Serial return and regional working-class self-expression: a cultural history of the East Midlands

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This thesis is dedicated to Dennis Frank Wakefield, my grandpa, and biggest fan.

"We are all amateurs; we don't live long enough to be better"

Abstract

My research focuses on representations of working-class life in the East Midlands. It offers for the first time a comparison of literary and audiovisual works by East Midlands-born and based artists, among them the largely underexplored early dramas of D. H. Lawrence, and Shane Meadows's *This is England* television series, which has yet to be subjected to sustained critical analysis. I draw on recent developments in regional studies, neo-genetic criticism, post-colonialism, town planning studies, and cultural sociology, as well as conceptualisations of place and space and person-place relationships that have dominated the discipline of geography since the 1970s, to prove that Lawrence's mining plays, Meadows's *This is England* sequence, and Alan Sillitoe's four-book Seaton novel series mobilise similar formal and aesthetic strategies for the representation of regional ways of life, and share a basis in the eschewal of the singular, the fixed, and the finished. By examining these works of drama, literary fiction, and television side-by-side, I show that these three artists have in common an artistic sensibility arising from a responsiveness to place, social class, and cultural marginality. My thesis charts a cultural lineage of the East Midlands region, and argues that serialness and its correlatives, repetition and open-endedness, are modes of expression typical of the representation of working-class identity in this historically under-regarded part of the country.

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INTRODUCTION

The central project of this thesis is to draw out the specificity of representations of the place of the East Midlands by East Midlands-based artists in order to argue for the distinctiveness of this area of the UK. In the process, this thesis reveals a correlation between certain artistic practices and relationships to authorship, and the marginal status of the regional working-class artists here studied. Chapter One examines D. H. Lawrence's early dramas: three dialect plays, which share a setting in a mining village based on Lawrence's birthplace of Eastwood. This chapter establishes Lawrence as a writer who rejects finishedness and fixity as necessary properties of the literary text, and whose nonorthodox approach to writing accommodates repetition, and is revealed in the flow of ideas and images between formally separate texts. Consistent with postcolonial theories of resistance—and building upon Amit Chaudhuri's identification of Lawrence as an unconventional writer, whose poems, specifically, demand a nonconventional reading approach—Chapter One characterises Lawrence's authorship as subversive of contemporary Western associations of authorship and creativity. This chapter posits that Lawrence's progressive authorship originated with his regional working-class upbringing, and was forged in the formative exercise of his composition of the mining plays. In this way, Chapter One makes an original contribution to Lawrence scholarship and literary studies. Chapter Two examines Alan Sillitoe's 1958–2001 novel series, which consists of four texts: *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, *Key to the Door*, *The Open Door*, and *Birthday*. It uses concepts of humanistic geography and engages with recent developments within

planning studies to analyse Sillitoe's depictions of place and his use of the serial form. By its application of theories of space and place to the novel series, Chapter Two makes an intervention into humanistic geography, as well as those areas of the larger discipline of geography wherein imaginative literature is considered to be worthy of inquiry, and to contribute to understandings of human-environment relationships. With its close readings of three novels commonly overlooked within Sillitoe scholarship, and in its treatment of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* as part of a series of works, Chapter Two makes an original contribution to literary studies. Chapter Three engages with the television works of working-class filmmaker Shane Meadows. It looks closely at his *This is England* series (2006–2015), which consists of a feature film (2006) and three television mini-series, and interrogates Meadows's adoption of television as his primary medium since 2010. Chapter Three draws upon the methods of television studies to open up discussions of Meadows's creativity, which has up to now attracted approaches mostly from within film studies, and to align Meadows's filmography with British regional television history, and television's industrial practices. This chapter's engagement with some of the founding theories of television studies, namely, Raymond Williams's identification of 'flow' as the defining characteristic of broadcast television, as well as the field's considerations of narrative seriality, serial programming, and episodic forms, permits a meaningful comparison of Meadows's serial television texts, Lawrence's interdiscursive plays, and Sillitoe's novel series. The insights into working-class cultural production which result from this comparison, and the chapter's positioning of Meadows's work as continuous with 1970s regional television production in Britain, constitute its unique contribution to literary and television studies. The following introduction will look, firstly, at the construct of the North–South divide, surveying academic engagements with this paradigm and the implicated myth of the 'North', to

demonstrate its preclusion of the formation of any equivalent space-myth of the Midlands, and the elision of the Midlands its frequent use performs. The introduction will identify instances of this elision within studies of the 'North', studies issuing from a range of fields, including film studies and geography. It will appeal for increased understanding of the Midlands and its distinctive identity, and call for more concerted efforts to discriminate between representations of its spaces and representations of those of northern England. The introduction will go on to set out the benefits to the East Midlands, in particular, of a more widespread awareness of its regional culture and identity, and a greater appreciation of the specificity of literary and audiovisual representations of its people, landscapes, and industries. The introduction will set out the second and parallel interest of my thesis, that of self-repetition, its intersection with modes of marginal artmaking, and its typical critical reception. Lastly, this introduction will survey the existing scholarship relevant to the concerns of my thesis.

The Midlands

The North–South Divide

The cultural geographer Rob Shields devotes a chapter of his 1991 study *Places on the Margin* to exploring what is known as the North–South divide. The 'North' of this formulation, he finds, has no geographical referent: it is a 'mythological North', one made up of 'contradictory images of the pastoral myth of the land of tradition, the myth of the

nineteenth-century industrial blight, and the myth of the "Land of the Working Class"' (245). This compound myth of the 'North' as 'an industrial area populated by rough working classes', and inexorably 'divided off from the South [sic]' can be traced to 'the end of the eighteenth century', when 'immense changes took place in both the spatial and socio-economic morphology' of the north of England (229). Among these changes were the proliferation of mills and mines in the region—the 'presence of water power and deposits of coal and iron' making possible 'first a resource economy' and, '[l]ater, with the expansion of manufacturing enterprises producing goods for British colonies, […] the expansion of a secondary economic base'—and the 'proletarianisation of an agrarian peasant class' (229). This was in contrast, Shields notes, to 'the agricultural basis of the Southern "home counties", and the emergence of financial capital in London' (229). So it was that, as the landscape of the north of England changed, southern England 'retained a pastoral landscape to which the aristocracy of the London-based court escaped' (229-230). Accordingly, '[w]hereas this "Southern pastoral" represented […] all the pleasures of [the gentry's] country estates, the landscape of Northern industry represented the social challenges of the nineteenth-century industrial bourgeoisie and the problems of a changing economic base' (230). Not only, then, did the 'North' come to be associated with *toil* and *difficulty*, in part because the 'South' ('an equally imaginary region') monopolised the opposite spheres of *leisure* and *repose*, but southern England's retention of an existing identity or image of itself, together with northern England's acquisition of a *new* one, succeeded in entrenching the notion of the 'North' as *other*; as *different* from the paradigm of the 'South' (229).

This notional 'North–South antithesis' persists, re-energised by the 'recently popular rhetoric of the "North–South Divide"' (212, 233). This expression is a relative of an 'old phrase which dates from Gaskell and Disraeli through Priestley's "Journey Through Britain"

(1934)', and describes an '"imaginary geography"', a country of two distinct halves (233). Still today, although areas of northern England such as Lancashire and Teesside have ceased to be centres of British industry, the 'North', that is, the popular construct of a monolithic 'North', continues to be regarded as the country's 'industrial heartland' (229). The erosion of industry in these places, '[t]he clearance of old factory sites and [the] diversification of single industry towns', has done little to fret 'the social fantasy' of the north's uniform otherness; it remains a 'locus for industrial images of […] coal-mining, bleak urban landscapes, and windswept countryside' (230, 232, 229). As for the association of the north of England with the working classes, 'London', writes Shields, has 'the largest concentration of those low down on the socio-economic ladder' (230). Even so, the perception of the north of England as 'homeland of a traditional British Working Class' prevails (229).

The persuasiveness of these images of northern England has partly to do with the area's enthralment, or subordination, to southern England, or, more precisely, to the country's capital. Shields identifies London as the home of the national press, and as the UK's 'cultural hub' (230). Wealth and power are concentrated in London; it is the country's financial and political capital. By contrast, in Germany and the United States, those same capitals are dispersed across a number of cities. In 'London and the English Desert: the geography of cultural capital in the UK' (2016), Danny Dorling and Benjamin D. Hennig argue that the UK is unique in this concentration of its resources (and 'philanthropy') in a *single* municipality—its 'geography of extreme inequality'—and in its resistance to rectifying this disparity by the redistribution of its wealth (Dorling and Hennig, 6, 1). This spatial inequality is perpetuated, Shields conjectures, by the use—or indulgence—of 'the North–South Divide rhetoric' by the nation's 'print and broadcast media' (Shields, 239, 232). Shields performs a 'comprehensive scanning of British "quality dailies"' to evidence his contention that 'the use

of such language' embeds the fiction of the North–South divide in the popular consciousness, even when this fiction is discredited 'as a caricature', and, more than this, causes it to become 'a conscious factor in personal and political decision-making' (233, 239, 234). For not only has this phrase and the attendant 'traditional mythology of the "North" [been] re-circulated and re-cycled' in recent times, it has—since the 1980s—become a part of 'the political vocabulary', and a significant one at that (240, 242). Such rhetoric, which Shields calls 'a *discourse of status distinction by division*,' has helped to form and foster 'a particular social spatialisation' (234). As Dave Russell paraphrases in his cultural history *Looking North* (2004), this expression that has entered common parlance has been *active* in 'locating the [north of England] in a national spatial hierarchy radiating from London' (Russell, 7). Ewa Mazierska (2017) agrees; in her study of representations of the 'North' in film and television, she posits that the 'discursive power' of the country's 'metropolitan core' foments 'the master narrative of the North' (Mazierska, 3, 4). 'This narrative,' she writes, which configures northern England as 'a literal and cultural "Darkshire"', may *originate* with 'authors such as Charles Dickens, Elizabeth Gaskell, D.H. Lawrence and George Orwell', but is approved and replenished by the south of England, which *today* enjoys a self-given 'authority to tell stories about this region' (4, 3).

In sum, the prevailing appeal of the archetypal 'North', which foists upon a large section of the populace what Shields calls 'a spurious, homogenised identity', is explained by this insistent, only *part*-imagined binarism of 'North' and 'South', one that is 'attractive even to academics', and 'disseminated widely through channels of formal education such as English literature and poetry' (Shields, 208, 240, 231). But it is also explained by northern England's *accommodation* of the articulations of its identity that have emerged from this discursive polarity, this cultural discourse of division. As Shields maintains,

> the mythology of the British North has been appropriated and re-worked in indigenous narratives, which have made this mythical 'North' into their own regional identity, and have cherished the images first propounded in the literature of (southern-based) writers in the nineteenth-century. This is aided by the fact that the myths were not simple fictions but related in a complex manner with tangible conditions. In many cases, the images accentuated those conditions; in others, the images became self-fulfilling prophecies which were incorporated into the logic of concrete arrangements of space (e.g. architecture and urban plans) over time.
>
> (Shields, 245)

In view of this, 'the North–South antithesis' is difficult to dismiss as an oversimplification of the material realities of life at either end of the country (212). It is *more* than mere shorthand or sound bite; the spatialisation that proceeds from or is, anyway, supported by such rhetoric 'is a "causative" factor which has *specifiable* impacts on conceptual thinking and, over time, on economic development' (244, my emphasis). Its frequent invocation in the press, its potential to influence policy, and, most importantly, northern England's assimilation of the 'imaginary geography' enshrined in the North–South binarism, makes this expression, the North–South divide, deserving of attention (208).

Elision of the Midlands

This binarism, which has driven and, to a certain extent, cemented the formulation of a northern identity does not exist for the Midlands, owing mostly to the fact that the Midlands has not one but two boundaries. The definition of northern England by contradistinction to southern England (and vice versa) appeals, because it is *easy*. It is easy—and, therefore, tempting—to define the one by what the other is not. To define the Midlands by contradistinction to *both* these territories would be difficult, and this difficulty has stayed its characterisation. Moreover, the enduring popularity of the North–South divide as *the* defining feature of the geography of England conceals the need for any definition of the Midlands, buried as it is in this formulation. It has not been possible to define the Midlands

by contradistinction to the 'North' *and* 'South', precisely because these regions are regarded as diametric; as engaged in mutually defining competition. As Shields explains, the 'North' is a '*foil* to other […] romanticised images of London and the South of England' (207, my emphasis). It is 'the *pole* against which the civilisation of the South has been compared' (230, my emphasis). Put another way, the 'spatial mythology surrounding the British North is dialogically interwoven with other spatial mythologies,' namely those of the 'South' (207). In her 1994 study *The North–South Divide: The Origins of Northern Consciousness in England*, Helen Jewell paraphrased the results of a 1988 'MORI poll of 201 executives in London, Leeds and Manchester', which sought to determine how established was the North–South 'divide in the mind' (Jewell, 2). 'The typical southerner was [….] seen as ambitious, entrepreneurial, under stress and wealthy,' Jewell reports, 'while the typical northerner was friendly, careful with money, down-to-earth, a loyal employee and with a good sense of humour' (2). Within this exclusionary relationship of 'North' and 'South', there has been no room, no *place*, for the Midlands; all the possible characteristics of a region are used up, consumed, in this polemical relation. The Midlands, then, has been *muscled* out of the national imaginary. Whilst it is possible to approximate the precincts of the Midlands, using, for instance, the obsolete ten Government Office Regions (1994–2011) for a guide, its essence, its *aboutness*, remains a mystery. Setting aside the limitations of a term like 'Northernness', its problematic uses, and questionable value, it is salient that there *is* no Midlands equivalent to Northernness, no such noun as Midlands*ness*, and no recognised tradition of cultural representations of the Midlands against which Midlanders might measure themselves and infer a collective identity. There *is* no image of the Midlands in the popular consciousness.

Conceivably, the lack of consensus as to where precisely the Midlands lies has frustrated the development of a separate identity or 'space-myth' of the Midlands (Shields,

211). If the boundaries of the north of England are diffuse, 'fluid and contested', the boundaries of the Midlands are still more indeterminate (Mazierska, 2). At what point, place, or places the Midlands *becomes* the 'North' perplexes the scholars whose studies I have touched upon thus far. Each maintains, as Shields does, that the 'North' 'is not a precisely defined and mapped out jurisdiction with clear borders' (Shields, 207). Each recognises the *range* of identifications of its reach. 'It is said by many to extend as far south as the Cheshire border, including Manchester,' Shields reports, 'and by a few to include even the Midlands – everything "North of Watford"' (207). Taking into consideration the geomorphology of England, and reviewing the many historical attempts to declare a dividing boundary ('[i]n different times and circumstances, and viewed through different eyes, the definition of the north and south has varied considerably'), Helen Jewell (1994) gives the clearest indication of where—from the vantage point of the late twentieth century—the line may be said to be drawn. That is to say, whilst '[t]here is not complete agreement about the placing of the dividing line, […] its general direction and the nature of the contrasting terrain each side of it are clear enough' (Jewell, 8).[1] Few scholars who *also* explore northern consciousness and northern mythology share Jewell's conviction as to the definitiveness of the northern frontier. Most, in deciding the jurisdiction of the north, err on the side of inclusivity. Geographer D. C. D Pocock is one such scholar. In his influential essay 'The Novelist's Image of the North' (1979), Pocock traces the formation of 'the literary North' with 'a wide review of English novels' dating back to the mid-nineteenth century. He uncovers 'a consistency in projection', which he considers to be 'a key contributor to the total image-geography of the North' (Pocock, 64, 73). Before listing 'various descriptions of place', which amount to 'a

[1]For a comprehensive account of where, 'historically,' the North–South divide 'takes place', refer to Chapter One (pp. 8-27) of Jewell's study *The North–South Divide* (1994) (Jewell, 8).

composite literary picture'—descriptions chosen, he notes, *not* for their 'regional authors *per se*', but for their 'contribut[ion] to the *topic*'—Pocock, like Shields, refers to the uncertainty surrounding its southernmost frontier (62, my emphasis). 'Rivers,' he writes, 'particularly the Trent and Mersey, can sometimes be taken as boundaries' (64). Pocock goes on to state that the 'use [of the Trent] as a satisfactory indicator depends on whether one conceives of a two- or three-fold division of the country' (64). In other words, the Trent serves tolerably as a marker of the bottommost edge of the north, providing one eliminates the Midlands from the picture, and subsumes the Midlands under the nomenclature and attendant identity of the 'North'.[2] In summarising, in this way, the difficulty of placing the British north, Pocock casts 'the equivocal Midlands' as the sticking point, *the* difficulty: *its* indistinctness foils the appointment of a single marker of the northern border, making subjective, and moot, what *might* be a matter of objectivity (64).

This framing of the Midlands' significance to the country's self-organisation as an insoluble problem, *because*, as Pocock has it, its 'mental assignment […] probably depends on one's relative location', makes any assertion of a Midlands identity seem far-off, unfeasible (64). It also clears the way for Pocock's collecting into his 'literary North' 'images of place' and 'environmental description' that are plainly *of* the Midlands (62). Indeed, works about the Midlands feature prominently in his inventory of 'the key dimensions of the literary North' (73). In fact, they make up the majority of his sample (73). For example, Pocock discerns the 'first appearance of the North in a major novel' in Dickens's *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1840), notwithstanding that it takes for its setting 'the country between Birmingham

[2]Helen Jewell refers to 'the divisive role of the Trent' in the long and complicated history of 'boundary definition' (Jewell, 14, 22). 'In the thirteenth century officialdom made the Trent a dividing line', she writes (23). However, '[t]he Trent boundary was never the precise course of the river, which would have cut across county boundaries, and indeed it was interpreted loosely' (23).

and Wolverhampton', two cities, which—along with Coventry, and the counties of Shropshire, Staffordshire and Herefordshire—are situated in the western half of the Midlands (68). Even so, according to Pocock, the 'stygian gloom' of Dickens's Birmingham models 'the most obvious single indicator or symbol of the North': 'smoke' (68). Pocock finds further confirmation of the 'classic smoke-impregnated landscape' in Arnold Bennett's 'novels of the Five Towns of the Potteries' (69). Bennett might, indeed, have 'vividly captured' such a landscape, but it is one that belongs to the Midlands—specifically, to Staffordshire—and not, as Pocock maintains, to the 'North' (69). Pocock adduces the novels of Nottingham-born author Alan Sillitoe to instantiate the claim that '[m]onotony is a prominent feature of the northern landscape' (71). It should be noted that Pocock is under no illusion that Nottingham is a territory of the north; he knows that the Nottingham of Sillitoe's novels is to be found 'in the industrial Midlands' (71). Nevertheless, he equates the setting of Sillitoe's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1958) with the 'Leddersford' of John Braine's *Room at the Top* (1957), and the 'Cressley' of Stan Barstow's *A Kind of Loving* (1960) to underscore the notion that the literary North 'remains a land of factories and mining' into the late 1950s (71). Not only were these latter two settings intended to resemble places in the north of England—in Yorkshire, specifically—but both are fictitious: an invented mining town, and an imaginary analogue for Bradford, respectively. Only Sillitoe identifies by its *real* name the *specific* part of the country to which his spatial evocations refer; only he depicts explicitly an actual locality.

Pocock's appraisal of the 'literary North' leans heaviest on the novels of D. H. Lawrence, who was born in the town of Eastwood on the border of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire. The surface features of this area, and the people of its mining community, Lawrence conveyed into multiple novels, short stories, plays, and works of non-fiction. These writings inspired by his birthplace were not limited to his formative years; his

particularisation of its atmospheres, social mores, dialect, and topography was the work of a lifetime, a concern to which he returned time and again throughout his career. His feeling for Eastwood and its rural surrounds was made evident by his indignation at its mechanisation at the hands of the manufacturing class, an indignation he channelled into *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, *The Rainbow*, and *Women in Love*; he gave it succinct expression in an essay titled 'Nottingham and the Mining Countryside' (1929), and named this part of the world 'the country of my heart' (Lawrence, 1989, 592). Pocock is familiar with Lawrence's affection for this region of the East Midlands; he cites the aforementioned essay in his article. Nonetheless, he regards 'Lawrence country' as constitutive of the 'North': the 'rural lowlands' depicted in Lawrence's works, 'rich in detail of flora and fauna', attest, he writes, to the *variety* of the scenery of the north; they are the counterpoint to its '*upland* hills, such as those rising above the Brontës' Wuthering Heights or Hollow Mills' (65, my emphasis). The topographical features of the rural East Midlands are not unique to that region; the likes of its landforms, its flora and fauna, are to be found all over the country, albeit in different combination. For that reason, perhaps, Pocock finds nothing *un*-northern about 'the Lawrence country', and views it as continuous with the moorlands of the Brontës's Yorkshire. There is, after all, no interruption of the land in the form of any physical boundary line by which we might distinguish the natural ecologies of northern England and the Midlands. Lawrence's *feeling* for the landscape of the Midlands *is*, however, unique: unique both to Lawrence, and to the landscape itself. This feeling, which has its origins in a cultural connection to place, is indivisible from his portraiture of the Midlands. Lawrence's receptivity to the environment of the Nottinghamshire-Derbyshire border derives from place attachment, a feeling-link between himself and the place of his birth. It is to the landscape of *this* area, and this area *alone*, that Lawrence's Nottinghamshire novels hold a mirror.

A proponent of humanistic geography, Pocock himself subscribes to the notion of the *particularity* of the person-place relationship. In *Humanistic Geography and Literature* (1981), he argues for the potential of the novel to enlighten the academic geographer of 'the man–environment relationship' (7). According to Pocock, the '"hard" positivistic' approach to geographical enquiry, popularised by what is known as the quantitative revolution, cannot compete with literature for its realisation of 'what is essentially an intangible phenomenon' (1981, 7; 1979, 62). It should be noted that Pocock ascribes this usefulness of imaginative prose to the '*deliberately cultivated subjectivity* of the writer which makes literature literature [and not, say, reporting]' (1981, 10, my emphasis). 'It is the work of the heart as well as the head; it is emotion,' he maintains (10). 'Emotion,' then, and 'subjectivity' are central to literary creation. They inhere in the 'fictive reality' of works by Lawrence and the Brontës, for instance, whose 'intuition of the concrete and *particular* truth' of the nature of place surpasses the methods of logical empiricism and outperforms 'the reporting of the social scientist' (11, my emphasis). In 'The Paradox of Humanistic Geography' (1983), Pocock defends 'this alternative to conventional scientific approaches', and the study of imaginative literature it might involve, against criticisms of 'a lack of clarity, and a social and environmental irrelevance' (355). He is most concerned to address the charge that humanistic geography places undue 'emphasis on the unique'; that is, 'rais[es] the unique component to an unjustified position' (355). Peter Haggett, he writes, 'in an earlier plea for a more scientific geography, had warned practitioners that all one could do with the unique was to contemplate its uniqueness' (355). 'But', Pocock counters, 'if Haggett was advocating a safety or respectability in numbers, then the fruits of the quantitative revolution can be shown to include many studies which modelled various aspects of behaviour based on very small populations […] often a captive student one' (355). The principal 'justification' he offers

for the study of literature is, '[a]s with the artist,' 'to seek the universal in the *particular*: to see a world in a grain of sand' (355, my emphasis). He concludes that '[t]o deny the validity of being able to particularise generalities would logically lead to the rejection of case studies, which have had a long and creditable role in the subject [of geography]' (355). '[U]ltimately', he reasons, 'it is the breadth of findings which is the criterion for assessing validity' (355). It was, perhaps, this last rationale that motivated Pocock to include in his survey of 'the literary North' so many images of the Midlands. Whatever the motivation, their integration undercuts his encouragement of geographers to 'explore the field of literature' for its '[d]istinctive qualities of place… perceptively recorded' (62).

I have examined these works by Pocock in some detail to demonstrate the normalisation of the Midlands' absorption into the 'North', and to give an impression of how much information must be discounted to enact this amalgamation, this merging of the Midlands with the 'North'. I have wanted, also, to highlight the weaknesses of this position, its hypocrisies. Pocock was not the first, nor would he be the last, to disregard the Midlands in favour of a more expansive 'North'. Seminal texts by Midlands artists have long been wielded and *continue* to be wielded as evidence of a northern consciousness. The works of literary figures Arnold Bennett, D. H. Lawrence, and Alan Sillitoe, especially—all of whom were born in the Midlands, and were committed to depicting this environment in their fiction—have been leant upon to instantiate a northern sensibility; have been marshalled as examples of a northern *self*-expression.[3] Rare is the critical study of the 'North' that does not

[3]Midlands filmmakers, likewise, are subject to misclassification. Working-class filmmaker Shane Meadows was born in Uttoxeter in the West Midlands. He moved to Nottingham in the East Midlands at the age of twenty in 1992. Meadows's early short films and his sixty-minute featurette *Small Time* (1996) were filmed on location in Nottingham. *Small Time*'s Nottingham-setting is specified in the film's diegesis. The large majority of Meadows's feature films are set in what is understood to be, or otherwise identified as, the Midlands. The setting of Meadows's *This is England* (2006) is an unidentified Midlands town, with Nottingham serving as the principal shooting location. Yet, the

adduce the works of these authors as contributing to the popular image or conceptualisation of the 'North'. Even where these works are mentioned *solely* to relay, as opposed to *ratify*, their contribution (rightly or wrongly) to 'the Northern space-myth', their very naming rehabilitates their association with this catchall image (Shields, 211). Shields, for instance, in his exploration of the 'imaginary geography' of the north, makes mention of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1960), a film set and shot on location in the Midlands city of Nottingham, and adapted from the novel by its author Alan Sillitoe (208). *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* is commonly thought to belong to the 'tradition of what were called 'Kitchen Sink' films', a 'cycle of British films [dating] from 1958 to 1963', most of which were adapted for the screen from literary sources (208, 215–216). The action of these dramas centred upon the relationships of ordinary people, and unfolded, with few exceptions, in the regions. They tended to be filmed on location in the (typically urban) environments identified in their source-texts, or else in areas to which their made-up settings were known to correspond.[4] The real-world surrounds that make up the backgrounds of each of these 'Kitchen Sink' films, and go some way to validating their claim to authenticity, interest Shields far *less*, however, than the abstract '"Land of the British Working Class"' they *altogether* 'portray' (216). Their representation *in combination* of this land of imagined expanse 'has irrevocably altered the images of the North', he argues, and is partly accountable for its having been 'seen as a single, undifferentiated landscape' (216). They popularised a *false* 'North', one that conforms to no endorsed estimation of the north's jurisdiction: 'that region 'North of Watford' which bleeds into the North proper' (216). Shields includes these films in his study to show how

British Council and the Independent Cinema Office, both, describe the film's protagonist as growing up 'in the north of England' (British Council; Independent Cinema Office).

[4] *A Taste of Honey* (1961), set in Salford, was filmed mostly in Greater Manchester; *A Kind of Loving* (1962) was shot predominantly in Preston and Blackburn in Lancashire; and *Billy Liar* (1963) was filmed, for the most part, on location in Bradford, West Yorkshire.

representations of the north have succeeded in divesting the region of its actual heterogeneity. He passingly acknowledges that 'most of these films concerned the Midlands, often being shot on location in Birmingham', but is not so suspicious of the 'Kitchen Sink' label that he would contest *its* homogenisation of films that show and were shot in cities as different as Preston and Nottingham. (Nottingham, it should be noted, is *as* remote from Preston as it is from London.) Shields's more-or-less unquestioning use of this *ex post facto* label effectively strengthens the 'spurious, homogenised identity' of the north to which he objects (208). His quarry is the 'proper' north, but it cannot be uncovered if he will not differentiate between representations of northern England and representations of the Midlands.

Toward a Midlands identity

In all likelihood, the elision, or erasure, of the Midlands in geography and cultural history stems from the difficulty of placing the Midlands region with any exactness. There is no less a case to be made, however, for the study of its cultural identity, and the sensibility of its people. The notion of Northernness, the northern identity, continues to occupy scholars from a wide range of disciplines, notwithstanding that a great many agree that the *place* of the north is negotiable, a matter of opinion, or rather of position, and notwithstanding that some of the more recent studies devoted to northern identity set out to challenge the 'master narrative of the North' (Mazierska, 4). Indeed, it would serve the project of those scholars, whose intention it is to interrogate and round out this 'master narrative', and, in the process, emancipate the north from its definitional dependency on the 'South', *if* cultural representations of the Midlands were subtracted from this narrative. If it is *nuance* they seek, specificity, or, at the very least, to call attention to the north's homogenisation, then they

might make a start at narrowing the field by separating the cultural yield of the Midlands, *its* representation in literature and other cultural fictions, from the cultural yield of the British north and *its* aesthetic expression.

In some senses, the absence of any coherent image of the Midlands—singular or composite—is a desirable starting point from which to begin exploring the cultural identity of the Midlands. For one thing, the region has been spared the 'gross generalisations' that are loaded on the north, except insofar as the Midlands has been understood to be a *part* of the 'North', incorporated into what Dave Russell calls 'the northern "place-image"' (Shields, 208; Russell, 7). In locating a Midlands identity, then, we may begin with its *self*-expression, rather than having to extricate its identity from external assumptions imposed upon it: from constructions formulated by those outside of the Midlands, and unacquainted with it.

This thesis has no pretensions to offering a comprehensive picture of the cultural identity of the Midlands, and takes as its particular focus—as I shall explain—the East Midlands. If these critical explorations of the 'North' have shown anything, it is this: that there is no unitary regional identity *to* discover; that regional sensibility, if it exists, is multifarious, and not singular. It is, also, necessarily, subject to change.[5] On the other hand, there can be no doubting the potency of place consciousness, the importance of place *to* people. Instinctively, we know there exists such a thing as *cultural* connection to place. It is possible to feel a bond with a person—a stranger, even—with whom we share a hometown. We feel we have something in common with that person, something other than knowledge, less measurable. Humanistic geography lends credence to these affinities, these

[5]In a 1960 lecture titled 'The Idea of the Region', social geographer E. W. Gilbert said the following: 'Now geography is, in my view, the art of recognizing, describing and interpreting the personalities of regions. Regions, like individuals, have very different characters; moreover, the character of regions, like those of individuals, are constantly changing or developing' (Gilbert, 1960, 158).

attachments: to the phenomena of home, and rootedness in place. Formalised in the early 1970s, humanistic geography offers a 'qualitative, interpretive way of understanding people's lived relationships with their geographical worlds' (David Seamon, 2015, 37). According to David Seamon, the five geographers whose work ushered in the humanistic perspective, 'Anne Buttimer, David Ley, Marwyn Samuels, Yi-Fu Tuan, and Edward Relph', 'drew largely on existentialism and phenomenology, the two closely related conceptual approaches grounding much of humanistic geography' (37). These approaches departed considerably from the 'quantitative research that,' up to that time, had 'dominated geography and defined the discipline as a "spatial science" concerned with measurable, predictable spatial patterns and interrelationships expressed terrestrially' (36). 'Existentialists', Seamon explains, 'probe the nature of human existence so that people might find helpful meaning in their lives through informed knowledge and action' (37). 'Phenomenologists', meanwhile, 'describe and interpret the nature of human experience, particularly its tacit, transparent dimensions marked by what phenomenologists call the *lifeworld* —the taken-for-granted nature of daily life to which people normally give no reflective attention' (37). Prominent works of humanistic geography have introduced into standard usage such terms as place experience (*insideness* and *outsideness*); place attachment (also *topophilia*); *fields of care*; emplacement; place identity; and the spirit or essence of place (also *genius loci*) (Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1974a; Seamon, 2015; Tuan, 1974b; Casey, 1997; Seamon, 2012). Some fifty years since the emergence of humanistic geography, it is generally understood that place is 'a fundamental aspect of being,' and a 'focus for common experience', to borrow the words of Edward Relph, whose study *Place and Placelessness* (1976) was among those major works to lay out the terms of humanistic research (Relph, 'Preface' to 2008 reprint, unpaginated; 1976, 35). It is Seamon's feeling, in fact, that, '[o]f all the 1970s humanistic work in geography,' this

publication 'had the most lasting influence because it pinpointed the existential crux of place experience in terms of insideness and outsideness—the degree to which a person or group feels a sense of belonging and identification with place, on one hand, or a sense of alienation and rupture, on the other' (Seamon, 39). Central to Relph's thinking, and to humanistic geography in general, is the principle that 'there are profound psychological links between people and the place which they live in and experience' (Relph, 'Preface' to 2008 reprint, unpaginated). The significance of these links cannot be overstated. 'To be attached to places and have profound ties with them is an important human need', Relph asserts (37). As Simone Weil hypothesised, it is 'perhaps the most important and least recognised need of the human soul' (Weil cited by Relph, 38). Indeed, 'for many such a profound attachment to place is as necessary and significant as a close relationship with other people' ('Preface' to 2008 reprint, unpaginated). 'It is this attachment', Relph maintains, 'that constitutes our roots in places; and the familiarity that this involves is not just a detailed knowledge, but a sense of deep care and concern for that place' (37). 'The places to which we are most attached are literally fields of care,' he continues, 'settings in which we have had a multiplicity of experiences and which call forth an entire complex of affections and responses' (38). This complex of responses does not reside, circumscribed, within the carer, but inheres, also, in the place for which he or she feels affection. As Relph asserts, 'distinctive and diverse places are manifestations of a deeply felt involvement with those places by the people who live in them' ('Preface' to 2008 reprint, unpaginated). 'In short,' Relph writes, 'people are their place and a place is its people, and however readily these may be separated in conceptual terms, in experience they are not easily differentiated' (34). This interchangeability of people and 'their place', *because* they are mutually defining, makes

abundantly clear the worth of determining the cultural identity of a region. What is at stake, and conceivably discoverable, is the identity of a *people*.

That the Midlands has no identity about which the country is agreed has material consequences for its population. Just as the rhetoric of the North–South divide has had 'specifiable impacts… on [the north's] economic development', and, thus, has actualised its marginal or secondary status, so also does the Midlands' effacement in the popular imagination encourage governing bodies and powerful organisations to treat the region as inferior. It was reported in 2018 that the BBC had apportioned to the Midlands a meagre percentage of 'its network television budget' for the period of 2017–18 (BBC, 2018, 43). The corporation 'spent just 1.9 per cent of its eligible budget on the Midlands, an area it defines as the West and East Midlands and parts of East of England' (Jones, 2018).[6] This equated to almost twice the sum allotted to the Midlands in the previous period. Even allowing for this increase, 'the Midlands ranked bottom of the list', notwithstanding two signal statistics: that the 'Midlands is the largest of the seven regions as defined by the BBC for its financial reporting,' and that 'around a quarter of the licence fee is generated [from within it]' (Jones, 2018). According to Mike Bradley, chairman of the Campaign for Regional Broadcasting Midlands, this failure 'to represent the Midlands to the nation' is of no small import (Bradley cited by Jones, 2018). 'It matters for many reasons,' he remarked, 'not least because the Midlands subsidises BBC spending in London by some £900 million each year', which 'equates to £9.9 billion over the 11-year charter period' (Bradley cited by Jones). This conferral on London of revenue raised by licence fee-payers in the Midlands violates 'the

[6]The report showed that '[a]lmost half of the BBC's budget (48.9 per cent) was spent in London during 2017/18 followed by the North of England (18.4 per cent), Scotland (9.1 per cent), South of England (8.7 per cent), Wales (6.7 per cent) and Northern Ireland (2.4 per cent). A final 3.9 per cent was spent in the year to March 31, 2018, on 'multi-region' – programmes made outside of London but which cannot be attributed to any single region or nation' (BBC, 2018, 43).

Charter requirement laid down by Parliament that requires the BBC to 'reflect, represent and serve the diverse communities of all of the United Kingdom's nations and regions' (Bradley cited by Jones). Worse, this abject neglect of the Midlands impedes its economic growth, and ensures that the region remains of negligible interest to the rest of the country. 'If some of that [£900 million each year] was spent in this region,' Bradley speculates, 'we would see a massive rise in employment in the creative industries, jobs created for young people and a massive boost to the profile and perception of this region at a national and international level' (Bradley cited by Jones).

The East Midlands

Like my maternal grandparents and my mother, I was born in Nottingham. Nottingham is my home, and I feel very fondly toward it. Much of what I am—or feel myself to be—I owe to Nottingham and the countryside about it, to my own exchanges with these places, and to the stories told and retold by relatives and friends that take as their setting the scenery of Nottingham and nearby Derbyshire. One grows accustomed to the inattention paid to the Midlands. I cannot be alone among those who live in the region in having been asked by non-locals to what area of England *precisely* the term 'the Midlands' refers. Many want to know to which parent-region—north or south—the Midlands belongs. To ascertain this is, as I have shown, to glean something of its identity: *is it northern; is it working-class?* In my own experience, those who live in London, or grew up farther south, are inclined to think the Midlands constitutive of the 'North'. Those who live in Manchester or Newcastle, on the

other hand, have derided the idea that Nottingham is in *any way* analogous to these metropolitan centres of the north of England.

The Midlands populace is not united in its answer to this question of regional identity; there is no consensus *on the inside.* Empirical research conducted by Natalie Braber in the field of sociolinguistics is revealing of this general uncertainty. Her work in the area of perceptual dialectology—the study of the folk linguistic or non-linguist perspective of language variation—and her extensive research into the dialect landscape of the East Midlands region (*Nottinghamshire Dialect* (2015), *Pit talk in the East Midlands* (2017)) establish the reciprocity between accent and dialect, and regional self-understanding. In her 2014 paper 'The concept of identity in the East Midlands of England', which 'investigat[es] feelings of identity in East Midlands adolescents', Braber treats as equivalent the dialectal character of the East Midlands region and the identity of its people, and describes as a 'cultural divide' 'the linguistic North/South boundary' (Braber, 3). She analyses responses to a map-based questionnaire devised to establish 'where a group of East Midlands adolescents believe the linguistic North/South boundary to fall in the UK, and how they position themselves within this divide' (5). A-Level students were tasked with drawing a line on a map of the UK to indicate 'where the North/South divide is found' (6). In addition, participants were asked how they self-identified; the labels made available to them were 'Northerner', 'Southerner', or 'Neither'. The data, collected from schools in Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, and Leicestershire, confirmed an 'uncertainty about the position of the East Midlands and where it belongs in the country', but it also found that 'a relatively high number of participants chose [to identify themselves as] "Midlander"', despite the fact that 'it was not an option explicitly stated to them' (9). As Braber explains, '[o]f the Nottinghamshire participants (of which there were 191), almost half answered either 'Neither' or left this

question blank', with 14% of participants opting for 'Midlander' without prompt (8). Of the students living in Derbyshire, '[a]n overwhelming 72% felt themselves not to belong to any category or left the question blank', with 'a larger proportion [giving] themselves the label 'Midlander'' (8). Braber's survey proves that 'large numbers of students in the three counties [seem] to be unsure about their identity' (8). More than this, it suggests that, with every invocation of the North–South divide, the majority of adolescents living in the East Midlands register the region's erasure. But what is also revealed—in the incidence of positive self-identification; in the appeal of the marker of 'Midlander'—is an appetite in the younger generation for more explicit definition of the identity of the East Midlands, and of the Midlands at large.[7]

The East Midlands region has much to gain from a surer definition of its identity, and from the recognition—and even leverage—that proceeds from a more consolidated and communicable self-understanding. Of the East Midlands and the West Midlands, the East is the more underfunded. Analysis of data relating to the distribution of government spending across the UK for the period of 2018–2019, undertaken by the Institute for Fiscal Studies, showed that the East Midlands received the least investment of all the English regions: around £600 per person, of which, for example, £159 was spending on transport.[8] Only Yorkshire and the Humber received less spending on transport: £139. For comparison, London residents received the most spending of any region: around £1,450 per head, of which £653 went on transport. Residents of the West Midlands, meanwhile, received £800

[7]Braber found that 'many of the participants later talked about the differences between East and West Midlands and how they felt very little connection with the West Midlands' (2014, 7).
[8]IFS divides the country into nine regions. In order of the amount of identifiable spending per head, from highest to lowest: London, North West, South East, East England, North East, West Midlands, South West, Yorkshire and the Humber, East Midlands.

per person in overall spending, of which £341 was spending on transport. There is a pattern of underinvestment in the East Midlands, as verified by Davenport and Zaranko, whose contribution to the *IFS Green Budget 2020* 'examine[d] the average level of investment spending per head across the five most recent years of data (2014–15 to 2018–19)' (33). They found that

> [o]ver this period, investment spending per person was higher in London than anywhere else in the country… Capital investment per person there averaged £1,461 a year over this five-year period (in today's prices), compared with an average of £851 in the rest of the UK, and just £658 in the East Midlands
>
> (Davenport and Zaranko, 33)

This chronic underfunding that appears, at the time of writing, unlikely to meet with any remediation has coincided with a period of cultural prosperity for the East Midlands region. Nottingham, in particular, has enjoyed—and presently enjoys—a prominence within the UK's cultural sector. In the five years between 2015 and 2020, Nottingham was named a UNESCO World City of Literature (December 2015), and the Nottingham Board for Culture and Creativity launched The Nottingham Project (July 2020), an initiative uniting a range of the city's foremost institutions, cultural practitioners, and smaller organisations—among them, the Next Gen Movement, founded by the organisers of Nottingham's Black Lives Matter protest (June 2020)—with a view to galvanising over a ten-year period the city's creative sector. In 2015, the Nottingham Poetry Festival was founded. In this same five-year period, Nottingham cellist Sheku Kanneh-Mason won the BBC Young Musician competition (2016), and performed at the wedding ceremony of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle (2018). The event was broadcast live on television, with coverage provided by BBC One, BBC News, ITV, Sky News, Sky One, and was live-streamed on the websites of the *New Yorker*, CBS, the

Today Show (NBC), ABC News, and *Good Morning America* (ABC), drawing an audience of an estimated eighteen million in Britain (*The Guardian*), and over twenty-two million in the US (*Radio Times*).

This research owes much to two high-profile cultural events, which, coinciding in the autumn of 2015, ensured that the East Midlands region was, however briefly, uncommonly well-represented in England's arts and entertainment sector. For a short time, the UK public had access to two separate dramatisations of the lived experiences of the working classes of the East Midlands region: one, a new work of dramatic storytelling, airing on national television; the other, a reworking of three extant stage plays dating to the early twentieth-century, in production at London's National Theatre. These momentarily coinciding, but otherwise uncoordinated, cultural events were the transmission of Shane Meadows's four-part television drama *This is England '90*, which premiered on Channel 4 to two million viewers on 13th September 2015, and concluded on 4th October; and the staging of a new adaptation of D. H. Lawrence's mining plays, which had its premiere that same October, and ran until February the following year. I attended a performance of *Husbands and Sons* (2015), which synthesised the narrative action of *A Collier's Friday Night* (1909), *The Daughter-in-Law* (1913), and *The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd* (1913), on the evening of 22nd October, by which time I had watched two of a total four episodes of *This is England '90*. While watching the production of *Husbands and Sons*—set, like the plays it combined, on the Nottinghamshire-Derbyshire border—I was struck by the similarities between it and Meadows's mini-series, similarities of theme, form, tenor, and scale. Both works represented working-class communities, intergenerational conflict, marital violence, and illicit sexual relationships. Both integrated multiple storylines, interweaving the carryings-on of three households in the case of the play, and, in the case of the serial, the affairs of a group of close friends and their

respective families. Central to both works were dominant women, whose hardiness and, in some cases, tyranny is sufficient to power narrative action. Mortality and desolation pressed in at the edges of the play and mini-series, and, indeed, eventually succeeded in penetrating the narratives of both. Their *dis*similarities were not lost on me. In the first place, the plays on which *Husbands and Sons* was based were exactly that: plays. *This is England '90* and its prequels *This is England '86* and *This is England '88* were created for television. From start to finish, interval included, the production of *Husbands and Sons* passed in three hours and fifteen minutes. *This is England '90* was broadcast over a four-week period, while the *This is England* sequence in its entirety spanned some nine years. A hundred years separate Lawrence's first drafts of the mining plays, and Meadows's creation of *This is England '90*. The plays are set in the industrial East Midlands in a colliery village modelled on Eastwood; the action of Meadows's mini-series unfolds during England's deindustrialisation in an unspecified setting assumed to be the Midlands. These considerable differences only cast into sharper relief their likenesses.

Repetition/Sameness

If my thesis is a response to an upturn in the visibility of the East Midlands, it is also a response to a tradition within cultural criticism for the discovery of sameness—or what is often called repetitiveness—within the work of regional working-class artists. The simplest way to introduce this parallel concern of my research is to describe an exchange which took place shortly after the acceptance of my research proposal by the University of Nottingham.

In April 2016, I ran across an editor with whom I had had the good fortune to collaborate while working as a film critic, and who, like me, was making his way to the Architecture/Essay/Film symposium at the Bartlett School of Architecture. As we walked, I relayed the news that I was soon to undertake a PhD, and explained the gist of my research, as it was at that time: an inquiry into the cultural identity of the East Midlands region by way of a comparison of the mining plays of D. H. Lawrence and Shane Meadows's multipart *This is England* narrative. This editor was unfamiliar with the mining plays, but knew Meadows's work, and remembered his arrival onto the British filmmaking scene in the mid-1990s. This person shared that he had admired Meadows's early works very much, but felt that in recent years Meadows had made the same film over and over again. I did not then, and do not now, disagree with the assessment that Meadows is a filmmaker who repeats; there are, as I will show, recurrences of interest, setting, character, plot, and dialogue throughout his body of work. Moreover, at the time of our speaking (in April 2016), Meadows had not produced a feature film in six years, preferring to extend the *This is England* narrative, and, in the process, inscribing repetition onto his filmmaking career. This editor is far from the only person to hold this opinion of Meadows; others have since confided in me that they find Meadows's work repetitive or—as they might put it—*samey*. But what intrigued me about this person's remark was the relationship it implied between repetition and merit. He preferred Meadows's early films to the later. Possibly, he had not seen Meadows's more recent works, the television work included, having stopped attending to Meadows's career some years before. The reason he gave for not liking the later works, or not feeling about them as he felt about Meadows's first films, was that they too much resembled each other *and* the earlier works. Meadows had not branched out, so that his filmmaking had become, this person implied, much of a muchness. This characterisation of Meadows's *re*-making as a

running aground, his repeating indicative of a kind of creative death or expiration, set me to wondering how widespread was this perception of self-repetition, and how entrenched and defensible was the association of "good" work with novelty; of talent with originality. I began to reflect on what this might mean for regional artists, in particular, and, indeed, for any artist whose creative intentions or agenda might entail the *repeated* representation of a *single* and specific environment or society. I wondered whether there might exist a cultural and critical predisposition for the discovery and criticism of repetition within the work of regional artists. And I wondered whether this tendency might intensify where it coincided with the work of regional artists who are *also* working-class, and strive—in more than one work—to reflect not only regional life, but life as inflected by social class.

The expectation that a new artwork "*be*" or "*do*" something new is pervasive, but from where does it come? Has it an etymological root? Is art, by definition, original? Does it originate with the cultural marketplace, and the incentivisation of novelty? Might it have been created by the marketplace, and taken up or embraced by critics, so that what began as a commercial imperative came to be seen as an *artistic* imperative: there is no artistic merit without originality? A really thoroughgoing exploration of the origins of this expectation, of the equation of art with innovation, is beyond the scope of this thesis. Its effects, however, on the critical reception of the work of artists who return or repair to the same subjects and settings repeatedly are profound, and so make it necessary to query this cultural assumption that a *"good"* artist ranges, rather than stays in one place; that the work of a *"good"* artist ramifies, instead of turning circles. The two questions postulated by each of the chapters of my thesis in turn are these: is this a reasonable expectation, which is to say, is it one capable of being met by *all* artists *equally*, and does the dismissal of self-repetition in art defer

understanding of its value, its productivity, what it *adds*, and encourage a homogenisation of repetition, where, in fact, there are permutations?

In addition to these broader queries, my research raises the following questions. If the perceived novelty of an artist's first work resides in his treatment of an underrepresented subject, environment or people, and if that artist wishes to offer a *sustained* correction to this underrepresentation, or blind-spot, and so returns in later works to this same subject, environment or people, is he repetitive in the pejorative sense of the word, as it is used to distinguish meritorious art from mediocre? If an artist conceives of his artmaking not as invention, or even creation, but as an exercise in *and of* his understanding, and if he repeats to deepen his and others' understanding, is he repetitive, and a poor artist? If an artist seeks to accrete understanding with the making of each work of art, such that his individual artworks overlap or imbricate—rather than to create distinct works, minimally similar, requiring that he start anew as from nothing with each project—might the work of this artist demand a different critical framework to the conventional? And if an artist, possibly, a working-class artist, should regard his artmaking as *work*, in the sense of labour, which has no definitional relationship to novelty, but is, by definition, repetitive, is it in his interests to abjure repetition? The artist who does not set out to placate the marketplace, for whom novelty is *not* a priority, must, anyway, have his works compete in the marketplace against works that are novel *by design*. But what basis is there for extending this competition into a critical and scholarly context?

If an attempt were made to engage with these questions methodically, it would necessitate addressing the following two indeterminacies: what does it matter what the artist intends; and how does one distinguish between the evidence of *voice* in an artist's work and an instance of repetition? Again, anything but an oblique look at these issues of authorial

intention, and style or auteurism is beyond the scope of this study; the intersection of these wider issues with the foci of my research (region, working-classness, return) warrants further investigation, as I recommend in my conclusion. That being said, as I work through the following three case studies, I will gesture toward the aversion to repetition that is widespread within the cultural sphere; the readiness with which it is identified in the work of working-class practitioners; the resulting association of working-class art with repetitiousness, monotony; and the weaponisation of the charge of repetition, its use as a basis of criticism that is itself a means of control by which working-class texts and their working-class authors are, at best, ghettoised, at worst, *"written off"* as constitutionally inferior.

Aims and Methodology

Aims

The COVID-19 pandemic has accentuated spatial inequality in England, calling attention to and, some allege, entrenching the economic and social disparities between London and the rest of the country (Hanley, 2020). Unquestionably, the pandemic has made apparent the severity of Westminster's indifference to the regions. Requiring guidance and financial support tailored to *regional* needs, the regions instead received generic guidance, and scant provision for the protection of businesses. In the case of Greater Manchester, this caused a political impasse. Mayor Andy Burnham censured measures enforced by central government,

and pushed back against the support package it put together.[9] Burnham's real-time reaction to the news of the government's refusal to confirm the £60 million-provision for business in the region—over and above the £22 million allotted for Test and Trace—was broadcast live on television, and his condemnation of the government's intransigence covered widely in the days that followed. This public display of defiance of Westminster's intervention in the management of *localised* impacts of Coronavirus raises questions about who cares, and who *really* cares, for the regions. It raises questions about mayoral responsibility, and the role it might yet play in the future of the English regions.

In the absence of devolved local government, the English regions depend entirely on Westminster for their prosperity. How, in such circumstances, does a region like the East Midlands attract notice, and win the good favour of Westminster, on which the welfare of its populace is contingent? How, without administrative autonomy, might an overlooked region like the East Midlands take an *active* role in its governance and impress on policymakers its cultural and economic value? It is, possibly, over-optimistic to hope that, by asserting its worth at every possible turn and by every possible *channel*, a region might improve its treatment at the hands of central government; that increased public understanding of the cultural identity of the East Midlands might exert a certain pressure on Westminster to recognise its peculiar interests, its potential for productivity. Indisputably, it is crucial that the government recognise *difference*, recognise specificity, if it is to close the gap in economic growth between London and rest of the country. As Alex Davenport and Ben Zaranko point out in their report for the Institute of Fiscal Studies,

[9]Local leaders had asked for £90 million, but were offered £60 million. When they later asked for £65 million, they were refused (Woodcock, 2020).

> [t]here is no single set of factors that characterise a 'left-behind' place. In turn, this means there is no one-size-fits-all policy agenda. The challenges faced by cities such as Newcastle and Glasgow are different from those faced by towns such as Dudley and Merthyr Tydfil, which are in turn different from those faced by coastal communities such as Margate and Blackpool. The government cannot be all things to all places. It needs to decide what it is trying to achieve and how.
>
> (Davenport and Zaranko, 315)

In other words, any attempt by the government to redress the evidenced discrepancy in spending, to mitigate regional inequality, *must* be attended by an understanding of the 'challenges' particular to each of the so-called 'left-behind' places it seeks to uplift. And *if*, I would add, this hypothetical investment is to be directional and not perfunctory—empowering of the region, rather than interventionist or officious—it follows that the government must take into consideration the histories and cultural sensibilities of these regions to get the measure of the institutions, the industries, extant and exhausted, and the symbolisms that feed into a region's self-understanding. The outcomes, the *success*, of such an enterprise would rest on a region's ability to articulate its identity to outsiders. It makes sense, then, for a region to become adept at communicating its self-image. For this, a region's people and their representatives must find a language, formulate a way of speaking, appropriate to the expression of regional self-understanding, and they must know—and, ideally, agree upon—what it is they wish to communicate. Neither is straightforward: the finding of the right words, and the reaching a consensus. There is a danger of making appear univocal something that is constituted of myriad, even competing, ideas and points of view. There is also a risk of stating in unambiguous terms something that is equivocal, diffuse, and in a constant state of flux. Too absolute a characterisation of regional self-image, or identity, would serve only to set farther off the desired wider understanding of the region and its people. This considered, how does a region decide its identity inclusively and without generalisation? How does it proclaim its identity without trampling on the plurality of which

it consists, and in such a way as acknowledges its necessary alteration, or shifting, with the passing of time? By various means, a region's museums, and arts and charity organisations foster historical and cultural consciousness in the regional population: exhibitions, displays of artefacts, and historical re-enactments. But how often do such attractions equip visitors with a way of speaking about spatial identity that is effective and accessible to the largest number of people?

The first step to developing such a language is not, it seems to me, to itemize features of regional identity, and thereafter to consider how best to communicate, or *sell*, these features or fables to outsiders. Rather, it is to gain an understanding of the mythopoeic processes by means of which a region generates its self-image. As the aforementioned studies of the 'North' make clear, imaginative literature and narrative filmmaking are among these processes. As Pocock writes, the literary North, the aggregate 'North' set forth in fiction, is 'a key contributor to the total image-geography of the North' (Pocock, 73). Consideration of the literary, cinematic and televisual Midlands—the mythopoeic strategies that undergird *its* self-image, *its* image-geography—is a sure and apposite place to start. In her essay on the regional identity of the US state of Montana, Susan Kollin reminds us that, according to the newest developments in Regional Studies, 'spatial identities are not geographically determined but socially and discursively constituted' (Kollin, 361). And '[i]f we understand regional identity as a *rhetorically* constituted entity rather than *naturally* given, we may be able to regard even the most enduring forms of self-understanding as open to contestation and revision' (360, my emphases). If this is so, then any discussion, or articulation, of regional identity is tantamount to its *constitution*; we *create* regional identity when we put it into words. This principle brings to the fore three facts, or actualities, relating

to regional identity: its instability; how easily it may be reconstituted; and how important it is that we choose our words—and aesthetic strategies—wisely.

This thesis aims to *open up* an understanding of the marginalised East Midlands by analysing examples of its realistic representation—for the theatre, in literary fiction, and in television drama—by artists local to the region. By its appraisal of artworks spanning a century (1909–2015), this thesis proposes to uncover a regional artmaking sensibility, arising from a responsiveness to place, social class, and cultural marginality. It is hoped that *from* this sensibility, and from the artworks here explored, there may be inferred a sense of the place and of the identity of the East Midlands area. The object of this research is to offer up a *foundation* of understanding, a starting point from which may begin the process of complicating—both inwardly (for the benefit of its populace), and outwardly (for the wider public)—the cultural identity of the East Midlands, and the region's self-understanding.

Methodology

The original contribution of this thesis resides in its multidisciplinary approach to the investigation of place; in the attempt to think outside of disciplinary norms and chronological boundaries. My thesis builds on recent developments in regional studies, literary geography, neo-genetic criticism, post-colonialism, town planning studies and cultural sociology to examine the formal, aesthetic and discursive strategies devised by three East Midlands artists for the authentic representation of that region. My case studies—three sets, or series, of interconnecting texts—range in date of composition (or transmission) from 1909 to 2015, making this study diachronic *as well as* synchronic. The study of place lends itself to a multidisciplinary approach; the many, overlapping analyses of 'the northern "place-image"' (Russell, 7), the 'image-geography of the North' (Pocock, 1979, 73), emerging from a variety

of fields of research, demonstrate the permeability of established cultural modes. By bringing to bear on these three sets of texts a range of critical perspectives, I hope to penetrate deeper into the workings and the meaningfulness of their representations of place than I might by keeping within the bounds of disciplinary norms and expectations. By drawing on the interdisciplinarity of literary geography and cultural studies, and following the example of Amit Chaudhuri—whose integration of post-colonial and post-structuralist lines of inquiry with close readings of Lawrence's poems generates unprecedented insights into the *whole* design of Lawrence's writing—I hope to ensure the broad applicability of my research, and its impact (social, cultural) beyond the fields of literary, film, and television studies. It makes sense that a study which emphasises the open-endedness and interdiscursiveness of representations of the region of the East Midlands should participate in the diffusion of paradigms across traditional disciplinary lines.

Existing scholarship

General

In *The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (2009), editors Warf and Arias remark that '[s]pace, place, mapping, and geographical imaginations have become commonplace topics in a variety of analytical fields in art' (Warf and Arias, i). In their introduction to the volume, Warf and Arias chart what they call the 'fall and rise of spatiality' (Warf and Arias, 2). The 'profound and sustained resurgence' in 'the study of space' of recent years succeeds a

recession in spatial thinking: '[i]n the nineteenth century, space became steadily subordinated to time in modern consciousness, a phenomenon that reflected the enormous time-space compression of the industrial revolution' (i, 2). '[I]ntellectually,' they add, 'this phenomenon was manifested through the lens of historicism, a despatialized consciousness in which geography figured weakly or not at all' (2). Edward Soja (1993) figures this historicist consciousness thus: 'an overdeveloped historical contextualisation of social life and social theory that actively submerges and peripheralises the geographical or spatial imagination' (Soja, 140). Warf and Arias share Soja's appraisal: 'historicist thought linearized time and marginalized space by positing the existence of temporal "stages" of development, a view that portrayed the past as the progressive, inexorable ascent from savagery to civilization, simplicity to complexity, primitiveness to civilization, and darkness to light' (Warf and Arias, 2). Such 'sweeping teleological accounts' as historicism yielded neglected, as Warf and Arias argue, 'space, human consciousness, [and] the contingency of social life' (2). The upturn they discern in spatiality had its beginnings in the 1920s, but gathered momentum in the 1960s. They ascribe its 'reassertion' to, in turn, 'the seminal works of Henri Lefebvre (1974/1991) and Michel Foucault (1972/1980)', which conceived of 'the organization of space [as] central to the structure and functioning of capitalism'; the contributions of social theory, which 'repositioned the understanding of space from given to produced'; and, latterly, globalisation (3). Globalisation, they write, 'has accentuated the significance of location' (i). '[A] worldwide space of flows […] erode[s] conventional geographic preoccupations with proximity', they suggest, and, yet, within this context, '[a]s neoliberal capital operates ever more effortlessly on a worldwide stage, small differences among regions becoming increasingly important' (5).

The influence of globalisation on spatial thinking in the arts is picked up by Neal Alexander and James Moran (2013), whose edited volume *Regional Modernisms* appraises

the ‘distinctive geographies’ of modernist literary texts (Alexander and Moran, 1). In their introduction, they remark ‘an increasing attentiveness on the part of critics writing on literary modernism to questions of location and geographical situation within a wider context of displacements and global flows’ (4). The resurgence in spatial thinking presents the opportunity to reassess what they term the ‘powerful and well-rehearsed narrative about modernism’, one that ‘defines it as essentially metropolitan and internationalist in character’ (1). In response to recent advances in modernist studies, namely, the transnational turn, which compels ‘a more detailed understanding of modernism’s sub-national and intra-national dynamics,’ the volume attends to ‘the complex interactions between internationalist sensibilities, forged in the metropolitan milieu, and those pervasive regional or local affiliations that inflect the work of so many modernist writers’, Ezra Pound and W. B. Yeats among them (4, 2). The volume’s ‘focus upon the regional affiliations of literary modernism […] is intended as a complement to, rather than as a substitute for transnational or global perspectives, the point being to enhance critical awareness of modernism’s complex, multi-scale geographies’ (8). Accordingly, contributor Andrew Harrison conducts a side-by-side comparison of the extent to which regional localities inspired works by D. H. Lawrence and James Joyce, emphasising ‘the fruitful ambivalence of [their] relationships’ with Eastwood and Dublin, respectively (Harrison, 2013, 46).

There are in existence a number of studies concerning what Shields calls ‘the Northern space-myth’ (Shields, 211). I have engaged with some of these studies already. Notable among these surveys of representations of northern England is Katharine Cockin’s *The Literary North* (2012). Its fifteen essays share an interest in the indefiniteness of the notional or mythological ‘North’, and an inclination, as Neal Alexander observes, ‘to challenge the prevailing cultural stereotypes concerning “the North”’ (Alexander, 2013a, 360).

Alexander finds, however, that the study's 'countervailing impulse towards definition and delineation' unsteadies its attempts to assert the north's mutability (361). Few such studies, as I have shown, differentiate with any consistency between the Midlands and the so-called 'North'. Cockin's study is no exception.

The rise in spatial thinking extends to film and television studies. Writing in 2019, Daniel Martin diagnosed 'a resurgence of class and regional analysis in film and television studies' (Martin, 526). Building upon the work of British sociologist Beverley Skeggs, whose ethnographic study *Formations of Class and Gender: Becoming Respectable* (1997) defied 'declarations that class and region were archaic models of social analysis by asserting the importance of these concepts to intersectional processes of identity construction and performance', David Forrest and Beth Johnson consider television's role in the formation of collective identities in *Social Class and Television Drama in Contemporary Britain* (2017) (Martin, 526). Similarly contributing from *within* the fields of film and television studies to Skeggs's exogenous insights into television's shaping of classed subjectivities (Skeggs and Wood, 2011), and confirming her contention that class formation and the formation of regional identity are 'fought out at the level of the symbolic', Ewa Mazierska and contributors to *Heading North: The North of England in Film and Television* (2017), mentioned above, uncover 'the various ways in which television and film actively shape the cultural imaginary of class and region' (Skeggs, 2004, 5; Martin, 526). Mazierska's introduction to the volume 'sketches a picture of the North's canonical representation as homogenous, historically static and ideologically hegemonic' (Martin, 528). In *Mapping Cinematic Norths: International Interpretations in Film and Television* (2016), Julia Dobson and Jonathan Rayner widen the net, and incorporate into their survey of on-screen norths examples from Scandinavia, the US, and Australia. Among the British examples analysed in this edited collection are the

Manchester-set *Control* (2007), a biopic of Joy Division's Ian Curtis, and television series *Shameless* (2004–2003).

Further back, in his canonical study *Sex, Class and Realism: British Cinema 1956-63* (1986), John Hill explored the representation of the regional working classes in the films of the 1950s and 1960s. Known collectively as the British New Wave, these films instituted a social realist tradition in British cinema, and a standard (formal, aesthetic) against which succeeding British social realist movements were measured. Hill (2000) and Kerry William Purcell (2001) separately analysed the "Brit grit" films of the 1990s, and asked how far these films reinscribe the class signifiers and the mise-en-scènes used in and legitimated by the films of the British New Wave, and to what extent a second generation of social realist filmmakers (Alan Clarke, Mike Leigh, Ken Loach, and Gary Oldman) reimagine the representational possibilities of social realism for a new age, and introduce into the social realist tradition aesthetic approaches and forms proportionate to 'the newly developing experiences of working-class life' (Purcell, 118). Both stress as essential to criticism an 'acknowledg[ment] [of] how the very means of representation are forged and shaped by social-historical processes' (Purcell, 118). Both 'question how the quantitative shifts in society in particular periods [of history] necessitate qualitative transformations in our imagery of class relations' (Purcell, 118).

In 'Film, Class and National Identity: Re-Imagining communities in the Age of Devolution' (2000), Julia Hallam finds evidence of a revival of interest in regional identities at the close of the 1990s, a revival she ascribes to the contemporaneous redevelopment of those parts of the country that were hardest hit by the effects of industrial decline. Hallam 'explore[s] the relationship between film content, local production initiatives and recent changes in film and moving image cultural policies,' and finds that 'a number of recent British

films are set in localities where urban regeneration schemes are in operation' (Hallam, 262). '[F]ocused on the cultural industries' in 'areas hit by severe loss of employment in traditional manufacturing', these schemes, she writes, have 'stimulated new kinds of business activity and renewed identifications with place', and 'enable[d] film and media producers to emphasise the specificity of place, projecting national and regional identities which question and contest stereotypical constructions of "Britishness"' (262, 263).

In his 2012 study *A Sense of Place*, Lez Cooke surveys the origins of regional British television drama, and examines the ways in which television has mediated regional culture and identity. Cooke identifies competition as an early driver of the creation of regional television production companies. From the mid-1950s, ITV showed the way: 'the fourteen regional ITV companies operated out of regional production centres from all over the UK with a degree of autonomy which the BBC regional production centres rarely achieved' (Cooke, 20). Cooke proposes that the BBC's constitutional basis—and its self-definition, at the instigation of John Reith, as a national institution—has, since 1924, stymied 'its regional broadcasting activities, especially in television' (20). Its television service, 'introduced in 1936', was initially accessible only to those living in or around the capital, and its post-war growth into other areas of the country was not accompanied by any sincere effort to engage regional audiences on their own terms (21). Only the launch of ITV in 1955—with its built-in advantages over the BBC of a 'federal constitution and regional structure'—roused the public service broadcaster to (self-preserving) action, so that by the mid-1950s the BBC boasted 'three English regional production centres at Birmingham, Bristol and Manchester', each 'equipped […] to produce drama' (20, 24). Competition, Cooke explains, would again alter the landscape of regional television production in the UK, when, during the second half of the 1990s, a 'new global environment' saw commercial companies dominate the UK market with

content aimed at global audiences and tailored for global tastes (1). The 'network of regional Independent Television (ITV) companies' that had once nurtured a wealth of 'indigenous regional and local broadcasting' across the country, and goaded the BBC to improve its regional provision from the mid-1950s onwards, was dissolved over a period of six years (from 1994 to 2000), eventually to be replaced in 2004 with a single company (1). The fragmentation of the network, and its substitution with a profit-oriented global competitor, put pressure on the BBC in the early 2000s to carry forward regional production, and to deliver programmes with regional appeal (1). At the centre of Cooke's study are detailed histories of the development and endeavours of Granada Television, which began broadcasting in 1956, and of BBC English Regions Drama (operational from 1971 to 1981), an ITV company and a BBC department, respectively, whose combined productivity constituted 'a "golden age" of television drama, from the late 1950s to the early 1980s' (1). Their commitment to locally-produced regional television programming has not been matched in the decades since. Chapter Three of this thesis explores in some detail the legacy of English Regions Drama, which was instrumental, as I argue, in Shane Meadows's development as a filmmaker, and crucial to any understanding of his work.

Within media studies, Ieuan Franklin, Hugh Chignall and Kristin Skoog (2015) have examined the ways in which various forms of media (film, television, popular music) have refracted English regional and British national identities. In his introduction to the edited collection *Regional Aesthetics: Mapping UK Media Cultures* (2015), co-editor Ieuan Franklin argues that the 'relevance of space and geography in relation to UK media… has hitherto (and by comparison [with other branches of the humanities]) remained largely unexplored,' owing both to a 'prevailing interest in the discursive formation or ideological mediation of national and globalized – rather than regional – identity', and a tendency toward 'historicism [which]

privileges time over space' (Franklin et al, 1). Unlike most of the above-listed studies, *Regional Aesthetics* differentiates between cultures of the Midlands and cultures of the north of England. David Forrest and Sue Vice (2015), in the same volume, combine analyses of South Yorkshire-set fictions—two teleplays, first broadcast in 1977, and two novels published in the 2000s—to assert a 'poetics of the North' (55). Two of the volume's chapters are dedicated to media cultures of the Midlands. Julie E. Robinson appraises regional programming in the Midlands (1968–1989) and its projection of a specific and then-incipient Black Country identity, a 'performative mode of representing the Black Country' that took its cue from 'wider discourses taking place… at the same time' (141). Gloria Khamkar chronicles 'the important contribution of BBC Radio Leicester' to directly 'addressing and catering to [the] Asian immigrant community', which was 'drawn from a few specific areas in the subcontinent' during the post-war period in response to 'the British Nationality Act of 1948' and the recruitment drives of 'British employers, such as the National Health Service (NHS), London Transport and British Rail' (157–158).

Lawrence

J. R. Watson's chapter '"The country of my heart": D. H. Lawrence and the East Midlands Landscape' in *The Spirit of D. H. Lawrence* (1988) probes Lawrence's characterisation of himself as '[n]ot being profoundly interested in landscape', and advocates taking these remarks 'in the context of a wider and more generous understanding' (Watson, 17). Watson argues that landscape partakes in 'the relationship between nature and man', and, as such, interested Lawrence very much (17). According to Lawrence, this relationship—'between the whole person, body, mind and spirit, and the external world'—was 'the real subject', and

characterised by, in Lawrence's words, a 'real intuitional awareness and solid instinctive feeling' (Lawrence cited by Watson, 17).

Most of the studies devoted to the repetitive properties of Lawrence's work focus on the poetry, and the repetitions—or multiples of poems—created through revision. Lawrence undertook to revise his poems over three separate, extended periods. Gail Porter Mandell, in *The Phoenix Paradox: A Study of Renewal Through Change in the* Last Poems *and* Collected Poems (1984), concentrates on the last of these periods (1927–28), during which time Lawrence also reorganised his poems. Mandell discerns in the order imposed on the poems *ex post facto* the story of Lawrence's growth as a poet, and contends that Lawrence re-versioned individual poems, and restructured the collection wherein they appeared, with a view to having the collection reflect the progression of his career. Appraising Mandell's study in *The D. H. Lawrence Review*, Holly Laird (1984) writes that 'Lawrence's poetry *endured* several phases of revision' (Laird, 257, my emphasis). This word 'endured' epitomises the impatience Lawrence's rewriting inspires in some scholars, even those interested, as Laird has proven (see her *Self and Sequence* (1988)), in anatomising the complex relationships between poems that share an origin in a single or '"proto-poem"' (Laird, 258). Despite its 'failings,' among them, its simplification of 'the complexity of Lawrence's career', Mandell's study 'settles any doubt about whether Lawrence was the *deliberate craftsman* of his verse' (265, 257, 256, my emphasis). 'He wrote and revised,' Laird continues, 'and again rewrote the poems' (256). But *do* Lawrence's revisions evidence conscientiousness, or have they something else to tell us about Lawrence's manner of working?

John N. Swift (1990) addresses the 'stylistic repetitiveness' of *Women in Love*, or what Lawrence—in his foreword to the novel—termed 'the continual, slightly modified repetition' (Swift, 121; Lawrence cited by Swift, 121). Swift appeals to psychoanalytic theory in seeking

to understand the 'pattern of endless unconsummated repeating' he discerns in Lawrence's novel (Swift, 122). He suggests, for instance, that this 'repetitive habit' might indicate an 'awareness of death', consistent with Freud's inference of a 'death instinct' 'from its manifestations in a compulsion to repeat' (Swift, 123; Cushman and Squires, 7; Swift, 124). As I will later explain, however, Swift's readings are too totalising of the cause of repetition, and Swift too little interested in its effects, its *productivity*, to cast much light on the 'repetitive energy' that characterises not only the prose, but Lawrence's plays and poems, also (Swift, 125).

It is often assumed of Lawrence's repetitions, his revisions to the poems, for instance, that they advance his texts, his poems, toward a state of completion or perfection. Amit Chaudhuri (2003) upends this assumption in his postcolonial reading of the poetry, which positions Lawrence as an outsider, whose 'difference' accounts for the 'repetitions… of words and images from poem to poem,' and for Lawrence's often 'arbitrary' amendments to the poems (Chaudhuri, 1). In the closing pages of *D. H. Lawrence and 'Difference'* (2003), Chaudhuri gestures at the possibility of a correlation between Lawrence's tendency to revise, and his alterity as an artist from a regional working-class background. My research, which builds on Chaudhuri's vision of the poetry, answers his invitation to examine this correlation more fully.

Sillitoe

As I have indicated, Alan Sillitoe's novels are frequently incorporated into studies of the 'North' and Northernness. Separately, a number of scholars have identified the episodic nature of individual texts. Alan Sinfield (1989) describes *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* as 'draw[ing] together a bundle of stories around a central protagonist, illuminating the sex,

violence and humanity of an unregarded (non-metropolitan) lower-class, youthful, urban scene' (Sinfield, xxiii). David Gerard (1988) recognises as significant the episodic nature of 'the long novels which depend for their coherence on serial adventures strung like beads along a cord' (Gerard, xiv). In 'The Roots of Sillitoe's Fiction' (1984), David Craig, as Gerard paraphrases, 'sees [Sillitoe's] heroes as "pedalling round in circles of rage", clusters of feeling "forever surfacing and going under", and wonders if at bottom the author was raging against some unresolved tension in himself' (Craig cited by Gerard, vxiii). Craig's drawing a connection between the pattern of return he discerns in the novels and Sillitoe's psyche or subconscious took its impetus, perhaps, from Sillitoe's own pronouncements about his writing life. Of his prolific literary output, Sillitoe remarked: 'The spirit I was born with … has made it necessary for me to keep on trying to repopulate my vacuous entity' (Sillitoe cited by Gerard, xvi). In conversation with Richard Bradford (2010), Sillitoe once more characterised his relationship to writing as compulsive, but imputed this compulsion to *all* writers: 'Writing novel after novel is little more than a serial attempt to bring to life a character he will recognise immediately as himself' (Sillitoe cited in Bradford, 271). The episodicism or serialness of the discrete novels, the circularity of feeling that Craig thinks typical of Sillitoe's principal characters, and Sillitoe's productivity have yet to be corralled together and examined in a single study. It has yet to be suggested that they are mutually informing, mutually implicated. It has not yet been asked whether they might share an origin in *either* the general enterprise, or agenda, of Sillitoe's novel-writing, *or* Sillitoe's working-class background, or both. The form of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* ('a bundle of stories') and the organisation of the long novels have not been considered alongside Sillitoe's production of a number of novel series. It has not yet been suggested that these serial forms and features are commensurate with the major themes and subjects of his writing, namely

the 'unregarded' East Midlands, and the contemporary working-class experience. Gerard describes *Key to the Door*, Sillitoe's second novel, into which were integrated 'disparate pieces of writing the author had produced since the time of his earliest attempts', as a '*large* attempt to project layers of experience coming from the base of the social pyramid', so that there might emerge 'a substantial testament' (Gerard, xvi, my emphasis). It has not been suggested that *Key to the Door* and its sister novels (*The Open Door, Birthday*) partake of a still *larger* attempt to represent—by *repeated* efforts—the experience of immersion in an underrepresented part of the country, *from* the underrepresented perspective of the working-class individual.

Meadows

In his essay 'Structure and Agency: Shane Meadows and the New Regional Production Sectors' (2013), Jack Newsinger details the very particular circumstances that enabled the young, working-class Meadows to test his interest in filmmaking. Newsinger's approach recognises as fundamental to Meadows's career progression both the filmmaker's 'personal agency' ('his determination, his creativity, his proficiency') and 'the opportunities and resources available to [him]' at the time of his starting out (Newsinger, 21). Newsinger traces these opportunities and resources to 'policy initiatives designed to encourage a regionalisation of film and media production' (22). These policy initiatives and their take-up transformed the regional film infrastructure such that the English regions could be considered 'significant components of the commercial film industry in Britain for the first time since c. 1914' (22). Prior to the 1980s, the English regions had served as 'location[s] for British films, particularly within the social realist tradition,' but had not themselves functioned as sites of film production; as Newsinger writes, since the start of WWII, 'the

commercial film industry in Britain has been concentrated in London and the wider South-East, in terms of studio space and post-production facilities, production finance and company offices' (22). This status quo changed substantively in the late 1980s, but, as Newsinger explains, the growth of regional filmmaking originates with the earlier 'regional film society movement of the 1960s, the regional Film Theatre Movement of the 1970s and, most significantly, the film workshop movement of the 1970s and 1980s' (23).

Newsinger explains how, during the 1980s, infrastructure and support for local filmmaking were bolstered by 'Regional Film Commissions' and other local bodies, attracting funding and helping to 'wrest film and television productions away from London and the South-East' (23). Around 1989, the local authority in Nottingham 'began [its] strategy to develop the city as a media centre', and numerous other cities followed suit (23). These second and third tiers of the industry, as Marris termed them, proliferated 'expertise and infrastructure in the regions,' such that, 'by the middle of the 1990s', as Newsinger reports, 'regional cultural industries were being hyped as key drivers of employment' (24). Newsinger names these regional operations the 'old regional production sectors' (22). These 'old' sectors were replaced under Tony Blair's prime-ministership with the 'new regional production sectors' (24). The 'new' sectors were intended to rectify the perceived 'disorganisation and fragmentation' of the system they displaced, and their creation coincided with Meadows's emergence into the mainstream film industry (24). Fashioned from an 'amalgamation of the agencies that characterised regional film sectors previously', nine new Regional Screen Agencies (RSAs) were created across England, which 'consolidated and expanded regional film activity' by evolving 'short film schemes, funded under a training and development remit', and by 'invest[ing] in low-budget feature film production' (24-25). The aim of these 'new' initiatives was twofold. The strategy, as recorded by John Holden

(2006), was to cultivate 'a sustainable UK film industry by developing the pool of creative skills and talent; […] and developing an industrial infrastructure' (Holden cited by Newsinger, 25). Equally, it was hoped that, by 'identify[ing] and empower[ing] under-represented and marginalised voices,' regional film funding would 'ensure diversity of access and participation' (Holden cited by Newsinger, 25). It would 'encourage the growth of a sense of community and identity,' and, in the fullness of time, 'help capture the many facets of British communities' (Holden cited by Newsinger, 25).

As Newsinger identifies, Meadows was precisely the type of filmmaker the 'emerging' system was designed to embolden (25). Unemployed, from a low-income background, and living in a region remote from the nerve centre of the industry, Meadows was numbered among those 'under-represented and marginalised' persons that the 'new' regional film funding sought to support and legitimate. As Newsinger notes, however, Meadows's career not only 'reflects' but 'pre-empts many of the features of the emerging regional sectors' (25). That is, Meadows was making short films as early as 1994, three years before Labour's election victory, and six years before the publication of the report by the UK Film Council in which the formation of the nine Regional Screen Agencies was mooted. The early years of Meadows's career—the mid-1990s, during which time (1994–1997) Meadows shot 'some twenty-five short films,' and the late 1990s, when his award-winning short *Where's the Money, Ronnie?* and sixty-minute film *Small Time* 'were commercially released on video by Polygram'—spanned the tenures of the 'old' and the 'new' regional production sectors (26, 32). Rather than profiting directly from one or other of these distinct sets of initiatives, Meadows was aided in his ambitions to become a professional filmmaker by a period of productive upheaval in the industry. He came up 'at a transitional time', writes Newsinger, 'a time of competing models for regional filmmaking' (26, 30).

Newsinger's chapter establishes the following: commercial filmmaking in the British regions was non-existent until the 1980s; Meadows's emergence coincided with an unprecedented growth in regional film activity during the 1990s; the RSAs set up under New Labour presented regional filmmakers with considerable opportunity, instituting short film schemes and subsidising low-budget features. Although the structures Newsinger delineates were influential, they were not, as Newsinger grants, wholly responsible for Meadows's successes. Furthermore, there is the possibility that the framing of Meadows as the—albeit indirect—beneficiary of the 'subsidisation of regional film sectors' distracts from the extra-institutional context of his emergence and early progression as a filmmaker (31).

Indeed, the formative years of Meadows's career were characterised by experiences at the peripheries of institutions, and by relationships with individuals willing to exceed their field of responsibility to offer support. Graham Forde, Technical Facilities Manager at Nottingham film cooperative Intermedia Film and Video during the 1990s, was one such individual. Though Meadows never enrolled on one of the organisation's official courses, through Forde he was able to access equipment, editing suites and advice. Meadows has repeatedly credited Forde—in interviews, acceptance speeches and, most recently, in conversation with Nottingham actor Andrew Shim—with occupying a centrally influential position within the trajectory of his career (Meadows, 2020b, 00:00:05 – 00:03:40). Likewise, Meadows's friends, family and neighbours who helped crew or, otherwise, performed in his early films for free, played a pivotal role in Meadows's breakthrough into the mainstream industry, and, taken together, amounted to a community. This extra-institutional community is equal in significance to the recognised industrial and institutional contexts, not only in shaping the direction of Meadows's career, but his practice and filmmaking values. This formative community, rooted in Nottingham, has, however, yet to have been considered in

any critical context, though, in its marginality, it parallels the types of community Meadows represents in his works: alternative, subcultural, anti-establishment, regional.

This thesis will argue for the consistency of the centrality of community to Meadows's works. Chapter Three, which examines Meadows's work in television, with emphasis on the *This is England* series, explores the measures Meadows implements to ensure an authenticity of interaction between actors, and that this realism of relationships, of social exchange, is conveyed to the screen. This thesis proposes, moreover, that the serial form authenticates Meadows's representations of regional community, because community, like serialisation, is predicated on repetition and continuation.

CHAPTER ONE: D. H. LAWRENCE

THE MINING PLAYS

> If our betters shame us out of our phrases and pronunciation, we shall be without resource. From a shared history, dialect is the enabling power of the commoner.
>
> Tom Hadaway, 2005

> No endeavour is in vain. Its reward is in the doing.
>
> D. H. Lawrence, 1905[10]

This chapter examines the mining plays of D. H. Lawrence. These three dramas—*A Collier's Friday Night* (written 1909), *The Daughter-in-Law* (written 1913), and *The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd* (written 1910)—were not conceived as a series.[11] The eight volumes of *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence* contain several references to what Raymond Williams calls '[t]he plays of the first period' (Williams, 1969, 8). Nowhere in his correspondence does Lawrence suggest that the dramas, written over the course of four years, might be staged in series, nor does he discuss the plays as complementary works. Nevertheless, in 1968, Peter Gill—then Assistant

[10]Text of sketch by D. H. Lawrence, 'Landscape with deer, trees, painted on leaf detached from Smith's autography album', D. H. Lawrence Art Collection, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas, Austin.

[11]The dates given in parentheses are the dates of composition. The first version of *The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd* was written by November 1910. The latest date by which Lawrence is known to have been working on *The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd* is October 1913. The play was published in 1914.

Director at the Royal Court Theatre—staged 'a season of plays' by D. H. Lawrence. They were: *A Collier's Friday Night*, *The Daughter-in-Law*, and *The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd*, performed within a two-month period, one play after the other. Their performance as a set was preceded by two separate productions of two of the mining plays two years apart, also at the Royal Court Theatre. Gill, formerly an actor, made his debut as a director with his 1965 production of *A Collier's Friday Night*. That *The Daughter-in-Law* was published for the first time in 1965 (*The Complete Plays of D. H. Lawrence*, Heinemann) likely occasioned its first ever staging in 1967. Gill directed *The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd* for the first time when he grouped the plays together in 1968. This 'triptych', as it was styled by *Observer* reviewer Ronald Bryden (1968), not only introduced the general public to the naturalist dramas of D. H. Lawrence, then better known as a novelist and writer of short stories, but ushered in the assumption that Lawrence conceived of the plays as a series (Bryden, cited in *The Guardian*, 2016). Reflecting on the career of Peter Gill in 2019, theatre critic Michael Billington wrote that, following his 'outstanding' production of *A Collier's Friday Night*, Gill 'went on… to revive the *complete* Lawrence trilogy of mining plays' (Billington, *The Guardian*, my emphasis). The National Theatre refreshed this impression for a new generation of theatregoers with their production of *Husbands and Sons* (2015), which compacted and combined the action and characters of the mining plays into *one* play. A Royal Exchange and National Theatre co-production, *Husbands and Sons* premiered at the Dorfman Theatre under the direction of Marianne Elliott (October 2015–February 2016), before transferring to the Royal Exchange in Manchester (February–March 2016).

Lawrence composed one series in his lifetime. It consisted of his novel *The Rainbow* (1915), and its sequel *Women in Love* (1920).[12] Rather than the actual, deliberate seriality of this two-book sequence, it is the *apparent* seriality of the mining plays, the quality or aura of interrelation to which stage producers and theatre directors have responded these past sixty years, that is the object of this study. It is my intention with this chapter to draw out this quality of reciprocity or interdiscursiveness and, furthermore, to argue that it is typical of Lawrence's works in general. In the process, I will interrogate the widespread perception of Lawrence as an author who repeats, and repeats abstractedly, and whose repetitions compromise his reputation or cast a shadow over his aptitude as a writer. I will survey the tradition of genetic criticism that has informed Lawrence scholarship, and which, in its attempts to trace from origin to end the development of Lawrence's major and supposedly most successful works, has created nexuses of texts, connected by similarities of character and plot. I will evidence a tendency to rate from best to worst those works within these groupings, a tendency precipitated by the wider drive to tease apart these enmeshed texts, in order to decide a trajectory of the work from *urtext* to maturity. I will argue that by giving prominence to chronology, and by schematising textual variants, these critics have misrepresented, falsely regimented, the creative motions of Lawrence's mind. I will show how genetic critics minimise Lawrence's agency in the distribution of ideas across texts that

[12]One might also include in this series the spinoff drama *Touch and Go* (1920). *Touch and Go* and *Women in Love* have characters in common, but those characters go by different names: 'Gudrun' (*Women in Love*) becomes 'Annabel' (*Touch and Go*), and 'Gerald Crich' becomes 'Gerald Barlow'. As Mark Kinkead-Weekes writes, 'the play differs from *Women in Love* in that it is not concerned with individual character. Instead (pre-Brecht) the protagonists perform representative attitudes, to bring out their full implications' (476). In the play, '[a] kind of analytical X-ray strips away the novel's character complexity in order to clarify where technological power allied to English class–contempt will go' (476). For a fuller analysis, see Mark Kinkead-Weekes's *D. H. Lawrence: Triumph to Exile 1912–1922* (475-478).

are not *formally* linked. I will argue that their work has contributed to obscuring the common root of the various forms of repetition within Lawrence's oeuvre.

In what follows, I will reframe the repetitiveness discerned in Lawrence's works as the corollary of a deliberate remodelling of authorship on Lawrence's part. I will argue that this reconfiguration of authorship has its origins in Lawrence's working-class upbringing. I will show that, while Lawrence's relationship to his working-class background was fraught, and his compassion for the working classes erratic, his interest in representing in his fiction the working-class populace of the industrial East Midlands endured. This fidelity, and Lawrence's formative development as an artist within the working-class community of Eastwood in Nottinghamshire, have seldom been considered by scholars as informing Lawrence's *manner* of writing, his artistic disposition, his conception of authorship. My thesis seeks to remedy this; it is my belief that Lawrence's tendency to repeat—his decision to allow specifics of story and character to flow between and across works—is revealing of a working-class writing temperament, one that is shared by Alan Sillitoe, and finds its companion in the filmmaking temperament of Shane Meadows.

I will draw on two studies of Lawrence's poetry, published in the last twenty years, that support and inform my argument for the transvaluation of repetition within Lawrence's body of work. In *The Palimpsest* (2007), Sarah Dillon construes the repetitiveness of Lawrence's poetry as active, rather than passive, proposing that when Lawrence re-versioned a poem he meant *not* for the newer version to stand alone, but to converse with the earlier version. This interaction between two or more poems Dillon thinks crucial to their appreciation. In other words, the reader reaches at the fullest understanding of the meaning of these coupled or confluent poems when reading them *together*, as dialogic. Dillon's theorisation heads off the temptation to set a value on each of the variants of a poem.

I will carry over Dillon's notion of palimpsestuousness, the relationship of exchange between poems, into my reading of Amit Chaudhuri's *D. H. Lawrence and 'Difference'* (2003). Chaudhuri's study concerns the 'repetitiveness of imagery and motif' in Lawrence's poems, offering an alternative to the 'New Critical way of reading recurring images' (Chaudhuri, 85). Like Dillon, Chaudhuri proposes that there is an exchange of meaning between Lawrence's poems so that meaning is circulated among them. Whereas Dillon applies her theory of palimpsestuousness to small groupings of poems, Chaudhuri extends this notion of reciprocity to the entirety of Lawrence's poetic output. He suggests that there exists a productive back-and-forth between the individual poem and the larger poetic discourse, and, more importantly, that Lawrence put into effect this give-and-take dynamic. It is Chaudhuri's claim that Lawrence took pains to signal the unfinishedness—or perpetual possibility—of individual poems by revisiting poems after publication, and instituting revisions that were in some cases scarcely measurable. In Chaudhuri's estimation, this revisional activity amounts to a conscious effort on Lawrence's part to rebut the boundedness of texts, to upend the equating of publication with perfection, and to refute the infallibility of the author. Chaudhuri's transactional model of the poetry, like Dillon's palimpsestuousness, not only defeats the impetus to arrange versions or comparable works by order of their success, but, by restoring Lawrence's agency in the matter of repetition, makes Lawrence himself the arbiter of the virtue of his work. Chaudhuri empowers Lawrence to name his own work imperfect, not only by the standards of a dominant cultural value system that celebrates ingenuity or newness in literature, but *as a condition* of the essential infirmity of the human mind behind any and all writing. In Chaudhuri's understanding, Lawrence accepted, even proclaimed, the wholesale imperfection or *failure* of his writing, and of the practice of writing in general.

I will adduce these two studies, both devoted to the poetry, in my effort to rescue Lawrence's works from charges of repetitiveness, and Lawrence from accusations of reusing: to legitimate the quality of repetition and reframe it as interdiscursiveness and flow. In so doing, I will reintegrate the art with the *act* of writing, as Lawrence himself experienced it. I will argue that Lawrence's conception of the printed work as *not* indefectible, *not* definitive, has its basis in Lawrence's peculiar experience of composition, the demands it made upon him, and the affective tensions that marked his self-identification as an author. This conception is reflected in the visible effortfulness of his writing practice – in, for instance, his subversive, almost iconoclastic, revisions to poems post-publication. It is discernible in the processual character of his writing, and in the restless image of the author that emerges from his works and writing movements.

Written between 1909 and 1913, Lawrence's mining plays dramatised the domestic lives of working-class families of the industrial Midlands. These plays will form the centrepiece of this chapter, because, more completely than any other work or collection of works in Lawrence's oeuvre, they synthesise the interests of my thesis: the representation of working-class lives; the flow of idea across works; and Lawrence's formative development as an artist. I will join John Worthen in characterising the mining plays as Lawrence's first authentic representation of the working classes. I will echo Worthen's verdict that the plays' authenticity proceeded from Lawrence's first-time experimentation with dramatic form; that writing for the stage enabled him to communicate the subjectivities of his working-class characters without mediation. I will argue that Lawrence drew two lessons from this early experience of writing for the theatre. I will suggest, to begin with, that the imperatives of playwriting—specifically, the distillation of drama from speech—rendered clearer to Lawrence the complex operations of his native dialect. I will argue that his writing of

vernacular dialogue powerfully impressed upon Lawrence the richly aphoristic character of the regional speech of Eastwood. I will argue that his characters' use of aphorism—the local proverbs contrived or appropriated by the Eastwood community for the decipherment of its socially specific cares and experiences—equipped Lawrence with a positive model of repetition. This variety of repetition that was expressive of community, expressive of collective identity, both tutored Lawrence in the accommodation of repetition within his work, and pointed the way to a non-autocratic style of authorship.

I will suggest, lastly, that the formative experience of writing the mining plays strengthened Lawrence's identification with the working-class world they depicted. This was a partial identification, in adulthood as in adolescence; nonetheless, he wished to maintain it, and pay it tribute in his writing. I will argue that the plays' creation, and the sympathies they kindled in Lawrence, underpinned his longstanding dismissal of the dominant ideal of the integral text, and the consummate writer—or Writer—behind it. The widely accepted conception of text and author as *beaux idéals*, immaculate and irreproachable respectively, was antipathetic to the representation of working-class experience, and exclusionary of a working-class readership. Lawrence knew that to espouse this conception was to estrange himself from family, and the community ties of his youth. To these he was indebted for his personal development and foundational relationships.

Repetition

A critical landscape

In his chapter of the edited volume *The Challenge of D. H. Lawrence* (1990), John N. Swift grapples with the 'charge of stylistic repetitiveness' that was levelled at Lawrence in his lifetime, and of which Lawrence was aware (121). Lawrence addressed this readers' grievance in his 1919 foreword to *Women in Love*. 'In point of style,' he wrote, 'fault is often found with the continual, slightly modified repetition. The only answer is that it is natural to the author: and that every natural crisis in emotion or passion or understanding comes from this pulsing, frictional to-and-fro, which works up to a culmination' (Lawrence, cited by Swift, 121). Rather than examine Lawrence's language, his lexical choices ('natural'), or probe his association of 'emotion' and 'passion' with 'understanding', Swift impugns Lawrence's self-evaluation; in Swift's view, the 'instances of verbal repetition [that are] everywhere in Lawrence's work' seldom reach a state of resolution (121). Drawing on Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, Swift cycles through potential explanations for 'this pattern of endless unconsummated repeating' (122). He engages with the possibility that 'Lawrence's repetitive habit', the 'slow ticking over, submergence and reemergence [sic], of a few words and phrases' in his prose, might be the 'manifestation of continuing pressure from untranslated, inarticulate desire' (123, 122, 123). Swift rejects this reading on the basis that 'Lawrence's repetitions are so varied in content that if we were… to read repeated gestures as the disguised returns of repressed desires, we would be forced to the troubling position that virtually every experience of object-relation was for Lawrence a potential trauma' (123). He conjectures, instead, that 'the pervasive repetitions of Lawrence's style function finally to

sever words from their reference,' so that 'what's being worked over is not a single traumatic event,' consistent with Freud's principle of the psychogenic symptom, 'but the production of language in general' (123). In accordance with Freud's contention that 'compulsion to repeat' in a patient betrays a 'primary death instinct', Swift construes Lawrence's 'unconsummated repeating' as a response to 'the immanence of the ego's dissolution' (124, 122, 124). Swift writes: 'the psyche frantically repeats—as a denial of death—its one genuinely masterful activity, its capacity for producing representations of language' (124). In a third reading, Swift inverts Freud's paradigm to conclude that Lawrence *calls forth* death by his repetitions: 'death, as a conceptual and textual presence, emerges *from* the contemplation of repetition' (126, my emphasis).

To characterise Lawrence's stylistic repetition as expressive of an obsession with death is to confuse Lawrence with the character of Gerald Crich in *Women in Love*, whose 'death wish', as Paul Delany writes in the same collection of essays, is an 'essential flaw,' for which an 'interest in machinery is shown as a compensation' (Delany, 85). The extent of Lawrence's identification with Crich is implied in Delany's description of the character as one of Lawrence's 'demonic magnates,' alongside Gerard Barlow (*Touch and Go*) and Clifford Chatterley (*Lady Chatterley's Lover*), 'examples of "the human soul worshipping at the mystery of Matter"' (85). More than this, the 'inutility' that is imparted to Lawrence's artmaking when his repetitiveness is regarded as the manifestation of a 'death instinct' seems to me irreconcilable with the image of Lawrence that emerges from any reading of the *Letters* (Swift, 122, 124). There is no indication, anywhere, that Lawrence conceived of art production as inherently ineffectual, meaningless, or defeated. Swift is untroubled by this tension: against Lawrence's losses, hardships and the toll of his tuberculosis, 'the work,' Swift proposes, 'busies itself with a futile healing energy' (125). Certainly, Lawrence wrote often of

death, especially toward the end of his life; to take only the poetry, 'The Ship of Death', 'Difficult Death', 'All Souls' Day', 'Sleep', 'Fatigue', 'Change', and 'Phoenix' are meditations on death and nothingness, and mutually revealing (603–614, *The Complete Poems*). But the idea that this should apply to the whole of Lawrence's output, and not only to self-contained poems, and inventions in the novels, is untenable. It would be hard to argue, for instance, that the 'repetitive energy' of the rapturous *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* (1923), and, equally, of the exultant *Look! We Have Come Through!* (1917) is *at source* despondent, and that Lawrence, in the writing of these poems, was knowingly engaged in a senseless enterprise (Swift, 125). More credible, indeed, is the opposite proposition: that 'the pervasive repetitions of Lawrence's style', along with his productivity, are the issue of an exultation of spirit, a *life* instinct, rather than of nihilism.

There exist a number of studies within Lawrence criticism that itemise recurrences of character and scenario within the prose fiction and the plays. Martin F. Kearney's *Major Short Stories of D.H. Lawrence: A Handbook* is one such study, and serves as a companion to the short fiction. The book maps six stories onto the larger body of Lawrence's work. They are: 'Odour of Chrysanthemums', 'The Shadow in the Rose Garden', 'Daughters of the Vicar', 'The Prussian Officer', 'The Horse-Dealer's Daughter', and 'The Rocking-Horse Winner'. Kearney uncovers the similarities between these six stories and certain other works in Lawrence's corpus, drawing on the discoveries of other scholars in the process: he references Janice Harris's assessment that 'Daughters of the Vicar' and 'Love Among the Haystacks' 'follow identical patterns' and Michael Black's discernment of a connection between 'Daughters of the Vicar' and 'Odour of Chrysanthemums' (Kearney, 74). Studies like these are valuable: they prove that Lawrence was an author who returned to subject matter, and to ways of presenting that subject matter (they 'follow identical patterns'). But such studies have their

limitations. Chief among them is a lack of interest in Lawrence's agency or his relationship to the textual repetitions scholars like Kearney identify. Kearney's study does not undertake to investigate why these links between Lawrence's works exist and are discoverable in the first place. Kearney seeks only to establish the similarities between works, and, in doing so, underscores the order in which these works were composed. (When establishing the connections between works, it serves to keep those works apart.) This constitutes another, albeit related, limitation of studies like Kearney's: they protect the separateness of Lawrence's individual texts, because they depend for clarity upon the chronological organisation of Lawrence's works. By their insistence upon a fixed and material sequence of works, such studies make little or no concession for the unfixed, shifting, and organic processes—or labours—of Lawrence's mind.

It would be wrong to claim that Kearney completely divorces the texts he treats from Lawrence's mental exertions. Kearney suggests that the national coal strike of 1912 revived Lawrence's 'interest in industrial themes', and that this revival of interest may account for three of the so-called "collier group" stories (11). He does not, however, inspect the pattern of repeating his book makes unambiguous, and that enables him and likeminded critics to speak of the "collier group" of stories and of "the mining plays". Kearney attends to six stories in his broadly historicist study *because* of 'the accurate cross section they present of Lawrence's entire career' (xi). But he does not ask *how* it is possible that a mere six stories present a cross section of a large and ranging body of work; how it is that they tell *so* much *so* accurately of the 'entire career'. The following passage from *Major Short Stories* demonstrates the way in which Lawrence's involvement in—or responsibility for—the connectedness of his works is of secondary concern to Kearney:

> In regard solely to subject matter, no other work of Lawrence's came as close to "Odour of Chrysanthemums" as the drama *The Widowing of Mrs. Holroyd*, first written in 1910 and revised in 1913. An early critic suggested that this tale furnished the story line for the final act of the play (Fuller 1917, 238.) A much later scholar also believed that material from the short story had found its way into the drama (Widmer 1962, 225), but it was 1965 before [George] Ford published a direct comparison of the two works [*Double Measure: A Study of the Novels and Stories of D. H. Lawrence*]. Both the tale and the play focused on domestic disharmony and a woman's inability to love her loutish miner husband. But Elizabeth Bates's major moment of recognition—her discovery of the distance that had separated them in marriage—was not shared by Mrs. Holroyd. Differences in both authorial intent and medium may explain this departure.
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> (Kearney, 12)

The last sentence of this passage reads like a postscript. What is important to Kearney is equivalence and 'departure', not how equivalence and departure came about. In his use of the passive voice to describe the recurrence of subject matter—'material from the short story *had found its way* into the drama' (my emphasis)—Kearney betrays his feeling that, in some cases of parallelism, there was no 'authorial intent' or design; it only *happened*. Implicit in this feeling is a judgement: a ruling on Lawrence's ability to control the distribution of his ideas, or on the scope—or limits, as Kearney implies—of Lawrence's ingenuity. This judgement has its origins in a literary value system that favours originality over all other markers of quality. This system promotes the notion that a good writer, a successful writer, is a writer of variety, and one that does not too often return to ideas that he or she has previously conveyed to the page. The work of a writer may have its hallmarks, a writer his or her home ground, but if consistency should tip into repetition, sameness, the writer's reputation, and the merit of the work, is certain to diminish. The passage beneath illustrates Kearney's assimilation of the prevailing value system, his disdain for secondhandedness, and his suspicion of Lawrence as a self-plagiarist:

> Thomas McCabe (1972) became the first critic to note Lawrence's use of phrase repetition in "Chrysanthemums" and in "Thorn in the Flesh" to establish a rhythmic unity (65). Similarly, [Keith] Cushman (1978a) found repetition in Lawrence's mature work along with those facets of accretion and intensity of passion found in the conclusion of the final version of

> "Chrysanthemums." Cushman, too, mentioned the parallels between this short story and the scene in *The Rainbow* where Lydia and Anna Brangwen tend the corpse of the drowned husband and father, Tom, a scene written only weeks after the final draft of the short story. Less developed, this scene lacked the dramatic tension in "Odour of Chrysanthemums," suggesting that Lawrence merely reused his earlier insights.
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> (Kearney, 13)

As this passage makes clear, there exists a double standard in the treatment of repetition. Kearney does not question the functionality—nor, for that matter, the artistic merit—of the 'phrase repetition' in 'Odour of Chrysanthemums' and 'Thorn in the Flesh'. But he is mistrustful of the recurrence of scenario. Lawrence's phrase repetition, his incantatory prose, is considered by Kearney, McCabe and Cushman to be as effective as it is deliberate: it brings about 'a rhythmic unity', and its 'use' is yoked to the 'intensity of passion' Lawrence achieves in the final moments of 'Chrysanthemums'. Lawrence's accretive writing style serves the narrative crescendo of 'Chrysanthemums', but his "reuse" of the laying out scene impoverishes, or does a disservice to, *The Rainbow*. As Kearney thinks, the difference between use and "reuse" is immense – it is the difference between intent and inattention, art and artlessness. But Kearney's dichotomy obscures the formless, abstract origins of all of Lawrence's writings; the common root of his 'use of phrase repetition' and 'reusing' of scenario: thought.

It is not unrelated to Kearney's sorting works by order of novelty—which is to say, in his estimation, achievement—that he glosses over the object, the common project, of Lawrence's writing 'Odour of Chrysanthemums' and *The Rainbow*. Lawrence sought with both these works to represent the realities of life in a rural or semi-rural community in the English East Midlands. The laying out of the dead by female relatives of the deceased was conventional, not exceptional, in the working-class worlds Lawrence drew upon for inspiration; it was a duty undertaken by the real women whose lives Lawrence dramatised in

the varying forms of short story, novel, and play. Lawrence likely incorporated this scenario into his depictions of the regional working classes (it features, also, in *The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd*), *because* it is inherently dramatic: it stages a confrontation between the living and the dead, and occasions reflection in the bereaved. The ordinariness and the ritualism of the practice of preparing the dead for burial are part of what makes the practice dramatic. But so, also, is the uniqueness of every laying out; the singleness of the interplay between this ritual activity and the individuality and agency of the person or persons who perform(s) it. In fiction, no less than in life, the scenario is endlessly variable, owing to its refraction through a prism of narrative particulars: cause of death (drowning; mining disaster); the nature of the relationship between the deceased and the character(s) who wash(es) and dress(es) the body; and the personal histories of those present at the scene.[13] More interesting, then, than the scene's reappearance is Lawrence's extracting from it its manifold potential; his drawing out the multitudes within this archetypal practice, a cultural or patterned behaviour, across a number of texts. I will look closely, later in this chapter, at the essentially repetitive way of life of the regional working classes, a factor Kearney minimises in his search for textual correspondences.

I want now, however, to expand on the insistent separation of text from text that vexes Lawrence criticism. I want also to return to the provisional nature of thought, and the

[13]James Moran (2015) suggests that the laying out scenes of 'Odour of Chrysanthemums' and *The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd* were directly influenced by and reproductions of the laying out scene central to John Millington Synge's play *Riders to the Sea* (1905), which concerns the fishing community of the Aran Islands off the west coast of Ireland. Moran writes: 'When Lawrence read Synge's script he realized that he could create an Eastwood version. As with Synge's play, he would position a group of men and women in a location where daily life might involve an elemental and potentially fatal battle with nature. Thus, whereas the men of *Riders to the Sea* repeatedly return to the ocean, even after disaster, the men of Lawrence's *The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd* return to the mines, and in each case the dramatic action revolves around the womenfolk of these communities who are left to survive and to mourn. Both dramas are set by the fireplace of an early twentieth-century cottage kitchen, and so focus insistently upon female space and female concerns' (41).

minimal attention it receives within studies of Lawrence's work. Both of these issues necessitate examination of the trend of genetic criticism within Lawrence studies.

Genetic criticism

Developed in the early 1970s, genetic criticism interests itself in the provenance of printed works: the process by which a literary work comes into being. The objective of the genetic critic is, generally speaking, to chart the journey of a text from its inception to its end. Thus, much of the work of genetic criticism involves the discovery and organisation of materials significant to a literary work—such as manuscript drafts, proof corrections, and editorial correspondence. According to Daniel Ferrer and Michael Groden, co-editors of *Genetic Criticism: Texts and Avant-textes* (2004), genetic critics are concerned with 'how texts are produced', their aim being to 'reconstruct, from all available evidence, the chain of events in a writing process' (Deppman, Ferrer and Groden, 2). They attend to what Jean Bellemin-Noël termed the "avant-texte" or pre-text—that is, the combined traces of the published work, or, in the words of Bellemin-Noël, 'all of the material which precedes a work and which can form a single textual system with that work' (Jean Bellemin-Noël, cited by Oliver Davis, 92). In accounts of this field of research, such material has been referred to as 'preparatory documents' (Oliver Davis, 2002); 'textual nebula' (Laurent Jenny, 1996); 'the immanent structures of the text' (Laurent Jenny, 1996); the 'seminal state' of great works, 'pregnant with latent possibilities' (Samuel Johnson, 1799); the work's 'becoming' (Friedrich Schlegel, 1804); and the 'fertilised embryo' of a poem and 'its successive states' (Paul Valéry, 1957-61).[14] Most of these terms are temporally inflected ('preparatory', 'becoming', 'successive'),

[14]All, cited by Ferrer and Groden, (2–6).

locking the pre-textual material into a linear pattern of progression that results, ultimately, in a printed text. Some of them harness biological imagery having to do with gestation and birth ('seminal', 'pregnant', 'embryo'), again locking the pre-textual material into a climactic pattern of progression, the outcome of which is predetermined, entirely predictable. The majority of these expressions attest to and, to some extent, are responsible for the conceptualisation of the printed text—within much, but not all, genetic criticism—as an end state. This end state, a state of completion and of closure, is reached by 'successive' efforts: the drafts and extra-textual materials that 'precede' the printed work. The relationship between the pre-text and the published text, as formulated by the language sampled above, is a one-way exchange. The constituents of the pre-text—the manuscript drafts, the emendations to typescripts—are germinal, nascent, immature, undeveloped. They cannot of themselves fulfil their potential, resolve their 'latent possibilities', because fulfilment of potential is consequent upon publication. The achievement of a piece of pre-textual material is located outside of itself, because achievement is measured by publication, and pre-textual material is, by definition, unpublished.

This notion of the linear development of a work from 'fertilised embryo' to fruition is not endorsed by all genetic critics. On this matter, geneticists are divided among themselves. Indeed, it was prescribed by certain of the movement's authors that the "avant-texte" be read together or in tandem with the published work; that it not be considered purely and statically anterior. Bellemin-Noël urged that we '*read continuously with the text and without any presuppositions, the totality of formulations that, as previous possibilities, have become part of a given work of writing*' (Jean Bellemin-Noël, cited by Lena Christensen, 124). This directive is a refutation of the teleological model of textual development. Bellemin-Noël insists, differently, that the "avant-texte" is 'part' of the fabric of the printed work, never

ceasing to inform it, 'continuously' cooperative, 'continuously' *competitive*. While the components of the "avant-texte" are formally and temporally ('previous') dissociable from the published work, they are not surpassed or overshadowed by the published work. In Bellemin-Noël's formulation, they partake of its achievement.

Yet, it cannot be denied that the term "avant-texte" underwrites the teleological model. The term implies that the mind of the writer passes through, and puts behind him, successive phases of composition to *arrive* at the summative, superior work that is the published text. Paradoxes such as this one are at the heart of genetic criticism, as Ferrer and Groden have written. Among them is the paradox that this kind of research calls for the examination of 'tangible documents […] but its real object is something more abstract—not the existing writing but the *movement* of writing that must be inferred from them' (Deppman, Ferrer and Groden, 2, my emphasis). Another is the seeming contradiction that genetic criticism grew 'out of a structuralist and poststructuralist notion of "text" as infinite play of signs, but it accepts a teleological model of textuality' (2). These conflicts cannot be thought to shake the foundations of genetic criticism if, as Ferrer and Groden maintain, they were 'present at its birth' (2).

Others, however, have found such inconsistencies disconcerting. Laurent Jenny calls attention to what he sees as the movement's limitations. In naming as its foundational texts such 'poststructuralist perspectives' as those of Roland Barthes and Umberto Eco (specifically, the former's concept of "writing" and the latter's notion of the "opening" of a work), genetic criticism has bent out of shape or misapprehended their intended meaning (Jenny, 200). The application of Eco's theory of "opening", for instance, to the mechanisms of genetic criticism is only partially satisfactory; as Jenny notes, 'genetic criticism can keep as its privileged object *either* an open form that is witness to a process of genesis ("writing" or,

better yet, the "pre-text"), *or* the articulation of the relations between this open form and the closed form that is the text', but it cannot do both (Jenny, 203, my emphases). The genetic critic who holds with the first—who privileges the 'open form' in which the pre-text is thought to participate—does not consider that "writing" has any 'teleological relation to the final text', and makes his object 'the very process of creative thought, using the traces of its wandering, its deletions, its resumptions' (203). The genetic critic who, instead, privileges the 'closed form' of the published work 'describes precisely the process of textual production', that is, he 'confronts a process and a product, and sets [his] sights on an interpretation' (203). These two projects of genetic criticism—or the "operations" (Jenny's term)—are opposing, mutually exclusive. Jenny describes a divided poetics, its practitioners subscribing to one or other system, without declaring, or being unaware, that their two camps are at cross-purposes.

In more ways than one, the operations of genetic criticism are ill-matched with Lawrence's work. Ferrer and Groden have described genetic criticism as 'deeply aware of the text's aesthetic dimensions' (2). Indeed, genetic criticism makes a virtue of the uniqueness of the published work. Whether the geneticist conceives of the printed work as closed or open, he or she assumes it possesses a fingerprint-singularity. The published work is one of a kind, regardless of whether the pre-text is thought to terminate in or to partake of the published work; no two finished works are alike. This condition inheres in the name: genetic criticism has as its focus the DNA of a text, its makeup, the combination of pre-textual "genes" that makes a text exclusively itself. Lawrence's occasional re-versioning of works—the total rewriting, twice, of his novel *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, for instance—compromises this notion of the singularity of the text, and begs the question of Lawrence's work: are *all* of his completed texts exclusively themselves? Lawrence's creation of three complete manuscripts

of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* destabilises the very definition of the pre-text. Are the first two versions drafts, or self-sufficient works? Do the first two versions converge on the third, as roads on a destination, or ought we to see the three works of writing as each achieving arrival, the earlier versions not germinal or undeveloped, but fully realised? The complex history of the publication of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, and the eventual printing of all three versions, makes still more difficult the categorisation of the earlier manuscripts, which were given the titles *The First Lady Chatterley* and *John Thomas and Lady Jane: The Second Version of 'Lady Chatterley's Lover'* upon their publication in Britain in 1972. As Laurent Jenny states, 'To present a pretext for reading is obviously to inaugurate it as a text' (Jenny, 204). It is possible, certainly, that these earlier versions fulfil neither the criteria of the pre-text nor the criteria of its opposite. Howsoever geneticists conceive of the relations between these versions, Lawrence's characterisation of the 'three complete' manuscripts as 'pretty different, yet the same' subverts the foundational principle of all schools of genetic criticism, namely the unbridgeable distinction between the pre-text and the printed work (Lawrence, cited by Squires, i).

There are more instances of "inauguration" connected with Lawrence's work. When *Paul Morel*, an early manuscript version of *Sons and Lovers*, was published by Cambridge University Press in 2003, it, too, became a text. Upon its printing, its claim to pretext-ness was 'obviously' annulled. Lawrence's reworking of *Paul Morel*, which was retitled *Sons and Lovers* upon publication, was motivated by the interventions of editors and its publisher. These circumstances, which align with commonplace editorial process, would seem to favour the conception of this earlier manuscript as draft. Yet, it remains that *Paul Morel* and the alternative *Lady Chatterley*s are *whole* works, and substantially different from their earlier-printed counterparts: different enough to be considered worthy of publication; different

enough to interest Lawrence's posthumous readership.[15] As such, they are better understood, not as drafts given the distinction of publication ex post facto, but as legitimate *alternatives* from the point of their completion. We may infer from Lawrence's creation of variants, or versions, a customary writing practice, one that spanned his writing career: he began drafting *Sons and Lovers* in October of 1910, and composed the three versions of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* between October 1926 and January 1928, before reworking and attending to proofs. We may also infer an approach to literary composition that is, if not unique to Lawrence, deviant from the norm, the norm assumed and affirmed by the methods of conventional genetic criticism.

What I will prove in the remainder of this chapter is that Lawrence did not hold with the notion that every next text must be *new*, a departure from the last piece of work, a start in another direction. I will argue that his repetitions—his variants, or multiples—are inextricable from his writing process. His working on multiple projects at once, across multiple forms at once—his working *through* related ideas, themes, characters, conflicts—proceeded, in part, from financial precariousness, and resulted in works that were connected. I will argue that each iteration lent itself to the advancement of an idea, and that this idea was changed with every work in which it found expression. I will claim that Lawrence's aim by this way of writing was to render an idea clearer to himself and, ultimately

[15]The first version of the novel, *The First Lady Chatterley*, was published in the United States in 1944, even before the uncensored third version, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, had found a legal, mainstream readership. In 1972, long after the so-called "Chatterley Trial", the second version, titled *John Thomas and Lady Jane*, was published on both sides of the Atlantic. Lawrence scholar Harry Moore welcomed the publication in the *New York Times* that year, arguing for the separate merits of both 'alternative' versions, and expressing a general preference for *John Thomas and Lady Jane*: 'The original draft, "The First Lady Chatterley," is the most consistently comic of the three; [...] not every reader will favor the second version, though it seems to me that in most ways it presents the story more intensely, in general more satisfactorily, and that the characters in it are at once more believable and more vital' (Moore, 1972).

to *cover* it. I mean this word 'ultimately' not to apply to a single work, not to the last in a *line* of works, but to the collection of works; to the *whole of the effort* of understanding toward which his writings were directed, and to which they attest. I will argue that Lawrence privileged thought and effort over the individual work, an approach to writing that may be traced to his working-class beginnings. In the section that follows, I will adduce two recent studies that restore to Lawrence his agency in the matter of repetition, and frame his work as unsteadying the notion of the ended or bounded text.

Palimpsestuousness

A response to and recasting of the operations of genetic criticism, Sarah Dillon's 2007 study *The Palimpsest* provides an alternative model for understanding the relationship between the published text and the materials connected to it. Unlike genetic criticism, Dillon's model distances the notion of re-working from notions of improving, and challenges genetic criticism's sometime severance of text from "avant-texte". In Dillon's conception, the published text is porous, rather than terminal, and this notion of the text's permeability — enabling a two-way traffic as opposed to a movement *from* or *out of* the drafts *toward* or *into* the "final" text—expresses, far better than conventional genetic criticism, the nature of the association between related texts within Lawrence's body of work.

The palimpsest, in Dillon's usage—a usage instituted by Thomas De Quincy in his 1845 essay 'The palimpsest'—is only 'implicitly related to palimpsests' (Dillon, 1). According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the palimpsest is a 'parchment or other writing surface on which the original text has been effaced or partially erased, and then *overwritten* by another' (*OED*,

my emphasis).[16] The *non*-palaeographic concept of the palimpsest, by contrast, 'exists independently of such phenomena… a strange, new figurative entity, invested with the stature of the substantive' (1). Dillon yokes theorisation of this 'figurative' and 'substantive' palimpsest to 'close readings of literary texts in which [the palimpsest] figures', among them D. H. Lawrence's poem 'Twilight', published in *The Collected Poems* (1928), and the two palimpsestic versions of that poem ('Evening of a Week-day,' a notebook-draft of 1907, and 'Palimpsest of Twilight,' published in *New Poems* (1918)), which prefigure or figure *in* it (2).

The aim of Dillon's study is not to chronologise the palimpsestic texts that make up a palimpsest-text; her aim is to demonstrate how they *interact*, and how this interaction generates meaning. In order to facilitate discussion of this interplay, Dillon adopts the neologism 'palimpsestuous', which, unlike palimpsestic, 'does not name something as, or as making, a palimpsest, but describes the type of *relationality* reified in the palimpsest' (4, my emphasis). If 'palimpsestuous' describes that 'type of relationality', 'palimpsestuousness' is its nounal form, and functions in Dillon's study as a synonym for that same relationality. Modifying the meaning of the palaeographic palimpsest, Dillon defines palimpsestuousness as 'a simultaneous relation of intimacy and separation' (3). Her term both acknowledges the 'distinctness' of related texts, and permits 'their essential contamination and interdependence' (3). Palimpsestuous texts are, thus, 'involved in a movement of reciprocal elucidation' (6).

Dillon's notion of palimpsestuousness approaches Bellemin-Noël's projection for genetic criticism, his recommendation that we 'read continuously with the text and without any presuppositions, the totality of formulations that, as previous possibilities, have become

[16]"palimpsest, n. and adj." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, December 2016. Web. 30 January 2017.

part of a given work of writing', with one significant difference: where the "avant-texte" admits only 'previous possibilities' (Valéry's 'successive states'), the palimpsest may consist of texts formally independent of each other. Dillon refines this condition of palimpsestuousness in her quarrel with Michael Davidson. In the process of close-reading Lawrence's 'Twilight', Dillon both implements and breaks with Davidson's theory of the 'palimtext', a neologism, which expresses 'the intertextual and interdiscursive quality of all textuality' (Dillon, 47). Davidson explains that his 'palimtext' has aspects in common with its namesake palimpsest, justifying his coinage thus: '*as its name implies* the palimtext retains vestiges of prior writings *out of which it emerges*. Or more accurately, it is the still visible record of its *responses* to those earlier writings' (Davidson, cited by Dillon, 47, my emphases). As Dillon points out, however, Davidson has misapprehended the meaning of 'palimpsest'. As the *Oxford English Dictionary* (cited above) confirms, it is not a definitional condition of the palimpsest that there be any relationship whatsoever between the 'original text' and the text that is later written over it. Furthermore, the notion that the topmost text 'emerges' from the 'prior writings'—owes its existence to the text beneath it—downplays the role of the 'writing surface' that the very word palimpsest names. The palimpsest is the 'parchment' that hosts both texts; it is *this* the texts have in common, and no more. Dillon explains: 'since there is no necessary relationship between the texts that co-inhabit the space of a palimpsest – one text is not derived from the other, one does not serve as the origin of the other – the palimpsest does not *properly* figure the relationship between a text and its sources, including its own earlier drafts' (47). Not only, then, does Dillon unsteady the notion of the "avant-texte", making it more inclusive—making eligible for examination textual material not conventionally perceived as vestigial in a published text—she emancipates genetic criticism from the nomination of 'origin', and from the need to recreate a 'chain' of textual events.

In support of her devaluation of origins and succession, Dillon marshals the writing of Michel Foucault, who fine-tuned the procedures of genealogy in his 1971 essay 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History'. She paraphrases:

> In response to the palimpsestuous body of history, genealogy 'must record the singularity of events outside of any monotonous finality… it must be sensitive to their recurrence, not in order to trace the gradual curve of their evolution, but to isolate the different scenes where they engaged in different roles' (pp. 139-40). Genealogy is not a search for 'origins' that attempts 'to capture the exact essence of things, their purest possibilities, and their carefully protected identities' (p. 142). It does not assume 'the existence of immobile forms that precede the external world of accident and succession' (p. 142).
>
> (Dillon, 7)

Like Foucault, Dillon is insistent that genealogy be 'sensitive' to the 'singularity' of events that are revealed *in the fullness of time* to be connected. She would have us be mindful that connected or recurrent events (or works) are first singular before becoming involved; for a time, they 'engaged in different roles' and 'different scenes' in a world 'external' to their subsequent collusion. To press them retrospectively into a 'gradual curve' is to suppress the different roles and scenes they participated in; it is to immobilise them. Even their communal role in the production of some outcome, the tracing of some 'evolution', is overstressed: recurrent events, Dillon cautions, ought not to be depended upon to 'captur[e] the exact essence of things, their purest possibilities'. The 'monotonous finality' of the combinatory power of recurrent events is seductive; this is all the more reason to hold in suspicion the retroactive definition—and, significantly, the *circumscription*—of the single work by its eventual participation in a series or collection.

Dillon's taking exception to succession makes her palimpsestuous model an attractive one in the consideration of Lawrence's work. The model allows for the study of serial novels like *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* alongside his non-serial works, combinations of texts

that *appear* to be serially related, because they have themes, settings, and even characters in common, but that Lawrence did not intend should form a series. Unlike conventional genetic criticism, Dillon's palimpsestuousness is not thrown off by the fact of Lawrence's writing three complete versions of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Rather, it accommodates the possibility that there is not, among these versions, an ultimate or exhaustive version; it allows for the potential that the three cooperate serially, and opens the way for analysis of the effects of this cooperation. We might, then, consider Lawrence's re-writing as palimpsesting, as writing, figuratively-speaking, *on top of* texts, with the effect that the figuratively "overwritten" text(s) show through the figuratively topmost text. (I use this word 'topmost' tentatively, heedful of Dillon's reminder that later-written texts are not 'responses' (Davidson) to the 'partially erased' text(s) with which they share a 'writing surface' (*OED*).) That is to say, taking the three *Lady Chatterley*s as an example, that each new version does not usurp or supplant the earlier version or versions. Rather, each version lends itself to a multicellular whole, a triple-headed *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. With each treatment of his subject, Lawrence compounded it. As a painter builds up colour—no one layer of paint preeminent; each layer complicit in producing the desired depth or density of colour—so Lawrence builds up meaning and enhances understanding by the writing of three versions that are mutually elucidating, reciprocally productive.

Writing as thinking

There is further work to be done to demonstrate how *consciously* reciprocal were these works by Lawrence. It is one thing to assert, as Laurent Jenny does, that the purpose of genetic criticism is to chart 'the very process of creative thought', it is another to suggest that Lawrence *sought* to have his separate works communicate with each other, to overspill their

limits, supposedly fixed by publication, and to participate in a free and intertextual production of meaning. It would require proving that Lawrence felt differently about the frameworks of texts than most other writers; that he rejected in some measure the confinement of a text within and *to* its walled form. If the ideal deployment of genetic criticism charts the process of creative thought, and Dillon's palimpsestuousness fulfils that ideal, is its application to Lawrence's work so completely successful because Lawrence set out to enact the process of creative thought in his writing? Is it possible that Lawrence's work appears so consistently palimpsestuous because he intended that his writing should record the motions of his thinking about a subject that claimed his interest?

Certainly, Dillon's conclusions excite inferences about the manner in which Lawrence thought; the habit of thinking that lay behind the creation of, as Lawrence confided, 'three complete MSS. [of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*]—pretty different, yet the same'. Dillon's appropriation of Thomas De Quincy's term 'involuted', a 'near synonym' of palimpsestuous, is suggestive of a connection between the action of thinking and the palimpsestuousness or repetitiousness of Lawrence's works (Dillon, 4). De Quincy's word 'involuted' succeeds in describing both the work (complex, heterogeneous, enfolding other texts) *and* the peculiarly recursive movement of the mind when working over a thought. Since no aspect of his person or creative process escaped his inspection, it is unsurprising that Lawrence himself should have provided the best evocation of the active mind and of its possession by thought:

> It is a psychological fact that when we are thinking emotionally or passionately, thinking and feeling at the same time, we do not think rationally: and therefore, and therefore, and therefore. Instead, the mind makes curious swoops and circles. It touches the point of pain or interest, then sweeps away again in a cycle, coils round and approaches again the point of pain or interest. There is a curious spiral rhythm, and the mind approaches again and again to the point of concern… as [it] stoops to the quarry, then leaves it without striking, soars, hovers, turns, swoops, stoops again, still does not strike, yet is nearer, nearer, reels away again, wheels off into the air,

> even forgets, quite forgets, yet again turns, bends, circles slowly, swoops and stoops again, until at last there is the closing in and the clutch of a decision or a resolve.
>
> (Lawrence, cited by Gilbert, 137)

If the gyratory motion of Lawrence's mind—its coiling round and 'approach[ing] again and again to the point of concern'—were to be traced upon the ground over which it 'wheels', a whorled pattern would be revealed, similar to the involuted 'surface structure' of De Quincy's palimpsest (Dillon, 4). Likewise, the 'curious spiral rhythm' of the thinking Lawrence describes, here, maps neatly onto Dillon's reading of his poetry. If one accepts that the action of Lawrence's writing involved 'thinking and feeling at the same time,' one might take this passage for a description of the process of literary composition as Lawrence experienced it. The 'spiral rhythm' of the type of thinking required to write a work of literature does *not* result, as does rational thinking, in cleanly demarcated works: 'and therefore, and therefore, and therefore'. Rather, the 'soar[ing], hover[ing], turn[ing], swoop[ing], [and] stoop[ing] again' of the creative mind yields manifold works that share a source in curiosity; in attentiveness to the same 'point of pain or interest'. The creative mind is, by nature, tentative ('slowly', 'leaves… without striking') and prone to failure ('still does not strike'). It 'clutch[es]' its 'quarry'—achieves 'decision'—only through multiple efforts at capture. 'Resolve' is reached by plural exertions, by energies 'different, yet the same'. Writing, then, for Lawrence, is a process of 'nearer, nearer', not of 'therefore, and therefore'.

An alternative authorship

Unfinishedness, revision, and decentred authorship

Amit Chaudhuri looks harder at the temperament of mind that generated Lawrence's interlocking texts. In his 2003 study *D. H. Lawrence and 'Difference'*, Chaudhuri describes Lawrence's poems as 'open-ended' (11). Like Dillon's principle of palimpsestuousness, Chaudhuri's theory of '"unfinishedness"' acknowledges the 'distinctness' of Lawrence's individual poems whilst also asserting, in Dillon's terms, 'their essential contamination and interdependence' (Chaudhuri, 1; Dillon, 3). Chaudhuri traces this quality of open-endedness to Lawrence's revisionary impulse:

> Lawrence was a great reviser; many of his poems exist in more than one version. Some of these early poems were published in his books of verse such as *Love Poems and Others*, and then revised later when they appeared in his *Collected Poems*, which was published in 1928. Yet a later version often shows no significant change from, or improvement upon, an earlier version (the revision being mostly a matter of changed punctuation marks and minor adjectives), so that it remains as open-ended and 'unfinished' as before, indicating that a Lawrence poem is a structure that keeps itself forever open to the possibility of revision
>
> (Chaudhuri, 40)

Chaudhuri attributes the perennial open-endedness of Lawrence's poems to the conditions of their making, and un-making. Not only does he maintain, like Dillon, that the poems are interactive, but that Lawrence *meant* them to function in a state of interaction. Like Dillon, Chaudhuri contends that the poems depend on one another for their meaning, and, differently to Dillon, that the poems depend on the 'general poetic discourse' they altogether formed, 'to whose creation all these poems contribute' (Chaudhuri, 1, 9). According to Chaudhuri, Lawrence intended that the individual poem be read with an awareness of the

whole of his poetry: 'each poem demands to be read, and engaged with, in a "double" way, both as itself and as an instance of that discourse' (12). That is, a poem by Lawrence is not *properly* read if it is not read conjointly with Lawrence's other poems; we are liable to misconstrue or curtail a poem's meaning—we read *poorly*—if we overlook the poem's exchange with the rest of Lawrence's poetic works. It is on account of this relationship between poem and poetry that Chaudhuri censures the rejection—the denial of entry into the Lawrence canon—of certain of Lawrence's poems on grounds of gaucheness or shortcoming. He finds the preferment of one version of a poem over another beside the point: 'The formal flaws and failings [are] […] integral features of a complicated fabric, … indispensable to the total effect the Lawrentian poem has on the reader' (32). It is, he writes,

> both impossible and futile to pinpoint the formal clumsiness of a Lawrence poem as if it somehow existed *by itself*, an unrelated impediment to the work, and nostalgically wish for it not to be there. It is these vivid and exuberant flaws and impediments—for instance, overwriting and repetition—that contribute to a large extent to the rich *textual* presence of the poem, and locate it firmly in the discourse where it belongs, and to which it intertextually refers.
>
> (Chaudhuri, 33)

Chaudhuri's study, thus, presses for a reassessment of the value of Lawrence's poetic corpus. Given their importance to the individual poem, which, like a bee in and out of the hive, carries meaning to and from the 'Lawrentian poetic discourse', it becomes necessary to accept into that discourse 'the "bad writing" and repetitions' with which Lawrence has traditionally been charged (12).

These twin, or linked, insights into Lawrence's poetry, that is, Chaudhuri's identification of the intertextuality of Lawrence's poems, *and* his radical transvaluation of the putatively 'bad' among them, opens the door to a novel understanding of Lawrence's attitudes to poetical composition:

> the very flaws, gaps, and repetitions, the journey of the image or symbol from poem to poem, […] expose the imperfect 'creativity' of the author, reproach the authority of his 'creative' function, and make us name him, from time to time, a 'bad' poet.
>
> (Chaudhuri, 51)

Indeed, not only must one accept, as Chaudhuri urges, that Lawrence was, 'from time to time, a "bad" poet', an 'imperfect' creator, it must also be understood, as Chaudhuri maintains, that Lawrence *wished* for his poems to disclose the limitations of his creative activity. These qualities of the poetry and the poet to which Chaudhuri calls attention—the poems' intertextuality, and Lawrence's revision of poems post-publication such that 'many of his poems exist in more than one version'—share a root in Lawrence's conscious dismantlement of the vaunted 'authority' of the poet, or writer (40). It is easy to perceive how Lawrence's tendency to return to poems and rework them might indicate a refutation of 'the authority of his "creative" function' (51). That the poems' intertextuality should constitute a reproach to traditional notions of authorship, or, more precisely, the conceptualisation of author as a figure of total conviction and self-mastery in the moment of creation, is not as immediately apparent. It is worth delving deeper, then, into Chaudhuri's impression of the poems' intertextuality that we might better apprehend its relation to Lawrence's refashioning of authorship.

It is Chaudhuri's contention that Lawrence did not conceive of meaning as enclosed within a poem's frame; of the poem as harbouring meaning, as hoarding meaning to itself. Instead, Lawrence conceived of his poems as open; of meaning as osmosing between them. His poems converse; as Chaudhuri avers, '[t]he subject of an individual poem may not only be certain themes, symbols, or protagonists—such as death, a flower, or a bat—but, quite often, another poem' (2). The Lawrence poem is, thus, 'a text whose meaning or import lies in its

struggle with another precursor text which it rewrites and revises' (4). Chaudhuri adduces Julia Kristeva's notion of 'intertextuality' to describe the invitation that inheres in each poem to read, or admit into the reading process, its rapport with other poems. As Kristeva writes: 'If one grants that every signifying practice is a field of transpositions of various signifying systems (an intertextuality), one then understands that its 'place' of enunciation and its denoted 'object' are never single, complete and identical to themselves, but always plural, shattered' (Kristeva, cited by Chaudhuri, 3). The 'object' of a poem by Lawrence is, likewise, 'shattered' and 'plural,' dispersed across multiple poems. The poem, thus opened, is impressionable; it is receptive to the notionally extraneous influence of other poems in Lawrence's corpus with which it has in common certain words and images. Drawing on Derrida's notion of the 'trace', Chaudhuri describes the language of *Birds, Beasts and Flowers*, Lawrence's seventh-published collection of poems, as 'a play of traces' (Chaudhuri, 4). Chaudhuri expounds: 'The Derridean notion of the "trace" … suggests that no image, or signifier, is absolutely and singly present, [but] contain[s] within it the "trace" of its use elsewhere, or the "trace" of another signifier' (4). These 'traces' within or native to the image—that invite into the compass of a single poem *other* uses of that same image, other signifiers—perforate the poem's bounds; they 'disrupt the poem-enclosing frame and locate the poem in a discourse or language' (4). According to Chaudhuri, Lawrence, signally, welcomed this permeation of the individual poem by 'traces' of 'elsewhere'. He actively sought its effects; he sought the pervasion of meaning, of *thought*, throughout the wholeness of his works, 'where one poem flows excessively into another, where the material of one poem is used to mould the shape of another, where the creator works, and leaves his marks, upon his emerging text as if it were … clay' (54). This purposive openness of the poem entails a partial renunciation of authorial responsibility on the part of the poet. The poems

are, to some extent, agents of their own creation. They are permitted, as Chaudhuri writes, to '"create" themselves in various active ways, to circulate freely among themselves, in an intertextual dialogue and exchange of images and phrases' (51). In such a scenario, wherein the poem is suggestible to the influence of symbols and signifiers outside of itself, the reader is encouraged to participate in the production of the poem's meaning; to assume some of that responsibility laid down by the poet. The job of meaning-making, then, does not reside with Lawrence alone; meaning is, to some degree, created at the interface of poem and reader, *because* it is created at the interface of poem and poetic discourse. In other words, Lawrence leans on the reader to read *across* his poems that he or she may discover the richest possible meaning of any single poem; that he or she may appreciate 'the total effect [of] the Lawrentian poem' (32). As Chaudhuri concludes, Lawrence's poems

> are not formally complete or perfected in the Yeatsian sense; their very verbal and formal inadequacies compel them to be open-ended and, rather than closed and independent, unfinished and dependent; the gaps they reveal in themselves are to be filled in by the reader by referring to his other poems.
>
> (Chaudhuri, 11)

The second way in which Lawrence 'expose[s] the imperfect "creativity" of the author' is by returning time and again to works, even published works, to revise them (51). The nature of his revisions, 'often arbitrary and thus even playful,' suggest a writer less possessed of an urge to refine his works than one compelled to re-open poems he has 'closed' with publication; to revisit *and reveal* the 'different scenes' (Foucault's term) of his gradual understanding (41; Foucault, cited by Dillon, 7). The existence of multiple versions of the same poem reifies the 'nearer, nearer' exertions of 'thinking and feeling at the same time,' of poetical composition, as Lawrence experienced it. Chaudhuri's assertion that Lawrence's revisions 'leave open to our view' the 'continual process of [a poem's]

construction' recalls Dillon's engagement with De Quincy's term 'involuted' in her characterisation of the properties of the palimpsestic text. She explains,

> Although the process that creates palimpsests is one of layering, the *result* of that process, combined with the subsequent reappearance of the underlying script, is a surface structure which can be described by a term coined by De Quincy – 'involuted'. 'Involute' is De Quincy's name for the way in which 'our deepest thoughts and feelings pass to us through perplexed combinations of *concrete* objects… in compound experiences incapable of being disentangled' (1998b, p.104). The adjective 'involuted' describes the relationship between the texts that inhabit the palimpsest as a result of its palimpsesting and subsequent textual reappearance. The palimpsest is thus an involuted phenomenon where otherwise unrelated texts are involved and entangled, intricately interwoven, interrupting and inhabiting each other.
>
> (Dillon, 3–4)

We may say of the Lawrentian poetic discourse that it, too, is an 'involuted phenomenon': the 'otherwise unrelated' poems of which it is composed 'are involved and entangled, intricately interwoven, interrupting and inhabiting each other'. The Lawrentian poetic discourse shares with the palimpsest an involuted 'surface structure', a whorled surface that mirrors the 'curious spiral rhythm' of the motions of the mind as it 'approaches again and again to the point of concern', the object of Lawrence's understanding. By the incessant remodelling of certain of his poems, Lawrence moved against the notion that works arrive at a state of completion, insisting, instead, that they engage in a gradual advance of creation, the results of which are never absolute. The marks left upon the surface of a poem by repeated interference are the marks of passionate thought; they record, in Chaudhuri's words, 'the peculiar pathos and joy of gradual creation' (Chaudhuri, 56).

By subjecting his texts to minor revisions after publication, Lawrence disperses the authority conferred on the figure of the author, and partially imparts that authority to his works. He wills a shift of attention in the reader. In effect, he asks the reader to relax his or her deference toward the poet; to be mindful of his or her conditioning to infer from the

poem a totalising authorial intention, a genius, and to regard the poem as the unitary consummation of the poet's designs. He enjoins the reader to heed, instead, the lively materiality of his text, 'the *raw materials* with which a poem is made, the tentative fittings of the structure, the painful but continual process of its construction, the oblique but special significance of its making' (56). By the minimal, but persistent, revelation of his 'presence' within the published poem, Lawrence decentres himself as poet, and deals a blow to the monumental archetype of author.

Lawrence's self-positioning in relation to his poetical creations made of him a different sort of author to the more conventional 'controlling author,' as modelled by Yeats and Joyce, for instance (53). Chaudhuri cites Lawrence's essay 'Poetry of the Present' (1920) to evidence Lawrence's own awareness of his difference. In 'Poetry of the Present', a defence of free verse, Lawrence interrogates the 'ideal' and its reverential treatment:

> The ideal—what is the ideal? A figment. An abstraction. A static abstraction, abstracted from life. […] It is a crystallised aspiration, or a crystallised remembrance: crystallised, set, finished. It is a thing set apart, in the great storehouse of eternity, the storehouse of finished things.
>
> (Lawrence, cited by Chaudhuri, 52)

Chaudhuri discerns in this passage a distaste for the commonplace characterisation of the author as being extrinsic to his works, and his works extrinsic to the historical moment in which they were created. Chaudhuri explains:

> When Lawrence speaks of the 'ideal', he may be referring here, to, [sic] a poem, a book, or even an author; the author, as creator and originator of 'perfected' works, may also be called the 'storehouse of finished things'. This controlling author, to whom, according to the conventions of literary criticism, we assign a personality and a life, would actually be, Lawrence seems to indicate, a 'static abstraction, abstracted from life', a circumscribing parameter which Foucault called the 'author-function'.
>
> (Chaudhuri, 53)

As Chaudhuri notes, Foucault's essay 'What is an Author?' (1969) echoes, in parts, Lawrence's perceptions of the limitations that inhere in the performance of normative authorship. 'In a rather radical statement,' Foucault maintains that, contrary to common assumption, 'the author is not an indefinite source of significations which fill a work; the author does not precede the works' (Foucault, cited by Chaudhuri, 53). Rather,

> he is a certain functional principle by which, in our culture, one limits, excludes, and chooses; in short, by which one impedes the free circulation, the free manipulation, the free composition, decomposition, and recomposition of fiction. In fact, if we are accustomed to presenting the author as a genius, as a perpetual surging of invention, it is because, in reality, we make him function in exactly the opposite fashion. One can say that the author is an ideological product, since we represent him as the opposite of his historically real function…. The author is therefore the ideological figure by which one marks the manner in which we fear the proliferation of meaning.
>
> (Foucault, cited by Chaudhuri, 53)

In Lawrence's poetry, Chaudhuri recognises a refusal on the part of its creator to embody the 'ideological figure' of the author, which is, as Foucault holds, a myth, a 'principle' or utility, contrived by 'our culture' to bring into submission and under ownership the language and substance of imaginative literature. The imbricative fabric of Lawrence's poetry actively prohibits his inhabiting the 'genius' figure of Foucault's evocation: '[t]he nature of Lawrence's poetic texts, with their intertextual extravagances, their excessive repetitiveness, their arbitrary revisions, causes the presence of the author, as an impeding and set ideological product, an "ideal" or "static abstraction", to break down' (53). That Lawrence's poems promote the diffusion, or distribution, of meaning makes it possible to characterise his authorship as radical; as rebellious. As Chaudhuri states, 'one may say that Lawrence's poetry is relatively unmarked by "fear", and is even courageous' (53). It dares disperse the equilibrium and fixedness of purpose vested in the author by the dominant cultural discourse, and gestures at the potential for an alternative reader–poet relationship, one not

founded on the inference of the poet's infallibility, but on fellowship, community, and other credentials of the poet, such as humility and, indeed, humanity.

Lawrence and his contemporaries

I will engage with the political implications of Lawrence's approach to authorship nearer the close of this chapter. I want, however, in this section, to digress from Lawrence momentarily to consider recent criticism of the work of another early twentieth-century modernist, James Joyce. I hope, in doing so, to show how Lawrence's writing practice and his valuation of the work *as printed* differed from that of his contemporaries. In the interest of setting up as near to a direct comparison as I can between these writers, whose resemblances modernist critics have tended to occlude, I will survey a work of criticism that, like the present study, examines the intersection of genetic criticism and authorial intention, about which, as we have seen, there is 'no consensus or great consistency' (Creasy, 48).[17] In his 2007 essay, 'Manuscripts and Misquotations: *Ulysses* and Genetic Criticism', Matthew Creasy ventures an impression of how Joyce felt about the introduction of typographical errors into his works by parties responsible for their presentation. In the process, Creasy challenges a 'tendency' among genetic critics to use 'prepublication documents' to 'discredit the notion of authorial intentions' (45, 48, 45). Creasy posits, in contrast, that 'the mixture of theoretical and practical textual considerations associated with genetic criticism provides a *rich and complex*

[17] In his essay 'The Regional Modernism of D.H. Lawrence and James Joyce', Andrew Harrison charts the historical polarisation of D. H. Lawrence and James Joyce by literary critics ranging from Richard Adlington (1932) to F. R. Leavis (1955), before identifying in their work a 'common form of engagement with regional landscapes,' 'an exploration of conflicted regional identities and a shared focus on the necessity of self-estrangement,' out of which were generated 'formal innovations in both writers' works' (45–46).

picture of authorial intentions' (45, my emphasis). What follows is a detailed exploration of Creasy's article, and of his findings, and the theoretical texts he mobilises.

Creasy begins by probing the appropriateness of Hans Walter Gabler's 'synoptic edition' of *Ulysses*, which 'traces the text of Joyce's work back through his earliest extant drafts and notes for each chapter, recording inconsistencies and "departures" along the way' (44). Gabler 'utilizes an extremely complex form of diacritical annotation in order to preserve editorial judgments about the differing stages and hierarchy of Joyce's work' (56). The edition takes a 'form that simultaneously presents as many of the varying states of the novel's composition as possible' (49). In this way, Gabler democratises the experience of reading Joyce, making available to the lay-reader the impression of 'intimate contact with an author and a writing process' that the 'handling [of] drafts and autograph manuscripts' affords the academic (49). He also gives his reader the materials, or tools, 'to construe a "text in progress"' (Gabler, cited by Creasy, 49). The rationale behind Gabler's edition bears comparison with the thinking of Jean Bellemin-Noël, who shares the view that '"revisional" activity is characterized by flux' (49). Gabler holds, likewise, that the 'act of writing has a "process-character" that renders "authorial intention [as it is] *statically conceived*" unsuitable for "editorial performance"' (Gabler, paraphrased by Creasy, 49, my emphasis). Gabler gestures beyond the writings of Bellemin-Noël—for whom genetic criticism 'dispens[es] with authorial intentions' altogether—when he 'suggests that genetic criticism may offer alternatives to received wisdom about the relationship between authors, intentions, and works of literature' (49). Among these alternatives is Gabler's conviction that authorial intention may be perceived 'not [as] a metaphysical notion to be *fulfilled* [by the writer], but a textual force to be studied' (Gabler, cited by Creasy, 49, my emphasis).

Creasy is in partial agreement with critic Vicky Mahaffey 'that Gabler's editorial approach is peculiarly congenial to Joyce's own emphasis upon the contingency of texts and the frailties of authorial intentions' (44). By 'Joyce's own emphasis', Mahaffey refers to the "intentional error" (Mahaffey's term) that abounds in Joyce's novel *Ulysses*, the 'deliberate inaccuracies, gaffes, and misquotations that are frequently associated with Leopold Bloom', its protagonist (44). More forcefully than Mahaffey, however, Creasy would stress that Joyce's 'creative interest in the potential for error'—his making his main character a victim of misprints and misspellings—does not preclude the possibility that Joyce wished to expunge 'undesirable' errors from his work (45, 44).

Creasy alludes to the raft of textual evidence that has been adduced in support of the commonplace claim that Joyce's preoccupation with printer's errors 'sometimes overlapped with the fortunes and misfortunes' visited upon his own text (45). When, for instance, in *Ulysses*, Bloom 'note[s] that his surname has been misspelled… in the evening edition of the Dublin *Evening Telegraph*', he is vexed by the error, but deems it typical of newspapers, which teem with 'nonsensical howlers of misprints' (45). There are many critics who consider this episode of the novel a 'dramatiz[ation] [of] Joyce's sensitivity to the contingency and fallibility of print' (45). Mahaffey is one such critic: she believes that in this passage of the novel Joyce is 'minimizing the importance of authorial intentions by stressing the ways in which they are modified and reframed by the variable processes of writing, transmission, and reception' (Mahaffey, cited by Creasy, 45). According to Mahaffey, Joyce 'uses error [in the novel] to allude reflexively to the vulnerability of authorial intentions' (45).

Mahaffey admits, however, that **'**there is a paradox here', and Creasy's essay builds on this admission (46). Joyce's determination to depict errancy *within* the narrative of *Ulysses* suggests, conversely, that he counted upon the potential for a 'high standard of textual

accuracy'; he placed his trust in the compositors and printers responsible for the conveyance of his work (46). In other words, Joyce was optimistic that there existed a 'high standard' of editing and of printing to equal the 'high standard of textual accuracy' he imagined to be possible. He believed in the achievability of his designs for *Ulysses*. To Mahaffey's mind, the coincidence of error within and without *Ulysses* 'is not happenstance' (45). To Creasy, it seems nothing more than 'an irony that Joyce's depictions of error should themselves be plagued by error' (46). In Creasy's view, the errors that appear within the narrative *of Ulysses* do not cynically anticipate the printing errors that may or may not befall the text in transmission; they merely illuminate Joyce's 'acute sensitivity to […] the ways texts are *mediated*' (46–47, my emphasis).

Further discrediting the notion that Joyce embraced, even invited, unwilled errors into his manuscripts, Creasy asks the following question: if the narrative's intentional errors are to be 'treated as emblematic of Joyce's general attitude toward language, truth, and error', must it not also be taken into account that, on more than one occasion, Bloom holds individual persons responsible for the errors that fret him? As Creasy reminds us,

> the structure of [*Ulysses*] acts to emphasize the role of particular individuals and subjective factors in the process of textual corruption. Personal favors and petty misunderstandings play significant roles here. Even apparent mechanical failures are attributed to human causes.
> (Creasy, 47)

Mahaffey's contention that the text's intentional errors were set there by Joyce to dramatise the infirmity of his intentions assumes of the processes of transcription and printing an impersonality, or automation. Her argument, and the argument of those who share her thinking, rests upon a latent dichotomisation of the human character of Joyce's intentions and the mechanisation of the variable processes of which his intentions fall foul. But the

'structure' of *Ulysses*, as Creasy points out, contradicts this supposition. Incidences of textual corruption in the novel are attributed to 'subjective factors'; they are traceable to '[p]ersonal favors and petty misunderstandings'. The idea that Joyce believed the medium of print integrally defective is undermined by this placement of blame; by Bloom's consistently pointing the finger at particular individuals. So, also, is the notion that Joyce pre-empted mistranscription by working mistranscription into his narrative; that he wilfully and wryly derided the hubris of his artistic ambitions.

What Creasy finds most unsatisfactory about the supposition that Joyce's representation of error discloses his own disillusionment with print is the severance of Joyce's intentions from his text. For Creasy, Joyce's sustained and painstaking efforts to bring the proofs provided for him into line with his intentions, and his 'suffer[ing] persistent "irritation" with the misprints and errors ("I am extremely irritated by all those printer's errors")', play havoc with the theory of Joyce's capitulation to authorial 'vulnerability' (48). There is nothing acquiescent or cynical about Joyce's revisional activity; rather, by his revisions, he exercises dominion over his text. Any allusiveness in *Ulysses* to the human error that makes the medium of print ill-adapted to satisfy—at first or even second try—an author's ambitions for his text is, Creasy reminds us, accompanied by Joyce's contestations with editors and compositors and by repeated attempts to reassert his authority over the text or to reassert the primacy of 'writing' over 'transmission' and 'reception'. In the last analysis, 'Joyce's extensive corrections to printer's errors […] confirm his basic desire to achieve an *accurate* text of *Ulysses*' (48, my emphasis).

In this matter of accuracy lies the principal difference between Joyce and Lawrence. In the minor revisions he made to poems after publication, Lawrence confirmed *his* basic desire to expose the instability of authorial intention; to assert his presence *within* the poem,

rather than his command *over* it. Lawrence's post-publication revisions have nothing to do with pulling rank, nothing to do with precision, and everything to do with plurality. By and large, Lawrence's argument is not—as Joyce's is—with printers, but with himself: how, he asks, can this be written differently; how can I come again at this theme or subject that I might better understand it? Lawrence, therefore, and not any compositor, is the corrupting influence upon his texts; his is the human error that tampers with his intentions, and removes the text a distance from its author's original designs. Unlike Joyce, Lawrence welcomes the perception of his intentions as vulnerable, vulnerable even to his own changes of mind. And unlike Joyce, Lawrence would truly have his works wear the mark of his vulnerability, of his humanity. This style of authorship—one that makes allowance for erraticism, and is not typified by the achievement of accuracy—goes a long way to explaining the many repetitions to be found within Lawrence's oeuvre, the same repetitions traditionally evinced to discredit Lawrence as a writer. Lawrence's revisional activity upsets the orthodox conception of the printed text as summative, sealed, unassailable. Lawrence's contemporaries upheld this conception, and sought accuracy and fixedness in their work. Deference to these ideals of rightness and permanence, and the standard of originality they advertise, prohibits repetition. Equivocation, and its admission into the finished work, *fosters* repetition. Unlike Joyce, Lawrence disturbed the permanence of his printed works, agitated the tranquil surface of his published poems, that they might reflect, in finishedness, the circuitous motions of his mind, as disclosed to him in the process of composition. Unlike his contemporaries, he countenanced repetition, because he wished his published texts not to cap or conceal the turbulence of the imaginative mind at work, but to make it manifest. Repetition, or retrying—'approach[ing] again the point of pain or interest'—inheres in the creative process, as Lawrence himself experienced it; it is a defining feature of the 'curious

spiral rhythm' of 'thinking and feeling at the same time'. By modifying texts post-composition, usually the duty of editors, he reified the ebb and flow of ideas. He insisted on vacillation as a primary condition of ideation, and insisted that vacillation be visible in his work. Compare again Joyce's differing approach to composition. The act or *art* of writing is, for Joyce, as it is for Yeats:

> Yeats, for a considerable pre-natal period prior to the birth of the final version, meditates upon the poem, pruning away, deleting, or rewriting what, according to him, are the clumsy or badly expressed phrases in the poem, … The process continues until the correct form and the right words are found, and the poem 'clicks shut'
>
> (Chaudhuri, 56)

Lawrence's reopening his poems with 'marginal' revisions staves off completion; he forever averts the moment of their "clicking shut" (56). Lawrence eschewed hard lines, rescinded the synthetic containment of thought visited upon a poem with publication. Indeed,

> In Lawrence's poems, the 'master-form' is never attained; the 'masterpiece', perfected and separate, with a beautiful frame around it, does not exist. The 'frame' around each poem (that is, the boundaries, artificial limits, which isolate one poem or painting from another, and draw attention to each work as an 'individual' and 'original' piece of work) is constantly broken down through formal or verbal failings, or through repetitions, so that the images or motifs in one poem might be found in an almost identical way in another. […] The crucial idea of 'originality' vanishes to a great extent in this context
>
> (Chaudhuri, 57)

In such a 'context,' wherein 'originality' has no cachet, which is to say, it does not serve as an index of *worth*, 'repetitions' do not depreciate an artwork.

There exists a still more recent study of the motions of Lawrence's writing. This study, likewise, infers from Lawrence's compositional habits a peculiar relationship to the *act* of writing. In *The Many Drafts of D H Lawrence* (2021), Elliott Morsia analyses the manuscripts of *Women in Love* (1920) and *The Plumed Serpent* (1926) to reach an understanding of

'Lawrence's notion of creativity' (Morsia, 213). Morsia, like Dillon and Chaudhuri, engages with genetic criticism: its methods underpin his exploration of Lawrence's manuscripts. Morsia, also, recasts genetic criticism, 'challenging what [he] see[s] as its overtly instrumentalist, "constructivist" approach', that is, the idea that the text is 'a constructed object and the process of writing […] a construction project' (Morsia, 211). Just as Dillon and Chaudhuri query the value of the teleological model of textuality, Morsia holds in suspicion what he calls 'the critical focus on "maturity"', which, as in the case of Lawrence's short story 'Odour of Chrysanthemums' (1911), inclines critics to dismiss 'early versions' of texts, which they pronounce 'immature' (216, 215). All three critics—Dillon, Chaudhuri, and Morsia—point to a dialogism at work in Lawrence's poetry and prose. Unlike Dillon, who regards the variants of a re-versioned poem as interdiscursive, and unlike Chaudhuri, who postulates that *every* poem participates in a dialogic exchange with the *whole* of Lawrence's poetic output, Morsia locates a dialogism in the *person* of Lawrence. Morsia's 'genetic dialogism' describes an 'interplay between self and other,' a dialogue 'between spontaneous and non-spontaneous states of being' (215). According to Morsia, Lawrence's manuscripts wear the marks of 'spontaneity and artifice', but only Morsia's reformed genetic criticism, as he claims, recognises *both* 'states of being' ('spontaneous and non-spontaneous') as figuring in the writing process (215). Morsia's examination of the manuscripts, his inference of the motions of Lawrence's compositional process, underlies Morsia's classification of Lawrence as a writer who abjures closure; as a writer for whom 'ending(s)' present 'a dilemma' (213). Morsia contends that Lawrence's 'texts frequently reject an egotistical desire to know or fix a thing absolutely' (213). Lawrence, he suggests, 'associat[ed] the latter process with completion, stasis and death, while flux, incompletion and the unknown [he] associated with life' (213).

In summary, Lawrence's emancipation of the poem from the artificial limits of its frame, his undermining the unity of the individual text, betrays his impatience with the idea that any work of his authoring was an end-in-itself, set apart from the churning and ferment of his mind. Lawrence's poems, novels, and—as I will show—the plays were no more adamantine, no more set, than was the mental activity required to bring a work to a publishable state. The opacity imparted to texts by the dominant cultural discourse seemed to Lawrence unnatural; it turned works into dead things. Lawrence preferred to conceive of his works as fluid, overspilling their limits; he preferred to conceive of his collected works not as a body of work, a mausoleum, but a community of thoughts (mutable, not rigid; sociable, not aloof). I will further expand on the notion of a sociable mode of authorship, and the importance of community to Lawrence's innovation of a kind of authorship to which his formative working-class identity might be reconciled, at a later point in this chapter. First, however, I will explore how this non-normative formulation of authorship was forged in the crucible of his composition of the mining plays, in his concerted reproduction of local dialect, and in his recursive representation of a working-class community.

The plays

An overview

This vision of authorship defined, I shall now look closely at the mining plays, also known as the Eastwood trilogy, which Lawrence composed in the space of four years between 1909

and 1913. These being formative works for Lawrence, as John Worthen explains in his biography (*The Early Years 1885–1912*), I will suggest that the writing of the plays—and the writing of drama, in general—presented Lawrence with a signal opportunity to test accepted notions of authorship, and his relationship to them, at a crisis-point in his writing life. I will recapitulate Worthen's claim that the mining plays amounted to Lawrence's first authentic representation of the working classes, on account of the fact that dramatic form eliminated the necessity for any narrator, whose mediation might distort the concerns of his working-class characters. Indeed, in the years preceding, and during, Lawrence's composition of the mining plays, his depictions of working-class people—in his short fiction, especially—were compromised by, because refracted through, the perspective of a partial narrator, whose tendentiousness, as Worthen points out, originated with Lawrence. I will begin this section, then, with an overview of the narrative prose composed in the same period as the mining plays to show how substantial was the transformation of Lawrence's working-class characters upon his adoption of dramatic form.

There are two parts to the following analysis of the Eastwood trilogy. I will first establish the critical importance of dialect to the mining plays. I will make the claim that the drama of these plays proceeds from the characters' use of dialect—that is, the manner in which they speak it—as much as from the meaning of their utterances, and the vicissitudes of plot. I will show how Lawrence's own relationship to the regional speech of Eastwood, alongside that of his parents, informed his understanding of the speaking of dialect as elective, and, by extension, performative. I will close-read scenes from *The Daughter-in-Law* (1913) to show how the speaking of dialect is itself a theatrical act, a performance of identity, both personal and communal, and that the manner in which its characters avail themselves of local dialect is *as* suggestive of temper and motive as the words they are given to speak.

In the second part of my analysis, I will discuss the aphoristic nature of the regional speech of Eastwood, drawing again on *The Daughter-in-Law*, and the speech patterns of the character of Mrs Gascoigne, in particular. I will argue that the rich and distinctive imagery of Eastwood's aphorisms appealed to Lawrence on multiple fronts. I will make the case that the aphoristic imagery, common to all three dramas, folds or layers pictures into the action of each play, and that these distinct, but interdependent, layers of aphoristic imagery and plain-spoken dialogue interact independently of Lawrence. I will argue that this partial resignation of agency was coincident with Lawrence's expectation that his dramas be performed and, in performance, modified. I will argue that the unknown of this interaction further appealed to Lawrence, because it mimics the profuseness—the chaos, or excess—that characterises real-life conversation. This looseness or profusion of meaning in dialogue—where dialogue, *not* narrative prose, is the primary vehicle of subjective feeling—struck Lawrence as more naturalistic, more befitting of the realism of his dramas, than any finite or dogmatised meaning, because conversational exchanges, in actuality, tend toward the superabundant, rather than exactness. The adages local to Eastwood appealed to Lawrence in yet another way. I shall argue that Lawrence's concerted reproduction of his native dialect—and, specifically, of its aphorisms—brought home to him the curious workings of the proverb, as used in conversation. The proverb, when spoken, serves both to particularise and to proliferate meaning: it specifies the importance of the incident or utterance it is called upon to explicate, and, at the same time, generalises it, forcing that incident or utterance to embody a commonplace truth. I will argue that this Janus-like nature of the proverb, its facing in two directions—toward the singular and toward the typical—appealed to Lawrence, because it suggested to him a means of conceiving of his individual works: as singular, complete, yet, typical, and actively participant in the body of thought to which all his works

contribute. I will conclude this section by suggesting that Lawrence's discovery of a kind of authorship amenable to him—that is, one that was confluent and not in conflict with his working-class upbringing—coincided with his first successful attempts at the representation of working class individuals.

Lawrence's working-class background

Lawrence is considered to be one of the finest writers of the working-class experience. But the skill required to portray the working classes equitably and accurately was acquired like any other; he could not do it outright. The mining plays remain among Lawrence's most adept representations of the working classes, but their adeptness was hard-won; they were, at the time of writing, his only faithful representations of the working class. When, in 1909, Lawrence began writing the first of his mining plays, *A Collier's Friday Night*, he was, as Worthen attests, still grappling with the identity of author, and managing the adverse responses of family and friends to his aspirations to become a writer of poetry and fiction.[18] Both of Lawrence's parents were alive in 1909 (Lydia Lawrence died in December 1910), and he had not persuaded them—nor would he ever—that he might and should making a living by writing. This grappling with the social ramifications of his becoming a professional writer went hand-in-hand with another kind of contest: a grappling with subject matter. Lawrence was uncertain in these early years what to write *about*. Was it a requisite of writing professionally that he broaden his horizons, take off into the world? Was it necessary for Lawrence to leave behind his family and the insular village of Eastwood, the colliery

[18]This struggle is dramatised in *A Collier's Friday Night*, which, as Raymond Williams writes in his introduction to the Penguin *Three Plays*, was 'a first writing of some of the central experience of *sons and Lovers*' (9).

settlement in the Midlands where he was raised, and where his parents remained? Or were his first-hand experiences, and the working-class people of Eastwood, whose customs and speech-ways he knew intimately, a well head of inspiration he could feasibly draw upon? Was the working-class world of his personal history *fit* for fictionalisation? Lawrence resolved to put to use his eighteen years in Eastwood; to dramatise, in three distinct plays, the ways of life—feminine and masculine; above and below ground; domestic and industrial—that existed and caused conflict in this border town, his birthplace, 'the country of my heart' (Lawrence, 1989, 592–594). These plays, separately and in combination, captured the essence and ambience of life under the strain of adversity, economic and occupational. With these plays, Lawrence succeeded in his professed ambition 'to find a language in which to write about what people *really* are' (Worthen, 240), but he also produced, in the same period, when he was in his mid-twenties, a number of short stories that miscarried this ambition, and failed their working-class characters. Before and during his composition of the mining plays—before and while writing successfully, which is to say, authentically, about the working classes—he made a number of what might be called false starts. Among these false starts are Lawrence's short stories 'The Fly in the Ointment' (and the first draft of this story, 'A Blot') (1910–1912) and 'A Lesson on a Tortoise' (1909). These stories were written upon Lawrence's leaving the family home in Eastwood for Croydon, where he took on employment as a schoolteacher.

In 1908, Lawrence began work in 'the poor suburb' of Croydon (Worthen, 237). Here, as Worthen relates, he met with a 'much intenser poverty' than any he had experienced; an 'extreme poverty', as his friend Helen Corke recalled in her account of 'the situation of the elementary Croydon schoolteacher of [their] generation' (Worthen, 237, 236). This routine confrontation with hardship moved Lawrence to re-evaluate his 'cultivated (relative) security'

as schoolteacher, and brought home to him, as Worthen writes, his 'strangely ambivalent position, belonging as he did both to the working class, and to the educated middle classes' (237). Lawrence's encounters in Croydon compelled him to reflect on 'the achievement of his life of "getting on"', and made it seem, at times, 'like nothing at all', like 'the most fragile of concepts' (237). Lawrence siphoned these emerging recognitions into his writing of the period. As Worthen relates: 'in Croydon… [Lawrence] began to write poems, plays and a novel not only about the lives of the working class, about poverty and alienation and about the conflict of the educated with the communal, but about the gulfs between people' (237). In Worthen's view, however, a good deal of this writing left something to be desired, because Lawrence was not in full possession of his feelings about such matters, and because some of the forms he was drawn to were an impediment to the fair and rounded representation of the lives of working-class people. In other words, Lawrence's abilities, and his grasp of the impact of form upon content, lagged behind his ambition 'to find a language in which to write about what people *really* are' (240). As a result, his would-be authentic representations of working-class characters were, at this time, choked by the 'moralising commentaries' of his 'uncertain fictional narrators' (Worthen, 244).

Lawrence's story 'The Fly in the Ointment', written in 1912, (and its first version, 'A Blot', written two years earlier), along with the sketch 'A Lesson on a Tortoise', written in 1909, fall into this category of stories compromised by moralism. Both are centred on the responses of educated individuals to incidents of theft by members of the underclass. Both are narrated by the educated character, for whom these encounters are a source of upset. Both narrators experience the incidents of theft as an assault on their self-image; as a vitiation of their choices and ideals. In 'A Blot'/'The Fly in the Ointment', the narrator's experience of stumbling upon an intruder in his home is nightmarish, because the youth

cannot be reasoned with, cannot be brought around to the narrator's way of thinking that he should 'make [himself] decent and smart… get a carter's job, or a tram conductor's' ('A Blot', cited by Worthen, 236). The perpetrator is 'unpassable' as a 'rock face', seeming 'to utterly bar the outward movement of [the narrator's] thought, even of [his] life' ('A Blot', cited by Worthen, 236). The actions of the underclass character in 'A Blot'/'The Fly in the Ointment' touch off in the narrator feelings of 'disgust and repulsion', because these actions do 'not belong to human nature as *he* wants it to be' (239, my emphasis).

In this story, and in 'A Lesson on a Tortoise', in which a teacher is disposed to believe, mistakenly, that the poorest of his students is responsible for the stealing of school property, the 'problem of the narrator's reaction' is 'not-quite-articulated' (Worthen, 240). To Worthen's mind, these inchoate responses paralleled Lawrence's own. Indeed, Worthen proposes that, like his teacher-narrators, Lawrence had been thrown off by the base behaviour of certain individuals in his charge, behaviour that did not agree with his projections for and professional investment in their future. What use is teaching if not to confer on the neediest of his pupils the refinement, status, and improved prospects of the educated? And what did it mean for his writing that the actions of some of their number offended his sensibilities? According to Worthen, Croydon 'rocked [Lawrence's] confidence in himself' (240):

> Who and what was he? What should his attitude be to those around him? Superiority? Artistic difference? Intimacy? His social situation, his very language (like the narrator's [in 'A Blot']), cuts him off from ordinary people.
>
> (Worthen, 240)

Lawrence's discomposure, his uneasy state of mind at this time, reveals itself in the 'entrenched superiority' and 'suavity' of his narrators (237, 235). It is detectable in *The White*

Peacock, Lawrence's first novel, published in 1911, which shows its author to be, at times, 'febrile, over-bred, self-satisfied' (241). It is detectable in the 'deadly commentator's voice' of 'Odour of Chrysanthemums', which, following Lawrence's revisions to the text, 'would speak even more distinctly *de haut en bas*' (241). This re-entrenchment of condescension in revision was something of a pattern in this period: as Worthen observes, the titular blot in 'A Blot', written in April 1910, was the narrator himself, ('I was a blot… a black, heavy, disfiguring blot, with no meaning'); when Lawrence rewrites the story as 'The Fly in the Ointment' in June 1912, it is the youth who is the stain, the taint, 'a blot fallen on my soul', like a smut on clothing (Lawrence cited by Worthen, 236).

Worthen, though, gives Lawrence the benefit of the doubt:

> We must remember however that Lawrence had previously written nothing equivalent to ['Odour of Chrysanthemums']: had never attempted to set out his intimate knowledge of the working class in the full glare of an 'artistic' creation for the middle-class reading public. He would not do so again until the first version of *Paul Morel* in the autumn of 1910; and even the second draft of that novel would be distinctly uneasy in its narrative commentary on the working class. The bulk of Lawrence's fiction in 1909-1910… was more conventionally 'literary', oriented towards a middle-class readership… As a result, his fiction was impoverished, except where he could overcome the problems of narrative stance, in another genre altogether: drama.
>
> (Worthen, 242)

Dialect: a way through

As Worthen writes, the medium of theatre presented Lawrence with a way through: a solution to the difficulties he had faced when attempting to represent the working-class experience. The solution was this: 'the dramatic *reality* is created by a scrupulous fidelity to the way people *talk*,' and, crucially, to the way people talk 'in *this* place and *this* situation', which is to say, in a working-class colliery village on the Nottinghamshire-Derbyshire border (Williams, 12, my emphasis). Over and above this breakthrough, Lawrence's writing of the mining plays resolved that other, congruent struggle, which characterised the formative

years of Lawrence's writing career. It is my belief that the writing of the mining plays marked a watershed moment for Lawrence with regard to his relationship to authorship, a relationship previously made fraught by the expectations of family and peer group. In what follows, I will argue that Lawrence's early experimentation with drama precipitated a conception of authorship that lasted the duration of his writing life, and, crucially, entailed the accommodation of repetition or restatement. In order to evidence this second breakthrough, I will need, initially, to demonstrate the salience of dialect to the mining plays, and, before that, to address some of the fundamentals of dialect-speech.

Regional dialect is a specialised language, shaped by and for the community it serves. It is not, like a major language, required to be comprehensive; it need only express what the community has *need* of expressing, and as much or as little in excess of this as the community determines. A dialect is tailored to and, to a degree, constrained by the industries and principles of a community. As such, the lexicon of a local dialect (the turns of phrase, the figures of speech) reflects the breadth—and, indeed, the narrowness—of the experiences of those who use it. So it is that a local dialect shares some of the properties of a map, marking the area—the expanse and outer limits—of a people's share or stake in experience. In some ways, then, speaking a local dialect is akin to working from a play-script. The speaker-actor is given lines with which to express himself, and must infer from this provision of speech the parameters of his character. The speaker-actor of a regional dialect does not speak his lines in a predetermined sequence, but improvises *around* his lines. As the actor devises his character from the quantity of words afforded him, so the regional speaker contrives *his* character, his regional identity, from the word-stock he is afforded. The use of local dialect is, then, inherently dramatic. To use it is to advertise one's membership of a community, to enact belonging. To speak a local dialect is, also, to maintain it; languages are living (we speak

of ‘dead’ and ‘extinct’ languages, and of ‘language death’), and may only be kept alive with constant use. This process of language preservation may be inadvertent on the part of the speaker, or it may not be: a person may take conscious pleasure in the allegiance to region his fluent use of dialect implies.

These fundamentals defined, I want now to look at *The Daughter-in-Law*. The following scene, which takes place two pages into the play text, suggests that Lawrence wished us to pay close attention to how dialect is used by his characters. Joe performs for his mother an imagined back-and-forth between Hewett, the underground manager at the mine where Joe is employed, and Bettesworth, a butty, whom Joe believes has let slip to Hewett how Joe came to be injured in the pit. Joe’s role-playing occasions impersonations of the two men; it is written in the stage directions how he ‘*imitates*’ them. Joe’s Hewett speaks a faultless standard English (‘How exactly did it occur?’), while his Bettesworth speaks (‘I couldn’t exactly say for certing, sir’) as Joe has spoken up to now: with an accent peculiar to the Nottinghamshire/Derbyshire locality and his socioeconomic position. The play, then, has not long started before the audience hears Joe speaking standard English. Joe’s impression of Hewett’s voice raises an interesting question: if Joe *can* talk this way, why doesn’t he talk this way *always*? So broad has Joe’s regional accent been up to now that the reader has needed to read carefully, the spectator to listen closely, to follow the meaning of his words. The spectator who is not native to this part of the country—and the non-native reader of the printed play—would stand a better chance of comprehending the character’s every word if Joe expressed himself consistently in the standard accent of English. This is not to be wished for, of course, and is anyway impossible, for Joe’s meaning—what he *means* to say—would alter with the adoption of a different language. Joe’s meaning—what he *means* to say—is governed to some extent by the texture, the complexion, of his local dialect.

It might be imagined—by the non-dialect-speaker—that the dialect of regional persons is so inborn that they speak it without thinking, automatically. Joe's anecdote proves otherwise; Lawrence's having his character produce the sounds of standard English—having him speak, as some would have it, "properly"—reveals that, to some degree, Joe chooses the language and the accent he uses. Joe has a measure of control over the manner in which he speaks. This is important: the placement of Joe's impersonation at the opening of the play suggests that Lawrence thought it vital to establish at the earliest opportunity that dialect is used consciously by his characters, and that Joe, at least, is not deaf to—but hears in *his own* speech—the tones and idiosyncrasies of local pronunciation. The sooner the spectator apprehends this fact—that the speaking of a regional dialect is, to some extent, elective—the sooner he or she may begin to question specific instances of its use. For example: Joe performs and convinces in the part of the underground manager, his boss. Does it follow that when Joe speaks in a regional accent he performs the part of himself or, perhaps, *a* part of himself: the collier part and the part that is his mother's son? How important is it—to Mrs Gascoigne, for instance—that the family shares a language; that they sound alike? Is speaking the same language as one's children an oral enactment of the bond of motherhood; is *continuing* to speak the same language as one's parents, one's mother tongue, long into adulthood, a performance of abiding filial affection? This early episode in *The Daughter-in-Law* prompts Lawrence's audience not to take the complex operations of dialect for granted; it rouses the audience to pay close attention to the ways in which it is used. The dialect of Lawrence's plays is far from window dressing. It is *not* a naturalist veneer, overlaying the

play's "real" action: the dialect *is* action, not merely describing feeling and incident, but engendering feeling and incident.[19] Dialect is an agent of drama; it shapes relationships.

Lawrence understood this well. From a young age, Lawrence was faced with a choice of voices, and was, like Joe, adept at "code-switching," because it was called for in the Lawrence household. For Lawrence, speaking was formatively performative, and, just as does Joe in the abovementioned scene, he used his bi-dialectism—his proficiency in two languages—in the service of entertainment. Like Joe, Lawrence was a talented impersonator, a talent he shared with his father, Arthur. According to Worthen,

> [Lawrence's] mimicry of all kinds of dialect and accent… was brilliant. Alice Hall recalled how, like his father, he was particularly adept at parodying the superior and the refined: 'it was our delight to get him to impersonate anyone we knew. The local clergymen were the ones we liked best, or the different folks that attended the Christian Endeavour meeting including his sisters and some of their friends'.
>
> (Worthen, 62)

As Worthen writes in relation to Arthur Lawrence, who 'was a gifted mimic', 'it is one of the necessities of life for people living between cultural and linguistic divisions to be able to impersonate those who sound superior' (Worthen, 61).[20] Indeed, Lawrence's own manipulations of voice were not reserved for the entertainment or mortification of others:

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[19] As Richard Leith writes on the role of dialect in Lawrence's narrative fiction, Lawrence 'assigns [the] roles and functions [of dialect] to a central place in his novels'. He '*dramatizes* the confrontation between linguistic varieties; his depiction of dialect is not merely a matter of providing, in Page's words, "local colour" or marking "social distance"' (Leith, *Dialogue and Dialect in D. H. Lawrence,* 247).

[20] This conditioned facility for mimicry Lawrence represented in more than one text: 'Ernest Lambert's father in *A Collier's Friday Night* also adopts "an exaggerated imitation of his son's English" when annoyed with his superior wife and son; while Walter Morel in *Sons and Lovers* – another "good mimic" – parodies the "fat, squeaky voice, with its attempt at good English" of the underground manager, as the latter attempts to put him in his place' (Worthen, 62).

> for the benefit of his teachers, [he] adopted an 'exquisite accent' (i. 64) in place of his Midlands accent while at college. It was a strategy that, in varying forms, he adopted all his life, as the class outsider is forced to do in England.
>
> (Worthen, 62)

While Lawrence's standard English was acquired, his vernacular speech came naturally. But it was no less "strategic" for that. As Worthen has it, 'it was one of his actual voices; it was an Eastwood voice (he always kept his Midlands accent) – but it was not his mother's voice' (63). Indeed, though it came as second nature to Lawrence to speak the Eastwood dialect (his 'command of the dialect was masterly'), his relationship to it was not uncomplicated, jaundiced, as it was, by his mother's refusal to use it (63). According to her son, Lydia Lawrence 'spoke King's English, without an accent', and for two probable reasons: out of distaste for Eastwood, 'the last in a succession of grimy and depressing places to which she felt she had been condemned', and as demonstration of her 'aspiration to another life which her efforts for her children continually created' (61). Although Lawrence would claim that his mother 'never in her life could even imitate a sentence of the dialect which my father spoke', Worthen thinks this inaccurate, because contradicted by George Neville, a childhood friend (61). And if Worthen is right on this point—that Lydia 'could actually imitate her husband's dialect perfectly well'—then *her* choice, when it came to speaking dialect, was to resist identification with the community foisted on her. Lydia's decision to individuate herself cannot but have had an impact on Lawrence's own identification with the place of his upbringing, could not but have troubled his own use of dialect; his lifelong 'choice and mixture of voices was a sign of the "queer jumble of the old England and the new" where he came into consciousness' (Worthen, 63). In two senses, then, the speaking of dialect was, for Lawrence, a conscious act; it was performative. The speaking, or not speaking, of dialect was freighted with implications for social and familial relationships. Allegiance entered into the

speaking of dialect; its use constituted a performance of a specific identity to the exclusion of another. Owing to his mother's aversion to dialect, the using of it was a partisan activity; its use inflamed the tensions within the Lawrence household. But it was also a source of amusement, and a curiosity. Lawrence made a spectacle of it in the company of those to whom it was strange; it was sampled, and it entertained.[21] These two types of theatricality intrinsic to the speaking of dialect enfold each other in the plays, as they did in life.

Richard Leith, writing of the dialect and dialogue in Lawrence's novels, thinks Lawrence exceptionally skilled at the representation of dialect-speech. In Leith's view, Lawrence's reproduction of the 'speech-ways' of Eastwood does not stop short at 'the surface features of Nottinghamshire/Derbyshire accent, grammar and vocabulary' (Leith, 246). Rather, 'Lawrence depicts as well as these a whole "style" of speech, a whole way of speaking' (249). Writing of the character of Walter Morel in Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*—a character based on Lawrence's father, a dialect-speaking miner—Leith remarks that 'the kinds of things that Morel says, what he uses language for, […] is more significant than how he says them' (249). Leith gleans from the miner's speech two intrinsic features of the dialect of Eastwood, and they are: the playing of 'games' and the performance of identity (249). As Leith writes: 'Much of Morel's speech is what could be called "ritualistic" – confronting, bantering, self-dramatizing, dismissing, narrating' (249). Using the speech-ways of Eastwood, he engages in 'mock conflict' with his wife, which is tantamount to 'a form of co-operation', a conjugal performance (249). Leith's essay rests at demonstrating Lawrence's *comprehension* of the theatricality that inheres in the speaking of dialect; it is *my* claim that it was, or *became*, important for Lawrence that his audience should discern this theatricality for

[21] '"We sometimes talked in the dialect. Bert was very good and gave us samples new to us"' (May Chambers, cited by Worthen, 63).

themselves. Indeed, the self-dramatisation that dialect-speech brings out in its users comes to the fore in the mining plays, because—unlike in the novels—the performative properties of regional speech register in the plays as metadrama. If, in the first instance, Lawrence wrote in dialect because he *could*, it is my suggestion that, in time, an awareness of the correspondence of regional speech with the medium of theatre gained on Lawrence, and emboldened him to play up, or give *prominence* to, the theatricality of regional speech.

This experiment in accentuation is clearest displayed in *The Daughter-in-Law*. In this play, dialect is a playground for Joe and his mother, Mrs Gascoigne. From the outset, it is clear that both gain enjoyment from the creative possibilities of the Eastwood dialect, and the sounds it makes in their mouths. There is a musical quality to their bantering that reminds of call and response:

JOE Tha talks like a fool, mother.
MRS GASCOIGNE Tha looks like one, me lad.

(Lawrence, 1969, 83)

Only when speaking *her* language can Joe talk back to his mother: he mocks her with his words, but *in voice* he sounds their attachment. He could not get away with the same impudence if he spoke to her in the Queen's English, for that would constitute a genuine affront to their relationship. This teasing exchange is a prelude to Mrs Gascoigne's instruction to her son, who has injured his arm and leg in the mine, to 'hutch up', whereupon, as indicated in the stage directions, 'she sits by him on the sofa and cuts up his meat for him'. If this physical closeness, reified by their mutual, almost coquettish, use of dialect, has them

resemble lovers, it is no accident. Throughout the play, Mrs Gascoigne equates maternal and spousal relationships, partly because she reduces the roles of mother and wife to the distaff duties of household management. With respect to her eldest son's removal—or, as she feels, defection—to another household, she behaves as a jilted lover.[22] In Luther's new home, the once easy flow of language between mother and son is troubled by the presence of his wife Minnie, who speaks a more moderate dialect, with a milder accent. Most certainly, it is Luther's decamping to live with Minnie that has Mrs Gascoigne infantilising her youngest son in the play's first scene. Sitting by him on the sofa, hemming him in ('He makes room'), she presses home her maternal advantage: 'It's a rum un as I should start ha'in' babies again, an' feedin' 'em wi' spoon-meat' (84). Though Joe has already begun eating his dinner 'with a fork', she 'Gives him a spoon' (84). It is noteworthy that Lawrence has Mrs Gascoigne perform the action of giving him the spoon *after* uttering her complaint, and not before. Mrs Gascoigne is setting the scene, *staging* this moment of intimacy, in which she may play at being mother to a younger, more dependent son than she has. Her use of the local dialect—the language Joe used exclusively as a child, before being exposed to other tongues in the world of work—is absolutely necessary to the scene she would have them play; it is as necessary as Joe's infirmity, since both make him vulnerable to his mother's coddling overtures.

Indeed, Mrs Gascoigne clings to dialect as she clings to her adult sons; she indulges in the language as she indulges in the fantasy of her continued significance to their lives. When that fantasy is threatened, she brandishes dialect as a weapon. She uses it to strengthen the

[22] 'Hadn't I bin a good mother to 'im I' ivry shape an' form? Let *her* make him as good a wife as I made him a mother! We'll see. You'll see him repent the day. But they're not to be bidden' (Lawrence, 1969, 92).

alliance between herself and her sons, and to heighten, in the same breath, Minnie's difference, her outsiderness. One might discern in Mrs Gascoigne's disdain for Minnie's choice of furniture a clue to her disdain for Minnie's fairer style of speech (94). Her argument with the way in which Minnie has chosen to appoint her home—a miner's cottage, the same in its dimensions as every other cottage in the village—has to do with utility. If Minnie and Luther should ever find themselves struggling to make ends meet, they would have more difficulty selling their second-hand furniture, chosen for its aesthetic appeal, than if it were new. In other words, it is not fit for purpose. The same applies to Minnie's speech. It may be pleasing to the ear, becoming—as her second-hand furniture is pleasing to the eye and becomes the rooms of her cottage, as Joe thinks —but it is out of keeping with the life she has chosen. It has no place in the life of a miner's wife.

Eastwood dialect as graphic language; flatness

There is an exception to Mrs Gascoigne's rule of prudence: she scrimps and saves by force of habit, but she is prodigal with language. The sententious Mrs Gascoigne draws generously on the images of the Eastwood dialect, seeming, more than any other character in the play, to relish its vivid idioms. She pillories her daughter-in-law's efforts to make nice her mining cottage, but *herself* prinks, or titivates, the very same straitened circumstances with the bright pictures of her native dialect. There is something of vanity in Mrs Gascoigne's reaching for these pictures; in fetching into conversation these colourful figures of speech. Her liberal use of idiom is almost recreation, and thus bears resemblance to Minnie's procurement of furniture that brings aesthetic pleasure—an irony, one suspects, that is lost on Mrs Gascoigne.

I have shown, in the above section, the significance of dialect to the mining plays, and how natural a match was the medium of theatre for the transcription of Lawrence's native speech. I wish now to explore the ways in which Lawrence's early experimentation with drama instructed him in a relationship to literary composition that lasted his entire career, one that entailed the accommodation of repetition, and issued in proliferative and palimpsestuous texts. I will posit, in what follows, that the imperatives of playwriting—the pressure exerted on dialogue to create and give shape to narrative—prompted Lawrence to observe the workings of conversational exchange more intently than ever before. I will argue that the exercise of writing for the stage furnished Lawrence with a fuller understanding of the operations of his native speech, and of its aphoristic nature, especially. I will argue that this, particularly—the copiousness and vibrancy of local figures of speech; the manner in which they are used by his characters; and their interaction with the non-figurative language of Lawrence's mining plays—influenced Lawrence's development of a nonconformist mode of authorship, reconcilable with his working-class upbringing and identity.

Below is a small sample of the figures of speech spoken by the characters of *The Daughter-in-Law*:

MRS GASCOIGNE	Marriage is like a mouse-trap, for either man or woman. You've soon come to th' end o' th' cheese.
JOE	Well, ha'ef a loaf's better nor no bread.
MRS GASCOIGNE	Why, wheer's th' loaf as tha'd like ter gnawg a' thy life?
JOE	Nay, nowhere yet.

(Lawrence, 1969, 86)

MRS PURDY	He'd seen th' blossom I' flower, if he hadna spotted the fruit-a-comin'.
JOE	Yi—but—
MRS PURDY	Yi but what?

JOE Well—you dunna expect—ivry time yer cast yer bread on th' wathers, as it'll come whoam to you like.

(90)

MRS GASCOIGNE […] Thinks I to myself, she's after a town johnny, a Bertie-Willie an' a yard o' cuffs.

(91)

MRS GASCOIGNE As I told him many a time, for am I to sit an' see my own lad bitted an' bobbed, tasted an' spit out by a madam i' service.

(93)

MRS GASCOIGNE […] now she's asked for what she's got. She's put her puddin' in her mouth, an' if she's burnt herself, serve her right.

(95)

MRS GASCOIGNE […] It ud look better o' thee not to spit I' th' hand as holds thy bread an' butter.

(97)

MRS GASCOIGNE […] let them as cooked the goose eat it.

(98)

As this small selection shows, the dialect of the Nottinghamshire/Derbyshire border is a highly pictorial language. Eastwood speech abounds with imagery; it is rich in 'memorable phrases' of the kind that Arthur Lawrence used, and 'which his son never forgot' (Worthen, 61). Indeed, in the speech of Walter Morel, who was based on Arthur Lawrence, Richard Leith observes a 'striking' quantity of imagery, 'concrete images drawn from the details of semi-rural life' (250). The above-excerpted phrases are typical of the speech-ways of Eastwood—and of the dialect of Lawrence's plays—in that they consist of imagery concerning the natural world, and, still more often, of food. Frequently, these phrases take

the form of aphorisms, some of them variants of ubiquitous proverbs, others exclusive to Eastwood.[23] Within the world of the plays, these aphorisms generate conversational momentum. For instance, a character may accept or protest the traditional wisdom embodied in a proverb. Twice in the above range of citations, Joe attempts to negotiate the terms of the proverbs put before him, and only once successfully. But they also perform an annotative role: Lawrence's characters use these sayings to pass remark on past or present action; they narrativise the events of their lives, even as they happen. These sayings thus occupy an outlying or tangential position in relation to the plays' action and backstory. Integrated into dialogue by the fittings of metaphor and simile, they are *yet* peripheral, circumferential. In addition to driving action, then, these phrases are ornamental, their vivid, isolated imagery adorning the play's plain-spoken dialogue. These compact, self-sufficient images combine to create a surface pattern, consonant with, but extricable from, the action of the play.

In many ways, the proverbs of the plays recall the images—or, as Chaudhuri prefers, 'pictures'—of Lawrence's 'early poems about love and landscape' (83). These pictures are, according to Chaudhuri, 'recurrent and intertextual' (83). They appear in multiple poems, and discourse with each other. Proverbs are, likewise, recurrent and intertextual. A proverb is, by definition, repeatable, convenient for use.[24] What's more, its every utterance is engaged in a reciprocal exchange with every *other* instance of its use *and* the general truth it expresses. Chaudhuri asks that, when we read Lawrence's poetry, we 'examine how [Lawrence's] similes

[23]'It ud look better o' thee not to spit I' th' hand as holds thy bread an' butter' recalls the traditional "don't bite the hand that feeds you".

[24]Defining the English proverb in his 1985 work *How Proverbs Mean*, the pragmatic linguist Neal Norrick explains that 'proverbs are preformed, inventorized linguistic units […] A speaker who uses a proverb falls back on the traditional store of preformed utterances. Seen this way, utterances of proverbs are acts of quoting. But the speaker does not quote an individual author, he quotes the linguistic community itself' (Norrick, 25–26).

and metaphorical constructions, instead of fulfilling the traditional function of clarifying or renovating our perception of an object, become an instance of collage, where the tenor, the figure in the poem, has as its vehicle a "picture" that is a textual snipping or cutting from another poem' (83). The proverbs of Lawrence's plays behave as the 'pictures' of Lawrence's poems, with one difference: they do *both*. They clarify or colour perception of an action, utterance or circumstance, and at the same time 'become an instance of collage'. If we imagine the collected proverbs of Eastwood to comprise a kind of text, or script, we might also imagine the proverb (as spoken) a 'cutting' from that composite text. As Chaudhuri writes of the images of Lawrence's early poems,

> What we have, thus, is not a comparison leading to a perception (*a* is like *b*), but a material superimposition, a collage, a joining together of cuttings, where *a* remains an outline filled in with *b*, [the 'cuttings' from a previous poem]. In a piece of descriptive writing, we 'see' the object anew with the writer; but here, what we 'see' as readers are externals, the pasting together of a picture from textual material, that is, from the general poetic discourse
>
> (Chaudhuri, 83)

So it is with the apothegms of Lawrence's mining plays: their use is *allusive*; the characters who use them draw on the general proverbial discourse of the dialect of Eastwood.[25] Utilitarian they are not, or not *purely*; within the context of their appearance in the plays, they energise perception, but they are also 'externals', superficially decorative. Was it to this that Lawrence was referring when he wrote to author Violet Hunt of the calculated flatness of *The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd*? Answering, in 1910, her criticisms of the play, he lamented,

> I was trying to persuade myself that I had really got the tones flat enough for an act-able play: you know what I mean – as in a decorative picture the tones are flat – say in Frank Brangwyn – and

[25]Neal Norrick goes on to identify the use of proverbs as a performance of belonging: 'a speaker can signal his membership in and identification with the local village community by drawing on its stock of (dialect) proverbs' (Norrick, 25).

> the figures are parts of a design rather than individuals – so I thought these Holroyd folk were nicely levelled down. Woe is me!
>
> (Lawrence, 1970, 199)

Lawrence had only lately completed *The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd* when he wrote to Hunt, so it seems unlikely he misrepresented his intentions for the play. According to Lawrence, he had meant to subordinate depth of characterisation to the whole effect of his play. His characters' complicity in the play's emergent 'design' he deemed of greater importance than any singularity he might impart to them. This would not necessarily frustrate an audience's ability to engage with 'these Holroyd folk'; in fact, Lawrence was persuaded that the subsumption of his 'figures' was the very thing that made the play 'act-able' and, thereby, available to an audience. In other words, a certain flatness, or planeness, made possible the performance of his play. Indeed, we might infer from Lawrence's letter that he believed planeness was what separated drama from other literary forms: a play's flat tones or 'levelled' surface made it not like a novel, to be read, but like a painting, to be *looked* at. And not just any painting: Lawrence is specific about the kind of visual art he intended his play to take after. He had in mind for this mining play to resemble the work of Frank Brangwyn, whose 'decorative picture[s]' exact a particular kind of looking. As Chaudhuri writes,

> we 'see' the [non-decorative] painting in a metaphysical way, possessing a depth and inner life… But when we regard a 'decorative' piece, we admire it as a pattern or a surface, not as a façade with a fictional 'meaning' or 'depth' behind it; thus, we 'see' it in a physical sense.
>
> (Chaudhuri, 103)

There is a similar distinction to be made between fiction and drama. A novel's 'meaning' is locked in its language, latent until such a time as the novel is opened, engaged with. The novel's 'inner life' is reached with reading. A novel is not immediate. A play, in contrast, acts *upon* a spectator, ready or not, with immediate effect. It does not need, as the novel needs,

to be actuated; the spectator does not set it going, as a reader sets the novel going. It is set before an audience; it does not wait on engagement. It exists in a state of readiness. Lawrence, it seems, intended his play script to match, or anticipate, the immediacy of theatre; he wanted to invest his text with the material immediacy it would take on in performance. He attempted to do so through this quality of flatness in order that his play, even in textual form, might be "seen" 'in a physical sense'. By the levelling down of his characters that they might serve the whole design, he divested—or tried to divest—his play of the 'façade' that mantles 'fictional "meaning"', with the result that surface and meaning were coalescent. Is it possible that Lawrence intended his play to be depthless, its meaning superficially apparent, *because* he also wished to call into doubt its fictionality? That meaning must be discovered in a novel through the process of reading embeds its unreality. *The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd* was a naturalist play, and, if Lawrence could narrow the gap between surface and meaning, making redundant any meaning extraction, he might also retract, or someway deny, its status as a work of fiction. It is uncertain whether Lawrence himself considered the graphic nature of Eastwood speech to contribute to the flatness of his play. No matter: the recurrence of aphorisms in the mining plays, their insistent use by the characters of each, effects a kind of surface design that makes good Lawrence's plan that his play take on the flat 'tones' of a 'decorative picture'.

Collage falls under this category of 'decorative' art. Its meaning is immediate; it resides *in* the surface, rather than behind it. As I have already indicated, the graphic aphorisms of Lawrence's plays conspire to give rise to a surface pattern, or surface effect, that bears comparison to collage. Lawrence's plays approximate to collage in yet another way. As George L. Ulmer writes of the work of artist Joseph Beuys, collaging entails 'the exploitation of chance effects' (Ulmer, cited by Chaudhuri, 84). Lawrence, I would argue,

accommodates the chance effects of the contiguity of his plays' aphorisms and their associated plain-spoken dialogue. The interplay of these two types of language extends beyond Lawrence's control. The fruits of their interplay are unknown, an unknown Lawrence embraces. Even if he wished, he could not curb or contain this interplay, because narrative prose has limited place in the dramatic form. Instead, this interplay is allowed to proliferate meaning in any which way that it might. This sanctioning of chance effects played a vital role in Lawrence's development of a nonconforming authorship, the decentred authorship Chaudhuri identifies, and which I paraphrased earlier in this chapter. The fecund exchange between the literal and figurative speech of Lawrence's plays is analogous to the give-and-take relationship between the single poem and the wider poetic discourse on which Chaudhuri founds his characterisation of Lawrence's peculiar authorship.

It is no accident that this partial resignation of agency coincided with Lawrence's earliest forays into drama. In the first place, the diffusion of meaning, created at the interface of figurative and non-figurative language, lent itself to the naturalist project of Lawrence's early playwriting, because it mimics—in the only way possible within the compass of an authored text—the profuseness or overabundance of real-life conversation. This looseness or profusion of meaning in dialogue, achieved by the layering of speech forms, struck Lawrence as more naturalistic, more befitting of the realism of his dramas, because conversational exchanges, in actuality, tend toward imprecision, rather than exactness. The overabundance of Lawrence's dialogue led playwright George Bernard Shaw to commend the second-written of Lawrence's mining plays, *The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd.* As James Moran recounts:

> Shaw watched *The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd* in 1926 and proclaimed that it 'rushed through in such a torrent of profuse yet vividly effective dialogue, making my own seem archaic in

> comparison', a comment that made Lawrence 'vastly pleased'. Lawrence declared, 'He ought to know about dialogue, it's very generous of him'.
>
> (Moran, 94)

The tumultuous rush of Lawrence's dialogue seemed to Shaw modern, a departure. It broke with convention: conversation, in Lawrence's play, was not a back-and-forth, but a pouring forth; not linearly progressive, but radially expansive. In one other way, Lawrence's suspension of agency was consistent with the writing of drama. His permitting the interplay of speech forms to go to work on the audience howsoever it might was coincident with Lawrence's expectation that his dramas be produced and, in production, modified.[26] Writing to Compton Mackenzie in 1920, he maintained:

> My idea of a play is that any decent actor should have the liberty to alter as much as he likes – the author only gives the leading suggestion. Verbatim reproduction seems to me nonsense.
>
> (Lawrence, 1984, 509-10)

This radical transvaluation of authorship, wherein the author is not punctilious, as Joyce was punctilious in providing his editors with manuscript corrections, but gives only 'the leading suggestion', is discernible in the plays on a textual level: it is there in the diffusion of meaning, created at the interface of figurative and non-figurative language, and in the plays' dilatant dialogue.[27] That Lawrence thought his dialogue elastic, that he was happy for his plays to be adapted by the 'decent actor', who was free to improvise around the dialogue,

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[26]Writing of his later play *David*, Lawrence wrote to Alfred Knopf in 1925: 'I don't want [the manuscript] published, unless it is produced. Curtis Brown thinks it would be better if it appeared first as "literature." Myself, I am a bit tired of plays that are only literature. If a man is writing "literature," why choose the form of a play? And if he's writing a play, he surely intends it for the theatre. Anyhow I wrote this play for the theatre, and I want the theatre people to see it first' (Lawrence, 1989, 274).

[27]Lawrence wrote the first version of *The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd* in 1910, which version is lost, and he revised it 1913. In 1926, in a letter to Esmé Percy, Lawrence expressed his wish to revise it again: 'if ever the play were to be done again, I'd re-model the end. I feel I should want to' (Lawrence, 1989, 604).

not moderately, but 'as much as he like[d]', shows how little Lawrence cared for the normative conception of authorship. His diminishment of the writer's pre-eminence is not, as we have seen, specific or limited to playwriting, but, as Chaudhuri argues, a property of the poetry, too. It is my conviction, however, that Lawrence's decentred authorship was inspirited by the writing of these plays. Lawrence's dismantling of the propriety of writing, and the fixedness of the finished text, was a lifelong undertaking, but had its root in the formative exercise of these plays' composition, and the urgency of his trying 'to find a language in which to write about what people *really* are' (Worthen, 240). As Lawrence wished his plays to be lived-in, to accommodate the spontaneity of a cast of sensitive actors, so, too, did he wish his prose and his poetry to be lived-in: not to be made forbidding, inhospitable, by the ghost of an eremitic author, but to be inviting of the insights and participation of the sensitive reader. He wished, additionally, to inhabit his works himself; he wished his readership to intuit, to sense, his living presence within a work, erring and errant. Lawrence's creative self was not packed away with the completion of a single work; fluid, it osmosed in and out of individual works, fostering repetition. This dialogic, sociable mode of authorship was compelled by a desire to have his works appertain to the working-class world of his upbringing; to belong as much to the community of Eastwood as to the educated middle class. Lawrence refused any association with accepted notions of authorship and art, because they rendered the writer and the work of his hand autocratic, unsociable, and exclusionary.

History, community, politics, and reader-participation

I want, at this juncture, to draw out these qualities of sociability and inclusion, which characterise Lawrence's singular relationship to authorship. I want, in this section, to flesh

out the connection between this relationship to authorship and Lawrence's early efforts to dramatise authentically, not only the lives and livelihoods of working-class individuals, but the workings of working-class community. I want, moreover, to integrate Chaudhuri's principal hypothesis into my study, namely, his speculation that Lawrence's poetry 'inhabits a "different" cultural space', and, as such, demands a 'special response'. As I have hereto explored, it is Chaudhuri's contention that Lawrence's poetic discourse 'breaks with traditional ideas of linearity, "development", and chronology, and often celebrates, and is also generated from, the disruption of these very things' (Chaudhuri, 5–6). What I have yet to relay in detail is Chaudhuri's insistence that the reading of such a discourse 'requires an imaginative leap on the reader's part' (6). This leap 'needs to be taken', Chaudhuri writes, so that we might 'reappraise [Lawrence's] discourse in the context of cultural determinants that are often at odds with the assumptions of the dominant culture according to which most texts are read' (6). That is to say, Lawrence's poetic discourse 'inhabits a "different" cultural space' to the one occupied by the majority of literary texts, and must be read accordingly (6). By way of explaining what he means by a text's 'inhabit[ing] a "different" cultural space', Chaudhuri engages with Gabriel Josipovici's 1990 article 'The Bible in Focus'. In this essay, Josipovici argues for the necessity of taking into consideration 'the cultural determinants that create a discourse,' and of developing a mode of reading appropriate to that discourse (Chaudhuri, 6). In application of this principle to the Bible, he calls attention to the unpreparedness of certain of its readers to take into account the context and the spirit in which it was written. Josipovici names Kierkegaard as one such reader: he 'notably failed to read Genesis 22 as it was meant to be read because he did not feel that he needed to enter imaginatively into a world different from his own where the Bible was concerned' (Josipovici, cited by Chaudhuri, 6). Of this assertion, Chaudhuri remarks:

> As one can see, Josipovici's concern is not primarily, …, with the 'true' meaning of the text, or even whether a 'true' meaning exists; it is with the cultural determinants that create a discourse, and make it 'different', an imaginative understanding of that 'difference' being both inextricably involved with, and the first necessity of, reading that discourse; or else, there is the danger of a cultural misreading.
>
> (Chaudhuri, 6)

Developing his premise, Josipovici 'suggest[s] a contrast between the kind of discourse that the Bible and also the Homeric epics constitute, as compared to [Virgil's] *Aeneid*,' (Chaudhuri, 6). 'For Josipovici,' Chaudhuri writes, 'biblical man is defined by his being part of a *community*' (Chaudhuri, 6, my emphasis). In Virgil's vision, however, 'man is *alone*, unrelated to nature or to the larger rhythm of the universe, except through an effort of the will' (Josipovici, cited Chaudhuri, 6, my emphasis). This 'contrast between the "communal" and the "individual"' is extended by Josipovici 'to suggest the "difference" of biblical discourse' (Chaudhuri, 6). As Josipovici writes,

> The contrast is enforced by something we take for granted in the Bible, but which is in fact a crucial element: the sense of teeming generations and innumerable episodes—far more than we can ever remember. The *Aeneid*, on the other hand, presents us with selected types and carefully chosen episodes, each of which is carefully crafted to make a point.
>
> Well, it will be said, what can you expect? One is a communal work, a massive series of chronicles and stories joined together, written over a thousand years by many people; the other is one man's attempt to produce a large public work….
>
> The contrast between Virgil on the one hand, and Homer and the Bible on the other, can help us to see a little more clearly what the latter two works have in common. It may be that the word 'communal' can be seen to refer not just to their origins but also to how they ask us to respond to them.
>
> (Josipovici, cited by Chaudhuri, 7)

Chaudhuri positions Lawrence's poetry alongside the Bible and the Homeric epics. 'Lawrence's poetry, too, asks us for a special response,' Chaudhuri writes, 'a reimagining of the way we read poetry',

> [f]or it, too, is 'communal' in that it refuses to inhabit a purely aesthetic ahistorical place; its insistence on incorporating idiosyncratic personal opinion and an extreme polemical voice is one of its ways of making itself exist in a specifically historic, rather than transcendentally artistic, 'moment' (Lawrence's word), a 'moment' which is to be distinguished, thus, from Virginia Woolf's private, uncommunal 'moment' or Joyce's 'epiphany'.
>
> (Chaudhuri, 7)

Lawrence's making room in his poetry for 'personal opinion' and 'polemical voice' defies the advice of Percy Bysshe Shelley, who wrote in 'A Defence of Poetry' that a poet 'would do ill to embody his own conceptions of right and wrong, which are usually those of his place and time, in his poetical creations, which participate in neither' (Shelley, cited in Chaudhuri, 168). Not only does Lawrence 'embody his own conceptions of right and wrong… in his poetical creations,' but he does so believing, contrarily, that his poems 'participate' in history; in the 'place and time' of their creation. As such, Lawrence's poetics constitutes a refutation of 'Shelleyan aesthetics,' the notion that poetry demands, in Shelley's words, 'a going out of our own nature, and an identification of ourselves with the beautiful which exists in thought, action, or person, not our own' (Shelley, cited in Chaudhuri, 168). For Shelley, 'self-transcendence'—or the '"escape from personality", to use Eliot's words, into "other lives"'—is the looked-for issue of 'a bond of "primal sympathy" between the poet and those creatures whose lives he imaginatively enters' (167–168). For Lawrence, self-transcendence is neither necessary nor desirable, because he does not share with Shelley and Eliot the same foundational understanding of the purpose, or possibilities, of poetry; he does not share in the assumption, as Shelley wrote in 'A Defence of Poetry', that 'the pains and pleasures of a species must become [the poet's] own' (Shelley, cited in Chaudhuri, 168). Lawrence, as Chaudhuri thinks, bridled at the idea that '[a] special person—the poet—at a special moment of illumination understands, through imagining "intensely and comprehensively", the fundamental sameness, suggested by [Shelley's word] "identification" (*not* the 'difference'),

of "the other"' (168). As Chaudhuri writes, Lawrence 'would argue with the assumption that the "other" is knowable,' to be had, gained, or synthesised through any exercise of imaginative projection (168). He would query whether the 'difference [of the other] can be essentialized in the terms—"pains and pleasures", "the beautiful which exists in thought"—of the "sympathizer"' (168). Furthermore, 'he would question Shelley's view that the imaginative perception of the "other" is a moment of *extraordinary* moral illumination, and argue, rather, for "otherness" and "difference" being *the normal condition of existence*' (Chaudhuri, 168–169, my emphases).

As Chaudhuri notes, there is a 'political dimension of Shelleyan aesthetics,' and it resides in the implied characterisation of the 'other' as 'waiting passively to be occupied by the "sympathizer"' (169). In the notion of poetry promulgated by Shelley and Eliot both is 'the presence of a trope of capture and appropriation' (169). For this reason, in part, Lawrence suspected the 'rhetoric of "sympathy"' (169). He was wary of the potential for dishonesty in this disciplined practice of sympathy; of its being no more than an outward show of compassion for the 'other'. He detected in 'the vocabulary of romanticism' what Chaudhuri terms 'a covert strain of violence,' and gave his suspicions expression in his poem 'Retort to Whitman': 'And whoever walks a mile full of false sympathy | walks to the funeral of the whole human race' (169). As Chaudhuri avows, 'Lawrence's perception of the "other's" difference radically revises the strain of romantic humanism to which Shelley belongs,' and situates Lawrence's poetry in 'a "different" cultural space' (168, 6). That is,

> For Lawrence, a poetry that incorporates 'conceptions of right and wrong, which are usually those of '[the poet's] place and time'—splenetic outbursts and rantings—is [a] way of taking the poem out of that pure, ideal, ahistorical space, and contextualizing it in a particular time and place that has been called 'merely personal' by Lawrence's critics, but which is also the trace and embodiment of 'difference'. For the ideal, disinterested, ahistorical moment is a myth that a

> dominant group believes in, propagates, and, most importantly, uses to suppress the 'pettiness' and waywardness of the 'different'.
>
> (Chaudhuri, 169–170)

Like 'Shelleyan aesthetics,' then, Lawrence's poetics has its own 'political dimension' (169). As Chaudhuri states, '[t]he introduction of the "quarrelsome", the argumentative, and the "personal" into poetry reminds us that there is no single, universal cultural basis for reading, that such an assumption is in itself political, and that the process of creativity and reading take place within contexts that are continually "differential", with specific backgrounds and histories' (170-171).

By other means than quarrelsomeness, Lawrence's poetry 'make[s] itself exist in a specifically historic, rather than transcendentally artistic, "moment"' (Chaudhuri, 7). The recurrence, the repetition, in his poetry 'of certain redundant but typical words and images'—by which the poet abjured the closure of individual poems, and effected their interdiscursiveness—forces, Chaudhuri claims, a perception of Lawrence as 'a creator interfering with his work… and existing *in history and community* rather than simply in a purely canonical literary tradition' (Chaudhuri, 7, my emphasis). 'For such a text,' Chaudhuri continues, 'which exists in a communal rather than in a canonical moment, Josipovici suggests an alternative approach', namely, a participatory one (7). 'For Nietzsche, for Homer, and for the bulk of the Bible,' as Josipovici writes, 'the world is multifarious, always in transformation, and can only be grasped through juxtaposition and discontinuities and *in the dimension of time*' (Josipovici, cited by Chaudhuri, 7, my emphasis). '[O]ur partial vision is itself the guarantor of the world,' he goes on, 'and our attitude to it should be one not of *focus* but of *participation*' (Josipovici, cited by Chaudhuri, 7).

'Lawrence's poetics,' as Chaudhuri shows, 'is a questioning… of the power structure embodied in traditional modes of reading' (8). This questioning, or criticism, originates with

'Lawrence's own conception of Art', which is itself 'a discourse that struggles to move towards communality and participation, and away from control and power' (8). This notion that Lawrence's poetics, like his 'conception of Art', moves against control and power is suggested by Lawrence himself in a letter he wrote to Carlo Linati in January 1925. In this letter, Lawrence responds to an article printed in *Corriere della Serra*, in which the author, Linati, characterised Lawrence 'as a writer whose imaginative intensity exceeds his capacity for thematic and structural control' (Lawrence, 1989, 200). 'I never knew I was so *frenetico*', Lawrence's riposte begins. He continues:

> But really, Signor Linati, do you think that books should be sort of toys, nicely built up of observations and sensations, all finished and complete? – I don't. To me, even Synge, whom I admire very much indeed, is a bit too rounded off, as it were, put on the shelf to be looked at. I can't bear art that you can walk round and admire. A book should be either a bandit or a rebel or a man in a crowd. People should either run for their lives, or come under the colours, or say *how do you do*? I hate the actor and audience business. An author should be among the crowd, kicking their shins or cheering them on to some mischief or merriment – That rather cheap seat in the gods where one sits with fellows like Anatole France and benignly looks down on the foibles, follies, and frenzies of so-called fellow-men, just annoys me. After all, the world is *not* a stage – not to me: nor a theatre: nor a show-house of any sort. And art, especially novels, are not little theatres where the reader sits aloft and watches – like a god with a twenty-Lira ticket – and sighs, commiserates, condones and smiles. – That is what you want a book to be: because it leaves you so safe and superior, with your two-dollar ticket to the show. And that's what my books are not and never will be. You need not complain that I don't subject the intensity of my vision – or whatever it is – to some vast and imposing rhythm – by which you mean, isolate it on to a stage so that you can look down on it like a god who has got a ticket to the show. I never will: and you will never have that satisfaction from me. Stick to Synge, Anatole France, Sophocles: they will never kick the footlights even. But whoever reads me will be in the thick of the scrimmage, and if he doesn't like it – if he wants a safe seat in the audience – let him read somebody else.
>
> (Lawrence, 1989, 200–201)

Here, a thirty-nine-year-old Lawrence, with some fifteen years' writing experience, declares his aversion to works of art that are 'a bit too rounded off,' works so 'finished and complete' that one might 'walk around and admire' them. He 'can't bear art' that is separate and inert; he prefers that a book 'be either a bandit or a rebel', and its author 'among the crowd, kicking their shins or cheering them on to some mischief or merriment', or, anyway, some

action. Lawrence *is* this author: 'whoever reads me will be in the thick of the scrimmage,' he writes, 'and if he doesn't like it… let him read somebody else'. Central to Chaudhuri's study is the idea that Lawrence rejected prevailing associations of authorship; he objected to the principle intrinsic to 'Shelleyan aesthetics' that the poet is in some way exceptional, sits proud of the crowd, or the masses, '[a] special person', who 'understands, through imagining "intensely and comprehensively", the fundamental sameness… of "the other"' (Shelley, cited by Chaudhuri, 168). Lawrence's letter bears out this reading, and leaves in no doubt the reason for his wishing to sluice from his poetry all traces of the 'static abstraction' of the author: '[t]hat rather cheap seat in the gods where one sits with fellows like Anatole France and benignly looks down on the foibles, follies, and frenzies of so-called fellow-men, just annoys me'. Lawrence exposes as fallacy the idea that art-making, and the consumption of art, facilitate fellow feeling; that 'a bond of "primal sympathy"', to appropriate Shelley's expression, is able to be forged between the poet and the object of his intellectual notice by the potency of the imagination, and that a like bond of sympathy between the consumer of an artwork and its human subject is experienced by the consumer at point of interaction (Shelley, cited by Chaudhuri, 167–168). To Lawrence's mind, there is an overlap between those authors, philosophers and critics who prefer their art *apart*—regard it from a 'safe and superior' remove—and those who congratulate themselves on achieving a sense of communion with the human subject of an artwork, whether it is an artwork of their own making or one they only consume. But, as Lawrence would convince Linati, this communion is provisional if one relates to art as does the audience-member to the actor. Being provisional, being short-lived, it is not communion, but condescension. Indeed, Lawrence would make clear in this letter that 'identification' with persons whose subjectivities and experiences one might hope to 'capture' in one's poetry—or, indeed, in one's 'books'—is not the aspiration of

all poets and novelists (Chaudhuri, 169). It is the preserve of artists and readers who believe that a book should be 'nicely built up of observations and sensations,' a museum-piece, a dollhouse, a bauble; it is the preserve of artists and readers who, enacting the transactional model of 'the actor and [the] audience', would 'isolate [art] on to a stage so that [they] can look down on it like a god'. This preference for separateness is likely to be attended by a perception of the world as 'a stage'. He who insists that art be sedate—subjected 'to some vast and imposing rhythm'—betrays his lack of involvement in the world. His approach to life is acquisitive, rather than participatory; he is covetous of experience, as the ticket-bearing theatregoer is covetous of the experiences set forth in the play he absorbs from his 'seat in the audience'. Lawrence's insistence that 'the world is *not* a stage', nor novels 'little theatres', lends weight to Chaudhuri's contention that Lawrence wished his poetry to 'exist in a *specifically historic*, rather than transcendentally artistic, "moment" (Lawrence's word), a "moment" which is to be distinguished, thus, from Virginia Woolf's private, uncommunal "moment" or Joyce's "epiphany"' (Chaudhuri, 7, my emphasis). These two opposing modes of engagement with art and with the world are the same opposing modes of engagement described by Josipovici, whose two contrasting archetypes are the Bible and Virgil's *Aeneid*. Citing Josipovici, Chaudhuri expresses the contrast as follows: 'biblical man is defined by his being part of a *community*... while 'for Virgil man is alone, unrelated to nature or to the larger rhythm of the universe, except through an effort of the will'' (Chaudhuri, 6). As he makes clear in his letter, Lawrence aspires to have his art embody 'the "difference" of biblical discourse' (6). He would have his works of art be communal, as the Bible is 'a communal work' (7): '[a] book should be… a man in a crowd', he writes, the reader 'in the thick of the scrimmage'. Nothing, nothing that even a well-meaning newspaperman might write of his work, could induce Lawrence to produce art that colludes in the illusion—the *lie*—of man

'alone,' man as 'unrelated to… the larger rhythm of the universe, except through an effort of the will', or the purchase of a ticket; 'you will never have that satisfaction from me', he guarantees, and we believe him.

That this confirmation of Chaudhuri's insights should come couched in terms of social status is important: it suggests that the 'political dimension' of Lawrence's poetics is one rooted in considerations of class. The object of Lawrence's criticism, that is, the artist or consumer who sits in judgement over art and, by extension, over those whose experiences it interprets, is plainly a member of the elite; the author or punter who relates to art as from a 'cheap seat in the gods' is characterised by his sedentariness ('sit aloft'), his etiquette ('sighs, commiserates, condones and smiles'), his attachment to money ('twenty-Lira ticket'), and his delusions of grandeur and advantage. In his essay 'Corasmin and the Parrots', which opens his 1927 collection of essays *Mornings in Mexico*, Lawrence consolidates these qualities of the individual who embodies the pious relationship to art he censures in his letter. It is worth reproducing the first few paragraphs of that essay:

> One says Mexico: one means, after all, one little town away South in the Republic: and in this little town, one rather crumbly adobe house built round two sides of a garden *patio*: and of this house, one spot on the deep, shady veranda facing inwards to the trees, where there are an onyx table and three rocking-chairs and one little wooden chair, a pot with carnations, and a person with a pen. We talk so grandly, in capital letters, about Morning in Mexico. All it amounts to is one little individual looking at bit of sky and trees, then looking down at the page of his exercise book.
>
> It is a pity we don't always remember this. When books come out with grand titles, like *The Future of America*, or *The European Situation*, it's a pity we don't immediately visualize a thin or a fat person, in a chair or a bed, dictating to a bob-haired stenographer or making little marks on paper with a fountain pen.
>
> (Lawrence, 2009, 9)

Morsia (2021) perceives how, in these lines, Lawrence punctures the inflated reputation of literature, and the apotheosis of its creators; Lawrence 'may […] be praised', Morsia writes, 'for exposing the *modernist* myth of the author as a godlike authority, a figure both

everywhere and nowhere' (Morsia, 213). Morsia interprets the essay's opening as evidence that 'Lawrence's notion of creativity is […] *empirical*' (213). In this, Morsia notes, Lawrence resembles nineteenth-century writers Edgar Allan Poe and Gustave Flaubert. But Morsia's characterisation of this opening meditation as 'Lawrence's humble account of the writer as '"one little individual"' suggests he misses something of the extremity of Lawrence's position (213). Indeed, so humiliated is writing in this passage—the object (generic), and the action—one could be convinced that Lawrence nursed a hatred for the whole concern, or, at least, found distasteful some combination of the dignification of writing, the lionisation of the writer, the literary business, and even the *act* of writing itself. The word 'writing' is altogether missing from this passage, and its referent reduced to 'looking' and the 'making [of] little marks on paper'. Lawrence absents the writer from the process by which books become available to readers ('When books come out'), and centres attention on the mediation and female labour that was then commonplace, and instrumental in the emergence of works 'with grand titles'. Lawrence divests the writer of identifying features ('a thin or a fat person'), and makes him sedentary ('in a chair or in a bed'). Morsia's 'humble' implies that, even as Lawrence undermines the eminence of the writer, he nonetheless *identifies* as one. On the contrary, Lawrence appears, here, to renounce the name of writer. And it is my contention that Lawrence puts some distance between himself and the writer-designation, because he wished to reduce the distance between himself and the reader. The deictic, telescoping opening sentence makes tiny the figure of Lawrence, who must be picked out on a 'shady veranda', congested with chairs and other fixtures, and who calls himself—not 'writer'—but 'person with a pen'. Consistent with the matryoshka logic of this opening, its organisation of places and things by decreasing order of mass, it is to be understood that Lawrence is lesser than the 'pot with carnations,' lesser, that is, in *specialness*, rather than in

size. Lawrence is no more remarkable than his neighbour, which is to say, no more remarkable than carnations. His purpose in this passage is to assert his little-personness and, thus, his commonality, *not* with any writer, but with the non-writer, the everyman. In so doing, he withholds his utility to an elitist 'culture,' which, as Foucault theorises, 'impedes the free circulation, the free manipulation, the free composition, decomposition, and recomposition of fiction' (Foucault, cited by Chaudhuri, 53). It is significant that Lawrence composed 'Corasmin and the Parrots' in December 1924. Lawrence wrote his letter to Linati in January 1925. That a mere month separated Lawrence's completion of the first draft of 'Corasmin', and his taking up pen and paper to answer Linati's review, might explain the consistencies between the two texts, and the formulations of an ordinary authorship they enclose.

It is no less significant that Lawrence, in his letter to Linati, uses theatre-imagery to articulate his frustration with the statutory relationship of the artist to his work. Lawrence corresponded with Linati over a decade after writing the mining plays. Nonetheless, he seizes on the actor–audience relation to illustrate the—as *he* thinks—fraudulent separation of the reader from the work of literature and its author. This bears out my thesis that the writing of the plays was a transformative experience for Lawrence, an epiphanic moment, because it was central to the evolution of a mode of authorship that was palatable to Lawrence: not hegemonic, not exclusionary, not imperious, or imperialistic. That theatre emerges as the bogeyman of Lawrence's letter—the scene of crimes perpetrated against art by men of letters—warrants contextualisation. Lawrence's plays were not performed in the years immediately following their composition. In fact, they were performed hardly at all in Lawrence's lifetime, and, when they were, they met with a lukewarm reception. Writing to Esmé Percy in December 1926 of a recent production of *The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd*,

Lawrence commended the actor for 'ma[king] the play live, even if there was no making it please the audience' (*Letters, Vol. V.,* 604). As Raymond Williams suggests, the *problem* of the staging of Lawrence's early dramas was extrinsic: there was no theatrical provision for *this* work at *that* time, and scant understanding of Lawrence's transvaluation of high naturalism (Williams, 11). The institution of English theatre was then unready for 'the play which gets close to ordinary experience, not only by taking ordinary situations and probable characters, but by using these to *embody* crises of immediate relationships, with an emphasis on ways of speaking, minutely observed and reproduced, as the social reality of a *particular* way of life' (Williams, 11, my emphases). 'In a theatre… in which the presentation and *rounding-off* of experience were habitual,' as in the English and European theatres of the early twentieth-century, Lawrence's plays were unwelcome, because *un-play-like*; 'such an emphasis on flow, incompleteness, unfinished rhythms because the lives were unfinished, would not easily be accepted as 'dramatic' at all' (12, my emphasis).

I want now to re-engage with the plays to consolidate my argument that Lawrence's relationship to authorship was formed, to great extent, in the process of their composition, and in the crucible of the creation of the character of Mrs Gascoigne.

The dogmatism of narrative language

Lawrence knew well the tyranny of certain kinds of authorship, because he had at one time, before his writing of the plays, conformed to the established conceptualisation of the author. His search for an alternative mode of authorship was not concluded upon putting pen to paper to write the first of his plays in 1909; Lawrence's negotiation of the associations of authorship was waged in the writing of the mining plays and his prose works of the same period. In the same four years in which Lawrence began and redrafted the mining plays, he

sought in his prose to portray class tensions in their fullest, bilateral complexity. His growing 'awareness of class divisions' inclined him, as Worthen writes, 'to think of other people according to how far they were individual, independent, proud, and capable of fulfilling themselves' (Worthen, 237). But Lawrence's early writing was not always commensurate to his thinking, and in some of the prose of this period Lawrence deprived his working-class characters of their self-determination. Certain of the stories Lawrence composed around the time of his writing the plays are—as I earlier argued—impaired by the overbearingness of their narrators; by an hauteur that, as Worthen reminds, Lawrence was 'capable of himself' (237). His choosing to depict class conflict through the singular perspective of a middle-class narrator prevented a more complete identification with the working-class characters of his fiction. But Lawrence's dereliction of these characters—his failure to give them a fair hearing; to represent members of the lower social orders as independent and individual—cannot be imputed to the assertiveness of a first-person narrator alone. The problems of the device of the narrator—tendentiousness, rigidity, imperviousness to other perspectives—are to some extent the problems of narrative prose.

In the writing of the plays, Lawrence became conscious of the dogmatism of narrative prose. In dispensing with it—in being 'unable to introduce the kind of moralising commentaries which interfere with the 1909-11 versions of "Odour of Chrysanthemums"'—he came to suspect its pretension to truth; to universal validity (Worthen, 244). More than this, it is my contention that Lawrence actively dramatised the peremptoriness of narrative language in the figure of Mrs Gascoigne. To use a proverb in conversation, as Mrs Gascoigne uses proverbs, is to append a general truth to a particular experience. It is to dogmatise the

meaning of that same experience, and to have the "last word" in its interpretation.[28] Put another way, the uttering of a proverb in response to an event imposes on that event a singular interpretation. In the context of its utterance, then, a proverb is impregnable: it is the end of the road; it shuts down or terminates discussion. The speaking of a proverb is, therefore, an exertion of control not only over the experience that prompts the proverb's utterance, but over the conversation as a whole, and over its other participants. It is, in this way, an aggression.

Mrs Gascoigne's aphorisms reflect the breadth, the precinct, of experience of the members of the community of Eastwood, and, especially, of its women. They partake of a phraseology proportional to its needs, developed by the community for the expression of its interests. To make use of these phrases is, inescapably, to retrace the bounds of these interests and values; to entrench them. The speaking of these phrases, then, entails a motion of containment and, by extension, of self-preservation. Mrs Gascoigne's sententiousness is a kind of isolationism. Within the compass of the play, her apothegms generalise her experiences and the experiences of those around her, and put them at the service of the wider mining community. In other words, she annexes the personal and presently-unfolding experiences of those around her to the impersonal, immemorial experience of the community at large. In doing so, she subordinates the individual, makes his or her interests subservient to the interests of the community, and herself performs the part of custodian, custodian of the mores and the welfare of a people. The reclamation, or reinstatement, of the values of community is, as a rule, more important to Mrs Gascoigne than any impression

[28]The proverbial power-play exhibited by Mrs Gascoigne demonstrates a recognised characteristic of proverb usage, as Norrick explains: 'the traditional character of proverbs imbues their ideational meanings with authority and lends their directive interactional meanings force' (Norrick, 29). He continues: 'due to their didactic, authoritative character, proverbs tend to place the speaker in a one-up position' (Norrick, 29).

upon the individual his or her first-hand experience might make. For her, all experiences are serviceable, eligible for absorption into the story of a community. But the story that appeals to Mrs Gascoigne is the one already written; it is inscribed in the aphorisms, the general truths, dispensed to her by the dialect of Eastwood. She mistakes this delimited provision of language for a comprehensive one in quite the same way as the narrator of 'A Blot' cleaves, at his convenience, to a vision of human nature, that is not, he is startled to find, inclusive of all experience. In reaching always for the choicest proverb, she shores up, reinforces, the universal story at the expense of individuality and difference. Her mythicising of the affairs and feelings of those who keep her company smooths over the nuance of those affairs and feelings; it reduces their radial potential to a single, final interpretation.

Mrs Gascoigne's spoken language is no less forcible than narrative language. Up until the moment of Minnie's intervention in Act Three of *The Daughter-in-Law*, she has succeeded in overseeing the lives of her adult sons, Luther and Joe. She has kept them close by her, and infantilised them so absolutely that they lack the wherewithal to make decisions independently of her. But she has not done so by cossetting her sons. When Minnie and Mrs Gascoigne quarrel, with Luther and Joe both present, Mrs Gascoigne asks Luther if she has 'iver marded and coddled' him, and he answers in the negative: 'Tha hasna, beguy!' 'No, you haven't, perhaps,' says Minnie, 'not by look of things. But you've bossed him. You've decided everything for him, really. He's depended on you as much when he was thirty as when he was three. You've told him what to do, and he did it' (Lawrence, 1969, 135). Not by spoiling her sons has she removed their volition, but by the strength of her opinions, which she expresses more often than not in aphorisms. Even in the midst of their four-way quarrel, Mrs Gascoigne dispenses instructions to Luther, which he follows, albeit complainingly. 'You see', Minnie remarks, 'His mother's word is law to him. He'd do what I told, but his *feel* would be

for you. He's got no *feeling* for me. You keep all that' (135). So acute is Luther's reliance on his mother, so all-consuming their relationship, there is little of himself left over that he might give to another relationship. As Minnie observes, both he and Joe are as if spiritually wedded to their mother. Luther 'belong[s] to his mother', Minnie tells her, 'He doesn't and can't *really* care for me. You stand before him' (135). Joe corroborates Minnie's insights: 'Mother, tha knows it's right' (136). For his own part, Joe feels trapped; he feels as if conjoined with Mrs Gascoigne. His path in life *she* has determined; it is the *same* as hers: 'me, a young man, belongs to thy owd age' (136). Such is Joe's attachment to her, he could not move away if he wished, and this paralysis of action makes him miserable: 'Tha knows I couldna leave thee, Mother […] I canna leave thee to go my own road. An' I wish, yi, often, as I wor dead' (137). Even in the event that he should move to Australia, as he is given to talking about, 'th' best part on me wouldna go wi' me' (137). 'If I went,' he explains, 'I should be a husk of a man. I'm allers a husk of a man, Mother. There's nowt solid about me' (137). In contriving to control her children, Mrs Gascoigne has caused them to feel insubstantial, less than human: 'I'm nowt, Mother, an' I count for nowt', says Joe (137). She has turned them into ciphers. They can neither speak nor move without thinking first of her; they must have her imprimatur, or else do nothing. 'There's not much of a man about me', laments Joe, 'T'other chaps is more of fools, but they more of men an' a' – an' they know it' (137). 'That's thy fault', Mrs Gascoigne protests. 'Yi', says Joe, sarcastically, 'an' will be – ter th' end o' th' chapter' (137).

As mouthpiece and steward of the community of which she is a part, Mrs Gascoigne resembles the writer of fiction. The conventional writer of fiction writes only as much reported speech as is needed to advance the overarching principle of his narrative, which is paramount. Reported speech and, by extension, the interiorities of his characters, are

pressed into the service of a fixed and pre-meditated edifice, and ringed about by the narrative voice that unifies his novel. Mrs Gascoigne's language is not narrative language, though it shares with narrative language its determinism. By her language-use, Mrs Gascoigne exerts control over others, and over experience. She turns the people in her orbit into dramatis personae, and codifies their behaviours, their feelings, their speech. Her speech is a form of storytelling, and she the guardian-authoress—or author-Goddess—of the narrative of her community. In this way, she embodies the quality of authorship that Lawrence wished, at this point in his career, to reject, and would persist in rejecting long into maturity. As Chaudhuri writes, 'the Lawrentian God is not, in his heaven, the "engineer" of his works, planning them a priori, controlling and creating them, but a *bricoleur*' (55). He 'does not bring forms into existence out of nothing', but 'creates out of what is at hand,' 'treating one text, or poem, as generative of another' (55, 9). Lawrence's presence pervades his works; we sense it, Chaudhuri writes, 'through his own inadequacies and unfinishedness as a poet' (11). He does not impose upon the poem from above, decreeing its meaning remotely; 'we see him,' rather, 'undermining his position as the "author-God", in Barthes's sense, of his work, as escaping the privileged but static position of "writer", and as freeing his poems from his own *limiting* presence' (11, my emphasis).

In the figure of Mrs Gascoigne, the young Lawrence dramatised the problems of narrative language as they seemed to him in this period. He was, at the time of his writing these plays (1909–1914), seeking 'a language in which to write about what people *really* are' (Worthen, 240). To Lawrence's mind, at that time, narrative language was *not* that language. Its coerciveness and circumscription of the richness of human experience rendered it incommensurate to his ambitions of this period. The paternalism of narrative prose, as he

then perceived it, was not conducive to the representation of working-class people as 'individual, independent, proud, and capable of fulfilling themselves' (Worthen, 237).

Community, continuity, flow

That Mrs Gascoigne conceives of community not as a plastic, adaptable entity, but a fixed and intellectual one, dissociable from the cultural moment, and the people that make it up, is not unrelated to Lawrence's feeling that narrative language was ill-suited to the representation of working-class experience in all its complexity. As each of these plays makes apparent, chief among the characteristics of the community they describe is the fact of its being in progress. Notwithstanding its social and cultural specificity, this industrial community cannot in actuality, and despite Mrs Gascoigne's best efforts, *be* fixed, but is continuous. It is not the edifice she would make of it, but more closely resembles an organism, formed of many interdependent parts, or agents. It is processual, because lived. As Worthen writes of the ritual significance of Friday night in the colliery village, '[f]or many people it marks the end of the working week, and the arrival of the pay-packet: but for housewives, it simply means the continuation of work' (Worthen, 242-3). *A Collier's Friday Night* concludes with Mother making ready the room and her husband's work-things for the following day. Lawrence's stage directions are comprehensive: *'She sets the table with a cup and saucer, plate, knife, sugar-basin, brown-and-white teapot and tea-caddy. Then she fetches a tin bottle and a soiled snapbag, and lays them together on the bare half of the table. She puts out the salt and goes and drags the pit-trousers from the cupboard and puts them near the fire'* (78). Ernest attends to the fire, as his mother *'fetches another candle and continues her little tasks'* (78). When Ernest has gone upstairs and his 'bedroom door is heard to shut', only then does she stop, '*stands and looks in the fire*', and only for '*a moment or*

two' (79). She passes '*into the scullery, and after a minute – during which running of water is heard – she returns with her candle, looking little and bowed and pathetic, and crosses the room, softly closing the passage door behind her*' (79). Such 'details' as Lawrence furnishes at the close of *A Collier's Friday Night,* 'save the ending', thinks Worthen, 'from mawkishness' (245). The 'mother's rinsing her husband's pit-bottle', specifically, 'reminds the audience that life must go on, that even overwrought feelings exist within the context of ordinary life' (Worthen, 245). The Friday night that Lawrence dramatised in this, his first ever play, is both the same as any other and profoundly different, singular. When Ernest and his mother bid each other good night, '*[t]here is in their tones a dangerous gentleness – so much gentleness that the safe reserve of their souls is broken*' (79). Their reciprocal vulnerability, the mutual disclosure of their care for one another, causes Mother *on this night* to pause in her routine preparations of their home.

The revelation of difference within a framework of sameness or of the difference *within* repetition: this seems to me the *point* of the plays, or, at least, a significant part of the project of the plays, and the key to the success of these expressions of the working-class lived experience. Introducing his reading of Lawrence's poem 'Bavarian Gentians', which audio recording is available at the website of *The Poetry Archive*, Glyn Maxwell says the following:

> This is a poem that shows Lawrence is the great repeater of words in English literature; you see it in the novels as well. And he teaches us that to say the same word over and over, as he says the word 'blue' and the word 'dark' countless times in this poem, isn't really to repeat them, because the context changes, and they deepen, and get stranger and stranger. This is a great example of that.
>
> (Maxwell, undated)

No less than in the poetry, in the plays Lawrence shows that to perform the same rituals 'over and over,' to undertake the same tasks, is not 'really to repeat them, because the

context changes,' and because the people with whom we share our lives do not conform to type, even as they are boxed in by the rigours of economic circumstance, even as shared employment creates the impression of likeness among miners, even as occupational patterns are suggestive of obedience or submission. Rather, the plays tell us that *any* social pattern or precedent is infinitely variable, owing to the individuality, the volition, of its living members.

As by his characters' use of dialect and utterance of local aphorisms, by the narrative action or *rhythms* of the plays, Lawrence shows that difference *inheres* in repetition. Still more specifically, he demonstrates that, while the life of the miner and his wife conforms by and large to a longstanding pattern, it is, yet, *various*. In *The Daughter-in-Law*, Mrs Gascoigne is taken aback when Minnie, who is of a higher class than the Gascoignes, having worked in service and inherited money, spends all of her money in one go—investing in prints—that she might excite in her husband Luther a sense of responsibility, and become as the other wives in the community, which is to say, wholly dependent on her husband's income for their lives, forced to engage in routines of getting by, and to perform these daily samenesses. Mrs Gascoigne has never heard or witnessed anything like it. Mrs Gascoigne, like the narrator of 'The Blot', is startled out of her assumption that there is only *one* way to live, one continuous with or consistent with past example. She is made to see that there is and always will be *difference*, even where sameness seems to prevail, as in this regional mining community.

Conclusion

The mining plays were overlooked in Lawrence's lifetime. As Williams writes, 'there was no theatre in England which could remotely understand what he was trying to do' (Williams, 1969, 13). And so Lawrence diverted his attentions to other forms. He would choose 'to check the flow of action and of feeling at door and window, with that shaping social landscape of mine and railway and farm left outside,' and exchange it 'for description or report' (14). 'But there was a moment,' Williams notes, 'when these three first plays were being written, when a new English dramatist was ready to engage with his audience, in a theatre of ordinary feeling raised to intensity and community by the writing of ordinary speech, and when it was the *institutions* – the links between writer and audience – which were absent, during the occupation of the theatre by a different class and form' (Williams, 13–14, my emphasis). In his Introduction to the Penguin *Three Plays* (1969), Williams could proclaim that, owing to 'another Royal Court season, the links and so the audience [could] at last be found' (14).

Misunderstanding, and the *patua* artist

If the English theatre long ago caught up to what Lawrence 'was trying to do', the critical establishment—and Western culture at large—has still to draw up alongside Lawrence in the matter of repetition. It is unsurprising that such a radical theatre as Lawrence was creating in his twenties should keep company with a nonconventional conceptualisation of authorship, accommodating repetition. Chaudhuri likens the poet–Lawrence, who was content to create variants or multiples of poems, and intended that these multiples interanimate each other, to

Bengali painter Jamini Roy (1887–1972). Despite being 'conversant with Western ideas of authorship,' Roy swapped the Western tradition 'for the style of the anonymous *patua* artists', folk-artists 'of Kalighat in south Calcutta' (Chaudhuri, 58). As Chaudhuri explains, 'the *patua* artist was part of a distinct school of painting; each painter used more or less the same technique, images, motifs, themes, colour-schemes, as the others who belonged to that school' (57). Much like the dialect-speaker, who draws upon a specialist word-stock for his speech and social identity, the *patua* painter 'drew upon the hoard of images and themes and techniques common to that school' (57). And just as the dialect-speaker reaches for the local proverb and, in so doing, summons every *other* instance of its use *in addition* to the general truth it expresses, particularising and generalising both at once, the *patua* artist's drawing upon a communal pool of images creates the conditions for 'each painting [to] appear as a revision of a painting by another *patua*' (57). By this method of working, the *patua* 'set his painting free to interact among the group of other paintings' (58). In this way,

> each painting belongs to, and enriches, a cluster of other similar paintings which, in the mind of the spectator is forever on the verge of forming a final, composite picture; this final image, however, never forms because the paintings are always subject to endless recombinations and adjustments [by any number of painters]
>
> (Chaudhuri, 58)

Following their example, Roy 'created not so much paintings, but a style,' Chaudhuri writes, 'full of repetitions, revisions, common themes and images, displaying a single technique; in doing so, he became, as it were, a "school"' (58). He

> sacrificed the 'frame' and concepts of originality, and added image upon *related* image to that composite, final picture which would always be on the verge of forming. Because he attempted to create no isolated masterpieces, but only a free, repetitive world of forms, he was sometimes misunderstood
>
> (Chaudhuri, 58)

Like Roy's paintings, Lawrence's plays and poems are 'full of repetitions, revisions, common themes and images,' all *related*, and resulting in 'a free, repetitive world of forms,' rather than a collection of discrete works, each an entity unto itself, enclosed in its own impermeable frame. Like Roy, Lawrence was a one-man school. Like the *patua* artist, he permitted the single play to interact with his others, his poems to interact among the group of other poems. And as Roy was sometimes misunderstood, so, also, was—*and is*—Lawrence, *his* repetitions disparaged 'by critics with an intellectual background in Western art' (58). One senses that, until such a time as the cultural establishment relaxes its 'very definite and fixed notions of the author, the work of art, and originality', Lawrence must continue to be misunderstood (58). Until the establishment allows that repetition is not only productive and facilitates invention, but is an essential constituent of any authentic representation of the working-class experience, and a mode of expression to which working-class artists frequently have recourse, the autobiographical work of working-class practitioners will continue to be labelled repetitious, monotonous, one-note.

Findings

Lawrence's repetitions, as well as his revisions, effect the open-endedness of his works. Because of their interdiscursiveness, we perceive Lawrence not as the author-God, extrinsic to his works, and they as transcending the historical moment in which they were created to take up their position in the canon, but as a meddling and restive artist, whose presence we sense *within* the works, which exist in history and community. Lawrence's progressive, non-individualist authorship, his refusal to embody Foucault's 'ideological figure' of author, a fiction created by 'our culture' to bring under control and under ownership the language and

substance of literature, originates, as I have argued, with Lawrence's early plays. The mining plays, their composition, imparted to Lawrence an understanding of the workings of community and, above all, the interrelation of the members of the community of Eastwood. This interdependence—the demonstrable *flow* of people, incident and, most significantly, language between the cottages depicted in the plays—shaped Lawrence's understanding of the relationship between the individual text and the overarching textual discourse in which all his writings share. This formative representation of the reciprocity of man and his community, of the enactment of collective identity through the use of local dialect, disposed Lawrence to conceive of his oeuvre *not* as a body of work, but a body of *thought*, within which his separate texts communicate with and enrich each other. His reproduction of the aphoristic speech of the East Midlands region, and of the occupational patterns particular to the colliery village, teach us that repetition is not the same as duplication, but the introduction of difference into a framework of sameness; that repetition is the means by which difference is perceived. Upon leaving Eastwood and, from a remove, seeking to give *authentic* expression to the mores, the rhythms and the humour of this unregarded, non-metropolitan community of the industrial East Midlands, Lawrence happened upon a philosophy of authorship that would endure the whole of his career, and issue in many more multiples of works, a mode of authorship that was congruent with his working-class background and identity.

A precedent

In the chapters that follow, I will show that both Alan Sillitoe and Shane Meadows share with their Nottingham forebear an interest in having their works *belong*—as opposed to *condescend*—to the regional working-class communities they each of them represent, and

wherein they had their beginnings. To varying degrees, each seeks to reconcile his working-class identity to the identity of an artist, in which enterprise only *one* of them succeeds. And the serial works of both artists elicit, in similar and different ways, a special response, one characterised not by *focus*, but *participation*. Of the two, however, Meadows is the nearer to Lawrence's example. Meadows's approach to filmmaking recalls—because it adapts and exaggerates—Lawrence's non-individualist, sociable mode of authorship. Meadows makes a social activity of the filmmaking process, and is attracted to media, forms, and filmmaking techniques that aid the creation of communities, textual and actual.

Sillitoe had little interest in making the writing of narrative fiction a social or communal process, although the social, regional community, belonging, and identity are thematically central to the Seaton novel series. Nonetheless, Sillitoe's writing upsets accepted notions of authorship. He dispenses with the *total* control characteristic of the author-God, and he does so by way of serial writing.

CHAPTER TWO: ALAN SILLITOE

THE SEATON SERIES

> I found a copy and re-read it, and thought about the possibility of writing of someone whose life had been quite the antithesis of the kind they had led: a young man who, when called on to fight, did not automatically accept the fact that his country was worth dying for. To say, that the harder a person's life has been, the more reluctant he is to give it up, is no mere exercise in subversion, but an attempt at a reality which I knew to be common enough. Tell England this, as well, I thought.
>
> Sillitoe, *Preface to Key to the Door* (1986)

There is a difference between the kind of repetition that characterises Lawrence's works, and the repetition that inheres in serialisation. Lawrence's repetitions are unformalised; they traverse the bounds of individual texts. Serialisation binds together discrete works in a *formal* relation. Serialisation is recognised as a legitimate mode of repeating, or, more precisely, it is a literary mode that legitimates repetition. The writer of a novel series is not commonly thought to repeat him/herself, but to return, and by returning, *extend* or develop a narrative. Extension is their purpose; they must repeat to achieve it. In other words, in the context of serialisation, repetition is, as it were, a necessary evil. Extension, then, is the defining characteristic of serial writing. Yet, there can be no extension, no continuation, *without* repetition: something of the first novel in any novel series must be repeated, or continued, in order for the second novel to qualify as sequel. Something must be carried over.

A further distinction between the unformalised connectivity of Lawrence's works and the repetition and connectivity intrinsic to any series is that the former is anomalous, peculiar to Lawrence, the latter normative. There is considerable precedent for this second mode of repeating, wherein the ends (extension) justify the means (repetition). Serialisation is woven into the history of the British novel. The serial publication of novels was commonplace in the Victorian era. Indeed, long after this manner of publication ceased to be popular, serialisation continued to inflect the reader-text relationship. Alan Sillitoe, whose serial novels are the subject of this chapter, attributed his earliest interest in literature to hearing radio serialisations of Alexandre Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo* and Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* (Hanson, 1999). Serialisation continues to mediate in the reader-text relationship, owing to the high incidence of adaptations of literary texts on radio and on television. Lawrence's style of repeating, by contrast, has no precedent in literature, and finds its likeness, rather, in decorative visual art.

However, even as the serial novel is accepted in mainstream literary culture, because, in part, it appears to uphold the principle of the boundedness of texts, serialisation yet gestures towards the possibility of textual open-endedness. The writing and publication of a sequel to an extant novel effects the open-endedness of the earlier novel. In this way, the novel series owes more to oral storytelling than does the bounded, single novel. So it is that, in the matter of repetition, the writings of Lawrence and the writings of Sillitoe have more in common than first appears. It is not so easy as to organise these authors into two opposing categories of writer: the writer whose repetitions break with standard literary practice, and the writer whose repetitions adhere to notions of literary propriety. Both authors produced novel series, and both repeated in ways not legitimised by mainstream literary culture, in ways that made them vulnerable to criticism. I chose to make the dialect plays the focus of

the previous chapter, and not the novel series, because Lawrence's serial writing does not suffice to exemplify his commitment to the representation of the culturally-specific region of the industrial East Midlands. His composition of the sequence of novels *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*, and his reopening of that two-book narrative with the drama *Touch and Go*, are implicated in and, I hope, illuminated by my analyses of the mining plays. But the novel series and their creation are not *of themselves* demonstrative of the total effects of Lawrence's repeating. They do not suggest as effectively as the mining plays the relationship between his depictions of the mining community of Eastwood and the mode of authorship his writing of the mining plays excited.

Of these two authors, Sillitoe was the more attracted to the serial form. Over the course of his writing career, he composed four separate novel series: a trilogy for children, featuring a character named Marmalade Jim, published over seventeen years; the William Posters trilogy, published over nine years; the two Michael Cullen books, *A Start in Life* (1970) and *Life Goes On* (1985), separated by fifteen years; and the series originating with the most famous of Sillitoe's works, *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, which charted the lives of the Seaton brothers, Arthur, Brian, and Derek. No two works of any of these series were published successively: always another novel or collection of stories or poetry interposed, or interceded, between instalments of a serial narrative. Sillitoe's repeating was not limited to the writing of novel series; his body of work is broadly reiterative. There exist in his oeuvre multiple versions of the same story, reworked. Elements of plot in his fiction have their correlatives in his non-fiction. So it is that Sillitoe's oeuvre has the earmarks of oral storytelling. More than does the oeuvre of a writer who writes only single novels and eschews self-repetition, Sillitoe's body of work seems rooted in this tradition of retelling, and not only because he wrote in the serial form. I have chosen to focus, here, on Sillitoe's serial

novels—the Seaton series, particularly—because these are the more revealing of his longstanding engagement with the place and regional identity of Nottingham. As with the previous chapter, I hope that the following analyses of Sillitoe's Seaton series, published over a period of forty years, illuminate the wider pattern of repetition that is general throughout Sillitoe's body of work.

This chapter examines Sillitoe's four-book Seaton novel series, focusing on the underexplored second, third, and fourth novels, *Key to the Door* (1961)*, The Open Door* (1989), and *Birthday* (2001), which share a protagonist in the character of Brian Seaton. With a view to opening up Sillitoe's serial depiction of Nottingham and the wider East Midlands, and taking a cue from his longstanding interest in maps and land surveying, this chapter looks to geographical thought and, in particular, to human geography, and its definitions of person-place relationships. Laying emphasis on Edward Relph's phenomenology of place, and his taxonomy of 'ways of experiencing places', I apply conceptual vocabularies drawn from human geography ('insideness', 'outsideness', 'place identity', 'place consciousness', 'place belonging') to each of the three novels in turn (Relph, 50). A series of close readings throws light on Sillitoe's articulation of Brian's boyhood identification with Nottingham, especially the cherished, rural environment of his grandparents' home and its surroundings (*Key to the Door*); the contingency of Brian's affective connection to his hometown, which is troubled by a posting overseas, and his cultivation of an 'air-mindedness', the bird's-eye view afforded the pilot, and required of the writer Brian would become (*The Open Door*); and Brian's estrangement from home and, by extension, from a part of himself, his emotional bond with his birthplace eroded by decades' absence (*Birthday*) (Daniels and Rycroft, 468). This chapter argues that Sillitoe's repetitive practices, chief among them, his use of the serial form, originate with Sillitoe's geographical imagination, which disposed him to read place as

unstable, open-ended, indeterminate, and multiple, and to understand, and represent in his fiction, the impermanence of the meaningfulness of place.

I will open with an outline of critical perspectives relating to the repetitiveness of Sillitoe's work. I will also provide a detailed biography, drawn from multiple sources, to illustrate the personal nature of Sillitoe's literary fiction, and the closeness of the narratives of the Seaton novels to the circumstances of his own life.

Repetition: a critical landscape

The recursive movements of Lawrence's writing that mirror the motions of emotional thinking have elicited all manner of responses. Exponents of genetic criticism, as I showed in the previous chapter, have identified in Lawrence's works what they term instances of reuse: instances in which the author seemed 'merely [to have] reused his earlier insights' in the writing of scenarios or interpersonal dynamics. This grouping together of correspondent elements of plot gives rise to comparisons of merit. Multiples of the same scenario are seldom seen as equal in value; one or other appearance of the scene is pronounced the superior version (the better couched, the more successful). Genetic critics thus entrench the censure of repetition that is prevalent in literary culture. They make impossible an appreciation of the *productivity* of Lawrence's repeating; of the fertile effects of his approach to composition that admits and, indeed, cherishes repetition.

Critics have reacted similarly to the repetitive quality of Sillitoe's work. Even those familiar with the whole of Sillitoe's oeuvre, with an appreciation of Sillitoe's writing movements, censure repetition where they find it. David E. Gerard, introducing his 1988 bibliography, describes as a 'weakness' the recurrence of 'scenes' across texts not formally connected (Gerard, xvi). Citing Sillitoe, Gerard writes:

> 'The spirit I was born with … has made it necessary for me to keep on trying to repopulate my vacuous entity'. 'Repopulate' is exact even to the point of weakness, for repetition and occasional monotony follow when the real pressure is turned off; scenes can recur years later: the opening domestic row in *Her victory* closely parallels the Vera-Brian Seaton spat in *Key to the Door*.
>
> (Gerard, xvi)

Gerard thinks this instance of repetition inadvertent: it is, he asserts, the undesired side-effect of the easing off of 'real pressure'. It is hard to say exactly what Gerard means by this; perhaps, by 'pressure,' he means economic necessity. Gerard seems to be alleging, here, that, while ever Sillitoe found himself in the position of needing to write in order that he might eat, his work was inventive, novel. Once an established writer, however, Sillitoe, in Gerard's telling, became susceptible to 'repetition and occasional monotony'. These sound, couched as they are, like infirmities, their onset as inevitable as senescence: they 'follow'. Just as Lawrence was charged with allowing material to "find its way" into multiple works (Kearney, 1998), Sillitoe is made a passive participant in the process of repeating ('scenes can recur'), rather than the agent of this process. Gerard's making passive the act of repetition—making of it something that *befalls* an author upon his becoming comfortable—is in contrast to Sillitoe's self-characterisation, his spiritedly 'keep[ing] on trying', and the productivity in which it issues.

It is worth drawing attention to the ambiguity of the concept of repetition in the above passage, because it makes apparent the shaky foundations on which the censure of repetition rests. Gerard elides the difference between something that is repeated, which is to say duplicated or done again, and something that is "paralleled" ('closely parallels'), which implies analogousness, comparability, resemblance, but not equivalence. There is a difference between *again, the same*, and *again, differently*: the former, *duplication*, asks no effort of the author; the latter, *likeness*, asks effort and is additive, and is, therefore, deemed to have worth. When an instance of repetition is dismissed as duplication, any analysis of its productivity is foreclosed. It is precisely this confusion of repetition with duplication that lies behind characterisations of Sillitoe's work as unsophisticated; in her preface to *Understanding Alan Sillitoe* (1999), Gillian Mary Hanson cautions that 'some find [Sillitoe's] works unpolished and embarrassingly blunt' (Hanson, x). In what follows, I will prescribe an alternative way of regarding what, historically, has been thought to betray amateurishness in a writer or—as Hanson insinuates—a lack of refinement.

Biography

I want, here, to set down some of the facts of Sillitoe's life, so that the reader might judge for him or herself the extent to which Sillitoe's experiences are mirrored in the narrative trajectories of the novels of the Seaton series. The designation of these four novels as autobiographical is problematised by Sillitoe's insistent refusal to describe his fiction works as

such, and by his many meditations in interviews and non-fiction texts on the relationship between truth and fiction. Indeed, the factuality of what follows is itself in doubt, given that I have drawn on extant accounts of Sillitoe's personal and professional life, which are themselves dependent on Sillitoe's own representations of the same. Both Sillitoe's biographer Gillian Mary Hanson (1999) and his bibliographer David E. Gerard (1988) gather evidence from Sillitoe's numerous essays, among them, 'The Long Piece', published in *Mountains and Caverns* in 1975, and what he called his 'part novel, part autobiography,' *Raw Material* (1972). I have drawn the below information from the sources to which Hanson and Gerard had recourse, and one other: a profile of Sillitoe that was incorporated into a newsletter circulated by Bryanston Films Ltd., the studio co-responsible for the release of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, the 1960 adaptation of Sillitoe's novel of the same name. This profile of Sillitoe, who adapted the film, accompanies potted biographies of the film's director and of the principal members of its cast. Sillitoe's profile is the last in the series, and by far the longest. The enthusiasm of its author (anonymous) suggests one who has recently met with success, and is confident—perhaps, newly confident—in his or her talent for storytelling, for turning a phrase. Indeed, this profile, titled 'From Marbles to Riches', carries many of the hallmarks of Sillitoe's prose, such that it seems implausible that Sillitoe was not its author. It is a useful resource, because written nearer in time to the events it relates; it was written, *if* it was written by Sillitoe, more than a decade before *Raw Material*.

Alan Sillitoe was born in Nottingham in 1928. His parents, too, were raised in Nottingham. Sillitoe's paternal grandfather, an upholsterer, born in Staffordshire, moved to Nottingham, where he 'married a Nottingham girl', who 'came from a family of cigarette manufacturers and retailers' (Sillitoe, 1972, 91). Upon his death, Sillitoe's grandfather was

found to have owned ‘several slum houses in Wolverhampton’, the sale of which left his eight children with ‘the sum of £40’ each (91). According to Sillitoe, most of the children spent their inheritance within ‘a few weeks’ in an act of self-defeating defiance at having been cheated by solicitors, ‘and’, notes Sillitoe, ‘it really seemed that they had’ (91). Sillitoe’s father held onto his endowment, keeping it ‘for a rainy day’ (91). He would need it. His five older brothers had each their professions, at which they stuck for the best part of their lives; one ‘was a lace-designer, two were upholsterers, and two became managers of butchers’ shops’ (92). He, in contrast, was ‘a man with neither craft nor calling, a labourer who was often unable to find any work at all’ (92). His ill-health as a child—which, Sillitoe speculated, was owing to parental ‘neglect’—had affected his education significantly; he ‘never learned to read or write’ (Sillitoe, 1972, 92; Hanson, 3). Sillitoe’s father had suffered from rickets, and had ‘had to get about with irons on his legs until he was thirteen’ (Sillitoe, 1972, 92). His braces removed, ‘he was sent to school,’ only to be taken out again ‘a few months later’ that he might ‘stay at home and help in the shop’ (92–93). Sillitoe’s mother (née Burton) was not illiterate; her formal education concluded at fourteen, whereafter, according to Hanson, she was employed at ‘a Nottingham lace factory’ (Hanson, 2). Before such time as she had to leave the factory to raise her children, hers was the only stable income, and it was all the money she had coming. Her own family, the Burtons, were regarded by the Sillitoes as inferior, a lower class of person, ‘a sort of uncouth beer-drinking person’ (92). Sillitoe’s paternal grandfather worked ‘as a blacksmith at Wollaton Pit a few miles outside Nottingham, shoeing ponies underground’ (Sillitoe, 1975, 10). His sons chose not to join him, though they might have, ‘preferr[ing] to travel to the Raleigh factory at Nottingham every day’, and his daughters neither expected nor received any give-away of the kind enjoyed by the Sillitoe children just that once and never again (10).

Sillitoe's parents and his four brothers and sisters lived 'in dire poverty' (Hanson, 2). 'Without the dole', Sillitoe wrote, 'we would have starved to death' (Sillitoe, 1975, 10). Theirs was a hand-to-mouth existence; they depended not infrequently on the nuns at 'Nazareth House at Lenton,' and the children on a 'dinner centre', where they could go for breakfast and 'a hot meal of main course and pudding' at midday (10). Circumstances were made more difficult when Sillitoe's father was imprisoned. As Sillitoe related the incident in *Raw Material* (1972), his father, emulating the enterprises of his elder brother Frederick, who had once absconded to London with furniture 'on which little more than a deposit had been paid', tried to defraud *his* creditors with 'running up bills for food that he had no hope of paying' (136). The family moved often: between 'a number of addresses in the Radford district', as Gerard writes, 'finally settling at 5 Beaconsfield Terrace in 1937' (Gerard, xi). Of one of their homes, 'on Talbot Street,' Sillitoe wrote that its 'four walls smelled of leaking gas, stale fat, and layers of mouldering wallpaper' (Sillitoe, cited by Hanson, 3). Like his mother, Sillitoe finished school at fourteen, whereupon he joined the workforce of Nottingham's Raleigh factory, making bicycle parts. By seventeen, he 'had joined the Royal Air Force', and between 1946 and 1947 'trained as a radio operator' (Hanson, 6). Once trained, he was 'sent to Malaya to work as a wireless operator for eighteen months' (6). On being 'discharged from military service,' he was discovered to have tuberculosis, and was forced to spend another eighteen months convalescing at Wroughton Hospital in Wiltshire (Sillitoe, 1975, 19; Hanson, 6). With time at his disposal, Sillitoe resumed his education, 'reading', as he writes in 'The Long Piece', 'all the books I could get my hands on' (24). He 'had hardly read any adult matter before,' and, here, was reading 'translations from the Greek and Latin classics, and as much English poetry as [he] could find' (24). It was also during this period that Sillitoe 'first gave

rein to the novelist's itching pen', as it is told in the personal history published in the Bryanston press release:

> He re-read the copious travelogue-diaries he had kept, describing his posting from England to Malaya, and decided to use his descriptive talent at a novel. It was eighteen months of hard work. But the product never got past the publishers' readers.
>
> For the next two years he lived in Nottingham on an R.A.F. pension of £3 per week and gave birth to another book – a stillbirth.
>
> (Anonymous, 1960, *Bryanston Newsletter*, unpaginated)

It was around this same time, '[i]n the autumn of 1950', that Sillitoe met Ruth Fainlight (1975, 26). They were a match: she, too, wrote poetry, and shared with Sillitoe 'a yen to travel' (Anonymous, 3). They married and, together, 'went to Spain, to France, to Majorca' (3). Settling 'in a small coastal town near Palma', the pair lived on Sillitoe's '£3 a week pension', and 'whatever other moneymaking opportunities offered themselves' (3, 4). All told, it would be 'ten years from the time he turned to authorship (at the age of twenty) until he had a book published' (1). That book was *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*; it was published in 1958:

> It was the story of the people he had left behind – the people who lived for Saturday nights, who had 52 extra Christmases a year – and who, in order to do so, went through a weekly drudgery that blunted their individuality and required of them no more than was required of the machines they operated.
>
> (Anonymous, 1960, *Bryanston Newsletter*, unpaginated)

This way of life, its particularity to 'England's large industrial cities', was made perceptible to him with 'living among a people who lived for every day of the week' (3). The novel's reception 'brought the Sillitoe's [sic] back to England', where they 'found themselves a permanent London address' (5). Sillitoe continued to write, and wrote prodigiously. He died

in 2010, and by the end of his life had seen the publication of twenty-three novels, eleven works of non-fiction, sixteen volumes of poetry, and nine collections of short stories.

The Seaton series

The novels of the Seaton series were published over a period of forty-three years. *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* was published in 1958, and its prequel, *Key to the Door*, not long afterward in 1961. *Key to the Door*'s sequel, *The Open Door*, was published nearly three decades later in 1989, and the series' last instalment, *Birthday*, in 2001. The novels that make up the Seaton series are alike in some ways, and unlike in others. They are alike insofar as the novels share a setting in the city of Nottingham, and in their exploration of class and regional identities. Characters recur across the novels, so that there can be no doubt that the novels are linked and form a series. The books have in common certain thematic preoccupations, such as work (the Raleigh factory, the air force), domestic labour, sex and romance, sickness and the somatic (abortion, tuberculosis, cancer), and travel overseas. The narrative perspective of the novels is almost exclusively male, but not all of the novels share the same central or focal character. Arthur Seaton is the protagonist of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*; Brian Seaton, his older brother, is the focal character of the succeeding novels. Narrative perspective differs across the novels in more complex ways than this. The free-indirect narration that binds the novels stylistically is the more pronounced in the second and fourth books of the series. The narrative perspective shifts in *Key to the Door* and *Birthday*,

moving between Brian Seaton and his parents in the earlier sections of the former novel; and between Brian and his brothers, Arthur and Derek, in the latter. By a considerable measure, the free-indirect narration of the second, third, and fourth novels favours Brian, around whose exploits and changing relationship to Nottingham the novels revolve.

There are other discontinuities worth summarising here. Notable are the series' inconsistencies of characterisation. Whilst certain characters recur and are further developed as the series progresses, retaining across the four novels identifiable behaviours, there are notable exceptions. The character of Em'ler, for instance, who administers Brenda's abortion in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (Sillitoe, 1958, 85–91), has characteristics in common with Batchy Em'ler, who appears briefly in *The Open Door* (Sillitoe, 1989, 54–55). Both women are middle-aged and are said to be 'a bit touched', having suffered a loss or ordeal in their youth (Sillitoe, 1958, 85). But there are differences between them that are likely to be detected by the reader who reads the books one after another within a short space of time. In *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, Em'ler is described as 'Brenda's old companion at the stocking factory' (Sillitoe, 1958, 85). In *The Open Door*, Batchy Em'ler is Brian Seaton's aunt, which would make her Arthur's aunt, also.[29] Unless it has slipped Arthur's mind that Em'ler is 'his mother's backward sister', we must assume that in the context of *this* novel—in the world of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*— she is not a family member. At this earliest stage of the series' evolution, Em'ler was *not* a relative. Continuity of characterisation is central to the conventional literary series; it is expected that one would be able to read the novels of a series, either in order or out of turn, and notice no discrepancy in the facts of a character's personal history. Such lapses of continuity as can be found in the Seaton series

[29] 'She was known in the family as Batchy Em'ler, his mother's backward sister'; 'at twenty she worked in a hotel as a chambermaid and was raped by one of the guests' (Sillitoe, 1989, 54; 55).

are few in number and, for the most part, consist in discrepancies of spelling. For example, the character of Aggar in *The Open Door* (1989, 180) is spelled 'Agger' in *Key to the Door* (1961, 65-9). A more considerable instability concerns the series' (three-time) protagonist, Brian Seaton. With *Key to the Door*, Brian displaces Arthur Seaton as the series' principal character. In *Key to the Door* and the novels that follow, Brian is the first-born Seaton son, and Arthur's older brother. In *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, Arthur's older brother is named Fred.

From this pattern of inconsistency of characterisation, for it *is* a pattern, one might surmise that Sillitoe was, at least for some phase of the compositional process, indifferent to ensuring the correspondence *across novels* of character names and relationships. One might characterise these inconsistencies, then, as a consequence of the author's *failure* to seek and enact agreement between the novels of the series. Conceivably, Sillitoe deemed it the duty of an editor to identify these variances, and to bring them to his attention, whereupon he might correct them or give instructions for their correction. Possibly, he thought them unobtrusive and, therefore, inconsequential. Perhaps Sillitoe's sense of his readership was such that he imagined no reader would notice such negligible differences from one book to the next. It would not have been illogical for Sillitoe to assume that many of his readers would read each novel in the year of its publication. Such a reader would need to be in possession of an extraordinary memory to register across a forty-year period the incongruities I have enumerated. It is difficult to say with any certainty whether Sillitoe was aware—before or after publication—of the inconsistencies relating to the peripheral characters of Em'ler/Batchy Em'ler, and Aggar/Agger. One can be certain, however, that Sillitoe was conscious of having changed the name of Arthur's brother from Fred (in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*) to Brian (in *Key to the Door*). That he did so suggests he was unperturbed

by this and, by extension, the aforementioned conflicts: they were unproblematic; they were not defects that blighted his novels, or compromised their serial integrity.

This indifference on Sillitoe's part is revealing, because eccentric. It might also be subversive. Certainly, it throws into doubt the extent to which *his* series adheres to literary convention, and, indeed, exposes as suppositional the notion that it *should*. To wish that Sillitoe had cross-checked his novels and weeded out discrepancies supposes that Sillitoe, in the writing of his series, strove for unity, or perfect integration – that he sought to create a *single* story—or master narrative—of four parts. It is to assume that the conventions of literary serial storytelling, the conventions of printed and published serial writing, are applicable to this series of novels, and *were applied* in the process of its composition. The inconsistencies of the Seaton series, and Sillitoe's seeming tolerance of the same, compel a re-evaluation of the series as a whole, and make it necessary to ask to what standard or model of serial storytelling Sillitoe was aspiring in the writing of his series.

If specifics of character were not topmost of Sillitoe's priorities, he was particular about specifics of place. The setting of the Seaton novels is categorically Nottingham, not a stand-in for England's other—or *all* English—regional industrial cities. This specificity was carried over into the film of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1960). The synopsis provided in the *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* 'Information Folder'—available at the British Film Institute—begins: 'Arthur (ALBERT FINNEY), a hard-jawed, handsome young man of twenty two [sic], works at a lathe in the turnery of a Nottingham factory where he turns out 5,000 components a week' (Bryanston Films, unpaginated). When it came to the naming of Nottingham's districts, thoroughfares and landmarks, Sillitoe was diligent. *Birthday* (2001), as I will go on to show, abounds with real place names, and pilots the reader on a moving trajectory through contiguous areas of Nottingham, and, equally—along a scenic route—the

villages of Derbyshire. The comparative thoroughness of Sillitoe's representation of place in the novels and, moreover, the consistency *across the series* of this careful attention, owes something to Sillitoe's habitual use of maps. As Sillitoe stated,

> For my Nottingham novels and stories, which account for the greater part of my writing, I have always had near me a street plan, as well as a one-inch map of the area to the west and north of the city. These last two items are not essential for my writings about this piece of territory, because I know every nook and cranny, every hole and corner of it, and always will, but still it is good to be correct.
>
> (Sillitoe, 1975, 69)

As this passage makes clear, the place of Nottingham was to be more than scenery against which the action of the novels played out; his Nottingham novels were to provide a record of place, even as—or, as I will show, *because*—its appearance was liable to change. Sillitoe's profound and abiding interest in place and person-place relationships, his geographical imagination, was, as I will establish, the primary motivation behind his adoption of the serial form.

In what follows, I will demonstrate the appeal of serial writing for an author such as Sillitoe, one whose writing profession ran in parallel to a passion for cartography. Using close textual analysis, and exploring—in order of sequence—the second, third, and fourth novels of the Seaton series, I will chart the protagonist's changing relationship to the city of Nottingham, his birthplace. I will show how serial writing—a process of return—is conducive to the authentic representation of place, and especially agreeable for the representation of a regional identity, which is typically subjected to generalisations of its character. I will argue that Sillitoe's palimpsestuous representation of Nottingham—the interdiscursiveness of the four texts that form the Seaton series—bodies forth the volatility and open-endedness of place. I will show that serialisation enacts the stratigraphic character of the familiar,

cherished place, in particular, which, as Sillitoe knows, is retentive of memory and past experience. This chapter posits, lastly, that this consonance of form and subject lends new meaning to the characterisation of Sillitoe's writing as realist.

Key to the Door

Emplacement and estrangement

If Arthur's identification with his hometown is flush, untroubled, and unconscious, complicated only by his fears about the future—namely, taking after his parents, whose lifestyle is predetermined by their class—the three subsequent novels explore their protagonist's estrangement from the place of his birth and upbringing. In the second, third, and fourth novels of the Seaton series, the character of Brian experiences a disturbance to his relationship with Nottingham. The nature of this disturbance, or rupture, varies from novel to novel. So, also, do the causes, which accumulate with each addition to the series. These causes are variously within and without Brian's control. In *Key to the Door*, his estrangement from the place of his birth is both a product of growing up, and precipitated by urban expansion, a rite of passage expedited by the modernisation of his hometown. In *The Open Door*, Brian returns to Nottingham after two years in the air force to find himself an alien in the place of his upbringing. The comparative luxuries he experienced as an airman, his adventures in Malaya, his acquisition of a new voice, required of the wireless coordinator, conspire to frustrate his re-assimilation into working-class Nottingham society. In *Birthday*,

age, relocation to London, and a career as a writer for television have driven a wedge between Brian and the place and people of Nottingham, which he visits at regular intervals to spend time with his two younger brothers. Common to all three novels is Brian's substratal identification with the territory of Nottingham and its rural surrounds, and, to a lesser degree, the people of Nottingham. The strength of this identification modulates over the course of the series, and, indeed, within the compass of each novel. It is the baseline from which his estrangement is measured.

Part Two of *Key to the Door* establishes the young Brian's connection to the Nottinghamshire landscape, and its shaping of his consciousness. As a child, Brian feels most at home at the countryside cottage where his grandparents live. His willingness to stay overnight at 'the Nook' prompts his grandfather Merton to remark, '"This'll soon be your second home, I reckon"' (Sillitoe, 1961, 57). Separating the Nook from his parents' terraced home in inner-city Radford is Cherry Orchard, 'vast, remote,' and hemmed on one side by 'the long dark strip' of Serpent Wood (83, 80). This rural expanse between home and 'second home' ('a continental mile from house to house') is Brian's playground, and sanctuary (83). A tree in this place is a 'refuge from punctuating black gulfs of school year and home-life that didn't bear thinking about' (83–84). Brian needs no persuading to run an 'errand to his grandma Merton's' (51). Every crossing of this interstitial space 'became an expedition': a military expedition ('He advanced, but behind outposts'); a surveying expedition ('mapping [the wood] with an explorer's mind') (51, 83, 80). Brian's preadolescent body is an instrument of measure, a gauge by which he apprehends the 'streams and lanes and stiles': 'Brian had just height and strength to wrench himself on to the parapet of New Bridge and see the free-wheeling bare spokes of the headstocks riding the air like upside-down bicycle wheels' (51). With 'scissor-legs', he 'leapt a stream' (53). Distances are calculated by the carry

of his voice: the dying echo of 'a Tarzan call,' 'an incompetent warbling scream', comes to 'a swift end against the unbridgeable obstacle of distance' (84). And his wayfinding continues indoors: 'Sheets of newspaper protecting the recently scrubbed tiles were used as stepping stones to the fire' (53).

Brian, who tells his Aunt Lyddy, '"I like making maps up"', sees landforms in the sky: 'Great clouds were piled high in the distance like a range of mountains suspended in space' (90, 63). The crowns of trees in Serpent Wood put him in mind of clouds: 'two farm labourers' cottages' lay 'under the clouds of cloud and trees' (80). These same trees seem to Brian occasionally architectural, as 'pillars and towers' (83). The well uphill of the Nook is 'a fairy-book piece of architecture', deceptively inviting, hiding a cavity that might kill him (56). 'He wanted to touch [its] wooden triangular roof', but 'was afraid', remembering his grandmother's warning to stay away from it, 'Because you'll get drowned' (56). Brian perceives structural forms even in his grandfather's mannerisms. 'Merton's hand made an eaving across his forehead', as he looked for the place where the birds he has shot lay wounded in the grass (59). In 'the tall upright figure of a grandad', 'Brian saw a controlling skyscraper in half-way motion between a wave and a point, shouting: "Goo after 'em, Gyp"' (59).

Meteorological happenings on this land have an individuating effect on Brian: 'A thunder-noise quickened his walk, a distant drumroll seemed to single him out from everyone else in the world as its first victim' (52). But its natural features of longer standing transport him into the past, and bring him into communion with older generations. The burnt-out tree nearby the Nook is one such natural feature. Its hollow, unlike the well shaft, poses no immediate danger. Contemplating the tree, Brian again confounds the organic and architectural: 'He trod his way through the wheatfield, skirted the well, crossed into Cherry

Orchard, and came up out of the lane to capture the gigantic tree whose bole was burnt out, making a *room* so big that he could walk inside and sit down' (60, my emphasis). It is worth looking closely at the following passage from Chapter Four for a number of reasons: for its representation of local knowledge; for Brian's multi-sensory participation in place; and for the rhythms of Sillitoe's prose.

> The fire-scooped hollow of the tree smelled of charcoal: who made such a big blaze to scorch out all this wood? Must have searched days for twigs and leaves to get it going. But what a fire, to burn yet carve a black hooded hollow big enough for a good many to hide in from rain or chasing gang, though it wouldn't make such a good hiding place because every kid in Radford knew about it. He went in, plucked a layer of charcoal and stamped it into the soft wet soil; picked off more to crush in his fingers and turn his flesh black. Must have smoked for days, everyone walking by and nobody thinking to piss on it even. Colliers riding past on their bikes, and laughing at it, letting it burn its heart into a hideout and shelter for when it rains, though it wouldn't be a good place if it thundered and lightninged because trees often get struck. Grandma ought to know because she's older than mam, and even she knows. But p'raps somebody had chucked a bucket of water at the tree to swill it down, watched it sizzling and steaming and gone off thinking it was finished, but as soon as it stopped steaming it started smoking again until it got red and went back to burning, which served the bloke right for trying to kill it out. He should have minded his own business and let it burn, because once fires start it ain't right to bother 'em, especially if they're in a field like this one was: you've got to let them get on with it and burn red hot, as any daft sod knows. Tons and tons of wood must a bin burnt in this tree and I'd like to a seen it. Mam says it's allus bin like this, that even she can't remember how it was before it was black and hollow.
>
> (Sillitoe, 1961, 61–2)

Brian's interaction with the hollowed-out tree kindles his imagination. A willing student of 'Geography, history and English' ('in each there was a possibility of learning about other countries and people'), Brian is inclined to narrativise (106). Here, he improvises a history of the burnt-out tree, which is character-driven: '*who* made such a big blaze to scorch out all this wood?' he begins (61). Unable, initially, to visualise the culprit who set the tree ablaze, his first answer lacks a subject. The sentence is truncated as his arsonist is faceless: 'Must have searched for days,' he muses. These more circumspect conjectures Sillitoe presents in Standard English, and in the free indirect style that is common to all four Seaton novels. As the passage progresses, however, Brian gains in confidence. More easily than he could the

culprit, he envisions the individual who 'chucked the bucket of water at the tree to swill it down'. He animates the man, brands him feckless ('daft'), meddling ('should have minded his own business'), and begins the work of making him the villain of his piece: it 'served the bloke right' that the tree 'went back to burning'. As Brian's imaginings gather pace, the prose takes on a dialectical inflection. Sillitoe works eye dialect spellings ('a', 'allus', 'bin') and contractions ('p'raps', 'ain't', ''em') into his prose, as if to indicate the growing assertiveness of Brian's interior speaking voice. At the same time, the latent 'I' of the free indirect style comes to the fore, usurping the third-person narrative voice: 'tons of wood must a bin burnt in this tree and I'd like to a seen it'.

The tree is both materially real, *in* place, and functions as a metaphor for rootedness in place. Brian has an intuitive sense of the value of the burnt-out tree, both to the area and the area's population. By its singleness, it dignifies the land on which it stands. Moreover, it contributes to a sense of place in which the local community is immersed. Brian's understanding of the tree is based on the spatial behaviours it inspires. He is conscious of the society, the group identity, that forms around the organism, a source of fascination for 'every kid in Radford', and a waypost for comers and goers. So active seems the tree in prompting responses from passers-by that it seems to Brian sentient, able to be humiliated: 'everyone walking by and nobody thinking to piss on it even'. His concern for the tree, his compassion, is symptomatic of place attachment. Brian belongs to this place, and it belongs to him. He feels toward it a responsibility, a debt of custodianship. More importantly, the tree binds Brian to his mother, who 'says its allus bin like this,' never not 'black and hollow'. The mother-son connection is, at bottom, biological, but the day-to-day quality of their relationship hinges less on kinship than on place knowledge and spatial proximity. From

Brian's perspective, his 'mam' is his 'mam' *because* they share a physical environment; *because* they share a communal frame of reference.

By subtler means than eye dialect spellings, Sillitoe buttons down the location of the physical environment they share. The absence of the foot-strut split in East Midlands speech occasions a higher incidence of the phoneme /ʊ/ than is standard in Received Pronunciation. In East Midlands English, the words 'good' and 'wouldn't' share a vowel sound with 'Must' and 'enough'. The reader acquainted with East Midlands speech is sure to hear this pronunciation feature, even where it is not indicated in the passage; even if they themselves have not the non-splitting accent that distinguishes East Midlands speech from other English dialects. For this reader alone, the reoccurrence of the short vowel sound in the passage above simulates the phonological character of Nottinghamshire dialect. In addition, then, to the eye spellings of the passage's second half, the repetition *throughout* the passage of the near-close near-back rounded vowel ('shouldn't', 'struck', 'crush', 'thundered', 'chucked', 'bucket', 'wood') fixes this place experience in the region of the East Midlands; it fastens the passage to its Nottingham setting still more absolutely.

The folk geography Sillitoe evokes in the above passage from *Key to the Door* is put at risk of erasure when the loci of Brian's childhood are razed during his early adolescence, the Nook demolished, and his grandparents relocated nearer the city. Grandma Merton runs a tea service for the labourers working on the housing development, which, when finished, will stretch from the boulevard '[a]s far as the railway and over to the woods' (178). Of her weekly takings, Brian gets a shilling for 'fetching and taking their cans' in the week, 'and gathering the money on Friday' (176). His duties as a 'mash-lad' give him access to the site, which spreads at a rate none expected (178). The Merton children had thought the Corporation 'were going to leave it a year or two,' but 'the houses had made a rush forward

in the spring', and the elderly Mertons had, in fact, but 'a month or two to think about moving' (178, 176, 179). The encroachment of 'the smoking city' on the Mertons' property and neighbouring land is precipitous and indelicate (176). The ambient sounds of the Nook and its surrounds are mixed with the sounds of construction; birdsong with the 'singing of trowels as bricks were tapped into position' (177). Brian is optimistic, initially, that the earth in process of being overlain will remain to him and the Mertons recognisable, being the site of experiences it is impossible to annihilate:

> The surface of the land was changing, becoming covered like memory, though Brian realized as he walked for the first time along new-laid pavements that the familiar soil underneath would never be difficult to reach. There was even soil under Slab Square in the middle of Nottingham, he realized, but that was harder to believe in.
>
> (Sillitoe, 1961, 176)

Though 'Merton didn't like the idea of leaving the Nook,' and took to standing by the window, 'his fierce gaze set upon the tatterdemalion camp of wood and bricks and cement bags near by [sic]', he goes stoically, when the moment comes, 'to live among shops and pubs' (178). When Brian pays a visit to his grandparents for the first time since their move, he resolves to return to the Nook '"to see what's 'appened"' (180). Setting out next morning 'to explore the Cherry Orchard,' he pauses to take in the view from New Bridge:

> From its summit he saw that apart from the immediate fields below, the countryside had gone. Nothing was the same, and beyond the broad new boulevard were houses, in which direction there seemed no set point worth searching for any more. He could go on walking on and on and not meet anyone he knew, could lose himself in the mountains of Derbyshire and reach the Atlantic at Wales without being able to stop a friendly face and say Hello how are you and Which is the way back to Nottingham.
>
> (Sillitoe, 1961, 180)

Emptied of its people—the Mertons, and Ken and Alma Arlington, who lived in the labourers' cottages—this place seems to Brian no longer 'worth' exploring. Where should he tend now that everything is changed? What point in plotting a course without headquarters, a base? The 'friendly face[s]' of family and neighbours made a place worth knowing; made it what it was. Nearing the Arlingtons' cottage, he finds it 'boarded up' (181). The 'disappearance of his friends disturbed him,' total as the absence of sound from the wood that bordered the Arlingtons' garden: 'no twigs cracked unexpectedly under other children's feet' (181). The Nook is the more transformed:

> only the foundations of the house remained, and he stood in them, walking from section to section, kitchen to parlour and down into the pantry – filled with bricks, filth and glass fragments that had once been part of the windows, showing him marvellous fields and gardens. It hadn't take them long to flatten it, he thought, and imagined it being done
>
> (Sillitoe, 1961, 181)

The Nook is an altogether *new* place now, made foreign to Brian by its disembowelment, and the absence of his grandparents' belongings. The wall-mounted 'case of horseshoes', hated by his mother, has gone with the Mertons to Vane Street, along with the 'seaside souvenirs of Cromer and Skegness, Cleethorpes and Lowestoft' (179).[30] Brian goes in search of the well:

> The fairytale headstock was no longer there, and he dropped stones down the depths still left: the noise of the stone sailing down to stone hypnotized him as he lay over the parapet of rubble, a great peace sounding between the stone leaving his hand and striking the depths below.
>
> (Sillitoe, 1961, 181)

In earlier days, he had been too afraid 'to sit on the circular low brick wall' (56). Nothing prevents him from doing so now. The well, it transpires, is not inherently frightening; it was

[30] '[P]rizes' her farrier-father 'kept the girls polishing all Saturday morning' (Sillitoe, 1961, 24).

made so by his grandma, who will never again have need of saying, '"Don't go near the well then, will you?"' (56). Divested of its 'conventional' headstock, and folkloric associations, the well is divested of its magic. Rather than test its depths with his voice, as he had measured Serpent Wood with 'all the air his lungs could muster', he uses stones, instead, and, in place of his own voice echoed back, hears a great, unspeaking 'peace' (84).

Identity of place

Brian's relationship with the place of his upbringing is similar to a dialogue. That dialogue is disrupted when the Nottingham he knows is transformed by forces beyond his control. What the above-cited sections of *Key to the Door* describe is identity *of* place, and identity *with* place, which two things are, according to Edward Relph, different and yet connected. In his seminal study *Place and Placelessness* (1976), Relph attempts a complete definition of the identity of place, drawing on characterisations of the same set forth by philosophers, urban planners, architectural critics, authors and geographers. Kevin Lynch, in his 1960 study *The Image of the City*, defines the identity of a place 'as that which provides its individuality or distinction from other places and serves as the basis for its recognition as a separable entity' (Lynch, paraphrased by Relph, 45). By this definition, the identity of Nottingham alters with alteration to its aspect. It is changed with the decimation of its distinctive features, natural and architectural; it is changed with the felling of the hollowed-out tree, and the knocking-down of the Nook. The writings of architectural critic Ian Nairn add nuance to Lynch's formulation. As Relph writes, Nairn 'recognises that "there are as many identities of place as there are people", for identity is in the experience, eye, mind, and intention of the beholder as much as in the physical appearance of the city or landscape' (45). Out of his intercourse

with the place of his upbringing, Brian creates an identity of Nottingham. But it is one among many. Relph goes on:

> while every individual may assign selfconsciously [sic] or unselfconsciously an identity to particular places, these identities are nevertheless combined intersubjectively to form a common identity. Perhaps this occurs because we experience more or less the same objects and activities and because we have been taught to look for certain qualities of place emphasised by our cultural groups.
>
> (Relph, 45)

Sillitoe's description of Brian's interaction with the hollowed-out tree is suggestive of the co-authorship of place identity. Brian is not alone in noticing the tree; the tree is constitutive of the common ground he shares with his peers ('every kid in Radford'), his 'mam', and the '[c]olliers riding past on their bikes'. These are the social and 'cultural groups' to which the young Brian belongs—peer group, family, social group, respectively—and that have taught him to 'look for certain qualities of place'. These communities, and the individuals of which they are composed, cooperate 'selfconsciously or unselfconsciously' to create a host of compatible identities imparted to the place of Nottingham. The identity of a place is a feedback loop; as Relph writes, 'rather than being a simple address in a gazetteer or a point on a map, identity is a basic feature of our experience of places which both influences and is influenced by those experiences' (45).

Relph breaks down the various 'ways of experiencing places', dividing them into two categories: 'outsideness and insideness' (50). He subdivides these categories into seven 'levels of intensity with which we experience outsideness and insideness' (50). These seven categories, he clarifies, are 'not discrete and precisely separated', but 'more or less distinctive' (50). The young Brian is an insider; he experiences Nottingham and its region from the inside. His relationship with place, as Sillitoe represents it, falls into all three of

Relph's subdivisions of insideness. Brian's experience of place is symptomatic of behavioural insideness:

> Behavioural insideness consists of being in a place and seeing it as a set of objects, views, and activities arranged in certain ways and having certain observable qualities. In contrast to incidental outsideness in which a place is experienced as little more than a background to events, behavioural insideness involves *deliberately attending to the appearance of that place*.
>
> (Relph, 53, my emphasis)

Brian attends closely to the appearance of Nottingham. More intently than is perhaps ordinary for a boy of his age, he marks, and maps, the physical features of the region in which he lives, and the network of paths, tracks and short-cuts that connect them. In further expanding the notion of behavioural insideness, Relph make reference to the work of Gordon Cullen, whose 'investigation of townscape… examines the places of our immediate experience, and seeks "to chart the structure of the subjective world"' (Relph, 53). Brian's haptic apprehension of the tree, his using his form and the form of his grandfather as measures of distance and scale, and his moving between the woodland and open spaces of the Nottinghamshire countryside, are recalled in Cullen's description of the elements that comprise 'our experiences of environment':

> first is 'place', … our immediate position defined visually as an enclave or enclosure; second is 'content', appearance in all its facets, the nature of this and that, colour, texture, scale, style, and character; and third is 'serial vision', the sequence of views as we move into, out of, and between 'places', a constant interplay of the anticipated and the revealed view that binds together the various static 'places' and their content.
>
> (Cullen paraphrased by Relph, 54)

Brian's relationship to place is also indicative of empathetic insideness. 'Empathetic insideness', Relph explains, 'demands a willingness to be open to significances of a place, to feel it, to know and respect its symbols' (54). 'This involves', he continues, 'not merely

looking at a place, but seeing into and appreciating the essential elements of its identity' (54). Such is Brian's investment in the tree, he would delve into its history. He probes it, figuratively and literally, for meaning: he 'pluck[s] a layer of charcoal' from its insides to better comprehend it. He imagines its burning before he was born, and the miners who watched and passed on. He is deeply taken with its dignity, and would have its dignity rub off on himself, 'pick[ing] off more [charcoal] to crush in his fingers and turn his flesh black'. The transference of the tree's black residue onto Brian's hands enacts his identification with the place and identity of Nottingham. As Relph asserts, '[t]o be inside a place empathetically is to understand that place as rich in meaning, and hence to *identify* with it' (54, my emphasis). Brian's insideness has, lastly, qualities of existential insideness. According to Relph, existential insideness 'characterises belonging to a place' (55). 'It is the insideness', he writes, 'that most people experience when they are at home and in their own town or region, when they know the place and its people and are known and accepted there' (55). In 'all other places we are existential *outsiders* no matter how open we are to their symbols and significances' (55, my emphasis). Conversely, he who 'experience[s] a place from the attitude of existential insideness is part of that place and it is part of him' (55). This type of insideness that is Brian's birth right is challenged when the land about which he was knowledgeable is changed beyond recognition ('Nothing was the same'); when the natural features he had thought of as his own and, consistent with Relph's definitions of empathetic and existential insideness, as *himself* are supplanted by municipal housing to which he has neither connection nor right. The 'strong and profound bond' between Brian and the country surrounding the Nook is vitiated by civic redevelopment (Relph, 55):

> Pink houses of new estates were spilling into the countryside. Men with black and white poles and notebooks came across the new boulevards into lanes and fields; they set theodolites and dumpy levels pointing in sly angles at distant woods … invading Brian's hideouts, obliterating his short-cuts and concealed tracks
>
> (Sillitoe, 1961, 191)

Owing to the impoverishment of Nottingham's identity, and the part of Brian's identity that was wedded to it, Brian experiences something similar to '[t]he person who has no place with which he identifies [and] is in effect homeless, without roots' (Relph, 55). His dispossession of his home and his self is perceptible in the deadened and bureaucratic tone of the penultimate sentence of Part Two of *Key to the Door*, which is empty of all semblance of East Midlands speech: 'The ground plan of the Nook was on view to the sky for a long time, because men and materials couldn't be spared for building houses, due to a war that had started' (Sillitoe, 182).

'Air-mindedness'

The Nook's impersonalisation is made explicit here, not only through the use of Standard English in place of the non-standard English Brian speaks, but by Sillitoe's institution of an aerial perspective. Not until this moment does Sillitoe have his reader visualise the Nook as from the air. In so doing, he makes conclusive the dissolution of Brian's attachment to it, and draws a line under Brian's childhood. What seems to have interested Sillitoe in the writing of this series is the impermanence of the meaningfulness of place, which is to say, as I shall explain in this section, the contingency of place attachment. Attachment to a place imparts to it a meaning. That meaning is lost or flushed from place when attachment is brought to an end. In other words, meaning is not inherent, but an integument lent to place by the subjective sensations of place attachment and place knowledge. The failure of Brian's attachment to this land is proportional to the failure of its meaning. This proportional

relationship of meaning to attachment is supported by the findings of Edward Relph. According to Relph, 'the meanings' of a place are intelligible to those who use it (Relph, 46). They are not intelligible to those who *only* look. Direct and coherent *experience* of a place is the key to perceiving its meaning. Meaning, he writes, is different from 'the static physical setting,' and different again from 'the activities' that take place in this setting (46). Setting, activities, and coherent experience of place constitute the 'three basic elements of the identity of places', and they are fundamentally distinct (46). Relph explains:

> For example, it is possible to visualise a town as consisting only of buildings and physical objects, as it is represented in air photographs. A strictly objective observer of the activities of people within this physical context would observe their movements much as an entomologist observes ants, moving in regular patterns […] But a person experiencing these buildings and activities sees them as far more than this—they are beautiful or ugly, useful or hindrances, home, factory, enjoyable, alienating; in short, they are meaningful.
>
> (Relph, 47)

Relph is persuaded that 'the meanings' of place are impossible to gauge from the air. The airborne observer cannot but see the scene he observes objectively; he cannot appreciate the quality of experience that invests a place with meaning. Sillitoe appears to share this conviction, underscoring the Nook's meaninglessness at the end of Brian's childhood by prompting the reader to imagine the Nook as from a bird's-eye view, from which vantage any meaning it might have acquired is inevitably imperceptible.

Relph's contrasting the place experience of a person on the ground with the impersonalisation of place by its representation from the air is especially relevant to the work of Alan Sillitoe. Few writers can have better understood the difference between these two perspectives—*amongst* and *above*—than Sillitoe, whose service in the air force afforded him plentiful first-hand experience of the elevated view. Stephen Daniels and Simon Rycroft have written comprehensively on the influence of Sillitoe's experiences as an airman on the vision

and geographies of Sillitoe's Nottingham novels (Daniels and Rycroft). It is their suggestion that Sillitoe's objective in the writing of these novels was to provide an insider's view of the city. It is also their suggestion that this objective was developed in response to the content of promotional materials published by the City Corporation in 'the period covered by the novels,' which represented Nottingham as 'a model, "modern city"', and made extensive use of aerial photography (476). As Daniels and Rycroft write,

> From the 1920s, the City Corporation promoted Nottingham as 'the modern city' with 'wide thoroughfares, well proportioned buildings, and an entire absence of the smoke and grime usually associated with industry ... creating a broad spaciousness that other cities envy and seek to emulate'. In official guides and publications, the structure of this modern city was displayed in aerial photographs: the new city hall (the Council House) and civic square, bright new factories, broad boulevards and spacious suburban estates
>
> (Daniels and Rycroft, 476)

Nottingham, as characterised by the City Corporation and, from 1954, 'by the regional journal, *The East Midland Geographer*', was a place in which 'economic and social development was orderly and integrated, creating the framework for a prosperous, enlightened city and citizenry' (476). The aerial photographs featured in these materials were considered as persuasive a promotional tool as the prose that boasted of Nottingham's prosperity and 'infrastructural developments' (476). As Daniels and Rycroft explain, the Second World War occasioned meditations on the potential of aerial photography to revolutionise the everyman's sense of emplacement. They write:

> During and immediately after the war, progressive experts, including professional geographers, hoped that increased flying experience and familiarity with aerial photography would re-order ordinary people's perceptions of the world and their place in it.
>
> (Daniels and Rycroft, 465)

Indeed, in his 1947 book *The Interpretation of Air Photographs*, geographer David Linton, drawing upon his involvement with the Royal Air Force's Photographic Reconnaissance Unit, proposed that '[t]he mobility of the aircraft makes our range of vision universal' (Linton cited by Daniels and Rycroft, 465). This universal range of vision was not the preserve of those with flying experience; the reproduction of aerial photographs meant that almost everyone benefitted from '[t]his expanding field of vision', which was thought by geographer E. G. R. Taylor, 'to be potentially one of international citizenship, connecting the local with the global in a new post-war world order' (Eva Germaine Rimington Taylor, paraphrased by Daniels and Rycroft, 465). Linton was likewise confident that 'war films and war photographs [had] brought some appreciation of the airman's point of view to virtually the whole adult population' (Linton cited by Daniels and Rycroft, 465). It was the implicit promise of the promotional materials published by the Corporation that any resident of Nottingham might regard him or herself as part of a larger-scale community than that of the merely local; might regard him or herself as an international citizen. Nottingham—as characterised in the 1939 edition of the *Nottingham Official Handbook*, for example—was, in other words, an extension of the rest of the world.

Daniels and Rycroft argue that Sillitoe's Nottingham novels were intended as an antidote to this sanitised fashioning of the city by the establishment: 'the texts of his Nottingham novels rebel against authoritative texts of the city' (468). They present 'a *belligerent* image of Nottingham, contrary to the smoothly progressive image of the city in professional and academic publications of the time' (460, my emphasis). Instead of joining in the idealisation of the Nottingham of the late 1950s, with its 'broad' new boulevards, and municipal estates, the likes of which had forced his grandparents to move from their home in the country, Sillitoe depicted 'the *labyrinthine* world of working-class Nottingham' (460, my

emphasis). The district of Radford where the young Sillitoe lived with his working-class parents was, at the time of his living there, as Daniels and Rycroft describe it, an 'intricate network of terraces, back-streets and alleys' (463). Repeatedly, Sillitoe conveyed the neighbourhood of Radford into his fiction (463). For instance, in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, Arthur returns from a night on the town to its 'maze of streets sleeping between tobacco factory and bicycle factory' (473). The protagonist of Sillitoe's short story 'The Death of Frankie Butler' lives on a street much like the one on which Sillitoe lived in Radford: 'a straggling line of ancient back-to-backs on the city's edge' (Sillitoe, cited by Daniels and Rycroft, 463). If the layout of such a place may be observed from the sky, its atmosphere cannot. Time and again, across different works, Sillitoe described the embattled nature of Radford, its adversarial atmosphere. He attributed this atmosphere to its structural design, and its sharing a border with a modern estate. Conflict within and across its perimeter was standard for the district of Radford: in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, Arthur takes cover from '[s]tars… like snipers' amongst the 'ranks' of houses, and the child-residents of Radford's analogue in 'The Death of Frankie Butler' perceive the nearby housing estate, which has engulfed the open country in which they used to play, as 'the enemy district', and take up arms against it (Sillitoe, cited in Daniels and Rycroft, 472, 463). The close proximity of homes in Radford, and its many cul-de-sacs, stirred in Sillitoe a yearning for escape. The character of Brian, protagonist of the second, third and fourth novels of the Seaton series, shares with Sillitoe this yearning. Reconnoitring his parents' home in *The Open Door*, some years after moving out of it, Brian is reminded of its cramped conditions:

> The window of the room which his sisters slept in looked over the backyards, from where you could see anyone going out for the evening, or coming back from a day's work, or on their way to

> the lavatory, or hanging their washing, so that you'd know what people wore right down to the underwear – if they had any.
>
> The front room he shared with his two brothers looked over the cul-de-sac of the terrace… The opposite houses were a few yards away, and the railings that had defined individual gardens had been taken away for scrap during the war.
>
> (Sillitoe, 1989, 33)

The rigours and lack of privacy to which the residents of Radford are accustomed leave their mark on Brian, much as the wildness of the land beyond it has *its* part to play in his personal development. It gives rise to a restlessness in him; to a need he cannot initially name: 'He had never been alone, not even for a day, hardly for an hour, yet he had always wanted to be, without knowing what he craved' (Sillitoe, 1989, 60). He covets space and solitude, and finds them both in the air force as an adult: 'In kids' talk with [his cousin] they had agreed how good it would be to live in a hut far from folk or family, and now he looked on the reality of his wireless hut as an ideal existence, never to be taken from him as long as it was not forgotten' (60–61). Such overcrowding of people as was commonplace in Radford, and the sense of confinement it engendered (in some), cannot be detected from the sky, any more than can the pugnaciousness that hangs about the air. It is something only the residents of these terraced streets can know, a meaningfulness intelligible only to those who use them.

Still, the aerial view provides a measure of respite from the narrowness of Radford for those who must endure it. For the likes of Brian and his creator, the elevated view placates their overwhelming need for freedom. Indeed, it would be wrong to suggest that Sillitoe disdained the aerial perspective. On the contrary, it excited him, as Daniels and Rycroft relate:

> During the war, Sillitoe joined the Air Training Corps based at the local aerodrome. Here he acquired a military-geographical education, learning radio-telegraphy, flight theory, meteorology and photogrammetry. The vertical viewpoint offered on training flights over Nottingham from a de-Havilland bi-plane was a revelation.

(Daniels and Rycroft, 464)

After years spent inside of the labyrinthine Nottingham, Sillitoe thrilled at the opportunity to see it from above. Daniels and Rycroft cite Sillitoe's essays 'Maps' (1975) and 'We All Start from Home' (1987), in which the author recalls his earliest experiences of the aerial perspective:

> This bird's-eye snapshot appeared to be just as valuable as the dense intricacies that came with lesser visibility on the ground ... It was easy to pick out factories and their smoking chimneys, churches and park spaces, the Castle and the Council House, as well as the hide-outs and well-trodden streets that had seemed so far apart but that now in one glance made as small and close a pattern as that on a piece of lace ... From nearly two thousand feet the hills appeared flat, and lost their significance, but the secrets of the streets that covered them were shown in such a way that no map could have done the job better.
>
> (Sillitoe, cited in Daniels and Rycroft, 464–465)[31]

Sillitoe seems to celebrate, here, the view from 'two thousand feet', deeming it 'as valuable' as any outlook from the ground. But there are tensions in his assessment of the worth of the bird's-eye view. As Sillitoe's lexical choices suggest, the clarity of vision afforded the flier, which rivals the 'map' for exactness, is deceptive in its effects. To begin with, the bird's-eye view subdues the city it reveals, reducing this place of moving parts to a photograph. Moreover, areas of Nottingham that seem to the walker 'far apart' are made to appear 'as small and close' as the pattern 'on a piece of lace'.[32] The view from the sky regiments and homogenises Nottingham, collapsing the distance and *difference* between the prestigious and architecturally impressive ('the Castle and the Council House'), and the unprepossessing

[31]Daniels and Rycroft merge (see first ellipses) two citations from texts published twelve years apart: 'Maps' (1975, 70) and 'We All Start from Home' (10), published in *Bulletin de la Société des Anglicistes de L'Enseignement Supérieur* in September 1987. Sillitoe was twice invited to speak at the society's annual conference. He delivered a keynote lecture in May 1987. It seems likely this lecture was printed as 'We All Start from Home' in the *Bulletin* later that year.

[32]The lace trade prospered in Nottingham for two centuries, before its decline in the 1950s.

and pedestrian ('the hide-outs and well-trodden streets'). Lastly, the flier's perspective flattens the scene's relief features, and strips them of 'significance'. Consistent with Edward Relph's thinking as to the meaningfulness of place, the 'hills' of Nottingham are meaningless from the sky. Sillitoe's closing association of the aerial view with a map is confirmation that, in his estimation, the bird's-eye view, though 'valuable', is no substitute for the view from *inside*. Only from within the city can an individual appreciate its 'dense' and three-dimensional complexity.

Sillitoe put both perspectives to use in the writing of his Nottingham novels: in recreating the Nottingham he knew, he appealed to his sometime sense of insideness (Relph's term) and identification with Nottingham, and pressed into service his experience of the elevated view, or—as Daniels and Rycroft style it—his 'air-mindedness' (468). Daniels and Rycroft liken this re-creation of the city to a 'process of surveying', which 'proceeds vertically as well as horizontally, in excavations or transects of the urban underworld' (467). As they point out, however, as far as Sillitoe was concerned, this two-pronged approach to the portrayal of place was nothing short of the *authorial* view. In the title essay of his 1975 collection *Mountains and Caverns*, Sillitoe 'quotes from [Victor] Hugo's novel [*Les misérables*] in characterizing the authorial view as *stratigraphic*, both documenting, as if from a mountain top, the "external facts" of culture and, as if in the depths of a cavern, its "hearts and souls"' (Sillitoe cited by Daniels and Rycroft, 467, my emphasis). Once again, Sillitoe discloses his association of altitude with objectivity, and the view from the ground with sentiment and 'spirit' (467). It is the 'vertical axis', however, according to Daniels and Rycroft, that separates Sillitoe from the 'consciously English, realist' writers with whom he is conventionally grouped (467). The 'gritty realism' of the Nottingham novels is leavened, Daniels and Rycroft propose,

by the elevated perspective the novels enfold, 'a defining trope of modernism' that aligns the works of Sillitoe with works by Lawrence, Hugo, and Joyce.

That the matter of class is at issue, here, can hardly be ignored. Viewed from above, Nottingham's prodigious and prosaic spaces run together; the Council House abuts the hide-out, as Sillitoe explains in 'Maps'. This nearness of the named (and capitalised) city hall, where policymakers convene, to the unnamed hideout that meets a need for anonymity in the general public suggests equivalence where there is none. The aerial perspective levels differentials of social value and status. The Corporation's publications of the 1920s and later circumvented mention of Nottingham's poorer areas, using to its advantage the deceptive effects of aerial imagery to flatten, and to *flatter*, the municipality in its charge. Additionally, the bird's-eye view effects the disappearance of Nottingham's people (Hugo's 'hearts and souls'), too small to be seen from 'two thousand feet', or small as ants, all alike, 'moving in regular patterns' (Relph, 47). But the uneven distribution of wealth in Nottingham is only obscured from the sky; spatial inequalities are conspicuous on the ground, as Sillitoe's novels attest. Indeed, *Key to the Door* begins with a thoroughgoing description of the straitened circumstances of Brian's early childhood, and the strain exerted on Brian's parents by the shortage of affordable housing within walking distance of the labour exchange (Sillitoe, 1961, 14). As Sillitoe delineates, the kind of accommodation to which the poorest families had access in 1930s Nottingham was insalubrious and provisional, more a 'staging-post' than a home (14). Brian is living in Albion Yard at the opening of *Key to the Door*. Its 'vacant houses' are occupied by families like his own. The Seatons are new to the area, having lately moved from a house in New Bridge, which was flooded during a thunderstorm. Brian's parents had awoken one morning to find the ground floor under water, their 'furniture and belongings floating around the darkened room like ducks' (8). The 'rain-puddled wasteland of Albion

Yard' is scarcely an improvement on the house at New Bridge (9). Brian's father Harold, chronically out of work, and 'running up bills at food shops that he would never be able to pay,' is a practised hand at massacring 'blackclock(s)', only setting down his 'brown-juiced hammer' when the floor was 'strewn with corpses' (14, 10, 11). Their stay in Albion Yard is short: when '[t]he living-room ceiling of the house next door collapse[s]', Harold prepares his family for another 'moonlight-flit' (11). A like-minded friend 'forge[s] the Albion Yard rent book as paid up to date', and they troop with two handcarts under cover of night to a dwelling on Mount Street, 'equally decrepit' (11). A short time later, from 'his father's shoulders,' Brian watches as the 'ruined houses' of Albion Yard are demolished (15, 16). It is not insignificant that, in 'a novel turn', Albion Yard is bombed from above, with grenades dropped from 'two-winged aeroplanes, the sideshow of a military tattoo whose full glory lay on the city's outskirts' at an airfield resurrected as RAF Hucknall in the year of Sillitoe's birth (14, 15). (As Daniels and Rycroft write: 'The Corporation was particularly keen on its new aerodrome outside the city, built in 1928, the second in Britain to be licensed', and gloried in the city's being 'always… in the forefront in the matter of aviation' (463).) These 'gliders', for whose pilots the wrecking of Albion Yard is menial work, trivialise the act of demolition; it seemed to Brian as if 'the aircraft played Punch-and-Judy with the enclave of slums' (16, 15). It is telling that the infant Brian intuits the dominance that inheres in the aerial view, and yet feels himself not excluded from the biplanes' enterprise, fancying his vantage point a 'control tower' (16).

In their determination to qualify Sillitoe for inclusion in the modernist canon, Daniels and Rycroft perhaps undervalue the textual motivation for the 'vertical axis', the 'air-mindedness', that characterises the narrative voice of the series. The aerial perspective of the Nottingham novels is *consciously* cosmopolitan, issuing from the aspirations to

sophistication Brian entertains in adulthood, which originate, albeit not exclusively, with his disadvantaged background. Like his creator, Brian desires and cultivates an internationalist perspective; like Sillitoe, he *wishes* to be class*less*, to shake free the encumbrance of class-based assumptions as to what he might accomplish. According to Daniels and Rycroft, Brian 'transcends Nottingham to achieve a cerebral, cosmopolitan vision, one vested like Sillitoe's in maps and air-mindedness' (467–468). I would argue, conversely, that, for all Brian's trying, he does *not* transcend the place of Nottingham, nor purges himself of his constitutional working-class identity. By some eight years, Daniels and Rycroft's essay pre-dates the publication of the fourth and final novel of the series. In *Birthday* (2001), an ageing Brian journeys three times from his London residence to Nottingham to reconnect with figures from his past. Daniels and Rycroft could not have foreseen in 1993 that Sillitoe, extending the Seaton narrative with a fourth novel, would have the septuagenarian Brian pay repeated visits to his hometown. They could not have known that Brian, as an older man, living in London, would hew to Nottingham and the beauty spots of Crich and Matlock in nearby Derbyshire; that, given the choice, he would choose *not* to renounce the city outright, nor to disown the lower classes whose parochialism he had spent his life striving to overpass. To the last, Brian is powerless to resist the pull of 'folk [and] family', and wishes, at retirement age, to be returned to the fold; to become again embedded in the place of his birth and upbringing (Sillitoe, 1989, 60). That he wants this only on a part-time basis, and to have always the option to withdraw, is one of the reasons it cannot come about. His efforts to reintegrate—his needing to be recognised by the people whose company his brothers keep as *one of them*, a local; to be 'known and accepted there'—are finally frustrated by Brian's individualism, and the longing for autonomy that has, for the larger part of his life, underlain his every decision (Relph, 55).

The multiplicity of place

I will return to these issues of class and individualism nearer the end of this chapter, when I analyse *Birthday* in detail. I want now to examine how the dualism of Sillitoe's perception of place disposed him to represent Nottingham repeatedly in his fiction. I will do so in this section through the lens of recent literature about the dynamics of neighbourhood planning—specifically, the adversarial relationship between planners and local residents—which brings into focus the inharmoniousness of Sillitoe's two perspectives.

In her 2019 study *Neighbourhood Planning: Place, Space and Politics*, geographer Janet Banfield considers the capacity of local communities to contribute meaningfully to the process of neighbourhood planning. Today, 'opening the doors of the planning framework to involvement by local people' is commonplace; 'the very intention of neighbourhood planning', writes Banfield, 'is to draw on the place knowledge and attachment of local residents in planning the future development of their area' (Banfield, 41). This 'networked approach to planning – bringing multiple interested parties with different perspectives together to develop planning policies – aims to reduce conflict and speed up development' (36). But even as, increasingly, 'neighbourhood planning seeks to incorporate a more local form of place knowledge into the planning of space and the construction of new places in a purported multiplication and democratisation of planning… shortcomings persist' (31). These shortcomings include an undue 'focus on the positivity of place attachment' in lieu of 'considering the *detrimental* implications for place attachment through the *unmaking* of place', and an 'excessive emphasis on the outcomes of neighbourhood planning as opposed to the process, practice and experience of its unfolding' (31, my emphases). These failings, or

misplacements of emphasis, 'inflame rather than reduce conflict' between the 'myriad actors' wishing to 'drive the network' (36, 38).

Accordingly, Banfield questions the success of the 'democratisation of planning' (31). She finds that, although 'residents and their local knowledge are invited into the planning process,' in reality, 'the same process stifles, silences and excludes that knowledge' (128). Banfield's research shows that, on the whole, 'community participation is invited but dismissed,' just as 'place attachment is purportedly valued but potentially destroyed' (136). She imputes this exclusion of the community, despite the best efforts of some, to the '[i]nherent power imbalances between the local community representatives, the local planning authority and any developers and site promoters that might be involved,' which makes difficult, even impossible, the resolution of 'dissensus among actors in the planning system' (18, 49). Perpetuating this dissensus, Banfield contends, is 'the assumption that this coming together and playing out [of actors in the planning process] takes place *in the same place*' (38). This assumption is predicated on a false, because unilateral, notion of place, when, in fact, 'place itself is variously constructed by different parties within a single neighbourhood plan process' (38). 'To this extent,' she continues, 'we need to think about place as multiple, performed, contested and unstable' (38). Banfield 'approach[es] these matters in a conceptual fashion,' exploring 'the performativity of place as exceeding and eliding the determinisms of planning,' as well as 'considering the affectivity of place attachment escaping capture in the formal language of planning' (38).

I have discussed at length the affectivity of place attachment as explored by Sillitoe in *Key to the Door*. But Banfield's recommendation, consistent with the arguments of fellow geographer Doreen Massey, that place be understood as 'multiple,' 'contested', 'performed,' and 'unstable' suggests a justification for Sillitoe's returning time and again to the place and

spaces of Nottingham in his fiction; it justifies Sillitoe's depicting the city and its circumambient scenery in serial fashion and from a single point of view. I will go on to explain how Banfield's understanding of place and space—namely, her appreciation of its multiplicity, contestability, and instability—sheds light on Sillitoe's revival of the character of Brian to have him face again and again the place of his upbringing and early adulthood. But first, I will show how the tensions inherent in Brian's perception of place are mirrored in the tension between the essence of place ('multiple, performed, contested and unstable') and the methods and rhetoric of planning.

Place is 'multiple', Banfield affirms, because the spaces that comprise it are 'invested with meaning in both individualised and socialised ways, such that there are both *common* frameworks of spatial meanings that relate to certain types of place (e.g. hospital, school or prison) and *idiosyncratic* meanings attached to specific places based on our own personal experiences of such places' (38–39, my emphasis). 'Immediately, then,' Banfield continues, 'we have a multiple understanding of place in which the varying positions and experiences of individuals affords them different understandings of the world' (39). In support of her conceptualisation of place as 'contested and unstable', Banfield draws on the writings of Doreen Massey (2005), for whom place is characterised by the 'throwntogetherness of social and spatial relations… where connections are extensible, unstable and generative' (36). This 'indeterminacy and open-endedness' of place is at variance with the 'determinisms of planning' (36, 38). As Banfield recaps: '[t]here is an inherent contradiction between the perpetual performance of the indeterminacy of place in the lived experience of place, … and the purpose of planning to make determinate that indeterminacy' (39). That is, the 'detailed interconnections between future residents and facilities cannot be foretold in advance,' notwithstanding the resolve of local planning authorities to mould 'the contingent

multiplicity [of place] into a planned and ordered singularity' (40, 39). As demonstrated by the young Brian in Sillitoe's *Key to the Door*, who traverses the rural area around his grandparents' home with scant regard for appointed pathways,

> human creativity will likely forge new paths or channel traffic flows in unexpected directions and with unanticipated effects. The daily performativity of place will only ever partially respect the determinisms of planning
>
> (Banfield, 40)

This dichotomy Banfield identifies between the nature of place (multiple, performed, contested, and unstable) and the process and language of planning ('rational, abstract') recalls the discordancy in Brian's engagement with place, which is informed, on the one hand, by insideness and, on the other, by 'air-mindedness'. 'Air-mindedness' shares with the planners' perspective the abstraction, objectification, and homogenisation of place. The flier sees the city from above as the planner imagines the city: as 'ordered' and obedient. The flier's perspective fixes the city; makes it appear abeyant. Analogously, the planner perceives its facilities as being of 'determinate' purpose. Insideness, meanwhile, *is* the state of emplacement experienced by the resident. The resident, on the ground, is unlikely to liken the city to a snapshot. From the resident's perspective, it resembles a turbine, powered by the continual flow of its people. The city is *always* in motion, its facilities only becoming serviceable when actuated by the interactions of its citizens, which interactions are elective, 'contingent', and partway 'idiosyncratic'. In other words, the local alone appreciates the city's plasticity.

Brian possesses this vision as a boy; he sees as the local sees (*Key to the Door*). The Nottingham of his childhood is not created *for* him so much as created *by* him, a made-to-measure playground, not a one-size-fits-all city. It does not exist autonomously of Brian's

insider's perception, nor does it seem to him obedient to predetermined functions. It comes into view at point of use. Upon joining the air force as an adult, however, and withdrawing from Nottingham for a period of two years, he forfeits his insideness, and the perception of place it makes possible (*The Open Door*). Brian's efforts to re-enter Nottingham, and reconstitute his boyhood identification with its spaces, are stymied by 'air-mindedness'. 'Air-mindedness' blunts the acuity of Brian's insider's perspective, until what remains of that insider's perspective is, in the main, remembered (*Birthday*). The insider can tolerate minor changes to a place's outward appearance, because he makes and remakes his locality after his own image. Changes to the appearance of a place to which one *formerly* belonged cannot be accommodated so comfortably by the existential outsider, which Brian perforce becomes. When he takes his leave of Nottingham at eighteen years of age, he loses the facility—the gift—for re-forming the city in his image. 'Air-mindedness' is the cause and the vehicle of Brian's estrangement from home; it foils his identification with Nottingham, and effects a dislocation of his personal identity.

It is clear from Sillitoe's serial explorations of Nottingham, which he figured as 'the greater part of my writing,' that he shared Banfield's conceptualisation of place as multiple, performed, and in flux (Sillitoe, 1975, 69). His characterisation of the young Brian is testament to his understanding that the insider performs the open-endedness of place. His later characterisations of Brian reveal his understanding that the outsider is excluded from and *disturbed* by the indeterminacy of place. Moreover, that Sillitoe chose to revive the story of Brian and his brothers—twice taking up the thread after long lacunae—bears out his understanding of place as fundamentally mutable, owing *both* to its modernisation, a never-ending process, and to the unevenness of the individual's identification with it. The open-endedness of place—of the place of Nottingham, specifically—justifies the open-endedness

of its fictional representation. It is my contention that Sillitoe deemed the series, or serial form, a natural fit for the literary depiction of the place of Nottingham, which—by dint of its constantly changing, and his lasting detachment from it—tended to volatilise with the passage of time. For the sake of exactness, he undertook to update the topographies and ecologies of Nottingham he documented in the earlier novels. For the sake of affection, he reoccupied the fictional character of Brian in order that he might reconstitute, vicariously, his bond with the place of his birth. In other words, Sillitoe's sporadic reopening of the novels was driven by a need to renew and improve his portrait of the place of Nottingham, which increasingly, and troublingly, eluded him.

Sostalgia/Solastalgia

I want to explore the degree to which Sillitoe was perturbed by the sclerosis of his relationship to Nottingham. I will posit in this section that affection for Nottingham had *its* part to play in Sillitoe's decision to extend the series beyond the second novel. Banfield's analysis of the 'emotional bond with place' is useful in this regard (Banfield, 40). According to Banfield, appreciation of the open-endedness of place arises from a *felt* experience of place, an 'emotional bond… [that] is also performative, being generated through active engagement' (40). Banfield's evocation of the significance of this bond serves to confirm and legitimise the hurt Brian incurs at the '*unmaking*' of the place that shaped him. As Banfield states, with reference to the writing of Quintin Bradley (2017), and to Yi-Fu Tuan's influential *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values* (1974), this emotional bond

> has been identified as being as important to wellbeing as interpersonal relationships. With emplacement understood as a condition of being in the same way that embodiment is (Bradley, 2017b), it is perhaps not surprising that wellbeing is so closely tied to place identity, or that experiences of sostalgia – a deep feeling of loss – can arise in the face of degradation of a familiar or cherished place (Jack, 2012; Cleary et al, 2017). Indeed, such degradation need not materialise in physical form but can take on affective significance as perceived denigration of the person even before the degradation of the place occurs.
>
> (Banfield, 40–41)

In other words, '[f]or residents, whose personal identity might well be bound up with the place of their locality, any suggestion that their settlement lacks meaning or their locality lacks interest might be taken to suggest that *so do they'* (41, my emphasis). In sum, the idea that the degradation of a 'cherished place' might degrade, in turn, the personhood of the individual who cherished it has been ratified by geographers, and finds expression in the fictional character of Brian. Brian's insideness, or sense of emplacement, is whetted by the menace of modernisation, and ultimately damaged by it. He and his family are extended no invitation to contribute to the planning of the housing project that displaces them; it goes ahead, anyway. In the process, Brian's sense of self is negatively impacted: he registers the alterations to the spaces in which he spends his time as a rejection of his self, an abasement. The modernisation of Nottingham is an attack on his personal freedom and, by extension, on his person. The 'deep feeling of loss' he experiences upon the demolition of his grandparents' home, and the dramatic changes to the 'cherished' spaces in which he had used to play, drives not only the narrative of *Key to the Door*, but the narratives of its sequels *The Open Door* and *Birthday*. Brian is possessed of a sense of loss from the moment of the Nook's demolition. It deepens and recedes within the compass of each book, and is the unifying mood of the series. The original moment of the sudden '*unmaking*' of the meaningful spaces of his childhood is renewed, or refreshed, with further disturbances to his 'emotional bond' to Nottingham. It assumes new forms: his removal to Malaya (*Key to the Door*); his exposure

to privileges beyond the reaches of the working-class community into whose ranks he was born (*The Open Door*); and his relocation to London to work in an industry in which no working-class person of his acquaintance had ever the inclination, much less fortune, to work (*Birthday*). Each of these events or changes in circumstance compounds his separation from his hometown, and wears away at his identity, even as, in other ways, they enhance his sense of self-worth. These echoes or aftershocks of the formative blow to his 'wellbeing' share a root in Brian's acquisition, as a grown man, of a perspective diametrically opposed to that of the local: 'air-mindedness'. Brian's cultivation in adulthood of an internationalist perspective is inevitable: it is an extension of the surveying instinct he nurtured as a child, and refined in his exploration of the very place he sets out, eventually, to escape. That his physical separation from Nottingham is willed—in response to a longstanding yearning for freedom, fomented over many years' residence in overcrowded Radford—does not negate the sense of loss that attends this separation. As the combined narratives of the second, third, and fourth novels attest, Brian does not, as Daniels and Rycroft suggest, transcend the place of Nottingham 'to achieve a cerebral, cosmopolitan vision' at the expense of his sense of belonging. His sense of belonging persists, albeit in a much diminished, disarticulated form. Indeed, that Brian's sense of belonging may be wasted *almost* to nothing, but never altogether expunged, makes its attenuation the more discomfiting. I will defer any further examination of *Birthday* until later in the chapter, for the sake of taking each book in turn, and averting confusion as to the narrative arc of the four-book Seaton series.

The Open Door

Kant's Chair and palimpsestuous seeing

The vexing of Brian's identity as a consequence of his estrangement from home is the unifying concern of the two later novels, *The Open Door* (1989) and *Birthday* (2001). Both explore a tension that characterises Brian's interface with Nottingham, a tension between varieties of insideness, and alienation from home and self. Brian is 'twenty-odd' in *Key to the Door*'s sequel, *The Open Door* (146). Having served for two years as an airman in Malaya, he returns to Nottingham a new man. 'You left England one person and came back another', reads the book's opening line (1). Throughout the novel, as at its opening, Sillitoe makes clear that *place*, not time, has brought about a change in Brian; the leaving of England, not the lapse of years, has troubled his sense of self and his identification with Nottingham. His wife, Pauline, for instance, 'was different by two years, but twenty thousand miles had altered him far more' (18). She was 'proud at having stayed the same', which is to say, proud at having *stayed* (18). His parents are similarly content to remain where and as they are. They share with Pauline an incuriousness about the world that makes all three seem to Brian phlegmatic. His father, 'a stranger to a map of the world,' does not know, nor care, where Brian has been these past two years: Asia or Africa, 'It's all the same', he says (35). Brian's desire to see more of the world, and his long-held interest in maps ('Brian had grown up with one in front of his eyes, even when they were closed') sets him apart from his family; it puts up 'a wall between him and his mother, between him and everyone' (35, 223).

Brian roams the centre of Nottingham, 'curious to see how places had changed' (180). Much is the same, superficially. 'The same grub and rubbish shops lined Alfreton Road' (16).

He takes 'a petrol bus, going upstairs for the view', and finds he is '[f]amiliar with every landmark of pub and chapel, picture-house and pawn shop, cop station and public library' (16). But these landmarks have lost their hold on Brian: 'The Castle, dead to him. The town was the same, dead in a different way. […] The world was different, even though it seemed the same' (177). This difference in the world originates with Brian. It has been wrought in him by travel, and habituation to conveniences afforded him by the air force: 'A daily shower or bath since joining up, and several a day in Malaya, set him apart from his previous self when he had gone once a week to the public baths' (16). Before even setting foot in Nottingham, aboard the boat to England, Brian imagines 'meet[ing] his old self crossing Slab Square on Saturday night' and 'never feel[ing] the pang of recognition' (6).

Brian's exposure to other geographies divides him, not only from his family, but from himself (his 'previous self', his 'old self'), and distorts his perception of the place of his upbringing; as he walks the streets of Nottingham, he cannot see what is in front of him for the memories and maps of Malaya that interpose themselves between himself and the known spaces of his hometown:

> he was carried by the left-right-left of footsteps through familiar territory, the clean air of the Park area […] By the Castle his mind switched into a locker of consciousness, where no one could follow, and he wondered whether this separation from his normal self was due to an exhaustion never before experienced, or a force over which he had no control, until he recalled descending the forest of Gunong Barat from the highest point, and laying out a camp by the short drop of a waterfall. He scoured among surrounding trees with a kukri to collect dead wood so as to keep a fire blazing through the night. Mess tins of stew were cooking while he laid his groundsheet in the undergrowth, hung a mosquito net – and suddenly he wasn't with five others in the jungle, but was boxed within a stockade of himself alone, only connected to the world by the sound of water travelling the path of least resistance in the dusk like static in a radio, strengthening the wall that cut him off.
>
> He was as unaware of the changing scene, walking the last mile to Ada's house in the Meadows […]. Using the footscraper by the back door brought him back to consciousness, as had Corporal Knotman's voice in the jungle telling him to come to the fire and eat.
>
> (Sillitoe, 1989, 38)

Brian's memories of the recent past pervade the present moment, and Sillitoe's handling of tense forms suggests this coalescence of past and present. He does *not* use the past perfect and past perfect continuous forms when describing Brian's activities in the forest of Gunong Barat (*had* scoured; *had been* cooking; *had* laid his groundsheet), despite these activities taking place some months before the action that opens the passage. Instead, Sillitoe persists in using the past simple form ('he scoured among surrounding trees'; 'he laid his groundsheet'), which form he has used up to now to describe Brian's actions in the present ('his mind switched'; 'he wondered'; 'he recalled'). Sillitoe's tense use generates the impression that Brian's Malayan adventure and his movements in the present occur concurrently. It recreates for the reader Brian's cognitive experience: his "living" in the past *in the present*. For Brian, lately returned from Malaya, the past is more immediate than the present, which impression is compounded by the appearance of the word 'suddenly' within the section of text given over to describing Brian's exploits abroad. This adverb stands out: communicating immediacy, like 'presently' and 'instantly', it seems to the reader to better belong in the realm of Brian's present, but it describes his withdrawing into himself, precipitately, in the past.

The confounding of Brian's sense of time exacerbates his 'separation' from Nottingham and 'his normal self', a sequestration set in motion by the devastation of his grandparents' home in *Key to the Door*. As he wanders, at 'twenty-one', the 'familiar' streets of Nottingham, his mind wanders, also, retreating to the forest of Gunong Barat where he felt 'himself alone,' cut off from 'others' (91). This feeling of being walled-in, 'within a stockade' or 'locker of consciousness,' he continues to feel in Nottingham. He is no longer behaviourally *inside* of his hometown, 'deliberately attending to [its] appearance' like the Brian of *Key to the Door* (Relph, 53). Neither is Brian exhibiting signs of empathetic

insideness: he does not 'feel' Nottingham; he is not, now, 'appreciating the essential elements of its identity' (Relph, 54). The 'serial vision' ('the sequence of views as we move into, out of, and between "places"'), a primary dynamic of 'our experiences of environment', is not experienced by the grown-up Brian: he is 'unaware of the changing scene' as he passes out of the 'Park area' into the poorer district of 'the Meadows'. The insistence of his memories of Malaya, their vivid immediacy, absents him from these familiar milieux; the memories make him unresponsive and unavailable to them, so that Brian, in this frame of mind, can no more shape their identities than these places can shape *his* identity at this time. The 'enclave or enclosure' of place—the first of Cullen's principles of place experience—is overpowered for now by Brian's *self*-enclosure.

In effect, Brian is in two places at once. These places, inner-city Nottingham and the bivouac in Gunong Barat, behave like palimpsestic texts. Like palimpsestic texts, they share a parchment, a writing surface, in the present, which is to say, in whatever place Brian is presently situated. The camp in Gunong Barat, remembered, shows through the more proximate Nottingham. Its 'surrounding trees' and 'sound of water' breach the surface of the present, making dim the 'interplay of the anticipated and the revealed view' of his hometown in motion, and expropriating from *its* sights and sounds the present moment, the now. Just as, to return to Sarah Dillon, whose study of palimpsestuousness I referenced in the previous chapter, 'there is no necessary relationship between the texts that co-inhabit the space of a palimpsest', there is nothing to connect Nottingham and Gunong Barat but for Brian's presence in each of these places at one time or another (Dillon, 2007, 47). Like Dillon's palimpsestuous texts, these places are engaged in a 'simultaneous relation of intimacy and separation' (2-3). Like the related texts inscribed upon a palimpsest, these places are distinct, but their relationality entails an 'essential contamination and interdependence' (2-3). They

compete for Brian's notice, jostling for precedence. Moreover, they are 'involved in a movement of reciprocal elucidation' (5-6). The 'separation' Brian feels in Nottingham is incomprehensible to him, 'until he recall[s]' experiencing its like in the forest of Gunong Barat; there, too, he felt himself barely 'connected to the world'. Correspondences between his experiences in Nottingham and in Malaya make themselves spontaneously apparent: availing himself of the footscraper at Ada's house in the Meadows 'brought him back to consciousness, as had Corporal Knotman's voice in the jungle'. Rather than seeing serially as Brian 'move[s]… between 'places'' (with the 'serial vision' of Cullen's definition of 'our experiences of environment'), he sees palimpsestuously: now, the 'familiar territory' of his hometown, now the unknown of Gunong Barat. The alternating materialisation of these places in the present further degrades his relationship, and identification, with Nottingham.

There are other instances in *The Open Door* of palimpsestuous seeing; of memory's intervention in the process of seeing—or reading—space. Not all cases of palimpsestuous seeing signify estrangement. Brian's past exchanges with his hometown are evident in the Nottingham of his present. Brian is tubercular when he returns to England from Malaya. After honouring an ambulatory appointment at a local clinic in Nottingham, and receiving an artificial pneumothorax,

> [h]e walked across to the open ground of the Forest, found a bench on the slope to sit and smoke a cigarette, always an exquisite taste after a refill. The space would be covered by the Goose Fair, as it had every year from the Middle Ages, a three-day October whirligig of lights and roundabouts. His tobacco smoke dominated the stink of chips and taste of candy-floss.
>
> (Sillitoe, 1989, 183)

Brian Seaton smells Goose Fair even out of season. So keen are his memories of annual, autumnal outings to the fair, its remembered savours compete with the odour of smoke in the present. Brian sees and remembers simultaneously. As a consequence, the Forest ground

wears the appearance of its cumulative uses. In this, it, *too*, resembles a palimpsest. Upon this palimpsest, or surface, are etched Brian's many interactions with the space. Each interaction or imprint remains to the place over time. No one imprint is supplanted by another, but holds its form throughout the years, and is accessible to Brian in the present. On this occasion, the sensory data of the present ('tobacco smoke') is the more assertive, 'dominat[ing] the stink of chips and taste of candy-floss'.

Brian grows to understand this manifestation of the past in the present, or what we might call the stratigraphic character of place. Following his ten days' leave in Nottingham, Brian is admitted to hospital to receive treatment for tuberculosis. He becomes infatuated with one of the nurses working at the infirmary. One night, 'Rachel sat on his bed after lights-out' (*The Open Door*, 99). 'Cutting away from sleep,' Brian tells her he loves her, and she responds in kind (99). Just as Brian senses the fair's presence on the Forest, even in its physical absence, so he continues to feel Rachel's weight on the bedclothes long after she has ceased to sit there. When Rachel returns from a holiday with books lent to Brian by her mother, Brian happens upon a language for this phenomenon:

> [The book] was *The Critique of Pure Reason* by Immanuel Kant, in which the first fifty pages were devoted to proving that if you moved a chair, the space which the chair, now absent, had occupied was still there. It amazed him that such difficult writing was necessary to prove something so obvious […] He certainly knew, when Rachel sat by his bed, in her pressed uniform with glinting buttons, that when she went away the space she had occupied was still there, and that as far as he was concerned she was in it for as long as he looked at it, or thought about her, or indeed until she came back to reoccupy it.
>
> (Sillitoe, 1989, 101)

Brian considers Kant's premise self-evident: it stands to reason that the space persists after the chair's removal; the space is not gone with the chair. Equally, Rachel, getting up from his bed, does not make off with the space she once filled. As per Kant, the space is 'still there,'

but so, too, in Brian's construal, is Rachel. Brian overstretches Kant's statement in applying its logic to his own situation. It is not Kant's claim that the image of the chair remains to the space it has occupied, but Brian has his own ideas. Rachel *herself* resides in the space for as long as he is conscious; he makes no distinction between seeing and mental visualisation. This phenomenon, which Brian misattributes to Kant, describes palimpsestuous seeing. It describes the place experience of a person who knows, or has known, insideness; whose identity, by dint of insideness, is yoked to that same place. It describes the impress left upon place by the insider's experiences of it, an impress visible, if not to the naked eye, then by force of imagination, memory. The chair, if Brian can think it there, is never *not* present. The Forest ground resounds with decades' experience of the fair.

This palimpsestuous seeing that comes naturally to Brian exceeds his subjective experience. It functions *across* the individual novels of the series, and, as such, enjoins the reader to see as Brian sees. The reader of any series, in fact, is encouraged to read palimpsestuously; to hold in mind, with the reading of each book, the substance of the earlier books. The reader of *The Open Door* and *Birthday,* familiar with the novels that precede them, sees palimpsestuously, like Brian, Sillitoe's three-time protagonist. This reader, if attentive, sees *through* depictions of place in *The Open Door* to depictions of the same place in *Key to the Door*, its prequel. That is, the reader "sees" both versions in the reading of only one. (Invariably, the reader will "see" more clearly the version textually before them. Notwithstanding this, the later-published version is haunted by the earlier.) In *The Open Door*, for instance, Brian revisits the San-Eye dumping ground, 'the tips' of *Key to the Door*, where, as a boy, he looked for anything of value that might be sold on or exchanged (*Key to*

the Door, 64).[33] Local men, out of work, showed up at the tips as to a place of employment, to rake through the rubble of demolished homes (64). The most experienced of their number, a man named Aggar, 'referred to the tips as "the premises" – a high-flown name', intended to lend to their seamy employment a semblance of dignity (66).[34] Returning to the site in *The Open Door* some ten years older, Brian finds it 'covered by factories':

> The huge incinerator buildings had been demolished, the land levelled by millions of tons of rammel brought by convoys of carts and lorries, and wagons laden with steaming clinker pushed along temporary rails from furnaces which had burned up the rubbish of the city. No one driving on the road that went triumphantly through, or working in a new factory, would realise the miasmic swamp with its banks of putrescent rubbish, and heaps of swarf and steel raked into uselessness by Aggar and his gang of unemployed, advancing week by week towards the canal. Brian had warmed himself at their fires in winter, between raking for bottles or bits of steel, and though everything was buried, the area still smouldered in his imagination.
>
> (Sillitoe, 1989, 180)

Civilisation has triumphed over chaos at the tips. In the intervening years, the work of destruction that characterised this place has been replaced by the work of *construction*. Onto the 'rammel' (the 'miasmic' kind) that Brian mined for 'base metals' has been poured more rammel (the good kind, the kind that makes for subgrade), and, over the top, laid a 'road' (180). The road, symbol of civilisation—enabling growth, communication, trade—hides from view the scenes of before, scenes of rude survival: men warming themselves 'at their fires' (180). Though the land has been 'levelled', and the naïve scene made impossible to be restaged here, the 'area still smoulder[s]' when Brian looks at it.

These instances of palimpsestuous seeing suggest a reason for Sillitoe's repeatedly reopening the Seaton narrative. They indicate an interest in representing place experience from the point of view of an insider, one, specifically, whose insideness is progressively

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[33] 'San-Eye' (*The Open Door*) is spelled 'Sann-eye' in *Key to the Door*, an abbreviation of 'Sanitation Department' (68-9, 71).

[34] 'Aggar' (*The Open Door*) is spelled 'Agger' in *Key to the Door* (65-9).

destabilised. Brian is one such insider: his relationship with Nottingham is characterised for a time by behavioural, empathetic and existential insideness. Each of these types of insideness is undermined by alterations to the aspect and, by extension, the identity of Nottingham. With time, Brian becomes more consistently *outside* of Nottingham, owing to a series of choices he makes, personal and professional, and a profound desire to get to know places far removed from Nottingham, which marks him apart from his family and the working-class community at large. At no point, however, does Brian *forget* his formative connection to the place of his birth. This connection, his residual insideness, is woven, like his involvements with it, into the fabric of Nottingham; it is deposited like sediment, and visible as a mineral seam.

Briggflatts and regional identity

The later novels of the Seaton series bear resemblance to Basil Bunting's poem *Briggflatts* (1966), in which the poet grapples with the distinctive identity of his home-region of Northumbria. Neal Alexander's analysis of the poem (2013) is worth paraphrasing, here, because it draws out the autobiographical nature of Bunting's poem, as well as the difficulties of encapsulating regional identity. I have shown already that Brian's encounters with Nottingham in the Seaton series are characterised both by continuities and discontinuities of identification, so that the image of Nottingham that surfaces is one wrought with contradiction, 'a field of often conflicting associations', like the Northumbria of *Briggflatts* (Alexander, 2013b, 214). I have yet to discuss, however, how far Sillitoe's evocation of Nottingham expresses 'a marginal cultural identity at odds with the hegemony of the metropolitan centre' (202). Like Bunting, Sillitoe 'attends fastidiously to the particularities of regional identity and culture', exploring in the Seaton series 'themes of dislocation and

homecoming through an intense imaginative engagement with the landscapes, history, and linguistic textures' of his hometown, the surrounding county, and the neighbouring county of Derbyshire (217, 200). But does it follow that *by* these 'affirmations of locality and regional culture', *by* his 'emphasis upon the particularities of place', Sillitoe realises a recognisable portrait of the city of Nottingham; pins down its 'distinctively regional characteristics and sensibility' (201, 200)? I will essay an answer in what follows, whilst keeping in mind the central question of Alexander's chapter: is the notion of 'a securely "northern" regional identity' conceivable, much less expressible in the form of poetry, or, indeed, in fiction (200)?

In *Briggflatts*, 'an autobiography of sorts,' as Alexander describes it, Northumbria emerges *not* as 'bounded, stable, and distinct', but as 'open' and 'discontinuous' (202, 204, my emphasis). This is partly owing to the poem's narrative structure—its 'trac[ing] the intersecting arcs of several departures and returns'—and partly owing to Bunting's 'encounters with otherness' (200). Like Sillitoe, whose sojourns in Malaya, Majorca, Morocco, Russia, France, and Israel supplied the settings and plot elements of a great swathe of his writings, Bunting travelled extensively, such that both 'local *and* international concerns interanimate in Bunting's poetry' (202, my emphasis). 'Journeys of various kinds and extents recur throughout *Briggflatts*,' writes Alexander, 'emphasising the contiguities of place through travel' (213). The spaces of Malaya, in comparison, seem at times to Brian more materially immediate than the spaces of Nottingham he traverses in the present. In *Briggflatts*, 'Bunting's focus shifts restlessly between local, regional, and international horizons, which are intricately coordinated but rarely cohere in a single representational frame' (203). So, too, in *The Open* Door, do the different geographical planes of Brian Seaton's experience compete for his attention in the Nottingham of the present; they are, as I have written, citing Sarah Dillon, 'involved in a movement of reciprocal elucidation' (Dillon,

5-6). These planes of experience, however, are finally immiscible. Like Bunting's horizons, they will not 'cohere in a single representational frame', instead remaining independent of each other, contiguous, but separate (Alexander, 2013b, 203). The effect is to distance Brian further from the familiar spaces of his hometown, and to make the more diffuse the singularity of Nottingham, the more elusive its distinctive sensibility, *if* it can be said to have one. Similarly, in *Briggflatts*, '[s]ocial spaces are folded and intercalated, superimposed and implicated in one another, maintaining a semi-autonomous existence but also sharing in an ambiguous continuity' (204). This assessment would serve just as well to describe the phenomenon of palimpsestuous seeing, that is, the 'simultaneous relation of intimacy and separation' that characterises the planes, or laminae, of Brian Seaton's experience (Dillon, 3).

The restlessness of Bunting's focus results in 'a meshwork of spatial relations', 'an array of horizontal and transverse connections' that recalls Sillitoe's two-pronged approach to the representation of Nottingham, an appraisal that 'proceeds vertically as well as horizontally, in excavations and transects of the urban underworld' (Alexander, 2013b, 202; Daniels and Rycroft, 467). This 'meshwork' is unstable, owing both to the 'uncertainty' of spatial relations ('perennially subject to historical change'), and to 'the vagaries of memory, which also play a significant role in [*Briggflatts*'] depiction of place' (211, 215). Treating, first, the instability or variability of spatial relations, Alexander refers to Edward Casey's conceptualisation of place, which is borne out, Alexander thinks, in Bunting's complex poem: 'place', writes Casey, 'is not entitative – as a foundation has to be – but eventmental, something in process' (214; Casey cited by Alexander, 2013b, 204). It is for this reason, the processual-ness of place, that Alexander disputes the widespread use of 'the organicist rhetoric of "roots" and "rootedness"' in considerations of Bunting's representation of the place of Northumbria (202). Whilst undoubtedly 'regionality provides the irreducible "core"

of the poem', which 'celebrat[es] locality and belonging in a cherished regional landscape,' it is not through 'rootedness' exclusively that Bunting experiences an affective connection to Northumbria; it is not 'rootedness' exclusively that qualifies Bunting to write with authority of 'the landscapes, history, and linguistic textures of the north-east of England' (203, 200). Rather, Alexander suggests, 'it is the intensity of his international engagements that make [sic] Bunting a Northumbrian poet' (212). 'To speak of roots', Alexander contends, 'is to risk neglecting the importance of these elsewheres for Bunting's conception of "home"' (202). The 'home' of Sillitoe's Seaton series, likewise, materialises 'not as a stable point of origin', but as a meshwork of spatial relations that is continually changed from the inside by the 'vagrancy' of its protagonist (214, 203).

Briggflatts, Alexander points out, 'is also a text much preoccupied with questions of time and memory,' and this, additionally, has a bearing on the poem's configuration of place (214). In fact, *Briggflatts'* representation of time and 'the partiality of memory' is what allows us to speak of the poem *as* a modernist work (215). As Alexander argues, citing Tim Armstrong: 'its modernism is perhaps most readily apparent in the way it engages with "notions of temporality which overlap, collide, and register their own incompletion"' (214). Bunting's passing within and without the bounds of Northumbria over a number of years (albeit these bounds are hypothetical; in reality, 'its borders are porous and shifting') affects his perception of its spaces (205). His coming and going gives rise to the kinds of 'disjunct temporalities' that Sillitoe's Brian experiences when confronted with the sites of the Forest and the San-Eye dumping ground (214). The sensory emanations that formerly characterised—or *cyclically* characterise—these surroundings continue to act upon Brian in the Nottingham of the here-and-now. In other words, Brian communes with these spaces in two or more timeframes at once. In both *Briggflatts* and *The Open Door*, periods of absence

and 'the *process* of remembering' effect a 'temporal coincidence of… past and present' (215). For Brian, as for Bunting in Northumbria, 'the reality of the past' withstands the manifold, never-ending re-formations of the surface appearance of Nottingham; for Brian, as for Bunting, the past endures 'as an *afterglow* threaded into the woven fabric of present experience' (217, my emphasis). Memory's mediation in spatial relations aggravates their uncertainty; memory, which is 'fallible and necessarily open-ended', participates in the 'dynamism of place' (215, 217).

It is worth relaying, here, Alexander's observation that 'if the Penelope work of recollection in *Briggflatts* weaves time and space together, in doing so it serves to bring out their multifariousness rather than their essential unity' (216). Indeed, *any* attempt to isolate a regional identity—by 'tracing the trajectory of an individual life and the history of a region', neither of which are unidirectional—is certain to be frustrated by the discord between time and space (215). *Briggflatts* bears witness to this frustration. Bunting, who was disposed to making 'assertions of regional pride', might *wish* 'for cultural continuity,' a definitive Northumbria of cut-and-dried identity, 'enclosed and self-sufficient,' but must at last allow that 'its culture is a *fusion* of heterogeneous elements', and Northumbria itself 'a site of intersection and cultural encounter' (202, 205, 204, 205). The Nottingham of the Seaton novels, like *Briggflatts*' Northumbria, 'admit[s] the co-presence of radically different places and temporalities' (216). The ease with which 'elsewheres' osmose into the Nottingham of the present moment suggests a Nottingham comparably accommodative of multiple, diverse, overlapping cultural and ethnic identities (202).

To restate the two-part question upon which this section opened: does Sillitoe realise a recognisable portrait of the East Midlands; does he isolate its 'distinctively regional characteristics and sensibility'? The answer is yes and no. Yes, he realises a recognisable

portrait of the region, but only, as I have shown, and will further explain in what remains of this chapter, by successive efforts at its representation. No, Sillitoe does not pin down a regional sensibility, because, just as 'a securely "northern" regional identity' is implausible, there is no 'enclosed and self-sufficient' Midlands to pin down. The question itself is unsound: there is no equivalence between recognisability, plausibility, realistic portraiture, and the unequivocal delineation of a regional sensibility.

Birthday

The changes to Brian's relationship with Nottingham are only implied in *The Open Door* (1989). For much of the novel, he remains an occupant of Nottingham, even after the war, living at his parents' home between long stays at the infirmary. He has yet to move away and take up residence elsewhere, as he will have done, a long time in the past, by the opening of *Birthday* (2001). Brian's estrangement from Nottingham is nascent in *The Open Door*. He registers the symptoms ('[t]he world was different'), but is too caught up in affairs of the heart (of which there are four in *The Open Door*) to take anything but a superficial interest in what it is that has made the difference to his relationship with home (Sillitoe, 1989, 177). The Brian of *Birthday*, conversely, broods over the failure of this relationship, a relationship once characterised by reciprocal identification. This older Brian confronts his otherness in the working-class spaces of his birthplace, and knows the cause: '[h]e had cut so many people out of his life in order to make a different world for himself, [he] couldn't connect any more'

(Sillitoe, 2001, 16). He recognises this existential separation from his hometown as a consequence of his leaving it 'with alacrity at eighteen' (5). More than this, he frames his estrangement as penance for offences committed against Nottingham. That he should become lost in its railway station is no less than he deserves, he muses: since leaving, 'he always had to search for the station exit, never an automatic walk up the steps and across the booking hall onto the street, as if the roots of his instinct were cut on the day he left' (15). As before, in *The Open Door*, it is the leaving of Nottingham, not the lapse of years, that has deranged his relationship with the city and, by extension, his sense of self: 'Not that he had gone far, but twenty or a hundred miles in England was enough to deracinate you forever' (74).

Toponymy

Whereas in *The Open Door* (1989) Brian's deracination presents as a slackening or resignation of control over the present moment, and over his experience of his immediate environment, in *Birthday* (2001) Brian's deracination takes the opposite form. At 'twenty-odd' in *The Open Door*, Brian drifts in and out of place consciousness, as when he wanders somnolent to his aunt's house, insensible to his surroundings (1989, 146). He cannot pass comment on the spatial inequality that the journey from the affluent 'Park area' to 'the Meadows' makes apparent, because both are obscured by vivid recollections of military service in Malaya (38). In *Birthday*, at seventy years of age, Brian is acutely conscious of his whereabouts. Indeed, if, in boyhood, Brian exhibited a visceral sensitivity to the place of his upbringing (*Key to the Door*), and *The Open Door* charted its attenuation, by the diegetic time-period of *Birthday*, that sensitivity, and kinship with Nottingham, has evolved once more and for the final time, becoming a *hypersensitivity*, a *disciplined* place consciousness. This discipline manifests itself

as an almost compulsive identification *by name* of the built and natural attributes of Nottingham: its areas, streets, places of worship, pubs, council estates, and 'colliery places' (2001, 3). This exercise in naming, in *specification*, encompasses topographical features, such as moors and plateaux, and localities farther afield, such as the villages, former spa towns, and landmarks of nearby Derbyshire, and holidaying spots on the Lincolnshire coast. *Birthday* abounds with toponyms; with astionyms, comonyms, and hodonyms. Conspicuously, its pages contain more proper names than do any of the preceding three novels of the series, and these names refer to actual towns, villages, and streets, identifiable—or previously identifiable—on a map of the East Midlands region. The opening page of *Birthday* enumerates four former mining villages within the county of Nottinghamshire: 'Bulwell and Kirkby and Sutton-in-Ashfield, not to mention Newstead' (2001, 3). The following list itemises the proper names and toponyms that appear within the first half of the book only: '[t]he Methodist chapel' (5); 'the estate of Broxtowe' (7); Basford Crossing (7, 26, 34-35, 37, 38, 44, 51, 85); 'the Derbyshire hills' (11); The Crossbow (11, 95); Trowel Moor (11); Skegness (26); Ingoldmells (26, 28, 33); the Leen (26); the Trent (27); the White Horse (27-28, 56, 75, 76); Radford (32, 121); Leicester (33); the Royal Children (36, 89); 'the fields around Top Valley Farm' (38); Slab Square (50, 54); Prospect Street (53); Matlock (56, 57, 62, 133); Ripley (56-59, 133); the Heights of Abraham (56, 62); Ambergate (57, 59); Eastwood (58-59, 62); 'Langley Mill, Aldercar and Codnor' (59); the Derwent (60); Matlock Bath (60); 'Riber Castle on its hill' (63); Cromford (65); the Via Gellia (66); Grangemill (66); Crich Memorial (67); Whatstandwell (67); Nottingham Castle (67); the Dover Castle (75); the Plough (75); 'the bungalow zone of Wollaton' (76); the Great North Road (76-77); Wollaton Hall (77-78); Wollaton Park (77); Misk Hill (78); Aspley (78); Skegness (86); 'from Cresswell Crags to

Hickling Pastures' (87); the Trip to Jerusalem (89); the Trent valley (96); Sutton Coldfield (114); Yates's (119); Salisbury Street (121); Goose Fair (131).

Rather than revealing place knowledge, the practice of toponymy, in *this* novel, discloses only the *aspiration* to demonstrate place knowledge. The ability to name is not, after all, an index of insideness (Relph, 1976). As he traverses Nottingham, and on excursions with Arthur and Derek into Derbyshire, the Brian of *Birthday* exercises the *memory* of belonging, which memory he refreshes with every homecoming. But reminiscence, and these short stays, and the reflected sense of belonging Brian's brothers, both residents of Nottingham, lend him by their proximity are no substitute for belonging, not even in combination. Of the young Brian's place attachment (*Key to the Door*), all that remains is information. Such information, or data, as Brian retains may be gleaned from, or checked against, a map. That he identifies contemporary Radford as 'an area in which he had no need of maps' ('[n]o matter how changed') suggests that, in other areas of this modernised Nottingham, he is prone to becoming disoriented (2001, 6, 5). Certainly, it displeases Brian to see the city so transformed; he bemoans the 'bulldozing [of] whole districts' by an unimaginative Council that 'had gone through one area after another, smashing up dwellings that had been lived in for generations, when bathrooms could have been installed above the scullery and made them comfortable for another fifty years' (35). Brian does much of his appraising of Nottingham from the inside of a car. Where once he walked, or took the bus—as in *Key to the Door,* and *The Open Door*—now he drives, or is driven. A windscreen divides him from the goings-on of Nottingham, reifying his self-enclosure, his existential separation. In childhood, Brian moved through space according to his will, impulsively, and almost always on foot. In this activity, he typified what Banfield calls '[t]he daily performativity of place' (Banfield, 40). This 'human creativity' that 'forge[s] new paths or channel[s] traffic flows in

unexpected directions […] will only ever partially respect the determinisms of planning' (40). At seventy, Brian accedes to the determinisms of planning. His movement through the city as a motorist, or in the passenger seat of 'Arthur's Peugeot', is *un*creative, compliant, and resigned (Sillitoe, 2001, 5). Brian may thrill at the familiarity of Nottingham ('he felt the customary excitement at seeing the towers and balustrades of Wollaton Hall, […] the chimneys and cupolas and stone terracing inspiring against any sort of sky'), and he may feel warmly toward it ('he'd never stopped regarding his home town with affection'), but familiarity and affection are not equal to participation; they are not of necessity social (77, 5). Integration within a community, and participation in its rituals, are necessary conditions of belonging.

Indeed, it is in his dealings with the *people* of Nottingham that Brian feels keenest his uprooting, and the schism in himself. He is conscious, in *Birthday*, of wanting to belong to the society he spurned in early adulthood: 'It was another reason for being here, apart from seeing his brothers, and trawling what places of his youth were still upstanding' (5). But there are limits to Brian's self-awareness; his palpable relief at finding himself occasionally accepted by Nottingham folk belies the self-possession he seems otherwise to have attained. Brian is excited at the merest suggestion of his blending in at the birthday party that gives the novel its title. The party is attended by locals: the friends and family of Jenny Tuxford, Brian's 'first love, never forgotten,' whose seventieth birthday motivates the second of Brian's three visits to Nottingham, about which the novel is structured (6). On hearing that Jenny has spoken often of him to her children, Brian reflects: 'If proof of belonging was that you had no secrets among the people you mixed with, then he was surely one of them' (128). The profundity of Brian's regret at having thought these people expendable in his youth may be inferred from this single word, 'surely', which introduces into his statement a note of

desperation. More often than not, the Brian of *Birthday* resorts to performing his belonging. The vernacular that was a signifier of Brian's insideness in *Key to the Door*, and which permeated occasionally the free indirect style of that novel, is put on by Brian in *Birthday*, along with the archetypal 'cap' of the regional working man, which he wears to 'go out with his brothers and sup pints in familiar pubs' (65). Brian *selects* to whom he speaks in Nottinghamshire dialect: 'he used the old lingo for Jenny', for instance, 'relished' the sounds that came from his mouth, sounds he was not used to making in London (25, 65). At Avril's wake, 'all were talking [it], telling stories and reminiscing. He recalled a remark by Hannah Arendt that "the homeland of the Jews is in their language", and being again among people he had grown up with, he realized that their idiom was his home base as well' (200). But the lingo is 'old' to Brian only, and his pretence to insideness fools no-one, least of all himself (138).

That Brian cannot speak the shibboleth of Nottingham's working classes signals his otherness, his difference. He has grown cloth-eared with being so long apart from the community into which he was born, and it shows. But the change in Brian's relationship with Nottingham is not his due, or just deserts, for leaving it behind, though leaving hastened the change; as Banfield affirms, place is 'multiple, performed, contested and unstable', and, this being the case, there is no such thing as a *fixed* relationship with place. The fact that place is performed, and the speaking of regional dialect performative, as discussed in the previous chapter, might assuage Brian's sense of outsideness were he not so intent on masking the effects of his estrangement. By the novel's close, he knows himself to be incapable of change, and the rift between himself and Nottingham is irreparable:

> He drove over the Erewash and along the dual carriageway back into Nottinghamshire, an area so familiar from childhood and youth it seemed he'd never been away. He certainly had no other place to come back to, yet knew that if he stayed more than three days a panic to travel overwhelmed him, to move and keep on going, especially in winter when dusk dimmed the countryside as if all life on the planet was draining away. He only belonged when in the kitchen with Arthur, or at Derek's and Eileen's, lights on and curtains drawn, bottles on the table and the smell of dinner cooking, talk crackling like squibs on Bonfire Night.
>
> (Sillitoe, 2001, 227)

Brian understands by *Birthday*'s conclusion that the place of his upbringing—its spirit, specifically—will elude him for as long he lives, being, as he has *always* been, at the mercy of 'an ineradicable itch […] prompting him to light off since first being conscious of where he was' (74). In the end, Brian's 'air-mindedness' overawes his identification with Nottingham, so that he sees 'the "external facts" of [its] culture' more readily than its '"hearts and souls"' (Sillitoe cited by Daniels and Rycroft, 467). When asked by Arthur if he would not, after all, prefer to live in Nottingham, Brian sets to thinking:

> Sell his flat? Find a lace-manufacturer's bolt hole in the Park? See the Castle glowering when he went for his morning paper? Wander moribund more than alive around the middle of town? It was a great city, with concerts to go to and plays worth seeing at the theatre, radio and television stations. The magnet of the East Midlands had a self-confidence no one could fault, a cosmopolitan go-ahead conurbation whose unique pulse animated young and old alike, the capital of his heart with a long history.
>
> The garden of Derbyshire was close to its back door, and out of the front it wasn't far to the paddling pool of the North Sea at Skegness. What more could anybody want?
>
> (Sillitoe, 2001, 66)

Were it not for the last of the four questions that open the first of these paragraphs, Brian's evocation of the place of Nottingham would look at home in the promotional literature circulated by the City Corporation from the 1920s onward. The voice Brian assumes in this passage is not the voice of the earlier novels; it is the voice and the vision of the outsider, and worse, of the planner. His description of the city in the above terms is a far cry from the 'belligerent image of Nottingham' Daniels and Rycroft credited Sillitoe's novels with creating

(Daniels and Rycroft, 460). Brian's commodification of Nottingham, his breaking it down into its constitutive assets and conveniences, suggests a deference, in old age, to visions of the city packaged and actualised by the local authority. This Brian is an *agent* of its interests, not its antagonist. The covert fourth question ('Wander moribund more than alive around the middle of town?') is the sole indication that Brian, in this instant, may be mocking the eulogistic argot of such literature as Sillitoe, according to Daniels and Rycroft, sought to undermine with the Seaton series. Mocking or not, Brian's facility to imitate the register of corporate marketing sets him apart from Arthur, a former factory-worker, who has no use for such language, and never had. The difference is stark between Brian and his younger brother Arthur, whose battle cry—spoken first in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*—he reaffirms in *Birthday*: 'All the rest is propaganda' (243).

The above excerpt continues as follows:

> Wherever he was, he felt the dynamo power of his life always pulling, and right from the fifties had considered ending his days where they had started. 'I'm settled in London. Maybe I live there to have the pleasure of spending a few days here now and again.'
>
> (Sillitoe, 2001, 66)

Brian's tacit admission that he had long imagined spending his retirement years in Nottingham, and that the city that set him going had never ceased to act upon him, suggests that Nottingham is, *in truth*, 'the capital of his heart', *even if* he cloaks the sentiment in the language of public relations. That being the case, Brian's closing question ('What more could anybody want?') is somewhat wide of the mark. A more apposite question is: "What has changed?"

The halfway earnest reflections prompted by Arthur's question are inconclusive. The brevity of Brian's answer, and its abruptness, as rendered on the page, together with the

tension between Brian's mixed feelings, privately unresolvable, and his spoken justification for staying on in London, encodes his shame at having forsaken Nottingham long ago, and, perhaps, also, at having no real answer for his brother. The half-truth upon which he settles supports the impression created by the tenor of the above excerpt: that Brian is, in the last analysis—in jest as in earnest—a stranger to the city, a tourist in his hometown. Inside the Industrial Museum on the approach to Matlock Bath, 'Arthur walked among the displays of two thousand years of mining, quietly studying' (64-65). Brian, in contrast, gave 'ten minute[s]' to the ranged exhibits, whereafter he 'stood by the information counter to buy postcards he wouldn't look at till sending one to Arthur in a year or two as a reminder of today' (65).

Conclusion

The 'belligerent image of Nottingham' the Seaton series sets forth not only topples 'the smoothly progressive image of the city' disseminated by the City Corporation from the 1920s onward, but troubles these publications' representations of the city as moving along an inexorable trajectory toward a state of perfection or completion, the particulars of which, it is implied, are predetermined and, as such, should be evident to all, and evidently advantageous (Daniels and Rycroft, 460, 476). In the Nottingham of the Seaton novels, however, change is multidirectional, and its effects uneven. The change that improves the life of one may impoverish the life of another. In the Seaton series, Nottingham, and the

experience of Nottingham from the perspective of one who experiences insideness (Relph's term), is characterised as much by devastation as creation, and by cyclical returns, or repetitions, unique to the city, like the annual return of Goose Fair to the Forest ground. The Seaton series defeats the notion that Nottingham might—by some finite number of vaunted improvements to its appearance and infrastructure—arrive at a state of equanimity, of stasis. The experiences of the young Brian in *Key to the Door* defy the idea that all growth is progress; that spatial expansion of the urban extent is looked for by all parties; and that urbanisation and planning are the necessary facilitation of some universally agreed-upon future of the city and its suburbia. The series asserts the impossibility of a polished or consummate Nottingham, because the adult Brian's vagrancy, his movement within and without the bounds of his hometown of Nottingham, and the insistence of his memories of elsewhere (as explored in the third and fourth novels) are revealing of the essential interanimation of place and citizenry, that is, the inflection of place experience and, indeed, of place identity by the fluid subjectivities of the individuals that make up a population. In these ways, the series subverts any idealised formulation of place as fixed or capable of fixedness.

By bringing the discipline of geography to bear upon the Seaton novels, one can see clearly why Sillitoe favoured serial forms. If repetition tends to be met with censure or reproach by the literary establishment—as with Lawrence, so also with Sillitoe—the theories of place and space advanced by spatial scholarship, applied to Sillitoe's works, allow for the discovery of repetition's productivity, and its *appeal* to the writer whose first concern is the realistic depiction of place. It is my contention that Sillitoe, whose interest in maps and land surveying tutored him in a geographer's appreciation of place, perceived the unfitness of the single novel for the realistic representation of what Banfield calls the 'familiar or cherished

place' (Banfield, 40-41). Just as Lawrence became persuaded that the determinisms of narrative prose and the mediations of a narrator were obstacles to the authentic representation of the working-class sensibility, Sillitoe deemed the stasis of the single novel as incongruent with the processual character of place. Put another way, the processualness of place—as per Casey ('not entitative, […] but eventmental')—compels a processual approach to its representation; the instability of place—as per Massey and Banfield—compels an unstable form; and the agitation of place and space by memory compels an agitatory form (Casey cited by Alexander, 2013b, 204). The closure and stability of the single novel imparts to the places in its pages an artificiality, a boundedness that falsifies the phenomenological experience of place. In the novel series, by contrast, Sillitoe found a form proportionate to the fundamental nature of place; a match for the 'eventmental' environment of Nottingham (Casey cited by Alexander, 2013b, 204). Each new addition to the series revokes the act of closure performed by the publication of the previous instalment, so that, by its form, it simulates instability, eventmentality. Unlike the standalone novel, a form apposite to the representation of *rootedness* in place, the novel series is equipped to chart a *changing* relationship to place, one that runs the gamut from place attachment to non-belonging. It is equally equipped to capture what Banfield calls 'threshold experiences', the 'hybrid, liminal, [and] chimerical' qualities of place experience (Banfield, 8).

There is further work to be done to ascertain how far into the rest of Sillitoe's oeuvre his eschewal of closure extends, and to what degree his repetitive practices intersect with his representation of place, region, and Nottingham, in particular. Additional examples of Sillitoe's aversion to finish and finishedness suggest themselves: his other novel series (the William Posters trilogy (1965–1974), and the Michael Cullen series (1970–1985), both of which are set in Nottingham); and his collections of short stories, among them, his second-

published work *The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner* (1959). Composed of nine stories, each with a different focal character, yet connected by the setting and idiolect of Nottinghamshire, the form of *The Loneliness* introduces plurality into the fictional representation of a specific, under-regarded, regional locality; it variegates the fictional representation of the continuities (dialectal, cultural) that bind its communities into a complex whole, and that are the indices of belonging.

This multi-text, interdiscursive approach to the representation of place—the privileging of a variety of voices and experiences over a single voice and a single experience—recalls Lawrence's approach to the representation of Eastwood in the form of the mining plays, not serial, but interconnected, 'involved in a movement of reciprocal elucidation' (Dillon, 6). Likewise, the formativeness of Sillitoe's decision to reproduce the polyphony of the place of Nottingham, after first—and once—depicting the city and its urban working classes in novel form, mirrors the formativeness of Lawrence's decision to dramatise the lives of the Eastwood colliery community *three* times: three individuated, intertextual dramas. This palimpsestuous dynamic in which the plays and, similarly, the *Loneliness* stories are implicated reminds one of Nairn's contention that '"there are as many identities of place as there are people"' (Nairn cited in Relph, 45). Relph, likewise, urges an awareness that 'while every individual may assign […] an identity to particular places, these identities are nevertheless combined *intersubjectively* to form a common identity' (Relph, 45, *my emphasis*).

To return, then, to the recommendation of this chapter's introduction—that critics ask to what model of storytelling Sillitoe's series aspire—the answer would seem to be: to oral storytelling. The unity and integration of the singly-authored literary series were not, so it seems, appealing to this regional writer of working-class background, whose prose works

are characterised by polyphony and palimpsestuousness. As with Lawrence, whose work, in its repetitiveness, bears resemblance to decorative art, it is necessary to look beyond the confines of the literary academy to uncover the radical potential of repetition and, in Sillitoe's case, the belligerence of his artmaking as a whole. Indeed, Sillitoe's insistence on open-endedness, which finds its textual correlative in the narratives of his novel *The Storyteller* (1979) and in the title story of *The Loneliness*, suggests an approach to creatorship that approximates to that of Lawrence. This approach is influenced, in both cases, by a suspicion of closure that itself proceeds from a commitment to place *and* realism, and is partly a response to—and, to some degree, a renunciation of—the expectations of the marketplace, and the arbitrations of the academy, which two bodies, by their celebration of novelty and singleness, perforce and pre-emptively reject as substandard manifold treatments by a *single* author of a *single* place or subject.

CHAPTER THREE: SHANE MEADOWS

THE *THIS IS ENGLAND* SERIES

This chapter looks at the work of Nottingham-based filmmaker Shane Meadows, whose four-part *This is England* series (2006–2015) spans the media of film and television. The *This is England* series—which consists (at time of writing) of a film (2006), and three television mini-series—is the last case history in this study of recursive representations of working-class life in the East Midlands. Meadows turned to the medium of television in 2010, having become established as a prominent independent filmmaker. Following the success of his feature film *This is England* (2006), Meadows made the first of three television sequels: *This is England '86* (2010), *This is England '88* (2011), and *This is England '90* (2015). The setting of the *This is England* sequence is an ambient locality, an impressionistic Midlands, abstracted from the concrete realities of Uttoxeter and Nottingham, where Meadows was raised, and lives, respectively, and which together inspire the 'small, provincial communities' he represents in his works (Fradley, Godfrey and Williams, 2013c, 4).

Formerly, Meadows specified the diegetic settings of his films. The narrative action of *Small Time* (1996) takes place in '1990s Nottingham' (Fradley, Godfrey and Williams, 2013c, 4). The voice-over that opens that film—'This isn't even Nottingham, man; this is Sneinton'—Fradley, Godfrey and Williams have read as 'an expression of defiantly specific regional identity' (Fradley, Godfrey and Williams, 2013c, 4). Since 1997, however—with the making of *TwentyFourSeven* (1997)—Meadows has seemed less interested in a specificity of place. The shooting script of *A Room for Romeo Brass* (1999), filmed on location in the colliery village of

Calverton in Nottingham, and in Chapel St. Leonards on the Lincolnshire coast, gives the film's setting as 'a small town in the Midlands' (Meadows, 2000b; Meadows and Fraser, 2000, 1). *Dead Man's Shoes* (2004) is set in the 'Derbyshire town of Matlock,' and was 'shot on location in and around Matlock', but the town is unnamed in the film's diegesis (Schwarz, 2013b, 102; Fradley, Godfrey and Williams, 2013c, 8). As Fradley, Godfrey and Williams identify, notwithstanding 'the Midlands landscape' of *some* of his works to date, Meadows's filmmaking attends to the 'margins' (Fradley, Godfrey and Williams, 2013c, 4, 3). Accordingly, this chapter is concerned rather more with the techniques Meadows mobilises for the representation of *marginal* regional place and its *marginal* populace than it is with the image of the Midlands that emerges from his works.

Repetition: a critical precedent

I want, here, to engage with responses—popular and scholarly—to the repetitive nature of Meadows's work. Meadows's repetitions have tended to be met with criticism in the popular press. Invariably, the appearance of the word 'repetitive' within the context of the popular review, published in a national daily newspaper or specialist magazine, is likely to coincide with a negative estimation of the object of its criticism. In such a context, with few exceptions, the word 'repetitive' is used pejoratively. In his review of Meadows's *This is England* (2006), Sukhdev Sandhu (2007) decried the monotony of Meadows's body of work. He wrote: 'Meadows has a rapport with his casts, a winning tone and an intimate knowledge

of neglected British landscapes; what he desperately needs are new and more complex ideas' (Sandhu, 2007). Meadows's repetitiveness, Sandhu prophesises, will stymie his career, unless remedied: '[u]ntil then, his films will continue to be pleasing but fatally lightweight confections' (Sandhu, 2007). Repetitiveness, Sandhu implies, relegates a filmmaker to the realm—or boneyard ('fatally lightweight')—of entertainment, where resides, one assumes, the romantic comedy, the game show, and reality television, and other such 'pleasing', but inconsequential genres. In order to transcend the realm of entertainment, filmmakers must prove their ingenuity in terms recognisable to the reviewer. Novelty, originality, and—Sandhu adds—complexity are the crossed keys of heavyweight cinema, unlocking for the would-be serious filmmaker the world of serious filmmaking, filmmaking of gravitas and lasting appeal.

Within the context of journalistic criticism, the context of Sandhu's review, the continuous serial—while not light or 'lightweight' of storyline—is widely assumed to belong, or to be adjacent to, this category of entrainment to which Sandhu consigns *This is England* (2006). Within this same context of popular criticism, the continuous serial is supposed to share with primetime formats an audience of largely working-class viewers. The conventional subject matter of the continuous serial partly explains its association with a working-class spectatorship. As Richard Dyer writes in his introduction to the co-edited monograph *Coronation Street* (1981), '[a]lthough potentially available as a vehicle for any kind of fictional world, in practice the continuous serial […], has restricted itself to one such world, [one] usually designated "everyday life" or "family drama" and labelled as the province of "soap-opera"' (Dyer et al., 1). Beverley Skeggs and Helen Wood's research (2011) into the television viewing practices of working-class women confirmed the popularity of 'the soaps' amongst this section of society (Skeggs and Woods, 943). Further indicative of 'classed differences in modes of attention' and relationships to television was their observation that 'working-class

groups want television to grab their attention, demanding entertainment, although they are frequently disappointed' (Skeggs and Wood, 947, 946). Inferring a connection between the presumed working-class spectatorship of the continuous serial, and the serial's typical representation of—as per Dyer—'everyday life', and the working-class community at the centre of the *This is England* narrative, and, perhaps, additionally, Meadows's own socioeconomic background, reviewer Hugh Montgomery expressed his disenchantment with the latest instalment of the *This is England* television series by equating it to a soap opera. Montgomery (2011) opened his critique of *This is England '88* (2011), the second of a sequence of three mini-series, by commiserating with the makers of *EastEnders* ('Walfordians'), whose historically 'doomy' Christmas Day special had been 'out-doomed by Shane Meadows this time round' (Montgomery, 2011). Montgomery goes on: 'compelling though Meadow's [sic] nascent franchise remains, I can't help finding its increasingly miserabilist trajectory increasingly irritating. Perhaps it's the sense that this high-class soap is less meaningful than it thinks it is' (Montgomery, 2011). The transmedia *This is England* series, consisting at that time of the film (2006), *This is England '86* (2010) and *This is Egnland'88*, was shaping up to be—as Montgomery pronounced—a 'monotonous […] saga' (Montgomery, 2011).

Meadows's working within the medium of television since 2010—and his adoption the form of the television serial, especially—has emboldened popular critics, in their addresses to non-academic readerships, to diagnose Meadows's repetitiveness as too closely resembling forms of storytelling beneath the consideration, as they insinuate, of the filmmaker *serious* about filmmaking; he is felt simply to be reproducing forms associated with working-class subject matter, and a working-class spectatorship. These sampled assessments of Meadows's work suggest the need for a firmer basis from which to explore the possible

connections between Meadows's repetitions, his anomalous status as a working-class artist, and the centrality of the regional working-class experience to his film and television texts. This thesis asserts that there are other and more *fruitful* ways to do so than by the cursory comparison of Meadows's work to cinematic and televisual modes associated with working-class subjects and audiences, and by the invocation of the tradition of social realism. This thesis offers an alternative means of opening up the relationship between Meadows's artistic practice and his working-class identity.

The field of film studies has provided more thoughtful analyses of Meadows's repetitions. Just as John Swift made recourse to Freud in his—by his own admission—only *partly* successful analysis of Lawrence's repetitive prose, Paul Elliott (2013), discerning repetition in the work of Shane Meadows, likewise looks to Freud to determine its significance. In his chapter of the edited volume *Shane Meadows: Critical Essays*, Elliott uses 'as a heuristic tool for films such as *Dead's Man's Shoes* and *TwentyFourSeven*' Freud's 1914 essay 'Remembering, repeating and working through', wherein Freud evolved an idea 'that would find ultimate expression in the latter chapters of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle'* (Elliott, 84, 83). That idea concerns 'the relationship between memory and psychological pain,' a relationship Elliott explains as follows: 'For Freud, impossible memory manifests itself in the compulsion to repeat. Unable to recall painful and thus repressed experiences, the patient is doomed to repeat some original trauma in a variety of ways until either it is worked through in analysis or it ceases in death' (83). Elliott's exegesis reframes *Dead Man's Shoes* (2004) as 'more than a revenge flick' (85). The film, Meadows's fourth feature, centres on the characters of Anthony and his older brother Richard, around whose exploits in an unnamed Midlands town the narrative revolves. Though Richard engages in a killing spree, 'wreak[ing] his revenge' on the members of a local gang of drug dealers, who have bullied Anthony, and

caused him great distress, Elliott contends that *Dead Man's Shoes* is a film rather more interested in 'memory and encysted trauma', more concerned with the possibility of 'coming to terms with one's own guilt than [it is] with punishing the guilt of others' (88, 86). It is a fact withheld from the audience until the film's conclusion that 'in diegetic time Anthony is already dead before the film begins' (87). The suspension of this information mirrors Richard's repression of the memory of his brother's death, or—as per Freud—its obscuration by 'repeated action and behaviour' (87). Richard murders five men over the course of the film, before being killed himself: '[s]ix deaths which can be read as one,' writes Elliott, 'six deaths which repeat the first' (88). '*Dead Man's Shoes* is structured around this repetition,' Elliott asserts, 'as we are made witness to Richard's attempt at overcoming the encysted trauma of Anthony's murder' (88). Fundamental to Richard's abreaction is admission of guilt and complicity: to the last surviving gang member, he confides that Anthony's mental impairment discomfited and enraged him and that he, too, contributed to his brother's suffering.

Thus, Elliott maps onto the 'structural triadic framework' of *Dead Man's Shoes* 'the three stages of Freud's essay: the failure to remember, the repeating of some painful psychological trauma and, finally, the working through that brings back a flood of images' (90, 89). These elements combined make for 'a mixture of violent social realism with a deep sense of psychological insight and mythopoesis that,' Elliott thinks, 'is *the* primary characteristic of Meadows' cinema as a whole' (86). Elliott draws a connection between this primary dynamic, and the autobiographical nature of much of Meadows's filmmaking, which Elliott frames accordingly as a working through of the filmmaker's past experiences and, occasionally, 'his own complicity' (89). Elliott alludes to 'the short documentary that accompanies *Dead Man Shoes*,' in which Meadows explains that he once 'stood back and

watched the boyfriend of a Down's syndrome neighbour being beaten by a friend' (89). The making of *Dead Man's Shoes* was, for Meadows, a form of catharsis: '"The whole basis of *Dead Man's Shoes*", he says, "is evicting all that fucking guilt"' (Meadows cited by Elliott, 89). Meadows's self-reproach, together with his sense that his storytelling might allay his guilt, suggests, Elliott claims, 'that [Meadows] himself sees his cinema […] as his own attempt to remember, his own compulsion to repeat and, sometimes, his own inability to work through' (90).

Elliott's thesis has gained in credibility in the years since his essay's publication. In advance of the transmission of his television mini-series *The Virtues* (2019), Meadows spoke to the *Observer*'s Miranda Sawyer about an incident in his past that he had long suppressed, and which he had explored in the making of *The Virtues*. Meadows told Sawyer that while staying away from home, aged nine, he was approached in a park by two brothers, who forced him into nearby woods, where 'the older brother sexually abused him over a long period of time' (Meadows, 2019). Meadows's first instinct, he later recalled, was to deny the incident had taken place: '"if you just don't tell anyone, it didn't happen"' (Meadows, 2019). In Sawyer's words, 'Shane squashed the whole traumatic, terrible incident down into something hard and dark and tiny,' so successfully that 'he actually forgot about it' (Meadows, 2019). Meadows explained: '"I know, it's mad. I knew they'd picked on me, bullied me, but that was it"' (Meadows, 2019). He added: '"It was like every ounce of me knew, but I didn't remember it, so I must've blocked it"' (Meadows, 2019). Yet, as he confided to Sawyer, '"every five or six years, I'd have these massive depressions or anxiety attacks"' (Meadows, 2019). So it continued until he saw a clinical psychologist and underwent EMDR (eye movement desensitization and reprocessing), whereupon the memory came back to him in pieces and incompletely (Meadows, 2019). As Meadows told Sawyer, '"it's like a

shattered mirror, I have fairly horrific images but I can't make whole sequences"' (Meadows, 2019).

The discontinuous temporality and graphic violence of *Dead Man's Shoes*, a film produced in the period preceding Meadows's diagnosis of PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), and prior, even, to his recollection of the incident, anticipate the particulars of Meadows's account of what it was like to live with the symptoms of trauma for over twenty years, to recall, *before* recalling the incident itself, the 'specific feeling of pain suppression', and, finally, to remember the experience, an experience so absolutely forgotten that in the moment of recollection '"it was like […] living it for the first time"' (Meadows, 2019). The structure of *Dead Man's Shoes*, with its three temporal zones and corresponding film stocks—signifying, variously, Richard and Anthony's childhood ('amateur and 8mm'), the events of the recent past, 'not attached to any discernible diegetic subjectivity' (black-and-white Super 16mm), and the diegetic present, (colour Super 16mm)—effects a reticulated picture of what has transpired, comparable to Meadows's 'shattered mirror' (Elliott, 86, 87; Meadows, 2019). As Elliott's chapter establishes, *TwentyFourSeven* (1997) shares 'the same temporal structure as *Dead Man's Shoes*' (Elliott, 90). With the benefit of hindsight, and information inaccessible to Elliott in 2013, Sawyer finds what she supposes to be indications of encysted trauma in *Dead Man's Shoes* ('a revenge tale'), and *A Room for Romeo Brass* (1999) and *This is England* (2006), both of which examine what happens when 'an older, dangerous stranger' inveigles himself into the company of younger boys (Meadows, 2019). That it is possible now to perceive the prescience of certain of Meadows's films, to appreciate the verisimilitude of their representation of abuse, acute mental trauma, pain suppression, and abreaction, lends weight to Elliott's reading of Meadows's cinema as 'his own attempt to remember, his own compulsion to repeat' (Elliott, 90). But even as insightful

a reading as Elliott's is limited by its underestimation of Meadows's exceptionality as a regional working-class filmmaker. Elliott neglects mention of the two intersecting marginal identities that inflect Meadows's filmmaking practice, and his intentions: his regional origin, and his working-class identity.

This chapter argues that the repetitiveness of Meadows's body of work proceeds from his commitment to the authentic representation of regional working-class experience. It proposes that Meadows's attraction to serial modes of storytelling, his near-exclusive use of serial forms since 2010, stems from a long-established interest in the *social*, which Meadows identifies as definitive of the working-class lived experience. In what follows, I will posit that Meadows's implementation of serial forms—four mini-series since 2010, with a fifth in pre-production from March 2021—is consistent with the centrality of community to his oeuvre: his making community, the vicissitudes of the peripheral or subcultural social group, the subject of his filmmaking, and his inscribing the social into the process of filmmaking itself by foregrounding and intensifying the inherently collaborative nature of the art form. I will make the case that the serial form, and the expediencies of television production, are the latest tools in Meadows's arsenal for the facilitation of his preferred working environment, one that allows for the creation of *both* authentic diegetic communities, and meaningful non-diegetic communities. This chapter argues that Meadows's practice is predicated on the reciprocity of both these types of communities, the textual and extra-textual. It argues that television is the medium most conducive to the fulfilment of Meadows's filmmaking ideals, chief among them this synthesis of dramatic and actual communities. It posits that the culture of television production, the latitude it affords, enables Meadows and his production team to engineer the optimum conditions for the development of a behind-the-scenes communality and openness, which, in the context of Meadows's filmmaking, is necessary to the creation of

authentic social relationships on-screen. It suggests that, relative to the film industry, the structures of the television industry make simpler the re-employment of crewmembers, the re-casting of performers, and the convergence *in one place* of as many elements and facilities of the filmmaking process (rehearsal, shoot, edit) as possible, which measures assist in the cultivation of a non-diegetic community. Furthermore, this chapter explores the idea that the serial form (the television series, the mini-series), essentially repetitive, is the most appropriate form for Meadows's regional storytelling, with its emphasis on the social. It argues that the qualities of sameness and continuation that inhere in serialisation complement his textual representation of community, the rhythms of which are themselves characterised by sameness and continuation. It argues that serialisation permits the introduction of difference into a framework of sameness, enabling Meadows to add variety to his dramatisations of working-class life in the regions.

I will begin by evidencing the conventional positioning of Meadows's work within the tradition of British social realism, and addressing the limitations and wider ramifications of that positioning. I will go on to propose that Meadows's work be regarded as continuous with what has been termed the Rosean tradition, which refers to a decade of television-making overseen by David Rose, and, by association, to a production-base in the Midlands. Turning, then, to Meadows's televisual works, I will draw upon recent and—up to now—unexamined interview material to show that Meadows's transition into television has precipitated the sophistication of his working methods and facilitated the further integration into his filmmaking practice of real-life, off-camera communal experiences.

Positioning Meadows filmmaking

Meadows is widely considered to be a social realist filmmaker. In his chapter of the *Critical Essays* (2013), David Forrest locates Meadows within the British tradition of cinematic social realism with the caveat that Meadows is 'a maverick who breaks as many moulds as he shapes' (Forrest, 35). Even as Forrest differentiates Meadows's filmmaking as a hybridised form—one that unites the stylisation and lyricism of art cinema with a 'treatment of landscape and space' reminiscent of 'the more expansive films of the documentary movement' (1920s and 1930s), and a diffuse social and political commentary that differs from the 'politically inclined polemical realism' of Ken Loach, whose films cohere around a single issue, and are explicit and linear in their messaging—Forrest does so in the service of *confirming* Meadows's classification as a social realist filmmaker, rather than affirming the alternative: that the label of social realism is only partway satisfactory in its application to Meadows's work, and should be discarded (45, 40). Instead, Forrest argues that Meadows has remodelled the social realist mode for the twenty-first century; in fact, he suggests that Meadows 'has *led* [his contemporaries in] the formation of a *new* realist tradition' (48, my emphases). By this assertion, and by situating Meadows 'within the lineage of the realist mode', Forrest entrenches Meadows's association with the social realist movement ('Ken Loach, Mike Leigh, Alan Clarke and the British New Wave'), and adds Meadows's name to a catalogue of directors working between 1999 and the late 2000s, filmmakers like Lynne Ramsay, Andrea Arnold, and Samantha Morton, whom Forrest thinks responsible for what he calls 'Britain's realist renewal' (35). Others (Hall, 2006; Seino, 2010; Schwarz, 2013b) share Forrest's opinion that Meadows is best understood as participating in the British social realist

tradition, and that Meadows's differences need not undermine that characterisation, but rather enrich and complicate the realist mode.[35] However, since 2010—which saw the transmission of Meadows's first work of television, and marked the beginning of (to date) an eleven-year stretch of television-work—the tradition of social realism has seemed of less and less relevance to Meadows. In what follows, I will give an overview of the origins and varied definitions of social realism. I will outline critical engagements with the tradition, before querying the conventional positioning of Meadows's work within it.

Definitions of social realism

Social realism is an equivocal term, and a genre of filmmaking that resists straightforward definition. Tony Garnett, a producer and prominent figure within British film and television, best known for 'working within a social realist tradition' with Ken Loach, his collaborator of thirteen years, remarked in 1998: '[s]ocial realism is not a formula' (Lacey, 8; Garnett cited by Lacey, 5). Samantha Lay (2002) described the genre as 'difficult to define not least of all because it is both politically and historically contingent' (Lay, 2002, 8). Lay's reasoning, here, echoes the writings of John Hill, whose canonical study *Sex, Class and Realism: British Cinema 1956–1963* (1986) established him as one of the leading authorities on the social realist films of this period, and set the tone for succeeding critical engagements with social realism. In his

[35]In her 2013 PhD thesis, Clair Schwarz attempts an extensive summary of critical efforts to reconcile Meadows's work with the canon of British social realism. These range from the straightforward—notably, Robert Shail's assertion that *This is England* (2006) sits 'solidly in the tradition of British Social Realism'—to more nuanced efforts, not only to locate Meadows's works within the genre, but to blur or broaden the category's parameters in order that it might more comfortably accommodate Meadows's filmmaking (Shail, cited by Schwarz, 2013b, 21). Schwarz remarks 'a tendency to overemphasise the social realist aspects of [Meadows's] work', but herself contrives a variation: her 'liminal realism' carves out a space within the category of social realism for the filmmaker whose work 'has so far evaded satisfactory classification' (Schwarz, 2013b, 19, 39).

chapter of the later-published *British Cinema, Past and Present* (2000), Hill outlines the mutability of the genre:

> The idea of realism implies a privileged relationship between an artwork and an external reality… Actual realist practices, however, depend upon the employment of conventions *which audiences are prepared to accept (by whatever standards) as 'realistic'*. The capacity to signify 'realism', therefore, is not intrinsic to any particular set of conventions but is relative to the social and artistic circumstances in which they are employed. Consequently, *the conventions associated with realism do not remain fixed and are subject to historical variation and change*. These changes in conventions involve two main kinds of representational shifts. The first involves what may loosely be described as content, or subject matter, and has a primarily social dimension. This affects the kinds of people, experiences and issues that are seen as most properly the domain of realism. The second shift relates to formal and stylistic features, the aesthetic means whereby such people and experiences are represented.
>
> (Hill, 2000, 249–250, my emphases)

In light of this, 'the concept of realism remains notoriously difficult to define' (249). This difficulty notwithstanding, Hill attempts a definition through a history of its identification. Citing Raymond Williams, he writes that 'innovations perceived as realist have typically involved a "movement towards social extension", increasing the attention devoted to hitherto under-represented or marginalised groups' (Hill, 2000, 250). 'Within the British cinematic tradition,' Hill notes, 'this has generally involved the representation of the working class' (250). This connection between realism and the working classes has to do with 'the perceived absence of (adequate) representations of this group within the dominant discursive regimes' (250). The impetus behind much of British realist cinema has been to rectify this absence or inadequacy; to fill in the gaps left open by 'Hollywood and… commercial British cinema, types of film-making that proponents of realism have perceived as shying away from the lives of "ordinary" people in the assumed interests of "entertainment"' (Hill, 250). Typically, then, British realist films have had an oppositional cast. What is more, Hill suggests, their 'impulse towards "social extension" […] has derived from a

variety of cultural and political assumptions about… the role within society that cinema should play' (250). 'In this respect,' Hill concludes, 'a resurgence of realism is rarely a specifically aesthetic matter but is characteristically bound up with a more general social vocabulary, or mode of perceiving social realities' (250).[36]

The origins of British social realism are conventionally traced to the 1930s, which saw the emergence of the documentary film movement, pioneered by John Grierson, and the launch of the social research organisation Mass-Observation. In the essay anthology *British Social Realism in the Arts since 1940*, which examines the genre of social realism not only as it intersects with cinema, 'the medium most frequently discussed in terms of social realist aesthetics', but also with 'theatre, fiction, poetry, visual art, and television', its editor David Tucker reaffirms the established narrative that social realism in Britain owes its beginnings to Mass-Observation (Tucker 13, 12).[37] Founded in 1937 by anthropologist Tom Harrisson, documentarist Humphrey Jennings, and poet Charles Madge, the organisation was intended to show 'the "Mass" of Britain to itself' (4, 5). The impetus for its creation was the founders' exasperation at 'an entrenched political and media bias,' which they hoped to disrupt by 'giv[ing] voice to "the ordinary and non-vocal masses of Britain"' (Harrisson cited by Tucker, 5). The group's observations of the UK's working class yielded 'a kind of archive of the imaginary,' which took material form in the still images produced by the movement's temporary fourth member, photographer Humphrey Spender. Spender's images, as Tucker

[36]For additional definitions, see Julia Hallam and Margaret Marshment (2000), who define social realism as 'a discursive term used by film critics and reviewers to describe films that aim to show the effects of environmental factors on the development of character through depictions that emphasise the relationship between location and identity' (Hallam and Marshment, 184). See, also, Stephen Lacey (2007), for whom social realism 'popularly connotes a drama that reveals the situation of the working-class at the level of its culture and everyday practices' (Lacey, 5).

[37]For a more detailed examination of the roots of British social realism, which looks beyond 'the documentary tradition of the 1930s and 1940s' to other 'resources, largely neglected,' see Paul Dave's chapter in the same volume (2011, 17–56).

writes, 'have come to encapsulate the experiences of Mass–Observation in Bolton' (6). They also enshrine the manner in which Harrisson conducted the 'Worktown' fieldwork, his 'plac[ing] particular emphasis on the importance of single images, of single instances of actual things happening, and being seen to happen' (6). Indeed, as Tucker argues, 'the Bolton group's focus on teaspoons, hands, hats, cigarettes, walking, dancing, drinking, manual labour and socializing as images to be described, sketched or photographed, produced… [an] archive that tells us at least as much about the observers themselves and their own social-historical contexts as it does of the streets and people of Bolton' (7).

The complexity of Mass-Observation, its being both a 'realist project' and peculiarly aesthetic, anticipates the complexity of British social realism as genre, movement, idea; 'in its very complications, in its multiple concerns, contexts and aspirations,' the Mass-Observation project, writes Tucker, 'mirrors a number of the issues that are important to any critical appraisal of British social realism' (8). One of these issues concerns the nature of the relationship between filmmaker and subject, 'the relative social positions of the observer and the observed' (Tucker, 8). Higson and others have written about the power that inheres in observation, and how easily and often observation shades into objectification. John Crish coined the phrase 'That Long Shot of Our Town from That Hill' to describe a common trope of the films of the British New Wave, which has since been appropriated by the critical establishment as a metonym, or byword, for the uneven power dynamics of the mid-century kitchen sink films (Crish cited by Higson, 1996, 133). The phrase may be understood as a space–place equivalent of Laura's Mulvey's 'male gaze' (Mulvey, 1975). Just as the male gaze of narrative cinema objectifies and dehumanises the female, 'project[ing] its phantasy onto the female figure which is styled accordingly', 'That Long Shot of Our Town from That Hill'

fetishises the spaces and places of working-class lived experience, flattens them into pictures, objects of beauty to be consumed, rather than engaged with (Mulvey, 11).

To the extent that a considerable proportion of Meadows's work presents as realism, or lends itself to that description, one might say of it that it combines properties of the realism characteristic of the British New Wave and properties of Loachian realism, that is, the kind of realism director Ken Loach engineers in his films and television works. Meadows's work exhibits the 'narrational self-consciousness and visual expressiveness' that John Hill attributes to the realism of the British New Wave (Hill, 2000, 257). Such lyricism or '"poetry"' as one finds in the New Wave films is, Hill notes, 'more commonly associated with (modernist-influenced) art cinema', and, as such, is assumed to be hostile to or at odds with realism (257). However, as Hill reminds us, acknowledging Andrew Higson's contribution to this debate, '[i]n the case of the British "documentary-realist tradition", … there has always been a tension between aesthetic and social-realist concerns', making it 'possible to identify a *play* between "realistic" and "artistic" motivation as a recurring feature of British "realist" cinema' (257, my emphasis). Given this history and consistency ('always'), it is difficult to justify the refusal of the label 'realist' to films or works of television that bear traces of aesthetic motivation. Meadows borrows, equally, from the Loachian model of realism, which is, Hill posits, rather, 'the *impression* of realism' (256, my emphasis). This realism that apes existing realist modes, rather than looking to the "real" world and devising styles and forms appropriate to its representation, is 'cued' to the spectator 'by the employment of particular stylistic traits (such as an emphasis upon actual locations and the use of non-professional actors)', and by the 'partial adoption of visual techniques adapted from traditional documentary (such as unbroken takes, long shots and apparently "natural" sound and light)' (256). (I will look in the following section at the increasing incidence of unbroken takes in

Meadows's work, and the importance he attaches to a continuity of interaction between actors in a scene.) 'The point about this style', Hill concludes of Loach's realism, 'is that it achieves much of its "realistic" quality from being noticed' (256). As Hill makes it seem by his survey of filmmakers working in the realist tradition, even the prototypical texts of British realism are run through with artistic flourishes and 'authorial signature[s]'; it is less the exception than the rule that realism is 'cued by various aesthetic devices' (257).

Inasmuch as Meadows's work effects 'a movement toward social extension', by his consistent representation of marginalised groups, Meadows fits comfortably within the tradition of British social realism (Hill, 2000, 250). On the other hand, the eclecticism of Meadows's body of work precludes any exclusive categorisation. Meadows's use of aesthetic devices is extensive, and most of these devices do not 'cue' realism. Dissolves, montages, external analepses, and slow motion are editing and camera techniques more commonly found in melodramas, film noir, action films, and thrillers, and they abound in Meadows's works. His playing with chronology, and toggling between colour and sepia photography in *Dead Man's Shoes* (2004), which owes much to revenge and exploitation films, and makes use of voiceover, and his parodying the spaghetti western with *Once Upon a Time in the Midlands*, transposing its conventions onto a Nottinghamshire council estate, altogether complicate any all-encompassing categorisation of his cinema. His use of non-diegetic music, the long, lyrical, musical passages that are something of a signature, aligns his work, rather, with classical Hollywood film.[38] The acting in Meadows's works, similarly, prevents any

[38]Having no inkling of the cost of music, Meadows used up the budget of *TwentyFourSeven* (1998) on the score. If it was supposed by producers and investors that Meadows was making a social realist work, there can have been no expectation that he would want it filled with tracks by Primal Scream, Nick Drake, Van Morrison, Beth Orton, Paul Weller, The Charlatans, and Johann Strauss. Music figures highly in Meadows's work, and has done since *Small Time* (1996).

straightforward classification of his cinema.[39] Though, unquestionably, Meadows is better known for helping his actors to effect vividly naturalistic performances, his work encompasses a range of performance styles.[40] Immoderation and exuberance in performance is indulged in and celebrated in Meadows's work, and has been since *Small Time* (1996).[41] More commonly than not, different styles of acting coincide in a single work or text, and this is true of the *This is England* series. The flamboyance of the performances given by Perry Fitzpatrick ('Flip') and Joe Dempsie ('Higgy') befits their characters' pretensions to style, underscores their separateness from the series' central friendship group, and ensures their status as the series' comedy duo. Meanwhile, the actors behind the characters of Shaun, Woody, Smell, Harvey and Gadget, are given an opportunity in the *This is England* series to prove themselves as capable of clowning as they are of subtlety and poignancy.

Meadows's working-class background further separates the filmmaker from the likes of Mike Leigh and Ken Loach, and, farther back, the directors associated with the British New

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[39]John Hill perceives a 'high degree of stylisation in the way that the acting in [Mike] Leigh's films, as a consequence of an extended period of improvisation, magnifies physical tics, bodily gestures and patterns of speech and accent' (257). 'Acting in Leigh's films,' he continues, 'is much more "histrionic" than "verisimilar", drawing attention to its own status as performance' (257). As before, Hill discerns non-realist features in canonical social realist texts. As before, the equivalent 'histrionic' performances present in Meadows's works are not necessarily grounds for his work's exclusion from the social realist tradition.

[40]Rolinson and Woods (2013) draw out the likenesses between Meadows's working methods and techniques implemented by social realist filmmakers Ken Loach and Mike Leigh. Elements of Meadows's practice, as 'the space for script-guided improvisation and actor collaboration, [both] facilitated by the production environment', resemble Leigh's approach to the capture of naturalistic performances (Rolinson and Woods, 2013, 200). Rolinson and Woods expand: 'in Meadows' case, the cast largely live together or, for *'88*, were tactically kept apart, with Lol and Woody separated until the end of both the story and filming. Loach's practice is recalled in Meadows' methods to generate the intensity of spontaneous response, as in Woody's surprise reunion with the gang near the 18-Hour Café, or his belief that Lol had died in hospital, regarding which the actor was, respectively, unprepared and misled' (200).

[41]In their introduction to the *Critical Essays* (2013), Fradley, Godfrey and Williams note how, in *Small Time*, 'Meadows and his cast of mates burst into laughter at both their surreal improvised banter and the preposterous self-delusion of would-be gangsters whose criminal activities consist of stealing cans of dog food and raiding car boot sales' (Fradley, Godfrey and Williams, 2013c, 5).

Wave movement. As Forrest reminds us, 'the likes of Tony Richardson, Lindsay Anderson and Karel Reisz were Oxbridge-educated members of the middle classes who had little first-hand experience of the subjects that they were surveying' (Forrest, 46). Meadows is, in the words of Sheldon Hall, 'a "native insider" not a "sympathetic visitor"' (Hall cited by Dave, 33). He must, therefore, be differentiated from filmmakers who address regional working-class experience in their films, but whose gaze is that of 'the socially concerned outsider' (Monk, 185). Historically, the social realist movement has neither prescribed nor rewarded insider-ness. In fact, indifference to 'insideness' (Edward Relph's term), and indifference to place knowledge, are inscribed in the tradition of British social realism.

When one considers the diverse attributes and interests of Meadows's filmmaking, the scope and heterogeneity of what is a large body of work, one can clearly see how Meadows's oeuvre is reduced by the label of social realism. The strenuousness of attempts to append this label to Meadows's oeuvre is, I would argue, indicative of both a critical overdependence on the social realist movement as a taxonomic repository for works about the regions and the working-class condition, and an unpreparedness within film studies to factor into its classifications the socio-economic statuses of filmmakers, and properly consider the distinctiveness of the working-class practitioner, the stimuli and stresses unique to his or her experience. That the working-class artist remains an anomaly within the British industries of film and television no doubt explains the disinclination to take account of the operations of class within filmmaking.

The Rosean tradition

In 2010, during an interview with the *Guardian*'s Amy Raphael, Meadows listed by name the filmmakers whose works he watched in his youth, and recalled approvingly the availability of such films:

> In England in the 80s it was hard for the likes of Mike Leigh, Ken Loach, Alan Clarke and Stephen Frears to get funding for feature films […] so they made films especially for the BBC or Channel 4. As a kid my cinema was the TV in the living room. Films that I might have been too young to see at the cinema were accessible to me at nine o'clock at night at home.
>
> (Meadows, 2010a)

This remark has been taken as evidence of Meadows's self-categorisation as a conventional, albeit progressive, social realist. Forrest (2013) cites the interview in support of his contention that Meadows 'identif[ies] himself within a tradition of realist filmmaking' (Forrest, 38). According to Forrest, by this remark, 'Meadows simultaneously "pays his dues" to his forbears and suggests a point of departure' (38). But to present Meadows's comment as confirmation of his membership of a principally cinematic tradition is to misapprehend his emphasis that his formative experiences of cinema were mediated by *television*. At the time of his giving the above interview, Meadows had just made his first foray into television, having previously produced only short and feature-length films. Eleven years on, and with the benefit of hindsight, it is clear that Meadows's embrace of the television mini-series was no mere experiment: since 2010, he has worked almost exclusively in television. This fact alone is sufficient invitation to reassess the application of the label 'social realist' to what is now a multi-media body of work. Meadows's regard for directors of television drama (Loach, Leigh, Clarke, Frears) suggests the importance of the medium to Meadows's vision and self-understanding, and serves as an additional impetus to query the usual classification of his work, and to consider its re-placement within a televisual tradition. In this section, I

undertake to situate Meadows's work within a specific televisual tradition, a tradition that, unlike the social realist tradition, coheres around principles of production, rather than principles of aesthetic. I propose that the 'Rosean tradition'—a term coined by James Saynor to refer to the works of television that were developed under David Rose during his tenure as Head of English Regions Drama at Pebble Mill in Birmingham—is a better 'home' for Meadows's films and television series (Saynor cited by Rolinson, 2005, 55). I argue that by re-locating Meadows's work in this way—that is, by understanding Meadows's film- and television-making as continuous with the Rosean tradition—one invites new insights into Meadows's practice, and refreshes a stale critical discourse.

As David Rolinson explains, 'BBC Birmingham was predicated upon creating "regional" drama' (Rolinson, 2007, 285). It was established in answer to 'complaints over television's apparent London bias', and marked, as Rolinson writes, a 'devolution of editorial power' (285; Hanson cited by Rolinson, 285). Rose was appointed 'Head of English Regions Drama in April 1971', and given an office at Pebble Mill, a purpose-built television studio complex in Edgbaston in Birmingham, which incorporated an office block, and other amenities, including gardens (285). Pebble Mill provided a workspace for the writers and directors Rose commissioned; 'playwright [David Hare] and [director Alan] Clarke were on the same corridor as [Stephen] Frears, [Mike] Leigh, Alan Bleasdale and others' (Rolinson, 2005, 54).

Connecting texts like *Land of Green Ginger* (1973), *Penda's Fen* (1974) and *The Black Stuff* (1978) is the overarching remit of English Regions Drama, and the vision of commissioner David Rose, that is, his interpretation of his responsibilities and of the function of English Regions Drama. Shaping this interpretation and, in turn, his commissioning practices was Rose's conviction that 'the writer [was] the primary creative figure in television drama', and that there existed a talent pool in regional repertory theatre on which he might

helpfully draw (Cooke, undated).[42] With the help of Barry Hanson, whom Rose engaged as script editor on the basis of his theatre work at the Hull Arts Centre, Rose enlisted regional writers to devise 'dramas about aspects of English regional life and culture' (Cooke, undated). Liverpool-born Alan Bleasdale was among the more inexperienced writers Rose recruited during his tenure at Pebble Mill. By 1978, Bleasdale had written 'a series of short stories about a teenager called Scully,' and read them aloud on local radio, written stage plays and had them performed in Liverpool and Manchester, and accumulated four television credits, contributing an episode to BBC North West series *Sense of Place*, and writing single plays for *Second City Firsts* and *Play for Today*. '[B]ut it was "The Black Stuff" (tx. 2/1/1980),' writes Lez Cooke, 'about a group of road workers from Liverpool laying tarmac in the north east, which launched Bleasdale on a new path which culminated with *Boys From the Blackstuff* in 1982' (Cooke, undated). Cooke's account of how this seminal television mini-series came to be developed, its topicality at the time of transmission, and its appeal to regional working-class audiences illustrates Rose's receptivity to writers of Bleasdale's profile and degree of professional experience:

> 'The Black Stuff' was filmed in 1978, and it was while it was being edited that Bleasdale wrote to David Rose, Head of BBC English Regions Drama, and Michael Wearing, script editor on 'The Black Stuff', outlining his ideas for developing the drama into five plays, using the characters in 'The Black Stuff' to explore the issue of unemployment and attitudes towards it which were prevalent at the time.
>
> 'The Black Stuff' was not transmitted until after Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government had come to power and unemployment increased dramatically as a result of the new government's economic policies. By the time that *Boys From the Blackstuff* was screened, in October 1982, over three million people were out of work, the highest figure for fifty years. *Boys From the Blackstuff* echoed a national concern about the effect of Thatcher's policies on working-class communities in the industrial heartlands of Britain, giving expression to the frustration and despair that working-class people were experiencing. Bleasdale channelled all of his previous experience as a writer into producing scripts reflecting this frustration, incorporating elements of 'scouse' humour and black comedy, ingredients which helped to make the plays both realistic and entertaining for working-class audiences.

[42]For further information, see Cooke (2005).

(Cooke, undated)

Boys from the Blackstuff (1982) was broadcast after Rose's departure from Pebble Mill, but its timeliness and impact epitomises the reach and contemporary relevance of the projects to which Rose was drawn. Patrick Campbell characterised Rose's time at Pebble Mill as a 'quiet revolution' and Rose as 'cast[ing] his net over all of non-metropolitan England' (Campbell, cited by Rolinson, 2007, 285–286). Rolinson credits Rose with 'launch[ing]' the careers not only of Bleasdale but of 'David Hare, Jack Rosenthal and Willy Russell,' and with bringing to pass 'visionary pieces like David Rudkin and Alan Clarke's *Penda's Fen*' (1974). That any of this was possible was owing to 'Rose's relatively autonomous position within the BBC', an editorial autonomy Rose claimed to have enjoyed as Commissioning Editor for Fiction at Channel Four, the office he filled upon leaving Pebble Mill in 1981; he 'just transferred the BBC in Birmingham to Channel 4 but gave it better production values' (286; Anonymous, 2017).

How, then, does Meadows's work fit within this picture? One could argue that the 'Rosean tradition' is a time-bound tradition, and, as such, Meadows's work can have no place within it. And yet, Saynor's designation of the work that emerged from English Regions Drama as a 'tradition' creates an opening, allowing for the possibility that Meadows might be assimilated into it, long after the department's dismantlement. That others have referred to the same collection of works by alternative names (Saynor calls it 'Rose's cinema') makes this 'tradition' or 'cinema' or movement still more indeterminate and open to interpretation (Rolinson, 2005, 55). Moreover, it runs counter to the department's founding principle, that is, its investment in the value of place, and its revelation over ten years of the distinctiveness of the smaller places that make up the larger national space, to insist that a 'Rosean tradition'

be, first, confined to a period of *time*, and, second, limited in application to the work of the sometime occupants of a single building complex in suburban Birmingham.[43] Owing to Rose's remit, and his 'relative autonomy from London', there was seeded what David Hare called a 'BBC Birmingham *culture'*, and it is with this 'culture' that I propose Meadows be associated (Rolinson, 2005, 54; Hare cited by Rolinson, 2005, 54, my emphasis).

Among the reasons for regarding Meadows's work as participating in the 'Rosean tradition' is its variety. Of this period in the history of television-making, David Rolinson writes: '1970s television films challenge the decade's cinema for diversity, ranging from art cinema to comedy, social realism to fantasy, regional films to thrillers, horror to Brechtian experimentation' (Rolinson, 2010, 168). The sum total of the television works produced by BBC Birmingham serves as a microcosmic reflection of this wider diversity. Its 'richly varied output,' and the innovation it encouraged in individual practitioners, is best exemplified by *Penda's Fen* (1974), a television play directed by Alan Clarke (Rolinson, 2005, 55). As Rolinson writes in his monograph on the working-class director, 'David Rose's choice of Clarke to direct a production since described by James Saynor… as a "fantasia" and a "bizarre BBC art movie" was as surprising as it was inspired' (53). Rolinson goes on: 'As rural as much of Clarke's work is urban, as lyrical as he is often elliptical, [*Penda's Fen*] operates in areas of imagery removed from the socially concerned realism with which he is associated' (53). Clarke, who by this time had directed five plays for the *Plays for Today* strand, '[rode] the intellectual and emotional whirlwind of *Penda's Fen*,' in the words of Howard Schuman, 'with its ton and a half of symbolic, poetic, theological and political freight' (Schuman cited by

[43]Pebble Mill was demolished in [September] 2005. The larger share of its departments the BBC had, by that time, relocated to The Mailbox, then a relatively new development. The nine-acre site in Edgbaston was vacant for almost a decade. In 2014, construction began on Birmingham Dental Hospital. It opened two years later.

Rolinson, 53).[44] Like *Penda's Fen*, Rose's cinema, in its wholeness, 'represented an intense amalgam of realism and fantasy', answering, as James Saynor argued, 'the "need" of a concrete locale combined with the writerly "leaping" of a talented dramatist' (Saynor cited by Rolinson, 55). That being so, Saynor judged *Penda's Fen* and *Boys from the Blackstuff* (1982) 'the twin peaks of this Rosean tradition on television' (Saynor cited by Rolinson, 55).

The relationship of this group of works to place is more indefinite than is suggested by Saynor's phrase 'concrete locale', and this indefiniteness or complexity is part of what makes the Rosean tradition an appropriate home for Meadows's work. Rolinson describes *Land of Green Ginger* (1973) as typical of the works that emerged from Pebble Mill in two ways; written by Hull playwright Alan Plater, the single drama 'demonstrates BBC Birmingham values, such as the centrality of Plater's personal voice, amidst a willingness to engage with identity beyond *simply* recording a "real" location' (Rolinson, 2007, 287, my emphasis). *Penda's Fen* is, likewise, 'rooted in its landscape in a more complex way than a tokenistic attempt to set a play in the provinces', a quality it shares with '*Boys from the Blackstuff*, Philip Martin's *Gangsters* (1975–78) and Alan Plater's *Trinity Tales* (1975),' all works produced by Rose (Rolinson, 2005, 55). In *Stage and Television Today*, now *The Stage*, in an article titled 'The quiet revolution in BBC drama' (1972), Rose is quoted as follows:

> I could have said to [writer] Brian Finch, 'you come from Wigan, so write me a play about Wigan,' or to David Rudkin, 'Let me have something about Warwickshire.' But there would have been little point in that. What each writer has done is to mirror some aspect of a community which he

[44]But even as the play marked a departure for Clarke in terms of material—a script by Birmingham-born David Rudkin, 'as much a poet as a playwright, a composer of language,' Rolinson writes—it was not a *wholesale* departure, as some have implied (Rolinson, 2005, 53). Rolinson had rather the play be understood as 'constitut[ing] a refinement of [Clarke's] personal style' (53). In this opinion, Rolinson echoes the assessment of playwright David Hare (1990), according to whom 'Clarke possessed "a strange mix of romance and realism"' (Hare cited by Rolinson, 53). Hare felt that *Penda's Fen* afforded Clarke the opportunity to engage this disposition; it 'showed a side to him "streaked with a romantic intensity which was almost mystical"' (Hare cited by Rolinson, 53).

> knows intimately. The locality is only important in so far as it provides the setting for a situation.
> (Campbell cited by Rolinson, 2007, 287)

Rose's privileging of representations of community over representations of 'locality', his preferring plays about *emplacement* to plays about place, finds a correlative in Meadows's approach to the representation of Nottingham and its rural surrounds in the film of *This is England* and its television sequels. Meadows made explicit the Nottingham setting of his earliest works, *Small Time* (1996) among them. He filmed in Nottingham, and populated his films with Nottingham people. This agreement of setting and location was, at this stage of his career, convenient. *If* it was also a matter of principle, it was not a principle to which Meadows remained committed. His collaboration with Warp Films, whose headquarters were based in Sheffield, put an end to location shooting in Nottingham, even as Meadows continued to set his narratives *in* Nottingham, or a version thereof. The film of *This is England* (2006), produced by Warp Films, was the first of Meadows's films to use stand-in locations: namely, Grimsby for the coastline of his 'Nottingham-On-Sea', an imagined amalgam of Nottingham and any of a number of seaside towns along the Lincolnshire coast.[45] In time, Meadows would substitute this particular discourse of authenticity, the 'recording [of] a "real" location', for other and, arguably, more persuasive discourses of authenticity, having to do with the representation of relationships within a community (Rolinson, 2007, 287). It was during the making of *This is England '90* (2015) that Meadows began to focus on achieving a continuity of performance; to experiment with continuous takes and multiple-camera setups that he might minimise interruption to exchanges between actors during filming, and eliminate as near as possible the need to piece together a scene or social

[45]In an interview with *The Scotsman* (2007), Meadows styled the setting of *This is England* (2006) 'Nottingham-On-Sea' (Petrovic, 130).

interaction in the edit. (The following section explores in some depth this emergent focus or priority of his filmmaking, one that coincides with his transition into television.) This shift in emphasis some twenty years into Meadows's filmmaking career—away from authentic localities, and toward authentic experiences of belonging within a community—aligns Meadows's filmmaking with the Rosean tradition. As Rolinson notes, Rose's requirement of his writers that they hold up a 'mirror [to] some aspect of a community' necessarily 'affected the form' (Rolinson, 2005, 55). He explains:

> as Rose told Bob Millington and Robin Nelson (1986: 25–6): 'to reflect regional life, the landscape and the community, we tried to make as many … *Play for Todays* on film as possible, to somehow get a feeling for the outlook of the regions … Space is created!'
>
> (Rolinson, 2005, 55)

There is a further justification for regarding Meadows's work as continuous with Rose's cinema. The writers and directors responsible for the drama that passed through Pebble Mill had in common a physical place: not their regional hometowns, nor the settings of their plays and series, but the city of Birmingham and a workspace within it. That English Regions Drama had its headquarters in the Midlands is not of little consequence, but numbers among the many agreements between Meadows's work and the Rosean tradition. Meadows and the writers and directors hired by Rose in the 1970s have in common a connection with Midlands centres of television production. Nottingham, like Birmingham, was for a long time a hub of television production. The East Midlands Television Centre, a studio complex built to house the new Central Independent Television, became operational in 1983, nine years before Meadows relocated to Nottingham at the age of twenty. Situated on Nottingham's Lenton Lane, the Television Centre—or Carlton Studios as it was later

known, and known to Meadows—was no small facility.[46] Its two largest studios each accommodated five hundred audience members, and popular gameshows *The Price is Right, Family Fortunes, Supermarket Sweep* and *Bullseye,* were taped in these spaces at Television House. Derbyshire-set drama *Peak Practice* (Central, 1993–1999; Carlton, 1999–2002), and the *Crossroads* revival (Carlton Television, 2001–2003) were also filmed at the site. At the height of its activity, there were six-hundred personnel working on-site, making television production one of Nottingham's important and now exhausted industries, along with lace and tobacco production, and bicycle manufacturing.[47] Eight of the ten series of *Blockbusters*, which ran for ten years from August 1983 to May 1993, were produced at the Television Centre, and an episode of the gameshow features in Meadows's *This is England* (2006).[48]

Also established in 1983, Nottingham's Television Workshop (previously known as Central Junior Television Workshop, and Carton Junior Television Workshop), a now-internationally renowned youth theatre group, providing training in performance skills for under-21s, was created to supply Central Independent Television with young actors for its productions. But the workshop outlasted Central Independent Television, and outlasted Carlton Central—a later iteration of what became and continues to be known as ITV Central—and remains active more than fifteen years since ITV announced its intention to sell

[46]Also known as Lenton Lane Studios and Television House.

[47]The Guardian puts the figure at 700 (Cozens, 2004).

[48]For more information on ITV's regional studios, all now non-operational, there are a number of online resources one might consult. Martin Kempton, formerly a television lighting director, has collated the first-hand accounts of some 250 contributors who worked at one time or another in or in proximity to television studio production in London and the English regions. He has fact-checked and integrated these histories with his own research, the work of some fifteen years, and made these reflections available at *tvstudiohistory.co.uk*. For information relating to the design and layout of the Television Centre, see 'Inside Lenton Lane' (2008), a blogpost by Roddy Buxton published on *transdiffusion.org*; and for information regarding Giltbrook, the temporary news studio used by Central Television during the two years it waited for the completion of the studio complex at Lenton Lane, refer to an earlier blogpost by Buxton, titled 'A Trip to Giltbrook' (2007), also at *transdiffusion.org*.

Lenton Lane Studios in 2004, and cut by half the production centre workforce in the process. Meadows's association with the organisation dates back to the mid-1990s, and his making of the featurette *Small Time* with actress Dena Smiles, who was an alumna of the Television Workshop. In the years since, the workshop has served as a first port of call for Meadows and his casting directors. Vicky McClure, Andrew Shim (*Room for Romeo Brass*), Finn Atkins (*Once Upon a Time in the Midlands*), Toby Kebbell (*Dead Man's Shoes*), Michael Socha, Chanel Cresswell, Perry Fitzpatrick, Joe Dempsie and Jack O'Connell (*This is England*) were cast through the workshop, and with the assistance of its long-time director Ian Smith. Smith, who retired in 2015, has appeared in three of Meadows's works (*TwentyFourSeven*, *This is England*, and *This is England '88*), playing a version of himself in *This is England '88*: Mr. Benson, who directs Shaun in a drama college production of *The Ticket of Leave Man.* It is owing to this intersection of Meadows's filmmaking career and Nottingham's history of television production and its ongoing, outsize contribution to the British film and television industry that I propose that, for Meadows, as for a substantial section of the Midlands' population, television is a Midlands tradition, and a Midlands export.

The variety of Meadows's work *frustrates* its categorisation. The recent critical orthodoxy that Meadows's work is quasi-social realist (Forrest, 2013; Schwarz, 2013b), or social realist *up to a point*, because it incorporates elements deemed antipathetic to realist motives, leaves something to be desired. It is a taxonomic shortcoming that the multitonality of Meadows's individual works obstructs their positive identification as social realist, yet their "failure" to meet genre criteria makes it seem, within the context of film and television scholarship, that these works are *themselves* insufficient. When we say of a work that it is not satisfactorily or *in every fibre* social realist, it is implied that the maker sought to create a

work of social realism, and failed in the attempt. This inference of an intention to *earn* the honorific of social realism is misleading in Meadows's case.

In the section that follows, I will make the case for regarding television as Meadows's *home*-medium, because repetition, flow and serial form are part of the fabric of television, and repetition, flow and serial form are, as I will show, sympathetic to the depiction of the lived experience of England's regional working classes.

Serial return and community: a social realism

This section looks more closely at the relationship between Meadows's filmmaking and the medium of television. In what follows, I will detail how the culture of television production, as distinct from that of film production, has equipped Meadows to embed and develop his preferred working methods. I will argue that working in television has enabled Meadows to inscribe community into his filmmaking practice more successfully than ever before and to realise on-screen an authenticity of social interaction to rival that captured in his very earliest, unfunded, and self-produced short films. In addition, I will suggest that serialisation—and the repetition and continuation it entails—further authenticates, or lends credence to, Meadows's representations of regional community, because community is itself constituted of repetition and continuity. Finally, I will make the case that television is a natural home for Meadows's work, with its emphasis on working-class sociality, because there is a consonance between the *flow* of television programming and the working-class

lived experience. In the process of making these arguments, I will establish that Meadows conceives of community as a constant of working-class experience and that the social is, and has always been, the primary dynamic of his filmmaking.

This section makes use of interview material that has yet to have been adduced in any critical context. This material sheds light on Meadows's approach, which he and his collaborators have reported as having changed since 2015, albeit in such a way as conforms with the general aims of Meadows's filmmaking to date.[49] This resource is a recording of an online Q&A, hosted by BAFTA in July 2020, following the nomination in three categories of Meadows's television mini-series *The Virtues* (2019). The live Q&A occasioned the coming together of the series' producers, its director, writers, and stars, many of whom had worked with Meadows prior to making *The Virtues*, and were well placed to reflect on the longevity of certain of Meadows's methods, and to quantify any departure therefrom.

I will begin by outlining two recent developments in Meadows's filmmaking practice, facilitated by his transition into the medium of television. They are: his comprehensive use of a multiple camera set-up on *The Virtues* (2019), a technique he trialled for the first time on the set of *This is England '90* (2015); and his siphoning of the real-life, contemporaneous experiences of members of cast and crew, and their responses as a social group to those same experiences, into the shooting of scenes of an emotional nature on *The Virtues*. Although not *in themselves* innovative, the introduction of these measures into Meadows's practice is revealing of the extent to which his approach privileges an authenticity of social interaction—of communication and community—over and above any other index of

[49]Speaking to a representative of the trade publication *IBC365*, Meadows's long-time producer Mark Herbert remarked of the making of *The Virtues* (2019), '"We broke a lot of the rules for how you are supposed to make TV drama"' (Pennington, 2019).

authenticity, such as, for example, a realism of *place*, which might be achieved by the correspondence of setting and filming location.

A social realism: practice

Meadows's account of how he settled upon using a multiple-camera set-up *throughout* the making of *The Virtues* (2019), a novel approach for Meadows, is revealing of the very precise kind of realism he would achieve: one predicated on the capture of *actual* social exchange. As Meadows explained during the aforementioned BAFTA Q&A*,* the 'big turning point' came with the making of *This is England '90*, and more specifically, the filming of what Meadows calls 'the reveal scene', in which, as he summarises, 'Lol sits everyone down at the dinner table, and basically tells them that she was the one that killed her Dad and it wasn't Combo' (Behan et al., 2020, 00:22:25—00:22:41). Meadows was concerned that his actors—of whom there were eight in this particular scene, seated in horseshoe-formation—would weary of having to run the scene repeatedly, a 'fairly standard' procedure that would ensure that he and his editors had multiple takes, as well as 'close-ups and mediums', from which to patch together the scene as it would later appear in the series (Behan et al., 00:22:58—00:24:28). He was conscious, then as always, that when an 'actor knows you're asking them to go somewhere incredibly real and incredibly deep […] there can be a certain amount of reticence, because they might have to do it fifteen times, and no human being on earth can go into that place fifteen times in a row' (Behan et al., 00:23:25—00:23:47). But it was not *only* out of concern for his actors that Meadows resolved on that occasion to implement a multiple-camera set-up; as Meadows shared, 'what [he]'d learned over the years—working with that cast, in particular—is that very few takes ever resemble other takes' (Behan et al., 00:22:40—00:22:49). It is standard industry practice to cut together fragments of a number

of different takes. That this procedure gives Meadows pause is enlightening. It provides an insight into what it is that Meadows *expects* of his filmmaking. In conversation with Sawyer, Meadows set out what he believes to be the drawbacks of combining takes ('four or five takes all the time'); what is forfeited when a film is assembled in this way (Behan et al., 00:24:22—00:24:28):

> you've got people who are looking at people in a scene, making eye-contact, and it's not the actual moment of eye-contact from that moment in time. And it can be done really well, and it can be hidden really well, but there's something that I saw in that scene in *This is England '90* that made me go, *That's the extra 5%*, *that's this little magical ingredient.* […] That really inspired the whole of *The Virtues*, and [the feeling] that *The Virtues* all needed to be shot so that the actors knew that, if we laid something down in one take, we'd got a wide, two mids, and two close-ups as a bare minimum, and that we could go, *That scene's done.* So you might take a bit longer to set things up, and to set the cameras up, but everybody knew when we shouted action, if something magic happened, or you had to go somewhere that you were scared to go, you weren't going to have to do it fifty-eight times afterwards. And so it was kind of a massive step forward for me
>
> (Behan et al., 2020, 00:24:29—00:25:39)

This 'moment of eye-contact' is, in effect, a synecdoche for the whole of the social exchange as it plays out, without interruption, within the compass of a single take. That Meadows would sooner record for his audience a back-and-forth between characters in its uncorrupted entirety than engineer its semblance in the editing suite is a development within the context of Meadows's career, and suggests that his sense of what realism involves has evolved in recent years. Furthermore, since these changes to Meadows's outlook coincide with his working in the medium of television, it might also be deduced that television has altered what Meadows understands by what John Hill calls 'the practice of realism' and '[a]ctual realist practices', as distinct from '[t]he idea of realism' (Hill, 2000, 249). Meadows's concern to preserve the 'actual moment of eye-contact' between actors makes explicit the kind of realism that appeals to him: not social realism in the conventional, albeit contested, sense of the phrase, but *a* social realism, a realism of relationships, relationships which altogether

comprise a regional working-class community. In pursuit of this realism of relationships, and emboldened by 'this kind of mad experiment' on the set of *This is England '90* ('the thing that gave me the belief that we could shoot [an] entire series like that'), Meadows used multiple cameras throughout the filming of *The Virtues*; 'five cameras as standard', as co-producer Nickie Sault attested (Behan et al., 00:24:00—00:24:13). As Meadows remarked of shooting a pivotal, intimate scene in this way, 'How do you manage to get two people sat in a kids' bedroom, and seven cameras on them? Because, obviously, it's quite a technical achievement' (Behan et al., 00:24:52—00:25:00).

For the most part, Meadows's approach to the making of *The Virtues* conformed with a well-established practice. Extensive rehearsals and improvisation have long been mainstays of his working method. These, among other standards, he carried over into *The Virtues*. As Meadows's long-time producer Mark Herbert told *IBC365*, '"[t]he script [for *The Virtues*] was a blueprint which was workshopped and changed in rehearsals with the actors"' (Pennington, 2019). That rehearsals and workshopping ran *from start to finish* of the shoot, however, constituted a departure for Meadows and his team: '[w]hat was unusual is that this process continued right through filming, with the production often stopping for hours, a few days and even three weeks at one point, in order for Meadows to work through a scene with the actors' (Pennington, 2019). Herbert expanded:

> Normally for an hour-long drama you'd allot two weeks to shoot it and you block all the scenes together for each location since that's the intensive and expensive bit of the whole production. What tends to happen is that even if a scene is not quite working you fall under pressure to keep to schedule because you might only have the actors for a certain amount of time. With the way Shane wanted to work we needed to break that structure.
>
> (Pennington, 2019)

That is to say, as Herbert explains, '"Shane has to have a truth to everything he films and we both felt that this time around we'd break the conventions of the shoot and reach for that truth a different way"' (Pennington, 2019). This difference—this breaking of the structure, '"break[ing] the conventions of the shoot"'—entailed, in Pennington's words, 'set[ting] up camp in a disused former school in Sheffield, not far from Warp Films' offices' (Pennington, 2019). This production site, large enough to house rehearsal rooms, an editing suite, the art department, and offices, 'was a space to which the actors could return and rehearse at any time' (Pennington, 2019). That it cost the company, as Herbert confided during the BAFTA Q&A, '£400 a month [in] rent', making the outfit 'a cheap thing to feed,' permitted Meadows and his producers the opportunity to suspend filming and resume rehearsals, or move ahead with the edit; 'to absorb a six-week hiatus, or a two-week hiatus,' or to decide, spontaneously 'not [to] film on a Friday' (Behan et al., 00:19:20–00:20:03). In sum, the inexpensiveness of the production office ('the most cheap Skywalker Ranch ever'), and the freedom it afforded the company to reflect and extemporise, 'allow[ed] Shane's process to evolve' (Behan et al., 00:19:05–00:19:42).

This latitude ushered in, among other things, the intensification of a process on which Meadows has long depended for the creation of certain effects or qualities of his work, which are themselves associated with the tradition of realism, namely, a naturalness of performance, and a genuine connection or chemistry between actors. Meadows's insistence on a long rehearsal period dates back to the making of *A Room for Romeo Brass*, Meadows's second feature. During the BAFTA Q&A, Helen Behan, who in addition to playing Anna in *The Virtues*, played the part of the community nurse in *This is England '88* and *This is England '90*, attested to the typicality of the greater extent of Meadows's approach on *The Virtues*, which

was no less confronting for being familiar. Of rehearsing a long and poignant scene between her character (Anna) and Anna's brother Joseph, played by Stephen Graham, Behan said:

> And I remember when we sat to rehearse, as I've said many's the time before, Shane's rehearsal room is like group therapy, which is a good thing and a bad thing. But in those rehearsal spaces, you really get to the depth of the character, because we spent—I don't know how long—three hours, more, talking, and you inevitably talk about your own history and your own, you know, your own stuff that you have internally, and that comes out and it informs the character
>
> (Behan et al., 00:26:40–00:27:15)

It is not unusual for Meadows to solicit and implement the input (intellectual and emotional) of his actors in shaping the behaviours and trajectories of their characters. Meadows has, historically, made time to discuss with his actors how they believe their characters might react to certain pressures and provocations, and in what direction their characters' futures lie. For example, in advance of the making of the first of the television spinoffs of *This is England*, Meadows assembled the cast of the film at the Broadway cinema in Nottingham, and had each cast-member write down what they imagined had become of their characters in the years succeeding the diegetic events of the film. Typically, the personae of Meadows's films and television works are created at the meeting of character and performer; they emerge from a combination of scripting, improvisation, and conversation. To that extent, *The Virtues* represented a continuity of approach. Graham describes how the writers' efforts prior to principal photography, the return of workshopping his character with Meadows, and the payoff of improvisational exercises are met in his performance: 'I'm doing a lot of work of creating a character along with Shane, whereas Jack [Thorne] and Shane have done a lot of work creating the language of this character, which then feeds in and then there's a beautiful little marriage that happens' (Behan et al., 2020, 00:14:45—00:16:10).

On this same production, however, the 'talking' to which Behan refers, and that is typical of Meadows's process, extended to the siphoning of real-life feeling, prompted by real-life events and experiences unconnected to the series' narrative, into the performance and shooting of scenes. That is, the previously *organic* practice ('inevitably') of talking about one's character and, in the same breath, one's personal history became, on *this* production, the *deliberate* re-direction of non-diegetic feeling and commonality into the diegetic world of the series. Of preparing to shoot the abovementioned scene, Behan remembered:

> we got to somewhere very vulnerable in a moment in that rehearsal space. And I remember we were all kind of emotional. I'll never forget it, in fact. […] I remember [Shane] actually said to us, *Stop where you're going with that; I know what's coming; I can feel it.* […] *Keep that now, and store it, and wait.* […] And on the day, I remember, we all had some stuff going on. I mean, it was a cataclysm of events that happened, and it nearly kind of didn't transpire on the day, but something happened that we decided to go with it, and take all the stuff that was happening. And everybody—from Nickie [Sault] and Mark [Herbert], from the makeup and the costume and the crew—everyone was aware that there was this giant moment
>
> (Behan et al., 00:27:10–00:29:15)

Graham, Behan's scene partner, corroborated her account:

> for me, personally, that was the most purest moment on a film set and as an actor I have *ever* experienced in my life, and that was simply because… Time stood still: […] due to the fact of what had happened to people individually, […] what people were going through. And we came together as a collective family, here, do you know what I mean, as a *real*… So people were having issues with families or issues with friends or whatever that were really, really, really deep and really affecting them personally, but we kind of put all that aside and we all just kind of got our arms around each other and we went, *It's all right, let's just give this a shot and see what happens.* And it was the most beautiful moment I have personally ever… Look, I mean [*points to hairs standing up on his arms*] Something happened in that room, something happened in that room. We captured something […] I don't mean to talk like that, but there was something magical, you know? […] And that's down to the process of how [Meadows] works, you know what I mean? You experience those moments that are spiritual, *really* spiritual and *moving*.
>
> (Behan et al., 00:33:00—00:34:25)

There is a critical difference—which I hope, here, to have drawn out—between wanting to capture genuine feeling in the *individual* performer, and wanting to capture a *flow* of feeling between *two or more* individuals. There is a rich precedent in acting training for the former approach: for the transference of real and remembered emotion into what Konstantin Stanislavski termed the 'given circumstances' of a scene, as per Lee Strasberg's 'affective memory'—an exalted version of a sub-principle of Stanislavski's 'system'—and Uta Hagen's 'substitution'. The latter approach, which both Behan and Graham describe as resulting in a kind of 'magic'—as something greater than the sum of each of their contributions to the scene—has not been codified or popularised in the same way. This more singular approach to the capture of naturalistic performances, one that demands a particular and hard-won production environment, distinguishes Meadows's practice. His growing suspicion of the commonplace procedure of combining takes, which suspicion motivated his institution of multiple-camera shooting, likewise, sets his work apart. As it seems to Meadows, the assembly of a scene from multiple disparate takes disrupts what he construes as a continuity of feeling, and constructs its representation, a counterfeit. Meadows's strategy of preserving for televisual audiences the intimacy, immediacy, and continuity of feeling between two or more people—of capturing the *phenomenon of fellow feeling*—is one of the means by which Meadows inscribes community onto his body of work. In sum, Meadows's making appreciable adjustments to his working practice between 2015 and 2019, during the making of *This is England '90* and *The Virtues*, is indicative of the way in which television production—its relative latitude, its forgivingness—has assisted Meadows in the realisation of certain sought-after effects, specifically, a realism of relationships. Equally, Meadows's television works have made clearer to audiences the centrality of the social to his filmmaking.

Collaboration and a sociable mode of authorship

The openness and sociability Meadows cultivates in his cast and crew runs in parallel to a set-wide understanding, likewise cultivated, that everyone involved in the making of a work of film or television is eligible and authorised to shape it. In fact, the off-camera camaraderie that Behan and Graham describe is *conditional* upon a common understanding that, where Meadows's productions are concerned, filmmaking is a *collective* undertaking. Meadows has long solicited, and put into effect, the creative contributions of his actors. By this invitation to his performers to share in the narrative development of his works, and *by* his readiness to discuss publicly the techniques of workshopping and improvisation, which he deems necessary for persuasive characterisation, Meadows has consistently, and since the very beginning, decentred himself as the sole originator of his works. However, the methods Meadows has implemented in the years since working in television, the changes he has made to his process, have succeeded in *further* decentring Meadows as the author of his works, a decentring he embraces.

During the BAFTA Q&A, Meadows related how he began work on *The Virtues* without knowing how the series would end. He had in mind 'a dual ending for each [of the principal] character[s]', Joseph (Stephen Graham) and Dinah (Niamh Algar) (00:35:15–00:35:25). In the case of Dinah's ending, Meadows resolved to 'shoot both', and choose between them in the edit (00:36:39). Joseph's ending presented more of a challenge, because Meadows 'was invested in his story in a different way' (00:35:40). Joseph's story, as noted earlier in the chapter, is based on Meadows's own experience, the memory of which he suppressed for many years. Meadows knew only that he wanted Joseph to meet his abuser face-to-face: 'how he handled the situation with that man… I was contemplating it from my own perspective; it was like a safe arena for me to do something that I didn't dare do in real life'

(00:35:45—00:36:00). In the case of Joseph's ending, then, and the confrontation-scene, 'it kind of *had* to be left open,' because 'you have no idea how it's going to be until you get there' (00:36:18—00:36:22). As Meadows explained, 'because I'd experienced something similar to what [the] character had experienced, there was a part of me that wanted to go in and… wanted Joseph to go in on my behalf and give him a right walloping, and there was a part of me that wanted him to go in and forgive him' (00:36:48—00:37:05). 'But what was lovely', Meadows continued, 'was that we kind of… we didn't choose, almost, who Joseph *was*; that bit wasn't kind of written' (00:37:05—00:37:16). It was eventually decided, as late as on the day of filming itself, that Joseph's abuser would be 'ill in bed', limiting the amount of preparation Graham and his scene partner (Liam Carney) could undertake (00:37:20—00:37:29). By that time, however, as Meadows relates, '[he] and Stephen, in particular, had [had] a lot of really intense conversations, as friends as well as colleagues, on that one' (00:37:46—00:37:56). Co-producer Nickie Sault spoke of this approach of suspending the series' ending, and described the result:

> We had a stunt coordinator standing by; we really weren't sure in what direction this scene was going to go in. It was so incredibly powerful, and I can't imagine any other set on the planet running this way, because… I mean, me and Shane were sitting in the next room with two tiny little monitors, with headphones on, and at one point I actually cried out […] I actually went, *Argh!* at the monitor, and Shane took his headphones off and he went, *What? What? What?* And I went, *Nothing. Nothing.* But that moment… Because I hadn't… This didn't *exist*, this scene, until these two people came together, and just the power and the courage of these two actors in this situation. I was at home on my sofa, watching it on telly; I was *so* in that moment with them.
>
> (Behan et al., 00:38:03—00:39:05)

This spontaneity of Meadows's filmmaking, and his openness to having his actors direct a scene from the *inside*, effects a further dispersal of authorship.

This fissuring of authorship recalls Lawrence's conceptualisation, and transvaluation, of authorship. Like Lawrence, who, by subjecting his texts to revision even after publication, disperses the authority conferred on the figure of the author, Meadows, by leaving his screenplays open-ended, and having his performers—under his stewardship—*"feel"* their way toward narrative decision, disrupts our collective conditioning by the dominant cultural discourse to conceive of the author as a genius figure, and to infer from a finished work a totalising authorial intention, a premeditated design. Moreover, Meadows welcomes the perception of his filmmaking as a collaborative endeavour. When, during the BAFTA event, Sawyer asked Meadows to clarify the extent to which the narratives of his films and television series are planned in advance, and, further, to address the popular assumption that his works are largely improvised by performers on-set, Meadows responded as follows:

> when we were doing the [*This is England* television] series, when you can see a character like Woody or Gadget or Harvey in your head, and you've already made something with them, there's this beautiful thing where you… they almost help you to write their lines, because you know who they are. So you kind of sit there reading a magazine, and the keyboard taps itself. What was really wonderful about [*The Virtues*] … in particular, with Episode 4, was that when you know an actor's gift […] and how two [actors] kind of work together in a room, you bring them into that writing process. So if you've got someone in your mind's eye, they help you—they do in *my* head, anyway; I don't know whether they do in Jack [Thorne]'s—but in my head, I love hearing, I love knowing, who somebody is, because they help me to inform the script. And, you know, the actors also play an enormous part in inspiring… it's like a duality, a dual relationship, of we'll come up with a script, and then we'll sit down and workshop with actors, and things that did or didn't work, you know, either stay or get changed. And it comes from the actors being honest and open in those improvisation sessions. And so it's a two-handed process that works all the way through. And what's lovely is that no-one's too possessive over their own part. For me and Jack, sometimes an idea may remain quite true all the way through, and sometimes things completely change. But it's not that they're not written; they're just written in a slightly different environment
>
> (Behan et al., 2020, 00:10:28—00:12:34)

There is much that is interesting about this answer. I would draw attention to two things in particular: that, when describing that stage of the writing process at which he writes alone, Meadows uses the generic 'you' in place of the first-person pronoun; and that, throughout

his answer, Meadows makes to remove himself as the agent of the action of writing. Even when he writes in solitude, with only the actors 'in [his] head' for company, the 'keyboard taps *itself*' (my emphasis). One may infer from Meadows's choice of words, and the passivity of the version of himself he presents to Sawyer and the wider public, the *intention* to absent himself from the writing process; to subvert the image of the author-God.

Meadows seems always to have had a singular sense of what writing entails. Reflecting in 2000 on the making of his film *A Room for Romeo Brass* (1999), he implied an essential conflict between character and screenplay: 'for my money it was always going to be character-driven; it was never a script-oriented film' (Meadows, 2000a). Twenty years on, in the form of the answer he gives to Sawyer, he suggests equivalences between improvisation and writing, and between performance and writing. On Meadows's productions, writing *happens*. It happens during workshops and on-set. The 'environment' and the instrument may change, but the activity is always 'writing'. In Meadows's understanding, writing is the process by which story and dialogue come to be fixed and committed to film. Writing is "done" or undertaken by everyone and no-one in particular, and 'all the way through' a production. The ceremony of writing—of writing *alone*, and only in advance of filming—is exchanged for a host of approaches, involving multiple parties. Ramifying, unformalised efforts are substituted for the prescribed oneness and integrity of writing. In this way, Meadows divests the activity of writing for the screen of its propriety. Proprietorship over the experience of writing is foreclosed in this context. Meadows's attitude to the printed word, the scripted word, and to writing for performance recalls Lawrence's attitude to writing for the stage and, indeed, to writing in general: 'the author only gives the leading suggestion' (Lawrence, 1984, 509-10). As previously argued, Lawrence's assertion amounts to a redefinition of authorship. Similarly, the sharing of the responsibility for writing on

Meadows's television productions overturns normative conceptualisations of creatorship. Meadows is a different kind of creator, and, as with Lawrence, this difference originates with his working-class background and identity. Like Lawrence before him, Meadows has developed a sociable mode of authorship, one modelled on—and *generative* of—what Paul Dave calls 'the protective, reciprocal and collective aspects of working-class culture' (Dave cited by Fradley, Godfrey and Williams, 2013c, 13). Once one understands the centrality of the social to Meadows's practice, acknowledging that he has consistently sought to maximise the sociality of the filmmaking process, one sees that his transition into the medium of television was inevitable.

A social realism: form

In much the same way that multiple-camera shooting and the channelling of real emotion into a fictional scenario enhance the authenticity of on-screen relationships, so, too, does the format of the television series authenticate the representation of community.

In their jointly-authored contribution to the *Critical Essays* (2013), written before the transmission of *This is England '90*, David Rolinson and Faye Woods draw out the televisual properties of *This is England '86* and *This is England '88*: the televisuality of 'their style,' as distinct from the style of the film, and the televisuality inherent in the 'promotional strategies' enacted by Channel Four consistent with its publicised return to 'the values which underpinned the channel's launch in 1982' (Rolinson and Woods, 2013, 186; anonymous, cited by Rolinson and Woods, 189). Rolinson and Woods's essay explores how the form of *'86* and *'88*, their taking place in 'the larger space of serial television', complements their thematic concerns: 'the weight of the past as revealed in returns, hauntings and traumatic memory' (186). The co-authors argue that the montages of archive television footage that

open both mini-series function 'less as nostalgic cultural artefacts, socio-political interrogation or subcultural exploration and more as manifestations of memory in service of theme and characterisation', for *This is England* is 'a haunted text', crowded with 'memories and hauntings' (186). As Rolinson and Woods maintain, '[t]elevision's past' overhangs the 'transmedia narrative' of *This is England* ('*'88* uses *EastEnders* to parallel narrative events,' for example), and constitutes 'one of the layers of memory at work in the serials' (190, 186, 197, 190).

Rolinson and Woods's analysis of televisuality does not extend to an evaluation of its effects upon the representation of community, though it invites it. I want, here, to answer that invitation by suggesting that the television serial is a vehicle more appropriate for the authentic representation of community than the standalone ninety-minute film. What interests Rolinson and Woods in their essay is the way in which 'Meadows' revisiting of *This is England*'s characters at intervals… constructs long-developing personal narratives' (191). Such narratives, they point out, bring to mind Amy Holdsworth's observation 'of the 'backwards and forwards movement, patterns of return and retreat, and the "ebb and flow" of television' (Holdsworth, cited by Rolinson and Woods, 191). They remark that

> [b]oth *'86* and *'88* open with the gang fractured and incomplete, separated by barriers created by past events and seeking to escape, atone or return to the fold. *'86* finds the gang long absent from Shaun's life after the divisive and violent events of the film, while *'88* finds Woody estranged from the gang and Lol suffering depression following her affair with Milky and her murder of her father, Mick, in *'86*.
>
> (Rolinson and Woods, 191)

But this state of fragmentation from which each mini-series moves off is part of a *larger* pattern of ebb and flow of friends in and out of the friendship group and of the rupturing and repair of this working-class community. It is worth setting out more fully the 'forwards and

backwards' motion of the overarching narrative of *This is England* to better establish the centrality of community to what is now, at time of writing, a work of four parts.

This is England (2006) has a circular structure: its friendless protagonist is assimilated into a community, only to find himself friendless once more, and in a worse position than before, when that community is torn apart. Fradley, Godfrey and Williams summarise the film's plot thus: '*This is England's* bullied and alienated young hero initially finds solace and comfort in a group of skinheads, but what appears to be a warm, accepting and non-judgemental community is thrown into disarray when one of its former members, Combo, returns from prison spouting ugly but eloquent right-wing rhetoric' (Fradley, Godfrey and Williams, 2013c, 9). Combo makes to recruit the group's more impressionable members into the National Front, and leads his devotees in criminal mischief and racist verbal assault. At the film's climax, Combo attacks Milky, who is black, and puts him in hospital with near-fatal injuries. Combo absconds, leaving Shaun without friends and without father-surrogate.

This alienation–assimilation–alienation paradigm is carried over into the television series. In *This is England '86*, Shaun is reintegrated into the group (E2), having spent the intervening three years nursing a sense of shame over his complicity (by proximity) in Combo's assault on Milky. The decision to reinitiate Shaun is a unanimous one; Woody, Lol and the rest of the gang descend on Shaun's house in the middle of the night, and wake him from sleep with a round of singing: 'We're your friends'. *'86* also sows the seeds of a schism in the group; the events of this series will cause Lol to withdraw into herself, and Woody to walk away from friendships he has had since he was school-age. Lol and Woody's relationship deteriorates in *'86.* Woody stammers his vows during their wedding at the working men's club (E1), and the ceremony is interrupted when Meggy has a heart attack in a bathroom stall. Lol's father Mick, who sexually abused her when she was a child, reconciles with her

mother, and moves back into the family home. Lol wishes to share with Woody this history with her father, but he is preoccupied, and she cannot reach him. She confides in Milky, instead, and they begin an affair. Mick, father to Lol and Kelly, rapes their friend Trev in his living room. The following day, Trev tells Lol what happened (E4), and Lol confronts Mick, killing him in the scuffle. Combo stumbles on the scene and decides to take responsibility for the killing.

This is England '88 explores the fallout of this incident, and of Lol's affair. In the intervening eighteen months, Lol has had a child by Milky; she and Woody have broken up; Woody has entered into a relationship with a girl unknown to the gang, and they live with his parents. The plot of *'88* is a double helix, a two-stranded narrative; it explores Lol and Woody's separation, not only from each other, but from their community, and the impact of this estrangement on their health. Woody is forlorn, and unresponsive at home. Lol lives alone with her daughter Lisa. Milky has visitation rights, but comes rarely. Unlike Woody, Lol sees their friends occasionally, but is vague and distracted in their company. She sees visions of her father. On Christmas Eve night, she takes an overdose, leaving a note, but is discovered before it is too late by her sister and Trev, and taken to hospital. Trev informs Woody, and the pair rush to the hospital, where Lol, having had her stomach pumped, is in recovery. Lol and Woody are reunited on Christmas morning in the visiting room.

By the opening of *This is England '90*, Lol and Woody have had a son named Jimmy, and Milky and Woody have put aside their differences to form a three-parent family to two children. In this four-episode series, it is Kelly who becomes alienated. Her bereavement, after the loss of her father Mick, overcomes her in *'90*. Her grieving coincides with the arrival of ecstasy on the Madchester scene, and Kelly develops a dependency on drugs and alcohol. The revelation (E3) that Lol, not Combo, killed their father distresses Kelly, and she runs away

from home. She confides in Gadget what has happened, who agrees without hesitation to have her stay with him in the flat he shares with Harvey. When Harvey presses Gadget for an explanation, Gadget tells him what Kelly had shared in confidence. Harvey is understanding, but when later he discovers Kelly using heroin in his bathroom, he throws her out. Combo, having served a prison sentence, is let out on good behaviour, and is taken in by Woody and Lol, and given a room of his own, thereby permitting his re-admittance into a community he has not been a part of for years. Milky, whom Combo beat almost to death in a racially-motivated assault when Milky was only a boy, cannot accept this decision; he refuses to have Combo share a house with his daughter. Combo's reintegration into the community is short-lived; having completed a half-day at his new job at a community centre (E4), he is intercepted on his lunchbreak by Milky, who suggests they have a talk over coffee. Combo goes with Milky, who drives them to an out-of-the-way café, where Combo is ambushed by members of Milky's family, and taken away by force. At the series' end, Kelly works up the courage to put in an appearance at Lol and Woody's wedding reception (E4). The sisters are reunited after a considerable time apart. Kelly is presented to the rest of the group, and embraced by all in turn. Combo has been missing for some months. Milky's secret keeps him from joining in the occasion; he is the newest member of the community to become unmoored.

It is clear that community is the axle about which the series turns. And what emerges from a viewing of all four parts in order is the sense that this community exerts a gravitational pull on its members, and, moreover, that the collective conscious of this regional working-class community compels its wholeness. The series' most affecting scenes tend to be those that depict reunion, or frustrated reunion; such moments are the centrepieces of episodes, and, indeed, of whole serials. Prolonged use of non-diegetic music

lends a lyricism to those moments within the series in which the friends come together as one, or almost-one: during games of football (*'86*), karaoke (*'88*), or barbecues in the front garden (*'90*). The most sympathetic of the series' characters are those whose past experiences or pathologies defer, or outright defeat, their wholesale assimilation into the group; there is nothing so damaging, the series persuades us, as the state of aloneness, as exile from one's community, and as having to support oneself without help or companionship through a period of personal suffering. The affectivity of belonging, as represented in the series, is comparable to the affectivity of place attachment.

Meadows's celebration of sociality is not limited to this series; *TwentyFourSeven* hymns social cohesion, and the horror of *Dead Man's Shoes* is redoubled with the revelation that its vengeful central character has no living family. Meadows is moved by togetherness and simultaneity, and increasingly so. The intensification of social atomisation to which the *This is England* series seemed a response, with its oblique or ambient treatment of a succession of subcultural movements (skinhead, punk, Madchester), has only worsened in the years since Meadows set to work on the first of the television sequels. Its normalisation on a global scale following the outbreak of COVID-19 at the beginning of 2020 augurs a lasting standardisation of social fragmentation, and of the anomie, passiveness, intolerance of difference, indifference to politics, and susceptibility to totalitarianism that theorists like Hannah Arendt have suggested attend mass atomisation (Arendt, 1949).

For the filmmaker whose enthusiasm is community, and who strives for realism, there is some appeal in finding a form proportionate to its narrative representation. In reality, community is not in stasis. It dilates and contracts, and is reactive. In television serialisation, Meadows has found a form commensurate to the dramatisation of community, because only by *extending* the *This is England* narrative is Meadows able to figure the kineticism and

endurance of its textual community. Only by means of *serial return* has Meadows succeeded at capturing the essence of community and, more importantly, its value. More than this, the repetition and continuation in which serialisation consists convey better than any exposition, the repetition and continuation intrinsic to community, and by which community makes itself felt. It is my contention that, during the making of *This is England '86, '88, and '90*, Meadows became persuaded that an authentic representation of community must entail repetition; that a credible textual community is achievable by serial and, ideally, interminable efforts at its representation.

Serialisation behaves as television behaves: it emulates the flow of television programming. In *An Introduction to Television Studies* (2004), Jonathan Bignell writes: '[t]elevision consists of a flow of audio-visual material that, although divided up into programmes, runs on across a period of time without empty gaps in between' (Bignell, 3). Unlike the cinemagoer, '[r]ather than anticipating and wishing for the end of an individual film narrative,' he states, 'the television viewer is usually drawn into and out of a flow of material that does not come to a decisive end' (Bignell, 4). Bignell cites Charlotte Brunsdon (1998): '[i]t is precisely this possible "drifting" through an evening's viewing that has come to seem … one of the unique features of television watching' (Brunsdon, cited by Bignell, 3–4). Bignell adds that 'the experience of watching television occurs in a dimension of time where little end-points (like the ends of programmes) keep occurring, but where viewers are always aware that something new is about to take the place of what they have just been watching' (Bignell, 4). Bignell's 'little end-points' that punctuate the constant flow of television programming bear comparison to the little end-points that interrupt the illusorily continuous transmedia narrative of *This is England*. *This is England*'s continuousness, its flow, is suggested by the insistence of Meadows's additions; by the motion of serial return, and the

sweep of its compound narrative. Since the transmission of *This is England '90*, Meadows has hinted at the probability of his extending the series with still another instalment. Speaking at the Edinburgh Television Festival in 2015, Meadows described the end-point of *This is England '90* as 'a full stop in pencil' (Meadows, 2015). And in conversation with Shim in 2020, Meadows said, 'I've got *This is England '00* in my head' (Meadows, 2020b).

A microcosmic television, and metatelevisual, serialisation is consonant with the representation of regional working-class community for all the same reasons that television is consonant with the representation of the same. As already argued, Meadows associates television, not only with regional working-class storytelling, but with the regional identity of the East Midlands, an identity that finds expression in the *This is England* sequence. What's more, as I have shown, the flow of both commends them to the realistic depiction of working-class life, *because* the working-class lived experience is, in its nature, continuous. Social mobility describes the movement of people between social strata, but upward movement favours the minority. Lawrence and Sillitoe were of that minority. Meadows is of that minority. But, for the majority of working-class individuals, there is no transcendence of the working-class existence. Hence, the 'decisive end' that distinguishes the feature-length film from the series is inimical to—or, anyway, frustrates—the realistic depiction of the working-class lived experience. The textual community of *This is England* approximates a real-life working-class community, *because* it flows from one serial to the next; *because* it is—or appears—open-ended.

In his essay 'Reimagining the Working Class from *Riff-Raff* to *Nil by Mouth*', Purcell argues that '[i]f our representations and contentions of the "real" are to be anything more than just theoretical parlour games, and "realism" is to be something more than just a stylistic gesture, it becomes important… to question how the quantitative shifts in society in

particular periods necessitate qualitative transformations in our imagery of class relations' (Purcell, 118). Defining John Hill's intervention in the study of British realist cinema, Purcell writes that, in *Sex, Class and Realism*, Hill 'acknowledges the importance of assessing the *pertinence* of a film's particular aesthetic approach to the period under view, along with the issues it is attempting to address' (Purcell, 118, my emphasis). Hill remarks of British realist cinema that, all too often, 'a change of content'—reflecting socio-cultural change, and a transformed working class—'has frequently *not* been accompanied by new *forms* to match the new subject matter' (Purcell, 118, my emphases). In this, he includes the 'working-class films of the British "new wave"' (Hill, 1986, 58). 'Indeed, even before the cycle of "new wave" films came to an end,' he reminds us, 'contemporary reviewers were already claiming that its "realism" had become exhausted' (Hill, 58). In addition to this, 'their "break towards realism"', he writes, by way of Raymond Williams, 'did not in any major sense entail the "invention of new dramatic forms"' (Hill, 59).

Meadows did not *invent* a form proportionate to new content, but neither did he *settle* for the form of the feature film. Like realism, which, in the words of Thomas Elsaesser, is 'infinitely "corruptible" through repetition', the fiction film has spent its potential as a vehicle for the realistic depiction of ordinary life (Elsaesser cited by Hill, 59). Instead of invent, Meadows *identified* a viable form, and one extraneous to cinema. By breaking with cinema to enter television, inverting the (then) conventional career arc of the average British filmmaker, Meadows made the mini-series form *seem* innovative. By his abandonment of the standalone feature film and his embrace of televisual seriality, Meadows intuited a new form for realist working-class drama, suited to 'the period under view,' and, in the process, he refreshed extant and 'exhausted' conventions of realism.

The make-up and presentation of the British working class changes; as Purcell reminds us, '[c]apitalism repeatedly transforms the means of production' (Purcell, 115). But what persists, Meadows believes, is its peculiar relationship to and regard for community. For Meadows, community is constitutive of late twentieth-century and contemporary working-class experience, and it is this he seeks to represent authentically, over and above any realisation of a realism of place. The defining absence of the 'decisive end' in the form of the television mini-series makes it eligible, *preferable*, for the representation of a working-class community.

Conclusion

This chapter examines Meadows's substitution of the medium of cinema for the medium of television, and his embrace of a realism of relationships in lieu of a realism of place. It argues that television, and television serialisation, both of which are defined by flow, are, as such, more appropriate to the dramatisation of the working-class experience than are cinema and the end-stopped narrative film; their rhythms mirror the rhythms of working-class experience, or, more precisely, the motions of community. I have shown that Meadows considers community a constant of the working-class experience; the composition of the working classes perforce changes, as, also, do the types of work undertaken by members of the working class, but what endures, as Meadows thinks, is the centrality of community to the working-class way of life. I have demonstrated that Meadows locates the identity of the

East Midlands region in the emplaced textual community of the *This is England* series. I have challenged the classification of Meadows's filmmaking as social realist, and recommended its relocation into the Rosean tradition. I have identified aesthetic, thematic and discursive continuities between Meadows's film and television work and the regional working-class works of television produced under the aegis of David Rose between 1971 and 1981. The subversive complexity of their relationship with place and space, in particular—their 'willingness to engage with identity beyond simply recording a "real" location'—enhances understanding of Meadows's work, rather than confounding it (Rolinson, 2007, 287).

Just as Lawrence, in the formative years of his career, nursed a suspicion of narrative language, becoming sensitised to the falsification of his representations of working-class folk by the mediations of a partial, and often imperious, narrator, Meadows has come to hold in suspicion, or to regard as problematic, the mediation that inheres in the editing process; in the dovetailing of takes to make a whole. No less than the young Lawrence, who wished to depict the community of Eastwood as authentically as possible, and its working-class members as 'individual, independent, proud, and capable of fulfilling themselves' (Worthen, 237), Meadows would strike a note of realism in his work, but a realism that has as its foci *people* and the *flow* of communication. As the dramatic form and multiple plays proved the answer to Lawrence's problem—expunging his representations of the regional working classes of artifice and authoritarianism, and honouring the dignity and self-governance of working-class individuals—televisual seriality and the multiple camera set-up are, for Meadows, the formal solution to the problem he shares with Lawrence. The unbroken takes of *This is England '90* and *The Virtues* preserve the flow of social exchange; a continuity of feeling. For Meadows, for whom community is the keystone of the working-class experience,

preserving the social or *human* through-line between agents within a community is to represent a regional people as they really are.

Meadows's multiple representations of the region of the Midlands (East and West, Nottingham and Uttoxeter), and of its marginal communities, is remedial in two ways. In the first place, Meadows's repetitions fill a vacuum; they serve as a corrective to the indefiniteness or vacuity of the Midlands; to the lack of any national, post-industrial understanding of the Midlands identity. The Midlands is an unknown entity, but Meadows's body of work makes it known to national and international audiences; it creates, where there were few before, positive identifiers of the Midlands region. *Space is created!* In the second place, Meadows's repetitions frustrate the cultivation of stereotype; that is, they work to avert the homogenisation of the image of the Midlands in the popular consciousness. As I have shown, repetition enables variegation. As with Lawrence's mining plays and Sillitoe's Seaton novels, Meadows's *This is England* series—by its could-be endless additions—introduces difference into a framework of sameness.

CONCLUSION

Meadows's impressionistic Midlands, abstracted from reality, pushes to its logical conclusion the conjoint example of the textual East Midlands of Lawrence's three plays and Sillitoe's Seaton series. Lawrence's multiples (the mining plays) are expressive of the revelation of change in a framework of sameness; of an industrial East Midlands continually changed from the inside, the occupational patterns of a colliery community modulated by errant behaviours. Sillitoe's novel series is suggestive of the discontinuities of place experience in Nottingham and the neighbouring county of Derbyshire, owing partly to cyclical rhythms of demolition and renewal that disturb a person's identification with place and, by extension, his or her own identity. Meadows, in no less of an attempt to reflect the region *as it is*, and as if to pre-empt its impending and continual renewal, abstracts the Midlands from its geographic situation, locating its sense of identity in the vicissitudes of a marginal, regional working-class community.

Summary

Chapter One is a response to the staging of Lawrence's mining plays in series (1968) and as a single play (2015–2016). It is a response to the consensus (critical and popular) that these plays are bound together in some kind of a relation, though they were not intended by Lawrence to be performed in series. The assumption that the plays are interrelated proceeds from their formal, thematic and aesthetic similarities, and from their having a setting (regional) and people (working-class) in common. Each of the plays dramatises the ways of life of a mining community on the Nottinghamshire-Derbyshire border, and the dialogue of each is written in the dialect particular to this area of the East Midlands. It proceeds, additionally, from the plays' shared naturalism, which sets them apart from Lawrence's later dramas (*Touch and Go, David*); and from the fact, established by Lawrence's biographers, that their shared setting takes its inspiration from the colliery village of Eastwood, where Lawrence was raised. It is justly assumed of works so similar—in content, and of origin—that their creator intended they be taken together, as a trilogy, or series. But that is not the case with the mining plays, and this defiance of expectation, this variance, signals a difference or otherness in Lawrence.

I instanced criticism of repetition where it has been discovered in Lawrence's prose works. I dismantled the assumption of genetic critics that the teleological model of textual development is applicable to Lawrence's writings. I argued that, for Lawrence, there is no arrival at a final, summative text; that, for him, artistic composition is a process of 'nearer, nearer,' rather than of progression to an end. I explored Sarah Dillon's conception of Lawrence's poetry as palimpsestuous, and Chaudhuri's analysis of the open-endedness and

intertextuality of the poetry. I set out Chaudhuri's hypothesis that Lawrence's repetitions, and his arbitrary revisions of the poems, which result in their interdiscursiveness, represent a dismissal of conventional, or Western, conceptions of authorship and art; a rejection of the authority vested in the writer by the dominant cultural discourse; a refusal to engage in, as Chaudhuri writes, 'the power structure embodied in traditional modes of reading' (Chaudhuri, 8). I put into context Lawrence's composition of the mining plays, adducing biographical material (Worthen) to illuminate his personal and professional circumstances, and his frame of mind, at time of writing. I applied to the mining plays the postulates of Dillon and Chaudhuri's studies of the poetry. I found, not only that the interconnectivity of the plays supports Chaudhuri's sense of Lawrence's authorship as decentred, but that this relationship to authorship was formed in the crucible of the mining plays' composition. I suggested that the exercise of writing for the theatre gifted him a greater understanding of the workings of his native speech, the dialect of Eastwood, and of its aphoristic nature, in particular. I made the case that proverbial speech, being a vehicle for the expression of collective identity, modelled to Lawrence a positive relationship to repetition; that the repetitions that inhere in regional speech tutored him in the accommodation of repetition in his work. I argued that the overbearingness and close-mindedness of the character of Mrs Gascoigne (*The Daughter-in-Law*), her use of local aphorism to compel conformity to an established way of life, apprised Lawrence of the dogmatism of the mediations of narrative language, a rigidity inimical to the authentic representation of the working-class individual, whom Lawrence wished to represent, not as compliant, but as 'independent, proud, and capable of fulfilling [himself]' (Worthen, 237). I concluded that Lawrence's refutation of the fixedness of the literary text—and, by extension, of the propriety of writing—may be traced to the formative exercise of the writing of the mining plays. I echoed Chaudhuri's assessment that Lawrence's

attitude to creation, and celebration of repetition in his work, calls for a special response, one of participation, rather than of focus, and one that the cultural establishment, which esteems originality, is not yet ready to give.

Chapter Two examined Sillitoe's four-part Seaton novel series, focusing on the second, third, and fourth novels of the series, *Key to the Door* (1961)*, The Open Door* (1989), and *Birthday* (2001), which share a focal character in Brian. In that chapter, I drew upon spatial scholarship to illuminate Sillitoe's serial depiction of Nottingham and the wider East Midlands. I provided a detailed biography of Sillitoe to illustrate the similarities between the narratives of the Seaton novels and the facts and scenes of Sillitoe's life. I surveyed critical perceptions of the repetitiveness of Sillitoe's work. Taking each of the novels in turn, and by a series of close readings, I traced Brian Seaton's changing relationship to his hometown.

Beginning with *Key to the Door* (1961), and applying to its representation of place conceptual vocabularies drawn from human geography ('insideness', 'outsideness', 'place identity', 'place consciousness', 'place belonging'), I demonstrated Brian Seaton's participation in place, and his total identification with Nottingham. I explored Sillitoe's articulation of how the demolition of Brian's grandparents' home in rural Nottingham ('the Nook')—the site of Brian's childhood and early self-discovery—impoverishes Nottingham's identity, and the part of Brian's identity that was wedded to it. I showed how the interanimating relationship between Brian and his birthplace is terminated with the Nook's disappearance. My analysis of the third novel in the sequence, *The Open Door* (1989), examined the way in which Brian's exploits overseas, and his serving as a wireless operator with the Royal Air Force, interfere with his perceptions of the Nottingham of *his* present. Drawing upon an existing study of Sillitoe's Nottingham novels*,* I examined the influence of the aerial perspective—the elevated view—upon Brian's interactions with his hometown. My

own close textual analyses of the text charted the attenuation of Brian's attachment to Nottingham, and, more generally, the impersonalisation of place effected by the bird's-eye view. I framed the novel as a dramatisation of the tension between the two points of view accommodated by the adult Brian; the dual perspectives of "on the ground" and "aboveground". With reference to the recent work of geographer Janet Banfield (2021), I drew out the similarities between Brian's dual perspectives and the conflict at the heart of the neighbourhood planning process: the irreconcilability of notions of place espoused by planners and policymakers, and the perspective of the local. I likened Brian's internationalist perspective, cultivated in adulthood, to the deterministic, and paternalistic, language of planning, and posited that the same issues of powers that inhere in the planning process texture—in the series' final novel—Brian's interfaces with Nottingham, so that he becomes alienated from the local working-class community of which he was formerly, comfortably, a member. In my examination of the fourth and last novel of the Seaton series, *Birthday* (2001), I explored Brian's estrangement from his hometown, and his self-estrangement. I demonstrated the futility of Brian's identification by name of the spaces of Nottingham and the neighbouring country of Derbyshire. Finally, I put forward the case that Banfield's refutation of the idea of a singular place, and her assertion—via geographer Doreen Massey—of the multiplicity, contestability, and performativity of place, provided context and a justification for Sillitoe's serial representations of Nottingham and the wider East Midlands. Chapter Two proposed that the open-endedness of place—as per Massey, Banfield, and others—compelled an open-ended form; that Sillitoe's geographical imagination inclined him to find in the novel series, and in the dynamic of serial return, the optimum form for the representation of place, and person-place relationships, both of which he knew or intuited to be mutable and fluid.

Chapter Three examined the television work of Shane Meadows, which has yet to be subjected to sustained critical analysis. It focused on the transmedia *This is England* series, comprised (at time of writing) of four parts: *This is England* (2006), a feature film; and the three television mini-series, *This is England '86*, *This is England '88*, and *This is England '90*. I established the generic Midlands-setting of Meadows's films and television series, one abstracted from the concrete realities of Uttoxeter and Nottingham—where he was raised, and lives, respectively—and upon which his impressionistic Midlands is widely assumed to be based. I argued that the ambient localities of his films—the hybridised Midlands of *This is England* (2006), for instance, formed of elements of Nottingham and Grimsby—show that Meadows's interest in marginality and regionality exceeds his interest in specificity. Having remarked a repetitive tendency at play in Meadows's work, I surveyed existing critical interpretations of these repetitions, and called attention to the tendency of media commentators to identify repetition as a negative attribute of Meadows's work, and one over which Meadows has no control. Chapter Three argues, differently, that Meadows's repetitions are strategic, and commensurate with the representation of working-class life in the regions, or, more specifically, with the depiction of working-class community.

Assessing the difficulty of situating Meadows within the tradition of British social realism, and the fraught history of critical attempts to do so, Chapter Three questioned the legitimacy of this categorisation. While acknowledging Meadows's commitment to the authentic representation of working-class experience, I argued that the 'social realist' designation oversimplified, more than illuminated, Meadows's works of film and television. Meadows's playfulness as a filmmaker, and the eclecticism of his work are, I argued, largely obscured by this designation. Moreover, for the past eleven years, as Chapter Three identified, Meadows has produced mostly television drama. The cinematic origins of British

social realism problematise the continued application of the label to Meadows's works. Instead, Chapter Three located Meadows's films and television works within the 'Rosean tradition' of regional television drama. This 'tradition' describes a culture of avant-garde programming, one cultivated by David Rose during his ten-year tenure at BBC English Regions Drama (1971–1981). The Birmingham-based department sought out and nurtured regional voices, resulting in ambitious, bold, and stylistically various representations of diverse ways of life in the English regions. It is in the spirit of this Midlands-based movement, I argued in Chapter Three, that Meadows has eschewed merely mimetic representations of his hometowns of Uttoxeter and Nottingham, and has refined his working practice in the service of capturing the essence of relationships within a regional community.

Chapter Three detailed this evolution in Meadows's career, beginning with his transition into television in 2010. It argued that television is Meadows's native medium, owing to its ready accommodation of repetition and the popularity of the serial form, a form uniquely suited to the representation of community. Drawing on recent interview material with Meadows and his collaborators, I identified two practical developments Meadows has made since his move to television, both of which have helped him to realise an authenticity of social interaction and emotional immediacy unprecedented in his work. The first is his experimentation with a multiple camera set-up, which reduces pressure on his casts, and creates a safer arena for emotional expression. The second is his creation of conditions allowing for the personal contributions of cast and crew members to the emotional environment of the shoot, and his encouragement of discussion, improvisation, and communal responses ('group therapy') to those contributions. These developments, I suggested, are evidence not only of Meadows's determined commitment to the inscription of community, undiluted and unmediated, onto his works, but also of the way in which

television production, specifically, has facilitated his artistic growth. Linking back to Chapter One, I drew connections between Lawrence's sociable mode of authorship, one forged in the process of his writing for the theatre, and the equally decentred mode of authorship modelled by Meadows. I argued that these radical attitudes are traceable to their working-class backgrounds, and proceed from their intimate understanding of specific regional communities. Building on the association of television with community, I examined the formal structure of the three *This is England* mini-series, drawing attention to the way in which a televisual format corresponds to the flow of characters in and out of the textual community. Chapter Three argued that the serial form, with its echoes and open-endedness, bodies forth the repetition and continuation that are definitive of the working-class community.

Throughout, I have reframed return and repetition as *political*. I have shown that to reopen and extend a narrative is to diversify the working-class story; to move against the stereotyping of the working-class experience. It is easy for the marginal working-class artist like Lawrence, Sillitoe, Meadows, who seeks to represent an overlooked regional working-class community, to institute a stereotype: to introduce into the public consciousness an image, or impression, which comes to be regarded—by audiences and critics—as the *only* or ultimate image. This homogenising response to representations of space and social class by artists starting out at the margins of the cultural establishment compels them to vary their representations of place by means of serial return.

Implications and impact

The uses of repetition

I have shown that repetition and open-endedness are qualities common to the works of Lawrence, Sillitoe and Meadows. I have shown that serial form—entailing repetition and continuation—is appropriate to the representation of the working-class experience.

I have argued that Sillitoe and Meadows believed this to be the case; that each of these artists found appeal in the serial form, because they saw in it an opportunity to represent the regional working-class lived experience still more authentically than they had been able up until that time. Meadows saw and seized an opportunity to represent community more effectively, Sillitoe to represent the ebbing of place attachment over time. I have established the productivity of repetition in these three sets of texts, and gestured at the productivity of the same in other works by the artists. I have gathered sufficient evidence to prove the necessity of reviewing the way in which incidences of repetition in works by working-class artists are regarded by popular critics and academics alike.

A cultural identity of the East Midlands

Through close analysis of three sets of texts spanning one hundred years, I have shown that the *loss* of Nottingham's industries has shaped the cultural identity of the East Midlands as *powerfully* as did once their presence, and informs its understanding of itself. The progression of deindustrialisation in the region, and the secondary demolition, dereliction and repurposing of industrial architecture, have stressed—*harrowed*—the collective conscious of the region's population. That this trauma—this profound disturbance to regional

self-understanding—is manifested in imaginative engagements with the place of Nottingham by both Alan Sillitoe and Shane Meadows is demonstrated, here, for the first time.

Limitations

Case studies: selectivity

The scope of my research is circumscribed by the uniform whiteness and maleness of the artists whose works make up the case studies of this thesis. Whilst I have not treated these works as representative of the *whole* of the phenomenological experience of immersion in the place of the East Midlands, nor as indicative of the totality of the mythopoeic strategies by which the region comes to understand itself, there is much that could be done to open up my research to other and diverse perspectives. My research is also limited by its focus on the city of Nottingham. Derbyshire, where it meets Nottinghamshire, and seaside resorts on the Lincolnshire coast receive mention, but my research neglects outright the counties of Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Rutland. The settlement of Leicester, especially, being the next most densely populated in the region, and having a more diverse demographic than Nottingham, must be incorporated into my research before it may be thought to even *nearly* evidence a regional cultural identity.

Uses and future directions

History of serial publication; serial form and loss

The detailed consideration of Sillitoe's serial novels in the middle chapter of this study, and the close textual analyses therein, might be integrated into a larger-scale history of serial publication. The findings of this chapter might equally facilitate critical examination of discourses of selfhood, especially where this interest intersects with the study of regional identity. Chapter Two, particularly, gestures at a connection between serial form and a sense of loss: the loss of place attachment, the loss of one's identity; a sense of loss arising from changes wrought upon the spaces of Nottingham and its rural surrounds in the name of modernisation, growth, and connectivity. Further work might be done to determine whether this connection between seriality and place-based loss (displacement, solastalgia) extends beyond the work of Alan Sillitoe, and, indeed, Shane Meadows.

Adaptations

My research does not take into consideration the many film and television adaptations of the literary works of Lawrence and Sillitoe. Sillitoe adapted his debut autobiographical novel *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1958) for the screen. He also adapted for the screen his short story *The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner* (1962). These self-adaptations are themselves instances of repetition—of rewriting—and, as such, warrant appraisal. My research would greatly benefit from the inclusion of analyses of both these films, and the sense of place they create. There exist a number of studies that examine cinematic and televisual interpretations of Lawrence's texts (Greiff, 2001, 2018); and, more generally, the

relationship between Lawrence's writing and the medium of film (Williams, 1993; Sutherland, 2013). Jason Mark Ward's study *The Forgotten Film Adaptations of D. H. Lawrence's Short Stories* is especially pertinent to my research, because it argues that the lesser-known short film adaptations foreground the fluidity and transtextuality of Lawrence's texts.

Expanding the scope

My research might be expanded to encompass the works of Leicester writer Sue Townsend, whose fictional character Adrian Mole, the hero of a series of eight novels, she claimed to have based on herself, and appeared in other media between the years 1982 and 2009, including newspapers, and radio and television series. Were it to be undertaken, this proposed research might go some way to revealing the operations of gender within regional identity, and serial writing.

Call to action

As Nottingham, along with other regional cities, hastens to boost its local economy by making itself attractive to tourists and day-trippers, there is a risk that its better-funded, City Council-affiliated institutions will reduce to a handful of digestible myths what is a rich and diverse, *presently unfolding* cultural history. As I have mentioned already, initiatives by cultural institutions to interest the local population in the region's history and culture tend to favour young children. But to what similar educative experiences should these children graduate?

Where, as they get older, should they look for further information; for more sophisticated manifestations of regional self-understanding; for more complex and interrogative engagements with the place of Nottingham? How likely are Nottingham's young adults to come across explorative, self-reflexive meditations on the city's self-image; on the intraregional relationships of its counties? The regional identity of Nottingham does not stop with Robin Hood. And yet, the larger share of the city's representations of itself and its identity lean heavily on his legend. Indeed, what is worse than the oversimplification of the cultural history of Nottingham *for visitors* is the simultaneous attempt to peddle this consumer product *back* to locals, and call it their culture.

One hopes that the renovation of the landmark Nottingham Castle, ongoing at time of writing, will *not* contribute to a commodification of the city's cultural history. The Castle's restoration has been couched and packaged to the public in advertorial language. 'Work to make Nottingham Castle a world-class visitor destination is nearing completion', reads the opening line of an article (October 2020), anticipating the Castle's imminent reopening. Spokespeople for the development's investors (Nottingham City Council, D2N2, the National Lottery Heritage Fund) have promised to replace the eclectic, esoteric displays of costume, ceramics and paintings with a ticketed and holistic experience, incorporating 'digital installations in the Robin Hood and Rebellion Galleries' (as above).

It remains to be seen how the remodelled Nottingham Castle will figure the city's self-image. (Its recruitment of so-called 'Explainers' to facilitate the 'learning & visitor experience' would suggest the further 'Disneyfication' of Nottingham's cultural heritage.) In any event, the streamlining and stagnation of the city's cultural and social history should be resisted by the local population for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is coercive. Secondly, it does not sustain. At the very least, we must consider the lasting effects of the commercialisation of

place identity. In the case of Nottingham, the focus on Robin Hood—a figure of folklore—in place of, say, the city's more recent history displaces the local population from the picture. This, in turn, impoverishes regional self-understanding, and makes more difficult the task of engaging the interest of the rest of the nation in *our* interests, *our* value.

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A Room for Romeo Brass (feature film, 1999); Paul Fraser (co-writer); George Faber (prod.); UK release 23 August; BBC Films, Big Arty Productions, Company Pictures and October Films.

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