Introduction

Imagining the North of England

Ewa Mazierska

In his seminal book about nationalism, *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson observes that 'all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined' (Anderson 2006: 6). This also refers to regions larger or smaller than a country, such as the North of England, which is of interest to the authors of this collection. Accordingly, what needs to be examined, is not what is the 'real North', as opposed to the 'fabricated North', but how it is created or imagined.

Anderson and others point to the role of the mass media in creating communities. It is the media which furnish places with specific meanings and people with qualities, telling stories which come across as convincing. Some of these stories endure for a long time, due to being recycled in the new media; others die out because the media cease being interested in them and new associations and stories are created about places and people. In this book we want to present such stories about the North of England, told in films and television productions, trying to capture what is constant in them and what is changing. However, before that, it is worth making some comments about the origin of this term. The 'North of England' presupposes its other – the 'South of England'. To find the 'North of England', we have to grapple with the South-North divide. However, almost all authors discussing this concept point to the fact that the boundary is fluid and contested. As Rob Shields observes, 'the "North" of England is not a precisely mapped out jurisdiction with clear borders. It is said by many to extend as far south as the Cheshire border, including Manchester, and by a few to include even the Midlands – everything "North of Watford"' (Shields 1991: 207). Graham Turner lists 'Cheshire, Lancashire, Cumberland, Westmorland, Northumberland, Durham and Yorkshire – plus some of the more northerly parts of Derbyshire' (Turner 1967: 14; on the more extended discussion of the divide see Jewell 1994; Russell 2004: 14-44). It is also assumed that Manchester is the unofficial capital of this region, due to its industrial past and the present, marked by successes in football and popular art. Katharine Cockin describes it as a 'synecdoche for industrialization' (Cockin 2012: 1). At the same time, the authors tasked with defining the North suggest, echoing Anderson's idea of an imagined community, that the best way to find the North is by asking people in a particular location where they belong.

Apart from asking 'where' is the North of England, it makes sense to ask 'when?', namely when its distinctiveness was at its strongest. Two periods are typically mentioned. One is the time of its supposed glory during the industrial revolution, of 'muck and brass', which lasted for most of the nineteenth century. During this time Manchester, the world's first industrial city, usurped the position held by York as the capital of the North (Smith 1989: 11-5). The second is the 1980s. David Smith and Helen Jewell both begin their seminal works dealing with the South-North divide by arguing about the importance of this decade in its marking (Smith 1989:1-2; Jewell 1994: 1-7). It has to do with, on one hand, deepening of the economic, political and demographical divisions between different parts of the United Kingdom during this period and the denial of these differences by the leading conservative politicians, including Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. These differences were demonstrated by the pressure exerted by Scots, Welsh and Northern Irish to have greater autonomy, which eventually led to their devolution and the project of regional governments in English regions, which, however, proved less successful. The drive towards self-determination can also be seen in the context of the revival of regionalism in Western Europe, reflecting the decline of the nation state and the growth in power of pan-national (and usually non-democratic) institutions, such as the World Bank (Keating 1998). Aligning oneself to region can be regarded as an attempt to resist these anti-democratic forces. The second factor is a marginalisation of the concept of class in historical and political studies and even political discourse after the 1970s (Meiksins Wood 1986; Rowbotham and Beynon 2001; Mazierska 2015: 9-45), which allowed other concepts, such as nationalism and regionalism, to be brought to the fore.

The pathos of the oppressed region

For the majority of authors writing about the North of England, its most important aspect is the relationship with London and the South-East, which is seen as unequal in two senses. The South, even though it covers a smaller geographical area, in the existing narratives is regarded as more important. This is understandable as London is the capital of England, the place where the royal family is based and which includes the City, which throughout the nineteenth century was the world's primary business centre and is still a major meeting point for businesses, whose only rival is Wall Street. Such a domination of the metropolitan area over the whole country is not atypical; it can also be seen, for example, in Paris, according to the rule that hegemonic power produces and reproduces difference as a key strategy creating

a social and spatial split (Soja 1996). However, in Britain's case the contrasts in the economy and political power appear to be greater than elsewhere in Europe. Today, a large chunk of the North, such as Lancashire, constitute some of the poorest parts of the northern Europe, while London and its surrounding areas is its richest part (Rickman 2015).

The domination of the South over the North is also reflected in what can be described as discursive power: the authority to tell stories about this region. Dave Russell begins his seminal work about the North of England, *Looking North*, by listing various mistakes authors from the South make about the North; what he describes as 'northern grit', arguing that they signal a much larger pattern of unequal relationship between the northern periphery and the metropolitan core, as perpetuated by the national media (Russell 2004: 1-2). Christoph Ehland adds that 'although the modern roots of regional identities within England reach at least the fourteenth century, the system of regional differentiation known today is largely a fruit of the socio-economic transformations which began in the eighteenth century, at the beginning of the industrial revolution' (Ehland 2009: 15). One aspect of the 'master narrative' of the North, on which nineteenth and twentieth century literature had a particular influence, reflects the rapid industrialisation and then postindustrial decline of this region. This narrative, in which the North can be summarised as 'Povertyshire' and literal and cultural 'Darkshire' can be traced back to authors such as Charles Dickens, Elizabeth Gaskell, D.H. Lawrence and George Orwell. It emphasises the role of the working class, which created the country's wealth, but was barred from consuming it, because it was appropriated by a few northern (and southern) industrialists (Smith 1989: 11-24).[i] D. C. D. Pockock in an essay 'The novelist's image of the North' summarises it in such words: 'a harsh landscape and climate; an often smoke-obscured land of mines or manufacturing; a substandard environment for both residence, a land populated by earnest people, ruthless leaders and heroes who may "escape" south' (Pockock 1979: 62). Rob Shields continues this line of investigation, claiming

> Disraeli in *Sybil: The Two Nations*, contrasts life of the rich in London with that of the poor in the mines of Mowbray, Lancashire and in the metal-working district of Woodgate (Birmingham). Mrs Gaskell's (1848) *Mary Barton: A Tale of Manchester Life and North and South* (1973) and (1855) *North and South* emphasises the regional contrast of the North with the South. Her heroine lives an idyllic life in a South England village 'sleeping in the warm light of the pure sun' until her father abruptly resigns from the church and transports his family to Milton (Manchester) in the pseudonymic county of 'Darkshire' to become private

tutor to a mill owner. She wonders 'what in the world do manufacturers want with classics, or literature, or the accomplishments of the gentleman?'' (Shields 1991: 209-10)

A more complex North emerges from the pages of Engels' *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, largely based on the author's observations of the circumstances of the industrial workers in Manchester, where the philosopher and politician spent a large portion of his life. Engels notes that the North gave birth to various technological inventions, such as 'the jenny, invented in the year 1764 by a weaver, James Hargreaves, of Standhill, near Blackburn, in north Lancashire' (Engels 2009: 52), which increased the productivity of workers and temporarily the wages of those using a new machinery and the wealth of the region where these inventions took place. In the longer run, however, they led to the rise of the agricultural proletariat, its migration from the countryside to the city, loss of land and their sole dependence on the wages earned in the factory and being vulnerable to the exploitation of the capital (ibid.: 53).

For Engels, who was a foreigner on British soil, the South-North divide is of relatively little importance or even at times he eschews it to make his point about the exploitation and suffering of the working class at large. The principal object of Engels' investigation is not the Northerner, but the 'poor man', exploited by capital. He constructs the Northerner as a universal proletarian. Take the chapter 'The Great Towns' (perhaps the best known chapter in his book), where he presents London as a place where one is lonely in a crowd, where 'the very turmoil of the streets has something repulsive, something against which human nature rebels' (ibid.: 68), adding,

> What is true of London, is true of Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, is true of all great towns. Everywhere barbarous indifference, hard egotism on one hand, and nameless misery on the other, everywhere social warfare, every man's house in a state of siege, everywhere reciprocal plundering under the protection of the law, and all so shameless, so openly avowed than one shrinks before the consequences of our social state as they manifest themselves here undisguised, and can only wonder that the whole crazy fabric still hangs together. (ibid.: 69)

While even during the industrial revolution the prosperity of the North was shared unevenly, with the working class being the least advantaged, by the end of the nineteenth century the South regained its privileged position and the decline of the North and the prosperity of the South has lasted to the present day. The great depression of the 1930s and

the recession of the 1980s hit the North particularly hard (Smith 1989: 19). By contrast, the South fared better during the interwar period because of developing new industries such as motors, electrical engineering, rayon, food processing and a wide range of consumer goods. Subsequently, industrialists moved south because it was expanding and prosperous, while the North was shrinking (ibid.: 23-4).

Common narratives of the North articulate not only its sense of marginality and second-classness in relation to the South, but also attempt to compensate for this position by suggesting that the North has some positive characteristics which the South (or indeed any other region in England) lacks. Typically, it is suggested that people living there are friendlier and closer to their roots than those living elsewhere. 'A nostalgic discourse of tradition valorises the North as the homeland of a traditional British Working Class and the culture associated with it -ferrets, pigeon racing, mines and mills, fish and chips, regional accents and football - as well as organic communities…. Its rougher pleasures of the outdoors contrast with the more refined pleasures of the high-culture of London and its commuter belt', writes Shields (1991: 229). Helen Jewell observes that a MORI poll of 201 executives in London, Leeds and Manchester, published in the late 1980s suggested that the typical Southerner is seen as ambitious, entrepreneurial, under stress and wealthy, while the typical Northerner is friendly, careful with money, down-to-earth, a loyal employee and with a good sense of humour (Jewell 1994: 2).

The dominant narrative of the English North includes unique elements, but it also reflects a certain logic pertaining to other regions and communities which perceive themselves as oppressed. Hence, it makes sense to use theoretical tools applied to these regions. One of them is the study of colonialism. Dave Russell draws attention to the usefulness of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) as an exploration of the relationship between dominant and subordinate cultures, while noticing limitations of this approach. This is because 'relationships between the English centre and its internal regions were vastly more equal than those that Said explores and the South obviously never had or required the level and apparatus of control over the "production" of the North that typified European relationships with the Orient' (Russell 2004: 9). It is not surprising that Russell finds Said's work useful as his focus is on how the dominant social group (the South) constructs the oppressed group (North) and his central thesis is that despite the fact that the North enjoyed 'a degree of agency and been celebrated, even cherished, but always on terms dictated by the centre' (ibid.: 9).

Another type of discourse of colonial oppression worth evoking in this context is captured by the term the 'pathos of small nation', coined by Mette Hjort. She defines it as a 'cluster of debilitating and troubling insecurities prompted by a demeaning stance on the part of more powerful players in the game of culture, by indifference and the sense of invisibility it entails' (Hjort 2005: 30). The 'pathos of small nation' is an approach taken by those nations surrounded by larger and more powerful neighbours. It emphasises its status as a victim and celebrates its suffering. However, as in the case of Said's 'orientalism', we should be aware of the limitations of this framework, when applied to the English North. The North is geographically larger than the South, hence cannot be classified as 'small' and it does not celebrate its suffering to the extent some small nations do, for example the countries subjugated to Soviet Russia, such as Lithuania, Latvia or my native Poland. Nevertheless, we can notice numerous commonalities between these discourses, such as its pleasure in playing victim, nostalgic leanings and the focus on 'authenticity' as a marker of the difference between southerners and northerners. The 'pathos of small nation' narrative is constructed by the marginalised community itself rather than imposed to it from outside, even though it can be argued that ultimately it is the colonial power of a neighbour that brings this narrative into existence.

A third approach can be drawn from the discourse of postmodernism. In postmodern theory marginality is treated as a new centrality. Such an approach, influenced by the works of Michel Foucault and Fredric Jameson, encourages researchers to move away from grand narratives and politics and focus on subjects which were marginalised as the site of a more authentic or progressive culture (Bertens 1995: 102). This 'exaltation of the "minor"' can be regarded as good news for the North of England, because it affords it extra attention and respect. However, a directive to privilege the margins also means that we never will be able to break from the centre as margins only exist in relation to the centre and that we need to seek margins within the margins; in this case paying attention not only to the North as a periphery of England and the South's other, but also a region internally divided, with its own hierarchies and competing interests.

Realism and poetry of the North

There exists not only a dominant story about the North, told by fiction writers, journalists, filmmakers, visual artists and ordinary people living there (and elsewhere), but also a consensus that this story should be told in a particular way, namely realistically. Such a

claim, however, is rarely made explicitly. What happens more often is using realistic works to illustrate how the North is represented and focusing on examples of works about the North to show what British (or even European or world) realistic literature or cinema is about.

For example, D. C. D. Pocock does not limit himself to describing what is typical of the literary image of the North, but maintains that it appeared in the 1830s and 1840s, when British literature underwent a significant transformation, and for the first time the novel 'became the main literary form, replacing the epic and drama' (Pocock 1979: 62). This happened by widening its scope by incorporating topics, regions and categories of people who were previously left out from literary examination, such as industrialisation and the urban proletariat, as opposed to showing indistinct places and focusing on the upper echelons of society (ibid.: 63). Although ostensibly Pocock's main interest is the English 'regional novel', reading his work one comes to the conclusion that British literary realism at large is about heavy industry and ordinary people, who predominantly dwell in Lancashire or Yorkshire.

In the case of cinema, the tendency to link the North with realism in part reflects the long-lasting conviction that British cinema is at its best when it is realistic (on this opinion and its criticism see Leach 2004: 48-58; Forrest 2013). Geoff Brown attributes this view to the propagandistic power of the most famous realists of British film, especially John Grierson:

> Through word and deed he proselytised so hard for what he termed 'the documentary idea' that when serious film criticism developed in Britain (from the late 1920s onwards) realism quickly became accepted as British cinema's worthiest goal and greatest strength. The talents drawn into the Empire Marketing Board Film Unit, the GPO Film Unit and other documentary outfits of the 1930s were also the country's brightest critics: in articles and reviews for Cinema Quarterly, World Film News and other organs, Grierson himself, Paul Rotha, Basil Wright and Edgar Anstey proved passionate champions of realist films. (Brown 2009: 28)

Likewise, Andrew Higson in an article published in 1984 refers to the opinion (although without subscribing to it), that the tradition of 'quality films' in British cinema favours films deemed realistic, of which the 'kitchen sink' or 'new wave' films of the late 1950s-early 1960s, such as *A Taste of Honey* (1961) and *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* (1962) by Tony Richardson are paradigmatic (Higson 1984: 2). John Hill in his book

Sex, Class and Realism and *David Forrest Social Realism: Art, Nationhood and Politics* (2013) turn largely to the films mentioned by Higson, trying to account for the factors which rendered them realistic or prevented them from being true to reality. Neither of these authors are naïve about what constitutes realism. They all agree that realism can incorporate multiple narrative and aesthetic potentials and is time and place specific – what is seen as realistic by one generation might be regarded as fake by another. However, the very fact of evoking the same films again and again, when realism is mentioned in the context of British cinema (and not infrequently world cinema) implies that not everything about realism is in the eye of the beholder.

What thus constitutes 'northern realism?' Following Raymond Williams, Hill argues that a shift towards realism in arts happens when a revolt against previous conventions takes place. This revolt can take two forms. 'One consists of the '"injection of new content" (new people, new problems, new ideas) but within a basically "orthodox form"; the other of an "invention of new forms" which undermine "habitual" versions of "dramatic reality" and thus communicate new, a more fundamental, "underlying realities" (Hill 2011: 59). Hill further argues that it is predominantly on the basis of their content, that new wave films were regarded realistic. They introduced new characters (the working class, juvenile delinquents), new settings (the factory, the housing estate) and new problems (race, homosexuality) (ibid.: 59). It appears that such characters and settings (and perhaps also problems) were easier to find in the North than in the South, which might explain the specific claim to realism made by films and novels about the North.

Realism is also traditionally a dominant style on British television (Whannel 1994: 183). While new wave films encapsulate British and European film realism, the soap opera *Coronation Street* (1960-) is seen as a model of a realistic British drama and a realistic television genre at large and this is again due to it introducing a specific type of people, namely working class, played by actors lacking in glamour and speaking with regional accents and setting it in ordinary spaces, such as a terrace houses or a local pub (Paterson and Stewart 1981; Dunleavy 2009: 108-17).

Together with linking representations of the North with realism, many authors suggest that they capture the 'poetry of the North'. For example, as an epigraph of his article, Higson quotes the cinematographer Walter Lassally, who says that the remarkable thing about *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* and *A Taste of Honey* is not that they treat working class people and working class problems, but that they have a very poetic view of them (Lassally, quoted in Higson 1984: 2). Higson subsequently mentions that the 'kitchen sink'

dramas are marked by a tension between the 'drabness of the settings (the "kitchen sink") and their "poetic" quality; between "documentary realism" and "romantic atmosphere"; between problem and spectacle' (ibid.: 3).

Poetry is conveyed by a specific use of nature. Nature in northern film is not only the background to the action, but reveals the state of mind of the character or, as David Forrest and Sue Vice put it in their essay, aptly titled 'A Poetics of the North: Visual and Literary Geographies': 'where the northern landscape seems most realist, it is at its most symbolic' (Forrest and Vice 2015: 60). Such an idea can be found, most famously, in Ken Loach's *Kes* (1969), whose young protagonist befriends a kestrel and he does so not to transform the bird of prey into an innocuous pet, but to cross to the other side, so to speak, namely learn to be like a bird. The close contact with nature of people from the North of England can be explained by the rapidity of industrialisation of this region. As Engels explained, in a short period peasants became industrial workers and factories were located in rural areas. Hence a typical northerner is somebody who did not lose his connection to nature and is still seeking it. The most touching moments of the 'new wave' films present the characters' excursion to places where this connection can be reclaimed, such as a wood or the seaside. In *Kes*, as Amy Sargeant observes, this is accentuated by 'Chris Menges' atmospheric photography' (Sargeant 2005: 251). These episodes are so touching because we are aware that the communion with nature will not last (Higson 1984: 13-4); the characters will have to return to the 'satanic mills' or the hell of their dysfunctional families, which are also the product of industrialisation. Maybe this emphasis on the closeness and contrast between industry and nature is a reason that, as Pocock observes, 'the Lake Districts is outside of, or at least an untypical appendage to, the popular image of the North. Romantic and unspoilt, with its own lakeland guides and poets… the area has a sufficiently distinctive literary heritage to justify separate treatment (Pocock 1979: 64). Poetry was also discovered in the world conjured up in *Coronation Street* (1960-), the longest running soap opera in Britain. This was achieved through idealisation of neighbourly relations and projecting Coronation Street as a utopian or rather, as Shields puts it, 'edenic universe': static, innocent and self-content' (Shields 1991: 226; see also Paterson and Stewart 1981).

Yet, not infrequently poetisation of the North and especially the northern countryside is accompanied by its demystification. We find such an approach in the films and television plays of the creator of *Kes*, Ken Loach, such as *The Price of Coal* (1977) and *The Gamekeeper* (1980), both written by Barry Hines, a writer born in Barnsley. As Sue Vice and David Forrest observe, *The Price of Coal* is structured on the binary of dark pit and light

countryside (Forrest and Vice 2015: 58). In this film the edification of the countryside by some of the characters acts like a premonition of the future of the coal industry as no future at all. In *The Gamekeeper* Loach demonstrates that the countryside is as ridden by class divisions as the industrial centre, if not more. The agricultural working class suffers the exploitation characteristic of capitalism, as well as that typical for feudalism, being expected not only to do one's job but show humility towards their masters.

The tradition of 'poetic realism' casts a long shadow on the more contemporary representations of the North. Not only artists interested in depicting this region are expected to focus on its drabness, economic deprivation, the dignity of its inhabitants and their sense of belonging to their milieu, but the critics and historians privilege works conforming to this stereotype. There is little research done on that part of northern literature or film which is surrealist or fantastic. This collection tries in part to address that gap by discussing film and television productions which offer us a more colourful and surreal North. However, before we move to it, let's briefly present the screen history of the North.

A short history of the North in film and on television

When film came into existence, there was already a dominant narrative of the North of England. As Dave Russell observes, a major factor in the construction of the North was the industry's need to appeal to audiences already armed with certain expectations about this region (Russell 2004: 177). Similarly, television had to take into account the representations prevailing in film. Let's look briefly at some films and television productions regarded as crucial in shaping the canon of northern cinema and television.

Before I move to discussing how the North was represented, let me consider the question how often it was represented. Although the answers to this question will vary, depending on what period we will take into account and how we define 'representation of the North', but on the whole the North was marginalised from such a quantitative perspective. For example, only some 3 per cent, or forty from over fifteen hundred, of the fiction feature (long) films produced in the years 1927 (following the Cinematograph Act of this year) to 1940 were set in the North, in spite of being the location of over one third of British cinemas and cinema seats (Hughes 2016).

Probably the earliest screen representations of the region were produced by James Kenyon (1850-1925) and Sagar Mitchell (1866-1952), whose collection was discovered in Blackburn in 1994, and is the largest surviving collection of early non-fiction films in the

world. A large proportion of their films concerns people living in the North, especially Lancashire and Yorkshire and among them the largest part constitute 'factory gate' films, showing workers leaving the factories. 'There are more than 124 factory gate films in the collection, illustrating the workforce of approximately a hundred known factories in over sixty-five recognised locations, the majority of which relate to Lancashire, in particular the towns and areas surrounding Manchester and Salford and the industrial areas of eastern and central Lancashire' (Toulmin 2006: 202). These films do not have individual protagonists, but masses of working class people, and they focus on the northern townscape marked by factory chimneys and terraced houses. There is a sense of overcrowding, resulting in part from the fact that at the beginning of the twentieth century working class people spent most of their free time out in the streets, to make up for the time they were locked in claustrophobic mines or textile factories, and because their houses were cramped and uncomfortable. Moreover, the filmmakers tried to squeeze as many people as possible into a single frame, because the characters were also their audience, who paid to see themselves on the screen. Yet, Mitchell and Kenyon's films are also untypical from the perspective highlighted by Russell, because they offer self-representation rather than representation from the outside; their gaze is not 'South-centred'. Mitchell and Kenyon were based in Blackburn and their films showing the North were made for northerners. The filmmakers also included themselves and their crew in their films, doing their work, for example directing the people towards the camera. Moreover, there is a fit between the way Mitchell and Kenyon made their films and the material production taking place in the North during Victorian and Edwardian times. Both strove to work in an industrial, 'Fordist' way (although they worked before Ford introduced this system in his car factory), producing the maximum of a given good in a minimum amount of time. It can be argued that this industrial, large scale production was eventually the cause of the demise of the filmmaking duo and northern factories. Mitchell and Kenyon remained faithful to their 'conveyor belt' type of production focused on the masses, rather than becoming 'auteurs', capturing the lives of individual characters. By the same token, however, they can be seen as a model of cinema as a democratic art.

In the period of the 'talkies', as Russell argues, northern films made up only a small proportion of the total output of the British film industry. The region attracted particular interest in the 1930s, between 1959 and 1963, in the 1980s and in the mid and later 1990s (Russell 2004: 178). Two factors predominate in this northern exposure. One was the successes of northern literature; the other was the British political and economic situation.

Typically the North attracted the attention of the filmmakers during periods of economic crisis which were felt there more acutely than in the South of England. The favourite location of filmmakers was Lancashire with Manchester being most 'exposed' to the camera (Richards 1997: 252; Russell 2004: 177-78). Another typical trait of northern films is the motif of escape, usually from the North to the South, but also, figuratively, from a lower to a higher class and from a constraining and conservative social environment to one that is more liberal.

From this perspective Basil Dean's musical comedy *Sing as We Go* (1934) is a typical northern film. Dean was born in the South, in Croydon and on the account of this fact, his subsequent career, most importantly founding and running Ealing Studios, and the textual characteristics of his film, it conforms to the idea of the 'North as construed by the South'. Produced by Associated Talking Pictures (ATP), one of the most successful independent production companies of the period (Higson 1997: 99)[ii], it is set and shot during the period of the 1930s Great Depression. It casts as the main character a young working-class woman, Grace, played by Gracie Fields, a northerner who specialised in playing strong, working class heroines (Richards 1997: 258-66). After losing her job in the cotton mill, closed as a result of the economic crisis, Grace goes to Blackpool in search of work and befriends Phyllis, a middle-class girl from London and has various adventures, presented as a series of loosely connected episodes. Her stay in Blackpool ends when the mill reopens. Grace is presented as strong, resourceful, optimistic and of good character, conforming to the literary image of the North of England, as examined by Pocock. Jeffrey Richards regards her down-to-earth attitude to life as a typical Lancashire trait (Richards 1997: 255-58). Despite all these positive qualities, she cannot save her workplace. For that, she needs the intervention of a wealthy southerner, Sir William Upton, who ensures that the factory is reopened. The people from the South are friendly towards Grace, but ultimately do not regard her as their equal, which is reflected in the fact that she is not the romantic lead in the film. The man to whom Grace is attracted, another affluent southerner, falls for Grace's metropolitan friend Phyllis. *Sing As We Go* is both realistic and poetic, at least in so far as it treats the working class characters with dignity. Ultimately, however, the film normalises the class divisions between the South and the North (Mazierska and Rascaroli 2003: 219-20). Behind its superficial sympathy for the hardworking and down-to earth northerners it hides a conviction that they should stay this way, accepting their lot with good humour and humility. Moreover, it depicts the South (which we can equate with capitalism) not as the source of misery of northerners (the root cause of the closing down of the factory is never revealed)[iii], but as its benefactor.

Probably the hegemonic character of the South was never more strongly felt than during the war years.   With only ten from two hundred and forty-seven features set there (4 per cent) in the years 1941-46, two of which were George Formby vehicles, the North remained near invisible in film. Equally important is the fact that the North was also positioned outside wartime discourses. While in the films set in the South the war was the dominant topic, in northern located films any links to the conflict are tenuous at best, with plotlines instead focussed on the routine dramas of everyday life typical of prewar outputs. Hence, in this very historical period the cinematic North remains outside national history (Hughes 2016).

It was not till the late 1950s that the North on screen became not only a British, but a worldwide attraction. The remarkable upsurge of films about the North in the years 1959-63, known as 'kitchen sink', 'new wave' or 'northern realist' films, has largely to do with the flourishing literature about this region (Russell 2004: 183). The new wave films were based on books about the North, but were seen as exceeding them in their realism (McFarlane 1986: 138). After the documentary movement of the 1930s, these films are regarded as a paradigm of British film realism. The wave started with *Room at the Top* (1959), directed by Jack Clayton and finished with *This Sporting Life* (1963), directed by Lindsay Anderson. The cluster was rather small, comprising only seven titles, including also *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1960) by Karel Reisz, *A Taste of Honey* (1961) by Tony Richardson, *A Kind of Loving* (1962) by John Schlesinger, *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* (1962) by Tony Richardson and *Billy Liar* (1963) by John Schlesinger. What they have in common is their focus on the improvement of the life of the working classes after the war and postwar austerity and their possibility to move up the social ladder, although by individual action, rather than collectively (Higson 1984, Hill 2011:136). Importantly, sport and marrying a wealthy woman are presented as the best means to achieve social advancement. There are no hints at the possibility of revolution or indeed any community action.

As Russell observes, of the five directors involved in the cycle, only West-Riding born Richardson came from the North and even he worked mainly in London (Russell 2004: 184). Hence, the films were prone to employing a 'southern gaze'. Although they were praised for their realism, as mentioned in the previous section, including frank, non-sentimental treatment of working and lower-middle class life, increasingly their realist credentials were questioned. Adam Lowenstein discusses *Room at the Top* alongside Michael Powell's *Peeping Tom* (1960), which barely features in the canon of realist cinema, arguing that, unlike Powell's film, *Room at the Top* places the viewer in the position of an observer,

detached from the working-class character and the spaces he inhabits, rendering them exotic (Lowenstein 2000: 227). He argues that beyond the social realism there is potential violence (ibid.: 228), which can be compared to that committed by an Orientalist writer presenting the customs of primitive people. I agree with this assessment of *Room at the Top*. However, there is a significant difference between new wave films in regard to their treatment of working class characters, with *Room at the Top* being most cruel and *This Sporting Life* and *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* the most sympathetic. This can be linked to the fact that the protagonist of *Room at the Top* is very ambitious; the other men are either ambivalent about moving up the social ladder (Frank in *This Sporting Life*) or reject such opportunity altogether (Colin in *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*).

When discussing the 1950s and 1960s films, it is worth including *Mandy* (1952) by Alexander Mackendrick, a Scot born in the United States and subsequently a leading director of the Ealing Studios. The film tells the story of a deaf child born into a family of means living in London. Both her parents want to help Mandy, but are in conflict about what is the best course of action. The more progressive mother decides, against the will of her husband, to place Mandy in a school for deaf children in Manchester and herself finds an apartment nearby to be close to her daughter. Shot partly on location in the progressive Royal Residential School for the Deaf in Manchester, the film managed to break the working class stereotype of the North by by-passing the class issue and showing the North as having something which the South is lacking – first class care for the disabled. In this sense *Mandy* remains a unique film. Maybe for this reason, in the only extended essay devoted to this film, written by Pam Cook, its northern setting is overlooked (Cook 1986).

The second half of the 1950s is also marked by development of commercial television in Britain (ITV). The contract for broadcasting in the North of England was awarded in 1954 to Granada Television under Sidney Bernstein. Bernstein was a southerner, who with his brother Cecil previously built a successful circuit of cinemas in London. However, he is credited with making Granada a powerful cultural institution in the North. Granada, as David Plowright, a well-known producer working under Bernstein reminisced, became 'the most precocious of the independent companies formed in the 1950s' (Plowright 2003: ix). Lez Cooke adds that it succeeded in 'targeting working-class audiences with its own home-grown soap operas, and by recruiting new writers to inject a dose of working-class realism into the single play' (Cooke 2015: 33). The paradigm of this approach became *Coronation Street*, first broadcast in 1960 and lasting till now. Following Marion Jordan, Lez Cooke describes

its style as that of social realism (ibid.: 37). The main characteristics of this style is the focus on the

> characters belonging to the working class or the classes immediately visible to the working classes such as shopkeepers. They and their surroundings should be ordinary; the locale should be urban and provincial (preferably in the industrial North) and the time should be the 'present' and the style should suggest an unmediated, unprejudiced and complete view of reality. (ibid.: 37).

This description suggests *Coronation Street* has much in common with the 'kitchen sink' dramas, but there are also differences. The gaze in *Coronation Street* is that of a working-class insider rather than the middle-class outsider. As Shields puts it, while in the kitchen sink films 'one looked from the inside-in, in *Coronation Street*, one looks from the inside-out' (Shields 1991: 227). Moreover, the townscape and landscape does not play a poetic function as in the kitchen sink films. The space presented in the soap opera is the space of action, rather than the signifier of the state of mind of the main character. The 'inside-out' perspective can be explained by the fact that many *Coronation Street* scriptwriters, such as Jim Allen and John Finch, had a working class background; its lack of (obvious) poetry by the way soap opera was shot, in the style of live theatre (ibid.: 38). Cooke argues that 'for working-class audiences, especially in the Midlands and the North, a programme like *Coronation Street* offered a shock of recognition, of ordinary lives in ordinary circumstances, such as television had never really offered before' (Cooke 2015: 38). But there is also another argument, suggested by Paterson and Stewart (1981) and reinforced by Shields, that *Coronation Street* is 'not simply a realist evocation of a way of life but also a prescriptive utopian fantasy' (Shields 1991: 225), because it offers us an 'insular world of certainties' (ibid.: 226; see also Whannel 1994: 188) free from most political and social problems, such as (from the 1980s) the onslaught of neoliberalism.

Kes by Ken Loach, made in 1969, can be seen as a link between the 'new wave' films and later productions about the North. It draws on the poetic realism of the 'kitchen sink' films of the previous decade, with its dialectic of the industrial setting and the countryside, as well as having new elements, such as being shot in colour and having a child as the main character. Although Loach was born in Nuneaton and studied at Oxford, his films and television productions about the North were never accused of adopting the perspective of a southerner. This is partly on the account of him using 'reliable' material, such as in the case

of *Kes* the novel and script written by the northerner Barry Hines and, more importantly, the sense that he identifies with the working class people whom he portrays.[iv] Loach himself commented on the cinematography of Chris Menges (his long-standing collaborator from the time of shooting *Poor Cow* in 1966) that it should both capture the spontaneity of the acting and be pleasing to look at (quoted in Leigh 2002: 60). Moreover, the camera should be a sympathetic observer (ibid.: 60; Hill 2011: 111-23), not smirking, as it was the case of *Room at the Top*. The point is to present the film's protagonist Billy Casper in the way his teachers and other figures of authority are unable to see. In this sense *Kes* is like *Coronation Street*. But the difference is that this 'sympathetic' observation has a distinct political goal: to draw attention to the inadequate education of the working class kids from industrial communities, the bulk of whom ended up in secondary modern schools, which sentenced them to life in menial employment (Hayward 2005: 91-4).

British cinema of the 1970s is typically seen as being of a lower standard than that produced in the 1960s. One reason is the lack of distinct waves, such as the 'kitchen sink' films, and the lack of adequate funding (Higson 1994: 217). Yet, there are several films which gained popular and critical acclaim and resisted the pressure of time at least to such an extent as the new wave classics. Among them is *Get Carter* (1971) by Mike Hodges, a southerner from Bristol with a career in film and television. *Get Carter* depicts the trip of a northerner who became successful in London back to his home town of Newcastle, to avenge the death of his brother. Jack Carter is of working class origin, but he is no longer working class. Neither is he middle class, because he represents the criminal underclass, which allows him to easily traverse class boundaries. He feels just as at home in a run-down bingo hall or betting office and in a mansion (which turns out to be full of crooks). This ease can be linked to the period the film was made, when such boundaries started to dissolve, as shown in some other films of the early 1970s, most importantly *Performance* (1970) by Donald Cammell and Nicolas Roeg.

Stephen Chibnall places *Get Carter* among *Cool It Carol* (1970) by Pete Walker and *The Reckoning* (1970) by Jack Gold, which in his view depict the North as a 'wasteland of demolition sites and crumbling terraces. Stripped of a vital stimulus for progress by the migration of their brightest and best sons and daughters to the south, the once virile cities of the north have fallen into a slow decay' (Chibnall 2003: 9). Chibnall goes as far as labelling Hodges' film 'north-eastern' with all the implications of this term: 'the familiar iconography of the western genre is knowingly adapted to give Newcastle a frontier quality' (ibid.: 6).

Moreover, this 'north-eastern' is made in the style of a spaghetti western, with its excessive cruelty and cynicism, rather than gentler classical western (ibid.:7).

Although Chibnall's argument is persuasive, I suggest a different interpretation of the North in this film. For me Newcastle does not come across as a frontier (between civilisation and wilderness), but rather as a palimpsest encompassing various stages of northern and English history, while also pointing to its future. The industrial work is still visible and it is not yet dead, with a fully operating port and coalmine. The entertainment and leisure industry, epitomised by a bingo hall, a betting office and a horse race course, is also thriving. We see run-down terraces, but also affluent upper middle-class houses and an aristocratic mansion whose guests indulge in a decadent lifestyle: alcohol, drugs, gambling and sex. There are sites of demolition, but this is not for the sake of destruction, but to erect new buildings, fuelled by speculative capital, such as a restaurant whose owner is involved in the murder of Jack Carter's brother. Many scenes, in part thanks to using high or low angle shots, render Newcastle futuristic. Although it is a frontier town, bordering the sea, the sea is tamed and subordinated to human needs. Ships are carrying passengers and cargo and a cable railway is full of industrial waste which is dumped into the sea (together with the man whom Carter murders). By revealing these characteristics, Newcastle does not come across as particularly northern or even English, but universal. It is a city on the border between Fordism and post-Fordism, full of – as David Harvey will put it – 'feral capitalists', making capital illegally and then investing it in legal operations (Harvey 2012: 155-57). Chibnall claims that '*Carter* neither romanticises, celebrates nor encourages identification with the working-class community it so convincingly depicts' (ibid.: 10). It is true that the characters in the film have no redeeming features, but I will not describe them as belonging to the working class in the old sense, as nobody in the film works in manufacturing. Rather everybody tries to make the transition to post-Fordism, often via a 'feral route'. Russell observes that although the film is 'tied unusually closely to a specific recognisable location, it casts only one north-eastern actor (Alun Armstrong) and 'Michael Caine, as Geordie returnee Jack Carter, is not the only one who chooses to solve the problem of accent by not bothering at all' (Russell 2004: 180). The choice of Caine for the main role, although reflecting the great popularity the actor enjoyed at the time, suggests that he is not tied to any specific location. He is neither southerner nor northerner, but a man in transit, without any distinct ties to class or region.

In the 1970s Granada continued producing series set in the North. One of them was *Sam*, scripted by John Finch and transmitted in the years 1973-75. Set in Yorkshire in the

fictional mining town of Skellerton (based on Featherstone, near Leeds, where Finch grew up), the series was written from Finch's own experience. Like the main character, Sam Wilson, who is ten years old when the series begins in 1934, and whose father emigrated to Canada, Finch's father left home when he was nine year's old and he never saw him again. The first series, set between 1934 and 1938, depicts the poverty endured by households where the main breadwinner is out of work and the way in which families rallied round to help each other. The second and third series show the growing affluence in postwar Britain, ending in 1973 at the time of a new economic crisis (Cooke 2014). The characters, the narrative and the style of *Sam* brings to mind the German series *Heimat* (*Heimat*: *A Chronicle of Germany*, 1984) by Edgar Reitz and Peter F. Steinbach, which also depicts the history of one family during several decades, against the panorama of social and political changes. However, there is a difference between the positions of these two series in their respective media histories. *Heimat* is regarded as one of the greatest achievements of German television and the series gained recognition abroad. *Sam*, according to Lez Cooke, despite being one of the most popular series on British television at the time, knocking *Coronation Street* off the top of the ratings at one point, is today largely forgotten, despite being released on DVD in 2004 (Cooke 2014). Meaningfully, I learnt about this series from the website 'Forgotten Television Drama'.

The 1980s profoundly changed the political and economic situation in Britain. The victory of Margaret Thatcher resulted in a worsening of the position of the working class due to high unemployment, following factory closures, mostly in the North and an erosion of workers' rights by curbing the power of trade unions. The cinema of this decade, reacting to colonial nostalgia, perpetuated by Thatcher's regime, was dominated by lavish heritage films, such as *Chariots of Fire* (1981) by Hugh Hudson, *Heat and Dust* (1983) by James Ivory and *A Passage to India* (1984) by David Lean. They played down class and regional differences and stressed the importance of the country's unity. Films about the working class became less prominent. It was really not until the 1990s, when Thatcherism's effect on the working class communities was reflected more fully.

Still, not unlike in the 1960s, as John Hill observes, 'it is the experience of the North which is privileged' (Hill 1999: 166). In particular, Liverpool served as a setting for a number of films centred on working-class characters, such as *Educating Rita* (1983), directed by Lewis Gilbert, *Letter to Brezhnev* (1985), directed by Chris Bernard and *Business as Usual* (1988), directed by Lezli-An Barrett. They present a city in decline, suffering from

unemployment and a lack of prospects (ibid.: 167). This refers also to other films set in the North, such as *Rita, Sue and Bob Too!* (1987) by Alan Clarke. As Hill notes,

> The imagery associated with the North has also altered. The iconography of rows of small terraced houses and cobbled streets characteristic of 1960s realism has given way to run-down housing estates with boarded-up windows (precisely the sort of estates just built in films such as *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1960). Factories (as in *Business as Usual*) have become wastelands and images of work, such as there are, are linked to the service sector (especially shops) rather than manufacturing. (ibid.: 167)

Perhaps the bleakest image of the North is offered in *Letter to Brezhnev*, where the desperate characters locate their hope in the Soviet Union, which ironically at the time was also in a state of mortal decline. Another novelty of these films pertains to their approach to popular culture and the mass media. As Hill observes, rather than highlighting its destructive or debilitating influence on the working class, as was the case in the new wave films, they are presented more positively, as a source of temporary respite from a bleak life, as exemplified by disco music in *Letter to Brezhnev* and pop videos in *Rita, Sue and Bob Too!* (ibid.: 167). As I will argue in due course, such edification of the media and pop culture will continue in the films made in the following decades.

The 1980s also brought changes in British television. As Cooke argues this decade saw a shift away from the production of regional television drama in Britain towards more expensive filmed dramas that were attractive to overseas markets. This was especially evident at Granada Television, where the production of *Brideshead Revisited* (1981) and *The Jewel in the Crown* (1984), with their exotic locations, at home and abroad and focus on upper-class characters, represented a departure from the more parochial, indigenous regional drama Granada had been producing since the early 1960s (Cooke 2012: 105). Nevertheless, the North still attracted the attention of television scriptwriters and programmers. One of the most successful productions of this period was *Brookside* (1982-2003), a soap opera devised by Phil Redmond, broadcast by Channel 4 and set in Liverpool, the 'northern screen city of the decade'. *Brookside* shares many characteristics with *Coronation Street*. It was written by an insider, with Redmond coming from Lancashire and being focused on a close-knit community, the titular Brookside, a housing estate mainly of owner occupiers. However, there were also differences. While *Coronation Street* presents a rather static and utopian universe, on which external events have a minor effect, *Brookside* was an 'issue drama', reflecting the political and social problems of the day, most importantly unemployment,

union-management conflicts, pickets and strikes (Gottlieb 1993: 41-2). Moreover, the social status of its characters was more differentiated, reflecting the decade it was first broadcast.

Ironically, the end of the Conservative rule led to a greater interest in the period of Thatcherism, as testified by such renowned films as *Brassed Off* (1996), directed by Mark Herman, *The Full Monty* (1997), directed by Peter Cattaneo, *Up 'n' Under* (1998), directed by John Godber, *Among Giants* (1998), directed by Sam Miller and *Billy Elliot* (2000), directed by Stephen Daldry. They are mostly directed by filmmakers coming from Yorkshire and they are set there, against the background of closing down or abandoned factories. They tend to be male-centred and stress collective action (Hill 2000: 178-83; Dave 2006: 61-75), albeit this action is not always straightforwardly political. What is also new about them in comparison to the films of the 1980s is that, rather than merely showing the de-industrialisation of the North, they point to the way its inhabitants embrace different career options outside manufacturing, especially in entertainment. In *Brassed Off* one of the ex-miners takes a job as a clown, performing at children's parties. In *The Full Monty* a group of men who previously worked in a steel factory become professional strippers. The titular character in *Billy Elliot*, a ten-year old boy decides to be a ballet dancer. These new career opportunities are presented with a varying degree of approval. *Brassed Off* mourns the disappearance of mining in Yorkshire, arguing that the industry was still viable and was destroyed by a political decision rather than through a sound economic appraisal (Dave 2006: 64-6). It also points to the precarious conditions suffered by those deprived of a stable, Fordist employment. *The Full Monty* looks at the opportunities offered by sex work more positively, not only as a way to earn money, but also as a means to regain self-confidence and form a community, even if on a smaller scale than those which existed in the old-style factories. However, as several authors noted the film at best offers a temporary solution to a long-term problem (Leggott 2008: 92), at worst brushes it under the carpet or laughs it off, in a similar way that Blair's government ignored the problems affecting the British working class (Farrell 2003: 133).

The most enthusiastically the transformation from Fordism to post-Fordism is embraced in *Billy Elliot*, which might have something to do with Daldry being a southerner. Cameron McCarthy and Jennifer Logue argue that in this film 'the shop floor and the coal mines belong to a distant past and now exist as straitjackets constraining the desires of youth' (McCarthy and Logue 2006: 15; see also Leggott 2008: 93-5). What is also characteristic about this film is that the main enemy of the youngsters from the North, encapsulated by Billy, are not the capitalists and politicians, but workers themselves, such as, initially, Billy's

father, who deny their children more attractive careers. In reality, the choice between working in a mine and dancing in the Royal Ballet is not as straightforward as Daldry makes us believe. Only a small proportion of British children become professional ballet dancers and of those the majority come from middle or upper-class families from the South, rather than the lower classes from the North. By promoting Billy's right to self-determination Daldry, even if unwittingly, diverts the viewers' attention from what is the main problem of the North, namely a higher level of unemployment than in the South, low wages and precarious employment, and promotes the competitive logic of neoliberalism, wholeheartedly embraced by Blair's government.

Billy Elliot deserves special attention in the context of representation of the North due to its similarities to Loach's *Kes*. The characters of these films share the same Christian name, are of a similar age, have only one parent and brothers who are older and more macho than they. Moreover, both boys dream about escaping lives down the pit. Both even steal books from the local library to learn how to fulfil their dreams. However, while criticising the Fordist employment in heavy industry and the macho culture it breeds, Loach does not suggest that such industry should be abolished, at least not till a more just political system is introduced. Such a conclusion, by contrast, can be deduced from *Billy Elliot*. Another difference concerns the use of landscape in the respective films. Billy Casper sought refuge in the countryside, as shown in his attachment to Kes. Billy Elliot is much less comfortable when surrounded by nature. There his senile grandmother gets lost. He feels much better in enclosed spaces, most importantly the dance hall.

While a northern factory in the cinema of the 1990s and 2000s typically appeared only as an absence, as a ghost, in television drama we could see factories still fully operational. This is the case in *Clocking Off*, a series, created by Paul Abbott, one of the scriptwriters for *Coronation Street* and produced by Nicola Schindler who founded Manchester-based Red Production Company. *Clocking Off*, whose first episode was transmitted by BBC 1 in January 2000, revolves around the adventures of employees of a fictional factory named Mackintosh Textiles. As Lez Cooke argues, '*Clocking Off* provided the BBC with an opportunity to return to its traditional strengths with a northern working-class drama intent on updating social realism for a new "postmodern" audience' (Cooke 2005: 184). In a way typical of *Coronation Street*, the episodes concern domestic life, yet the fact that the series is centred on the workplace, 'opens the drama out to embrace a social dimension' (ibid.: 187). The politics of the workplace is in the background; the centre is occupied by moral issues. Still, it is enough to notice how politics and the economy frame the

characters' lives. For example, although a textile factory is a Fordist institution, we get the impression that we live in post-Fordist times, when workers have few rights and financial crisis, rather than stability, is the economic norm. The postmodern aspect of the series consists of a 'preference to stories told in a faster tempo and delivered in easily digestable narrative segments' (ibid.: 189). The mise-en-scene is more colourful than in the earlier television productions, set in the industrial North (ibid.: 191). The characters live in a large variety of houses, testifying to the class differences between the employees of Mackintosh Textiles and the changes in the economic status of the northern industrial working class (ibid.: 194). However, while the series makers managed to depart from the stereotype of 'Darkshire', they conformed to a different one – one captured by Marc Augé's phrase 'non-place' (Augé 1995). This is particularly noticeable when the characters travel through the North in their lorries and vans, for example between Manchester and Sheffield. It feels that, although the post-Thatcherite North managed to shed its working-class skin, the price is a lack of any distinct identity.

Patrick Keiller is not regarded as a northern filmmaker, despite being born in Blackpool, but his take on the North belongs to the most sophisticated, as far as cinema is concerned. Keiller is the director of several short films and three 'fictitional documentaries', as they are typically described: *London* (1994), *Robinson in Space* (1997) and *Robinson in Ruins* (2010). The North features only in *Robinson in Space* and *Robinson in Ruins* and the author examines it in a wider context of British and European history. Unlike most filmmakers discussed in this introduction, who underscore the difference between the North and the South, with the North associated with (declining) manufacturing and the South with a flourishing service industry, Keiller suggests that in terms of economy more connects than divides different regions of contemporary Britain. By the mid-1990s, shopping centres, supermarket depots and high-technology business became the main employers in Merseyside, Derbyshire and Lancashire, as they were in the South of England. There are also considerable similarities in the way industry is organised in different regions and types of businesses because the old style, state-owned factories with strong trade unions, were replaced by new types of establishment, owned by foreign investors, whose sole objective is maximising profit, often using devious practices (Mazierska and Rascaroli 2006: 65).

Paul Dave situates Keiller's examination of England in the context of 'cultural critique' flourishing in the 1960s and represented by historians such as Anthony Sampson, Perry Anderson, Tom Nairn, Martin J. Wiener and Corelli Barnett who explained Britain's decline by a domination of landed aristocracy with its 'rustic and nostalgic myths of

Englishness' over bourgeoisie, seen as a progressive class (Dave 2000: 341-42). In particular, 'for the proponents of the "cultural critique", the plight of the North of England signifies the tragic failure of capitalist modernity while the South represents the continuing dominance of "gentlemanely" commercial and landed capital' (ibid.: 344). However, at the same time as dismantling the opposition between North and South, Keiller argues that the problem of England is not the archaic character of capitalism, but its success, because a successful economy leads to the exploitation and deprivation of the working classes and produces urban decay' (ibid.: 350). This is a reading of capitalism familiar from the pages of Marx's *Capital* and *The Communist Manifesto* and Engels' *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, where the misery of the working class, captured by the term 'alienation', is explained not by the infancy of English capitalism, but by its maturity. This misery can only be overcome by introducing socialism. This idea is underscored by the filmmaker mentioning various, more or less 'unorthodox', continental socialists, such as Raoul Vainegem, Alexander Herzog and Karl Polanyi.

In *Robinson in Space* Keiller attributes Blackpool an important place in English history, stating that 'Blackpool stands between us and the revolution'. Most likely this is because in this northern seaside resort the rules applied to the rest of England are reversed. Here the class system is suspended and ethnic minorities see their cultures celebrated. Unlike most of England, Blackpool is also very European. As Keiller himself claims:

> The Illuminations were borrowed from Kaiser's birthday celebrations, and the tower is borrowed from the Eiffel Tower; the company which began Jaguar began in Blackpool, and they used to make aeroplanes there. The trams are very Middle European. You can imagine that it's the cost of Bohemia, if you're looking for the coast of Bohemia (Keiller 1999: 231).

However, Blackpool also prevents any large-scale (socialist) revolution from happening by allowing in the limited space of this seaside resort and the limited time of a holiday to indulge the visitors in the sort of life which they could enjoy if the revolution dreamt of by Robinson happened. The inclusiveness, egalitarianism and progressiveness of Blackpool, presented also in *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993), directed by Gurinder Chadha, act as a vent to their frustration, and allow the rest of the country, both the East and the West to remain reactionary, class-ridden and frozen in time (Mazierska and Rascaroli 2006: 67).

There are many interesting films and television productions set and shot in the North, but space does not allow me to dwell on them. Moreover, many of them will be covered in detail in this collection.

Modifying the master narrative

The authors of *Heading North* do not attempt to prove that the master narrative of the North as genuine working class, poor and friendly is false, or that the North lends itself to fantastical rather than realistic representations. Rather, they try to interrogate and add nuance to it, by 'unpacking' and 'breaking up' the North and northern identity into smaller units on the one hand, and connecting them with more universal problems, on the other.

This interrogation begins by opening the archive, so to speak. The authors contributing to the first part of this collection look at the North's history as something which sheds a light on the present and the future, but also requires new interpretations, reflecting changing circumstances, in which such interpretations are undertaken. This first essay, by Paul Dave, deals with the work of some of the most important artists preoccupied with the North: L.S. Lowry and Mitchell and Kenyon. Dave considers the meanings of *northernness* in the Mitchell and Kenyon 'factory gate' films and the 2013 Tate Britain Lowry exhibition. Dave regards northernness as a complex set of interrelated ideas about the working class and history, arguing that whilst the Mitchell and Kenyon factory gate films allow us to revive a utopian and now unfamiliar sense of working class northernness as historically open to the future, Lowry's work has been iconic in establishing a postwar northernness which is associated with a sense of failure, defeat and dysfunctionality. Dave opposes this abandonment of the utopianism and uses 'factory gate' films to problematise this 'end of history' thesis, both in its mode of neoliberal capitalist triumphalism and in its concomitant mode of working class defeat.

While Dave's chapter deals predominantly with class, Heather Norris Nicholson's investigation focuses on ethnicity. Her chapter traces how two public regional film archives within the North of England, the Yorkshire Film Archive and North West Film Archive have brought greater visibility to changing patterns of ethnic diversity into their respective collections of moving image. Her attention is directed to different initiatives that enable more inclusive understanding of northern experiences and challenge stereotyped ideas about communities and identities. She pays particular attention to evolving Black and Asian identities, as captured in amateur and professionally made film. Norris Nicholson points to

the role of digital technologies in accessing previously unknown visual sources and the possibility of accessing them not only in the archive, but also outside its walls.

From Yorkshire we travel to Cheshire, which Brian Baker discusses in a chapter devoted to Alan Garner and John Mackenzie's television production *Red Shift* (1978). Baker argues that this film comes across as an archive, offering us a layered history [0-of Cheshire embodied by the film's protagonist. This history is highly mythologised, as demonstrated by the choice of pivotal moments, when the fate of Britain was at stake: Roman times and the time of the Civil War, with which the present of the 1970s, seen as a temporal dislocation between the end of the post-war settlement and the rise of Thatcherism,.is compared. Throughout the film Cheshire, a county on the boundary between the North and the South of England, is presented as a privileged vantage point from which to assess the country's history and predict its future. At the same time the film draws attention to the role of the technologies of mobility in enabling us to access the past, transform it and escape from it.

The second part of the book is concerned with urban and rural locations in the North and their effect on people living there: their jobs, relations with other people and their identities, including class and gender. The first chapter in this part, written by Sue Vice and David Forrest is about two films by Ken Loach, made in the early 1980s, *Looks and Smiles* and *The Gamekeeper*. Although not a Northerner himself, Loach probably did more to project a certain image of this part of England than any other director and to the present day his sympathetic view of people living there serves as a yardstick against which other representations are measured. *Looks and Smiles* and *The Gamekeeper* were scripted by Barry Hines and Vice and Forrest examine these films as reflecting Hines' inside knowledge of South Yorkshire. *Looks and Smiles*, set in Sheffield, takes issue with the economic recession of the early 1980s and Thatcher's onslaught on the working class and the welfare state, felt particularly strongly in the North. *The Gamekeeper* shows what career paths are still available to those who lost stable, Fordist employment in the northern factories. Loach and Hines show the beauty of the northern countryside, but they avoid sentimentalising it by pointing to the fact that both the northern cities and its countryside are sites of the exploitation of the working classes.

The next chapter in this part, written by Katharine Cockin, takes Yorkshire during the 1980s as its subject, by examining the television series *Edge of Darkness*. The series takes issue with the miners' strike of 1983-4 and its aftermath, using a thriller narrative. Unlike Forrest and Vice, who focus on the similarities and differences within Yorkshire, Cockin discusses Yorkshire as a province pitted against the power of London, as well as wider global

forces linked to neoliberalism. Referring to the literary concept of a 'man of feeling', introduced in the eighteenth century, Cockin characterises Craven, the series' protagonist, as a 'northern man of feeling', contrasted with the cold reason and cynicism of a metropolitan centre. However, her point is that feelings afford Craven agency and make him a powerful adversary to the forces of neoliberalism, unleashed by Thatcherism. Although *Edge of Darkness* conforms to the dominant narrative of the North as working class, it departs from it by breaking with realistic depiction, expected in stories about industrial relations.

Peter Atkinson examines the complex and dynamic relationship between Manchester/Salford and Leeds, and the ITV soap operas *Coronation Street* and *Emmerdale* that are produced in these cities. He notices that they play an important part in the culture and economy of the North of England due to their sheer longevity and persistent presence in the TV schedules, with *Coronation Street* being the longest running soap opera in the world. Drawing on Bourdieu's concept of habitus and the ideas of heritage Atkinson points to the fact that these programmes not only reflect on the changing politics, economy and culture of the North of England, but affect it, by becoming a site of tourist gaze and a means of regenerating and gentrifying places where they are shot and set, as conveyed by the term 'Northern Powerhouse'. However, this process is not without caveats, given that *Coronation Street* and *Emmerdale* are concerned with the working class community and culture, whose gentrification might lead to their obliteration.

Shivani Pal and Andy Willis undertake the analysis of a specific genre: legal television drama, to examine how they represent northern characters. They begin by considering London-set *Kavanagh QC* and *Silk*, arguing that they take issue with the struggle for northern characters from working class backgrounds to operate within a workplace context that privileges those from an upper middle class educational and social background. However, the authors of this chapter are particularly interested in dramas which not only include northern characters, but are also set and shot in the North, namely *North Square*, set in Leeds, and *New Street Law* and *Outlaws*, set in Greater Manchester. They argue that *North Square* and *New Street Law* are less concerned with class and more with age, gender and race. Problems of maturity and having proper legal representation for non-white people is more important in them than the struggle of the working class for social advancement. Pal and Willis link such positioning of the characters to the successes of New Labour with its project of rendering the category of class old-fashioned. However, in *Outlaws*, which is a comedy series, class gains greater prominence.

While in the productions discussed by Forrest, Vice, Cockin, Atkinson, Willis and Pal, location is specific, this is less the case in *In the Flesh*, a recent television series examined by Amy Chambers and Hannah Elizabeth. The authors argue that although this supernatural horror-drama is set in the fictional village of Roarton in Lancashire, the series was actually filmed in Marsden, West Yorkshire, suggesting that rustic northern topographies are interchangeable. Chambers and Elizabeth also claim that urban and suburban landscapes are utilised in the series to furnish the supernatural narrative with a greater sense of authenticity lacking in aspirational US teen dramas. Moreover, thanks to the northern setting *In the Flesh* shows the contrast between the ideal treatment promoted by southern government bodies and the reality of instituting these policies outside of urban centres to problematise the relationship between the state and its regions, and the NHS and its patients.

In the bulk of existing literature the North of England is examined in relation to the South of England. Such an approach, although justified, misses the point that people living there also belong to other communities and define themselves in relation to different 'others'. They are, for example, a part of the European Union (still), global proletariat and English-speaking world. Equally, it is not only the South which is interested in the North and its representations, but also other geographical and cultural regions. For these reasons the last part of this collection is dedicated to the North in a wider context than the history and present day of Great Britain. The first chapter, written by Alan Hughes, examines northern set films made in the first decade after the Anglo-American Films Agreement in 1948. This agreement resulted in about 30% of the British films having an American character or theme. Hughes maintains that rather than gazing either enviously or contemptuously southwards, in these films the main point of reference is America. Moreover, these films adopt such typically American genres as film noir and Western, with its stock characters, by the same token departing from the dominant representation of the North as benevolent and working class.

After a chapter examining northern films which are Americanised, focus is redirected towards those which are Europeanised. This chapter, written by myself and Kamila Rymajdo, looks at *24 Hour Party People* (2002) by Michael Winterbottom and *Control* (2007) by Anton Corbijn. Each of them is a fictionalised biography of a famous Northerner, who left his mark on popular music in the North, respectively Tony Wilson and Ian Curtis. Our argument is that both films present characters who attempt to overcome their predicament of living in an English province by getting closer, literally and metaphorically to (continental) Europe. This strategy pays off, because Europe proves more receptive to their ideas and their art than

the national centre. Hence, while the South of England is presented in them as a colonial 'other', Europe is seen as a 'friendly other'.

The penultimate chapter in this collection, written by Zsolt Győri, draws attention to the parallels between northern films, most importantly Ken Loach's *Kes* (1969) and Hungarian films, such as Csaba Bollók's *Iska's Journey* (2006), resulting from the possible influence of Loach's cinema on Hungarian filmmakers. Bollók's film, as Győri argues, depicts children entrapped by a specific socio-economic situation and hence point to the crisis of the Enlightenment ideals about childhood, as experienced in these different regions. Győri suggests, not unlike Engels in his *The Condition of the Working Class in England* that by examining the condition of people living in the North of England we can learn much about the position of those economically disadvantaged elsewhere in Europe.

This part and the entire book ends with Deirdre O'Neill discussing a film which she co-directed with Mike Wayne in 2012, titled *Condition of the Working Class*. The title of this project inevitably brings to mind Engels' work and O'Neill and Wayne openly draw on its famous predecessor. The film brought together a group of working class people from Manchester and Salford who worked collectively to devise, write and perform a theatrical piece based on their own experiences and Engels' book. Not unlike Engels, O'Neill and Wayne conceive their film as a local project concerned with the specificities of the northern working class, but also as a means to interrogate the character and position of the working class globally, although not during the period of industrial capitalism, but neoliberalism. They also refer to the motif present in many chapters included in this collection: representation of the North from outside and self-representation, arguing for the importance of the former to construct a reliable testimony. However, the overall conclusion of this collection is that if we want to learn about the North of England, both in reality and in its representation in film and television, we should not discard any viewpoint. Only by juxtaposing and combining it, do we get a sense of the meaning of the North for their inhabitants, colonisers and tourists.

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[i] Graham Turner mentions a man from Batley who pictured the North as a fat and generous sow lying on her side while the greedy little piglets (the South) fed off her (Turner 1967: 13).

[ii] Significantly, Andrew Higson contrasts *Sing As We Go* with *Evergreen*, which was also produced in 1934, arguing that *Evergreen* was made for international audience, while *Sing As We Go* was '(quite knowingly) inexportable' (Higson 1997: 98). As much as reflecting on the situation of the film, Higson's framing of *Sing As We Go* conveys an impression of films set in the North as provincial.

[iii] In reality Lancashire cotton industry was a double victim of capitalism: its global character and its drive towards innovation. It suffered from the competition from cheaper foreign products and the emergence of the new, man-made fibres (Smith 1989: 21-2).

[iv] Loach identification with his subject matter and personal integrity is underscored by titles of some books dedicated to his art, such as *Agent of Challenge and Defiance* (McKnight 1997) and *The Cinema of Ken Loach: Art in the Service of the People* (Leigh 2002), which includes a chapter about *Kes*, entitled 'Sympathetic Observation'.