**A Poetic Ethnography of the Post-Mining Communities of the South Yorkshire Coalfield**

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of PhD



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November 2019

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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**Acknowledgements**

Thank you to all the members of the post-mining communities who gave their time up to speak to me, without whom this project would not have been possible.

I am profoundly grateful to my supervisor, David Forrest, whose support, encouragement and special knowledge of the work of Barry Hines and of northern literature have been invaluable in the final stages of my research. I simply couldn’t have finished it without him. Special thanks go to my former supervisor, the erudite Sam Ladkin, for his particularly inspiring method of questioning the world and for lending me his ferocious intellectual rigour.

Thanks also to K de Ruse, Matthew Cheeseman, Jonathan Ellis, Agnes Lehoczky and Adam Piette for their key advice and support at the start of my research, and Sue Vice for her encouragement and advice at its end.

Thanks also go to:

Professor Katy Shaw for kindly agreeing to be my external examiner. Jessica Moriarty for her discussions and collaborations in autoethnography, and for almost becoming my external examiner! Ian McMillan, and the members of the Remembering the Oaks Campaign, the Dearne Valley Landscape Partnership. Dr. Malcolm Moyes, who generously provided a large and varied collection of rare books to my research, pamphlets and other materials, most of which I would have had no other access to.

I am very sorry if I omitted anyone from this list.

Thank you to my parents Steve and Carol for their constant support.

Finally, thank you to Murielle, who never relented in believing in me.

**Abstract**

This project aims to create a body of poetry with a critical framework which explores how the identity of adults of working age in the South Yorkshire Coalfield has been affected since the loss of the mining industry. It seeks to outline and explore the potential of lyrical strategies as an aesthetic response to the challenges of representing the testimonies of the post-mining community in order to provide a poetic ethnography of their changing industrial identities. The dynamic between worker, location, and labour was radically altered after the defeat of the National Union of Miners in the miners’ strike of 1984-5. The thesis suggests ways in which these relationships may begin to be restored in the poetic imagination of the present, outside of fatalistic and nostalgic narratives.

My research covers firstly, the poetry and philosophy of Muriel Rukeyser which exemplify a Modernist poetic response to a mining disaster, and poetic strategies towards building class consciousness in mining identity. Secondly, it considers the approach of Barry Hines to the 1984-5 miners’ strike and its aftermath in his novel, *The Heart of It.*, also utilising the many testimonies from mining families he collated for the novel. Thirdly, I compare Juliana Spahr’s poetic responses to identity in the neoliberal age, with a view to applying her strategies to restoring a sense of collective identity in the present day. My final chapter is a shorter discussion of how the findings of each chapter inform the poetry which follows, which together with the poetry itself, forms my conclusion. Each chapter, in broadly chronological order, addresses a conceptual or contextual theme. These are, consecutively: place and the materiality of poetic symbols, the intersection of body with place in the formation of identity, and poetry’s potential to restore individual and collective identities in the neoliberal age.

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**Introduction**

This project has its origins in my successful application for the Hossein Farmy Scholarship, available for students pursuing research related to mining. As such I feel that I should outline my own partisan interest in the research. I come from a mining heritage stretching back six generations to my grandfather’s great grandfather who travelled from Lincolnshire to Barnsley in search of work in the mines of South Yorkshire. Although due to problems with his health, my father would eventually leave his job as an electrician at Cortonwood colliery, the mine that sparked the Miners’ Strike of 1984-5,[[1]](#footnote-1) my uncles were still employed as miners during the strike. As such, my childhood was framed in many ways by the fallout of that industrial action’s calamitous defeat: from witnessing the dramatic effects on the town’s topography and playing in its wastelands, to witnessing my uncles’ attempts to reinvent themselves in search of employment.

As the first generation of my family to go to university, it was only later that I directly experienced the repercussions of the strike’s defeat on employment opportunities when I returned to the Dearne Valley after graduating. One of the few large providers of employment above the minimum wage were the new call centres situated in Manvers, Rotherham, on the land of the former colliery. These jobs were a result of the area’s regeneration with employment provided by global service sector businesses, subsidised by the European Union’s Social Fund. [[2]](#footnote-2) The experience of working there profoundly affected me, and those friends who worked alongside me. Manvers at the turn of the millennium felt in many ways an alien environment: waist high saplings skirting the many roundabouts which served as arteries for temporary workers from the nearby towns to commute to the new warehouses and call centres. Much of the land was flooded to make a lake for leisure activities, and there was no discernible town ‘centre’ or high street with which one could get a sense of community identity.

Within the call centres, working life felt similarly alienating. Performance was logged as data which was displayed on LED displays in the vast floor full of work ‘pods’. Toilet breaks were timed to the second with punitive consequences meted out to those who exceeded their allotted time. There often seemed little meaning to the projects which call centre workers were employed to support. During interviews for this thesis, my friends recounted one government project which entailed weeks of training in order to advise senior citizens how to claim Pension Credit online. The scheme had not been sufficiently advertised to the public, resulting in staff sitting for hours and days on end with headsets on but no calls to answer. The disheartening experience of working in a call centre helped me to decide to pursue a career in education from 2003, and eventually train as a teacher with the aim of seeking fulfilment in a meaningful job. However, the question remained in my mind as to what could have happened to cause such a disparity between those joyful stories of camaraderie and community told by my grandparents, and the precarious and alienating work experiences in the same community that I had experienced at the turn of the millennium. This was the basic question which I sought to answer, through the prism of poetry, in order to address this perceived loss of meaning in the post-mining community, whilst harnessing the testimonies of workers in the community from before, during and after the miner’s strike. I felt strongly that stories such as these which have not been widely heard, and which to some may seem mundane, in fact reflect the seismic shifts in the formation of workers’ identity on a much larger scale. This seemed to be borne out in the huge political upheaval in the months after I started the research at the end of 2015, in which many of these disenfranchised post-mining communities voted for Brexit[[3]](#footnote-3) despite the money spent by EU’s Social Fund, and then abandoned their traditional political allegiances in order to ensure its execution[[4]](#footnote-4).

**Critical Framework:**

In determining how to explore the ways in which notions of mining identity have been constructed and deconstructed over the past century, I felt that it was particularly useful to identify key moments of crisis in the mining industry. Such crises offer stark contrasts in the competing ideologies affecting the formation of mining identity, and also the chance to analyse contemporary poets’ strategies in response to them. Each of these crises, I argue, is epochal, and provides the focus for its own chapter. Chapter One examines Muriel Rukeyser’s response to the Hawk’s Nest Tunnel Disaster in West Virginia in 1927. Although this thesis is a poetic ethnography of the South Yorkshire Coalfield in England, there are several reasons why that disaster serves as a pertinent starting point for the thesis. Firstly, we gain an insight into the mining industry’s competing interests in its context as America’s worst ever industrial disaster[[5]](#footnote-5) in Gauley Bridge, West Virginia. The disaster can be interpreted as taking place at the fault-line between the flourishing of the socialist trade union movement in the 1930s, and those capitalist interests which sought to exploit mass unemployment and non-unionised labour during the Great Depression in the pursuit of profit. Most importantly for my own project and poetic practice, the chapter is able to set the framework by which we may appraise the efficacy of the salvaging strategies employed by Muriel Rukeyser’s poetic response to in her collection, *The Book of the Dead* (1938)[[6]](#footnote-6). In seeking to reclaim the lost experiences and objects of exploited miners, Rukeyser’s project to salvage their anonymous suffering at the hands of capitalist greed places her as an artist within the historical materialist tradition outlined in Walter Benjamin’s *Theses on the Philosophy of History* (1942)[[7]](#footnote-7)*.* *The Book of the Dead* explores the legacy of European capitalism’s displacement of the Native-American ‘Asiatic’ society as delineated by Marx in the *Grundrisse* (1939)[[8]](#footnote-8). It is argued that Rukeyser shows the necessity of salvaging the signs and materials of industrial conflict, such as the insurrectionary figure of John Brown, in order to begin to create the ‘always-unfinishedsymbol*’*[[9]](#footnote-9) which may resist against the misappropriating machinations of capitalism, continuing the work of poets such asHerman Melville*.* The essay argues that Rukeyser’s symbolic framework which aims to spur the subjective worker to action through imagination invokes a ‘Hydraulic state’[[10]](#footnote-10), as in ancient Egypt, inspiring a quasi- religious submission to the higher unity of the Hydroelectric dam and those who died creating it. Finally, we explore the implications where this spur to collective working-class action depends upon the consciousness of the human conduit: the irony at the heart of Marxist autonomy. The chapter thus concludes that ‘place’ is essential in providing the materiality with which poetry may create symbols which offer access to lost communal and vocational identities.

The second chapter serves as the central epochal moment for mining identity in the United Kingdom, exploring the effects of the Miners’ Strike of 1984-5 in the United Kingdom upon meaning-making and identity in the South Yorkshire Coalfield. This period represents the apex of the struggle for the industry’s collective autonomy: the pitched ideological battle between the unionised, nationalised mining industry and the free market privatisation agenda of the contemporary Conservative Government. It was a conflict which would affect the existing gendered identities of Fordist family units, leading to hyper-masculine iterations which I will define ‘elemental masculinity’, as well as its binary other the ‘scab’, and new freedoms for the wives of miners. The key text that I’ve selected to explore in this period is Barry Hines’ 1994 novel *The Heart of It, [[11]](#footnote-11)* which delineates the effect of the strike upon the lives of a mining community and poses questions as to how subsequent generations may engage with its legacies. The novel form provides a useful counterpoint with which I may compare the relative efficacies of lyrical strategies. As well as *The Heart of It,* much of the research data in this chapter comes courtesy of the Barry Hines Papers, held in the Special Collections library at the University of Sheffield.[[12]](#footnote-12) The addendum to Hines’ preparation for the novel features transcriptions of interviews from news reports and other television features providing a valuable series of testimonies and anecdotes detailing the experiences of striking miners and their families interviewed during the strike. The chapter further examines the suitability of the unfinished symbol of Chapter One by considering the usefulness in emulating the picket line as a site of transformation- of competing ideological narratives and corporeal agency- in which lyric address through bodily utterance and chant may restore this highpoint of mining identity and agency. Apostrophic lyric address, in particular, allows a performative present tense in which lost places and communities may be summoned into being. The chapter thus builds on Chapter One’s findings to propose the importance of the body, in intersection with place, in the formation of mining identity.

The third part of this triptych of mining identity examines the crisis posed to mining identity in the aftermath of the strike’s defeat, as ‘post-mining’ communities left miners without a mine to work in. It traces the roots of the commodification of labour which led, in this era of neoliberal economic policy, to a fragmentation of union power, and increasingly, of individual identity. Workers faced further commodification of their labour into marketable identities to compete in more ‘flexible’, or transient, job markets. Poet Juliana Spahr was active in 2011’s Occupy movement which- like picketing miners- sought to reclaim the streets, this time in protest against austerity measures designed to bail out the banking sector following the financial crisis of 2007-8. Her poetry, particularly 2015’s *That Winter the Wolf Came,[[13]](#footnote-13)* portrays the difficulty that workers experience in becoming aware of, then protesting against, a neoliberal society that they are implicated in physically, socially, and financially. Her poetry offers several vital strategies towards reclaiming workers’ connection with their territories. Particularly, the chapter discusses how we may employ the refrain, and metaphor when envisioned as a process or flow (and thus suitably ‘unfinished’ to inspire action), in order to challenge the linear inevitability of representing narratives in order to answer Rukeyser’s call in Chapter One. The chapter concludes with examples of how applications of these approaches may seek to raise an awareness of agency or ‘class consciousness’ in the lyric’s capacity to re-define the working relations of deterritorialised miners in their natural and industrial spheres. Finally, the chapter discusses strategies following the deconstruction of bodily identity seen in Chapter Two. Where the neoliberal condition seems to be characterised by Deleuze’s concept of what he defines as the ‘dividual’ worker who is ‘contiguous with machines,’ [[14]](#footnote-14) finance, and digital media in order to be employed, then devices such as anaphora when used to recount workers’ testimonies as poetry may aid their conscious re-positioning with lost conceptions of a more secure individuality capable of solidarity and collective action.

Finally, Chapter Four provides a summary of the application in my poetry of the strategies discussed in the previous chapters following my interviews with workers from the South Yorkshire Coalfield. It considers how these poetic representations may avoid the pitfalls of nostalgia, by which the narrative of the collapse of the mining industry becomes repeated until appearing inevitable. I give examples of formal devices such as voltas within the sonnet form, and sestinas, which may allow the testimonies of research participants to offer new insights into their positions as workers as they arbitrate their own narratives. In constructing refrains from the more emotive phrases that they provided, lost places and people may be restored to the present tense of utterance within apostrophic address. If the loss of the mining industry has brought about a collective trauma in the rupture between a remembered, idealised past and the precarious present state of employment, then the evocation of that which has been lost in the lyric present may begin to help build a platform for personal and political transformation.

**Methodology:**

The project focuses on the South Yorkshire Coalfield, particularly the Dearne Valley, and the industries which evolved from, or replaced those, in the areas of former collieries. The area has experienced radical changes to its employment, economic and cultural infrastructure following the collapse of the mining industry due to the policies of Margaret Thatcher’s governments in the 1980s. Industrial action began in the valley, at Cortonwood,[[15]](#footnote-15) in 1983 in response to government policy to cut jobs in the industry which led to the national strike of 1984-5. The Dearne Valley is also where my own family worked as miners, and where I would later work as a call centre operative for a time following my graduation from university. Several of my interviews came with workers in the village of Manvers, in the Dearne Valley. The regeneration of the Manvers Main Complex embodies the fate of many post-industrial towns across Britain. An important regional hub of mining with its own coke ovens, after closing in 1988, it left reportedly the largest area of derelict and contaminated land in Western Europe[[16]](#footnote-16). In the face of the declining profitability of traditional Fordist mass-production industries, the state began to dismantle the basic, institutional components of the post-war settlement with policies that extended competition and free-market commodification. Regenerated by European Social Fund in 1995 the industries are now dominated by service industries such as Capita and T-Mobile call-centres and massive distribution warehouses such as Next.[[17]](#footnote-17) Wasteland was flooded to expand existing wetlands and create an RSPB bird sanctuary and a leisure lake[[18]](#footnote-18). I wanted to explore how workers’ identity has been affected inthese communities due to underemployment and alienation from their past within these externally designed economies of the neoliberal age, tending towards zero-hours contracts and other types of fragmented and temporary employment.

After visiting sites of the former collieries, or conducting interviews, I wrote field texts upon my return for the use in constructing the poetic ethnographies. These field texts consisted of phrases drawn from the testimonies and observations made during interviews with identified participants. I did not record any conversations other than by jotting brief notes in order to remove any impediments from the spontaneous flow of conversation, and to avoid participants feeling self-conscious. All the participants remain anonymous within the poems, or with fictionalised names if they appear as a persona within a poem, although I offered them the option to appear as a general participant in my acknowledgements if they wished to. I did not read from a prescribed number of questions as I did not want to guide the conversation, but rather allow the participants to speak about their sense of their selves in relation to their area, family and work without my intervention, as far as possible. I conducted the same approach when participating in unstructured walks around sites of the former collieries. Early in 2016, I attempted to formally offer my services to Next Warehouse and Distribution Centre and Capita Call Centre at Manvers as an unpaid 'Poet in Residence' to allow employees to engage in the creation of poetry at the site of their employment. None of the businesses replied to my overtures, possibly as a result of the negative publicity generated by the ‘Sports Direct Scandal’[[19]](#footnote-19) at the end of 2015, in which distribution warehouse workers were alleged to be subject to draconian working practices and effectively paid below the legal minimum wage. I was interested in this approach as I felt I would get an insight into how the service industries that now dominate the area engaged with the local community. Luckily, I was able to interview some of these workers after they responded to requests for interviews on the unofficial community forum website www.barnsleyfc.org.uk, which centres around the community’s local football club. As a result, I was able to interview a small cohort of participants that represented both ex-miners and their families currently employed in Manvers and also workers from non-mining backgrounds and migrant workers who have moved into the industrial area of the former Manvers Main Complex from elsewhere in the UK. Some were retired, but still lived in the area. I also spoke to members of agencies which worked to regenerate the former colliery: in particular, the Dearne Valley Landscape Partnership, the Coalfield Regeneration Trust, the Wath Community Partnership and the RSPB at Old Moor. The heritage campaign Remember the Oaks Mining Disaster were generous in giving interviews. Finally, I spoke to friends and to members of my extended family who worked in the area.

There was the potential for emotionally vulnerable participants to become involved in this research. Volunteers in the project self-identified, for instance, as 'former miners'; as being from mining families, or as workers within the post-mining community today. As the focus of the research was to discover how the identity of a community has been affected by the collapse of the primary industry that once defined it, it was important to gain the consent of participants and to treat their responses with sensitivity and confidentiality and I took care to ensure that contributions from participants remained anonymous. The final way I conducted the research was through visiting key sites of post-mining communities in order to consider how it may be possible to address them directly in poetry in order to summon and engage with the community’s extant and lost spaces: the high streets, former working men’s clubs and RSPB Old Moor, for instance. If confronted as to what I was doing by members of the public, I planned to declare my research interest and provide such participants with an information sheet about the project, which may have led to something of an obstacle to the approach, but no such encounters occurred.

**Chapter One:**

**Muriel Rukeyser’s *The Book of the Dead*: Poetry’s capacity to symbolise territory and materiality to salvage a mining identity out of the site of a disaster.**

In March 1936, aged just 22, Muriel Rukeyser visited the aftermath of America’s worst ever industrial disaster in Gauley Bridge, West Virginia. The town was a link in the pattern ‘of all those places where people are linked even in the middle of their suffering, where people fight against an evil condition so that other people need not go through the same fight.’[[20]](#footnote-20) This evil manifested itself in the failure of mining companies to protect their workers from the deadly effects of mining the valuable silica which was discovered as a by-product of tunnelling for a new hydroelectric dam in 1931. The Rinehart and Dennis Company of Virginia, under the supervision of the Union Carbide and Carbon Corporation, failed to provide safe drilling practices such as adequate ventilation, respirators and ‘wet’ drilling: a form of drilling in which harmful dust is removed from the air but which is slower, less efficient and thus, less profitable. The consequence was the Hawk’s Nest Tunnel Disaster in which 764 workers were confirmed to have died within five years of the tunnel’s completion[[21]](#footnote-21) from silicosis, a progressive lung disease in which fibroids caused by inhaling airborne silica grow until the victim effectively suffocates. The company’s neglect of basic precautionary safety measures was exposed in hearings held by a subcommittee of the US House of Representatives Committee on Labor in 1936. Given the widespread knowledge of the effects of silica exposure for at least twenty-five years, as evidenced by the US Department of Mines’ dissemination of literature in the hearings of the subcommittee, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the safety of workers was subordinated to profit margins. This exploitation is further supported by the company’s decision to recruit the majority of its workers from outside the mining town’s own 80% white, skilled population of miners, with over 80% of tunnel workers drawn from an unorganised cohort of black workers who had migrated to the area in desperation as a consequence of the endemic unemployment during the Great Depression.[[22]](#footnote-22)

This chapter seeks to set the framework by which we may appraise the efficacy of the salvaging strategies employed both in Rukeyser’s poetic response to the disaster, *The Book of the Dead* (1938)*,* published in the collection *U.S.1,* and her own elucidation of the strategies in her manifesto-like testimonial *The Life of Poetry,* compiled from a series of her lectures given in the war years following publication of *The Book of the Dead*. In seeking to reclaim the lost experiences and objects of exploited miners, Rukeyser’s project to salvage their anonymous suffering at the hands of capitalist greed places her as an artist within the historical materialist tradition outlined in Walter Benjamin’s *Theses on the Philosophy of History*. First published just two years after *The Book of the Dead* in 1940, it allows a reading of the poetry as an attempt to harness the ‘*weak* messianic power’-[[23]](#footnote-23)the latent class consciousness of successive generations- into a revolutionary awareness of the greater class conflict that would bring about the working class’s emancipation. Rukeyser’s concerns centre upon the capitalist misappropriation of materials, labour processes and importantly, their signs and symbols, in order to reclaim them in the working-class consciousness. For Rukeyser, who ‘regarded herself as well versed in Marxism,’[[24]](#footnote-24) the pre-capitalist ‘Asiatic’ societies delineated in the *Grundrisse*, whilst ultimately restrictive, offer elements of a utopian structure in which workers, through their labour, can become constituent with a symbolic higher unity. Their relevance to Rukeyser’s depiction of Gauley Bridge in *The Book of the Dead* is outlined later on in the chapter. The advent of colonial capitalism misappropriated this symbolic network, alienating the workers who were to become coal miners by 1936. The chapter will go on to outline Rukeyser’s schema for the representation of materiality within poetry as *symbol,* influenced by the pre-eminence of image within the documentary traditions of the 1930s. Finally, after exploring flaws in the notion of Asiatic utopia, we will consider how Rukeyser’s constructivist, humanist strategies as postulated in *The Life of Poetry* place an onus, long overdue, on each individual citizen to contribute to the salvaging of symbolic meaning in art; each becoming a nexus to an active, collective sense of the world through the epistemological relationships between experience, ideas and feeling.

**Roads as facilitators of literal and imaginative journeys**

Rukeyser’s willingness to spur the reader into a sentient, salvaging agency towards the construction of a new egalitarian world in *The Book of the Dead* is apparent from the collection’s first poem. ‘The Road’s directivein answer to the urge of its own breaking poetic consciousness that ‘These are roads to take when you think of your country / and interested bring down the maps again,’[[25]](#footnote-25) invites the reader to take an active role in delineating the social and emotional parameters of the country. This call to reflection echoes Benjamin’s claim that ‘our image of happiness is thoroughly coloured by the time to which the course of our existence has assigned us.’[[26]](#footnote-26) Rukeyser’s agency begins by positing that the map rather than the history book is the confluence of human technological intervention upon the topographical world. As Susan Buck-Morss notes: ‘There is nothing natural about history’s progression. But (on this Benjamin insisted) nature does progress historically’[[27]](#footnote-27): we must be aware that our course through history and geography, time and space is linear in that its path serves as the justification of the hegemony of the ruling class. Rukeyser offers us the potential course of a physical road, *US1*, aware of its allegorical latency which she will seek to deconstruct through the subjective motion of her own re-imagining. There is, perhaps, no moment so visceral in terms of our awareness of our agency in space and time in the present as the moment when ‘you sit at the wheel and your small light / chooses gas gauge and clock; and the headlights / indicate future of road’.[[28]](#footnote-28) Benjamin theorises this temporal agency as an instance in the register of ‘Messianic time’ which began with the French Revolution; as Buck-Morss comments:

[F]rom this point on, time can be said to exist in two registers: as secular history, the sequence of (catastrophic) events that mark human time without fulfilling it; and as revolutionary ‘now-time,’ every moment of which is irradiated with the real anticipation of redemption.[[29]](#footnote-29)

A secular replacement for the Jewish Messiah’s imminence, the present for Benjamin thus ‘comprises the entire history of mankind in an enormous abridgement’[[30]](#footnote-30) and the potential to access, through revolutionary action, the overlapping potential of a conscious redemption. As Andrew Robinson claims, ‘human existence is itself like a messianic zero-hour in the entire history of Earth’:[[31]](#footnote-31) this divinity of consciousness itself in every living human representing an epiphanic moment when measured against the colossal scale of all life on Earth. If consciousness is a zero-hour, then Rukeyser’s turn of her steering wheel towards Gauley Bridge fixes its ‘ground-zero’, its roads’ topography acting as an abridgment of the sufferings of the working class across capitalism. Yet the epiphany of that moment comes in its potential to reclaim and salvage the past. Benjamin insists that ‘our image of happiness is indissolubly bound up with the image of redemption’.[[32]](#footnote-32) Indeed we can only envisage the future insofar as we have experienced the past, and the hopes for the future lie in its infrastructures: ‘the junction, the fork, the suburban station, / well-travelled six-lane highway planned for safety.’[[33]](#footnote-33) This ‘safety’ of the highway; the ensuring of the security of nationhood by facilitating military transportation, and its economy through the movement of the cargoes of trade, ironically offers the means to subvert and dissect through literal and imaginative journey. Rukeyser begins to delineate the material means of production, each strand of society’s tripartite structure of security, trade and military expansion representing a junction or gateway as components of ‘that most excellent invention, America’.[[34]](#footnote-34)

**The representation of materials**

Priming the reader for the realisation that to be conscious of the utopian possibilities of the future, we must actively reclaim the right to define our material past, is crucial to Rukeyser’s project; for as Benjamin remarks, ‘The class struggle, which is always present to a historian influenced by Marx, is a fight for the crude and material things without which no refined and spiritual things could exist.’[[35]](#footnote-35) Leftist art, post-Wall Street Crash, nurtured a tradition of reportage in which artists aimed to portray objective reality through photography and documentary in response to the abstract narratives of capitalism which had culminated in the misery of the Great Depression. In the opening of *The Road*,we see the poet using the second person perspective to collectivise the action of her own marshalling of materials in the moments: ‘when you think of your country / and interested bring down the maps again, phoning the statistician, asking the dear friend, / reading the papers with morning inquiry.’[[36]](#footnote-36) However much the poet wishes to escape the risk of falling into a bourgeois role[[37]](#footnote-37) as a middle-class, intellectual observer, and as the conduit in the process of forging these alloys of ‘personal responses’ and the ‘actual world’, she risks creating what she fears will be a ‘fantastic structure that has nothing to do with reality’.[[38]](#footnote-38) Moreover, Catherine Gander suggests in *Muriel Rukeyser and Documentary* that ‘[b]y employing symbols and signs throughout the book, Rukeyser addresses the larger documentary problematic of the truth-value of representation.’[[39]](#footnote-39) As such, *The Book of the Dead* is *real*, precisely because it is dotted with those fantastic structures of roadside signs and buildings which presented ‘the discrepancy in capitalist culture between the promise of the sign and the reality of its referent’[[40]](#footnote-40) as we venture towards Gauley Bridge:

into the wealthy valley, resorts, the chalk hotel.

Pillars and fairway; spa; White Sulphur Springs.

Airport. Gay blank rich faces wishing to add

History to ballrooms, tradition to the first tee...

Rivers and spring. KING COAL HOTEL. Lookout,[[41]](#footnote-41)

Avery Slater notes the synchronicity of the publication in 1938 of Rukeyser’s *U.S.1* collection with the Works Progress Administration’s namesake publication of guidebooks which sought ‘to promote highway travel and historic consciousness of America’s roadside monuments,’[[42]](#footnote-42) in an effort to boost the tourist industry during the Depression, but also subsequently to foster a sense of collective unity through the symbols of what Avery delineates as ‘The privileged representation of American political dreams, a colonial-republican axis running north to south along the eastern seaboard (which) obscures the settler ambitions and ceaseless displacements of indigenous peoples that the east-west axis represents.’[[43]](#footnote-43) Yet here this obscuring process is paradoxically drawn into sharp focus by the motion of Rukeyser’s poetic progress: the road offers a reeling succession of spatiotemporal moments of messianic perspective which dissects the architectural signs of a failing capitalism from their absent material reality. In omitting any demarcation of the billboard ‘KING COAL HOTEL’ from her own listing of the road’s referents, she subversively reveals how personification, when wielded by tourism businesses, can abstract coal’s use-value into the commodity of a luxury hotel. The destructive exploitation of the mining process lies far away from the road’s narrow path, which at this stage, trickles into luxury hotels; the litany of locations and events experienced here as seen from a speeding car serves as an indictment of the unredeemed America of 1936; its signs are bereft of the *colour* of the significance of experience, in turn *chalk, white, blank*. Like Rukeyser, Benjamin’s material historicist is:

A chronicler who recites events without distinguishing between major and minor ones (acting) in accordance with the following truth: nothing that has ever happened should be regarded as lost for history. To be sure, only a redeemed mankind receives the fullness of its past.[[44]](#footnote-44)

As capitalism seeks to recalibrate the symbols of the coal industry’s material referents towards their use-value to consumers, then workers risk losing their own sense of value as producers in society. In the billboards and signage of US1, it is only the ‘gay’ elites of the bourgeoisie who hold a stake in an unredeemed future, able to add their history to ballrooms, and project their perpetuating traditions into the future with the swing from the first tee. To drive the road is to be funnelled through the phallocentric patronage of ‘your tall central city’s influence’, leaving the traveller unable to reflect on and make sense of the past and therefore the future. Only the salvage of statistics and cartographies to enable the redrawing of hierarchies of influence, plotted as coordinates upon the map, allows the wilful escape into the ‘deep country’ in which Rukeyser as ‘photographer unpacks camera and case’ and surveys those remote, utopian communities such as Gauley Bridge that have broken free of the gravity of Wall Street into a consciousness of their exploitation: ‘centers removed and strong, fighting for good reason’.[[45]](#footnote-45)

**The colonial re-appropriation of topography**

Tim Dayton, in his monograph *The Book of the Dead,* agrees with Gander that Rukeyser saw her poem as a chance to utilise the economic crisis facing contemporary society and its modernist poetry, by revealing the growing fissure between subjective meaning and objective, societal values. Dayton goes on to argue that this is paralleled by another rift, ‘the one between values, whether those of individual or collective subjects, and reality, whether understood as “society” or as “brute nature”’.[[46]](#footnote-46) At Gauley Bridge, Rukeyser directs us to the opportunity of a new trinity of unlikely interpretative gateways: ‘Here is your road, tying / you to its meanings: gorge, boulder, precipice’.[[47]](#footnote-47) Geology, as prehistoric signage, defines itself either in the negative juxtaposition of the gorge’s absence *next to* land, or in its static impenetrability as the boulder’s rock; ‘signs’ well away from the roadside which signify nothing except the material itself and the shapes with which to delineate it. Within this topography, Rukeyser suggests, we may mine our own meanings, our own country. The agency which Rukeyser believed resided in the individual imagination nevertheless served to offer a solution to the debilitating effects of social democracy’s version of history. As Benjamin’s personified ‘Angel’ of history reveals, ‘progress’ is akin to a violent storm which ‘irresistibly propels him into a future to which his back is turned’.[[48]](#footnote-48) Rukeyser envisions an alternative to this restrictive linearity; from horizontal roads into the deeper, inner realisation of the transformative potential of signs and images.

It is worth clarifying here that Benjamin’s theses on history, which have informed our reading of Rukeyser’s project so far, relate to Marx’s designation of ‘civilised’ life on Earth. This stage is explained by Engels as the:

development of society at which division of labour, the resulting exchange between individuals, and commodity production, which combines the two, reach their complete unfoldment and revolutionise the whole hitherto existing society.[[49]](#footnote-49)

In the *Grundrisse*, Marx sees these kinship societies, which he deems as *Asiatic* (which includes the indigenous Native Americans[[50]](#footnote-50)) as offering a utopian model of labour relationships. The exchanges between individual labourers granted a holistic awareness of each worker’s respective role in the process of commodity production: a collective blossoming of consciousness that would be supplanted by the colonial capitalist societies of Europe. Marx declares that ‘in most of the Asiatic land-forms, the comprehensive unity standing above all these little communities appears as the higher proprietor or as the sole proprietor; the real communities hence only as hereditary possessors’.[[51]](#footnote-51) As such, every worker shares in the collective consciousness of their position in relation to their work, material environment and means of production: they are aware of the outcome of their labour, and collectively partake in its material benefits. This awareness is essential to the achievement of the sense of identity and happiness of individual workers in pre-capitalist societies. This is because:

[e]ach individual conducts himself only as a link, as a member of this community as proprietor or possessor. The real appropriation through the labour process happens under these presuppositions, which are not themselves the product of labour, but appear as its natural or *divine* presuppositions.

(My italics).[[52]](#footnote-52)

‘West Virginia’, the next poem in the collection, dramatises the moment that ‘West Virginia’ as a signifying construct was imposed upon the land and its Native American people, violently replacing their autonomous systems of relationship between subjective consciousness, objective nature and their conceptions of the divine. Again, Rukeyser satirises the received, colonial history of this process as ‘progress’ as the advent of capitalism is uncoiled in a relentlessly dizzying litany of events, obscuring the previous ‘Asiatic’ relationships between the workers and their land. The white European ancestors who ‘left a record to our heritage,’ simultaneously inflicted the ‘breaking of records’[[53]](#footnote-53). The ironic ambiguity of this ‘record breaking’- that ‘discovery’ relies on the destruction of pre-existing orders of signs, meanings and consciousnesses- is not lost on Rukeyser as she superimposes the written testimonies and architectures of European explorers and their descendants into bricolage with Virginia’s rivers and rapids. In Rukeyser’s relaying of the colonisation of Virginia, we see the cataclysm of the appropriation of the indigenous, natural conditions of labour rendered through the migrants’ eyes as a satirical moment of ‘discovery’ disfigured into property: ‘Found Indian fields, standing low cornstalks left, /learned three Mohetons planted them; found-land/farmland, the planted home, discovered!’[[54]](#footnote-54)

The imposition of this received, canonical history is an attempt to expose the eclipsing of the pre-existing order by which communities defined their own identities via their relation to their environment; their subjectivity as an objective fact of their role as labourers and producers in the greater unity of their community, culture and beliefs. Marx delineates the process of this misappropriation in pre-capitalist kinship societies where:

the relation of the individual to the natural conditions of labour and of reproduction as belonging to him, as the objective, nature-given inorganic body of his subjectivity -- appears mediated for him through a cession by the total unity -- a unity realized in the form of the despot … through the mediation of the particular commune. The surplus product -- which is, incidentally, determined by law in consequence of the real appropriation through labour -- thereby automatically belongs to this highest unity.[[55]](#footnote-55)

Property is a transitory and collective concept in which the higher proprietor is its own symbolic conception of its ‘unity’; a manifestation of collective consciousness. There are cynical echoes of this pre-capitalist ‘unity’ carried weakly in that generation of European explorers that sought to claim the land: Virginia was named for, the ‘Virgin Queen’, Queen Elizabeth I, who declared herself married to her country.[[56]](#footnote-56) This union saw her as ‘sole proprietor’ to the land and its resources in the utmost symbolic metaphor; the virgin benefactor who could presume no stake to the permanence of a lineage of descendants. This sign of *Virginia*, held static and *unyielding* in time, served to conceal the paths of the exploitative commercial transactions behind it; its produce not given up to a despotic ruler or spirit who would benevolently offer it back as the floral or faunal manifestation of their means of labour, but instead exported across the ocean to the colonising realm. Even the very material topography of its landscape became displaced and exported alongmetonymical lines of signification, as its explorers categorised the mountains as ‘at home amongst the mountains of England’[[57]](#footnote-57) and rushed inexorably through the country only to find the trade routes which would ensure Virginia itself as another road, ‘Virginia, speeding to another sea!’.[[58]](#footnote-58)

Rukeyser’s strategy plots an act of redemptive mediation against this historic misappropriation of identity where the ‘frontier defines two fighting halves’[[59]](#footnote-59): the sign and its referent, and thus the consciousness of the worker and their unconscious exploitation. She posits that poetry may empower subjects with a return to utopian consciousness through the reclamation of a third imaginative truth which chimes with the higher unity of kinship societies:

Art and nature are imitations, not of each other, but of the same third thing - both images of the real, the spectral and vivid reality that employs all means

[. . .] People want this speech, this immediacy. They need it. The fear of poetry is a complicated and civilised repression of that need. We wish to be told, in the most memorable way, what we have been meaning all along. This is a ritual moment, a moment of proof.[[60]](#footnote-60)

Rukeyser’s project in depicting her progress along this received history of *West Virginia* is to lay bare, and thus critique, the complications and minutiae of history that repress us: the imposed linearity of routes and their highway guides, the documents of centuries of appropriation in the land since it was claimed for and named after the Virgin Queen. Once this is achieved, space is created for the salvage of lost events and their testimonies which will constitute much of what follows in *The Book of the Dead*, with its aim of conveying a redemptive fullness of the past in which to situate the Hawk’s Nest Tunnel Disaster. Benjamin’s ‘Angel’ of history witnessed that: ‘Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet.’[[61]](#footnote-61) The moment in which we see our true place and worth in society in the confluence of poetry and environment through image and symbol is a moment of communion which correlates to divinity- the *ritual moment.* For Marx then, what obstructs this in the present moment is the systemic exploitation of the material dimensions of the poetry’s symbols due to capitalism, which warps the symbol’s event from out of introspective meaning and moulds it into surplus external units of desirable commodities in the cause of profit. Consequently, the agency to divine meaning is lost in favour of capitalist presuppositions of symbols which undermine forthcoming generations of workers. Its very architecture establishes its synthesised and pseudo-mystical hegemony; the KING COAL HOTEL that looms over Rukeyser’s car.

**John Brown, and the potential of the body as poetic symbol**

In revolt against this imposition, Rukeyser scatters her *West Virginia* with the obscuring wreckage of 350 years of received, historical signage. Amongst a litany of battle sites and their detritus, we stumble over the sign of one of the seminal moments of American history, violently fragmented and demarcated within the collage in the rubble of a concrete upper-case:

The battle at Point Pleasant, Cornstalk’s tribes,

last stand, Fort Henry, a revolution won;

the granite SITE OF THE precursor EXECUTION

sabres, apostles OF JOHN BROWN LEADER OF THE

War’s brilliant cloudy RAID AT HARPERS FERRY[[62]](#footnote-62)

John Brown’s legendary abortive raid on the arsenal at Harper’s Ferry, Virginia in 1859, in which he hoped to arm slaves in order to galvanise them into revolutionary insurrection, is spliced into the poem in its material form as a signpost. Rukeyser’s claim for Brown, as Dayton observes, is as a ‘precursor of the emancipatory power that will contest the power of Union Carbide and its hirelings, a possibility realized when a resurrected Brown returns late in *The Book of the Dead* in a utopian image’.[[63]](#footnote-63) But in her collaging of the establishment’s commemorative record of liminal, roadside signs, Rukeyser must also ‘break’ the record of the event by inserting it into collective memory. In form, she subverts the phanopoeia of these images by forcing the reader to confront in their translation the obscenity of the fragmentation of the sign in order to doubt those ‘concluded’ models of redemption which have fed the myth of a free, white America. It was not enough to invoke the metaphor of Brown’s moral insurrection; ownership of the very materials that constitute the sign from which meaning is appropriated is paramount.

*The Bill* salvages the original lyrical response to the event of John Brown, *John Brown’s Marching Song,* using itto break open the spiritual, imaginative ground for her transcendent poetic meditation of the collection’s final poem, *The Book of the Dead*:

John Brown’s body lies a mouldering in the grave,

John Brown’s body lies a mouldering in the grave,

John Brown’s body lies a mouldering in the grave,

 His soul’s marching on!

 (First verse of the John Brown Marching Song[[64]](#footnote-64))

This first iteration of John Brown is not fully resurrected in the theological sense of the word; he lies *un*dead in the present- continuous. If his ‘soul’s marching on’[[65]](#footnote-65), it is in the sense of the material *sign* of his body which is salvaged from lying ‘a mouldering in the grave’[[66]](#footnote-66) and reanimated into Rukeyser’s present via the free verse iteration of a heroic couplet, as ‘dead John Brown’s body walking from a tunnel / to break the armoured and concluded mind.’[[67]](#footnote-67) In the Benjaminian *crudity* of this image, it is John Brown’s body that breaks into the imagination as an anti-hero who ‘allows many people to feel the moment of crisis, and to understand that it is common to all imaginations ready to receive its meaning.’[[68]](#footnote-68) For poetry to affect change in its response to moments of crisis, the poetic symbol must be crudely material, obscenely present.

Yet although Benjamin describes his Angel’s wish as one that aspires to ‘awaken the dead, make whole what has been smashed’,[[69]](#footnote-69) this reconstitution must be outside the existing redemptive terms of social democratic teleology, or risk being limited and controlled by them. To reveal what is at stake, let us examine the genesis and evolution of *John Brown’s Marching Song* from its origin as a soldier’s lyric. Another link in the pattern of human suffering, the American Civil War, created a situation in which the worker, as soldier, faced an inorganic subjectivity, mediated by the ceding of identity to the unity of the army which sought to uphold the Union. Alienated in this sense from the connection to natural production through their labour, and directed instead towards its inverse, murderous destruction, soldiers nevertheless were endowed with the existential consciousness of their mortal relationship as subjects to their material environment; organic counterparts to the inorganic resources fought for in the war. George Kimball explained some thirty years later in his *Origin of the John Brown Song* that the song’s material originated in the playful teasing of a namesake John Brown in the army:

[H]e was sure to be greeted with such expressions as ‘Come old fellow, you ought to be at it if you are going to help us free the slaves’; or, “This can’t be John Brown – why, John Brown is dead.” And then some wag would add, in a solemn, drawling tone, as if it were his purpose to give particular emphasis to the fact that John Brown was really, actually dead: “Yes, yes, poor old John Brown is dead; his body lies mouldering in the grave.” This nonsense was kept up from day to day, and these expressions, particularly the ones referring to the defunct condition of Brown, were so often heard that they became by-words among us, and were repeated at all times and in all places’[[70]](#footnote-70)

Aiming to salvage their sense of agency through an awareness of their collective disposition, the lyric employs a gallows humour which delineates this subjugation in the terms of its material nature. Amongst this satirical paean to the material aspects of ‘the army of the Lord’, as well as John Brown’s ever-decaying body, we see the repetition across the refrains: of his knapsack, Christian lambs secularised into ‘pets’ and the evocation of Confederate figurehead Jeff Davis’s body hanging from a tree. But Benjamin also warns of the power of hegemonies which have a ‘retroactive force’ which can ‘call into question every victory, past and present’. [[71]](#footnote-71) Such was the discomfort of many in face of the epiphanic crudity of the lyrics, juxtaposed with its hugely popular, jaunty melody, that the song was famously appropriated by Julia Ward Howe at the behest of a Reverend James Freeman Clarke and became the Union’s prevailing anthem, *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*. In this act of appropriation, instead of redeeming a conscious, utopian collective *soul* of the lowly worker, the material labour and environment of the war is sublimated into the higher unity of a despotic God:

I have seen Him in the watch-fires of a hundred circling camps,

They have builded him an altar in the evening dews and damps;

I can read his Righteous sentence by the dim and flaring lamps:

His day is marching on.[[72]](#footnote-72)

The battle for the materials that constitute a poem’s vivid symbol is the battle for the contextual framework of its insights.

**Orpheus, and the movement of metaphors**

In considering whether the poetic ‘symbol’ contains any intrinsic energy beyond its material potential, Rukeyser conceives it as a vessel for knowledge which is anachronistic in its potential to offer redemption across time. She writes that ‘The history of a symbol, traced in this way, will show the history of human passion for a relationship…’;[[73]](#footnote-73) they are the expressions of ideas and relationships between humans and their place in nature. In offering prehistoric examples of symbols which illuminate this, such as the spiral which is found ‘in ivy, in water, in hair, in shells, ears, whirlwinds,’[[74]](#footnote-74) Rukeyser offers the diagrammatic symbol as a depiction of the process by which we consciously question ‘the existence of the problem of the relationship of movement with life’[[75]](#footnote-75). They offer us, in their diagrammatic form, the chance to conceptualise and view our agency, or lack of agency, in the midst of relationships. Her recourse to geological symbols of ‘gorge, boulder, precipice’[[76]](#footnote-76) at the end of *The Road* is a yearning for the holistic components of a prehistoric utopia, but her choice of a pseudo-photographic reportage, alongside the technological advancements of the late 1930s and 40s, suggests that she saw the opportunity to utilise ‘relative velocities of growth’[[77]](#footnote-77) as a way of measuring that utopia’s qualities. She introduces these relative velocities, again diagrammatically, in the next poem, ‘West Virginia’, with its metonymic symbol of telegraph wiring bringing the capitalist state’s military power to bear: ‘Wires over the gash of gorge and height of pine.’[[78]](#footnote-78) This image offers a diagram of the Gauley Bridge workers’ subjugation, yet if seen as an equation where ‘over’ can mean ‘divided by’ (Wires / (the gash of gorge + the height of pine)), the state’s monolithic control has the potential to be broken by those who can harness the natural means of its production. Gauley Bridge’s hydroelectric dam embodies this potential, ‘the power flying deep / green rivers cut the rock / rapids boiled down, a scene of power / done by the dead.’[[79]](#footnote-79)

This characteristically modernist preoccupation with the liberating and energising effects of velocity and motion is central to Rukeyser’s conviction in the efficacy of the symbol. Along with John Brown, Rukeyser names visionaries whose ‘life becomes an image reaching backward and forward in history, illuminating all time’, including Abraham Lincoln, Buddha, Beethoven and Jesus as figures whose lives were gestures of the search for purpose through lives of intense concentration, and who ‘risk the immortal meanings every day, pure in knowledge that the only way to realize them is to risk them.’[[80]](#footnote-80) To risk is to reject stasis, or the closure of the mind. To risk is to reject the terms and relationships we inherit as finalities in favour of a radical step towards hope. And so hope, in a time of crisis, depends on the salvaging of the terms and symbols of meaning, for ‘the gestures of the individuals are not history; but they are the images of history.’[[81]](#footnote-81) That these images run in directions counter to linear, canonical history is also highlighted by the fact that they derive from countless generations of anonymous workers cited by Rukeyser, among them miners like those at Gauley Bridge and women and children in resistance movements. Benjamin states that to guard against becoming mere tools of the ruling class, historical materialism aims to ‘retain that image of the past which unexpectedly appears to man singled out by history at a moment of danger’[[82]](#footnote-82). The bounty of these images is the risking of the consciousness of them as incomplete and shifting components into insight, which Rukeyser believes finds its highest state in the understanding of ‘the beauty of unconditional love’.[[83]](#footnote-83)

In her section of *The Life of Poetry* subtitled ‘The Poem Seen as System’, Rukeyser outlines the efficacy of symbols in this state- both inchoate and vivid- within the human memory: ‘We know the memory of the unfinished act, or story, or joke, is stronger than that of the finished. These symbols are never finished; they continue to grow; perhaps that is their power.’[[84]](#footnote-84) The propensity of the conscious human brain to hold on to unfinished acts is known in Gestalt psychology as the Zeigarnik effect, after Soviet psychologist Bluma Zeigarnik, who conducted a series of experiments on waiters in 1927.[[85]](#footnote-85) She proved the existence of the phenomenon by which waiters had an enhanced memory of unpaid orders but quickly forgot the details of finished acts of payment. The mind’s tendency towards the unfinished results in a model of symbols as systems, rather than as discrete units of meaning. Rukeyser, in similar fashion, sees the human mind as being primed for the emotive spur to action, so long as its symbolic elements are vivid, yet complex enough so as to allow countless alloys with. As a consequence of this process, Rukeyser elucidates her framing of poems which ‘like anything separable, and existing in time, may be considered a system.’[[86]](#footnote-86): their strategies which interact through time with readers are subject to change over time in terms of the transactions of meaning reverberating through Poundian melopoeia which leads: ‘the memory of an unknown witness, by means of rhythm and meaning and image and coursing sound and *always-unfinished symbol*, until in a blaze of discovery and love, the poem is taken.’(my italics)[[87]](#footnote-87)

Rather than see this instability as debilitating, Rukeyser revels in its agency. She summons the semi-mythical father of lyric poetry, Orpheus, as a material redeemer whose poetry and song was so resonantly meaningful it ‘was able to make all things sing’.[[88]](#footnote-88) Orpheus symbolises the filtering of individual, subjective experience into song, one of the strongest iterations of an ‘I’ in the immediacy of the performance of singing. Yet Rukeyser considers it telling that he was torn apart in violence as he sang before becoming deified and outside of time: this violent dissembling is indicative of the systematic nature of symbols over time, hacked apart:

Like pieces of the body, knowing there had been pain, but not able to remember what pain- knowing they had loved, but not remembering whom. They know there must be some surpassing effort, some risk. The hand moves, finds the lyre, and throws it upwards with a fierce gesture. The lyre flies upwards in night, whistling through the black air to become the constellation; as it goes up, hard, the four strings sing: *Eurydice*. And *then* the pieces begin to remember; they begin to come together; he turns into the god. He is music and poetry; he is Orpheus.[[89]](#footnote-89)

Rukeyser conceives of the transforming states of the symbol as being subject to the relationships of a ‘dynamic system’,[[90]](#footnote-90) subject to the entropy of energy exchange and loss in the drive to equilibrium. Orpheus approaches ‘maximum entropy’,[[91]](#footnote-91) utterly fragmented until the drive to poetry restores the celestial equilibrium of the constellation, *Lyra*, which is illuminated and available across the hemisphere of every generation. The implication of this entropy as it fragments the corporeal identity of the archetypal lyric poet is that we must convey our constituent experience in its fragments: signs toward emotion, sensation and imagination that can be reconfigured in the equilibrium of the reader’s mind. This is Rukeyser’s mission: the poem’s symbols are fragmented that they may fall in the patterns of suffering which link those oppressed, like the miners of Gauley Bridge, that they may rise to acts of change.

We can trace Rukeyser’s conception of the dynamic poetic symbol by returning to an earlier depiction of John Brown. Herman Melville recognised Brown’s figurative, kinetic potential by portraying him as a meteor in his poem, *The Portent*. Melville, laudedby Rukeyser as the pre-eminent ‘poet of outrage’,[[92]](#footnote-92) provides a link in the symbolic chain of the collective experience of existential danger in the American Civil War, with the ideological battle of the Spanish Civil War which was raging when Rukeyser conceived of writing *The Book of the Dead*. Rukeyser remarks that: ‘The Civil War turned him into a poet who saw aspects of wars to come, veteran of a knowledge in some ways strange to his time, like the veterans in our own age of the war in Spain.’[[93]](#footnote-93) In this way, Melville is able to offer a forwards-facing prescience which the Benjaminian angel, in salvaging John Brown’s story, cannot. Where Rukeyser sees Brown, ‘that meteor, whose blood was love and rage, in fury until the love was burned away’[[94]](#footnote-94) as losing redemptive energy through a figurative thermodynamic entropy engendered through his federal persecution, Melville rescues it through his depiction of Brown as a ‘brilliant masked symbol’.[[95]](#footnote-95) We can see in this symbol a most vivid example of Benjamin’s prescription to ‘seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger’[[96]](#footnote-96), Brown flashing as ‘The meteor of the war’.[[97]](#footnote-97) Kent Ljungquist has linked this metaphorical depiction to a contemporary, material manifestation of meteors, with their ancient, attendant omens of war and other disasters reporting that: ‘Between John Brown’s assault on the arsenal at Harper’s Ferry on 16 October and his hanging on 2 December 1859, a meteor shower dazzled the northeast and was widely covered in the press.’[[98]](#footnote-98) Seen in the light of this ‘flash’ of material, Melville’s image of the moment of danger is seized by showing Brown’s perpetual martyrdom in its present tense as ‘the stabs shall heal no more’[[99]](#footnote-99). Stab wounds which would naturally fork between either scabbing over or flowing into the conclusion of death instead bleed uncannily and fresh in the imagination outside of linear history. Ljungquist describes how contemporary ‘Newspaper accounts of the execution focused on the inordinate length of time that the body swung, further speculating that the hemp rope was too weak to kill Brown, portrayed more as demon than martyr’,[[100]](#footnote-100) as though the measuring of the scale of Brown’s insurrectionary danger lay in his materiality; in the physical proportions of the force it took to despatch him. The account illustrates the dynamic moment of Brown’s transformation out of a violent, material entropy towards the *demon*stration of a new chthonic iteration in newsprint, ripe for salvage as poetry and a new equilibrium in the promise of class insurrection.

It is interesting to consider Melville’s response in sharp relief against another famous depiction of existential anguish, that of John Keats in his 1819 ‘Ode on Melancholy’*.* Keats’ famous call to neglect a litany of death’s metonymic materials, deadly nightshade, yew-berries and wolf’s-bane, that threaten to ‘drown the wakeful anguish of the soul’,[[101]](#footnote-101) is replaced here by Melville’s subjugation to anguish’s fracturing of experience into its material terms. He is unable to render Brown’s body due to the hood that has been forced upon him and the effects are profound: ‘Hidden in the cap/Is the anguish none can draw;/So your future veils its face’.[[102]](#footnote-102) Such a revolutionary act will always be prone to misappropriation; to retrospective interpretation in the interests of maintaining existing hegemonies. Its redeeming symbol, concealed by a blindfold, is dangerous because it is a key to the present-continuous imagination: the fuse-like motion as ‘the streaming beard is shown’.[[103]](#footnote-103)

**Representing the means of production**

We have seen how the qualities of dynamic symbols, for Rukeyser, enable the poetic mediation in which we may salvage the images and meanings of workers’ histories. Her project to delineate these processes in *The Book of the Dead* sought to grant the redeeming insight into the class injustices wrought upon exploited workers, such as those at Gauley Bridge. But how can the subjective insights of poet and reader then amount to collective action? It is pertinent at this point to qualify Rukeyser’s call to a remembrance of the possibilities of pre-capitalist societies summoned in the architecture of *The Book of the Dead* by outlining their basic infrastructure. Perry Anderson, in *Lineages of the Absolutist State,* traces the realisation of the importance of public hydraulic works in *Asiatic* societies back to Adam Smith. The Asiatic state’s interest in acting as the proprietor of agriculture led to numerous vast projects to irrigate the land: most famously, the Nile in Egypt and the Ganges in India. That ‘the executive power charges itself both with the reparation of the high roads, and with the maintenance of the navigable canals... [and t]his branch of public police accordingly is said to be very much attended to in those countries’[[104]](#footnote-104) shows how the infrastructure involved in harnessing the natural means of production both defines the state and allows its perpetuation through policing; the ambiguous roads for ‘safety’ as Rukeyser plotted US1 in *The Road*. Yet this despotism of Asiatic societies is seen by Anderson to offer common utopian patterns of empowerment for workers such as a stake in the ‘state property of land’ and a ‘lack of hereditary nobility’ due to an ‘agrarian predominance over industry’,[[105]](#footnote-105) despite workers being subjected to involuntary periods of work in times of drought. Workers felt connected to their means of production and reaped its benefits in their safety; as Marx states ‘The communal conditions for real appropriation through, such as irrigation systems (very important among the Asian peoples), means of communication, and so on, will then appear as the work of the higher unity…’.[[106]](#footnote-106) Yet these channels of communication are circuitous: they reinforce workers’ identity as productive links in the greater unity. An example of this in ancient Egypt, for instance, would be the channel of prayer to the Nile River deities that personify the parameters of their continuing labour. Thus, ultimately, Marx views the Asiatic model as historically immutable and cyclical, failing to offering workers the dynamic consciousness with which they can better their conditions as according to Anderson: ‘The impact of the state on the mosaic of villages beneath it was purely external and tributary; its consolidation or destruction alike left rural society untouched.’[[107]](#footnote-107)

Although Rukeyser portrays Gauley Bridge as similarly isolated from the ‘tall city’s central influence’ in *The Road,* by 1936 capitalism was well established there in the shape of its burgeoning mining corporations. Although similarly a hydraulic project- a dam- its tributary flow, this time as the commerce and resources extracted and flowing *out* of town, left its inhabitants far from untouched. Rather than the state charging itself with the commissioning and execution of the project, a private company, New Kanawha Power Company, filed its plan for the hydroelectric dam with the federal government in 1927.[[108]](#footnote-108) Local workers thereby became disassociated not only from their immediate means of production but also lost the identity of their higher unity due to the cost-saving measures the company employed in order ‘to avoid economic penalties for work delayed beyond two years’[[109]](#footnote-109). Firstly, they were displaced by a new influx of migrant workers as the local population of skilled miners ‘accustomed to labor practices in the lumbering camps and coal mines of the state’[[110]](#footnote-110) refused the unsafe, low-paid work and were sidelined in favour of the unskilled labour of black workers migrating from economically depressed regions further southeast in 1930. This displacement was structured in the division of labour along race and social class lines; black miners made up 75% of the 2982 workers who were exposed to the deadly conditions by working tasks which required them to be inside the tunnel. Secondly, they were alienated from any sense of collective, *Asiatic* ‘higher unity’. Partly this was due to the amorphous hierarchies of corporate entities which took on the project, and resulted in the New Kanawha company, a subsidiary of Union Carbide, described by Cherniak as a ‘legal fiction’ or an ‘administrative chimera, combining solitary corporate control with minimal liability’[[111]](#footnote-111) for any social responsibility such as legal damages as a result of its industrial malpractice. Each of these consequences are symptoms of the government’s release of public utilities to private companies; industrial relationships and responsibilities thereby became chimerical, disassociated.

Rukeyser’s witnessing of *The Dam* which powered Gauley Bridge attempts to re-conceptualise this site of industry; the personification of its tremendous energy arising as the reader is positioned in its equations. Its witness evokes rapture, its rushing water offering the potential for a messianic celebration of the eternal present, ‘yielding continuously’ to perception, ‘evad(ing) the pillars’ of its monolithic, private infrastructure and instead autonomously ‘building its colonnades’ from the power of its own substance.[[112]](#footnote-112) It is almost the perfect utopian vision of the redeemed and repaired ‘Asiatic’ society in which identity is formed within the higher unity between the ownership of, and subjectivity to, natural means of productions; an identity that seamlessly ‘repairs in stream’ and ‘spouts’ as the ‘mind dances’ with joy.[[113]](#footnote-113) This quasi-religious submission to the higher unity of the dam destabilises Rukeyser’s anthropocentrism, yet its very existence depends upon the consciousness of the human conduit: the irony at the heart of Marxist autonomy. In worshipping the land, or its powers to produce, collective agency can be realised without the need of a mediating despot, via a mediating poetry, just as ancient Egyptians prayed towards the unity of nature and the divine in the Nile gods which seemed the proprietors of land and wealth. Yet the flaw in this redemptive trope also lies in its symbolic self-containment. If the river is personified through our witnessing, then we are at risk of seeing our witnessing agency as defining us as individuals, rather than the higher unity of what we witness. Perhaps this is inevitable: the symbolic entropy in systems discussed earlier demands that the water’s personified trope is ‘urging’ the hollow towards its ‘release’ towards the ‘major climax/ energy’” and away again.[[114]](#footnote-114) As Rukeyser warned, in *The Life of Poetry*, ‘Art is action, but it does not cause action: rather it prepares us for thought.’[[115]](#footnote-115)

Is it possible that this moment deep inside the mechanisms of the dam, which would have been witnessed by very few people, and certainly fewer of the terminally ill miners, could prepare them for redemptive action? Rukeyser was interested in taking what she called a ‘Contemporary statistical method’.[[116]](#footnote-116) Her model consists of a ‘large unit (which) is reflected in the lives of the people’, the collective consciousness which finds its parallel within the structure of Marxism as the majority proletariat, underneath the more bourgeois members of what she terms ‘society in the abstract’, the undertakers and the engineers who ‘cared mainly about the mechanical beauty and efficiency of the thing they were building, and not about the human lives involved’.[[117]](#footnote-117) The bourgeois engineers, already directors of the dam’s parameters, would surely be seduced by *The Dam’s* symbolic energies, yet mostly likely in that formation of the equation which ‘uses’ men like water. One engineer, a *Jones*, who escorts Rukeyser through the dam with pride, remarks on its elegant utility: ‘They said I built the floor like the tiles of a bank, / I wanted the men who work here to be happy.’[[118]](#footnote-118) Yet the sun’s ‘light laughing on steel’, the current of currency through material energy at the engine of the dam is ‘mottled’ and ‘given away’ by the time we reach the mine’s tunnel.[[119]](#footnote-119) One miner working there, Arthur Peyton, ‘described dust so thick as to interrupt visual surveys’[[120]](#footnote-120) yet he was able to perceive that the engineers benefited from a mandatory fitting of respirators. Afflicted workers, whose legal settlements, after suffering what was commonly a terminal illness, ‘eventually ranged from $30 to $1600, with single black laborers receiving the least’, [[121]](#footnote-121) could have little hope in the massive utopian potentials they helped construct in building the dam.

**Death as material and metaphor**

Rukeyser portrays this loss in the figure of the eponymous *Arthur Peyton* pitifully reading the letter attached to his settlement cheque ‘payable to you, for $21.59/ being one half of the residue which/ we were able to collect in your behalf.’[[122]](#footnote-122) Having had his life’s small valuation divided in two by lawyers, unable to continue his suit of marriage, he becomes the embodiment of the ‘glassy’ stream’s equation: ‘my death upon your lips / my face becoming glass’[[123]](#footnote-123) . As he is fed into the cremation at a steel-mill furnace, Rukeyser both laments and celebrates ‘O love the stream of glass a stream of living fire.’[[124]](#footnote-124) His redemption comes only in the sign of his death upon the lips of the living, yet its longevity is guaranteed in that death is inherently unconcluded: in our secular understanding of death’s parameters other than presence and absence, in its material reality whose fragments are transformed into ‘living’ symbolic fire in the furnace of a salvaging memory of the ashes of cremation. In this manner, the contemplation of the objective, physical destruction of sacrificed workers seems to offer the definitive, irreducible symbol with which to guard identity from misappropriation and provide the discovery of the working-class’s physical bondage- the spur to risk with nothing to lose. Yet this access to this symbolic sense of death and loss, stripped of the channels of industrial infrastructure with which it can course into action, is jeopardised after the diminishment of the mining industries and trade union movements in the wake of the Anglo-American neoliberal policies of the 1980s. Death perceived in impotent nostalgia enables an inverse constriction of identity via the symbolic: that miners’ worth stems only from salvaging their past heroic sacrifice; that their hope for the future lies only in the perpetuation of that sacrifice’s recognition.

**Conclusion: poetic strategies**

For Alan Wald, it was Rukeyser’s primary concern that she ‘rose to the challenge of developing techniques for communicating strong feelings about the lives of ordinary people.’[[125]](#footnote-125) In answering the Benjaminian call to seize hold of memories as they ‘flash’ up, a form of poetic ‘photography’ seems to offer the perfect medium to meet ‘the longing for communication which we can see everywhere: communication with the secret life of the individual, communication through machines, communication between peoples’.[[126]](#footnote-126) Wald sees the melding of Rukeyser’s symbolic visionary tropes with the objective stance of reportage as being a ‘variant of the technique that Walter Benjamin theorized as “profane illumination… vivifying the common experiences of humankind with a religious glow, through the use of images from the non-sacred material world.[[127]](#footnote-127)’ But, as is the case in poetic symbols, the meaning conveyed in photographs can be seen as being subject to flux over time in the human contexts of its reception, depending on the level of consciousness and agency of the audience. Despite this, Esther Leslie summarises three claims that Benjamin makes for a photograph’s representative potential:

First photographs are analogical representations that correspond to the experience of natural, optical perception; hence their access to the realm of truth- photographs as images of nature. Second, photographs capture something that is more intense than surface reality, be it an excess of historical duration that inheres in the image derived from the real or the exposure of the ‘different nature’ that offers itself to the camera-eye; hence their privileged access to something deeper than surface truth- photographs as images of different nature. Third, photographs are denaturalized. The ‘optical-unconscious’ hangs on an exploratory way of seeing, a microscopic incursion that slices up the intricate configurations of natural and social life.[[128]](#footnote-128)

We have already witnessed Rukeyser’s machinations towards the first claim in her directing of the device of a ‘photographer’ persona to the boulders and precipices of Gauley Bridge which offer the material dimensions of an irreducible realm of truth with which to contain experience. This analogical representation is best shown in the poem *Gauley Bridge*, in which the process of the visual event is depicted outside of an interpreting human witness: ‘Camera at the crossing sees the city/a street of wooden walls and empty windows’. The camera, without either the definite or indefinite article to allow its human agency in syntax does not order: it *corresponds*; admits the images of events:

The little boy runs with his dog

up the street to the bridge over the river where

nine men are mending road for the government.

He blurs the camera-glass fixed on the street.[[129]](#footnote-129)

Once the power of this claim is established, that Gauley Bridge is the irreducible made universal as ‘any town this one-street town./ Glass, wood, and naked eye:’[[130]](#footnote-130)

At the other end of the spectrum of perspective approaches to the potential of the photographic, poetic image, Rukeyser utilises Benjamin’s third claim, into that *microscopic incursion* into the configurations of natural and social life. In order to do this, Rukeyser utilises the penetrative power of x-ray photography, graphically illustrating the configuration of the capitalist process on the materials inside the human body to gruesome effect in the poem named for the dying miner, *Mearl Blackenship*:

He stood against the rock

Facing the river

Grey river grey face

The rock mottled behind him

Like X-ray plate enlarged

Diffuse and stony

His face against the stone. [[131]](#footnote-131)

Due to his lungs’ inability to rid themselves of the silicon breathed in as a result of his mining, the miner is now a literal, not figurative, link between the material of his labour and its produce. The silicon which has made his masters rich is killing him, alienating him from his own existence despite the strongest pathological bond in his body’s mirroring the mottled rock itself. As such, he becomes the X-ray upon a plate, revealing the inner-mechanisms of his own exploitation with a perfect economy of trope- the fusion between the exploitation of object and subject. Rukeyser pre-empts the threat of Benjamin’s warning that the historical materialist ‘must be aware of this most inconspicuous of all transformations’ in which history may be reinterpreted so that ‘even the dead will not be safe from the enemy’,[[132]](#footnote-132) seizing the biological matter of the fatally-ill (*undead*) worker in the midst of the terminal threshold between life and death. In this way, matter shines with the *profane illumination* of conscious acceptance.

But Rukeyser is most concerned with accessing the power of Benjamin’s second claim: that an excess of looking, of historical *exposure* to the fixed illuminated image of the poetic ‘photograph’ grants a privileged access to deeper truths:

Whistling, the train comes from a long way away,

slow, and the Negro watches it grow in the grey air,

the hotel man makes a note behind his potted palm.

Eyes of the tourist house, red-and-white filling station,

the eyes of the Negro, looking down the track,

hotel-man and hotel, cafeteria, camera.

And in the beerplace on the other sidewalk

always one’s harsh night eyes over the beerglass

follow the waitress and the yellow apron.[[133]](#footnote-133)

By expanding the scope of the poem to suddenly admit ‘one’s harsh night eyes’ into the camera’s viewfinder, we find ourselves plunged into the realm of truth. Our eyes start the circuit of feeling which terminates at the eyes of the silent, but witnessing people of *Gauley Bridge*, the ‘Negro’, those anonymous eyes inside the tourist-house. That our eyes ‘always’ follow the waitress, indicates a sense of concern, or a longing for comprehension in a repeated scanning of the photograph over time. The waitress is reduced to component parts- a yellow apron- which show her subjugation in the starkest way. The passenger is reduced to waiting in his colour as a ‘Negro’. The starkest identities of economic relationships are laid bare and monochrome grey. And yet the motion of time lends depth to witnessing perspectives; the spaces for the conjecturing of meaning through our human ordering of relationships. Why is the man waiting to leave with the train? Do we read his yearning in what we imagine about the glamour and risk of escape promised in the adjacent, rain-streaked billboards for the movies, *Racing Luck* and *Hitch-Hike Lady*? What is written on the note-pad of the ‘hotel-man’, hidden behind his potted-palm? A receipt? A suicide note?

One potential risk in using such a ‘photographic’ poetic approach is that miners and their community risk becoming objectified, even whilst this process lays bare their exploitation. In representing the site of the means of production, it is interesting to consider the effects of an apostrophic address: the addressing of an abstract quality, person or place. In the case of my own study of the Dearne Valley, the material remnants of the former collieries are few: commemorative pit wheels to serve as village signs, landscaped slag heaps and grainy photographs on the walls of pubs. Whilst we can survey the post-mining landscape, to address the mines and their workers is to address a topography which is lost and absent. Jonathan Culler remarks that:

Paradoxically, the more such poetry addresses natural or inanimate objects, the more it offers tropes of voice only, voice events, or instances of what I have called voicing, and the more it reveals itself at another level as not spoken, but as writing that through its personification enacts voicing, for the readers to whom it repeatedly presents itself.[[134]](#footnote-134)

To address an absent place which cannot possibly respond thus, conversely, emphasises the humanity of the loss: its emotive impact upon the community of the present day. I have sought to use the images drawn forth from the uttered memories of those research participants who worked in the pits in order to voice this address. To some degree, this act of construction will always be an act of auto-ethnography due to my editing, and according to which words and phrases caught my attention: a process which is discussed in Chapter 4. Yet as I have tried to only use direct words and phrases from the participants’ idiolect, to read the poems will always be an act of voicing another’s words, a ‘ritual moment’ which brings the fragments of memorised symbols in the present tense of address. Such images from the inner camera-eye of memory, ‘more intense than surface reality’, as Leslie stated earlier after a duration of thirty five years, offer the means to a poetic address which in its utterance can simultaneously conjure the vision a lost, alternative way of life and employment. Such poems can resonate in the collective imagination as living, voiced and present in a manner that photographs cannot.

# Chapter Two: The Miners’ Strike:

**Poetry’s capacity as a bodily act to restore identity in its linking to notions of territory**

In exploring the period of the miners’ strike of 1984-5, this chapter seeks to make several claims which I will first seek to outline. The previous chapter examined how Muriel Rukeyser saw poetry’s capacity to symbolise the elements of an industrial crisis as enabling the imagination to spur acts of conscious protest. Firstly, I will seek to demonstrate that by the 1980s in the UK, this industrial dispute was an embodiment of Rukeyser’s utopian vision of a workforce awake to the ideological nature of the battle between the unionised mining community and capitalist interests, in this case the Conservative government which, upon election in 1979, aimed to establish a free market capitalism based on privatisation and deregulation. Miners fought for the right to conduct industrial action, conscious of the dispute’s importance for the future of collective action: in negotiating their terms and conditions and in opposing pit closures, many explicitly predicted the consequences in government policy which would arise if they were defeated. Miners and their families fought squarely on these clearly defined causes, and lost, with huge consequences for the discourses and narratives which form their collective, and individual identities. Novelist Barry Hines, who would later write of these events in 1994’s *The Heart of It*, came from Hoyland Common, and originally worked as a surveyor in Rockingham Colliery, at the western perimeter of the Dearne Valley. In 1984, Hines was invited to the local coalfields by Arthur Scargill, and the National Union of Miners’ Industrial Relations Officer, Keith Brookes, describes Hines’ reaction to the aftermath of Orgreave a few weeks after the infamous ‘Battle’ of June the 18th:

Barry was silent for some time, glancing across to the dirty coke plant and the field between us; probably a visualised picture in his mind from the TV news scenes; then he turned to us and said, with a sadness and melancholy in his eyes that “this was probably the last strike and fight of its kind, after this the strength and collective of the unions would be broken- standing up and defending communities would not be possible, all people could do in the future was defend themselves and their immediate families. [[135]](#footnote-135)

From this account it is clear the miners’ strike represented for Hines a watershed moment in the belief that collective identity, through the strength of trade unions, would triumph over individualism. Continuing from Rukeyser’s schematics on the symbol, and objective rendering of territory, much of this chapter will explore Hines’ ‘visualisation’ of the post-mining landscape, as the struggle over physical boundaries and delineations would have psychological ramifications upon the telling of narratives and the formation of identity. As David Harvey notes, in neoliberal thought:

The absence of clear private property rights… is seen as one of the greatest of all institutional barriers to economic development and the improvement of human welfare. Enclosure and the assignment of private property rights is considered the best way to protect against the so called ‘tragedy of the commons’, (the tendency for individuals to irresponsibly super-exploit common property resources such as land and water). [[136]](#footnote-136)

The Coal Industry Nationalisation Act of 1946 implemented by the Labour Party had already ensured that such a ‘tragedy of the commons’ had been averted by placing the pits, their land and resources in the possession of the state. Mining communities centred around a symbiotic relationship between the pit and those industries which supported its workers and in turn, relied upon their income. As one miner in Bentley, Doncaster insisted, ‘you’ve got to look at the social aspect of what happens when you close a pit: the community folds, shops close, the engineering firms that feed off the coal industry close, so obviously everything’s got to come into it...’. [[137]](#footnote-137) Miners both worked together, and socialised together afterwards with their families, in local working men’s clubs. In the 1930s America of *The Book of the Dead*, the road in Rukeyser’s poem is a chance to escape ‘your tall central city’s influence’ both ideologically and imaginatively, to find the ‘centers removed and strong, fighting for good reason’.[[138]](#footnote-138) The miners’ strike of 1984 was a fight for the political and ideological centre of the country fought across the roads. The conflict between mining communities and the Conservative government, who sought to dissolve these nationalised bonds and boundaries, would thus be rooted in territory: the miners’ formation of picket lines in order to isolate their pit and prevent ‘scab’ workers from breaking the strike, and the increasing use by the Government of the police to prevent the free movement across the ‘commons’ of high streets, motorways and A roads, of the National Union of Miners’ ‘flying pickets’ from being able to consolidate successful industrial action across the country.

Next, it will be demonstrated that, just as only weeks later, the aftermath of Orgreave would become an act of visualisation for Hines, so these changing identities and territorial delineations were contested by both the respective belligerents in portrayals across media representation. Margaret Thatcher, who in July 1984 would notoriously denounce the Miners as ‘the enemy within’,[[139]](#footnote-139) would seek to recalibrate miners’ identity by depicting them as a threat to democracy, with deviant characters compared to those heroic enough to cross the picket line in pursuit of individual benefit. It was a conflict over the vision of what kind of country the United Kingdom would be come, and over whose narrative would become ‘reality’ and reach both miners and the wider country alike.

Defeat would instigate another radical change in the formation of identity, in which conceptions of a masculinity which were in part forged in the miner’s relationship with the coalfield faced the imposition of the deterritorialization of labour in the industries that replaced the mines. The third assertion is that the physical, material nature of this industrial conflict engendered a form of hyper-masculinity defined by the body’s capacity to fight, to protect and to utilise the land to provide. In the industrial disaster of Hawk’s Nest which serves as the setting for Rukeyser’s  *The Book of the Dead,*  we have seen in poems such as ‘Arthur Peyton’ that the diseased body serves as the material pathology of the exploitation of the miner by capitalist interests that do not adequately protect them. By 1984, mining masculinity, which I define as ‘elemental masculinity’, was aligned to a Fordist sense of the worker’s importance as a skilled, integral agent in operating the mode of production. Here, the right to work, and to be represented as part of a collective trade, is a democratic and fundamental human right, and its defence, therefore, the upholding of a moral code of honour and decency. This rising of an elemental masculinity also fused its binary opposite, the ‘scab’, who would come to represent the ‘other’ both in physicality and temperament. As a result of this shift, women, the traditional complementary ‘other’ in the Fordist nuclear family would find a degree of liberation through their mobilisation in support of the collective cause.

Finally, the aftermath of defeat will be examined in all of these areas in order to trace its consequences on the formation of identity in mining communities. An emotive spectrum of consequences followed in which I argue that defeat and the concept of a miner without a mine, would lead to the transition of identity away from the materiality of an ‘elemental’ masculinity towards acts of imagination which conjured a form of nostalgia, in which the identity is constructed in retrospective acts of imagination. Here the notion of the miner, post-mining, fluxes between narratives of pride at an honourable defeat, and the humiliation out of a tragedy with many lateral paths which could have brought victory.

**Background: ideological consciousness**

As well as Barry Hines’ novel, *The Heart of It,* much of the research data in this chapter comes courtesy of the Barry Hines Papers, held in the Special Collections library at the University of Sheffield.[[140]](#footnote-140) The addendum to Hines’ preparation for the novel features transcriptions of interviews from news reports and other television features providing a valuable series of testimonies and anecdotes detailing the experiences of striking miners and their families interviewed during the strike. From these accounts, it is clear that miners were convinced that the Government’s programme of mine closures, executed through the National Coal Board (NCB) was an ideological, rather than economic initiative: ‘ (The) economics of this strike went out of the window months ago because the money that this government has spent in trying to get the NUM to go back to work is colossal, it would have kept the pits open for years.’[[141]](#footnote-141)

In 1974, Ted Heath’s Conservative government sought to impose wage controls on miners and a three-day-week in response to soaring oil prices. When the miners went on strike, Heath called a snap general election. His election slogan was ‘Who Governs Britain?’[[142]](#footnote-142). In Selina Todd’s droll summary, ‘Unfortunately for Heath, the answer was: not him.’.[[143]](#footnote-143) The return of the socialist policies of Harold Wilson’s government brought about both the zenith of the miners’ political power in the United Kingdom, and a new ruthless determination by the Conservative party to bring an end to it. The latter was public knowledge due to a leak to *The Economist* on the 27th May 1978 of a report commissioned by Nicholas Ridley MP into strategies to combat the trade unions. As *The* *Times* reported a few days later, ‘the Senior shadow ministers were embarrassed last night by the disclosure’ which revealed in an annex to its report ‘that if there is confrontation between a Conservative government and the unions the battle should be on ground chosen by the Tories.’[[144]](#footnote-144) By 1985, Callinicos and Simons would notice that the plan’s strategies, including such controversial suggestions as having ‘some right to treat strikers differently in relation to supplementary benefits and tax refunds’[[145]](#footnote-145) were ‘followed with eerie precision the pattern laid out in the Ridley report’.[[146]](#footnote-146) From becoming an embarrassment, Nigel Lawson would insist by 1984 that the breaking of the miners’ strike was: ‘Even in narrow terms, a worthwhile investment for the nation” during a government debate on 31st July 1984. [[147]](#footnote-147) To put this into context, the estimated cost of importing coal and burning oil in power stations, mobilising the police against pickets, increased benefit costs and lost revenues, (not to mention fourteen deaths, thousands of injuries and over 10,000 arrests) would be more than £7 billion of UK taxpayers’ money.[[148]](#footnote-148)

This chain of political events- Heath’s defeat at the hands of the miners, the commissioning of the Ridley plan, and the Thatcher Government’s subsequent attempt to implement its recommendations- set the stage for what would be a pitched and overt ideological battle for workers’ right in the United Kingdom. Michael Welsh, MP for Doncaster North, speaking at the Hatfield Miners’ Women’s Support Group Rally in 1984 summarised its terms:

…(the decision to take on NUM) was not made last March when Ian McGregor made his announcement about 20,000 men and 20 pits, it was a deliberate political decision planned and taken by Margaret Thatcher in cahoots with Ridley some five years ago, to smash this union and also discipline its members. First, they changed the laws of this land to prevent you from going picketing and to antagonise you as much as they could with laws like obstruction and besetting, we all know them. Secondly, they stocked the power stations up... and in ten months they’ve spent five billion pounds and they’ve lost 70,000 tons of coal. Ten times as much as ASLEF have said would have solved this industry. And all in an attempt to defeat you.[[149]](#footnote-149)

The spark for the miners’ strike- the closure of the twenty pits- is one of the possible factors cited as ‘casus belli’[[150]](#footnote-150) in the Ridley Plan, whose martial semantics reveal the conflict to have the characteristics of a civil war. Welsh goes on to further outline the Government’s systemic use of the state’s infrastructures in order to repress the miners’ capacity to strike, each of which will be seen to have a profound effect on miners and their families’ identities:

The police operation against us, the massive use of the courts against us, the use of the scabs of the fifth column against us, the use of the media against us. It all adds up to a determined attempt by a union-hating Tory government to defeat the NUM.[[151]](#footnote-151)

As these logistics of the government’s ‘chosen battle ground’, including ‘good, non-union drivers’ and ‘a large, mobile squad of police who are equipped and prepared to uphold the law’ were open knowledge in the public domain, it represents a high water mark in working class consciousness: a formative moment in the creation of the worker’s identity in which what he or she was fighting for, and against, were clearly delineated. As one miner from Maltby Colliery attested, ‘I think this Government’s made one big mistake- and police- they’ve politicised our union, they’ve made people realise what is actually against ‘em. I mean t’ system… the system in itself is attacking mine workers and their families.’[[152]](#footnote-152) Across the country, the threat of this seismic, ideological shift was felt. A member of the Society of Graphical and Allied Trades spoke out that: ‘the main issue really this dispute has got out of Yorkshire mining fields and its touching everybody and the whole issue is about the future… what country you want to live in, and whether you want to make a decision on what is going to happen to you, or whether the pound is more important than the person.’[[153]](#footnote-153) Mining communities were aware that defeat would see a shift in the way that their community was identified. Privatising the mining industry would see each mine and its community identity lost in the economic appraisal of its capacity to provide profit or loss.

Mining communities were also aware that the right for union representation and power would be constant, hard won after many years of struggle. As one miner in Maltby revealed: ‘We’ve had no arguments from our retired members, all they want us to do is win and not give up what they fought for in 1926 and thirties and forties and for nationalisation, and when they made this union what it is today.’[[154]](#footnote-154) The battle for these rights was constantly slipping from the figurative to the literal, through protest on the pickets, and the sacrifice of comfort to the point of starvation. As the SOGAT member continued, ‘... unless it hurts you’re not giving enough and I’ll stress again, if the miners are defeated, I’m defeated, my children are defeated, and their children will be defeated’. [[155]](#footnote-155) This sentience constitutes a Benjaminian moment of danger: that if the moment was not seized, then its defeat would have emotive repercussions across generations. That a lack of empathy and solidarity would breed apathy and alienation:

I strongly believe, it’s the future you’re talking about, them kids out there, they’re the future and if they don’t see that you’re a caring society they’ll react to that, their reaction, chances are, will be violent. Because basically the media, and that includes you and me, because we all work for the media, are gradually brainwashing people into not being a caring society.[[156]](#footnote-156)

This was the moment to fight, as with dark prescience the Maltby miner warned of their impending demise: ‘If they decimate the NUM… the rest of the Trade Union movement may as well pack their bags and go home because they will, they will slaughter them.’[[157]](#footnote-157)

The right to qualify violence, as righteous protest or nihilistic hooliganism was itself, a fight. The most vivid symbol of this was the picket line itself. As the SOGAT union member recounted: ‘What we’ve always argued is that the reason why there’s a lot of violence on picket lines is because if there isn’t then police can’t justify being there.’[[158]](#footnote-158) There is a widespread sense that the Ridley Plan, with its searching for ‘casus belli’ and battlegrounds in which to employ its mobile police force induced police to be confrontational and provocative. This was an accusation levelled, in particular, against London’s Metropolitan police force: ‘We’ve had ‘em here twice and the two times they’ve been here they’ve done nothing but abuse people, they’ve even thrown bricks at the picket up at the top and cursed and sweared (sic) at women, children…’[[159]](#footnote-159)

My assertion is that the government policy was to turn the focus of the conflict away from its true ideological nature, and into a material, territorial struggle, with the same nationalistic rhetoric that had brought Thatcher electoral success during the Falklands war. People who had never been in trouble before fell in risk of being criminalised in the course of their protesting. Miners on picket lines feared that they were being represented as ‘mindless’ criminals, most having had ‘no previous convictions until this dispute and what sympathy do they get from courts? They get put on curfews, restrictive bail to stop their movements, heavy fines, heavier fines, heavier sentences compared with other criminals.’[[160]](#footnote-160) The right to travel across the country and picket received the same punitive treatment as the physical, violent crimes of the criminally deviant who forfeit their right to a democratic voice: ‘I mean some of bail conditions that’s been imposed on men on strike, you can go round stabbing or murdering or raping people, you don’t get similar bail conditions… for just breaching the peace and obstruction.’[[161]](#footnote-161)

Ian Lavery, the Labour MP for Wansbeck in Northumberland, campaigning on behalf of miners for almost thirty years, argued for the cleansing of the criminal records of those arrested who were often subject to politically motivated plea bargaining. ‘Innocent, hard-working people were arrested for pushing or being shoved on the picket line and hauled up in court for serious offences like affray. Solicitors were telling them that if they accepted a public order offence they would avoid going to jail.’[[162]](#footnote-162)

The public order offence meant that miners would no longer be able to travel to support picket lines at other mines. The swift, systematic nature in which such arrests were handled, left a profound impact on the psyches of some miners, as though they were processed as units in a market:

And I appeared in court half past ten, about 10.30… this at night yes, ay night time, there must have been twenty or thirty of us up at same time, it was just like a supermarket, we just all stood there and you got no chance of defending yourself or anything… I was stopped from picketing anywhere except at me own pit, and that seemed to happen to a few of them.[[163]](#footnote-163)

The response of many, was one of defiance, and of an awakening of class consciousness and solidarity: ‘I’ll never trust’ em again me, police. ...I’ve watched telly a lot more now, laid out policies of country and all pulling together you know, you seem to tend to get to know more things you know with being on strike, you learn.’[[164]](#footnote-164) This awareness, that the legislative instruments of state were being utilised against mining communities extended to the agencies responsible for the distribution of benefits in which the physical health of mining families became a battleground:

yes, they’ve got the DHSS, that’s one of the agencies they’ve used and everyone knows about how they’ve… how they’ve kept money off striking miners because they maintain they get £15 a week strike pay. So they deducted that off the allowance. They’re willing to see children starve.[[165]](#footnote-165)

The ideological fight for the future of industrial rights of workers was being played out on the body and its basic rights for freedom of movement and nutrition, in a manner akin to military warfare. The repercussions of this fight would be huge for the identity of beleaguered striking miners and their families. One striking metaphor is of the confusion that comes of a bypassing of negotiation, or intellectual debate in favour of the body being ‘crippled’: ‘whatever it costs them they’re out to cripple us, whether it be foul means or what, they’re out to cripple us**,** and it’s 1985 and we’re all stood here- I don’t understand it do you?’[[166]](#footnote-166)

This trauma developed a siege mentality that persists today. The corporeal and mental effects of the state’s attempt to annex property and home upon those who resisted it would have profound consequences for identity in the post-mining coalfield.

**Territory and the formation of identity**

A vivid account of how the Government sought to create the conditions for a siege comes from an account from Swedish trade union workers attempting to bring two lorries full of Christmas gifts to give to the families of striking miners. Mentioned in the Ridley plan as a possible choice for a ‘battle ground’[[167]](#footnote-167), the Swedes ‘anticipated there might be trouble so I called the British Customs Authorities in advance and asked them if they would supply (the documents)’[[168]](#footnote-168). Upon arriving and being told they had the wrong documents, it became clear that their attempts to bring gifts would meet resistance from the Customs Authorities: ‘they sort of talked about this is for the miners and we’ll try to do everything we can to stop you, they said it bluntly in our faces.’[[169]](#footnote-169)

The result was a dash to fill in the documentation and find the correct location in the port at Harwich in order to secure the cargo’s passage:

we had to go to Custom Authorities in Harwich which were closing in one hour’s time and we wouldn’t be able to find it ourselves because it was a couple of miles from the harbour and he wouldn’t tell us where it was and he also promised that that paper we had to fill in there we couldn’t do that ourselves… and nobody would help us fill it in, he promised us that, and he said he would do everything to stop you from getting in here, and so he detained the two lorries and said “oh you can leave them for whatever you want and I’m closing here in 45 minutes so that’s where your lorries will be staying” But fortunately we picked up someone who helped us and we came back just in time and threw the papers in his face and we had to pay, as I said, £745 to get them…

The story encapsulates the importance of territory in ‘provok(ing) a battle in a non-vulnerable industry’[[170]](#footnote-170) for workers’ rights which would have such a profound effect upon mining communities. Firstly, that of enclosure: to stake borders in the name of the state so that their means of production may be proffered to private business interests in the manner that was happening with the Conservatives’ appointment of Ian MacGregor as head of the National Coal Board, before sealing their physical access in order to prevent collective acts of solidarity and protest. Secondly, the use of legislation to enforce these restrictions of movement. And finally, to engender a sense of confusion in the ability to negotiate the interaction of these politicised enclosures and the legislation which sought to uphold them.

The starkest example of this to be found in the interview transcripts of the Barry Hines Papers is the situation that a miner’s wife, ‘Jill’, in an interview following her husband’s arrest at Orgreave. Jill describes the confusion that surrounds the ownership of her family home:

Well the NCB are saying it’s their property (housing) for the simple reason that at the beginning of the strike we were picketing right down at the pit gates... but there again it’s not been proved it’s NCB property, and at one time when I wanted some service doing on it they disclaimed it was theirs, so one week they’re telling me it’s theirs, and the next week it isn’t.

The account shows how the National Coal Board’s property boundaries are drawn and redrawn to restrict movement in the case of access to a picket line but deny liability in terms of a responsibility to maintain its service. In fact, it becomes clear that the NCB’s aim is to restrict movement to and from the property in order to ensure the safe passage of scab workers to the pit. This policy, centred around the use of the subjective ‘breach of peace’ legislation was one of the Ridley Plan’s key policies to enable the government ‘to hold the fort until the long term strategy of fragmentation could occur.’[[171]](#footnote-171) The fragmentation of Jill’s family unit in the transformation of her home into a ‘fort’ was, thus, a microcosm of the larger aim to break up the political and industrial unity of mining communities:

Yes, in the first few weeks they used to have three policemen stood outside at the front and two round the back alley watching the house all the time. During the time that the scabs were in at the pit they wouldn’t allow anybody down to the house at all to visit us. Even my parents weren’t allowed down at all, and then after a couple of weeks they relented a little didn’t they? Relaxed it, and they could come down one at a time but with a police escort and the police would wait here until whoever was in the house had finished and then escort them back up again. Then if there were anybody else waiting up there to come and see us they could come down once whoever it was here had gone.[[172]](#footnote-172)

This utilisation of the ‘breach of the peace’ charge meant that a family gathering became a criminal act in which the family in crossing into the disputed territory became transfigured as a unit of a picket:

I did ask the Superintendent… and he described it as liable to cause a breach of the peace, any more than one person coming down to our house it could constitute a picket which he wasn’t allowing down here and if he had any trouble he’d turn us out of the house, he’s his actual words were he’d come through house and turf us out. [[173]](#footnote-173)

The choice of metaphor ‘turf’ employed menacingly by the policeman is telling and metonymical: that the ground would be removed from under the family’s feet, annexed in the name of the NCB, and above that, the Government’s project to fragment the community and its power. The effect upon the family must have been one of profound insecurity; its identity as a family unit under threat of being redefined as insurrectionary, their rights as tenants shifting and under constant surveillance: ‘… in a morning you can see them in t’ back of the woods to make sure no-one’s coming through here you know, because they’re not allowed to picket here, but, the vans are always parked while the scabs are in, all round here anyway, but you sort of just get used to it.’[[174]](#footnote-174)

Indeed, the Government’s aim to fragment the communities was made explicit by its offer to give miners from closed pits jobs in other mines. The idea was met with cynicism by one miner from Maltby:

We don’t… we don’t want people compromising on jobs, can’t split jobs in half, can’t split communities in half… OK for certain people, you transfer them into another community and then what you have is you have bad blood between all those young people in that other community that can’t get jobs… I mean how do you share jobs? How do you realistically share jobs?[[175]](#footnote-175)

The remarks are telling as they give an insight into the mindset of Fordist labourers in contrast to the nature of employment in the distribution warehouses and call centres that would replace the mines. Work there now rarely offers stability and permanence in the form of a contract, but more likely proposes finite and temporary projects which drifting workers move to complete before needing to find another project.

The Conservatives’ policy of allowing people to purchase their council houses from 1980 put further pressure on the territorial nature of the conflict. Rather than being tenants catered for by the nationalised industry that they worked for, miners increasingly became owners of mortgaged properties, curtailing their mobility and their financial freedom to be able to strike over long durations. Many saw this as a deliberate attempt to weaponise debt by the government: ‘you’ve got to educate the working class because they’re trying to put the working class into so much debt. Council house sales- all they want to do is put the working man in so much debt that he can’t afford to strike’[[176]](#footnote-176) As one member of SOGAT London’s Machine Chapel noted whilst attending a Christmas fair in Shafton, Barnsley, mining communities were bonded symbiotically to the territory of their communities to the extent that the loss of their means of production would be devastating in comparison to more diverse constituencies:

We are fortunate to live in the metropolis and there are other options open to us, but in these communities most of these people have been encouraged to buy their own homes, what happens when their pit shuts, who do they sell it to? Nobody, they can’t sell it, there is nothing here for people to come and buy, they can’t get a job, so they can’t buy the houses, so what do they do, they’re lumbered with a house they’ve been persuaded to buy, they can’t transfer to another pit, because their one main asset they can’t sell, so they’re trapped in a situation they can’t get out of.[[177]](#footnote-177)

As one wife assented, ‘if my husband was moved to Selby, say he got transferred, I can’t sell my house, because nobody is going to be working, nobody will be able to afford it.’[[178]](#footnote-178)

In a territory treated like a battleground, in which workers live in their place of work and make a living from the land with little hope of an alternative, the fight took on a level of desperation which resembled guerrilla tactics. Freezing miners stole onto collieries only to be warned that ‘...if they get caught coal picking now it’s instant dismissal. I’ve got the sack before for things, coal picking because to keep warm and everything’[[179]](#footnote-179).

Ultimately, however, the dispute would not be won or lost by the adoption of such tactics, but on the picket lines that delineated the wider ideological battle. The repression of the democratic right to free movement along the country’s highways was enabled by the surveillance provided by a mobilised police force: ‘I pay ninety quid a year road tax and they’re stopping me going to Goole, or stopping me going down M1 to go down and picket. They’re saying that there’s going to be a breach of peace, 200 mile away, they’re not God, they can’t say what’s going to happen 200 mile away.’ [[180]](#footnote-180) The success of the government in preventing miners from being able to talk to each other in order to make the political case for their strike action was seen by pickets as a decisive factor in the strike:

If we’d have been able to carry out what we’d have wanted to do, as regards to talking to men in other coalfields that are working, there’d have been no mass picketing, none at all. I’m convinced that the men in other areas would have joined the strike, and this is where the role of the police sickens me because their intentions has been to stop us irrespective of cost, irrespective of social damage that’s been done on people and the impression that the police are now biased, that’s been highlighted. And as I say it’s simply that they just wanted to stop us from talking to other men that’s working, and to a degree it’s worked. What’s the point in seeing the buses just go flying through and you can’t get near but the lads keep turning out? What is the purpose of that?[[181]](#footnote-181)

This is the tragedy of the dividing line: that the workers who cross it hold the key to the strike’s success or failure yet are shielded away from reason, compassion and persuasion by police cordons and blacked-out bus windows. The picket line was thus a site of transformation between competing ideologies, whether or not those who crossed it were aware of it. The government sought to laud these scabs as one miner remarked bitterly: ‘...the minute they change from being a striker to a worker…they’re those brave men all of a sudden, and all they’ve done is cross from that side of street to that side and gone through pit gates and they’re different people.’[[182]](#footnote-182) As the next section will explore, those who sought to stop them crossing would represent a separate transfiguration of masculinity entirely.

**Territory and bodily identity in *The Heart of It***

… do you want a society that makes things and builds things? It’s the old Nye Bevan bit of ‘on an island built of coal surrounded by a sea of fish we starve to death watching colour television sets’ …We are built of coal, why on earth do we have to import and not export it, is to me a foolish and retrograde step… we will end up as the office block of the world, won’t we?[[183]](#footnote-183)

This misquote of Aneurin Bevan[[184]](#footnote-184) by an NUM Rep in the winter of 1984 is a dystopian narrative that resonates today in the Dearne Valley, amongst its profusion of office blocks and call centres. In the South Yorkshire Coalfield, the sense that ‘we are built of coal’ was taken almost literally. Barry Hines’ *The Heart of It* features ‘characters who act as emblems of the traumatic and indelible marks of the strike,’[[185]](#footnote-185) formed from his extensive research, much drawn from the testimonies that inform this chapter. A key character, Harry Rickards, a leading trade union activist who serves as a heroic masculine archetype of the fighting miner, serves as a pathology of the effects of this transition. As Forrest and Vice describe, he is ‘barely able to speak and is incontinent, functioning as an embodiment of the contemporary socio-economic reality with which the novel presents us…Harry symbolises defeat and lost hope.’[[186]](#footnote-186). We see Harry as he is in the 1990s, after he has succumbed to a stroke, which allows the reader to encounter Harry rendered in his physicality, outside of language. As his son, Cal, returning home to help nurse him helps to wash him, he realises that:

He had forgotten about the mosaic of blue mining scars and seared shrapnel wounds covering his body. What a brave life he had led: five years fighting in the war followed by a lifetime of danger down the pit: the Enemy Within. Cal was proud to wash his feet.[[187]](#footnote-187)

Harry here is the sum of his labour and sacrifice. His mining scars when considered amongst the shrapnel wounds of his brave actions in fighting fascism in the second world war gain the blueish hue of that of a tribal warrior, an example of ‘the totemic and injurious nature of the political struggle’. [[188]](#footnote-188) His skin represents the nexus between his working identity and selfhood and his tenure of the land underground that has become indelible through the scars of his labour. During the strike, one miner ruminated on the differences in the miners of Yorkshire with those from Nottinghamshire, who enjoyed more modern working conditions in their pits, and where the great majority of miners[[189]](#footnote-189) continued to work throughout the strike. As one Yorkshire NUM representative remarked:

There’s always been that division between Nottingham and Yorkshire, Yorkshire has always tended to be more militant because we’ve always had to fight more for what we’ve got than Nottingham… just geologically got it a little more, a little easier, but there’s always been that division in, in NUM, it’s as simple as that.[[190]](#footnote-190)

Coal differs in gradation in a way which has a direct correlation with its workers’ economic and medical prosperity. For instance, the Barnsley Seam ‘produced a steam coal that surpassed even those of South Wales...In the early nineteenth century the miners of South Yorkshire enjoyed the reputation of being the best paid in the kingdom.’[[191]](#footnote-191) Just as coal can be graded in terms of its quality and suitability for different applications, so the ease or difficulty in which it can be extracted from the ground was believed by miners to engender traits in workers such as tenacity, stubbornness and resilience. By the 1980s, the Nottinghamshire mines which were comparatively newer than those of Yorkshire and offered ‘thick straight seams and relatively good wages and conditions’[[192]](#footnote-192) which were often held to be physically less demanding than those of South Yorkshire, leading to the resentment of the NUM rep above.

In fighting to retain the ties to territorial and economic heritage, the striking miner brought a type of hyper-masculinity that I define as ‘elemental’: a notion of considering the ‘miner’ archetype as a confluence within the body of dangerous pressurised geological and social employment conditions. As one Maltby miner puts it:

One thing that a lot of people don’t understand that aren’t tied with mining industry is we face problems every day. They face elements, they face injury, disease, accidents, you name it they face it by nature of job they’re doing. And what that brings is it brings a hard, hard type of a worker. He’s mentally hard, he’s physically hard as well. And when he’s been facing elements for years and years, to be on strike and to be attacked like he has been, there’s not really much different, it’s more a psychological attack than when he’s actually working. But there’s no way they’ll beat determination of miners. Hitler couldn’t defeat miners, so I’m quite sure that Maggie Thatcher, she’ll not defeat us. [[193]](#footnote-193)

It is telling that this account divides the tribulations of the strike into the ‘psychological’ and the physical, or ‘elemental’. The aspects of the strike such as hunger and the material deprivation caused by a lack of income do not compare with the material perils faced every day on the coal face. There is a sense that in facing the elements in his day-to-day job, the miner is intact psychologically: a masculinity that provides for the community he lives in, mining its coal with a certainty of purpose which is etched on to his very body in the bruises and scars of its labour. Yet it is the encounter in the strike with a form of ‘psychological’ warfare which proves challenging to the elemental miner; that of being criminalised, of being accused as ‘the enemy within’ and ostracised by the wider concept of the nation which is why the Maltby miner evokes the memory of the miners’ role as patriotic, defenders of the country’s democracy in the darkest hours of the war.

In Hines’ *The Heart of It,* Harry Rickards, one-time agent of resistance against the government’s attempts to close his industry, finds himself in the process of being closed down. It is apt that Hines chose for Harry to have suffered a stroke: on the one hand, it serves as testimony of the consequences of his government’s misappropriation of his own state’s infrastructure which would bring the transition of a one-time soldier able to overcome Hitler into a literally ‘broken’ criminal:

This all started when he got arrested during the strike. I’m convinced of it.

Cal looked at her.

What do you mean?

Your dad. When he got beaten up by the police. That and going to prison. He was never the same again somehow.

That’s a long time ago isn’t it, 1984?

These things can have a delayed effect, Karl.[[194]](#footnote-194)

The other, metaphorical, interpretation of the internal ischaemia of his blood vessels is that it serves as a manifestation of the state’s attempts to block the strike’s mobility of flying pickets and networks of support as we saw earlier. Harry’s brain, starved of oxygen, leads to his removal from verbal agency in the narrative of the book: an act of tragic torture as Harry’s body, which withstood shrapnel and the dangers of the mineshaft without, succumbed to stresses within. Outside of this sphere of influence, the miner cuts a confused, bathetic figure of impotence outside of the traditional equation of the labourer, their means of work and their rights, as Harry’s wife asserts that he’ll be ‘up and about in no time’, Cal remarks that ‘looking at his father’s tortured features (he) found it difficult to believe that he could understand the question, let alone reply’.[[195]](#footnote-195)

This metaphor is taken to its extreme incarnation, as Harry, the former agent of extracting valuable minerals from the ground, becomes unable to control the expulsion of waste from his own body, nor summon the words with which to vocalise his new indignity:

He was making croacky, gurgling sounds as if his throat had been cut… He was in a state of extreme agitation. Cal thought he was having another stroke…Then he smelled it. Oh, no! But even as he scanned the carpet for the offending mess, he knew what had happened: his father had shit himself while he had been upstairs. He could feel his lips starting to quiver in disgust.’[[196]](#footnote-196)

The disgust for Cal forms not only from the shit itself, but from the alienating encounter with the uncanny, wasted physical form of his father, a man who had once been the imperious patriarchal figure of his childhood. In cleaning him up, Cal must dissemble his father into a procedural litany of dead-weighted body parts and clothes: ‘He couldn’t carry him upstairs to the bathroom because he was too heavy, and he couldn’t risk giving him a piggy-back because he might fall off. But much more pertinently, he didn’t relish the thought of supporting his father underneath the buttocks.’[[197]](#footnote-197)

Hines’ symbolic dismantling of the patriarchal support relationships of the mining community in the aftermath of the strike’s defeat was the nightmare of mining men in 1984 and 1985. For Forrest and Vice, he serves as a tragic emblem: ‘bereft of a hitherto distinctly gendered labour identity… Harry’s own fragile body seems to consolidate the apparent erosion of an at least “traditional” working-class masculinity.’[[198]](#footnote-198)A common refrain of striking miners was that the capacity for men to provide for their families was an ethical and human right:

‘It’s a basic man’s right to work, that’s all we’re asking for, we’re not asking for more money, we just want the right to work. The just basic right to support your married wife, kids and just go to work.’[[199]](#footnote-199)

As well as fighting for the necessity of an income, it was the male role to perpetuate the security inherent to the Fordist family unit: to provide food and safety for their wives and children, and to take the burden of suffering on behalf of their children. In doing so, they were taking a stand against job cuts which itself would ensure a moral continuation of an ethical ‘maturity’ which would perpetuate the system itself:

They’re trying to protect not only their own jobs, but their communities and their families. That’s what it’s all about, those little kids of 2,3,5 … although there is a political overtone of it all, but at the end of the day that’s what touches us, that’s what will go away with me until the day I die…I will do my best to make sure those little kids will get to maturity without suffering.[[200]](#footnote-200)

In this way, the industrial action justified the utmost show of physical resistance as a moral act. The miner, whose physicality had hitherto come as a result of, and in the cause of, mining the minerals that would ensure his family’s wellbeing, became central on the picket line to ensuring its future. Increasingly violent stand-offs with police, culminating with the notorious ‘Battle of Orgreave’ introduced a battle for the right to represent the miners’ stand on the picket line. In the mining community, the ‘elemental’ miner’s physicality was an intrinsic part of his morality. As one miner who was present at Orgreave commented on the alleged presence of *agents provocateurs* placed to throw house-bricks from within their own ranks:

Well we’ve had mysterious stone throwing and when it’s happened it’s usually been pickets been injured. I’m not that naive to believe that if a miner who’s a strong healthy bloke wanted to throw a brick at police then he would hit a police officer … he wouldn’t mess around hitting pickets and I think we’ve had some agent provocateurs in’t picket lines.[[201]](#footnote-201)

In this instance, the fact that miners were strong and healthy as a result of their physically demanding job serves firstly, as a guarantee that they wouldn’t stoop to ‘mess around’ with such cowardly measures as throwing bricks and secondly, if they had thrown bricks they would have hit their target. Instead, miners saw themselves as victims of a pitch battle of the sort projected in the Ridley Plan, as the police deployed[[202]](#footnote-202) around 6,000 officers at Orgreave, heavily equipped with riot gear, and aided by police dogs mounted police officers:

As they pulled me through one grabbed hold of hair at back of me neck, pulled me down and there were a few fists and boots coming in... I don’t mind being arrested if I’ve done something wrong but I’d not done anything wrong, especially when they start punching and kicking me, so I punched and kicked ‘em back , and that’s when an inspector ran in and pulled me out… In fact, at one point we heard one inspector shouting ‘take prisoners, Mr Simpson’, you know as if it were a full-fledged battle.[[203]](#footnote-203)

It is an account supported by the miner’s wife, Jill, who describes his return home from the police station where ‘they’d got him on the floor and they were kicking him, when he got home his ribs were bruised and (he had) cuts and that on him”[[204]](#footnote-204). The cuts and bruises customary to the miner in the course of mining a difficult seam now came to represent the act of resisting the mine’s loss.

There was an awareness, however, that the government, suspected of orchestrating the ‘battle’ by utilising the resources of a multitude of counties’ forces, were also utilising legal processes to criminalise miners *en masse* and restrict their movement. We saw in the previous chapter how the accelerated process brought about to prevent the industrial action of flying pickets was described as transforming the courtroom into becoming ‘just like a supermarket’. [[205]](#footnote-205) The simile is arresting: the captured miners losing the agency to harness elements, and instead reduced to products themselves: market commodities to be processed, appraised and contained. Many of these arrests were spurious and subsequently overturned[[206]](#footnote-206).As the miner continues his story:

They charged me with abusing threatening behaviour, and possession of a dangerous weapon, which turned out to be a flattened mop bucket. In the future they dropped that one because they found out it had been on the ITN one o’clock news and they charged me with throwing it at 1.25 so they made theirselves look a bit of a fool with that so they withdrew that charge.[[207]](#footnote-207)

That is not to say that miners didn’t recognise that there were those within their ranks who were intent on causing trouble. As one NUM rep conceded:

...It be a foolish man that deny it, we’ve seen trouble, we’ve seen things that I would never want to see happen on a picket line, but you get these hooligan element infiltrating they’re not all miners as that’s been proved as cases have gone to court… I think they’ve portrayed our battle in a bad light. Now all of a sudden them men who were tarred with same brush as us, we’re all hooligans... [[208]](#footnote-208)

There is an attempt in this account to differentiate the ethical, fighting miner fighting to preserve his family, community and right to work, with the figure of the brick-throwing hooligan; cowardly, anarchic and opportunistic. Ultimately this battle for representation which was fought in the media found its centre in the elemental masculinity of the miner. As miners began to drift back to work at the end of 1984, for many, it was not due to a lack of ideological solidarity, but the loss of the ability to provide the basic elements of survival for their families, ‘starved back to work’, emasculated by feelings of guilt and impotence:[[209]](#footnote-209)

they’re not going back to work because they don’t believe in union, they’re going back to work because Margaret Thatcher’s attitude is working on them, and what their families are going through, they’ve been forced back to work[[210]](#footnote-210)

In this narrative, as warriors fighting an ethical battle, it is only an inability to provide an elemental security to those that relied upon them that could bring their downfall:

...I think this is what’s sending a lot of blokes back ‘cos they’re not getting enough heat, you know for house and that they’ve got kiddies and that and they’re freezing, they’re sat at home and they’re seeing all drift back to work and they thinking “well I could do with a ton of coal” and they’re going back to work.[[211]](#footnote-211)

The conditions of the prolonged strike ultimately splintered the miner’s elemental masculinity, in which, unable to stave off the food and fuel poverty his family faced, his fight for employment rights became ethically compromised. It was a defeat that would have profound consequences for this conception of masculinity. Splintered by the imposition of such moral ambiguities, the elemental miner archetype of masculinity would become refracted into warped and inconstant versions of its former unity, as in *The Heart of It* Cal upon returning to his father in 1990s South Yorkshire finds: ‘He was shocked at his appearance. His hair had turned white and the stroke had twisted his face into a leering grin. He looked like a reflection in the Hall of Mirrors.’ [[212]](#footnote-212)

**The Scab, and the erosion of Elemental Masculinity**

… a lot of these scabs who’s gone back to work, they’re getting back to work now and they’re not getting the money they’ve been promised. And they ought to have more sense than to go back to work defeated ‘cos that’s what they’re doing. They’ve got no union, no union representation, so what are they going to get from t’ employer? An employer only recognises strength and if you, if you, if you haven’t got strength then he’s going to walk all over you, it’s human nature.[[213]](#footnote-213)

If the miners’ strike gave rise to a form of hyper-masculinity, then it also underscored its binary opposite, the ‘scab’. If the elemental masculinity described before was a form of essentialism, rooted in the physical and emotional capacity to garner natural elements, it was also ethical and philosophical in each miner’s collective determination to fight on behalf of their pit and their dependents in the wider community. The scab represents the beginning of this ‘masculinity in crisis’[[214]](#footnote-214)- the individual worker’s subversion in his selfish choice to exploit the opportunities brought about by the strike in the pursuit of personal greed. In this essentialist view of employment conditions, in which employers will ‘walk all over’ employees given the chance, then the scab is a weak incarnation of masculinity.

There are several ways in which scabs are represented as a weak ‘other’ when opposed to the elemental warrior style of masculinity. Firstly, they are self-interested, as in this account of a worker who neglected to support the union which protected him after an accident at work:

I mean he had an accident at work fair enough, no fault of his own, and through that he were a fitter by trade, and it damaged tendons in his hand, now they wanted him sacked a one handed fitter is no good at all at NCB… so his branch fought and kept him alive, kept him in a very good job at pit where he’d been and this is what he turns round and does. I mean he goes back in, I mean it’s disgraceful...[[215]](#footnote-215)

Secondly, they are often regarded as incompetent workers:

well there’s one in particular, I won’t mention his name, he’s a welder, not a very good one, chewing gum would last longer than his welding… prior to this strike he got the sack, he’s been in deep water several times. The union, our branch union fought for that lad to being reinstated, now the management didn’t want him, they want him now because he’s a scab…[[216]](#footnote-216)

Allied to this incompetence is a conception that scabs are lazy. *The Heart of It* describes the attempts of Harry Rickards to convince a scab to stop scabbing:

Your dad had gone to have a word with Phil Walton. He was the scab who’d gone back. They’d found out who it was by trailing the police van when it took him home from work. It was funny really. Your dad said he was the idlest man at the pit. They called him the phantom fitter because nobody could ever find him when there was any work to be done. Your dad said the ones who went back first were usually the biggest skivers.

Rotten elements.[[217]](#footnote-217)

The final remark of ‘rotten elements’ is telling in its depiction of scabs, as the name suggests, as the waste by-products of a strong and healthy elemental masculinity. This is taken further into associations with disease and a form of wasting ideological contamination, as outside the house which are reminiscent of a painted cross on a plague house, ‘has SCAB painted on the wall’. Rickards is warned: ‘Don’t go in there… You’ll get contaminated. You’ll have to burn your clothes when you come out.’[[218]](#footnote-218) To be a scab is a terminal condition, as one miner repeats a common refrain that ‘once a scab always a scab’, with the terminal prognosis that ‘They’ll be finished in communities, they’ll be finished in pits and the lot.’[[219]](#footnote-219) The animosity towards scab workers was a result of their detrimental effect on both the strike’s efficacy and the general morale of the community. This was exacerbated by the willingness of the government to exploit scab workers:

I’ve got one lad in one instance for you, our personnel manager approached a man what got sack prior to the strike and he said to him if you got to work and break the picket line I’ll give you your job back, and that lad’s in now. That’s how vicious, how foul it is, for these people here. It’s just a vicious attack on working class people.[[220]](#footnote-220)

In crossing the territorial picket line escorted by the police, scabs crossed the moral line which delineated the contested realms of elemental masculinity and thus also transgressed its moral codes:

They’re very brave whilst the police are escorting ‘em in and out but as soon as the police go home they’ve got to be braver haven’t they? They’ve got to work with us, they’ll get nothing round here, nowhere whatsoever, I mean it’s got to be the lowest of the lowest for a man to be escort into his own place of work with a police lorry, hasn’t it? It must be the lowest of the lowest, that’s all I can say. They’re nothing but scabs, they’ll always be scabs.[[221]](#footnote-221)

Even worse, the government lauded scab workers in the media as the definition of a brave and moral man: ‘(that they) keep turning round and saying “well these are the men, these are the people” is utter rubbish because these people are really slashing everybody’s throats, it’s as simple as that. I mean they’re scabs.’[[222]](#footnote-222) This deviation from the ‘fight’ of the miner to one of murder, continues with an analogy of otherness in terrorism:

...they’re going in like IRA gun men, you know, this about big brave men, you see pictures on TV of them walking, walking into work by a picket line, walking in? Have you seen the amount of police that’s keeping ‘em walking in?...scum of industry it’s as simple as that.[[223]](#footnote-223)

The incongruity of this portrayal of the government’s scabs as the brave heroes of the dispute in was in stark contrast to the depictions of the average miner: ‘At the age of 43 I became a rioter – overnight. A bully boy, a thug, a mindless hooligan and an enemy of my own country. I wasn’t really aware of the change; in fact I thought I was quite happy as a craftsman miner…’[[224]](#footnote-224). This incongruity led to an increasing consciousness that competing histories were being written; that there was an ethical, code of honour outside which transcended even politics, and which found the scabs to be morally lacking:

they are the people she’s been depending on since day one that aren’t prepared to fight for their jobs, their just bothered about their selves, nothing else. I mean them people decision they’ve taken they’ll never work for the rest of their lives and we believe we’re right and I think history will be on side of the NUM without no doubt that is.[[225]](#footnote-225)

**The strike’s effect on Fordist gender roles**

Finally, there is a fear that the loss of employment would lead to the emasculation of men who are unable to provide the circumstances with which to attract a woman in order to build a family:

you can walk round Maltby tonight, you can see all young lads on dole, they can’t ask their girlfriends to marry ‘em because they haven’t got a job; they’ve got no money to spend in community, they don’t create in community by not having jobs and they get… they get a lot of hassle from police every day. We’ve argued about how police tactics have upset us, I mean ethnic minorities, blacks, and unemployed, people like that, they’ve… they’ve been having this for years and we’ve stood by and said nothing really.[[226]](#footnote-226)

This loss of the conditions to nurture elemental masculinity brings a consciousness of those ‘others’ who do not have the same stake in the community: ethnic minority workers and other sections of society that are over-represented in unemployment figures. *The Heart of It* appears to represent a tendency in the language of the mining community to engender scabs, as those who jeopardise the employment conditions which can provide a strong elemental masculinity in favour of personal greed, as another binary opposite of this masculinity: as women, or more accurately as objectified and sexualised women, or ‘whores’.

For Forrest and Hines, Cal’s struggle to narrate the events of the strike is an indication that ‘the novel is itself a reflection on the process of representing authentically and ethically (the strike’s) tumultuous effects.’[[227]](#footnote-227) In terms of the representation of members of the community, this is apparent in two ways: firstly, in the fact that Cal, as a screenwriter, serves to embody Hines’ own background by emphasising his ‘initial distance from the class and community from which he is exiled.’[[228]](#footnote-228) There is a degree of guilt in this detachment, as though Cal’s observations are merely elements[[229]](#footnote-229) to be integrated into an aesthetic, rather than authentic, representations: ‘Cal’s struggles to tell its stories… are Hines’s too.’[[230]](#footnote-230) Secondly, he is affected by the fragmentation of gender roles which are in the process of erosion all around him, in which the traditional masculine roles of warrior-protector and provider have been displaced by an atmosphere of predatory individualism. As Katy Shaw observes, ‘Thatcher’s valorisation of consumerism promoted polar opposite values to a mining community designed to produce rather than consume.’[[231]](#footnote-231) Gender in the post-mining community of the 1990s in *The Heart of It* is one of a retrograde and starkly binary nature; of men as likely to consume women as nurture or protect them. During a conversation in the post-mining 1990s of *The Heart of It,* a man walks into a newsagent’s to pore over the top-shelf porn magazines: ‘Gary gazed at the cover and shook his head in wonder. These birds. You could fucking eat ‘em couldn’t you?’[[232]](#footnote-232). It quickly becomes apparent that this objectifying encounter is symptomatic of the wider malaise among workers experiencing the deconstruction of the traditional values of Fordist gender relations in the post-mining village:

He replaced the magazine and continued along the row

Big Uns! That’s what it’s called.

The newsagent shook his head.

I’ve sold out.

Dirty Bastards. It only came out yesterday. What did they do- queue up all night? They’re a load of sex maniacs around here, that’s the trouble.[[233]](#footnote-233)

Cal, who is not a miner, having left the community to become a script writer living in the south of France, nevertheless immediately begins to appraise the physical, aesthetic qualities - via a series of sexual fantasies - of the local women. It is almost as if he is contaminated by the toxic consequences of the breakdown in the protective solidarity of the elemental masculinity of the strike. In a lustful reverie he compares a local woman, indeed no less than his former sister-in-law, Christine, with his wife Helene back in France:

Cal looked at the pin-up on the cover of the magazine while Gary paid the newsagent. He could imagine Christine posing like that and fixing him with the same knowing leer. He could see her on his bed at the hotel, provocatively changing positions, mocking the convention yet being excited by it too. He thought of Helene. She would have never posed like that. Cal had seen a portfolio of austere, black-and-white nude studies of Helene taken by a famous French photographer. But they were more suitable for an art exhibition than for wanking off to.[[234]](#footnote-234)

This insight into the formation of photographs within Cal’s fantasy allows a reading of what Esther Leslie, in the previous chapter, called the ‘optical-unconscious’: that ‘microscopic incursion that slices up the intricate configurations of natural and social life.’[[235]](#footnote-235) Despite being former in-laws, and an awareness that each actor in this sexualised, exploitative exchange is enacting a convention, Christine and Cal seem resigned to playing out their binary differences with a mechanical indifference, in which the intimacy of sex is reduced to the kink of a consumerist transaction: ‘She stood in front of him with one foot up on the bed while he sucked her nipples and slid his fingers inside her. Lovely cunt.’[[236]](#footnote-236)

On the very next page of the novel, we face the juxtaposition of Cal’s reconstruction of the scene of his father’s arrest due to his confrontation with a scab:

It’s incredible. The idlest man at the pit. He’s been sacked once for absenteeism. And to think that the union fought to get a sod - (no, cunt. His father would have said cunt). And to think that the union fought to get a cunt like that his job back.[[237]](#footnote-237)

On the one hand, as Forrest and Vice note, this reconstruction demonstrates Cal’s alienation from his class and background in his overemphasis on ‘superficial, cinematic details of dialogue and accent’.[[238]](#footnote-238) The repeated emphasis of ‘cunt’ as a placeholder for a worthless, self-interested epitome of otherness: juxtaposed with the terminology of illicit, transient sex in a bed and breakfast, also indicates the gendered aspect of the scab as ‘other’ to the authentic elemental masculinity. It echoes in the story of an ex-miner who jokes about his attire in his new position working in a restaurant:

When my mates come in, they’re always taking the piss out of my blazer. Hey up! they say. I didn’t know you’d got a job at Butlins. I wish I had, I tell ‘em. At least I’d be getting plenty of cunt. He laughed and shook his head ruefully.[[239]](#footnote-239)

Again, the collective noun serving to capture the women of seemingly meaningless sexual encounters at a holiday resort juxtaposes with the miner’s recollection of the scab, Phil Walton, on the very next page:

I understand that Karl’s father was arrested along this road somewhere. He’d gone to talk to the scab Phil Walton. That cunt! It came out louder than Jack intended and he glanced around to see if anybody was staring at him. I’d better watch my fucking language or I’ll be getting the sack.[[240]](#footnote-240)

This sense of ruefulness in workers’ newfound outlook as they find themselves subject to the whims of a fragmented labour market- consumers where they were once producers- is never far from the surface, as their memories shake with the anger, sadness and bitterness of elegies.

Yet despite this dystopic vision of gender relations Forrest and Vice note Hines’ ‘characteristic ambivalence’ in which the misery of post-industrial fragmentation is ‘partially challenged by the ways in which *The Heart of It* privileges narratives of female empowerment as emerging from the strike.’[[241]](#footnote-241) Whilst the strike, for men, is elegiacally historicised, ‘for the female characters…it functions as a platform towards political activity and the imagination of a possible future.’[[242]](#footnote-242) Maisie acts an emblem of this empowerment, organising and addressing meetings, travelling to raise funds and acting more as a teacher in the public sphere than a mother and housewife bound to the domestic sphere. Christine, Maisie’s daughter-in-law, was likewise inspired to ‘become independent’ after witnessing her transformation as after the strike, as husband and wife, Harry and Maisie ‘came out on equal terms’.[[243]](#footnote-243)

In supporting the strike, women became privy to a new sphere of experience and helped to shape the terms of identity for themselves in the process of the fight for who was honourable. In contrast to the curtailment of movement experienced by miners, women now experienced new opportunities to experience the commons in their communities. For some women, this shift was as fundamental as leaving the confines and routines of the household in order to provide food:

We’ve had some fun, I mean, we’ve gone through a lot we’ve seen friends there, women as well as children, they’ve all gone coal picking, and we’ve had a good time there for a couple of hours, filling our sacks up, and we’ve gone into tattie field in rain and wet and sludge with wellies on and, something I’ve never done in my, well I did as a child like, tattie pick, but I’ve never done it for years…And neighbours have all pulled together, you’ve found your neighbours are good and friends…[[244]](#footnote-244)

The account reads as breathlessly intoxicating: the reconnection with the land of the commons bringing back memories of the liberation of childhood; the freedom to become wet with rain and become caked with the commons’ mud alongside other women who are friends and no longer faceless neighbours. The fact that this hard work was so much fun, hints at the degree of isolation in the day-to-day life of a miner’s wife, and of many women’s fervour to embrace the chance to play a greater part in the public and political sphere.

As one Maltby miner asserts in a sentiment that appears several times in *The Heart of It* strike stories research[[245]](#footnote-245), ‘Without our women behind us this strike would have been over weeks, weeks, weeks into t’ dispute. But they’ve picked us up when we’ve been feeling down, they’ve fed us, they’ve clothed us, they’ve looked after us. [[246]](#footnote-246) But whilst the provision of these traditional domestic needs could be viewed as an intensification of the traditional duties of the Fordist housewife, women were also, importantly, organising and mobilising themselves independently of men, in conjunction with the larger movement of the strike, forming soup kitchens and fund-raising operations:

…they have more or less kept that soup kitchen going...somewhere round 400 meals a day.... and the women put a lot of hard hours in and it’s not easy work and it’s not easy work going down London to make the collections, ‘cos they’ve got to stand on tube stations, tube stations,(sic) street corners, begging with a bucket and at times they do get a fair bit of abuse, but they carry on, they do it and they’ve done well.[[247]](#footnote-247)

There is a sense of grass-roots activism, and a newfound belief in women’s own potential to start from nothing to make a demonstrable difference to the cause; a defiant resilience in being able to weather abuse in their subversive act of leaving their hidden domestic space in order to fundraise on the street corners of the capital:

There were eight of us started it off and we just put some posters round seeing if anybody wanted to join group and we had a meeting up at one of local pubs in Bentley and we just got a few coming, that’s how we got together, just putting notices about, then we started collecting round pubs and what have you until we went, went to London.[[248]](#footnote-248)

Beyond these forms of support, in the family narratives of the mining family, women retained a crucial agency: that of their power to give consent to their husbands and sons to strike. As we have already seen, the elemental, warrior miner was giving up the material role that his identity depended on in favour of an ideological battle for its continuation. He was highly susceptible to feelings of guilt, inadequacy and emasculation (conditions that, as we have also seen, ultimately forced his return to work.) As one NUM rep put it, ‘I mean there’s a lot of pressure at home, you know, ‘course if there’s no money coming… I mean I’m a single lad like but I mean my mother’s never once said to me to get back...’ [[249]](#footnote-249) A woman in Shafton, Barnsley explained:

 I mean we had rows, and I suddenly realised I’d been watching telly and picket lines and Mr McGregor talking his little head off and Mr Scargill and I just thought, well you’ve got to support your husband, because it’s our lives, it’s the family I’ve got to support, I mean all my family is in mining, my father died, well he died three years ago, he were a miner for 42 years, I mean he gave his life and a lot of old miners gave their lives for their pits, So I just thought after a few weeks, I have to support my husband, I have to.[[250]](#footnote-250)

**The battle for representation**

One great spur for this mobilisation was the fight to define the community’s own identity from within, rather than the narrow and retrograde vision imposed upon it through the media by a government bent on sweeping it away in the name of neoliberal economics. As the Shafton woman continues, ‘I agree with him now, but I didn’t at first. When I read the papers and saw the telly, the media made it sound like we were in cloth caps and clogs…’[[251]](#footnote-251).

One shining example in which women grasp the chance to define both themselves and the wider strike was through the establishment of a small printing press in Barnsley with the donation of union supporters from SOGAT in London:

(we) try to alleviate hardships. This printing machine is part of it , to distribute…through pubs and clubs and the soup kitchen… the logging, the paraffin and calor gas… heating what we provide at a very cheap rate... the newsletter to get it out to as many people as possible… Some political thought goes in- meetings and coming branch meetings. What the women are doing in the soup kitchen, that sort of thing, any odd item that’s relevant to the strike.[[252]](#footnote-252)

Women were now party to, contributing to and editing the political discourse which was largely hitherto the preserve of the male-dominated trade union movements. They were also able to fight the propaganda pedalled by the National Coal Board, spreading rumours to instil fear amongst striking miners such as:

the one about twelve months on strike and you’ll have your termination, employment terminated. Well there’s no truth in this rumour and through the newsletter we’re trying to get it out to people, get the message over. We think it’s just a seed put into the mind but the Coal Board, you know, it’s just a small propaganda, more rumour, just to try and encourage a drift back to work and through the newsletter we hope to be able to stop this.[[253]](#footnote-253)

Distributed in ‘Working men’s clubs, and the soup kitchen, the pickets’ meeting place… pubs as well if the landlords are friendly enough to allow it’,[[254]](#footnote-254) the Shafton printing press was a small weapon in the war to define both the identity of those participating in the strike and the narrative of their experiences of its events. The presses that the women of Shafton were competing with were perceived as distorting the reality of the strike and governed by the anti-trade union sentiments of the papers’ owners. A stark example of this is the Society of Graphical and Allied Trades union’s support of the strike- the printers and paper workers who operated the printing presses. Whilst it was felt that: ‘I would think 80% of the population of this country read Mirror, Star, Sun, and I don’t think any of those papers have ever put our case to justify why we are on strike’[[255]](#footnote-255), it was a surreal situation that saw those who printed the stories in solidarity with the denounced miners, as at Shafton’s Christmas party in 1984, made possible with supplies and presents organised by SOGAT[[256]](#footnote-256): ‘We just couldn’t believe it…we walked into the Sun and we thought what they print in the paper, we thought the workers would have the same view, well they’ve got the totally opposite view to that, they really do support us.’[[257]](#footnote-257)

To those on strike, who considered themselves ‘the best set of working men in the country’: a country in which ‘there’s nobody more patriotic than miners’[[258]](#footnote-258), there was a mixture of resentment and bewilderment as their depiction as a threat to the nation: ‘I mean we’re called the enemy within? There’s more miners give their lives for this country just doing their job than any other set of workers in this country; it’s unbelievable and we’re the enemy within?’[[259]](#footnote-259)

This statement, that assigns to the elemental masculinity of the miner the quality of patriotism as a result of the physical danger he puts himself under in mining the country’s minerals, reveals the deep anxieties that miners experienced once that role was put in jeopardy. The consequence to the government’s refusal to engage with the miner’s sense of morality and fairness, ‘to understand our problem, that we’ve got a point of view’, is tellingly played out in this miner’s sense of his body, made bestial and demonic, as ‘we are turned out as though we’ve got horns stuck out of our heads, that we don’t realise.’[[260]](#footnote-260)  This chthonic imagery, perhaps a result of the inherently hidden, underground nature of mining was a result of the insularity of mining communities and the general public’s ignorance of daily life there, which led to the media becoming disproportionately influential in informing the general public. On hearing about a survey in which two thirds are against the strike one miner remarked: ‘I mean things that they put in paper are just unbelievable…I can’t believe that at all. They only know about the industry what they read in the papers.’ [[261]](#footnote-261)Another complained that the television did not report the international aid donated to miners from across the world except to report the support of Gaddafi in Libya in an attempt to smear the miners’ cause as alien and fundamentalist: ‘...they keep showing like some support from Libya you know, they try and downgrade it all the time. I mean we’ve had support from Australia right through I mean not just in Europe…’[[262]](#footnote-262)

The plight of struggling mining families became increasingly eclipsed upon televisions by images of the contemporary famine in Ethiopia. The horrific images of starving, emaciated children would lead to a charity single, *Do They Know It’s Christmas Time* with its invocation, ‘But say a prayer/ pray for the other ones’[[263]](#footnote-263). To one struggling miner’s wife, this sense of ‘otherness’ seemed more to be a dystopic vision of the consequences of the same deprivation the ostracised mining community faced from an uncaring society, ‘because, you know, you look at people in Ethiopia and you think “oh that’s not us, we could never be like that, that it could never happen to us…”. Why can’t it eventually, the way the country is going, why can’t it?[[264]](#footnote-264). In the isolation of a lack of support from the wider trade union movement at the TUC, the public’s apparent condemnation of the strike, and the Government’s punitive use of the legal, criminal and benefits systems, there was a sense that miners could no longer be sure of the nature and morality of their own country any more. This disbelief even went as far as the notion that the government was managing a form of mise-en-scene in which they altered the topography of the country in power stations to make it seem that they have heaps of coal in reserve to break the morale of the strike:

they have got a slight coal stock left, but it’s… I mean they even exaggerate that, it’s not as much as they make out. There’s a power station just over the back of the pit, Thorpe Marsh, and from the outside it looks like a nice mountain until you actually go into the power station and walk round the back and all the middle’s taken out and they just left like a wall to make it look good for the cameras outside.[[265]](#footnote-265)

The mining communities’ incredulity towards the representation of their own reality which was projected back to them in the media, most visceral in the rebuttal of their depiction as riotous hooligans as we saw earlier at the Battle of Orgreave, now centred upon news reports of scab workers and those miners who were returning to work as 1984 drew towards its close. The most blatant disparity in these competing versions of reality were the statistics presented on news reports of miners returning to work:

I mean they’re saying there’s so many gone back today, the NCB are notorious for cooking the figures and they’ll cook the figures for ever more I should think but we take no notice of it because we know how many people are going in here at this pit and we know their names, and we know there’s not as many as the NCB claim.[[266]](#footnote-266)

This set up an uncanny situation in which scab workers could be at once, apparently going in to work, and yet at the same time visible in the community soup kitchen, such as in this account from Bentley, Doncaster:

See there’s an awful lot of propaganda put about about these scabs… we know ones that’s gone in just for one or two days and then they’ve decided not to go any more but their name’s still on the list to say they’re going in and we.... find well they’re not, because we’ve had a few come in this kitchen, haven’t we? We’ve had scabs coming in here their selves and said “we’re not going back no more until we all go back together.[[267]](#footnote-267)

Most audaciously, the government was able to successfully misappropriate conceptions of mining bodies by subverting strikers’ own terminology when re-ordering the narrative of the strike:

Peter Walker, Energy Secretary he comes on television, he has a lot to say and at the moment his favourite saying is “the miners are voting with their feet, they’re going back to work”- how come he didn’t say that twelve month ago when there were 140-odd thousand miners out on strike, didn’t they vote with their feet then when they came out? Or didn’t it suit the argument then? The argument were in our favour now he thinks it’sin his favour he’s using the same terminology, that we were using twelve month ago.[[268]](#footnote-268)

Ultimately, without the support of the wider trade union movement, and with the decision of the Nottinghamshire miners to accept the government’s reassurances on the strike, failure was inevitable- a sentiment that the Conservative government would go on to cultivate through media outlets and representations following their eventual victory.

If you take Nottingham area for a start, they’ve been led wrong since day 1 of strike, they’ve listened to propaganda that Coal Boards been teeming out and that is what’s actually destroying this union… if we start listening to what the media are telling us then I’m afraid they’ll destroy us.[[269]](#footnote-269)

**Conclusion: poetic strategies**

**Nostalgia, and the territory of time imagined**

In *The Heart of It,* Forrest and Vice describe how the utilisation of ‘Cal’s dislocated, outsider’s perspective (draws) into focus the sense of a community in ruins.’[[270]](#footnote-270) Although I come from a mining family, as an academic who never worked as a miner, I am well aware of the ambivalence of this dislocated perspective after researching the post-mining towns of the Dearne Valley. In interviewing people from the community, I inevitably heard many stories which lend themselves to serve as vignettes, just as Forrest and Vice note that in *The Heart of It,* ‘These vignettes of post-strike life reveal both the deep fragmentation of working-class labour and community and the turbulent psychological effects of the conflict.’[[271]](#footnote-271) Similarly, I have been in the fortunate position of being able to compare the experiences of workers both pre- and post-strike in order to draw refrains of poetic symbols and emblems from across their testimonies.

The Conservative Government did much to foster the narrative that there was no alternative[[272]](#footnote-272) to their sweeping privatisation of state industry. As one miner towards the end of the strike lamented of the Nottinghamshire miners: ‘I think most of it’s the Back to Work movement that’s done it you know, I think they’ve convinced them now you know it’s not winnable, never were winnable, but like I say even now if they come out which I doubt very much like but, if they did I think it wouldn’t take long and that’d be it.’[[273]](#footnote-273)

The resistance of the neoliberal narrative hinges upon the imaginative potential to challenge and imagine new ways of organising labour. To this end, the defeat of the miners’ industrial dispute led to a nostalgia that persists to this day; a tragic reimagining of many lateral paths which would have led to victory which nevertheless offers hope when conjured into a possible future. On one such path, the TUC were not a ‘paper tiger without teeth’[[274]](#footnote-274)having organised a general strike: ‘I should think four, maybe six, weeks of a General strike would have been enough, this government would have collapsed and they’d have been out…’[[275]](#footnote-275). In another striking vignette, we witness the belief in the working class’s ability to literally cut the power in the country and plunge it into darkness: ‘I think they’re coming, it’s only a matter of time you know and maybe if a few more power workers helped us out in there you know it may be a bit quicker, but I think a month, maybe a month and half and there will be summat drastically done.’ [[276]](#footnote-276)

And ultimately, the lateral narrative that even with defeat, this apex of the ideological consciousness of the class struggle would rouse the communities on to eventual victory: I think the thing is why I think we’re going to be stronger ‘cos I think it’s wakened (sic) a lot of people up there were asleep, that’s the thing…’[[277]](#footnote-277). Another stated a common conviction that: ‘this union will still be fighting in fifty, hundred years’ time …[[278]](#footnote-278). Even before the miners returned to work there was an impossibility of gauging how any party could possibly emerge victorious, due to the economic damage to the country of the dispute, the alienation of miners from their representations in the media and the incomprehensibility of the Government’s measures to suppress them. One miner uses the terms of a football match to reveal the hopelessness of any coming pyrrhic victory:

I can’t see anybody’s won in actual sense of like on a football score, one or two nil, so look how much it’s cost and look how much it’s cost in community terms, what it’s done, it’s split families down middle all over country and just cost in actual financial terms to this country, and which’ll go on your electric and gas charges.[[279]](#footnote-279)

This continuation of the raw wounds of humiliation in mining communities that persist in the present day, mixed with a binary pride in the pride of being ‘a member of the generation of miners that had the will, the guts and the foresight to try and do something about it…’[[280]](#footnote-280) is defined as ‘unfinisibility’ by Katy Shaw. This state results from the ongoing process of meaning formation which reflects ‘both the “still-warm” reality of the strike itself’[[281]](#footnote-281) and Shaw’s belief in the primacy of Bakhtin’s own claim that truth is ‘no to be found in the heart of an individual person, it is born between people collectively searching for truth, in the process of their dialogic interaction.’[[282]](#footnote-282) Although such unfinisibility causes pain through a lack of psychological closure, exacerbated, for instance, by the refusal of successive governments to grant an inquest into the government’s use of police at the ‘Battle of Orgreave’, it is also the optimum state for poetic imagery that may spur the imagination into action, as we have seen at the conclusion of Chapter One.

**Lyric poetry as a counter to linearity**

Miners at the time of the strike were aware that their defeat would mean that their attempts to comprehend its events, frame its meanings and to reconcile its injustices, would always be counter to the prevailing discourse- an alternative, subliminal or underground body of testimony:

I believe that this fight’ll be carried on underground and it’ll be a sorry day for this country if it is… under the conditions that some of these people suffering (sic.), they will hold grudges for the rest of their life against this government, no doubt about that.[[283]](#footnote-283)

The abrupt loss of the status of miners as masters of their own fate, and of warriors in defence of their trade would engender for many a perpetual sense of grievance for those miners forced: ‘to go back down there defeated ...we’ll never forget it. We’ll never forget it.’[[284]](#footnote-284)

In order to for these voices to speak, then, a form is required which may overturn the inevitability of the prevailing linear narrative of causality and defeat. To this end, apostrophic poetry proves irresistible, particularly when we consider Jonathan Culler’s portrayal of its capacity to conjure an alternative temporal paradigm where:

a temporal problem is posed: something once present has been lost or attenuated; this loss can be narrated but the temporal sequence is irreversible, like time itself. Apostrophes displace this irreversible structure by removing it from linear time and locating it in a discursive time. The temporal movement from A to B, restructured by apostrophe, becomes a reversible alternation between A’ and B’: a play of presence and absence governed not by time but by poetic ingenuity or power. [[285]](#footnote-285)

Apostrophic poetry, in its addressing of that which is lost, provides a difference from a novel such as *The Heart of It,* as it is constituted of a discursive speech act of address to those lost people, places or times whose utterance conjures a present continuous tense. As such, rather than sequencing events, its utterance becomes the event itself. Asked about whether the strike could be ‘winnable’, or a matter of returning with the least humiliation, the apostrophic potential to place the 1985 event in the discursive moment summons the nexus between its understanding from a source of humiliation into pride:

is this strike still winnable or is it lost and it’s just a matter of going back with the least humiliation?

The strike… the cause of the strike can never be lost because it will be proved right, there’s no doubt about that, but by humiliating the miners then maybe that could counter-react on this government…[[286]](#footnote-286)

These hopes and wishes which haunt the present and remain unconcluded, are rendered and played out within the special optative nature of the apostrophic lyric. As Culler notes in summarising Heinz Schlaffer, the lyric offers a resistance to secular rationality, persisting ‘in modes of invocation and magical operations that seem anachronistic’[[287]](#footnote-287). It is a mode of invocation to an absent ‘other’ which is hear time and time again in the testimonies of striking miners during the strike:

if more trade union members would realise this and just come to terms with themselves and say right, fair enough, it’s been a long, hard battle, these lads that’s going into work now if they’d just turn round to each other and say ‘look it’s been a long battle, it’s been too long, all we have to do is come out, just come out for a week or two or a month, they see nobody’s going in, we’ve won, we’ve won if you can call it winning.[[288]](#footnote-288)

If this summoning of lateral paths is tragic or elegiac in the past tense, then perhaps their invocation in the poetic event of the present serves to provide an imaginative platform for change. In order to explore this, then we must look at the most important ritual site of invocation during the strike: the picket line.

**Bodily utterance and the unfinisibility of the picket line**

In writing poetry based on the testimonies of mining families, it becomes clear that their representation in this period is often best served through dialogue: those present speaking of, and to, absent people and places, alternative realities; the poet a bodily, listening conduit, the space to receive participants’ speech in the moment. As Katy Shaw states: Dialogue stresses ‘the open-endedness of representation, demanding further discursive and responsive analysis in their foregrounding of the intrinsically social structure of poetry… this unfinisibility constitutes a significant aspect in an ongoing process of meaning formation.’[[289]](#footnote-289) The resulting poems which form from remembered speech and field texts capture the nexus of this ongoing process.

We have already witnessed the importance of the picket line in the formation of identity: as an ideological frontier between the socialist state and private capitalist interests, and as the site of the transformation of masculinity between elemental, warrior miners and the scabs that were escorted through them. As Katy Shaw contends, in agreement with those testimonies which attested to the importance of communication in maintaining the class solidarity necessary to win the dispute, picket lines provided:

the space and opportunity to vocalise thoughts and feelings, perspectives on developments and hopes for the future. Picketing also helped to develop the literary culture of the strike, allowing strikers to meet, exchange ideas and write together[[290]](#footnote-290)

Shaw’s work in analysing the poetry of striking miners and their families was very influential on my own poetry as I sought to understand the ways in which poetry may shape meaning, and work towards rendering workers’ experiences, redressing the sense of the stasis engendered in both pride and humiliation. Shaw defines most strikers’ poetry as counter-hegemonic, and extensions of the chants of picket lines, ‘narratives themselves that can be deemed poetic’[[291]](#footnote-291). The battle in the media over competing representations of the reality of the miners’ strike was such that it was necessary to be physically present in order to avoid being circumvented from the narrative of the strike. An NUM rep stressed how critical this bodily presence was:

the way the whole media’s dealt with the fact that, you know, some miners are going back… it’s disillusioning the striking miners. It’s people on the picket lines that are needed. But I mean we were all up this morning and out at four o’clock but obviously people don’t do that every day. I think the miners need to see people out supporting them and that’s precisely why we are doing this, I mean marching through a mining community it’s to actually show people that we are there and we are supporting them.[[292]](#footnote-292)

Solidarity became a physical matter of bodily presence in defending the picket lines as: ‘it’s no use having an empty slogan “The workers United will never be defeated”- that’s got to be portrayed in lots of different ways, it’s got to be portrayed on the factory gates…’[[293]](#footnote-293)

Chants fuse the body and voice in the poetic moment, offering a chance to redeem the body’s capacity in the formation of identity which, as we saw earlier, was a primary site of contestation during the strike. The suppression of picket lines led to the very real fear that miners were becoming the “heads on poles” of Thatcher’s regime- symbols used to discourage civil, political and economic disobedience in other industries’[[294]](#footnote-294). As such, a form of restitution of the body took place through the collective utterance of picket line chants and refrains. On one level, this became manifest in wishing a form of bodily retribution on the perceived chief instrument of their suffering:

 What shall we do with Maggie Thatcher?

 Early in the morning

 Burn, burn, burn the bugger

 Early in the morning

 (Anon “What Shall We Do With Maggie Thatcher?”)[[295]](#footnote-295)

Yet this sense of bodily, positional awareness once standing on the cusp of the picket line allowed more transcendent calls for action, such as this prayer discussed by Shaw:

I’m only asking for the right

To work, for me and mine

So, Lord be close beside me

When I’m on the picket line

From “Picket’s Prayer”, Karen Kull, *Strike 84-5*[[296]](#footnote-296)

There is a sense of deictic enlightenment which seems to stem from the experience of being ‘beside’. That the even the spiritual and almighty, in validating the righteousness of the strike, must fall in line with the strike’s configuration. That the picket line becomes an embodiment of unfinisibility is due to the strike’s defeat, which brought about both the deliberate removal of its physical traces as mines were decommissioned, and its ethereal continuation in the memory of those present. However, Katy Shaw offers a solution to this as:

Dialogic exchanges within and between strikers’ poems, protest chants and picket line songs not only capture the intercourse of utterance, but establish utterance itself as an act of authorship, encouraging the authoring of the conflict to go beyond the written word in the re-animation of past forms.[[297]](#footnote-297)

If poems offer the capacity to hold the ‘intercourse of utterance’ in its present continuous incarnation, then they may serve to redress a sense of hopelessness and stasis which often seems to arise when speaking to workers in post-mining communities.

**The apostrophic address of absent people and place**

The defeat of the miners means that today, dialogic exchanges must increasingly address people and places that are lost or absent. It is here that apostrophic poetry, the addressing of a dead or absent person, place or thing as if they were in fact present, becomes useful in their re-animating. The continuing ritual of miners’ galas suggest that there is a deep need with post-mining communities to understand, remember and rejoice in this stolen form of identity. Galas serve as a kind of material metonymy for an entire way of life: another space of unfinisibility which offers a vision of the past in the repeating present tense of ritual which I felt compelled to capture in my poem, *Gala*. The tradition continues through much of the post-mining world, and is strong in Yorkshire, where there remains a perception that character comes of an elemental relationship to the land and its minerals which causes a tenacity and resilience to endure:

...we’ll not go back with our heads down, we’ll be holding’ em up even higher and it’s all in here, they can’t knock… and this is… she’ll never do, this is why she wanted Yorkshire out of it, they’ll never break that in there, they’ll never take it out of us it’s in you…[[298]](#footnote-298)

Katy Shaw notices this tendency in the poetry of striking miners, observing that:

In the face of defeat, writers revert to naturalistic imagery… a sense of permanence concerning the mining industry, a belief that despite government threats, it was a mainstay of the universe, harmoniously and symbolically connected to nature and man’s history.[[299]](#footnote-299)

Just as with the instance of the Picket’s Prayer in which God is summoned into position along the picket line, so apostrophic, lyric poems restore this harmonious, symbolic working connection between human community and its natural environs seen in the previous chapter in the model of the Asiatic community. As Jonathan Culler states: ‘Apostrophic poems, like prayers, often tell the addressee something the addressee presumably already knows. It thus acquires a ritual character.’**[[300]](#footnote-300)** This ritual moment, recognised by Muriel Rukeyser in the previous chapter, defies the linearity of time in which loss is inevitable, offering instead the circular: ‘O of apostrophic address (which) connects mouth and event’[[301]](#footnote-301). The act of utterance provides a bodily redemption in conjuring lost places and people as they are addressed. This tradition, which dates back to the Orphic hymnsis bardic in that it ‘makes things happen by an act of naming.’[[302]](#footnote-302) It allows such fragmented and uncanny symbols such as the few remaining Pitheads and hauling gear to become ripe as poetic symbols of unfinisibility, or the unfinished act of their obsoleting.

I hope that my bardic series may qualify as what Katy Shaw terms, regeneration writings; those which encourage ‘spatial and temporal intrusions of dialogue between past and present in an attempt to reveal profound truths about the future.’[[303]](#footnote-303) In addressing a place as a subject, then we may begin to address it and will it into life in the present. We witness this vatic act of willing imagination as Cal searches for the material remnants of his community’s struggle to continue:

He searched the grass verges for signs of their year-long occupation of the site, but the only thing he found was a rusty bicycle frame which could have been dumped there at any time. But Cal was convinced that it had been used to carry sacks of coal, courageously picked from the muck-stack during the long, harsh winter.[[304]](#footnote-304)

The novel here narrates the act of imagination, but it cannot allow the conditions for the bardic act of address to summon the picket line into the present tense of a direct address. Nevertheless, we are party to an external view of that mental process as Cal believes he finds an authentic brazier:

As he hauled it out into the open, nettles stung his hands and spiky, bramble tentacles stripped away sheets of rust from the corroded metal. He stood it up outside the gate and laughed with delight. It was the brazier at which the pickets had warmed themselves during the strike. And even if it wasn’t, *he was determined that it was going to be…* (my italics)[[305]](#footnote-305)

The act summons previous iterations of the striking miners in their pomp of elemental masculinity:

He spread his hands over the shimmering heat as his father and Joe and Charlie and Tommy and the others had done before him during the long strike… Cal felt greatly moved and privileged standing here before the fire, like a boy who had been allowed to join the company of men.’ [[306]](#footnote-306)

In working underground, then fighting above ground for the same land, the coalfield had an indelible effect upon the body of many miners. In summoning memory and speaking back, bodies may become circuitous through the utterance of thoughts and feelings. To use the terms laid out in Chapter One, this is a quasi-religious submission to a higher unity, this time to the coalfield rather than the dam at Gauley Bridge. Yet the coalfield as a natural and topographical source of industrial identity, ironically depends upon the consciousness, memory and physicality of each individual miner as a conduit. Their testimonies are as vital to its existence as the remnants of its defunct architecture.

A final claim for poetry is then, perhaps uniquely, it allows us through the dialogic exchange of place with testimony and experience, to access the inner-world of this communion in an uttered present tense: a platform from which the imagined past, brought into the feeling, breathing present, may spur future acts.

**Chapter Three:**

**Poetry and Post-Mining Identity in the Neoliberal Era**

This chapter seeks to explore the ramifications of the defeat of the miners’ strike of 1984-5 upon the meaning-making and identity in the South Yorkshire Coalfield. Chapter One explored poetry’s potential through symbolic and objective representation to reclaim the lost experiences and objects of exploited miners in order to spur a revolutionary awareness of a nascent sense of class conflict in America that would bring about the working class’s emancipation. Chapter Two focused upon the apex of this struggle for the industry’s collective autonomy: the pitched ideological battle between the unionised, nationalised mining industry and the free market privatisation agenda of the contemporary Conservative Government, a conflict which would prove formative to the identity through notions of elemental masculinity, scabs, and new freedoms for mining wives. The third part of this triptych of mining identity must examine how the dynamic between worker, place and labour was radically altered after the defeat of the National Union of Miners: a defeat so complete that it led to the ‘post-mining’ community, or miners without a mine. It will trace the roots of the commodification of labour and contend that the dismantling of the power of the union movement would also lead to a fragmentation of individual identity as workers faced further commodification of their labour into marketable identities which may compete in more precarious job markets. The chapter then goes on to consider competing perspectives on the validity and purpose of poetry, contrasting poets endorsed by the neoliberal regime in the United States who promote adaptability and resilience in the detailing of life experiences of rootless worker. Examining the poetry of Juliana Spahr, several strategies towards reclaiming a reconnection with territory will be examined. These will include the refrain, metaphor envisioned as a process or flow, and the extent to which poetry may seek to raise an awareness of agency or ‘class consciousness’ in the lyric’s capacity to re-define the working relationships of deterritorialised miners with their natural and industrial spheres.

By the end of December 1985, twenty-three collieries had closed with the loss of 18,500 jobs[[307]](#footnote-307). By 1992, the closure of all but twenty-two collieries was announced[[308]](#footnote-308), with Britain’s remaining core mining assets returning to the private sector in 1994, less than ten years after the strike’s defeat.[[309]](#footnote-309)

Traditional mining families were distinguished by their strong common bonds of identity, evident in this account from Jane Thornton of Askern, Doncaster:

Everyone here is familiar with his neighbour, and has been for generations… it would be irresponsible to suggest that everyone likes each other, nevertheless people here do always seem to have time for a smile, a word, an acknowledgement or a wave as they pass in the street, as they sit on the bus or as the wait to buy a bag of fish and chips…This village is a community in the old tradition, a fellowship with common interests and origins.[[310]](#footnote-310)

From 1985, mining families found their way of life under threat as this solidarity of social cohesion, in which ‘a nucleus of people were prepared to support and motivate the weak, the frightened and the pessimistic’[[311]](#footnote-311) began to change as many mining families found themselves tenants to private landlords after the National Coal Board decided to sell off its entire housing stock within three years. Families found themselves subject to ‘a new breed of speculative landlord…quick to take the rent and quick to sell on, but very slow to carry out the obligations and commitments of landlords.’[[312]](#footnote-312) As pit villagers were forced increasingly to leave in search of employment, the notion of a mining community would increasingly entail an act of nostalgia, in which its identity is constructed in retrospective acts of imagination. Here the notion of the miner, post-mining, fluxes between narratives of pride at an honourable defeat, and the humiliation out of a tragedy with many lateral paths which could have brought victory. This chapter will explore the stake that the neoliberal state may have in defining this outcome, how the forming of an individual’s identity becomes co-opted by private interests under the pressure to fulfil precarious forms of employment, and how poetry may have a role in combating this, giving voice and awareness to workers in the post-mining community.

**The Reification of Labour**

In order to examine how the process of subjectification works on the formation of identity, it is useful to trace the process back to the events of the strike in which collective action was at its height. At the beginning of winter, 1984, striking miners in Bentley, South Yorkshire turned to logging trees near the M1 motorway for the Forestry Commission. The endeavour was ‘all part of the strike to stop it from crumbling’[[313]](#footnote-313) as miners faced either returning back to work or the risk of getting fired for ‘coal picking’ at the pits in an effort to stave the cold from their homes. These activists were mobilising as part of the greater ‘claim of the workers not only to control wages and conditions, but also the very nature of their work’[[314]](#footnote-314) against the interests of the Thatcher government intent on making efficiency savings and increased profits by importing foreign coal.

Georg Lukács, in ‘Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat’[[315]](#footnote-315) gives a very early outline of the transformation in the way that consciousness is constructed amidst workers’ engagement with the emergent Fordist modes of production from the early twentieth century. The advent of mechanised, fragmented modes of production which, in turn, allowed through higher efficiency, the provision of higher wages in which the commodified end-product can be purchased. Thus a climate was created in which ‘The universality of the commodity form is responsible both objectively and subjectively for the abstraction of the human labour incorporated in commodities'[[316]](#footnote-316). A rich irony rising as it did from necessity amidst the fight over the control over the coal commodity, this ad-hoc logging company offered a utopian glimpse of human labour outside of abstraction:

We’ve done it for nowt. We’ll saw it up and we’ll sell it for 30 pence. 30 pence goes towards the bench saws that we’ve got to cut up the logs. We’ve set up a company with the money off the logs...we do repairs to gas cookers, repairs to electric cookers, anything we can do to help out with it. Any way like that, any household repairs. Vacuum cleaners or anything, we try to repair them for them. We pay for the parts, we supply gas bottles, we supply paraffin at a cheaper rate than what you can get it at a garage or so, which of course we’re buying in bulk. Every bit of money we make it goes to people to keep warm, to repairs.[[317]](#footnote-317)

It is a fleeting example of how self-organised labour can oversee the production of a commodity defined entirely by its use-value: each log not sold, but instead providing the warmth that may keep the strike action going through the winter months. Here, labour’s relationship with domestic commodities is not one of the creation of surplus and profit, but one of maintenance; that commodities may provide concrete use to feed or provide hygiene. This industry in its relationship to commodities, borne of desperation, would only provide a temporary hiatus from the fragmenting of the worker’s labour, subjectively and objectively; a consequence of Marx’s phenomenon of *reification* in ‘Capital’, cited here by Lukács, where:

A commodity is therefore a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men’s labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour; because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social relation existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour... a definite social relation between men that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things.[[318]](#footnote-318)

In the winter of 1984, this abstraction: that with the strike’s defeat, the solidarity of social relations risked slipping into the fantastic relations of things, was well understood. A major reason that the strike failed was that the government had prepared until, ‘there was an estimated forty million tonnes of coal stockpiled at UK power stations’[[319]](#footnote-319), and furthermore that UK coal was increasingly uncompetitive due to falls in global market prices. Against these unfavourable political and economic conditions for their commodity, the miners rightly feared their own lapse into transferable, fantastical notions as units: ‘... there’s going to end up about four or five (pits) shut because they’ve transferred men already. They’ll be nowt, they can shut pits, they can transfer men left, right and centre, but soon they’ll be no vacancies at all.’[[320]](#footnote-320) The Ridley report would confirm this as being the government’s ideological strategy all along, in its conclusion that: ‘the political objective must be to fragment the public sector of industry into a number of independent units which could eventually be denationalised’[[321]](#footnote-321).

As Lukacs claims, the commodity, through reification, becomes a manifestation of time, external to the individual who ceases to be responsible for the entirety of production due to the ‘mechanical repetition’ of Fordist work tasks. Divorced from the product of their work, the fragmentation of workers’ labour into ‘abstract, rational, specialised operations’ also impacts on the way that labour is perceived and organised[[322]](#footnote-322). It is this quality of alienation that the free market policies of Conservative government sought to exploit; a perception of labour’s measuring which is shifted ‘from a merely empirical average figure’ to an objectively calculable work-stint that confronts the worker as a fixed and established reality.[[323]](#footnote-323)’ Once this is established, then value can be constructed and codified according to the terms which facilitate the financial markets. Moreover, because the perception of time is a subjective, qualitative experience, the consequence of this new reality is that the worker’s ‘psychological attributes are separated from his total personality and placed in opposition to it so as to facilitate their integration into specialised rational systems and their reduction to statistically viable concepts.’[[324]](#footnote-324)

In addition to fragmenting the union movement, this process thus fragmented the individual worker. From a being a discrete and individual social entity (if alienated from the products of her labour) who has a concrete physical, geographic, legislative and economic relationship with the pit’s machine as a means of production, they must turn to a form of self-marketing of ‘skill-sets’ which may fulfil the demands of the realm of the neoliberal machine. Here, their state industry will have been deregulated in the interest of competing private interests, as ‘State Sovereignty over commodity and capital movements is willingly surrendered to the global market.’[[325]](#footnote-325) The effect of this globalisation is that labour, and consequently identity, increasingly becomes increasingly deterritorialised as Neoliberal states seek to: ‘negotiate the reduction of barriers to movement of capital across borders and the opening of markets (for both commodities and capital) to global exchange.’[[326]](#footnote-326) In the Neoliberal configuration, time, as labour, thus adopts the qualities of space, ‘sheds its qualitative, variable flowing nature; it freezes into an exactly delimited, quantifiable continuum filled with quantifiable things’[[327]](#footnote-327), in which workers must pass through ‘atomised’ by their quantified identity in their working ‘performance’, isolated from other workers and from their own labour in its externalisation as a commodity. Conversely, just as the qualitative experiences of workers can be atomised and made quantifiable, so can the quantifiable aspects of capitalism- profit margins, wages, stocks and shares- have a qualitative impact on workers. Lukacs describes how, when considering increases or decreases in sums of money or labour-time:

in the second case *every* change is one of quality in its innermost nature and although its quantitative appearance is forced onto the worker by his social environment, its essence for him lies in its qualitative implications. This second aspect of the change obviously has its origin in the fact that for the worker labour-time is not merely the objective form of the commodity he has sold, i.e. his labour-power (for in that form the problem for him, too, is one of the exchange of equivalents, i.e. a quantitative matter). But in addition, it is the determining form of his existence as subject, as human being.[[328]](#footnote-328)

The poorer the worker, the more significant these quantitative factors of salary or working hours will be to his or her quality of life, and the more it will constitute the determining form on their identity as an existential factor of their reality. These transactional factors of reification through commodity: of the qualitative experience of work becoming atomised and quantifiable, and of quantifiable aspects of work then affecting the quality of human’s identity through their relation to the shifting ebbs and flows of their precarious work, summarise the post-Fordist identity. Of even greater consequence in the South Yorkshire Coalfield were the effects of where labour was lost in the aftermath of the strike as the neoliberal machine reduced the numbers of ‘recalcitrant and unreliable’ workers in favour of those whose identity could be meet the new ‘mechanical, electronic and chemical’[[329]](#footnote-329) characteristics of replacement service sector and distribution industry jobs.[[330]](#footnote-330)

**The Resistance Against ‘Semiocapitalism’**

In the ‘70s, while reading Deleuze and Guattari, the consciousness of the autonomous movement discovered that reality has no meaning: the meaning of reality has to be created by the movement itself. [[331]](#footnote-331)

The ideologically-driven industrial disputes of the 1970s which fomented the advent of the monetarist administrations of Ronald Reagan in the United States and Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom also saw the creation of counter, autonomist, movements on the continent which sought to mobilise and protect the working class identity, this time through individual agency outside of state controlled interests. Heavily influenced by the work of Deleuze and Guattari, theorists such as Maurizio Lazzarato, Franco Berardi, Paolo Virno and Antonio Negri sought alternatives to political systems which enabled capitalism to develop at the cost of the economic and political agency of the individual. Lazzarato recalls a 1960s in which:

two behemoths of the party and the union… prevented all political innovation and blocked the emergence of new subjects and new ways of conceiving and practicing politics (micropolitics: young workers, minorities, the women’s movement etc.). Today, with the party gone, and unions completely integrated into capitalist logic, macropolitical action and its forms of government, based on an irreducible multiplicity of subjectivation processes, are at the heart of our urgent underlying question: “what is to be done?”[[332]](#footnote-332)

It can be argued that the intractable and patriarchal structures of the left were partly responsible for their own demise, stifling expression, innovation and the representation of minority groups: an issue that the belated liberation of women to engage in the political and logistical spheres of the strike briefly illuminated. In addition, under Reagan and Thatcher, *laissez-faire* economics undermined and dissolved traditional lines of identity along regionality and class. Thirty years of neoliberalism has shown that: ‘The asignifying semiotics of the economy, of money, easily circumvent laws, conventions, and institutions. The most deterritorialized, like money and finance, are the most formidably efficient’[[333]](#footnote-333) especially in the dismantling of labour laws and rights.

To answer ‘what is to be done?’ about this circumventing subjectivation, we must understand how it came to pass. We have seen earlier how, in the aftermath of the Miners’ Strike, workers were fragmented into exchangeable units to meet production tasks, outside of the protection of their unions and codified and assigned to remaining pits ranked according to their efficiencies of production. As such, Lazzarato describes the shift of subjectivity using Deleuze’s terminology as: ‘Human agents, like non-human agents, function as points of “connection, junction, and disjunction” of flows and as the networks making up the corporate, collective assemblage…’[[334]](#footnote-334) in a form of ‘machinic enslavement’. In this schema, the miner who faced unemployment and whose pit was closed down was merely a new point of disjunction: between the ‘asignifying’ semiotic flows of statistics of commodity production and market value, and the signifying narrative discourses of nationalised, unionised industry. Thatcher’s narrative seen in the last chapter, ‘There is no alternative’, is countered by Oxford economist Andrew Glyn’s remarks that, ‘the resulting unemployment would oblige the NCB and the taxpayer funding larger retirement pensions, thousands of redundancy payments and millions of pounds in unemployment benefit. It was cheaper to keep the miners in work.’[[335]](#footnote-335) In order to function as a point in this flow, subjects must fragment into Deleuze’s concept of the ‘dividual’, rather than the individual, as the working individual no longer ‘stand opposite machines or make use of an external object; the dividual is *contiguous* with machines.’ (my italics)[[336]](#footnote-336)

The dividual in a post-mining community is very likely to gain employment in which it forms part of a configuration of apparatus, a ‘machinic assemblage’, at one with, but consequently divided as:

The component parts of subjectivity (intelligence, affects, sensations, cognition, memory, physical force) are no longer unified in an “I,” they no longer have an individuated subject as referent. Intelligence, affects, sensations, cognition, memory, and physical force are now components whose synthesis no longer lies in the person but in the assemblage or process (corporations, media, public services, education, etc.)[[337]](#footnote-337)

As such, workers may now find themselves forced to harvest their emotions as performative affects as part of ‘emotional labour’[[338]](#footnote-338) in order to boost their company’s profits. The dissolution of the pit and its gravitational economic security has allowed the proliferation of industries in which location is incidental and work is fluid and precarious: the call centres and distribution centres of international businesses being the two leading forms of employment in the Dearne Valley. In a sales job in a call centre, for instance, confidence, enthusiasm and a ‘personable’ nature are vital personality traits in order to maximise sales. As Ivor Southwood remarks, ‘In these ways the worker-performer manufactures the final product: the desired emotional state in the customer.’[[339]](#footnote-339)

The miner who takes on this role would offer an ethereal outline of his former self, no longer working the land to reap the product of his labour, but performing an emotional embodiment of his company’s concerns and opportunities so that he may profit from its projection upon a faceless customer. That customer is as likely to also be place-less, be it the destination of items picked in one of the huge distribution warehouses of the Dearne Valley, or on the end of the telephone line within a call centre. These forms of employment are frequently temporary; precarious positions which enable corporations to have ‘flexible’ workforces to meet shifting global demand with minimum liability. For Southwood this pervasive labour climate dominates the neoliberal era in the UK, ‘a free-floating precariousness created by (a) rootless approach to work which shadows the flow of information and labour through public and virtual spaces…’[[340]](#footnote-340)

After this deconstruction of the old elemental and geographical certainties in the construction of identity through employment, then language becomes crucial to any notion of regaining territory in order to restore lost agencies of identity:

The machinism of language is one of the most important apparatuses for reterritorializing the decoded flows of individuals, persons, and individuated subjects. Through its “rudimentary psychology,” language leads us to believe in “the ‘I’, in the ‘I’ as being, in the ‘I’ as substance, and it *projects* this belief in the I-substance onto all things- this is how it creates the concept of ‘thing’ in the first place.”[[341]](#footnote-341)

Language, has become the battleground after neoliberalism, capable of either the exploitation or emancipation of identity, as:

Signifying semiologies (language, stories, discourses), on the other hand, are used and exploited as techniques for control and management of the deterritorialization undermining established communities, social relations, politics, and their former modes of subjectivation. They are meant to model, format, adjust, and reconfigure the subjectivation process according to the “individual subject,” whose systematic failure has always lead and continues to lead to the opposite of individualism, namely to the “collectivism” of nationalism, racism, fascism, Nazism, machinism, and so on.[[342]](#footnote-342)

The restoration of a lost agency in the perception and construction of meaning thus hinges on the production of signifying semiologies: who gets to create and assign meaning through identity? Poetry is one source of semiotic flow, creating new aesthetic conditions of perception. But as we look at the redemptive strategies which may be deployed in poetry in its distributions of narrative and symbolic meaning, we also need to acknowledge its susceptibilities as a tool for control and management, under the pressure of the economic free market policies which reigned almost unfettered in the Anglo-American neoliberal era.

**A Neoliberal Agenda for Poetry**

The poet I have chosen to focus upon in this third chapter on the effects of Neoliberalism, Juliana Spahr, was aware of poetry’s susceptibilities in meaning-making, just as she worked to hone its enabling capabilities and strategies. In *Contemporary US Poetry and its Nationalisms*, she explores the direct political pressures brought to bear upon poetry, asserting that there was ‘an intensification of interest in literature’s possible nationalism during the Bush years’[[343]](#footnote-343); the administration returning much of the funding of the National Endowment for the Arts, hitherto cut under Bill Clinton[[344]](#footnote-344). Spahr traces the Bush administration’s close relationship with the NEA[[345]](#footnote-345) through its appointment of staff to the NEA such as poet, and former Vice-President of General Foods, Dana Gioia, as chairman, and their promotion and funding of projects and publications which embody the rise of a new ‘private and public funding synergy’,[[346]](#footnote-346) also manifest in institutions such as the Poetry Foundation. The article is important, because it shows the methods in which a government which is explicitly neoliberal in its policies seeks to shape a poetry which promotes its interests, and also embodies its forms and aesthetics within the poetry itself. The neoliberal agenda touted by the Adam Smith Institute promotes open markets which enable free movement, free markets and the limiting of state intervention through taxation[[347]](#footnote-347). The poetry that would serve this liberal migration relies on the commoditisation of this movement in those human values which most readily enable one’s movement through it: of being tough, willing, unquestioning and adaptable.

In 1991, in an article titled *Can Poetry Matter?*, Dana Gioia set out his belief that ‘poetry has lost the confidence that it speaks to and for the general culture’. [[348]](#footnote-348) Instead, it constituted a sub-culture, analogous with a small and restricted market audience due to the quality of its experimental forms, and the cultural elitism of its institutions. This seems to stem from Gioia’s belief that the ‘boom’ in creative writing classes in the 1980s, with thousands of new teaching positions and MFA graduates, created what he saw as a bureaucratic subculture which created art, not to tap into the ‘general’ arts market, but to create work when they ‘no longer (assume) that all published poems will be read. Like their colleagues in other academic departments, poetry professionals must publish, for purposes of both job security and career advancement.’[[349]](#footnote-349)

Without a readership, Gioia states that this glut of material causes ‘Gresham's Law, that bad coinage drives out good,’[[350]](#footnote-350) to begin to apply to poetry. In his analysis, with the application of financial models to what is an apparently cultural malaise, Gioia seems keen to stress the authenticity of his own non-academic background as a self-made businessman, measuring uses and values of poetry for potential wider markets. What, then, constitutes this *bad coinage*, the inwards looking ‘homogeneity’ of poetry produced within, and for, the subculture of academic poetry? John Barr, taking up Gioia’s invectives against the self-serving creative writing ‘industry’, labels the necessary component qualities, often lacking from contemporary poetry: ‘The result [of Creative Writing classes] is a poetry that is neither robust, resonant, nor—and I stress this quality—entertaining; a poetry that both starves and flourishes on academic subsidies.’[[351]](#footnote-351) In sourcing these qualities, we must look to Barr’s belief in the source of ‘groundbreaking’ poetry: ‘Groundbreaking new art comes when artists make a changed assumption about their relationship to their audience, talk to their readers in a new way, and assume they will understand.’ Whilst Barr’s appraisal purports to be structural, looking at the failures of the structural relationships of the classroom and the poetry workshop, it is in fact deconstructive in that it in fact proposes a recalibration of the artist’s own subjective perspective: to alter their own perception in the guise of altering their relation to a potential audience. What is ‘groundbreaking’ in this interpretation of poetry, is that address is made direct through its fragmented subjectivation towards an imagined audience, a ‘transforming’ assumption. This stands in stark contrast to this thesis’s first chapter in which we saw Rukeyser’s interpretation of Melville as the ‘poet of outrage’ at the injustices of his time; consciously accessing symbols, ‘the perpetual hunt, and sea-images, world images (which) gave these their language (and) speak for the backgrounds of our present.’[[352]](#footnote-352) Whereas outrage is a consciousness that leads to a marshalling of symbols and their poetic materials by Melville in this reading, it is telling that conversely Barr seeks to conjure a sense of the ineffable, and ‘wondrous’ at the directness of the address. As Barr, like Gioia, keen to emphasise his own non-academic credentials and life experience, opines,

I wish I could offer a distinct picture of what I think the next poetry will look like. But predicting the future path of poetry is like trying to predict the stock market (Wall Street being my other career). Both are relentlessly resistant to being captured in that way. And poetry the more so because it arises from what is intractable in the human spirit. (Poetry—thank goodness—is the animal that always escapes.)[[353]](#footnote-353)

Neoliberalism, unlike Rukeyser’s Marxism, offers no future utopia or ultimate goal, but celebrates the individual’s tenacity and adaptability to navigate elusive routes through precarity and risk in which the individual can only attempt to ‘speculate’ futures. This constant unattainability in the neoliberal world view drives creativity. Capital must always be able to flow to new markets, and thus the poet must find his or her audience and its resonances within their own imagination. It is no surprise then, that Barr states that:

The limits of the poetry of any age come not from things the poets perceived but were unable to attain (that would be failures of craft), but rather from the things they never thought to include or never thought of value to their art. It's not just the poets; this is how one age differs from the next. [[354]](#footnote-354)

To go back to the qualities in which Barr feels contemporary poetry is failing, then we need to understand his terms: the ‘limits’ of experience are those units of experiential ‘value’; that which may foster a ‘robustness’ in spirit as a resilient and ruthless pursuit in poetic signification towards the ‘sensibility based on lived experience’, that will ‘resonate’ with, and thus ‘entertain’ a new audience. Barr’s lamenting of a perceived ubiquity of the lyric as exemplifying the ‘poverty’ of the contemporary poetry scene seems somewhat counter-intuitive given that his call to realign the subjective imagination into new relationships of direct address is well suited to the lyric tradition. In distinguishing that ‘Lyric poets pursue knowledge of and through themselves; epic poets, at the other extreme, require a knowledge of the world and how it works. That is because the epic poem renders a world order, and does so with a moral urgency,’[[355]](#footnote-355) Barr seems to insist upon an empirical poetic engagement with the external world, yet denies that, in doing so, a poet will always face being realigned by its forces, writing in complicity with it. Instead, he refers to the call to poets to experience as much of a ‘rich’ and varied life as possible, like Hemingway on safari, as though an individual’s experience can be qualitatively valued and weighed in its ‘effects’ upon its audience.

**Conclusion: restorative strategies for identity through poetry**

Walt Whitman is one of the poets lauded by Barr, whom Rukeyser agreed was a ‘poet of possibility’, [[356]](#footnote-356) but unlike Barr, she saw the ‘craft’ in his innovations in lyrical form as an essential nexus between the inner body and the outer world, as: ‘from the rhythms of pulse and lung, Whitman made his music signify. Rarely, in the sweep of lines, is the breath hardened and interrupted.’[[357]](#footnote-357) Poetic form in this view represents a victory in ‘the rhythms of resolved physical conflict. When he says, “I have found the law of my own poems,” he celebrates that victory.’[[358]](#footnote-358) Here then is an example of how introspection within the parameters of the human body can create a form of direct address to a wide, contemporary audience: in this case, suffering the shared and cataclysmic experience of a civil war. Whitman’s lyricism allows the poetic moment in which he can act as the witnessing conduit of the external world:

The smoke of my own breath,

Echoes, ripples, buzz’d whispers, love-root, silk-thread, crotch

and vine,

My respiration and inspiration, the beating of my heart, the

 Passing of blood and air through my lungs[[359]](#footnote-359)

In this moment of lyrical utterance of breath, of the body’s internal machinations and its transactions with the outer world, he may proclaim that both ‘Clear and sweet is my soul, and clear and sweet is all that is/ not my soul,’[[360]](#footnote-360) offering a holistic rendering of the world. It is a reverie in which the material enunciation of the body enacts what Lazzarato describes as: ‘a power of self-positioning, self-production and a capacity to secrete one’s own referent emerges…’.[[361]](#footnote-361) Enunciation provides a power of autonomy in the ability to re-define one’s own position in the natural and industrial spheres which we can see would offer a restorative agency and awareness to the deterritorialised post-miner.

In contrast, Spahr decries George W Bush’s Poet Laureate, Ted Kooser as embodying the aesthetic values of the neoliberal agenda for poetry, starting his Pulitzer Prize winning *Delights and Shadows* with ‘a poem about walking on tiptoe, a poem about a faded tattoo…’. [[362]](#footnote-362) Here the authenticity of experience becomes a scopophilic commodityto be measured and valued. The body of poetry is a fragmented, dividualised and cataloguing of the rustic everyday as beautiful, rather than a will towards collective experience, or to the building of a utopian vision. Far from the totemic, corporeal power of Harry Rickard’s mining bruises, in Kooser’s ‘Tattoo’, the titular symbol is reduced to ‘just a bruise/ on a bony old shoulder’, as the wearer has transitioned from ‘someone you had to reckon with’ into the futile anonymity of ‘only another old man, picking up / broken tools and putting them back.’[[363]](#footnote-363) As Spahr continues: there might be nothing wrong with this ‘folksy’, ‘mundane’ poetry ‘if it were not being presented as more egalitarian, more popular, as representing the aesthetic concerns of the common man.’[[364]](#footnote-364) The common man here is voiceless and dissembled, symptomatic of a socially conservative and individualistic poetry, yet supposedly serving a popular demand in place of the poetry of the academy and bourgeois elite. As a poet working in academia herself, Spahr feels that it is an autoethnographic exercise to consider ‘the way that literature circulates in the scenes in which I, too, circulate.’ One such fear is that experimental forms of writing seen to be favoured by the academy such as conceptual writing, once avant-garde in its procedural experimentation, was embraced by the Obama administration in performances by poets such as Kenneth Goldsmith at the White House. With this, Spahr states that poetry has ‘returned to its usual status of benign aesthetic practice, as part of the nation but not as a meaningful part of a national agenda’[[365]](#footnote-365), apolitical, and not threatening political or business elites.

In delineating the direct links between the neoliberal agenda of the Bush administration and its associated corporate interests, I hope to pose a number of questions with which the reach of such interests may be challenged through a poetry conscious of the pressures that come to bear upon its forming of meaning. I choose Juliana Spahr’s 2015 poem *That Winter the Wolf Came*[[366]](#footnote-366) to explore this, as its central concern is to ‘call attention to the material life of the artist, as person, who, in addition to being creator/ conspirator to a body of work, possesses a physical body, and real financial, medical and social needs.’[[367]](#footnote-367) As such it seems an influential work when dealing with those in post-mining communities who have been alienated from their former ‘elemental masculinity’ and physical relation to the pit as the means of production. It is a call for the creative act of poetry to provide a re-calibrating consciousness of our position as bodies at the intersection of vying discourses and interests, financial, medical and social. It is also an examination of poetry’s delimitations after the gift of that consciousness, and whether poetry can help reclaim the losses in each of those spheres following neoliberalism.

Spahr’s work before *That Winter the Wolf Came* is relevant in this discussion, firstly for its development of innovations in the use of the lyrical refrain to harbour the notion of a ‘we’, or what Dianne Chisholm calls ‘an autonomous everybody’.[[368]](#footnote-368) Refrains in Spahr’s work re-territorialise collective identity, ordering meaning to create an eco-political awareness of how ‘we’ both have agency in creating our habitats and are in turn recipients of the effects of this process, for instance through depictions of climate change. Chisholm particularly identifies the use of anaphoric units to collectivise the acts and experiences of humans in understanding their environment, which repeat and vary in relation to the natural world. In her ‘Sonnet 29’[[369]](#footnote-369), by repeating and modifying the refrain, ‘because we were bunkered’, Chisholm notes that Spahr ‘builds figurative houses (bowers and bunkers)’ and ‘interrogates the habitability of what she has built by proceeding to deconstruct them.’[[370]](#footnote-370) Hostility, ironically here, comes in the form of *inner* intellectual impediments- bunkers- which pre-empt the problem of realising ‘what mattered’ in terms of humans’ habiting relationships with the spatial and material environment. This strategy of ‘bunkering’ is an act of poetic reification- of making the human spatial relationship concrete and material through the Symbol of a mental bunker. ‘And because we couldn’t figure it out bunkering was a way for us /to claim what wasn’t really ours’. This act of reclamation is necessary because of the loss of the commons, and of a self-evident relationship between worker and community, and the means of production. In stark contrast to Whitman’s act of sentient respiration which allowed him to see himself as a coherent self, alongside ‘clear and sweet is all that is/ not my soul’, Spahr’s first person is a collective of ‘dividuals’, alienated from their natural environment by the very act of having to justify and reclaim their lost connection to the land. In chapter two, we saw how striking miners had the utmost conviction of the right to their homes and community, centred around the pit and delineated by the picket line which acted as a territorial distinction between competing ideologies. Denied of this communal birth-right, any claim to land for a home must now overcome learned societal impediments in which concepts such as ‘home’ have become reified and commodified:

But because we were bunkered the place was never ours, could

Never really be ours, because we were bunkered from what

mattered, growing and flowing into, and because we could not

begin to understand that this place was not ours until we

grew and flowed into something other than what we were we

continued to make things worse for this place of growing

and flowing into even while some of us came to love it and let

it grow in our own hearts, flow in our own blood.[[371]](#footnote-371)

It is necessary to flow into ‘something other’; to conceptualise a new identity which may allow an organic and self-evident connection with the land. Even with the best will, the Whitman-esque corporeal sentience of one’s place in nature seems no longer possible in the neoliberal configuration of identity, divorcing, as it does, work and its fruits from the sense of a home in territory. Spahr conjures anaphoric refrains of ‘flowing’ with which she may delineate these energies: the yearning for a re-positioning with the land, to ‘let it grow in our own hearts’, and thus to be defined together with it as a community. This nature in which the creating of similes and metaphors can be seen as a ‘process’ is outlined by the Hungarian poet, Agnes Nemes Nagy:

Let’s say the poet allows herself to invent the two-million-five-hundred-and-eleventh simile about the moon. In this simile there will be the moon and the yellow chrysanthemum, with which it was compared. Two yellow heads, two tufted stains will be visible on the photographic disc of the simile, more or less overlapping each other, moved away from their own outlines… Each object will relinquish something of its own identity, emerging into the other temporarily, or for longer, and will bring about a third entity; the simile itself. This doubted “oneness,” this doubted identity, this somewhat fusible identity creating something new: this is one of the secrets of the psychological significance of the simile. The simile is nevertheless a process, the process of partially intermingling two objects…With this dual nature the simile denies and doubts the dissection of the world’s phenomena into separate objects. Its territory is that thin layer, that fog which encircles the contours of the identity of objects, that epistemological evaporation which conceals or carries the possibility of these differences merging into one, as on a universal screen.[[372]](#footnote-372)

In this depiction of the psychological significance of the simile or metaphor, the power of the figure comes from the awareness of the process of the flow between the meaning of two separate identities. Nevertheless, this same symbolic process, described as a fog, a doubting, ‘carries’ the potential for exploitation. Its duality echoes what we have seen of the fracturing of the ‘oneness’ of the worker as she becomes ‘dividual’, relinquishing parts of a former identity of workplace and community so that she may intermingle with the codes, identity and demands of temporary employment. In *Capitalist Realism: is there no Alternative?* Mark Fisher claims that the structures of capitalism have succeeded in creating its own ‘pervasive *atmosphere*, conditioning not only the production of culture, but also the regulation of work and education, and acting as a kind of invisible barrier constraining thought and action.’ [Fisher’s italics] p.16. This invisibility occurs, according to Fisher, at the culmination of an ideological position’s naturalisation in its transition from value to ‘fact’: ‘Over the past thirty years, capitalist realism has successfully installed a “business ontology” in which it is *simply obvious* that everything in society, including healthcare and education, should be run as a business.’[[373]](#footnote-373) [Fisher’s italics]

*That Winter the Wolf Came* opens upon a street scene laden with the inevitability of this ontology, even within the midst of an unspecified day in the Occupy protest in Oakland, California which pitched the hostility of anti-capitalist protesters against the hostility of its state infrastructure in ‘the oil wars’ as the police: ‘...know what they are doing. It is their third time clearing the park and they will clear it out many more times and then they will win and a building will be built where there once was the park.’[[374]](#footnote-374) Yet whilst Spahr states that ‘What I have to offer here is nothing revolutionary’,[[375]](#footnote-375)she seeks to reveal the terms by which capitalism’s transactions and exploitations may be unveiled in the first step towards their countermanding. Firstly, in order to restore the ethical iteration of value lost in capitalist realism, she reverses this symbolic ‘process’ deconstructing figurative vessels into bare components that serve as negations of personifications. The police ‘move slowly, methodically in a line as if they are a many legged machine’. Their ‘exo-skeletons’ are literal, offering the protection of bone in riot armour. If they ‘know what they are doing’, their knowledge is not a sentience as such, but an enacting of method: a progression only in acting out, for the hundredth time, the spatial and temporal street operations of corporate interests into inevitability. Likewise, the workers ‘circulating with the oil’ are literally circulating the Earth on oil tankers, and pipelines of ‘thousands of interlocking parts’[[376]](#footnote-376), away from their partners and families. Without the ability to share language with loved ones they are left, like the consequences of the literal fact of Harry Rickard’s stroke, with only two weeks in each year where they can experience the tongue in meaningful conversation’.[[377]](#footnote-377)

Yet within the sphere of poetry, the agency to select the terms and elements with which symbolic identity may be fused is an exhilarating prospect, doubting as it does society’s separation of phenomena, with the consequent understanding that a communion born of pattern-making in the imagination and intellect may hold the key to recapturing notions of identity. Spahr offers examples of such pattern-making through refrains, so showing how song may offer its own spatio-temporal relationships with which to subvert capitalist realism. 2015’s *That Winter the Wolf Came* locates this new ‘flow’ as a result of the collective enlightenment that what ‘mattered’ following the 2008 market crash was the reclamation of the territorial commons. The book was published as a freely available PDF and thus part-political project with Commune, the fruition of Spahr’s involvement in 2011’s Occupy movement with its imperative to occupy the financial zones of cities, and with its slogan, ‘we are the 99%’. The movement aimed to reclaim and re-drawboundaries of space and identity along ideological lines, just like the picket lines of the miners’ strike; protests aimed to counter the policies of austerity after governments sought to shrink the public sector in order to bail out the banking system. Spahr’s involvement with Occupy seems to be an attempt to escape an enabling complicity inherent in working in almost any job in the neoliberal age. In her 2011 essay *Contemporary U.S Poetry and its Nationalisms*, as an academic and ‘first world writer of literature’[[378]](#footnote-378) Spahr admits her poetry is ‘undeniably a nationalist practice, caught in a series of ever-forming relations with state agendas.’[[379]](#footnote-379) Her awareness, and anxiety, about these relations is captured in the poem *Brent Crude* which features the remarks of anonymous voices in response to hearing about her project:

someone said the last thing we need is another BP poem; someone said just another nature poem; someone said stupid white girls writing about Africa; someone said I refuse to publish stuff like that. Not to me necessarily. At other moments to me but that doesn’t matter.[[380]](#footnote-380)

Spahr is often critical of ‘identity poetry’ for the reason that ‘poetry that explores individual and personal identity… often becomes exemplary of that sticky mess of privatisation and nationalism’[[381]](#footnote-381)- the implication being that by this time, in any field of work, (even as a poet and lecturer like Spahr) it is likely that worker’s identities have become complicit with the demands of the free market. In universities, for instance, the imposition of tuition fees in the late 1990s has led to students becoming more aligned with consumers, and with education commodified and graded accordingly for market competition. Instead Spahr favours what she deems ‘movement poetry’ (‘poetry with ties to antinational activism’)[[382]](#footnote-382). I would argue, in fact, that dissecting the motives, concerns and influences that constitute the space of her identity is the defining drive in her understanding of her involvement in the movement, and also in its failure into what she calls ‘non-revolution’. However, amongst the protesters, her depiction of her body does not focus on any racial or ‘institutional’ concept of identity, but serves to act as a glyph by which the hostile interventions of capitalist interest can be mapped. *That Winter the Wolf Came* gives lengthy accounts of the street occupations, marches and of the Occupy protest in Oakland. She insists that her body is:

unremarkable, not at all singular, as I walk up to join these other bodies, and it remains unremarkable, not at all singular, as it walks with others, takes off into the street when others do, usually after someone yells block up block up into a megaphone. Then we walk together and yet unevenly out into the street, darkly clad because the facebook invitation said to wear black...[[383]](#footnote-383)

Spahr seeks to define *the* movement through *its* movement, its physical movement: uneven (she admits that she never stayed overnight), yet together; temporarily affecting and modifying the layout of the city in roadblocks and camps, and yet anonymous beside the sweeping might of state interventions which will act to prevent it. It is a delineation which, again, recalls the picket lines of the 1984-5 miners’ strike in the United Kingdom, and yet the identities therein and no longer quite so ideologically coherent and diametrically opposed. The Occupy movement is made up of bodies which are each equally, and so paradoxically, identified in their complicity in the machinations of the oil trade: in the importance of foodstuffs, in travel, in the manufacturing of clothing, in countless ways. And so Spahr begins:

...writing a poem about oil extraction in iambic pentameter because Cara emails me and asks me this: ‘how can we, as poets, take care of ourselves, our creative work, and the larger planetary body on which we depend?’ She says she wants to ‘call attention to the material life of the artist, as person, who, in addition to being creator/ conspirator to a body of work, possesses a physical body, and real financial, medical and social needs.[[384]](#footnote-384)

One strategy that arises from this focus of the physical negotiation of creatures and the world through movement is what we may see as the evolutionary concept of analogies in order to claim biologically and culturally- inherited territories where revolution may occur. Within biology, analogous structures are similar features present in species of different lineages; features that have a similar form or function but were not present in the last common ancestor of those groups. One example of this ‘convergent evolution’[[385]](#footnote-385) is that bats and insects both share the analogous structure of flight. In creating *analogous* structures, linked with the anaphoric phrase ‘Just as…’,she aligns the signifying capacities of the acts of riot police, migrating Brent Geese, and country and western singers. The poem opens with the Brent Geese who: ‘fly in long wavering lines on their migrations… They learn the map from their parents, or through culture rather than genetics.’[[386]](#footnote-386) Spahr offers the success of the bird, which ‘fattens’ and breeds autonomously through hostile landscapes in the Arctic, Greenland and Western Siberia as both being both culturally and naturally derived, a map that is both the inheritance of intergenerational decisions and object reality of seasonal patterns of climate. To continue this analogy to the area of my data, it is paramount that inter-generational learning continues through the narratives of the strike years- it is in these narratives that the maps and routes to lost communities and identities, no longer extant in territory, may survive and again flourish.

However, any claim to culture as having the capacity to harness natural patterns of the Earth, such as weather, is problematic in the age of global warming as Fisher notes: ‘Capitalist realism insists on treating mental health as if it were a natural fact, like weather (but, then again, weather is no longer a natural fact so much as a political-economic effect).’[[387]](#footnote-387) For Spahr, the presentation of the loss of stabilities in the inner mental, emotional and the outer, natural worlds represents a wider ‘time of loss’. Capitalism’s hostile consumption of the materials of the environment, what Fisher calls the ‘fantasy structure’ that ‘the earth itself is merely a husk which capital can at a certain point slough off like a used skin, and that every problem can be solved by the market’ is itself enacted by the juxtaposed analogy of the riot police who come to ‘clean’ the city square:

all that is there is the police and the debris and the police deal with the debris. They push over book-shelves, open up boxes and look inside, tear into tents awkwardly, the poles springing. They are only there to see if any humans remain. Tomorrow the bulldozers will push the debris into big piles and load it into trucks. The police wear white helmets and short sleeves under their kevlar vests.[[388]](#footnote-388)

The police here, are given the analogous gait of scavenging gulls, clumsily categorising that of value (defined here as the living who would impede the use of a bulldozer) in designating whether ‘humans remain’ (only one remove from ‘human remains’). Little remains of the humans enacting the cleaning of the square as they are reduced to obscure metonymy under their protective shells of their equipment: helmets, Kevlar, and the ghostly directing forearm left unrendered by the short sleeves included in the description.

In immediate juxtaposition, Spahr analogises the Brent Geese:

For many years the Brent geese ate eelgrass, but once the eelgrass was gone to the wasting disease and the estuaries filled, they moved inland to agricultural lands and began eating grasses and winter-sown cereals. The Brent geese are social, adaptable. They fly around together, learning from each other, even as these groups are often unstable, changing from season to season.[[389]](#footnote-389)

The Brent geese seem to offer a response to a newly hostile environment which has the inevitability of the lineage of evolution: with the loss of their land to pollution, they learn new routes, new maps to prosperity, even though their groups flux and flow over time. The riot police, similarly, offer the embodiment of the cultural lineage of capitalism. They sweep the debris free for the third time, their unity incarnated in hostile, protective uniform, with the inevitability not of nature or evolution, but towards the fulfilment of capitalism’s fantastical and perpetual strive to expansion. Spahr’s route out of the hostile environments of neoliberalism are thus the spur towards collective identity through patterns of refrains and song:

The women and the women-identified of 1789 and 1871 and 1917 and

1918 and 1929 and 1969.

Sometimes they had just a drum and churchbells, then kitchen blades,

and then suddenly ten thousands.

Sometimes they began with stones and snowballs and then they turned

to attack police stations.

More.

Always more.

For more.

Like how the white throated monkey does it, five or six at the beginnings,

then more gathering up to thirty.[[390]](#footnote-390)

As the poem repeats and adapts its phrases, anaphora emphasises the performing moment of utterance and ably holds the trope of loss: the nostalgic revisiting of people and places. Its refrains and patterns offer an alternative creative space outside the logic and patterns of capitalism, one rooted in analogous evolution whose very organic nature entitles these collective iterations of identity to claim their place in the world. The consideration of Spahr’s analogies employed with a convergent anaphora under the refrain, ‘just as’, interchangeably signifies ‘in the same process’, and ‘to the same *proportion*’, in an echo of its original Greek etymology. ‘Just as’encompasses the police’s acts within the properties of song: its patterns, inevitabilities of refrain and contradiction, and reveals them not as institutional agency, but choice and in that way a step towards revolution:

It is just an observation, a small observation, that sometimes art can hold the oil wars and all that they mean and might yet mean within. Just as sometimes there is a refrain between each stanza. And just as often this sort of song tells a certain sort of story, one about having something and then losing it. Just as sometimes the refrain of a song is just one word said four times. Just as sometimes the word is huge, sometimes coming from a machine and yet hitting in the heart; uplifting and ironic and big enough to hold all these things in its four syllables. Just as sometimes, often even, it contradicts, and thus works with, the stanzas. Just as the police clear out yet another public space and yet another camera follows along behind. Just as the stream has no narration, only ambient noise.[[391]](#footnote-391)

Spahr offers this form of poetic song as the method that ‘reflects and refracts the oil in ways both relevant and trivial’[[392]](#footnote-392). It is able to reconceptualise constantly under threat by being spliced into competing narratives, yet it can also draw attention to its own process as an active framing account of reality, as it ‘contradicts, and thus works with’, able to position the action of a state’s police force as contiguous with a one word refrain of a country music song, or the ambient noise of a stream. Enunciation provides a power of autonomy in the ability to re-define one’s own position in the natural and industrial spheres.Under neoliberalism, where money and profits have become increasingly virtual and globalised, policies such as quantitative easing in which new money is printed from thin air have the illusory quality of a magic trick to the average person. To this end, Spahr’s lyric seeks to root the refrains in its origin in song, to voice a collective emotive experience of loss; at its globalintersection in the economic and ecological realms via the body’s needs and desires. The repetition inherent in lyrical refrains is the consolidation which confirms a human consciousness towards agency.

Yet these modifying patterns which can render the sites for protest against economic malpractice and environmental catastrophes can also fall prone the patterns of historic inevitability of past protests such as the miners’ strike, that the police ‘will win and a building will be built where there once was the park’. [[393]](#footnote-393) To that end she seeks to let the hegemony’s narrative expose itself in the market manipulations of the Brent Crude Oil Spot price which serves instead of a linear narrative ‘clock’ time, revealing the ever-pervasive influence of big business, whose actions may seem: ‘At other moments to me but that doesn’t matter. It was in the air. The Brent Crude Oil Spot price was 117.18.’[[394]](#footnote-394) The pattern of refrains becomes the repetition of ritual which brings about the consolidation of the consciousness of loss as found in Country music songs. Country, as an indigenous folk expression of white America, offers a structure of expression that pre-dates this form of capitalism, as Spahr indicates in her splicing of its value into those of the stock market:

The Brent Crude Oil Spot price is set in dollars, maintained by force, endlessly manipulated by commodity futures markets. The refrain is the moment when the singer makes it clear that they understand something about what is being lost. It was obvious they had lost their country, it being taken over by bankers and all.[[395]](#footnote-395)

Despite her interventions, Spahr describes the atmosphere that pervades Occupy as ‘non-revolution’:a fatalistic sense that throughout her representation of an epiphanic re-territorialisation of urban boundaries and limits through the public reclamation of the commons, there is the superimposing of the hostile state’s repression. Its future tense invades the ‘momentary, transitory’ triumph with the expectation of tomorrow’s bulldozers, sure to sweep the streets clean of the tents and rubble barricades to maintain capitalist interests. For Mark Fisher, the Lacanian sense of ‘the Real’ is the only real threat to this ‘capitalist realism’ and that free market competition is inevitable ‘progress.’ He promulgates ‘the Real’ as ‘an unrepresentable X, a traumatic void that can only be glimpsed in the fractures and inconsistencies of the field of apparent reality.’[[396]](#footnote-396) The BP Deepwater Horizon disaster is one such cataclysmic[[397]](#footnote-397), and literal, fracture that reveals the true processes behind capitalism’s exploitation of territories. In *Dynamic Positioning,* Spahr chooses iambic pentameter, that traditional metre which most readily holds the breath and cadences of English to hold the moments of fracturing procedure within the industry’s own terminology:

Ers. It was then almost close to ten o’

Clock, still when next a roaring noise, a vib-

Ration, engines began rapid increase-

Ing as also the drill pipe pressure rap-

Idly increasing as the rig then los-

Ing power, shut down processes then fail-

Ing. First explosion on five seconds aft-

Er. Then explosion again, ten sec-

Onds later. It was not yet ten

O’clock when the mayday call was first made.[[398]](#footnote-398)

‘Dynamic Positioning’, the poem’s title, refers to a computer control system that ‘automatically maintains a vessel’s position and heading by using her own propellers and thrusters’[[399]](#footnote-399) so that it may drill oil. As Lazzarato notes, revolutionary change is made possible by such moments of economic and social ‘rupture’, as:

under capitalism, processes of political subjectivation must both enter and break from economic, social, and political flows. The two operations are indispensable: start from the hold machinic enslavements and social subjections maintain over subjectivity and produce a rupture, which is always at the same time an invention and constitution of the self.[[400]](#footnote-400)

Tellingly, the extract also lays bare the poet’s own process of positioning herself in order to draw meaning from the event. Listing those who were involved in the tragedy, she implicates herself by way of her spectating: ‘Curt Kuchta, Jimmy Wayne Harrell. I did / Not die. I watched it then burn on a / Flat screen.’ [[401]](#footnote-401) Yet poetry offers her the chance to invent a re-positioning of the terms of the disaster itself so that it is both meticulously represented in technical detail, yet also jarring in its caesuras which force the reader to read lines back, and constantly check the macabre relentlessness of its destruction. When the metre is unable to contain this process which spills out into a recalibrating enjambment, the disaster chillingly reveals the ‘Real’ implications behind the oil industry’s order, as fragile, dangerous and artificial.

Spahr’s poetry offers us the site of a conscious intersection of the body in its environment of needs and desires, both financial and bodily. Her depiction of activism in the city both pluralises individuality into collective metaphor and re-territorialises it in a communal place. The interventions and complexities with which the late-capitalist world has given us the ‘agency’ to comply is carefully delineated as a set of urges and responsibilities which acknowledge the likelihood of defeat yet offer glimpses into new relationships with the world, as was the case in the 1984-5 miners’ strike, through social and economic catastrophes. The site of countering neoliberal poetry is summoned via refrains with which the enunciating moment of song connects the potential of word with material flesh to frame new slippages of signification, borne of humans flows rather than the codes and symbols of the free market.

**Chapter Four:**

**Bridging Document of Strategies**

Spahr, in her commitment to both ‘learn the city in a different way’ via the networks of political struggle, whilst learning ‘something I do not yet understand about my physical body, my real financial, medical and social needs’[[402]](#footnote-402) is essentially conducting an act of auto-ethnography: ‘a self-narrative that critiques the situatedness of self and others in social context.’[[403]](#footnote-403) Hal Foster’s 1994 essay *The Artist as Ethnographer?[[404]](#footnote-404)* offers a valuable insight into how the role of the artist changed with the late twentieth century ‘cultural turn’ towards ethnography in academia. Itself a consideration of Walter Benjamin’s *The Author as Producer***[[405]](#footnote-405)**, Foster describes how Benjamin calls for any artist of the left‘to side with the proletariat’[[406]](#footnote-406). Paris in 1934, like the South Yorkshire Coalfield of the 1980s, was unionised, collectivist and productivist: industrial growth and increasing production was a central purpose of organising art. What is radical about Benjamin’s claim, however, was that the artist must intervene in the means of artistic production, to change the ‘techniques’ of traditional media in order to transform the apparatus of bourgeois culture. A ‘tendency’ towards, or sympathy, was not enough- that was to assume a place ‘beside the proletariat.’ And ‘what kind of place is that?’ Benjamin asked, in lines that still scathe. ‘That of a benefactor, of an ideological patron-an impossible place.’ [[407]](#footnote-407)

In Chapter Three, it was discussed how academia, and the poetry business in general can become implicated with political or state agendas. Yet creating art which has a deliberate social concern and is not ‘autonomous’, but motivated towards the political awareness of others, has pitfalls for the artist which remain after the ‘Cultural Turn’ as identified by Foster:

First, there is the assumption that the site of artistic transformation is the site of political transformation, and, more, that this site is always located elsewhere, in the field of the other…Second, there is the assumption that this other is always outside and, more, that this alterity is the primary point of subversion of dominant culture. Third, there is the assumption that if the invoked artist is not perceived as socially and or culturally other, he or she has but limited access to this transformative alterity, and, more, that if he or she is perceived as other, he or she has automatic access to it. Taken together, these three assumptions lead to another point of connection with the Benjamin’s account of the author as producer: the danger, for the artist as ethnographer, of "ideological patronage."[[408]](#footnote-408)

One of my biggest fears in conducting this project was the possibility that I may be patronising through making an ‘other’ of the people that I spoke to. This was exacerbated by my own academic background, and the fact that, like Cal in *The Heart of It*, I was returning to an area and industry that I had left and was trying to reconnect with as a son of a line of miners, rather than having been a miner myself.Much of this doubt stems from an insecurity of authenticity: the question of who has the right to speak on behalf of those of the South Yorkshire Coalfield. I hoped that it is enough to have worked in the post-mining industries such as the call centres of Manvers at the start of the millennium after university, and to have lived for many years in the South Yorkshire Coalfield. The appropriateness of notions of authenticity when representing identity in art is, however, contested. Marxist perspectives bring into question art after the ‘Cultural Turn’ where it tends to displace the problematic of class and capitalist exploitation with that of race and identity. A poststructuralist critique would question it for the opposite reason: because it tends to retain the idea of the worker as having a coherent, material place in history, each worker having fixed, discrete identities that were transformed and altered, as we saw in Chapter Two with my notion of ‘elemental masculinity’.  Mining, like other Fordist work models, in which skilled and unskilled workers fulfil specialised, mechanised roles in mass production demanded, as Gramsci asserted, ‘a new type of man’[[409]](#footnote-409), disciplined and less emotionally invested so as to be able to adapt to meet the physical rigours of the job. Mining, like Fordism, was thus in short an “affect factory”, organising the identities of women, men and children along an “econometrics of feeling”.[[410]](#footnote-410) As the mining towns were stripped of their defining identity and means to produce, becoming ‘post-mining’ towns almost overnight, this rupture exacerbates crises in the formation of identity, leading to nostalgic retrospection which fluxes between cyclical paths of anger, humiliation and pride in their roles in the miners’ strike as we saw in Chapter Two. In response, I wondered whether it would be possible to form a strategy by which ‘I’ could begin to dissolve in place of a deconstruction of what Benjamin would describe as a bourgeois academic apparatus of hermeneutic poetry that seeks to exploit or commodify the framing of identity, in an attempt to allow members of the community to depict their own patterns of acts of feeling.

One instance of this came in the summer of 2016 after I attended a fundraising performance of a play written by a local playwright, Sarah Osborne, called *Remembering the Oaks* performed by local amateur actors and schoolchildren which seemed to enact Benjamin’s productivist project of a transformative art of alterity. Ostensibly, the play sought to raise money for a monument to the victims of The Oaks Colliery Disaster of 1866 in Barnsley, but it also sought to position the audience’s identity in the present day around the disaster, rather than merely commemorate it. The refrains in the play calling on the audience to ‘remember’ to juxtapose the loss of their dead and their work- ‘their bones, and their ground’ with ‘our bones, our ground’- fascinated me. This transformation had some objective truth in it: the miners were buried in the disaster a stone’s throw away from the venue; descendants of the victims were in the audience; the town has had to regenerate above the defunct mine. But, ethnographically, it was the drive to form the identity of the present in the losses of the past that fascinated me. How could I write this as poetry without patronising ‘beside’ those I described? I experimented with separating the performance into units of meaning within an apparent caption for a missing photograph, employing forward slashes to divide the witnessing of the play into autonomous units of meaning which also read into a growing confluence of mise-en-scene, symbolism, and stage directions. I hoped to draw into focus the call to alterity within the performance, but with the tension that the acts themselves could retain an irreducible beauty within that emotive intention of the playwright and actors. This was taken a stage further with the poem/ illustration ‘Diagram of Tropes’, in which I tried to measure these artistic processes by looking at their material relationship, weight and direction.

One book published during the course of my research, *In Loving Memory of Work,* eulogised ‘work’ itself and featured a dust-jacket ‘printed using actual coal dust ground from coal picked from the remaining muckstacks on the site of Barnsley Main Colliery’[[411]](#footnote-411). The ritualistic process with which this process is outlined in the book shows the fetishistic hold which coal itself has on identity three-and-a-half decades on: ‘After picking, the coal was dried-out then ground and crushed into coal dust which was then mixed with a substrate and printed to create the first edition dust- jacket.’[[412]](#footnote-412) Here, the title’s eulogy is conveyed in the actual coal dust of its ‘resting place’. The moment a poem is written down will always compromise it in fixing its moment in materiality, but here its fixing is actively celebrated in the reification of the coal itself representing the authentic values of loss and mourning. This representation falls prone to becoming aestheticised; the safe, respectful and commodified curation of loss which is seen too, behind polished glass and spot-lighting in the town hall’s permanent mining exhibition.

During this period of writing, I began to realise that the objectivist approach, influenced by Rukeyser in which materiality became the basis for symbolic resonance in the imagination of the reader would not, alone, be sufficient as a strategy in order to engage with the people and place I was studying. In response, I wondered whether I could explore whether material elements could possibly forge a collective sense of the plural first person, which would seek to find truth in the material, bodily connections with the lost past that I had observed the memorial campaigners of Barnsley were yearning for. I came up with *Vernix Caseosa* which looks at the analogous structure of vernix to coal in the formation of identity; the substance which surrounds new-born sea lions has been found[[413]](#footnote-413) to share a very similar constituency to that of new-born baby humans, supporting ‘the hypothesis of an aquatic habituation period in the evolution of modern humans’[[414]](#footnote-414). I wondered whether this could lend credence to a direct correlation of the mining of coal upon the corporeal identity of miners, a notion that was borne out symbolically, if not scientifically, in Chapter Two. Materiality is clearly important as the basis for metaphor: in reification as discussed in Chapter Three, in poetic verisimilitude in which miners’ identities were bound up in the territory, and its elemental substances which contribute to the construction of ‘elemental masculinity’ and its gendered Fordist nuclear family. But as we have seen Rukeyser insist in Chapter One, and as Katy Shaw later confirmed in Chapter Two after analysing striking miners’ poetry, material events require their ‘unfinished symbol’ to allow the potential for the imagination to receive, and lead to action in the present. In writing the poems for the section *Fiends of Fire-Damp,* John Tomlinson’s 1868 account [[415]](#footnote-415) was incredibly useful in its detailed account of the Oak Colliery Disaster’s aftermath.

I do not have any form of direct voice in many of the poems in *Captions for Fallen Photographs*. Although at least four generations before me worked in the pits of the area, I initially felt unqualified to develop a narrative voice of my own, nor able to summon the life experiences to adapt to the projected expectations of the audience, as Barr insisted was necessary in Chapter Three.  It is an anxiety that recalls that of Tony Harrison’s narrator’s engagement with the angry and dispossessed working class of Beeston, Leeds in his 1985 poem *V.[[416]](#footnote-416)*  Again, like Cal Rickards, Harrison’s semi-autobiographical narrator returns to the home of his parents- in this case their grave- in the aftermath of the catastrophic defeat of the 1984/5 miners’ strike, having left to study Classics in London ( like me, the first generation of his family to do so). As in the South Yorkshire Coalfield, we see the implications for identity of the loss of mining employment in an encounter with a drunken youth he catches graffitiing his parents’ grave:

Ah'll tell yer then what really riles a bloke.

It's reading on their graves the jobs they did –

Butcher, publican and baker.  Me, I'll croak

doing t’ same nowt ah do now as a kid.[[417]](#footnote-417)

Harrison’s encounter with this ‘other’, which but for social circumstances could easily have been him, shows him try to mediate the interpretation of the word ‘United’ graffitied onto his parents’ tombstone. His will to interpret it leads to: ‘an accident of meaning to redeem/ an act intended as mere desecration’.[[418]](#footnote-418) On first reading the claim to the tomb’s sacred placeholder of territory is simply that made under the emblem of Leeds United, but it may also glean its ironic shadow of the lost union of collective power. Rather than true solidarity, the territory is claimed for the faux-tribalism of the football field; the bitter pitched ideological picket lines outlined in Chapter Two echoed only faintly in a senseless iteration of violence as hooliganism. Harrison’s speaker soon finds his position upon his prodigal return as untenable, after his alter-ego youth, who is alienated out of all but the most visceral and immediate value systems, retorts that ‘a book’s not worth a fuck’[[419]](#footnote-419). The desperation of his call “The autre that Je est is fucking you!” echoes Rimbaud’s famous cry of alienation, ‘Je est un autre’[[420]](#footnote-420). Harrison’s attempt to absorb a dual persona portrays both the potential agencies of the self to give poetic voice to a societal other, but also shows its pitfalls and limitations. It can be seen as offering a personal tragedy as another lateral path of the wider nostalgia, willing to play out alternative versions of self and community in the guilt of escaping the consequences of the strike. Bleakly, this failure of poetic agency is emphasised by Harrison’s concluding trope, staring into the living room’s open fire until stoking up an apocalyptic reverie. The violentand nihilistic resignation to human insignificance across epochal time and space is both materially and symbolically embodied in the: ‘vast, slow, coal-creating forces, / that hew the body’s seams to get the soul’.[[421]](#footnote-421) Like the ruptures of Spahr’s consideration of the BP/ Deepwater Horizon disaster, Harrison’s speaker almost seems to crave the regenerating power of destruction which may lead to change, and which formed the very coalfields themselves, yet the forces invoked require the geological forces and pressures of millions of years. It is the sort of Benjaminian call to seize hold of memories as they ‘flash’ up in a form of poetic ‘photography’ which I have tried to employ in *Fiends of Fire-Damp*the material dimensions of an irreducible realm of truth with which to contain experience. For instance, I have tried to use the technical terminology of the pit when used, and to outline the moments of danger experienced by many miners, whilst also being interested in crafting moments of microscopic incursion where such moments may represent wider configurations of natural and social mining life.

*V.* ends with the sensual, but material, union that brings the oblivion its persona craves when in bed with his wife as the television’s last images recede to a ‘glow’ alongside the coal cooling in the grate.  At the start of my research, in 2015, this fatalism seemed to remain pervasive in the area. As Paul Mason stated, in a 2016 Guardian article about the underachievement of the white working-class that forms the predominant demographic of post-mining communities in the South Yorkshire Coalfield, ‘Thatcherism didn’t just crush unions: alone that would not have been enough to produce this spectacular mismatch between aspiration and delivery in the education system. It crushed a story.’[[422]](#footnote-422) In Chapter Two, we saw many versions of this same overarching story that the working class could tell about themselves to give a moral sense of meaning in their place in the world, and with which to motivate and aspire social mobility. During the period after these narratives were crushed, Norman K Denzin was at the forefront of proposing alternate methods in which the artist could again subvert the neoliberal domination of social and political discourses which came to a height in the years following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, when ‘Academics and pacifists critical of the war on terrorism (were) branded traitors. More and more restraints are being applied to qualitative, interpretive research, as conservative federal administrators redefine what is acceptable inquiry”.[[423]](#footnote-423)  His response was what he deemed performance ethnography, or auto- ethnography, which was powerfully subversive in that the space between political discourse and performance fuses in the actions of the performative self of the artist.

Performance ethnography is moral discourse. In the discursive spaces of performativity there is no distance between the performance and the politics that the performance enacts. The two are intertwined, each nourishing the other, opposite sides of the same coin, one and the same thing.[[424]](#footnote-424)

These acts subscribe, as cited with Katy Shaw’s Bakhtinian assertions in Chapter Two, to the notion that truth is only ever found within the interplay of dialogic interactions of collectives of people, rather by individuals.  As performances they may allow for nuanced representations between actors, making agents of those who offer their testimonies. In facilitating conversations in interviews and in tracing the sites and spaces of the former collieries I was able to create field texts- spaces for the remembered words and symbols of these encounters in which I may seek to perform through varied modes of address in my poems. That these acts should begin to form as performance within the self in the terms of its dreams and desires seems the most fitting response to the subjectivity engendered by neoliberalism, outlined in Chapter Three. As writers such as Jeremy Gilbert have commented in reply to Paul Mason’s article, this vision of the working class as ‘hapless victims’ of Thatcherism is too simplistic; and ignores the fact that a post-Fordist disillusionment had set in long before: ‘There is surely something significant in the fact that today, in a culture which is saturated by nostalgia, hardly anyone looks back to the epoch of full-employment as one which seems remotely culturally attractive’[[425]](#footnote-425). The mines themselves were dirty and sometimes dangerous: my own father quickly left the pit after training as an electrician to become a cinema manager, and almost every former miner who I have interviewed wanted their children to have jobs away from the mine. As we saw in Chapter Two, Fordist jobs engendered a workforce which was powerful and which won many employment rights, but which was necessarily emotionally repressive, with fixed familial power relations which often constrained women, in particular, subservient in maintaining the system. It is important not to patronise miners when working- class people such as those working in the South Yorkshire coalfield, in rejecting these societal constrictions, also had a hand in the cultural changes that brought about the closure of the mine. If the closures brought about hardship and unemployment, then we should remember that, as Denzin states:

The storied performances of life experiences move outward from the selves of the person and inward to the persons and groups that give them meaning...Persons are arbitrators of their own presence in the world and should have the last word on this problem.[[426]](#footnote-426)

The work of Denzin led me to wonder how I may ensure that people remain their own arbitrators within the narratives of my poetry, rather than becoming subsumed with a politicised, academic narrative. I began to search for other modes of address with which I may let the participants in my research speak in the poems, and to consider what the possible benefits would be therein. I aimed, therefore, to allow the primacy through address of phrases from the testimonies in field texts that I made; a move towards allowing the reader of the poem to enunciate the participants’ words. As Lazzarato asserts: ‘In the act of enunciation (in the same way of every act of creation), a power of self-positioning, self-production and a capacity to secrete one’s own referent emerges’[[427]](#footnote-427). It is the epiphanic autonomy that we saw Whitman experience in *Leaves of Grass* in the previous chapter, the difference being that this takes place within the selection of narrative events which enable the participant to define their own identity as a referent in time and place. The responsibility of positioning, of speech into the metres and structures of poetry is then mine, as I take their narratives in a further act of editing, of creation. I believe it would be impossible for me to be entirely absent from a poem in bringing about its creation. But I have endeavoured to find ways in which I may be less present; or at least to prioritise the participants’ symbolic and narrative choices. I came across the idea of using the structure of sonnets in order to explore this positional sense of the binaries of subject and object, worker and place as well as present consciousness and memory. The volta by which each of these binary concepts may pivot allowed me to represent the vibrancy of community pivoted through loss and decay, defeat pivoted into defiance, and many other tropes of feeling, with the picket line running square through each. I also attempted the use of the sestina. In *Moral Compass*, for instance, the female call centre worker’s voice was composed using only that participant’s own words, with refrains of phrases she repeated, and using her idiolect and dialect at times of heightened feeling in the interview in order to give a coherent voice to her fragmented experiences. My role as a poet here was one as editor, selecting phrases and positioning them. Here the sestina offers the potential to begin to restore the consciousness of her positional relationship with their work in the office (which she felt was hopeless, confusing and depressing) through the form’s rotation of patterns of lexical repetitions, and end-word pairings which offer a multitude of possible insights. Wherever possible, I used participants’ words as remembered in my field texts in order to lend each poem a strong, representative voice.

Another key method to promote the primacy of voice is through the use of refrains, as influenced by Juliana Spahr in the previous chapter. We saw lyrical refrain as a strategy to re-territorialise collective identity, in the raising of consciousness of our bodily agency to consider and then, reclaim, our ancestral territories as communities. Guattari likens the neoliberal subject as being like: ‘A child singing in the night because it is afraid of the dark (seeking) to regain control of events that deterritorialised too quickly for her liking…’. It is his belief that ‘Every individual, every group, every nation is thus “equipped” with a basic range of incantatory refrains.’[[428]](#footnote-428) It is an aim to create poems which make such incantations out of the summoned memories of participants in the hope that they may serve as routes to lost communities and identities, no longer extant in physical territory, but yet as a small offering of visions with which to help lay a claim upon the future of the coalfield. In rhetorical devices such as incremental repetition, anaphora and refrain, utterance in the poetic moment is given primacy over fatalistic or linear narratives as the ‘poem’s voice is posited not as the reader-auditor but as character.’[[429]](#footnote-429) If the poem may develop as voice as a character constituted of the voice acts of the post-mining community, then in this way, the space is created for a ‘performative unity into which readers and auditors may enter at will’[[430]](#footnote-430). My hope in these elements, which Greene defines as ritual, is that the poems bring into utterance the ritualistic moment that Rukeyser would believe participants: ‘wish to be told, in the most memorable way, what (they) have been meaning all along.’ [[431]](#footnote-431)

Yet times of trauma, in this case a collective trauma experienced with the sudden destruction of the area’s primary industry, exacerbate the displacing discourses of neoliberalism and “call into question the truth value of representation”. Denzin cites Clough (2007) “The experimental forms of writing that mean to capture trauma often present the subject in blanks, hesitations- a topographic formulation of forgetting, loss, uncertainty, disavowal, and defensiveness… [T]rauma makes the past and the future meet without there being a present. The future is collapsed into the past as the past overwhelms the present”.[[432]](#footnote-432)

This topographic *displacement*, as we saw in Chapter 2, brings a tendency for members of post-mining communities to slip into nostalgia, something that would suit hegemonic business interests in upholding the status quo in the present. Cathrine Thorleifsson, in her survey of the post-mining community of Doncaster, identified three **‘**new competing scale-making projects over meaning, memory and future’[[433]](#footnote-433). One section was aligned with cosmopolitan, global entrepreneurship which viewed the changes in the area as positive. For instance, I interviewed a prosperous footballer and his family, and former miners who were self-employed as gas-fitters and in the installation of safety equipment for playgrounds, both of whom preferred the flexibility of working on their own terms. Others reacted strongly against what they felt was a degree of immigration which, in their world view, led to an existential uncertainty leading to a lack of jobs and putting pressure on key services. This was evidenced in the strong ‘leave’ vote in the area[[434]](#footnote-434) during the EU referendum of 2016, as disenfranchised and vulnerable workers embraced anti-migration and anti-EU politics, and the agency of voting in an election in which every vote counted equally outside of the ‘First Past the Post’ system. Common across the spoken testimonies of my interviews was a sense that members of the community were still engaging ‘with the town’s industrial past, nostalgically appropriating coal as source of national and regional identity’[[435]](#footnote-435). This seems to be particularly a male facet of identity: the majority of those who wanted to speak to me, were male and nurtured a strong sense of nostalgia. This is perhaps understandable, given how empowering this Fordist sense of masculinity was shown to be in Chapter Two, with miners adopting the role of provider, warrior and moral guardians in one.

However, the post-mining community as a whole struggles to reclaim a collective sense of pride and meaning in the discourses it creates from the loss of its secure, defining industrial heritage. I attended the summer miners’ galas as one of the only remaining gatherings of the communities in their former identities as miners and miners’ wives. These reiterations of experience across time, ironically render the ‘new’ through perceptions of the loss of the past: brass bands and blessings of lodge banners amidst a political climate in which the trade union movement has become nullified. Thus collective action in the coalfield can often be retrospective and static: the thus-far futile attempts to hold an enquiry into the legality of the government’s use of the police at Orgreave[[436]](#footnote-436), for instance. The dynamic funding campaign which I mentioned earlier in the chapter called ‘Remember the Oaks’ raised £125000[[437]](#footnote-437) from events across the Dearne Valley, saw its end goal as an act of remembrance: to make a statue to commemorate the Oaks Colliery Disaster, which, whilst the biggest ever in England, with 361 miners and rescuers who died following explosions in the pit, took place over 150 years ago.

The trauma then, that leads to this tend towards nostalgia can be seen as the rupture between a remembered, idealised past and the precarious and disorientating present state of affairs. For every entrepreneurial success story, there were plenty of mining families who could not adapt. The ‘progress’ and raising of standards of living as promoted by Thatcherism was counterbalanced by experiences of lost status, resources and self-esteem. In the face of this, nostalgia itself can be a useful tool by which post-mining communities may try to gain agency in interpreting the past in order to form a new identity. One problem with this is that as a kind of collective imagination that tests each lateral possibility borne out of a yearning for a future that never was,[[438]](#footnote-438) it can lead to the tragic repetition of impossible outcomes- witness the testimonies of striking miners in Chapter Two pleading for a general strike, or for scabs to see sense and return to the picket line.

Aiming towards what Katy Shaw terms regeneration writings; those which encourage ‘spatial and temporal intrusions of dialogue between past and present in an attempt to reveal profound truths about the future’[[439]](#footnote-439), may allow the remembering and summoning of the past to become a process to insight, rather than an end in itself. As discussed at the end of Chapter Two, in addressing a place as a subject, then we may begin to experience it and will it into life in the present. This process defies linear time in which losses are irrevocable and subject to forgetting, offering the present tense of apostrophic address with the chance to present the speaker’s voice in an audible, performative moment. This approach may fulfil a collective yearning, the ‘Longing for that which is unattainable because of the irreversibility of time’[[440]](#footnote-440). The speaker addresses, invokes, declaims and asserts against the negation of that which has been lost. I feel this mode works particularly well in my poem *POST-* the story of a miner’s son who addresses the polluted wasteland of his father’s former colliery in Manvers, Rotherham in the early 1990s. I close the poem with the lines “all billowed smoke/ on the wake of/ the photograph dream,” indicating the imagery is borne of someone else’s memory, almost objectivist in this manner. I also use the figure of a “Fugue of hibernation” to twine what is present and absent: the mine in the memory and its absence now; the dream in the present tense that is liable to be forgotten or barely remembered upon waking. These forms of address may drift into elegy or panegyric, lateral ritual paths of the remembrance of people, places and relationships which can serve as an invocation for change in the poetic event of the present. When the address coalesces around the voicing of collective identities of class and gender, it offers, as Forrest and Vice observed in Chapter Two: ‘a platform towards political activity and the imagination of a possible future’[[441]](#footnote-441). The addressing of ‘place’ may serve as the human pivot to a harmony between nature and industry as seen in the Asiatic model of labour in Chapter One, and in the logging company of the miners’ strike at the beginning of Chapter Three. Each of these instances portray labour which resists commodification and thus, the alienation of the worker, through the addressing of a larger symbolic unity (a benevolent river goddess, the fuel to sustain the greater cause of the strike). To address, directly, the natural topography of the community in the South Yorkshire Coalfield is to summon memories of hard work and joyful leisure in which bodies may become circuitous through the utterance of thoughts and feelings to lost relationships with the remembered land.

Finally, it is with the presentation of these nostalgic ‘lateral paths’ of meaning that I feel it is necessary to consider my own role in the writing, as it is the poet’s agency to select which paths to render and to follow in the poem. This shift of focus travels the spectrum which runs from ethnography, (the written account of a culture or group) to autoethnography (the self-reflection of the life of an ethnographer), which can include both the subject’s drawing together of their own story when taking part in an interview, but also the poet’s own account of their place in the creation of the poetry. Norman K. Denzin’s description of what he terms ‘deconstructive autoethnography’[[442]](#footnote-442) is a crucial mode of approach in my research. As we have seen in Chapter Three, with the neoliberal ‘dividual’, the ‘unified speaking subject with full access to her thoughts and intentions is a myth”.[[443]](#footnote-443) By also deconstructing the researcher as a subject, deconstructive autoethnography acknowledges that any notion of an authenticity of voice, experience or presence can be problematised. Rather than constructing a binary self-other relationship which is proposed by Benjamin’s productivist poet working on behalf of a clearly defined ‘proletariat’ working class which no longer exists, this approach ‘de-centres the knowing I, challenges the writer’s voice, unsettles the concept of past-experiences as the site of subjectivity, and opens the door for multiple voices and perspectives to be heard, performed and seen.”[[444]](#footnote-444) In being present in persona, or in the reflective account which frames and composes the poem as it is being written down, this approach allows me to acknowledge my hand in the poem whilst simultaneously allowing a measure of autonomy to the voices of participants in the arbitration of the poem’s parameters and themes.I’ve committed to crafting poems that participants will recognise themselves in; poems created with their visions of the community its spaces for it continue to be theirs, rather than being dictated by the judgement of outside interests.My lyric poems aim to poeticise the stories and voices of my interviews without being directly representational, or framing into simplified and over-arching retrospective narratives. As we explored in Chapter Two, I favour apostrophic lyric poetry as a mode of address for participants’ voices as it is an event in itself, rather than a representation of an event. It is performative, and as such avoids easy misappropriation into nostalgic linearity. AsFranco Berardi asserts, as language’s excess which inundates transactional, financial modes, poetry is ‘a singular vibration of the voice. This vibration can create resonances, and resonances may produce common space…’[[445]](#footnote-445). These poems are invocations to the liminality of a discursive presence as its mode is a ‘Triangulated address’[[446]](#footnote-446), an indirect address connected to a third, absent or indeterminate addressee. In upholding a triangular address as I mediate the poems into being, I hope to offer participants’ utterances of identity the space and equality of emphasis to resonate in their depicted territories. They will thus be poems which are not absolutely mimetic, but which may offer observations about their community and expose its realities.These hopes and wishes which haunt the present and remain unconcluded, are rendered and played out in each poem’s present; freed from, and now hopefully back into, the transforming lifestyles and cultures in the coalfield’s towns and community, with the hope that each may offer its own trigger to meaning-making.

Stories from

The South Yorkshire

Coalfield

**THEY TALK**

with your dreams’

 sodium; the blaring boundary of streetlights

 the scratch of matches

 to silver-stain your eyesight

remarkable only when you think about it-

that everything here

has been held, is being held, and has been lost

at once in this night

and they ask, ‘when we die, who will

be interested?’

apparitions and flames:

the land unfamiliar to

the minds of our beloved

**Fiends of**

**Fire-damp**

**i**

This is the path to take, the path to this country.

The street, the seam, barricaded by the low stone wall

you are hurdling. It will be dangerous: ask for your temerity

in answering the dim, misgiving strangers

who voice the ‘*who are you?*’ on some abrupt hill.

Always speak the truth to the watchman asking,

skirt the silver of the railway in the grey away

from the certainty of tarmac and fibre.

The deep sepia of rolling valley, the Ardsley crematorium

bruising the sky with the plume of moments,

towards villages desolated into hamlet,

calamitied into their own silent hemisphere.

Line, line of stone, line of stone cottages-

supposed, as their haunting has no gossip, and

silent are the steps where busy feet should ring

in family. Yet you are pulled past to scramble up,

graze the path of blackened furnace dross

of rocks which evidence the Earth’s central fire.

There is no jury, no conjecture about the cottages

of implied widows and implied urchins.

But as you unpack your camera, its blind flash

of lens glass seems to draw out the poor boys

and girls into being, out of primitive beds of crust

and shrub.

-‘What do you call this place?’

            -‘Why it’s Hoyle Mill.’

The mind swings with the bird’s eye view

up the gloomy pit hill, painted in the dismal hue

of sorrow

***Be careful***

This path remembers the tragedy

with a sucking of air -

hold fast to the head gear

to stay out of

the shaft

**iii**

On the twelfth of December 1866, *three hundred and forty*

men and boys were alive, *three hundred and forty*

men and

boys were down,

down,

alive and working in the pit

Thirty years

since the corve cart first rounded the bank

Twenty years

since the pit first fired taking three or four lives

Almost twenty years

after the explosion that blasted seventy-three

more with twenty-six saved

Sudden extraordinary goaves

of gas. Deaths defined *accidental* at the inquest,

as the floor cracked for a considerable distance,

cracked like a kettle and

hissed, blew out the geordie lamps. Hissed

its indifference

to the grievous error of management in this pit

Years ago, one or two ventilation shafts

could have been sank in the distant workings

One or two shafts

could have blown the foul air, offered

escape from the fiends of fire-damp

Weary, living men and weary,

living boys plotting one or two shafts out of distant workings

to their dinners

It is a delicate question of cost of work and life

but the explosion was inevitable. The fire-damp

in the vast dips of the pit

The sparks at the stroke of a pick

It is a delicate question

of how much to dilute the foul air of the pit

There was a furnace

Some hands refused to work the notorious

Barnsley seam

There was a furnace that constantly burned

at the upcast

There are few kinder, or more generous men than the Proprietor

but it is a delicate question of cost

Some hands refused

to work, and some worked

returned giddy and tripping, insensible

The gas from the goaves, making men giddy

FIRE

chalked in some distant workings

Some hands refused, but other hands dare not take

their geordie lamps past the

FIRE

chalked on walls. Finally resolved upon:

an extra drift to ventilate the workings, clean the air for

*three hundred and forty* men, needed blasting so, a blast

A dull, heavy sound. A singular coincidence of explosion

and charge. A heavy sound made delicate with distance

A blaze

The pit all on fire

Fire flooding like gas over

*three hundred and forty* men and boys

**iv**

They were chucking their voices deep into the shaft,

moved by the desire to save

They were freighting the cage in an eager relay,

presented sickening sights

They were charred and blackened, not utterly lifeless,

scarcely recognising the face

They were restoring still forms to kitchen tables,

disfigured corpses to lift

and it was not a hallucination’s bell ring

but a bottle of brandy sent

to the sole man surviving the rescue attempt

swept by the second blast,

but there are no heroes banding now, my love

there are no heroes banding now

**v**

In this account, you are silent,

your exterior rude with newsprint,

your deep substratum of morality

cannot be excited like dust

in the page turn, but is constant

Lend me your honest and

undissembled feeling.

furrow the brows

on the high street,

dither the windows like rain

Let air reclaim your shrine,

from straw and puddled clay,

the scaffold and the cage,

Let everything fall away,

peace from disarray and pain

Lend me the mischief of unions,

dissension developing

sway. Our mutual benefit

rising, rising, until

incalculable today

**Strikes**

**APPRENTICE**

In order to     avoid sparks and explosions certain items were prohibited

underground,  silver-foil for one. Frisk searches carried out at random on the pit-bank.

underground  could be cold or hot depending on the depth of the

seam.              The deeper the seam, the warmer it was. My pit

Haigh             Moor was colder than the

Silkstone        seam. At the

pit-bank          as miners boarded the cage. Cigarettes and matches,

lighters etc.     were obviously contraband and to take

contraband      or attempt to take contraband

underground   was a sackable offence. Items which had

silver-foil        wrappers such as

chewing-gum   were custom-wrapped in

waxed-paper    by the manufacturer for sale at

coal mines    .The pit baths had two sets of lockers. One set was at the

canteen    side of the baths known as the ‘clean lockers’ or ‘clean side’ where clean

clothes     were stored. A walk round the corner took you into the ‘dirty side’ where work

clothes   were stored.   The idea was to strip naked by the clean

locker   ,walk round to the corresponding dirty side locker   taking your

towel     and soap and dress in work

clothes   then make your way to your place of work. Smokers would take one

cigarette   and one match only round to the dirty side to have a last

smoke     before the shift contraband problem. Some would hide a second

cigarette   and a match in a nook or cranny in the bath house

wall         to get a smoke at the earliest possible moment when they came out of the

pit     .At the end of the shift, it was up to the dirty side, strip off, take your

towel   and soap into the shower and after showering leave by a

door       opposite which took you into the clean side lockers. Manvers had a short travelling

walkway   system which took you past a series of sun

lamps     on your way to the

lockers.   What the training didn't prepare you for was being approached in the

baths     by a big, overweight and dirty miner handing you his

soap   and asking you to wash his grimy

back    .Many a young lad had never seen a naked

body     before, let alone touched one

**A GENESIS**

In the 1930s the coalshaft collapsed,

its subsidenceshifting wasteland into ing

\* *ing*: from the old norse for water meadow /

   marsh by the river, often plural as *ings*

the dialect embanked the plentiful north

sourced from the space made warm for speech;

the palate that presses breath glottal, forth

and rounded’s imagined like tunnels that reach

towards pressures of decades of rainfall

\*\* middle English *-ing*, from old English -ende

a suffix forming the present participle of verbs, as in *waiting*, as in

the river waiting

anaesthetised,

the river bleeding carpet dyes of

stout- brown, bottle-black,

pumped down lacquer-like,

even purplish in slicks

beside the fabric factory

reflecting at the derelict monastery

\*\*\* adjectives from participles,

 as in *the wait-ing*

the waiting, the waiting coal

black as sleep, yet tinnitus-white

diffracting the rhythms of bleary sight:

the succumbing of pit-head to carpark,

the Asda that’s open all night

**TO THE PATRON SAINT OF LOST THOUGHTS**

 propped up by the pit

I prize open your snaptin philosophy

to ensue like caplamp-light;

the love in our risking to feel

Now everything is synaesthetic

in the underground silence

whose colourless cupola

would echo if voiced in an anecdote

Oh to be illuminated by your speech of struggles,

be held inside its first enunciation-

copper letter which yearns to be instead

verdigris and ivy wreathe and weathering

Obscene defeats in the poem’s scopophilia

or, *what has image got to do with feeling*?

**SALVAGE**

Salvage the anonymous-

each poem, feathers to flight our past;

the means to subvert and imagine.

From time to time we need the road to escape town,

to slingshot from roundabout to carriageway, to roundabout

like taunted compass needles

Town of histories built on buried stories;

Eras threaded rich upon banners, mineral, floral, faunal

symbols that allow those ready, in moments of crisis, to feel.

the reader magnetic with repelling dread and hope,

velocity, motion and risk, to reel

To reconstitute a memory from

emotion, sensation and imagination.

The nightmind is a snowglobe at the edge of a hearth:

a chthonic chance for poetry,

a redemption, not of financial prosperity,

but remembrance

 in the reader’s new balance

**VANTAGE POINT**

Most days we are aware of it without seeing it;

the wind’s gear unwinding the sulphur beneath,

as though breathing is in apprenticeship

to superstructural steam and furling flame.

Our unit is our self-sufficiency

where motors, cable, switchgear are maintained,

repaired and overhauled.

       In special fields,

that worn irreparable is salvaged, changed:

conveyor belt cut up, split down to layers and

crafted into workbelts; flip-flops for the baths

against the lethal slip;

 kneepads brimming with sponge

                      to fend off bitter mice,

                                              the future bruises in pit girders

**FERRY FROM ESBJERG**

A paradox that the North Sea is raising-

to stand on deck forgotten, yet peninsula

to a wider goodwill, like bays

to the rolling moment.  We shiver

like a single idling engine’s phases,

like the swelling heart towards its beat

Anticipated,

the ferry peels and gilds its wake;

blackness cobbled into shimmering past.

An empathy of rooftop’s sleep is breaking

into daylit, cargo-gifts for children dreaming

by the rasp of dizzy christmas

Apprehensive, we arrive,

our efforts intercostal, heaving to a sigh:

the Customs tried to faze us

*if this is for the strike, you must sign pages,*

two miles from the concrete of harbour,

of carriageway like miles of bigot phrases

Yes, this was the custom of that authority:

needing no excess in metaphor or allegory,

but bluntly *we’ll do everything we can*

*to stop you getting in*. 45 minutes

or a promise to detain.

A Harwich stranger helped us race

like signatures, until within the proper place

we threw the papers in the officer’s face

**Betamax video holding part of the 21st December, 1984**

Wide shot: putting up welcome banner no sound piercing drawing pins

        into the unfurling banner, ‘SOGAT’.

        Wide shot above.  Full shot of SOGAT.

        Pan above banner.

Another pan, band on stage.

Reverse of above as if you are in the band.

Dishing up in the kitchen.

Mother and child below kitchen.

Blonde giving out plates. Older women.

Girl tickles

cut to

mother’s face.

kids messing about on the dance floor.

kodaks, three women walk in carrying sandwiches.

glamour girl.  medium shot of blondey.

bloke with sandwiches.     pan of

banner with crowd and balloons.

*They Shall not Starve* poster.

Nice pull out from the poster to shaking hands

people getting off a bus. VOICE OVER:  Give us a kiss… you’ve been a

 Godsend to our people. (too faint to be this?)

The unlovely bus follows people in.

wide shot of carrying boxes.

Hazel and bloke holding a box.

a failed interview.

reverse shot of them talking their strife.

Medium shot of handing boxes over

                                                       a London accent.

The club interior,

following gifts being carried in,

arrive at the stage and stack up.

                                      W/S a white rabbit walks into shot, across, and waves.

Balloons come down. A kid covered in chocolate

                                      with balloons and dad.

                                      Rabbit holds and kisses child.

                                      Kojak is dancing with a kid.

                                      Max Wall with a balloon.

                                      A woman jiggling around, holding a little girl.

            Kids waving arms to *Macho Man.*

            Max Wall dancing with a balloon to *Macho Man*.

            An announcement about Father Christmas.

            Party game, Worzel Gummidge.

              5 little loves ready for game.

pan to back. kids running in game- dummy run.

Lads receiving prize. Father Christmas arrives.

friends on stage. SOGAT speech and applause.

Victim and the miners. Father Christmas gives presents out.

 Chaos!

Father and child

content with the camera that looks at them.

**IT DIDN’T MAKE THE PAPER**

At Orgreave where I found the conflict’s heart

or it found us, lounging in shorts and vests

A summer day that heated like a shaft of sparks,

chucked housebricks, spent like someone else’s rent

were landing in ourfront rows. Sent

from out the back from men who wouldn’t speak:

who all had short hair- short and sleek: ‘agent

provocateurs’. I had to ask him what that meant.

The lads would tek the piss- I’d nivver lob a brick

just there to picket. And when we trickled back

t’ pit, I was but a young and single man;

my father wor bereft

Like three-nil dahn, no minutes and no tricks

the final whistle blows: you still feel sick

**TO THE POWER CUT**

Some say her hills of coal are hollow,

some say her soul is hollow,

but let’s pray for the power cuts to drop us all

like a rock in this bucket

pierced with five fire-holes

We picket the pit, the end of the estate,

will each other on, while their myths create us,

repeat us, dilute us into enemies within

as the coppers line the park off darkly

like thunder’s latest limit

our family becomes an illegal gathering

of numbers in the spitting distance-

across our doorstep, the trespassing power

of a government’s parable

**REVERIE**

The miner’s welfare club rumbles with turns and laughter, stages

smoke and ashtray glass to flex you out of shape like unspooled tape

the picket line by a sky inside hot asphalt that the mind reads as water

because water also reflects the sky, something higher, because water

like the chant finds its natural level with which it can sustain

here we go, here we go, here we go:

this is the heat of disputes to disrupt your organising gaze

fuzzy with interference, fizzy like asti, remembrance static

all along the watchtower they yell, the cranes sway still

the docks only glisten and car doors yawn half-sprayed

in gel-blue segue to The News- of an office darkness

stepping forward strip bulb by strip bulb,

a three-day week, into no- day week.

All is won.

**Captions**

**For**

**Lost**

**Photographs**

**1866 in 2016**

re-enacting the worst mining disaster in English history,

depicting a survivor running as if in slow motion

whilst the remaining performers interlock their arms to form

a tunnel of limbs on the point of collapse;

these young actors’ nervous, breathing connection to those passed

on through bones as an inherent identity

in the repetitive shifting of pronouns (*their* bones, *our* bones)

in marrow and earth and the kinship of place

through a subsidence of pronouns, *‘*theirdisaster, our ground’

becoming *their* ground and *our* disaster

through old seams shot with topsoil

the pit-shaft unplugged, and its air rasped

in the teenaged insistence *remember*, remember

those who are dying and their livelihood which will die

a widowed refrain, *remember,* instigated by the teenager who is shawled, so ‘widowed’

when she taps a shoulder, it brings about unconsciousness

now she is snatching the flush of memorial poppies out of the mourner’s pale

grip now grabbing the scuffed football, suddenly despondent

boys by the limp-flag, world cup aftermath.

Our witness is the fourth wall

**DIAGRAM OF TROPES**

**Path                            Path     Path Path**

**\* \* \* \***

 BONES BRONZE STATUE VIDEO MUSEUM

**Path** **\* \* \* \***

             EMBRACE                     SONG                   PROTEST                       STAGE

**Path**    **\* \* \* \***

                BONES             CAMPAIGN                   PIT HEAD     FOUNDATION

**Path   \* \* \* \***

EARTH                     GRIEF                 NEGLECT     FORGETTING

**Path        \* \* \* \***

MUSCLE                     GRAFT             UNION                   ILLUSTRATION

**POST -**

your legacy is derelict:

fiercely fractured concrete

parking spaces stolen into scrub grass

the generations flecked with aches

you are marked out in their leaving,

in punk’s fierce aesthetic – no future

no choices but the pull to fuse with anger,

life parallel with the centre of a nowhere

you are the street that shifts the stench of weed

the soundtrack shifts from flat to flat

 from techno to anarcho punk and back

 through skunk that hangs in sodium light

 in shafts beneath our feet

 you are the street of paths,

 its drugs and drinks’ collective

 counter-past

 No eyes gleam out of

 the decade prelude;

we twined the dirt-tracks’

fugue of hibernation

all billowed smoke

on the wake of

the photograph dream

**BIRD PROTECTION FOR THE SOCIETY OF ROYALS**

This wetland has been fought over, poached upon, chased over

by kids with sticks who called a spade a spade,

birders spurning daily lives for Spurn Head and back

with a stove and a tin of beans till dusk

1755; green, farmed. 1940s; cabled with barrage balloons

its colliery on three sides, surviving world war

only to be torn down from within.

Aerial photographs of 1993-  no sight for sore eyes, of

several square miles of moonscape:

*Mare Crisium* of violent flux and loss, *Mare Frigoris* of furnaces burned out,

*Mare Vaporum* pollution blues, *Oceanus Procellarum*, an ocean of storms,

*Mare Imbrium* of bitter tears, *Mare Nubium*, obscuring, forgetting,

until the mixing of topsoil of farmland with *Mare Humorum*

until secret bitterns, and the stilt-walking avocets called tourists

as pilgrims to their fact,

 serene by the boating of the tranquil lake.

.

Those mining birders, with blood and sweat and tears

staved off the driving culture, the indecent haste of the bulldozer,

sparing one last lunar feature:

the *Mare Cognitum* of its new teeming life;

            that which has become known

**A BARNSLEY BILDUNGSROMAN**

1997

part-time on fish counters, Humanities BA

boring but had to, foundering, family on the way,

let me work in the spare room, new ties

after the BA, getting hit with ‘you’ll be fine’

Opened doors you had to push for yourself,

to know what you wanted, put yourself on the shelf

in training we learned the whole history of Tescos, blah blah blah.

Then they wanted us to join the unions and- ha, ha!

in walked in the same union people in smeared aprons,

the managers and reps from the pits, same path,

*Back in the day, unions had too much power, no good for the country*

my head in my hands. blah, blah, blah. I had to laugh,

but it’s a new job; I’m not getting into it.

Then what did it was a fast-track programme,

or not getting onto it, *not your personal thing…*

-*well it’s not your job to decide that.*  I split

1998

Ventura, call centre agent, loads of jobs,

everyone jostled for position.

First couple of years there were lots of opportunities,

then the workforce became younger,

they began promoting the inexperienced with ‘hunger’

over the experienced ex-miners who’d been there longer.

They didn’t want to be challenged;

they wanted to mould people, arrange

1999

the Amarado Oil Company inside the old Coal Board offices

Texas in Manvers, tapping into the new lucrative dual-fuel businesses.

    dipping their toe into the market

Company-credit-card-behind-the-bar-racket

nice hotels and back offices, sacked but

temp jobs available,

    payment input, in but not permanently

2000

the Department for Work and Pensions

-they announced its closure.

I jumped before I was pushed.

Now

I process Jobseekers’ Allowance. Like death and taxes, a job that lasted.

The 2008 crash, our boom time: fears

we couldn’t get staff fast enough.

Recruitments, promotions galore. Then losing staff more and more.

I get accused of being cynical, but its privatisation.

Unreal, I’ve been a civil servant as long for the nation as

a miner. With hindsight, it was hard. My Dad felt it.

But I was a young single man, out on the scrap tips.

Funny. Bitter. It was an adventure

till I ran out of money and needed new digs

**REIFICATION**

Their exactitude becomes my grown illiteracy

Their menacing upon my goose-pimpling flesh

Their speaking teeth, my hunger into rests

And they’re closing off the commons

grazed,

gnawing fingernails in clutching palms,

my nakedness: momentum, never stillness

And they’re closing off the commons

And they’re closing off the commons

like they blocked the flying pickets

like we had to climb in boots of cars

like the plastic bags of groceries

And I get that time moves on,

but it moves along the prices

like the bursting of the Don

while we look helpless, on

And they’re closing off the commons

like a landlord sick of talk,

like a night too cold to walk

fall asleep, just be gone

**CHARITY POETRY**

I always like commissions because they make me think hard,

make me want to make this piece very accessible.

This campaign-call of the kind-hearted,

tightly rhymed with brussen rhythm,

urgent as a chant

*what have we learned?*

People like its heightened language: -

*what have we learned?*

the music of it, the inclusiveness of it.

I guess I like the sound of the word *timeless*;

I like the idea of the ground as unchanging, unshifting

I like the idea of the explosion being a constant noise in the town's collective ear

And I think identity comes from those who work together

to stay hilarious, alive

**YOUR PIT WHEEL**

Your pit wheel creaking in your sleep

Above the laughing miners of a shift’s end

Your pit wheel stitched

As a badge on a bored scout’s arm

Your pit wheel in authentic black and white

Stern geometry cutting fluffy dusk-clouds

Your pit wheel painted dripping racing-green

Obscured by regeneration conifers

Your pit wheel as placeholder for a name

For this town of graffiti and shutters

Your pit wheel of the purple buddleia

Clasped in the wall like a drunk’s fist

Your pit wheel as its

Grade II listed shithole

**MORAL COMPASS**

8AM I take a tablet that takes three hours to absorb.

That first 30 mins is difficult. But then, this is what I’m like

Moral compass- shut the fuck up. None of *our* customers

For civility’s sake I won’t say owt, but you’re tekkin the piss.

I’ve got a shoddy diet. I’m taking all this stuff. I’m not on the sick.

It dunt sit reight with me doin summat for nowt.

 People will do owt for nowt.

 Cmon guys! Do summat with your lives.

    Have some pride.

but then, this is what I’m like

3 Minutes I’ve timed it. Because of the data I know

it takes 3 minutes to pee: 180 seconds on average

I get there and I bang out calls one after another

because the difficult calls come in the afternoon,

 smother you,

but then

use 10 minutes in *wrap* after peak calls. Difficult call? yank the cord out

they can’t trace it. Can’t do it too many times because

it looks suspicious if you

 pull the cord out when you’re headset’s on

because I go on tangents from the circle and go mad,

you learn how to set up your workstation

     to yank the cord out,

but then

this is what I’m like

when I’m mentally healthy. They noticed I was tranquilized

everything is in slow motion. Actually it feels normal.

It feels like I’m meditating,

     the calmness, medicating

Sestina

*-We’ve got call centres so we can rectify these problems*

*- there’s been a system error*

(in my brain, most of the fucking time)

- *a system error, I can sort it out immediately*

use their lines: *I’m just gonna put you on hold,*

I’m not telling you someone’s fucked

up. She slept with the manager three times

in the overflow car park, no error,

no exchange of promises: they fucked

and there it was, immediately.

Then I’m in a bit of a low-cut dress, hold

on, apparently that’s caused problems

Seriously, High School taught me that times

people see you as vulnerable, immediately

they take you down... *push it back, hold*!

I was getting attention from the manager, problem

is she didn’t like it, so I sit there in *wrap* as if it’s an error

*problem offshore,* (fag break for 30 minutes before!) am not fucked

Documented discussions, many times

we know we have problems

taken into a room with *you plus two,* immediately

you’re in for a rodgering, you’re fucked

one crazy woman, fired after errors

locked herself in the toilets, held

on for hours barricaded out of time

you might as well be a ghost, whose problems

pass by like a breath of wind, whose error

is spent in a headset immediacy

like the flame at the end of my wick, tucked

tight as a hangover’s hold

My God, the tinder parade, bad memories, immediately,

his grandma still up with her girlfriend, *hold*

*on*, take your shoes off downstairs. Fuck!

I nearly slept with him! I’ve got problems

but denial’s a beautiful thing; you function with errors

and counselling is expensive, £30 a time

*problems offshore* and my time’s gone in error

 immediately fucked, she holds no better knowledge,

 fed only the lines that get fed through me

**WE WERE THE OVERSPILL**

Second lot of training. Shit’s gonna hit the fan

9AM Monday morning. Advert’s going on TV:

Pension Credit. People had to call up and apply.

We were the overspill. We had time to bond.

Play games and make quizzes. We moved from desks

as they gradually took people. Some wanted more calls.

Others liked the quizzes. We stayed as overspill.

*The rug’s gonna get pulled from under your feet here*.

But it didn’t- until Christmas. Flashes of people coming up.

The Team Leader stripping off to

Knights in White Satin. Went on for ages in his pants.

Lauren the reddish- blonde singer. Gaff,

I liked how he bit his nails and smelled them.

They had a snog. Emma, she got pregnant, was a smoker-

*I was gonna stop but I’d like to have a baby*.

We’re getting whittled down. That rock guy with the 7-foot girlfriend.

What’s his story? Flashes of people are coming up.

The new year snowballed, staggered start times.

The rug swept from under our feet. Whittled down.

Deeply unpleasant, call after call after call,

Call levels on red boards. Waiting till the minute changes

and logging out then.   Mechanised. Told a white lie-

my mum had broke her arm. You can be off at 5.25 as a

one-off, as long as call levels are low and not moderate

or high. The next day she ran the report and at

5.25 they were moderate. Disciplinary.

It was like being in a capsule, no connection

with the place. Plonked anywhere.

I liked the walk to the new lake for lunch.

The knee-high saplings. For me it was a transition period.

After Australia, before York. No spiritual education

there. They were dirty fuckers. Aren’t we all connected

and multi-faceted beings? No *what’s going on with*

*you?*s.

Look at my disciplinaries- no *what’s going on*

*with this fella?* Something deeply troubling below

the surface. What was the first one? That might be

interesting to you. I gave him the finger. A woman

had to demonstrate my action in the meeting.

We had a rapport; when asked what I did she blurred a swift motion.

I kept my job.  The second time? I went off like fuck on the

wheelie chair, right to the meeting room perimeter.

It was a cry for attention.

But there was no *what’s going on at home?*

Just disconnect.

**STREETVIEW, MANVERS COLLIERY**

Where are you in the detailed overview?

wetlands over outlines, your structures but

the scorched lines in scrub-grass, by pallets

at the depot of our earthly desires:

pallets stacked cathedral and warehoused

You are getting forgotten, unless prompted

   into the front of trolley-pushers’ thoughts.

    What would make you glow like a Costa front,

   break you out of car-boot picture-frames,

             out-sing the hiss of the arterial roads of state?

You are behind the gates and barriers,

 sometimes a simple road sign

 sometimes the smoke of corrugated smokers

 YOU ARE ON CCTV

**Collateral Words**

**PUB**

*Just let me clean this shit up, and you can talk slash type whatever you are doing. If you are ordering a wife order me one, I want blonde hair, big tits*

[ holds the air tightly with bowled fingers to denominate his wish territory’s curving fertility as a woman ]

*and an ass like a peach /*  the bar-light all jaundiced with first sight

like UV dawns up upon his dearth of facial reflection - of stubble hay of climate’s change and why do I let this be OK to say and why can I not be strong enough to challenge:

masculine like a foreigners’ vulnerability; masculine like denial.

Try deny any chain with this man except your given meat  - cock - chain of manhood

 What is left over?

**ROUNDABOUT**

Summer’s cargo

SUV,

take back control:

vote leave

magnetic with repelling dreads, we

taunted like compass needles, we

dual with carriageways, we

are junction to the judder

so speedbump. so pothole. so

nobody dreams above their dashboard anymore

air-conditioned re-entry into town,

not to rub against its atmosphere

**DREAM AT THE MINERS’ GALA**

The nuisance of capturing dreams / Britain has slipped thru the sense of itself. You can only see it when you leave it. Like once I went to - this is too grand - I saw Thracian caves cracked open by centuries of Black sea earthquakes, golden heat.  And - this is too grand - but subsidence quakes through the coalfields again. Subsidence flashes new lakes. To forget is primordial, water-borne   /    remember, and life is tough; the monuments their latest allowance of that. Collection buckets shake with coppers for the disaster monument: a bronze widow saddled with a bruised toddler, a bandstand by a purpose. *A Whiter Shade of Pale,* dissembling brass into its drone, clatters its campaign upon the breeze. Muscles that ache

dim efficiencies to hold us                  like metres of faint poems

**INSOMNIA**

Upset stomach the next day.

He would yearn to be able to say a prayer through to the end without drifting away; to source

the seam of his mood, to be free of all the gazing. Why couldn’t he think of the pleasant things?

Next, he would dream about pleasant things.

 a flaking sausage roll sneaked

 in an echoing bus station gate

the strike

as the washing machine his mother put on

spinning out of time downstairs

 the strike

 being a shivering child by a running bath

 and the shadow resonance of a piano, still warm upon its lid

and a frame of

his grandparents as

locking-hand children;

**HALF-REMEMBERED NEWSPAPER**

that troubles us since Brexit. mistakes are sudden, plummet one

anything goes, knuckles out of numbness for the Poles / on the TV, a

party conference calls jobs *British* then the American maternity invoice

which itemised skin-to-skin contact, post-caesarian, at $39.35 since

drinking daily into longer happy longer lucid longer thinner states

dealing with it, but what can you say that isn’t an itemising?   Talking in

poetry: the more elegant, the more valuable its print / once familial love

in contact is itemised as a new commodity     twice into its poetic

apocalypse / at least $39.35 still has corners and sides, at least paper and

coin. Invert the transaction: how much pain for the main items of news?

Emaciation’s latest ribs / cannulae clogged and powdered with plaster

elbows pinning their last embrace    the bewildered boy in the

ambulance bay / the Syria rotating through our bedrooms/ life as       the

awe at no end till some next time   still we write

**IS POETRY**

the reconstruction of ethnography into autoethnography?

the microphone falling into squealing feedback

from the speaker-stack, the smartphone slaps the tiles

splinters the screened feedback; cannot replay the respirated voice.

Sang experience. the PhD’s impact, gradations of the pricing at the market

*why don’t you like this poem*, *how much will you write of you?*

Jess reminding that writing is always a dialogue

in autoethnography, this reminding is the call to craft new characters:

not just self-realisation, but the stirring of heard words,

not just your blood to smear the white space of the page

*Maybe you can come back after the PhD state? You are there,*

*in the community*, it is OK. *When did you start to feel OK about the poem?*

Draft out the fourth wall,

no longer at one remove, but cast in auditorium darkness

hunched in the aisles before the poem’s exertions,

whose breath, as mine, is seen to mist the cold

Guilt halts: the poems are tough, confusing, abstract

is that alright? To keep writing, holidaying by thracian caves, into

readings that widened my memories into a newer story of more people

sunshine bleaching into its crackled soundtrack. Here, where

my father’s palms are far and gone, flat behind the coal-dust air.

tweaked at by this symbol for my own hands lost in work

*And your work has been human, and full of love for others. how do you feel about the community?*

I care about them, and the post-Brexit, feedbacking post-debatable

but nevertheless, who will send the subsidies?

here is my subsidy for the moment in which you read it;

a present transactable with the rhythm of our lives

**SCULPTING**

I could ask that you stir awe in yourself by seeing-

the leaf as a mimetic act in which we read our own arteries

Consciousness bifurcated into conscience;

its runic, politic veins

A human hierarchy of yearning

for simplicity

for a stark depiction of the

complications of skeletons and cells

The climate as the trickling of our collective skin-

I will end in trying something like this.

But this town does not remember like this.

Its sculptor once had cardboard stuffed in his shoes to fill

the holes at the bottom;

now he can nearly reach out of his car and touch it-

his shawled woman of bronze, haloed by a stainless steel;

circle of life in the pushing of a pram.

Neither of us know what it’s like working down a mine:

Yet all of us know by our degrees

the hardship and heartache that went with it

**VERNIX CASEOSA**

Hold your breath for as long as you can in the bath:

bubbles iridescent, curve light as across mussel shell

until silver, tight-chested, you are burst

into the grease of a varnishing birth

in new, obliging shallows: shellfish, crab, aquatic plants

for the biped who stands, scans

and for the first time sees;

brain flushed with violets of iodine

Our environment amends our physiology:

the ear canal that latches onto coolnesses of tide,

responds in bone- petal-skins of first ice-

until a divers’ ear to dive with, to bear the pressurised

intact like seal pups in harbour congregation

whose same *vernix caseosa* brings us,

through our history of exposures and starvations,

to the epoch’s narrative in waveshapes

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**APPENDIX**

**PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET 11th May 2016**

Project: **A Poetic Ethnography of the South Yorkshire Coalfield.**

You have been invited to participate in a research project. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like any further information. Take time to decide if you would like to take part. Thank you for reading this.

**Background**

My name is Bryn Tales and I am in the first year of studying for a PhD in English Literature at the University of Sheffield. Most of my employment background has been in teaching and education, although I have worked in several different types of employment, including call centres such as the former Ventura call centre at Manvers. I am from the Barnsley area and the first of many generations of my father’s family in Barnsley not to go down the pit myself (I was only 5 when the Miner’s strike of 1984 broke out). In 2015, I was awarded the Hossein Farmy Scholarship to carry out research connected to the mining industry. I have decided to choose the area of the former Manvers Colliery Complex to to discover how the identity of people living and working in the area may have changed since the loss of the mining industry, and to write poetry which explores this. The project is expected to be completed in 2019.

**Why have I been chosen?**

You have been identified as someone who can provide research data connected to the former mining communities of South Yorkshire, either as a retired former miner or member of a mining family, someone still working (or searching for work) who has had to adapt to the death of the mining industry, or a member of the community who has recently moved into the area having never worked in mines. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may discontinue your involvement at any time and do not have to give a reason.

**What will happen if I take part?**

You will contribute to a discussion about your experiences of living and working in Manvers. The conversation may take part with other participants to allow you to discuss and compare your experiences together. There will be no set questions and you will be free to talk about whatever you want for as long (or short!) as you want. The discussion will take place in a location that is agreed beforehand and convenient to all participants.

**Possible benefits and risks of taking part**

The prospective benefit of taking part in the project is that you are able to enrich the quality of the research data and lend your voice, experiences and ideas to the poetry and research that comes out of it to give as true a picture of the community as possible.

Possible risks are particularly that for some people, the discussion may trigger uncomfortable memories relating to the loss of the mining industry or employment in general. It is important to be aware that you can take a break from the discussion or discontinue your involvement at any point if you become uncomfortable talking about your experiences.

**What if something goes wrong?**

Contact details of the research supervisor are listed at the bottom of the page if you wish to complain about any aspect of the research project. If you are not happy with the response to your complaint, then this can be escalated to the Head of Department.

In the event of any distress experienced as a result of participating in the research, a list of agencies that may offer support is also provided at the bottom of the page.

**Confidentiality**

All the information that you give will be strictly confidential and anonymised. You will not be identifiable in any reports or publications. Where participants’ words, phrases or stories are used, then they will be anonymised and fictionalised within the poetry. Consent forms will be confidential and kept in a secure location on the university’s password protected server.

**What will happen to the data?**

I plan to use the stories, events, descriptions and sentiments of participants to create an ethnography: a study of the identity and culture of the people of Manvers- through writing a collection of poetry and through studying and analysing theories which will enhance this. I hope to invite participants who join the optional email mailing list to a public reading in Manvers in which you can hear the poetry created as a result of the research and express your opinions of it. Data might be used in subsequent research and publications, but your identity with regards to the data will always remain anonymous.

**Ethics Procedure**

The project has been reviewed by Dr. Matthew Cheeseman and Research Supervisor Dr. Sam Ladkin in the course of the School of English’s ethics procedure.

Thank you for helping me in this important research.

Best regards,

Bryn Tales

**Research contacts:**

**Lead researcher**: Bryn Tales, 07599662423

**Research Supervisor:** Dr. Sam Ladkin, 0114 2228481

The School of English,

Jessop West,

1 Upper Hanover Street

Sheffield

S3 7RA

**Support:**

**MIND**: [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk) Tel: 020 8519 2122

**Relate**: [www.relate.org.uk](http://www.relate.org.uk) Tel: 0300 100 1234

**Samaritans**: [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org) Tel: 116 123

**Counselling Directory**: <http://www.counselling-directory.org.uk/>

#### Participant Consent Form

|  |
| --- |
| Title of Research Project: **A Poetic Ethnography of the South Yorkshire Coalfield**Name of Researcher: Bryn TalesParticipant Identification Number for this project: Please initial 1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated 25.04.16

explaining the above research project and that I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.1. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the discussion at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negativeconsequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or

questions, I am free to decline to answer them. I understand that I have 14 days from the date of the interview with which to withdraw my data from the project if I change my mind (lead researcher contact number: 07599662423).1. I understand that my responses and personal data will be kept strictly confidential.
2. I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised responses. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials,

 and I will not be identified or identifiable in the reports that result from the research. 1. I wish to be kept informed of future events relating to the research via email.
2. I agree for the data collected from me to be used in the creation of poetry and

 future academic research. 1. I agree to take part in the above research project.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Name of Participant Date Signature(*or legal representative*)Email address: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Name of person taking consent Date Signature(*if different from lead researcher*)*To be signed and dated in presence of the participant*\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Lead Researcher Date Signature*To be signed and dated in presence of the participant*Copies:*Once this has been signed by all parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form, the letter/pre-written script/information sheet and any. A copy of the signed and dated consent form should be placed in the project’s main record.* |

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46. Dayton, pp. 22-23. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
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53. ibid. p. 72. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. ibid. p. 72. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Marx, *Grundrisse* p. 404. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. In her speech to the House of Commons in 1559 in answer to their address about her marriage, Queen Elizabeth asserted ‘Yea, to satisfie you, I have already joined myself in marriage to an husband, namely the Kingdom of England.’ From J. Welwood, (1820) *Memoirs of the Most Material Transactions in England*: *for the Last Hundred Years, preceding the revolution in 1688*. London: R. Wilks. p. 235. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Rukeyser, *West Virginia,* p. 72*.* This passage is a direct quotation from ‘A Briefe and True Relation of the Discoverie of the North p. art of Virginia,’ written in 1602 by Jon Brereton, who was a passenger on the Concord during its voyage to New England. Brereton believed that Virginia may hold a coveted trade passage to the East Indies. Brereton’s account, taken chiefly from Hakluyt, 1534-1608. can be found in *Early English and French Voyages*, edited by Henry S. Burrage (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), pp. 327-340. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Rukeyser, *West Virginia,* p. 72. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. ibid. p. 72. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Rukeyser, *The Life of Poetry*,p*.* 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Benjamin,p. 257. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Rukeyser, *West Virginia*. p. 72. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Dayton, p. 36. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Anon. (1861) *John Brown’s Original Marching Song*. Philadelphia: J.H Johnson. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
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67. Rukeyser, *The Bill.* p. 102. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Rukeyser, *The Life of Poetry. p.* 36. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Benjamin, p. 258 [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
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71. Benjamin,p.255. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Ward Howe, J. (1861) *The Battle Hymn of the Republic* in *The Atlantic Monthly.* Feb. 1862. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Rukeyser, *The Life of Poetry.* p. 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. ibid. p. 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. ibid. p. 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. ibid. *West Virginia, p. 72.* [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. ibid. *The Life of Poetry,* p. 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. ibid. *West Virginia, p. 72.* [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. ibid. p. 72. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. ibid. p. 35. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. ibid. p. 37. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Benjamin,p.255. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Rukeyser, *The Life of Poetry*, p. 37. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. ibid. p. 186. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. A simple account of the experiments and their implications can be found in Satrajit Dutta and Rabindra Nath Kanungo, *Affect* *and Memory: A Reformulation*. Oxford: Pergamon, 1975), p. 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Rukeyser, *The Life of Poetry*, p. 186. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. ibid. p. 186. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
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91. ibid. p. 187. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
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103. ibid. p. 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
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106. Marx, *Grundrisse.* p. 479. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. Anderson, p. 483. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. Cherniak, M. p. 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. ibid. p. 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. ibid. p. 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. ibid. p. 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. Rukeyser, *The Dam.* p.95. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. ibid. p. 95. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. ibid. p. 95. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
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119. ibid. p. 93. [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. Cherniak, p. 59. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
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141. Barry Hines Papers, *The Heart of It*Box 9 addendum. p. 127. [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
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150. The Ridley Plan ‘Confidential Annex’ [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
151. Barry Hines Papers, *The Heart of It*Box 9 addendum. p.125 [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
152. ibid. p.72

 [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
153. ibid. p.45 [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
154. ibid. p.70 [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
155. ibid. p.55 [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
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157. ibid. p. 76. [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
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180. ibid. p. 200. [↑](#footnote-ref-180)
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183. ibid. p. 186. [↑](#footnote-ref-183)
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198. Forrest and Vice, (2018). p.167. [↑](#footnote-ref-198)
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200. ibid. pp. 48-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-200)
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202. Milne, S. *‘*Battle for Orgreave revealed crude riot tactics that caused hundreds of injuries while 48-day trial exposed lies about arrests of pickets*’*, in The Guardian, 20 June 1991.Accessed 22/11/2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-202)
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212. Hines, *The Heart of It*. p. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-212)
213. Barry Hines Papers, *The Heart of It*Box 9 addendum. p. 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-213)
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217. Hines, *The Heart of It*. p. 39. [↑](#footnote-ref-217)
218. ibid. p. 39. [↑](#footnote-ref-218)
219. Barry Hines Papers, *The Heart of It*Box 9 addendum. p. 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-219)
220. ibid. p. 100. [↑](#footnote-ref-220)
221. ibid. pp. 100-1. [↑](#footnote-ref-221)
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226. ibid. p. 61. [↑](#footnote-ref-226)
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228. ibid. p. 169. [↑](#footnote-ref-228)
229. Forrest and Vice found many parallels in the imagery employed by Hines in *The Heart of It* in the

 manuscripts of other unpublished work. The use of a skylark’s song in the account of The Battle of

 Orgreave in *After the Strike,* as in Cal’s imagined version in *The Heart of It* being one of many examples

 that suggest that Hines compiled and drafted many versions of narratives in the search for an authentic

 imagery. See Forrest and Vice (2018) pp. 171-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-229)
230. ibid. p. 171. [↑](#footnote-ref-230)
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232. Hines, *The Heart of It*. p. 116. [↑](#footnote-ref-232)
233. ibid. p. 116. [↑](#footnote-ref-233)
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235. Leslie, E. (2000) *Walter Benjamin: Overpowering Conformism*. London: Pluto Press. pp. 60-1. [↑](#footnote-ref-235)
236. Hines, *The Heart of It*. p. 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-236)
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240. ibid. pp. 109-110. [↑](#footnote-ref-240)
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242. ibid. p. 172. [↑](#footnote-ref-242)
243. Hines, B. (1994) *The Heart of It*. p.80. [↑](#footnote-ref-243)
244. Barry Hines Papers, *The Heart of It*Box 9 addendum. pp. 41-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-244)
245. Mick Walsh MP, speaking at a Hatfield rally in 1984 comments on how ‘we’ve seen the birth and the growth of women’s support groups in every mining village, in every mining community in this country.’ Barry Hines Papers, *The Heart of It*Box 9 addendum. p. 129. [↑](#footnote-ref-245)
246. ibid. p. 63. [↑](#footnote-ref-246)
247. ibid. p. 144. [↑](#footnote-ref-247)
248. ibid. p. 118. [↑](#footnote-ref-248)
249. ibid. p. 206. [↑](#footnote-ref-249)
250. ibid. p. 41. [↑](#footnote-ref-250)
251. ibid. p. 41. [↑](#footnote-ref-251)
252. ibid. p. 146. [↑](#footnote-ref-252)
253. ibid. p. 146. [↑](#footnote-ref-253)
254. ibid. p. 147. [↑](#footnote-ref-254)
255. ibid. pp. 25-26. [↑](#footnote-ref-255)
256. ibid. p. 35. [↑](#footnote-ref-256)
257. ibid. p. 149. [↑](#footnote-ref-257)
258. ibid. p. 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-258)
259. ibid. p. 195. [↑](#footnote-ref-259)
260. ibid. p. 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-260)
261. ibid. p. 180. [↑](#footnote-ref-261)
262. ibid. pp. 205-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-262)
263. Geldoff, B. and Ure, M. (1984) *Do They Know It’s Christmas Time*. Warner/ Chappell Music Inc. [↑](#footnote-ref-263)
264. Barry Hines Papers, *The Heart of It*Box 9 addendum. p. 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-264)
265. ibid. p. 143. [↑](#footnote-ref-265)
266. ibid. p. 146. [↑](#footnote-ref-266)
267. ibid. p. 119. [↑](#footnote-ref-267)
268. ibid. pp. 199-200. [↑](#footnote-ref-268)
269. ibid. p. 181. [↑](#footnote-ref-269)
270. Forrest and Vice, (2018). p. 165 [↑](#footnote-ref-270)
271. ibid. p. 166. [↑](#footnote-ref-271)
272. Margaret Thatcher frequently quoted this phrase in her speeches on economic policy, which became abbrieviated to TINA. See ‘Margaret Thatcher: A Life in Words’ in *The Telegraph*, 8th April 2013. https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/margaret-thatcher/9979399/Margaret-Thatcher-A-life-in-words.html. Accessed 11/08/2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-272)
273. Barry Hines Papers, *The Heart of It*Box 9 addendum. p. 93. [↑](#footnote-ref-273)
274. ibid. p. 202. [↑](#footnote-ref-274)
275. ibid. p. 143. [↑](#footnote-ref-275)
276. ibid. p. 92. [↑](#footnote-ref-276)
277. ibid. p. 215. [↑](#footnote-ref-277)
278. ibid. pp. 176-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-278)
279. ibid. p. 201. [↑](#footnote-ref-279)
280. ibid. p. 189. [↑](#footnote-ref-280)
281. Shaw, K. (2012). p. 114. [↑](#footnote-ref-281)
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 Michigan Press. p.110. [↑](#footnote-ref-282)
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289. Shaw, K. (2012) p. 114. [↑](#footnote-ref-289)
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291. ibid. p. 16. [↑](#footnote-ref-291)
292. Barry Hines Papers, *The Heart of It*Box 9 addendum. p. 184. [↑](#footnote-ref-292)
293. ibid. p. 190 [↑](#footnote-ref-293)
294. Shaw, K. (2012). p. 112. [↑](#footnote-ref-294)
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297. ibid. p.16. [↑](#footnote-ref-297)
298. Barry Hines Papers, *The Heart of It*Box 9 addendum. p. 209. [↑](#footnote-ref-298)
299. Shaw, K. (2012) p. 99. [↑](#footnote-ref-299)
300. Culler (2015) p. 222. [↑](#footnote-ref-300)
301. ibid. p. 223. [↑](#footnote-ref-301)
302. ibid. p. 223. [↑](#footnote-ref-302)
303. Shaw, K. (2012) p. 128. [↑](#footnote-ref-303)
304. Hines, *The Heart of It*. p. 211. [↑](#footnote-ref-304)
305. Ibid. p. 211. [↑](#footnote-ref-305)
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