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Joe Lampton's North–South Divide: Remembering Place and Space in *Man at the Top* (1970–72)

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ABSTRACT

This article considers the depiction of region and materiality in Thames Television's *Man at the Top* (1970–72). Dealing with the present by looking to the past, the series critiques the architectural reconstruction that changed the face of the country during the post-war years and beyond. This transformation is seen through the jaundiced eye of series protagonist Joe Lampton, a 1950s anti-hero recycled for a more uncertain age. He finds himself caught between the pull of tradition and the push for progress – forces aligned respectively with the industrial North (his native Yorkshire) and the cosmopolitan South (his contemporaneous London-based life). Why, in the broader context of the early 1970s, must Lampton's North be identified with the past? How does materiality work to frame remembrance? The article responds to these questions by mapping the series, along with television culture more generally, onto its socio-political moment. It arrives at conclusions via a constructionist analysis that draws on 'New Left' inflected discourses, on the one hand, and philosophies relating to collective memory and materiality on the other.

Keywords: memory; materiality; 1970s television; post-war reconstruction; modernism; the North

INTRODUCTION

In this article I offer a constructionist analysis of themes relating to region and materiality, utilizing the concept of memory as an organizing principle. My subject is Thames Television's *Man at the Top* (1970–72), which ran for 23 episodes across two series. This gritty drama (re)visits issues of class, tradition and progress, viewing them comparatively from locations in or around London, the Home Counties and Yorkshire. Dealing with the present by looking to the past, it critiques the processes of post-war reconstruction that had changed the face of the country. The series reflected a fairly long-held conviction that '[a]cross much of urban Britain' – to quote David Kynaston (2014: 304) – 'modernism was being imposed on a deeply un-modernist populace'. I contend here that this was particularly the case in the North of England. While it is true that much of this enquiry deals with the South East, it does so primarily to facilitate a comparison with the North – and with Yorkshire in particular. My understanding of the difference between north and south, as it is presented in *Man at the Top*, emerges from a consideration of physical alteration. This change includes a variety of urban and domestic spaces, and it is seen through the eyes of male protagonist Joe Lampton. The vison in question is wholly masculine, then, historically specific and region-inflected in its construct. This is a

point I take into account as I pose the following questions. Why is Lampton's North identified with the past? How does materiality work to frame remembrance?

My answers draw on several post-war cultural and sociological discourses, each of a 'New Left' political inflection. (Hoggart 1957; MacKenzie 1958; Thompson 1960; Williams 1958). They also borrow from the philosophies of thinkers such as Gaston Bachelard (1964) and Pierre Nora (1989), whose works on memory and materiality are rooted in broader notions of collective memory. A turn to the spatial, as it were, is helpful in that it allows for a topographical approach to a drama in which region serves to demarcate spheres of experience. And this in turn suggests new and fertile ground for 1970s television studies. In broad terms, the article asserts that 1970s television offered a form of 'mnemohistory'[1] as a symbolic replacement for lost space. More specifically, it examines how *Man at the Top* presents actual replacements for this space; and how, through representations of 'bottom-up' recall, memory serves to challenge the modernist grand narrative of the day. I propose that *locus* affords this critique real power: the North was, in every conceivable sense, at the farthest remove from the London-centric modernist mind-set.

Before continuing, though, I would like to draw attention to some important points concerning context and medium. I suspect that *Man at the Top* would be distasteful to much of today's viewing public, if only because it reflects the attitudes and assumptions of an era with which we have become increasingly uncomfortable. 1970s Lotharios like Lampton can only ever age badly – and that is putting it mildly. It comes as no real surprise, then, that the series is now all but forgotten.[2] Yet, for all its boorishness (perhaps because of it), *Man at the Top* remains an important document. It deals in power and exclusion discourses; the same broad issues, in fact, which frame the specifics of so much contemporary debate – region (Northern Powerhouse), public housing (Grenfell Tower), predatory masculinity (#metoo #timesup). The 1970s holds up a mirror to our own reality and, distorted though it might be, the reflection is just about recognizable. If as historians we are to construct versions of the decade which capture something of its everyday spirit (and by default something of our own), then we can do worse than look to television as a guide. In 1959 Hugh Gaitskill had listed television, along with full employment and the housing boom, as a defining feature of post-war life (Hall 1978: 23). Its influence increased throughout the 1960s. Historian Jeremy Potter (1989: 12) summed up its reach at the turn of the 1970s, stressing an inverse relation to 'decline' and 'crisis' narratives: 'The more dire the state of the economy, the less other amusements could be afforded and the greater the nation's dependence on the box in the sitting room.' It was in this context that *Man at the Top* enjoyed commercial success and critical acclaim.[3]

The television Lampton was a migrant from a classic of 1950s 'kitchen sink' literature – John Braine's best-selling *Room at the Top* (1957). The 'angry' label so readily associated with the character (and others of the same vintage) served to orientate the viewer, calling on narrative conventions that had long dealt in northern-ness and class – and their associated environs. If the displacement accompanying these concepts had first been mobilized in the 1950s, then the 1970s was high time for reflection. And the results were in and ready to be counted. They pointed to a complex inter-relation with physical upheaval. The move from slum dwellings to council housing (Boughton 2018; Ravetz 2001), from inner city squalor to

[1] Jan Assmann (1997: 9) coined this term, explaining: 'Unlike history proper, mnemohistory is concerned not with the past as such, but only with the past as it is remembered. It surveys the story-lines of tradition, the webs of intertextuality, the diachronic continuities and discontinuities of reading the past.'

[2] It is only by way of a Network DVD release that the title remains in any kind of circulation.

[3] The show was commissioned for a second series, and Kenneth Haigh was nominated for a BAFTA Award in 1972.

new town 'utopia' (Osborn 1969; Aldridge 1979; Alexander 2009) – each impacted particularly on men who were, for the most part, less able to cope than women. This disparity is seen poignantly in Colin Ward's end-of-decade documentary, *New Town, New Home* (BBC 1979). The 1970s was a tough decade for the traditional male (despite appearances to the contrary) – and not only because Home had been demolished. The industrial space in which he had forged his identity was fast disappearing. Moreover, thanks to the aforementioned conventions of the 'kitchen sink' narrative, his kind of precarious masculinity was often associated with a redundant North. At the dawn of the decade, then, and with one eye firmly fixed on Yorkshire, *Man at the Top* looked back in anger at the change all around.

PAST AND PRESENT IN *MAN AT THE TOP*: AN OVERVIEW

Joe Lampton's journey from North to South marks a transition of sorts. It precedes the action of the first episode, but its importance is such that it is referenced through montage during the opening titles sequence. Offering a glimpse of two worlds, this sequence traces Lampton's passage from one to the other.[4] Yet, for Lampton, whose northern-ness is inscribed in everything from his accent to a penchant for Yorkshire bitter, the old can never be completely eclipsed by the new. Both spheres exist simultaneously in the story world of *Man at the Top*, threading through the episodes and stretching across the series. The present, then, is signified clearly enough: it is Lampton's Aston Martin, his large detached house, his sharp tailoring, and the thorough-going modernity of his profession as a management consultant. If the spirit of that present is located in and around cosmopolitan London, then the essence of the past is to be found in his Yorkshire hometown of 'Dufton', with all its associations of tradition and decline. Based in the London suburbs but at home in neither the past nor the present, Lampton slips between the two. His displacement, like that of David Main in *The Main Chance* (ITV 1969–75), prompts audiences to view the relationship between past and present through the lens of region.

Unlike David Main, however, a character created for television in 1969, Joe Lampton was something of a familiar figure to audiences. Indeed, his presence in other media predates the television series by well over a decade. After debuting in *Room at the Top*, the character transitioned from page to large screen in 1959 when Lawrence Harvey enjoyed major success in the role that was to make his name. A 1965 adaptation of Braine's follow-up novel, *Life at the Top* (1962), which again starred Harvey, saw the character on film for a second time. Hammer Films' ill-received *Man at The Top* (1973) completed a fairly comprehensive recycling process by bringing Lampton to the cinema for one final appearance. The reuse of a particular character, or characters, through various means of adaptation was a widespread practice at this time; the economies involved made commercial sense during the lean years of the early 1970s, and it was an efficient way to mobilize self-reflexive narratives about the past. *Whatever Happen to the Likely Lads?* (BBC 1973–74) serves as a good example, as does *Billy Liar* (ITV 1973–74). Both these series reference the social realism of the preceding decades, albeit in light-hearted ways. The same associations are far richer in *Man at the Top*, though – and thus the treatment of the past more complex.

Much of this complexity stems from the casting of Kenneth Haigh, a particular kind of 'northern star' (Forrest and Johnson 2016). Born in Mexborough, West Yorkshire, in 1931, Haigh was a miner's son who moved to London to become an actor. By the standards of the day, his enrolment at the Central School of Speech and Drama represents a feat of social

[4] The sequence is updated for series 2, but its narrative function remains identical.

mobility that was notable, certainly – but not unheard of. His was the journey of that immediately recognisable figure, the grant-aided student of the early Welfare State years. Others of comparable backgrounds and attitudes marked a similar passage. Along with actors like Tom Courtney and Albert Finney were cutting-edge writers, filmmakers, political activists and thinkers – 'angry young men' – who set out their store in high-profile collections of essays, such as *Declaration* (Maschler 1957), *Conviction* (MacKenzie 1958) and *Out of Apathy* (Thompson 1960). As Jimmy Porter, the troubled anti-hero of John Osborne's seminal *Look Back in Anger* (1956), Haigh came to symbolize the movement. Most television critics refer to Haigh's Jimmy Porter in their reviews of *Man at the Top*, just as they mention Harvey's Lampton and Braine's original.[5] S. Day Lewis (1970) manages to conflate both these characters and the actor, illustrating the complex and layered nature of Haigh's role – and the connection between his northern-ness and the past: 'In the person of Kenneth Haigh, reincarnated from that other 1950s hero Jimmy Porter, [Lampton's] Yorkshire accent sounds sharper than ever.' Lampton/Haigh is a vehicle for memory, in and of himself as well as in others, and his success in this regard relies on complex associations with a past that is regional and temporal.

TELEVISION OF THE EARLY 1970s: MEMORY, MATERIALITY AND MODERNITY

The end of the 1960s marked a watershed in post-war social history, beginning a period of uncertainty in which hitherto continuous processes of reconstruction began to show signs of slowing. The modernist drive for change still retained much of its zeal, but by the turn of the new decade its efficacy had been undermined. While it is easy to overstate the extent of an erstwhile 'post-war consensus' (Addison 1975), it is nevertheless true, as Emily Robinson et al (2017: 270) have pointed out, that 'the 1970s remains the critical turning point in almost all narrative histories of post-war Britain'. From the troubled economy (Coopey And Woodward 1996) to the politics of decline (Fry 2005), it is here that the Winter of Discontent provides a spectacle of finale to previous episodes of division, such as the miners' strikes, power cuts, 1973 Oil Crisis, and the three-day working week. And it is during the 1970s that the Keynesian economic model finally makes way for Powellite monetarism as practiced by Keith Joseph and Margaret Thatcher.[6]

It comes as no surprise, therefore, in light of the downturn and its attendant mood of 'morning after' pessimism, that the collective mind-set should seek solace in a kinder past. Alwyn Turner (2013) notes that, as the decade progressed into its early and middle years, popular culture trends tended towards nostalgia. This was particularly marked in the case of television, as Amy Holdsworth (2011) and Laurel Foster (2012) have pointed out. The all-powerful medium, then at the height of its Golden Era, offered an almost universally accessible portal into the past. According to Penny Tinkler (2013) and Andreas Huyssen (2003), television facilitates the sharing and development of personal and cultural memory by circulating a common set of cultural reference points. It is a site, then, of what Michael Pickering and Emily Keightley (2006: 930) call 'mnemonic imagination'. Lyn Hibbard and Zoe Tew-Thompson (2018) apply these ideas to Yorkshire specifically. Their work on nostalgia and the representation of Holmfirth in *The Last of the Summer Wine* (BBC 1973–2010) examines a

[5] 'Remember Joe Lampton?' asked Mary Malone, before describing the show as 'decidedly worn' looking and 'stuck in the groove of the late fifties'. She concludes: 'Can Kenneth Haigh in the lead dig himself out of those *Look Back in Anger* days and endow Joe with a bit more charm just to keep us tuned in?' *Daily Mirror*, 23 February 1971.

[6] Joseph and Thatcher (along with Albert Sherman) founded the Centre for Policy Studies in 1974, in order to promote the economic liberalism which would characterize the following decade.

misty-eyed vision of the North that is completely at odds with its grim portrayal in *Man at the Top*. Yet Holmfirth and Dufton are equally recognizable: two visions of the North, both defined by their difference from the South, and both mythical representations rooted in memory.

Pierre Nora's work on memory, like that of Tinkler and the others, draws on Maurice Holbwachs' theory of 'collective memory' (1992). Nora identifies a social and cultural nature in individual reproductions of the past. Memory, as he understands it, is 'absolute'; it is distinct from processes of 'history' which relate 'to temporal continuities, to progressions and to the relations between things' (1989: 8). While more recent work problematizes this plurality, stressing a complimentary exchange between memory and history, the idea retains much of its power when considered in relation to materiality.[7] Through its dynamic relationship with the material world, moreover, memory 'takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images, and objects' (9). Importantly, Nora contends that 'sites of memory' serve as necessary replacements for absent 'real environments' (ibid.). He refers here to the symbolic nature of monuments, but the point can be applied elsewhere. At the turn of the 1970s, the function of television as one such site of memory derived much of its power from the fact that, for a significant number of viewers, the physical spaces in which actual memories were created had disappeared.

A victim of slum clearance, the terraced house is a poignant example of this loss. In his pioneering work on memory and domestic space, Gaston Bachelard (1994: 15) maintained that our living environment 'is physically inscribed' in us, and that our houses are sites for 'dream memory'. Our interaction with the solid materials of the house amounts to more than mere 'habit'; it is, more properly, 'the primary function of *inhabiting*', which for Bachelard captures something of the 'passionate liaison of our bodies… with an unforgettable house' (ibid.) This notwithstanding, whole neighbourhoods were condemned in the name of welfare. During the post-war years it had been Labour politicians who had, in their desire for improvement, pushed most stridently for slum clearance. Predictably enough, their Tory counterparts, while of the same mind in principle, were less energetic in the potentially costly policy area of public housing. Less predictable, perhaps, was the reticence of the leading figures on the intellectual left, many of whom were conflicted when it came to the old neighbourhoods. In *The Uses of Literacy*, Richard Hoggart drew on his own memories of a working-class upbringing to detail a world that had, in terms of community at least, much to commend it. Raymond Williams adopted a similar tone in *Culture and Society*. That other 'angry young man' of the New Left, E.P. Thomson (2013), talked of a working class 'making' itself just as the materials containing the memories of that construction were being happily dismantled. For all their problems – they were myriad, as Robert Roberts (1974) explained – the back-to-backs, two-up-two-downs and other kinds of cheap terrace dwelling were key community building blocks.

Rather more bourgeois concerns, this time about the cavalier treatment of public space, gained momentum when the realisation of consequences fully set in. Much of the discontent was focused on heritage – and by extension aesthetic. The *Architectural Review* had long been scathing about the wanton destruction of 18th and 19th century buildings, but it was only when two of its most prominent voices spoke on television that this trenchantly middle-class debate found an audience with a more general public. John Betjeman's short series and one-off programmes, such as *Betjeman's London* (ITV 1967) and *Metro-land* (BBC 1973), considered old buildings in poetic terms, their lyrical commentaries echoing the spatial poetics of

[7] See J Assmann, *Egyptian*. Also, Aleida Assmann (2008), 'Transformations between History and Memory,' *Social Research*, 75: 1, pp. 49–72; and Edward Said (2000), 'Invention, Memory, Place', *Critical Inquiry*, 26 pp. 175-192.

Bachelard. Equally poetic but visceral in his evocation of memory was Ian Nairn, whose series *Nairn at Large* (BBC 1969), *Nairn's Journeys* (BBC 1971-8) and *Nairn Across Britain* (BBC 1972) decried town planners for their state-sponsored vandalism. The 'angry young man of architectural history', Nairn's delivery recalled the passion of Jimmy Porter and Joe Lampton (and his obsession with the North of England only served to heighten the association). The concern for heritage crystallised with the publication of *The Rape of Britain*. 'The damage has been colossal', noted authors Colin Amery and Dan Cruickshank (1975: 10), 'and it has been carried out knowingly and effectively – almost as if there were an officially sponsored competition to see how much of Britain's architectural heritage could be destroyed in 30 years.' Television not only charted this progress; it strove to offer some means of redress.

The medium was singularly adept at reproducing versions of lost space, its verisimilitude lending a patina of realism to highly mediated visions of the past. A preoccupation with the Edwardian era indicates that much nostalgia was rooted in a desire for order. *Upstairs, Downstairs* (ITV 1971–75), *The Rivals of Sherlock Holmes* (ITV 1971), the mini-series *The Edwardians* (BBC 1972–73), and – later – *Raffles* (ITV 1975–77), each recall a period pre-dating living memory for most of their viewing audiences. Yet, despite this gulf of time, each series welcomed viewers into material environments at once familiar and comforting. These were, after all, the traditional spaces which had lingered long into the twentieth century. A comparison between *Upstairs, Downstairs* – a notable success – and *Adam Adamant Lives!* (BBC 1967), aired just a few years before, is instructive in that it reveals something of a change in popular attitudes towards to what John Osborne disparagingly termed 'the Edwardian twilight'. A quirky 1960s adventure show, *Adam Adamant Lives!* brings an upper-class Edwardian character back to life in Swinging London. His confusion with the chaos of car-lined streets, technologically appointed 'pads' and hip nightclubs serves to heighten the attraction of fast-living modernity, with all its comparative sophistication and heady rush of excitement. In *Upstairs, Downstairs*, on the other hand, an opposite set of values emerges, as strict spatial organization (and with it a static social hierarchy) marks a defining feature of the series – as its title would suggest.

Standing in sharp contrast to cosy depictions of the past was Britain's post-war modernist project, its reality jarringly chaotic. And the most vivid manifestation of its spirit, the re-imagining of the nation's cities, illustrated the point on a grand scale. If, with hindsight, the systematic obliteration of the material past had come to seem unwise, then its replacement of re-enforced concrete tower blocks, shopping centres and car parks bore all the hallmarks of disaster. The pace of this change only served to emphasize the problem and was due in large part to a single piece of legislation. The Town and Country Planning Act of 1947 was a knee-jerk response to what Miles Glendinning and Stefan Malthesius (1994) describe as the 'hysteria' surrounding diseased and dying cities. It allowed for Compulsory Purchase Orders which, in turn, gave free reign to the planning authorities.[8] Architectural historian Charles Jencks argued that it had been obvious, even as far back as the early 1960s, that the attempts to heal cities were as virulent as the perceived disease of urban decay. By 1973 – the time of his writing – the rot had well and truly set in.

Encircling Britain's futuristic urban centres were high-rise tower blocks for high-density living – the solution to the problems of the slums. They had been introduced by London County Council, whose avante garde architects saw in the area of mass housing an opportunity to exercise their le Corbusier inspired ethos. Le Corbusier (1946: 27) had railed against what he called the 'cult of the house' and its 'conglomeration of useless and disparate objects', all

[8] The '47 Act was consolidated by subsequent amendments (1968 and 1971) which helped accommodate – and thus encourage – the onslaught of millions of cars.

of which reflected, in his eyes, 'the insular pre-occupations of the middle classes'. But the identikit new flats soon became synonymous with grey uniformity. Moreover, the premature shoddiness of these cheap constructions had come to symbolise the struggle to contain the swiftness of social change. This image of failure took a tragically literal turn with the collapse of Ronan Point (and has since repeated itself in the fire engulfing Grenfell Tower, of course).[9]

Television teased at this tension between modern domestic space and social change. Factual series tackled drug use (*Man Alive* [BBC1 1969]) and the disintegration of family (*Tuesday Documentary* [BBC 1971]) in the context of failing living environments. For the hugely popular cop series format the high-rise tower block was a natural home for crime. *New Scotland Yard* (ITV 1971–4), for example, presented urban reconstruction as an arena for juvenile delinquency. *Special Branch* (ITV 1969–74) and *The Sweeney* (ITV 1975–78) took their high-octane action into the urban concrete jungle. Comedies, meanwhile, took full advantage of modernism's visual potential by treating it cinematically. Large screen adaptations of hit shows, like *Steptoe and Son* (*Steptoe and Son* [1972]), *Til Death Us Do Part* (*The Alf Garnett Saga* [1972]) and – later – the aforementioned *Whatever happened to the Likely Lads?* (*The Likely Lads* [1976]), placed their protagonists in, or in close proximity to, the new tower blocks – arenas in which dysfunction and anti-social behaviour seemed to be the norm. These characters were all associated with the past in some way, and their alienation served as a blackly comic critique of the modernist turn. But, as the next section illustrates, when the past was bound up with a depiction of region (Franklin *et al* 2015; Mazierskwa 2017), comedy tended to slip over into tragedy.

MAN DIVIDED: NORTH AND SOUTH

Traditionally, the North–South Divide narrative had functioned as a means of maintaining what Helen Jewell (1994) has described as a 'northern consciousness'. As the twentieth century gained pace, however, its construction served to frame a difference that increasingly had become defined by one overarching element – inequality. By the hungry years of the 1930s, the sharpness of northern identity was drawn along the lines of real want. George Orwell (2001: 45), writing towards the end of the Great Depression, contrasted the redundant North's 'lunar landscape of slagheaps' with the 'glittering white structures' of a modern and prosperous South. This binary was familiar enough to viewers at the turn of the 1970s; and many would be able to call on their own childhood memories in order to fully appreciate *Man at the Top* and its Orwell-imbued treatment of the North–South Divide. Indeed, Orwell's comments reflect the internal logic of the series. Lampton's South fits Orwell's description, with poverty and inequality existing only on the periphery of the privileged world he inhabits. His experience of the North, by the same token, is equally selective in that it is orientated by the memory of struggle. His North is 'Dufton' and its Yorkshire pit village connotations, while the affluence of a neighbouring town like Harrogate is as alien to him in this world as the council estates of Battersea in the South.

At the outset the North is present only as an echo of the past, as the action in the first episodes is positioned firmly in the South. It does fulfil an important function, however – one characterized by a certain amount of unexpected reflexivity. This playfulness invests well-worn regional tropes with something akin to criticality, a quality hinted at early in the first episode (TX 14 December 1970). Here, Lampton self-consciously performs 'stage northerner' credentials to well-heeled neighbours and business acquaintances, all of whom are gathered as

[9] Canning Town's Ronan Point partly collapsed on 16 May 1968, killing four people and injuring 17. It had opened two months earlier.

drinks party guests at his house. Responding to her husband's behaviour, Susan light-heartedly accuses him of talking like a music hall comedian. It is a comment that conjures an image of 'north country' entertainers – Depression era stalwarts still of lingering familiarity at the turn of the 1970s, like Nat Jackly, Robb Wilton, Norman Evans and Gracie Fields. Bradford lad J. B. Priestley described Fields in 1934 as 'a sort of essence of Lancastrian femininity', a quality defined by 'shrewdness, homely simplicity, irony, fierce independence, an impish delight in mocking whatever is thought to be affected and pretentious' (Featherstone 2003). It is this kind of resilient but ultimately benign representation of traditional northern identity that is gently parodied through the husband-and-wife banter. And the exchange is significant because it is the first to associate the North explicitly with memories of the past.

This remembrance is re-enforced by other, more complex instances of reflexivity. They consist of scenarios in which Lampton engages in dialogues with younger female characters, each one representing an aspect of his former self. Together, these exchanges constitute a mirroring strategy, reflecting one kind of social mobility (Lampton's in the 1950s) through the image of a contemporaneous process – involving working class women and second wave feminism. An example is Julia, his son's girlfriend with whom he conducts an affair. She hails from a Battersea council estate, and Lampton's identification with this precocious teenager is framed by a shared frustration with working class life – a memory for him, a present reality for her. The next stage of Lampton's evolution is caught in the figure of another youthful female character. The upwardly mobile Paula Fraser is a Barnsley-born model. At a reasonable remove from stultification and poverty, she is a version of Lampton in the earlier stages of his success. He flirts with these romantic, conveniently air-brushed visions of his past, safe in the knowledge that he can keep them at arms-length.[10]

Charlie Armitage, by contrast, is an ugly reminder of the past. Here, the mirroring strategy works in reverse; it produces an image that is magnified grotesquely – and too close for comfort. Brash and unpolished, he is the younger Lampton seeking to marry up. Armitage is a warts-n-all personification of the social process of 'hypergamy', so described by Lynne Segal (1988) in relation to the angry young men of the 1950s. His forays down south are a frequent intrusion; he invokes a shared northern upbringing with grinding regularity, referencing 'meat-in-a-rag', the chippy, Saturday nights in Worley; and he constantly leers at the fashionable women of Chelsea, describing one such socialite as 'a nice bit of quality weave'. Distaste for everything Armitage represents is signified by the absurd figure he cuts in his ill-fitting Carnaby St fashions. Unsurprisingly, Lampton is merciless in his treatment of him.

It is only when the series is well-established that the North puts in its first physical appearance. 'Change Partners' (TX 8 February 1971) transfers the action to Lampton's Yorkshire, where his 'mam's' death prompts an emotional encounter with the past. The bereavement is the first in a series of crises which associate the North with historically defined problems, both personal and public. This tendency follows a well-trodden scholarly path. From tradition and work (Dennis 1969) to the home and education (Stacey 1961; Bott 2001; Douglas 1972), the 'problem' of the northern working class is there to be solved. Lampton's bereavement anticipates the tragic death of his daughter (dealt with in detail below), and as such it is intensely personal; but its function at a broader, series level serves to establish the North as a wild and alien place, especially when measured against the progressive standards of the affluent South. It is where bodies are subject to 'laying out' before burial, where scores are

[10] In many ways, this playful imagery parallels aspects of the twenty-first century notion of gender-based power-play and oppression.

settled by brawls – and where class identity retains an unyielding rigidity, reminiscent of the pre-war era.

Lampton is on his way to New York when he receives the news about his mam, so diverts to Leeds to deal with it. He is followed by the glamourous Johnnie, with whom he conducts an on–off affair. Her presence functions in two ways. First, by a simple juxtaposition that serves to distance the North from contemporary mores and aesthetic, of which she is the key signifier at this stage in the series. Second, by bridging the personal and the public – and sparking resentment in the process. It is Johnnie's enquiry that invites Lampton's own description of his mam. 'She worked in a weaving shed', he tells her; and when she asks if Susan and his mam were close, he responds: 'Susan's dad owned the mill where me mam sweated her guts out.' The point is revisited at the end of the episode, when in the heat of domestic dispute Susan calls Lampton a 'cloth-capped yobbo'. Susan's father, Abe, also involved in the altercation, threatens him with some 'clog-toe pie', to which Lampton retorts: 'You never wore a clog in yer life, Abe – *but me mam did*.' So concludes Series 1.

Series 2 mirrors the broad sweep of industrial unrest afflicting the nation, positioning cause and effect geographically. Lampton's London life represents the affluence and opportunity of the post-war managerial society, the fruit of ideas set out by US theorists such as Adolf Berle and Gardiner Means (2017) and James Burnham (2019). It is also a suitably impressive arena for brinkmanship, a practice at which he excels – and one which spills over into the public and domestic spheres beyond the office door. Meeting head-on the excesses of the white-collar world are the hotbeds of militancy that are the mills of the North, a collision that repudiates middle class managerial sensibility while casting working class bullishness in an equally negative light. At the heart of this conflict, Lampton finds his particular brand of social mobility – such as it is – a singularly valuable asset. He is more than simply a London emissary with insider knowledge of the North: he functions, more properly, as an intermediary who can produce the currency of one world and barter with it in the other – an exchange that works both ways. Yet there is little to show for this bargaining, as north and south remain irreconcilable in their respective significations of industrial past and managerial present**.**

Industrial dispute draws Lampton back up to Yorkshire with increasing regularity. The last three episodes of Series 2, broadcast between mid-August and early September 1972, are set almost exclusively in Dufton and Worley where the action focuses on union business and its attendant political chicanery. Amidst the fallout of the disastrous Industrial Relations Act (1971), the stand-off portrayed in and around Yorkshire's textile industry recalls major instances of national dispute. Prime Minister Edward Heath's first declaration of a State of Emergency (1970), a direct response to the Liverpool dockers' strike, helped fix in the public mind the industrial North as a destabilising force. This impression was re-enforced in February 1972, with another Emergency in the wake of power shortages caused by the miners' strike. With violence erupting in the Doncaster coalfields and Labour MP Tom Swain comparing the situation to the Troubles in Northern Ireland, the northern working class once again became associated with a radicalism pre-dating the modern Labour 'revisionism' of Hugh Gaitskill and the first Harold Wilson Government. It harked back to the brand of solidarity depicted in Robert Tressell's *The Ragged-Trousered Philanthropists* (1983) and, by extension, the common ownership ethos of Priestley's wartime Common Wealth Party. These values were decidedly at odds with the newer social processes of *embourgeoisement* (Goldthorpe 1968) but would find contemporary expression through figures like Tony Benn. The series consolidates this vision of the North as hotbed of radicalism by introducing that other disruptive element, the politicised student, as Lampton's son, Harry, talks of revolution from his digs in Leeds.

It is in a traditional pub ('The Knacker's Yard' TX 19 June 1972), the masculine space that is the social corollary of the mill, that student and workers collide, further emphasizing the discordant nature of the northern scene. The grim surroundings are a step back in time; and here the middle-class Harry, for all his supposed leftist leanings, is clearly an interloper. He is ill-equipped to deal with a situation that threatens physical danger. Lampton intervenes to face down Harry's opposition, protecting his son with practiced skill. Indeed, it is his ability to handle himself in this scenario that properly illustrates the nature of his potency. Ostensibly, the taming of the wild space represents a victory over an approximation of factory floor bullying and intimidation. But on a broader, cultural level, it is the arena itself – not the actions – that is of significance. Paul Jennings (1995) has considered the importance of the public house in Yorkshire's social history, noting its precarity in the modern world of the early 1970s. The pub's oppressive atmosphere is a by-product of vulnerability – impotent rage at the prospect of a way of life grinding to a halt. Christopher Hutt (1973) wrote poignantly of its potential demise, viewing 'the death of the English pub' as symbolic. Nowhere was it more so than in the industrial heartlands of Yorkshire which had been subject to some of the most 'radical' (Gunn 2010: 851) of modernization processes.

The theme of finality is revisited in another immediately recognisable arena, the working men's club. The series finale plays itself out in these solemn surroundings, with Lampton unable – when push comes to shove – to act on behalf of the Southern political cabal intent on carving up the constituency of Worley. The scene equates honesty and authenticity with region, much against the grain of the series as a whole; it is a romanticized view, certainly, and tragic in its last-ditch attempt to highlight the importance of tradition and identity. Memory plays a part in defining these constructions, and, as the following episode analysis will demonstrate, it frames the personal as well as the political.

WELCOME ON THE MAT

It is another old pub – refurbished in modern décor – which sets the scene for the most extended instance of regional remembrance. This happens in 'Welcome on the Mat' (TX 10 July 1972), written by Roy Bottomley and directed by Mike Vardy. It opens with Lampton paying a visit to Susan who, distraught at the death of their daughter, is convalescing in a nursing home. After the visit, and while driving back to London, he gives way to an impulse and takes a detour. His alternative destination of Dufton is introduced in semi-montage, its topography scored by the soothing tones of brass band music. The overall effect is one of surprising coherence, of a northern industrial aesthetic sympathetically portrayed. It is Lampton's subjective vision of 'home', of course, affected by personal tragedy. Borne of grieving, then, his desire to connect with a substantial part of himself – his past – colours people as well as place. Later in the episode, for example, when back in London, he sketches the 'Northern character' while in conversation with Helen, the young doctor with whom he is striking up a relationship. 'It was nice to be among real people again,' he tells her; 'people who've got real dignity – not the bullshit that passes for sophistication down here.' Set up to be knocked down, this subjectivity heightens the impact of the drama that is to follow. The process in which Lampton's nostalgia corrects itself, moreover, forces hard questions about the northern identity as it stood in 1972.

Director Mike Vardy is quick to shatter the illusion of local calm and coherence. It is with Lampton's first encounter, in fact, in the parlour of his uncle's terrace house, that the positively spun 'Northern self-image' (Russell 2004: 37) begins to unravel:

Uncle Dick: Come through town, did you?

Lampton: Hardly recognized it.

Uncle Dick: They pulled the market down to make way for a fancy shopping centre.

Lampton: Who built it?

Uncle Dick: One of them clever buggers from London, I suppose

Lampton: [Ironically] Aye, happens all the time.

If Lampton is agile enough to distinguish nostalgia from memory, then Uncle Dick proves equally adept at tempering his own misty-eyed vision. He is happy to talk of a heyday in which Dufton could boast 17 working pits; but a caveat – 'they took us for slaves when you think about it' – recalls a drudgery that was real, experienced by many and narrated in studies like *Coal is our Life* (Dennis 1969). Dick is a stereotype (as is Lampton), yet his character critiques the Myth of the North even as it represents it. Dick's is neither a nostalgic nor solitary opinion, but a conclusion arrived at through dialogue that is layered and complex.

Their conversation continues along similar lines, segueing this scene into a next which establishes the main line of dramatic action. Here, uncle and nephew repair to the former's pigeon loft where they lament its impending fate; it is to be torn down, Uncle Dick explains, in order to make way for a modernising property development scheme. The juxtaposition is compelling: the communitarian and traditional (socialism and collective memory) versus the destructive and faceless (capitalism and corporate progress). Lampton's subsequent quest, to uncover the identity of the nameless developer, strikes right to the heart of this dichotomy. It is the classic post-war dilemma, of course, as formulated over a decade before and argued across various social agendas, including culture (the aforementioned *The Uses of Literacy* and *Culture and Society*), politics (Tony Crosland's *The Future of Socialism* [2006]) and place (Margaret Stacey's case-study of Banbury, *Tradition and Change* [1961]). On investigation, it transpires that a member of their own family, the locally influential Cousin Arthur, has bought the land. He plans to build a furniture store so he can profit from a nearby council estate, currently under construction. The greed which fuels this betrayal is a stark reveal.

The realization that 'home' is not what it used to be continues to dawn as they make for the pub:

Lampton: What the bloody hell's happened to this place?

Uncle Dick: It's been modernized.

Lampton: Bloody sterilized. Where the tap room?

Uncle Dick: No tap room now.

Late in the afternoon, after closing time, Lampton goes home with Sandra, the barmaid and an old flame. Sandra is the final element in the aforementioned mirroring strategy. She is the Lampton who never managed to escape. Vardy introduces her flat with an extreme high angle shot of the tower block in which it is contained. He follows up immediately with a low angle, redoubling an already dizzying effect of disorientation. The camera then cuts to an interior, surprisingly sumptuous in a modern style, and then tracks Lampton as he makes his way to a window. Sandra joins him and proceeds to list the advantages of living in such a place: bathroom, waste disposal, fridge, underfloor central heating. These are tokens of consumerist aspiration, highly prized in those post-austerity years – and one reason why so many people were amenable to re-housing in the late 1950s and early 1960s (Wilkinson and Sigsworth 1963). It is only Sandra's 'And I hate it' which breaks the spell. Wistfully, they both look out

towards Belmont St, over in the middle distance. Now all but demolished, this is the street on which Sandra grew up. She moves her gaze further along the horizon, fixing it on the Co-op Hall. 'Oh, we had some fun at them Saturday dance nights, didn't we!' she enthuses; and they proceed to list the bands they saw there. 'Co-op Hall's boarded up now,' she says.

Frederick Alderson (1968) traced the longitudinal development of working-class neighbourhoods in the industrial north. His description of modern domestic space – personalized interiors of the new dwellings – captures the essence of Sandra's home. To contextualize the march of material modernism, Alderson compares past and present, meticulously weighing one against the other:

> Instead of old fashioned mahogany there is now veneered or varnish-stained chain-store furniture; chrome, cheap lustre and plastic nicknacks fill mantelpiece and sideboard instead of lacquered tea caddy, moustache cup and shell decorated photo frames; and instead of the window box with bright geraniums or nasturtiums there are roses or begonias also made of plastic. The rag or clip rug, of black or navy blue with a central diamond or circle perhaps in red, has been replaced by a jazz patterned article of half the wearing quality (ibid. 47).

Lampton and Sandra continue their vigil in silence, offering the viewer space in which to make a similar kind of comparison. Forcing her attention back to the confines of the room, she tells him something of her high-rise life: 'I hardly ever see the lads. They go to their Gran's – they can play in the street.' She warms to her theme: 'No-one seems to know each other here; if you live by yourself you could be dead, and no one would notice.' This is a fair description of the loneliness that had, by the early years of the 1970s, become the scourge of streets-in-the-sky living**.** More than anything, though, Sandra is distressed by the destruction she is compelled to witness. Along with the aforementioned amenities, proximity was another reason why, at the height of reconstruction, the decision to move had often been taken with relative ease (Wilkinson 1965). If tower blocks were locally situated, uprooting would be only partial, loneliness less of a peril – or so many people thought in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Sandra's lament offers an alternative perspective, an informed opinion indicative of lived experience:

> There's nothing there, nothing at all. Sometimes I think they stick you up in places like this just so you can watch them knock it all down. All that's left of my past life is just a pile of rubble. Oh, I wish I'd left here years ago, like you did – then I wouldn't be here to see it.

Lampton tells Sandra that he has returned because he is looking for something. 'Maybe it's buried in all that rubble,' he muses. Vardy visualizes his quest in a montage that answers the earlier sequence, in which he arrives in Dufton. The keynote here, though, is discordant, with images of terraces, mills and shops thrown uncomfortably against shots of concrete tower blocks, housing estates, and a Morrisons supermarket. All the new buildings are in various stages of construction.

Avante garde mass production – what Edward Relph (1987: 25) called 'no frills modernism' – took no account of place or tradition. Patrick Dunleavy (1981) and Anne Power (1999) detail its negative impact generally, while Joe Moran (2007) makes specific reference to the North. And it is on these terms, in a final confrontation with Cousin Arthur, that Lampton solves the conundrum of the North–South Divide. Pushing his way into Cousin Arthur's beautiful Victorian house, he finds Sandra prostituting herself to pay for the goods in her box in the sky. Past and present are brought together at last, in the figures of Cousin Arthur and Sandra respectively, and each one is as distasteful as the other. 'I came here because I thought I belonged here,' Lampton tells them both. 'It's an open-minded friendly kind of town – that's a bloody mirage!' He looks at Sandra, draped on a sofa and dressed in a garish pink negligée; and he finally realises that Belmont St and the Coop Hall can no longer be found, no matter

how hard he searches. Then he rounds on his cousin: 'You've taken the heart out of this town and replaced it with slabs of concrete – and nobody's roots can grow in concrete!' The scene fades on a shot of the pigeon lofts being bulldozed.

At the end of the episode, as the credits role, the full significance of the seemingly simplistic homing-pigeons-and-loft metaphor makes itself apparent. It represents not only the wanderer Lampton, displaced and no longer at ease in his figurative nest of Dufton; it is also Sandra and all the other high-rise and housing estate dwellers, their pasts demolished. 'Welcome on the Mat' offers the viewer a means of challenging contemporaneous orthodoxy, but the memories with which they may do so are fleeting – the materials in which those memories were housed being long gone. The episode presents a world in which the robber baron remains one of the few constants, his greed in the present an echo of his power in the past.

CONCLUSION

This article has considered depictions of region-specific, class-based recollection in *Man at the Top*. Protagonist Joe Lampton expresses popular memory, on the one hand, and critiques material modernism on the other. In short, he surveys past and present and finds both, in their different ways, wanting. Back in 1958, Journalist James Gordon wrote that the original Lampton-type figure was 'a passing post-war phenomenon – the result of delayed shock.' In some respects, this is true. But the 1960s and 1970s would see the angry young man resurface, at regular intervals and in various guises. Yorkshireman Alan Turner, protagonist in John le Carre's *A Small Town in Germany* (1968), is one such example. Jack Carter in *Get Carter* (1971) is another. And the television Lampton is yet another. No longer young, he is disgruntled in middle age; and having lived through a National Reconstruction that had all but failed, he has every reason for complaint. His anger has matured and focused; and he is, as this article has demonstrated, angry in the medium most suited to its expression at that time – television.

Answers to the questions posed in the Introduction are of course multi-faceted. Yes, *Man at the Top* equates Yorkshire with the past. But the 'North' as depicted is far from static as an entity, despite a material connection to memory. This relative complexity is something of a novelty. Looking from an end-of-era vantage point, Chas Critcher (2007: 14) noted a broad tendency, evident across scholarly discourse, to flatten Northern identity against the rudiments of a local-colour backdrop. Scholars of the 1950s and 1960s could not, he claimed, 'conceive of a working class without the extended family, back-to-backs, or mild beer'. *Man at the Top*, by contrast, considers tradition in terms of housing and job markets, and the complex inter-relations between them which, as Critcher noted at the time, 'shape the changing face of Britain's cities' (ibid: 14). Seen through the eyes of Lampton, the North is neither mythologized nor sentimentalized. It is, instead, contextualized. *Man at the Top* self-consciously stripped nostalgia from recollection, making Lampton's forays up north anything but sentimental. These journeys sought to communicate understanding to the viewer whose past they were revisiting and whose present they were depicting. This article has charted that progress.

For 1970s television studies, there is more mileage in the concept of memory. A marked preoccupation with the past, on television and across the broader popular culture, says much about the 1970s as an era. The preceding years had been characterized by a drive towards the future (and away from the War), but, at the end of the 1960s, this sense of purpose faltered. Raymond Williams (1978: 208) captured something of the prevailing mood when, some ten years later, he reflected on a 'widespread loss of the future'. This future, for many people, had

been represented in reinforced concrete – the good life as envisaged by Nye Bevin. It was now difficult to contemplate. For working class men, the crisis felt particularly acute – their identities were eroding faster than ever before, their vulnerability displayed for all to see. Lampton's displacement and anger were expressions of this crisis. Women and men alike, for all their difference of experience, felt a strain that manifested itself in an alienation immediately recognizable to our own social media, screen-obsessed world. As this article has found, Lampton saw – certainly – and he passed comment, but he was powerless to do anything about it.

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