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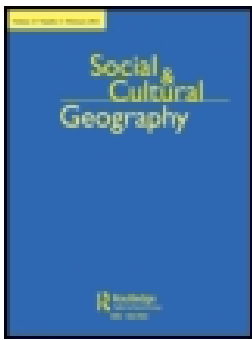
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Urban trauma in the ruins of industrial culture: Miners' Welfares of the Nottinghamshire coalfield, UK

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this paper is bodily-material dynamics of urban trauma in ruins of Miners' Welfare institutions in the Nottinghamshire coalfield, UK. Emergent geographical work on urban trauma has explored how attritional 'slow' violence enacts in space and time, emphasising the complexities of spatiotemporal processes of collective trauma. Processual theorisations in urban trauma literature are prefigured by those in recent ruins research where there is a retheorisation from ruin as object to ruins contingent of spatiotemporal processes of ruination. Bringing recent literatures on urban trauma into closer dialogue with ruins research, this paper makes a methodological contribution to bodily-material dynamics of urban trauma in spaces of ruination. Contributing to theoretical and empirical debates on industrial ruins and ruination, I advance two interrelated methodological positions: archival research and critically reflexive embodied ethnographies. Following a tracing of their development, I situate Miners' Welfares within theorisations of urban trauma and ruin(ation) before proposing a pluralistic and processual methodological framework. The utility of this framework is then enhanced by an empirical section arguing that bodily-material dynamics suggest moments of 'fast violence' imbricate the slow violence of ruination to constitute how urban trauma is textured into, and evoked by, the decline of Miners' Welfares.

Le traumatisme urbain dans les ruines de la tradition industrielle: la Société de Secours Minière (*Miners' Welfare*) du bassin houiller du Nottinghamshire, au Royaume-Uni

RÉSUMÉ

Cette communication s'intéresse particulièrement aux dynamiques corporelles et matérielles du traumatisme urbain dans les ruines des institutions de la Société de Secours Minière du bassin houiller du Nottinghamshire, au Royaume-Uni. La recherche émergente sur le traumatisme urbain dans le domaine de la géographie a exploré la manière dont la violence d'attrition « lente » joue dans le temps et l'espace, mettant l'accent sur les complexités des processus spatio-temporels au niveau du traumatisme collectif. Les stratégies de

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théorisation processuelles dans les ouvrages sur le traumatisme urbain sont préfigurées par celles de la recherche contemporaine sur les ruines, dans lesquelles on trouve une rethéorisation de la ruine en tant qu'objet qui laisse place à la ruine soumise à des processus spatio-temporels de destruction. En rapprochant étroitement des études récentes sur le traumatisme urbain et la recherche sur les ruines, cette communication offre un apport méthodologique aux dynamiques corporelles et matérielles du traumatisme urbain dans les espaces de destruction. Contribuant aux débats théoriques et empiriques sur les ruines et la destruction industrielles, je joins deux positions méthodologiques étroitement liées: la recherche d'archives et les ethnographies concrètes de pensée critique. En suivant un traçage de leur développement, je situe les Sociétés de Secours Minières dans les théories de traumatisme urbain, de ruine et de destruction avant de proposer un cadre de méthodologie pluraliste et processuel. La fonctionnalité de ce cadre est ensuite amplifiée par une partie empirique soutenant que les dynamiques corporelles et matérielles suggèrent des moments de « violence rapide » intercalent la violence lente de la destruction pour constituer la manière dont le déclin des Sociétés de Secours Minières intègre et évoque le traumatisme urbain.

Trauma urbano en las ruinas de la cultura industrial: el bienestar de los mineros del campo de carbón de Nottinghamshire, Reino Unido

RESUMEN

El objetivo de este artículo es la dinámica material-corporal del trauma urbano en ruinas de las instituciones de bienestar de los mineros en el campo de carbón de Nottinghamshire, Reino Unido. El trabajo geográfico emergente sobre el trauma urbano ha explorado cómo se ejerce la violencia 'lenta' de desgaste en el espacio y el tiempo, haciendo hincapié en la complejidad de los procesos espacio-temporales del trauma colectivo. Las teorizaciones procesales en la literatura sobre trauma urbano están prefiguradas por aquellas en investigaciones recientes sobre ruinas donde hay una retorización de la ruina como objeto de ruinas contingente de procesos espacio-temporales de ruinización. Acercando la literatura reciente sobre trauma urbano a un diálogo más cercano con la investigación de ruinas, este artículo hace una contribución metodológica a la dinámica material-corporal del trauma urbano en espacios de ruina. Al contribuir a los debates teóricos y empíricos sobre las ruinas industriales y la ruinización, adelanto dos posiciones metodológicas interrelacionadas: la investigación de archivos y las etnografías encarnadas críticamente reflexivas. Haciendo un seguimiento de su desarrollo, ubico los bienestares de los mineros dentro de teorizaciones de trauma urbano y ruina (ruinización) antes de proponer un marco metodológico pluralista y procesal. La utilidad de este marco es reforzada por una sección empírica que argumenta que la dinámica de los materiales corporales sugiere momentos de 'violencia rápida' imbricando la violencia lenta de la ruina para constituir cómo el trauma urbano se texturiza y se evoca por el declive del bienestar de los mineros.

Introduction

The focus of this paper is bodily-material dynamics of urban trauma in/with Miners' Welfare institutions in the Nottinghamshire coalfield, UK. The constitutive interrelations of space, trauma and affective memory for traumatic events have been extensively studied, documenting how troubling personal and social memories are embedded in physical and imagined sites and materialities (Alexander, 2016; Fewell, 2016; Hirsch, 2008; To & Trivelli, 2015). Emergent work on urban trauma has explored places that have experienced more attritional violence, emphasising the complexities of spatiotemporal processes of collective trauma (Fullilove, 2004; Mah, 2012; Pain, 2019; Shields, 2012; Till, 2012a, 2012b). Seeking to move beyond the evental, Till (2012) suggests a continual livingness of 'wounded' places that goes beyond a psychoanalytic understanding of resurfacing from a traumatic incident. Pain (2019) advances Till's work further to conceptualise *chronic urban trauma* which apprehends the effects of the 'subvisible temporalities and spatialities of slow violence' (Pain, 2019, p. 386). Expanding from Nixon (2011), 'slow violence' in Pain's usage indexes the economic, material and symbolic wounding of successive socio-political phases of dispossession. It contrasts with types of 'fast violence', such as an environmental disaster, war or, salient for this paper, a workplace closure or bitter industrial dispute (Kern, 2016). Chronic urban trauma describes 'the psychological damage, alongside the physical harm, that slow violence creates and depends on to be sustained' (Pain, 2019, p. 389). Chronic urban trauma, thus, seeks to grasp the spatial and temporal dynamics of urban trauma at the level of the locality – in Pain's instance, a former coalmining village – while attending to wider geo-historical processes underpinning and constituting slow violence.

Processual theorisations in urban trauma are prefigured by those in recent ruins research where there is a retheorisation from ruin as object to ruins contingent on spatiotemporal processes of ruination. An industrial ruin 'speaks to the trauma, uncertainty, and tenacity of lived experiences with painful post-industrial transformations' (Mah, 2017, p. 205), evoking, signifying and mediating senses of traumatic events, memories and endurances (Degnen, 2016; Mah, 2012; Strangleman, 2013). Much research has been done on ruins of industrial workplaces, where former workers continue to cultivate attachments in what 'can be compared to a grieving process' (Meier, 2013, p. 475; Emery, 2019a). However, a focus on workplaces dictates a narrowed emphasis on labour issues, the loss of industrial jobs and economic decline. Broadening the study of ruins to social spaces, such as residual industrial cultural institutions, expands the discussion to include the bodily-material dynamics of urban trauma. One such social space is the Miners' Welfare, which was the organisational and geographic centre of an infrastructure of industrial welfare, and a space where sociality across genders and generations took place. Miners' Welfares are social and cultural institutions rooted in everyday working-class life, culture and histories, similar to Working Men's Clubs, Labour Clubs and the post-war 'estate pub' (Hall, 2017; High et al., 2017). Many of these institutions are now closed, and these *ruins of industrial culture* are scattered over deindustrialised landscapes, acting as 'physical reminders of industrial production and decline, and of the lives which were connected to these spaces' (Mah, 2010, p. 402, 2012; Muehlebach & Shoshan, 2012). Miners' Welfares are, then, centrally positioned, geographically and socially, in the collective narrative of dispossession inflicted on Britain's former coalfields, an ongoing process that has taken lives, livelihoods and now cultural and welfare institutions (Foden et al., 2014; Pain, 2019).

In this paper, I argue for the importance of bringing recent literature on urban trauma into closer dialogue with ruins research through a focus on bodily-material dynamics (Coddington & Micieli-Voutsinas, 2017; Vorbrugg, 2019). Based on a larger research project undertaken between June 2016 and April 2018, I show the importance of two interrelated methodological approaches for illuminating these bodily-material dynamics. The first approach is critically reflexive embodied (auto)ethnographies. Urban trauma conceives the social geographies of traumatic transformations and how these traumas are felt and embedded in and between bodies. This is a critical concern for geographical research on ruins, which emphasises embodiment, materialities and absence (Dawby, 2010; DeSilvey & Edensor, 2013; Edensor, 2005a; Hayes-Conroy & Hayes-Conroy, 2010; Stoler, 2008). However, there has been inadequate attention to the multiple ways that ruins are embodied and felt by the disparate and shared lives intimately enmeshed with them (Fraser, 2018; Hill, 2013; Safransky, 2014). Embodied (auto)ethnographies are required to reveal how variegated body-ruin relations emerge from an accumulation of habituated, embodied encounters within transforming sociopolitical contexts (Dawney, 2020; Gordillo, 2014; Martin, 2014; Till, 2012a; Tsing, 2015). The second methodological approach is archival research. Theoretical advances in urban trauma and ruins research regarding relational spatiotemporal processes call for more historically informed research. This is in contradistinction to the dehistoricised nature of much existing industrial ruins research, which absents historicities of ruin(ation) in favour of detailing embodied encounters with material remains and absence. I contend that historicising ruins and ruination has contextual and analytical importance for how ruins are understood and narrated, through foregrounding the affective, symbolical and institutional place of materialities and physical architectures within their constitutive historical geographies.

In this paper, I show how these interrelated methodological approaches provide new insights into the bodily-material dynamics of urban trauma in the ruins of the Nottinghamshire coalfield. In the next section, I trace the development of Miners' Welfares in the Nottinghamshire coalfield based on archival and Oral History research. Following this, I outline processual theorisations of urban trauma and ruin(ation) and offer a pluralistic and processual methodological framework that combines archival and critically reflexive embodied (auto)ethnographic methods. The next section documents the spatiotemporal processes of history, memory and contemporaneity converging in the spaces of Miners' Welfares. I show that moments of 'fast violence' – namely the 1984–85 Miners' Strike, colliery closure and closures and erasures of Miners' Welfares – imbricate the everyday slow violence of ruination to constitute how urban trauma is textured into, and evoked by, the decline of Miners' Welfares. The final discussion section examines the critical implications of weaving methods into pluralistic frameworks in studies of urban trauma and ruins.

Miners' Welfares as spaces of industrial culture

Miners' Welfares were operating sporadically across the British coalfields by the turn of the twentieth century in the form of Miners' Institutes and Welfare Halls. Numbers grew rapidly with the establishment of The Miners' Welfare Fund in 1920, an act of governmental paternalism to placate an increasingly militant workforce (Griffin, 1999). In the Nottinghamshire coalfield, the growth coincided with the development of new, often

isolated, collieries on unexploited agricultural lands (Waller, 1983). As ‘islands of light in the dreary uniformity of bleak ugliness’ (Zweig, 1948, p. 127) the Miners’ Welfare was often the sole place for social life proximate to home and work (Waller, 1983). By World War Two every colliery in the Nottinghamshire coalfield had an allocated Miners’ Welfare, founded specifically for miners’ self-improvement with prescribed activities, such as sports and reading (Figure 1.; Griffin, 1999; Waller, 1983).

Following the nationalisation of the coal industry in 1947 the administration and financing of Miners’ Welfares was transferred to the state-owned Coal Industry Social and Welfare Organisation (CISWO). Funded by deductions from miners’ wages, Miners’ Welfares were now ostensibly owned by the mining workforce as community assets. In this period, women increasingly began using Miners’ Welfares unaccompanied by men, though female participation tended to reflect and reproduce gendered and classed roles through, for example, mother and baby groups and local chapters of the Women’s Institute. At the regional level, the Nottinghamshire coalfield was also being transformed under nationalisation (Emery, 2018). Investment led to relocations of mining families from deindustrialising coalfields in Scotland and north-east England. In an atmosphere of relative socioeconomic security, building programmes swept through the Nottinghamshire coalfield, with some Miners’ Welfares demolished and rebuilt and others enlarged by wraparound extensions.

New buildings were materialisations of flourishing mining communities and, during the 1960s and 1970s, the larger Miners’ Welfares hosted many widely popular entertainment acts. Northern Soul, originating in the industrial north of England, was enthusiastically adopted in the Nottinghamshire coalfield and groups of ‘soul boys’ and ‘soul girls,’ attired in vests, full circle skirts or bellbottomed trousers, would pack the dancefloors of Miners’ Welfares (Pixelthree, 2013; Wilson, 2007). More broadly, the Miners’ Welfare was



Figure 1. Clipstone Social Club (Miners’ Welfare), 2017. Photo by author.

the site for almost every social event across the life course, vital and mundane. Senses of belonging were produced through embodied cultural practices: weddings, christenings and wakes; the quotidian routine of having a drink following work at the colliery; brass band or sports team practice; taking your children to playgroup; falling in love; first bungled kisses at the teenagers' disco; the combustible tension of a National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) branch meeting on the eve of industrial action; collectively honouring and mourning a miner killed at the colliery; days spent with family and community at mining galas held on the Miners' Welfare grounds; and many moments inbetween (Degnen, 2016). With these embodied interactions and encounters, the 'emotional deep-mapping' (Maddrell, 2016, p. 169) of the mining community found its epicentre in the Miners' Welfare. Materialities and atmospheres were endowed with local and class affective meanings and memories, variegated across emotional registers of joy, lust, love, care, communality, grief, anger, loss and despair.

In many respects, the Miners' Welfare functioned as a communal space of respite from the urban trauma and hardships of the mining community, as well as a space to collectively process those traumas (Strangleman, 2018). Individual Miners' Welfares were simultaneously the material and symbolic communal centres of 'social ecologies of place' (Till, 2012a), as well as institutional nodes in an infrastructure of state-led industrial welfare. They functioned to both order and maintain these 'social ecologies', producing belonging to place, class and state. The meanings and memories emergent of relational bodily-material processes, in turn, underpin the complex role of the ruination of Miners' Welfares in texturing urban trauma. Before I move on to narrate some of this complexity, I want to situate Miners' Welfares within processual theorisations of both urban trauma and ruins and discuss the pluralistic methodologies that emerge from such theorisations.

Theorising and researching ruins as sites of trauma

Till (2012) describes 'wounded cities' as urban environments "that have been harmed and structured by particular histories of physical destruction, displacement, and individual and social trauma" (p. 6). In urban environments, the "social ecologies of place" – embodied, affective, symbolic and material – are critical. Damaging this ecology through violence results in "root shock", a term conceptualising the "traumatic stress reaction to the destruction of all or part of one's emotional ecosystem" (Fullilove, 2004, p. 11). I have already documented how the Miners' Welfare occupied a central place in the "social ecologies" of mining communities. Importantly, however, the function and purpose of the Miners' Welfare was intrinsically connected nationally to the wider coal industry, and locally to specific collieries and their associated communities. The rapid contraction of the British coal industry in the 1980s and 1990s inflicted multiple socioeconomic and cultural violences on the coalfields that still persist (Foden et al., 2014). The decline of Miners' Welfares could, thus, be interpreted as a later victim of the 'root shock' of colliery closures.

Pain (2019) suggests that processes of industrial ruination and dispossession following colliery closure have 'hard-wired' a chronic urban trauma in the human and material fabric of the mining community under observation. Further, chronic urban trauma, contingent of historical processes of industrial decline, creates a vulnerability in deindustrialised places that exposes them to ongoing 'slow violence' and trauma, for instance, austerity, housing dispossession and environmental decline. This is supported by quantitative

research that found former industrial areas were most impacted by austerity policies (Beatty & Fothergill, 2016). However, instead of 'root shock', I suggest that spatialities of urban trauma were inherent within mining communities prior to colliery closure because of: the bodily hardships of mining; the precarity, danger and death that mining entailed; and the collective struggles to cope and care in these violent conditions (Strangleman, 2018). Miners' Welfares were spaces of respite from these urban traumas. Colliery closures are best conceived as an event of 'fast violence' in longer and broader histories of class-contingent 'slow violence'. Indeed, recent theorisations situate urban trauma within longer and broader geo-historical frames. They highlight the ongoing traumatic effects of attritional ruination as opposed to *post*-traumatic, and draw attention to the political-economies perpetrating this violence.

Materialities and space are often the target, victims, and representations of the violence, with their ruination enacting and making visible urban traumas (Pain, 2019; Vorbrugg, 2019). Both ruins and urban trauma are increasingly seen as contingent on spatiotemporal processes of ruination *and* as a lens onto the politics of those spatiotemporal processes (Mah, 2012). Arguing that ruins are largely a Western discursive construct of fetishized and reified rubble, Gordillo (2014) is interested in how they provide a lens 'through which to examine space negatively: by way of the places that were negated to create the geographies of the present' (p. 10; Stoler, 2008). Tsing (2015), in an aligned conceptualisation, uses the matsutake mushroom to examine human-material dynamics in spatiotemporal processes of capitalism, alienation and ruin. Such a processual understanding of ruin(ation) overcomes the question of how a ruin is defined and by whom. Material remains, of course, can evoke absent pasts, but they are not always fundamental to remembering for those who knew sites before ruination or erasure (Bright, 2016; Byrne & Doyle, 2004). Relatedly, there is also the issue of bodies, life and habitability, bringing into question designations of ruins as abandonment (Dawney, 2020; Safransky, 2014). Ruins are rarely empty of human and more-than-human activity, and are often occupied – in, on and around – by existing populations that live through and with their ruination (Gordillo, 2014).

Situated in expanded conceptualizations of ruin(ation), ruins are conceived here as sites subject to spatiotemporal processes of ruination whose purpose is now either transformed or terminal. Such ruins engender altered emotional complexity either by what happened there and/or by what its loss means or represents. For instance, in terms of materiality, there is not much remaining of Welbeck Miners' Welfare, the Miners' Welfare that I have most attachment to. Welbeck Miners' Welfare served the coalmining village where I grew up for almost ninety years until it closed in 2015 (Figure 2. NEILTIMOTHYify, 2014). It was subsequently demolished, and remnants, in rubble form, are all that remain of the physical fabric. When I first returned to this site, the eradicated topography, desolate and being reclaimed by nature, left me with a disconcerting intensity of unknowing. However, I could (still) faintly hear the clacking of pool balls and outdated songs playing, smell the fustiness of stale beer, feel the linoleum-like textures of the seats and sense the atmospheres that this assemblage of embodied memories invoked. Welbeck Miners' Welfare, then, is undergoing a process of ruination: materially absent, but cognitively and affectively present. Conversely, some Miners' Welfares are still open to the public. However, they are still subject to processes of material, cultural, symbolic and emotional ruination. Affective memories imbue the decaying materialities of all Miners' Welfares, whether open, derelict or demolished (Dawney, 2020; Vorbrugg, 2019).



Figure 2. Welbeck Miners' Welfare, 2015. Photo by Tim Cutts. Reproduced with permission.

Archival research and historicising ruins

Edensor (2008) claims that '*not finding out*' about the historicity of ruins 'is part of the methodology of confronting ghosts, it allows the spectral to continue haunting without exorcism' (pp. 325–326, emphasis in original). Joining recent theorisations of urban trauma, I propose that the omission of historical-geographical contexts precludes a thorough understanding of bodily-material dynamics of urban trauma. Till (2012) decries 'site biographies' that are too 'narrow in their analyses of social exchange and power relations' (p. 7). Critically, 'cities become wounded in very different ways, as tied to the particular histories, processes, and traumas of displacement' (Till, 2012, p. 6). Awareness of these 'particular histories' is important for disentangling the complex texturing of trauma in material space over chronological time. I propose that contextualising material forms within their 'social ecologies of place' leads to more empathetic and nuanced understandings of traumatic dispossession. Simply, we must know what collectivities have been dispossessed of.

My historical analysis of Miners' Welfare is based on the examination of a range of textual and visual archival material, including photographs, film, published memoirs, artistic representations, local media, Oral History, social media pages and web-based heritage projects. I used these materials to investigate how the Miners' Welfare was used and embodied, and the rhythms, practices and performances that took place in them. I was particularly interested in how these aspects were impacted by fast and slow violences of ruination, which helps contextualise the data elicited from critically reflexive embodied ethnographies.

Critically reflexive embodied ethnographies

Couched in embodied and materialist methods, ruins research in Cultural Geography has mainly explored the capacities of the sensing and emoting body to elicit absent and

affective evocations of the past, present and possible futures (Degnen, 2013; DeSilvey & Edensor, 2013; Lorimer & Murray, 2015; Meier et al., 2013). These methodologies involve remaining attentive to the visual, haptic, olfactory and audible, which 'gives rise to a host of associations and sensations' (Edensor, 2005b, p. 834) and is generative of 'an empathetic and sensual apprehension understood at an intuitive and affective level' (Edensor, 2005b, p. 847). These sensory stimuli animate involuntary and indeterminate pasts and memories, 'disrupt notions of presence and absence' (Hill, 2017, p. 70) and engender emotions that draw us analytically closer to senses of loss and erasure (DeSilvey & Edensor, 2013). Descriptive accounts of embodied and affective research encounters signal that much of contemporary life is mediated through exposures to absent pasts and their materialities (Edensor, 2005b; Hill, 2017; Lee, 2017).

A dependence on self-description in embodied ruins research has attracted claims of 'ruin-gaze' that trivialises the traumatic experience of industrial ruination (High, 2013; Mah, 2017; Safransky, 2014). While ruins can be variously conceived as sites of experimentation, political critique or *ruinlust*, the role of industrial ruins in urban trauma makes creative engagements seem somewhat indulgent. However, extant ruins research using embodied methods has been useful in conveying the more-than-representational ways that ruins evoke affective and embodied absences of people, things, memories and of the previous lives of buildings, 'invoking a literal sense of continued "presence"' (Maddrell, 2013, p. 505). Trauma is an inherently bodily and affective condition, one which is notoriously difficult to articulate and describe (Shields, 2012; To & Trivelli, 2015; Tamas, 2016). Embodied methods allow us to reveal some of how urban trauma surfaces and mediates bodies, senses and emotions in bodily-material dynamics.

Materialities and absences are not, however, universally encountered, but are 'the product of bodies with a particular habitual disposition that is historically constituted' (Gordillo, 2014, p. 41). While I traced rubble remains of Welbeck Miners' Welfare, memories surfaced inchoately. These were either reconstructions of direct memories or invoked from traces of stories and fragments transferred to me by family, friends or research participants (Dawby, 2010). They were place, people and event specific affective memories of Welbeck Miners' Welfare: of mourners gathering for my grandad's wake; of being drunk in front of my family for the first time; of bodies, sounds, smells and textures at New Year's Day parties. These direct lived and intergenerational memories, and the experiences on which they are based, are of greatest import because it is actual occurrences that condition and constitute traumas (Frers, 2013). My positionality, thus, privileges me in this research. Because many researchers are not enmeshed with the lived histories of the ruins they study, they face alternative challenges in attuning themselves to the urban traumas of industrial ruination (Dawby, 2010; Dawney, 2020; Edwards, 2016; O'Callaghan, 2018; Stoler, 2008).

My embodied autoethnographic research with Welbeck Miners' Welfare involved attuning to memories, absences, emotions and sensations evoked by the site. Lee (2017), returning to where her hometown once stood, creatively engaged with the erased landscape by tracing out the topography. This was a process of '*felt* remembering in which the town that no longer exists is very much alive and present' (Lee, 2017, p. 63. emphasis in original). Like Lee, I re-enacted a walk-through of Welbeck Miners' Welfare, plotting each materially absent room. I attempted to capture embodied memories and their emotional resonances before they were swept away by the blowing wind. Fieldnotes were revisited shortly after to add reflexive material that escaped being recorded in the moment (Edwards, 2016).

Appropriately used, autoethnography should 'inform readers' understanding of some aspect of the social world that exceeds the autoethnographer's individual experience' (Butz & Besio, 2009, p. 1666). However, no autoethnography can convey in full how it feels to live among the ruins of industrial culture (Shaw, 2013). I am from a mining family, grew up in the Nottinghamshire coalfield and have experiences and attachments to Miners' Welfares. Yet, my (white, male) 'insider' account is not wholly representative of others' and I faced none of the exclusions based on gender, sexuality and race that took place within the Miners' Welfare (Drozdowski & Dominey-Howes, 2015; Farhadi, 2019). Further, even when someone grows up living within the confines of a place, deeply attuned to its rhythms and ways of being, they cannot be from all of it. I have innumerable direct memories of Welbeck, Longden Terrace and Church Warsop Miners' Welfares – all now closed. I have fewer direct memories, or none, of other Nottinghamshire Miners' Welfares. Every village in the Nottinghamshire coalfield has a separate 'sharply tuned spatial logic whose muscled core is an affective-attachment to place so powerful that it's as if there's an invisible gate at the town line' (Stewart, 2013, p. 276; see also Emery, 2019b). Each specific Miners' Welfare is imbued with meanings contingent of its own local histories that diverge and converge with those of other Miners' Welfares.

Although my autoethnographic insights signal some of the affective density of bodily-material dynamics, embodied ethnographies must incorporate the social and structural, as well as personal, if they are to generate socially representative empirics. For this reason, I conducted seventeen semi-structured Oral History interviews with autochthonous individuals of varying ages and genders, all from Nottinghamshire mining families. Three interviews took place in Miners' Welfares and fourteen in participants' homes. I asked participants a series of questions about their experiences of Miners' Welfares over the life course while eliciting opinions, feelings and emotions regards decay, closures and ruination. In largely free-flowing dialogues, participants nostalgically remembered Miners' Welfare, and displayed relations between present ruination, affect and memory (Vorbrugg, 2019). People legitimated or evidenced their expressed feelings with reference to past experiences and sociality and in dialogue with present day conditions of Miners' Welfares, social relations and decline. While this study does not engage with psychoanalytic understandings of the unconscious suppression and embodiment of traumatic events, it remains that trauma can often be accompanied by a reluctance to speak, misrecognition or preference to leave traumatic experiences unremembered (Alexander, 2016; Caruth, 1995; Palacios, 2019). However, the hesitation to speak about traumatic themes appeared to be most related to localised contexts related to the 1984–85 Miners' Strike, colliery closures and ruination.

Oral History testimony was augmented with three further interviews – a regeneration stakeholder, a former employee of a Miners' Welfare, and a current employee. These interviews provided insights into the management and political economies of Miners' Welfares. Additional informal interactions with managers of Miners' Welfares and the public during participant observation were also recorded. I conducted approximately sixty-five hours of participant observation in five open Miners' Welfares, where I observed embodied performances and interactions, and material and atmospheric fabrics. I also visited eight additional closed Miners' Welfares to observe the material ruination. Remains at different sites were in various stages of ruination, from recently vacated to erased and rebuilt over.

Urban trauma, industrial ruination and Miners' Welfares

This pluralistic methodological framework produces representative empirics that capture the disparate urban traumas embodied and enlivened in human-material dynamics. In the next two subsections, I weave these empirics together to narrate the ruination and urban traumas of Miners' Welfares in the Nottinghamshire coalfield.

Miners' Welfare as sites of ruination and urban trauma

The ruination of Miners' Welfares in the Nottinghamshire coalfield dates to a single event of fast violence – the 1984–85 Miners' Strike (Paterson, 2015). While most of Britain's coalmining workforce was on strike, only around two-thousand of Nottinghamshire's thirty-thousand miners participated in industrial action from beginning to end. In violent, hostile conditions, Miners' Welfares became battlegrounds between those who supported strike action and those who continued to work, with each side deeming control of their Miners' Welfare as a symbolic and strategic victory (Beaton, 1985; Paton-Black, 2012; Witham, 1985). Some strike committees were allowed to set up soup kitchens in their respective Miners' Welfare, run by women of striking families. Others were denied access to facilities altogether. Miners' Welfares as spaces of solidarity and communality were transformed by these struggles. Relationships between friends and families were severed. Some striking miners refused to ever associate with 'scabs', and many never stepped foot in their Miners' Welfare again.

Following the defeat of the strike workforces were reduced and collieries closed, and Miners' Welfares suffered further loss of patronage. Additional colliery closures from October 1992 further entrenched socioeconomic deprivations within the Nottinghamshire coalfield, which have persisted into the present and expected future (Foden et al., 2014). In an atmosphere of bitterness, division and deprivation, Miners' Welfares declined.

In the Nottinghamshire coalfield, unlike other mining areas, the 1984–85 Miners' Strike and colliery closures are rarely explicitly spoken of, suppressed precisely because those who lived those histories continue to live and suffer with them (Bright, 2016; Emery, 2018). However, vigilant suppression of these pasts often falters (Alexander, 2016). The absence of lost friends and family, the occasions shared with them and the rhythms that have been fractured are routinely evoked by and within Miners' Welfares. Inside, engraved brass plates, photographs in corridors, tankards behind bars or trophies in glass cabinets bear the names and faces of absent people, practices and solidarities. Commemorative plates of Nottinghamshire's collieries, keepsakes manufactured for the respective colliery's closure, are also ubiquitous, displayed as materialised reminders of collective loss and trauma. These materialities prompt stories that conjure the absence of former friends and family. My partner's grandad, for example, died in 1985, but his absence is presenced by stories told about him: stories about how he was branch secretary of the NUM at the colliery he worked; how he was on strike throughout the 1984–85 Miners' Strike; his assault by police at the 'Battle of Orgreave'; and the time he decried 'eternal shame' on his fellow miners who continued to work (Taylor, 2005). Sat in *his* Miners' Welfare, still clinging to life twenty-five years after its colliery closed, his presence is only materially absent. His life, and those similar, persistently surfaces through narratives that mediate the atmospheres of Miners' Welfares: traumatic pasts come to (re)traumatise the present.

Urban trauma is further textured into Miners' Welfares by the false starts and promises surrounding their regeneration. In 1998, after thirteen years of insecurity and ruination, the Deputy Prime Minister came to Ollerton and Bevercotes Miners' Welfare in the Nottinghamshire coalfield to state that New Labour's coalfields regeneration programmes would rejuvenate our sense of self and place. Many Miners' Welfares had already become charitable trusts to take advantage of additional support from government, charities and CISWO. They would find, however, that support was conditional. Miners' Welfare governing committees were reconfigured around principles of profitmaking sustainability. This turned committees of former miners into boards of entrepreneurs, and the communities they served into mere consumers. As the head of one community foundation phrased it, Miners' Welfares needed to transform their 'victim mentality' and 'dependency culture' and become self-reliant. This discourse dismissed the industrial welfare that mining communities had strived for, perpetuating the myth that mining communities had been 'dependent' on the state. It also ignored the atomization of mining communities following colliery closure, with mining families moving in search of work or away from ruination, replaced by people with little intergenerational loyalty to the Miners' Welfare or understanding of its function in social ecologies. Instead, targeted funds for the coalfields were ended in 2014 as the state imposed the slow violence of austerity on former mining communities still suffering the effects of industrial ruination wrought by colliery closures decades earlier.

As I toured local Miners' Welfares in the 1990s with Welbeck Miners' Welfare youth football teams, I was blissfully unaware of the urban traumas consuming mining communities and how the legacies of the 1984–85 Miners' Strike complicated their expression. Miners' Welfares for my team were spaces for adventure. Now, I can see how Miners' Welfares can be inimical places. The few Miners' Welfares still in operation take turns to hold monthly Northern Soul Nights that are moderately popular. Sparsely attended bingo fills up weekday calendars, with tribute acts booked for weekend nights, sometimes drawing in over one hundred but mostly only a few dozen. In the daytime, a handful of drinkers bestrew the main bars, sharing newspapers, dispensing coins in the bandit machine or venturing outside to smoke under makeshift shelters. Liminal spaces between life and death, an atmosphere of suspicion fills the room if someone unknown occupies a corner.

Outside a Miners' Welfare whose attendant colliery closed twenty-two years ago, one of the daytime drinkers tells me that he has been coming since he 'wa' a lad', his father bought him his 'first *legal* pint' there and he and his wife had their wedding reception in the adjoining hall. He admits the building is 'in a bit of state'. The managers try hard, but a sense of inevitable closure imbues the materialities and atmospheres, as it does other Miners' Welfares that cling to life. Limited by austere budgets, surplus rooms are closed off to save on energy and maintenance bills and finality is forestalled by continual and piecemeal mending. Flaking paint lets in rain, rotting wooden signage and fascias. Chipboard suffices for windowpanes, and metal framed windows rust and corrode away. Patrons are forced to hopscotch over uneven broken slabs to get to the entrance. Pooled water on flat felt roofs seeps through onto suspended ceiling tiles and plasterboards, leaving patchworks of damp discolouration. Weeds snake through split cement walls. The man outside finishes his cigarette, stubs it into the dented ashtrays on the wall and says 'I don't know where I'd go if it shut'.

Others are less dependent on their local Miners' Welfare. Still, they do not want to see it close. The building holds intimate and symbolic spatiotemporal meanings. A former miner who went on strike during the 1984–85 Miners' Strike has 'mixed emotions' that *his* Miners' Welfare is still open. Despite having not been in for thirty-five years because it is 'full of scabs', it is all that is left of how mining culture was ordered, practiced and performed. One woman has only been in her Miners' Welfare 'perhaps two dozen times' in her eighty-five years in the village – she did not like the cigarette smoke and alcohol – though her deceased husband went in 'most nights'. If the Miners' Welfare closed she would lose a piece of him and the place-histories they shared. These residual relationships between the trauma of death, mourning and the Miners' Welfare are still apparent in collective commemorative practices. Following a recent memorial to mark twenty-five years since a disaster at the local colliery killed three miners, those gathered retreated to the Miners' Welfare following the service (Bilsthorpe Colliery disaster remembered 25 years on, 2018). When a Miners' Welfare dies, some come to witness, others acknowledge the loss alone and others are indifferent.

Afterlives of Miners' Welfares

It was with great sadness that I heard of the proposed demolition of the Old Welfare Hall. Lots of memories were stirred by the news. For so many years this building had become the rock in the centre of Edwinstowe, and now the last icon of an era is to go into oblivion. What will be left, only memories! (Howard, K., date unknown. <https://edwinstowehistory.org.uk/local-history/buildings/welfare-hall/>)

Closed Miners' Welfares are promptly demolished when there is opportunity to financially exploit land, such as for housing or discount supermarkets. However, neither private enterprise nor government seem willing to invest in the Nottinghamshire coalfields' more remote communities. Miners' Welfares vacated *in situ* are sometimes descended upon by urban explorers keen to encounter materialities of lost cultures preserved under dust (dweeb, 2012). More commonly, derelict Miners' Welfares are favoured spots among adolescents for vandalism, drugtaking and arson: funeral pyres for industrial cultures captured on smart phones (Djtomtink, 2009). Some condemned Miners' Welfares, following public discontent, have metal shutters bolted to the windows and doors by stalling local authorities reluctant to incur the costs of demolition (Figure 3).

Arson, closure or demolition of Miners' Welfares are noted by local media outlets and community social media pages, prompting public responses that 'can be read as confessions of social realities and oracles of new possibilities' (Dawby, 2010, p. 773). Proposed developments are almost universally unwanted by those I spoke with, as they bring increased traffic, noise and put pressure on local services. Participants suggested that a community resource would be more preferred. However, vacated Miners' Welfares, once materialisations and enablers of industrial cultures, become prominent visible representations and reminders of its decay. There is a temporal and affective conjuncture felt at the level of the locality when a Miners' Welfare closes for good whereby traumatic and nostalgic pasts gather up in a contemporaneity of ruination and uncertain senses of the future. The Miners' Welfare emerged from, ordered and represented a certain rhythm, a way of doing sociality and communality (Strangleman, 2018). Inhabitants connected to



Figure 3. Erased Welbeck Miners' Welfare, 2017. Photo by author.

the site interpret closure as the final passing of that way of 'doing things'. Traumas associated with closure are not linearly conceived and expressed as nostalgia, however. They are deeply complicated by the lived past of decline and ruination.

It is New Year's Day that is continually referenced when Welbeck Miners' Welfare features in photographs posted on social media, or when a former miner, walking his dog, enquires into what I am doing traipsing around the wasteland (Figure 4). Memories of this annual occasion, mundane and repetitious, yet concomitantly unique and idiosyncratic, linger on. New Year's Day at Welbeck Miners' Welfare is qualified in conflicting emotional registers because the material and socioeconomic conditions that facilitated it have been so dismantled. As expressed by the dog walker; 'It breaks your heart to think about it really'. On the site, it is hard to imagine how you could not think about it. Two young mothers sat on the bench across the road, moving pushchairs back-and-forth, gazed mistrustfully across at me as I collated conflicting memories and sensations from the rubble: annoyance at the apathetic attitudes of the community when Welbeck Miners' Welfare was threatened with closure; guilt that I had done nothing to prevent it from happening; rage at the people – living and dead, known and unknown – who had destroyed these communities. Like many, I feel powerless to resist the material eradication of Miners' Welfares, the social relations and cultural performances they engendered and the memories and futures they imbued. As I passed the two women on the bench we shared pensive nods of the head. I wondered if they too share the urban trauma embedded in this site, and if so, will their children, innocently asleep, be haunted in the same ways. I wondered what can be done.

The different versions of what should be done with closed Miners' Welfares are expressions and articulations of the urban trauma of processual slow and fast violence



Figure 4. Annesley Miners' Welfare, 2017. Photo by author.

and are contingent of local and personal historicities within these processes. Questioned on feelings invoked by ruination, or what should be done about it, responses are often tacit, aimed at concealing wariness and projecting resilience to ruination. Yet complex and varied affective registers of nostalgia, resignation, anger, melancholy, relief and apathy are evoked. Interviewees would connect feelings to mundane and vital memories: 'I spent a lot of time in there I can tell you, for all sorts of stuff Well, I met my wife in there when we were sixteen at a disco And we spent near on every Saturday night in there after'. Continually referenced are the 'fond memories' made in the Miners' Welfare, how its fate is a 'terrible shame' and how much of a 'pity' it is that it closed. Brief utterances are caveated by how the site had become an eyesore prior and since closure, that people stopped going in toward the end, had never felt welcome there and the futility people feel about the material and cultural erosion of their communities.

Discussion

The far-reaching economic and social impacts of industrial ruination have been well-documented (Emery, 2019a; High et al., 2017; Mah, 2012; Strangleman, 2013). A focus on urban trauma enables a theorisation of the embodied and affective impacts, as well as the politics entangled with them. Industrial ruination has wrought urban traumas that continue to texture bodily-material dynamics in Nottinghamshire coalfield mining communities. Spatial and temporal ruination has complex and traumatic affects: nostalgia and mourning for the spaces where events and practices took place; suppression of traumatic pasts relating to the Miners' Strike 1984–1985 and subsequent industrial ruination and

closures; and resignation and apathy toward the decline of mining communities. Ruins, thus, often (re)surface and reify traumatic pasts, signal nostalgic loss, and entrench urban trauma in the present (Pain, 2019; Palacios, 2018; Stoler, 2008). With urban trauma an ongoing process, more needs to be done to illustrate the narratives, meanings and associations engendered by industrial ruins (Mah, 2012). This requires tracing their histories and listening to the plurality of affected voices. To achieve this, I have suggested a pluralistic methodological framework that combines critically reflexive embodied (auto) ethnographies and archival research. These approaches are complementary and (must be) relational.

A chronological approach reveals both the intense moments of fast violence and the less visible phases of slow violence that led to urban trauma. Historicising urban trauma in ruins of industrial culture highlights the crucial non-traumatic normative precedents. It is these pasts that mediate the felt intensities of present traumas. Additionally, archival work on the lives of ruins allows us to more thoroughly apprehend the structural political-economic conditions that gave rise to, and which continue to enact, violence. The ruination of Miners' Welfares resulted from capitalistic principles of self-reliance, a retreat from social welfare in deindustrialising areas and the privatisation of space for capital accumulation. What is also illustrated by attending to historicities of ruins is that urban trauma cannot be separated from the localised enactment of broader violent political-economic processes. Localised specificities played a critical role in the Nottinghamshire coalfield in relation to the 1984–85 Miners' Strike. Some striking miners have not been in their Miners' Welfares since 1984 with others alienated by the legacies of broken relationships and traumatic memories imbuing the atmospheres of Miners' Welfares in their final years as well as afterlives.

Embodied ethnographies help us conceptualise how these different spatial and temporal violences texture urban trauma into bodily-material dynamics (Hayes-Conroy & Hayes-Conroy, 2010). I used embodied autoethnography to convey how traumatic absences on the site of the erased Welbeck Miners' Welfare led to incongruous affects emergent of an urban trauma: (dis)comfort, nostalgia, affection, loss, anger and impotency. Autoethnography overcame some of the silences of the Nottinghamshire coalfield, and showed how urban trauma manifests in the personal. However, it is possible that through centring autoethnography I have universalised relations between ruins and urban trauma (Drozdowski & Dominey-Howes, 2015). Personal historicities of the body in that specific moment conditioned how trauma surfaced and transferred into analysis (Edwards, 2016). Additional to the erased architectures of the Miners' Welfare, the environmental conditions and the sense of being watched by the two women on the bench shaped this encounter. Further, my in-depth knowledge of Miners' Welfares, and their place within mining cultures over time, perhaps distorts from how they are known and lived in the everyday (Degnen, 2013). I certainly have more intense feelings when I return to sites after researching them (Walley, 2013). For a generation growing up in industrial ruination, the Miners' Welfare signified and emplaced cultures that are spoken of with great fondness, like fairy tales. I am mournful of these pasts and communal futures that are denied. But when a Miners' Welfare closes some my age mourn its loss and others are apathetic. Maybe, as the former miner at the erased Welbeck Miners' Welfare said, it is best not to think about it, and some certainly do not. However, for those who lived through the lives and ruination of Miners' Welfares, their afterlives do evoke complex

feelings and affectivities and their mournfulness is complicated by affective memories imbued with nostalgia and trauma.

In the case of Miners' Welfares, embodied ethnographies of interviewing and participant observation reiterate the critical role played by memory in the constitution and affective intensities of urban trauma (Bondi, 2014). Recent work has sought to move beyond claims continually made in deindustrialization studies that former industrial areas are deeply conditioned by decline, loss and nostalgia for industrial pasts, instead emphasising the ongoing care, vitality and resistance that takes place (Dawney, 2020; Pain, 2019; Till, 2012a). However, these two analyses are not entirely opposed and both can be seen in the Nottinghamshire coalfield. Ruins are not glamorised in the Nottinghamshire coalfield. They are, in Gordillo's (2014) terms, rubble. The desire to remove decaying, closed Miners' Welfares does not come from a desire to erase the past (an impossible task), but through concern for tarnishing it further by ruination and the hope to care for place by formulating alternatives for the space. The fabric of Newstead Miners' Welfare building, for example, was saved by local activists who repurposed it as a conference venue. However, this was enabled by its unique position next to a train station and its proximity to the city of Nottingham and the motorway. Desired alternatives are not regularly met as capital either seeks to exploit land in the form of housing and value supermarkets or, determining no capital value in it, leaves sites empty. This dispossession is part of the 'slow violence' that Pain (2019) documents, where the loss of jobs leads to loss of facilities which leads to dereliction.

Developments in urban trauma, specifically chronic urban trauma (Pain, 2019) and 'wounded cities' (Till, 2012a), are, thus, welcome for their mutual focus on the political, temporal/historical and spatial. However, their detachment from the event can belie how moments of 'fast violence' invoke conjunctures and encode collective and personal memories. In turn, memory is both fundamental to the feeling and persistence of urban trauma, and gestures to a time imagined to predate trauma. Regards conjunctures, events are often moments of 'fast violence', in this case the 1984–85 Miners' Strike, closure of the colliery and the Miners' Welfare. Where Pain (2019) and Till (2012a) place emphasis on the quotidian livingness of trauma, we might well draw attention to the livingness of traumatic memory, enlivened chronically by visible and absent stimuli in processes of ruination. In the end, it is overlapping processes of fast and slow violence and ruination that have textured trauma into Miners' Welfares. Although this paper has not considered therapeutic or political interventions, it is apparent from considering the textures of urban trauma in the mining communities of the Nottinghamshire coalfield that any moves towards social justice and wellbeing will be difficult. Acknowledging the contested range of narratives, meanings and traumas attached and enlivened by recent ruins is critical to developing policies around what we do with what is left.

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