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The Ruin of the Past: Deindustrialization, Working-Class Communities, and Football in the Midlands, UK 1945-1990

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Kinesiology

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Abstract and Keywords

As a social history of deindustrialization in the Midlands (U.K.), this study explores how loss informed working-class conceptions of identity, culture, and community. By shuttering factories, disrupting social networks, defamiliarizing the landscape, and relegating thousands to the unemployment lines, deindustrialization marooned the Midlands working class in a world they struggled to recognize. Using oral histories to interrogate the ways loss informed everyday life, this study examines how the meanings attached to football transformed the sport into a metonym for the past. The dynamics and values specific to working-class communities are analyzed through the lens of four key working class relationships. Composing the fabric of reality, by dissecting relationships to the body, employment, sociality, and the everyday, this study illustrates how work organized and influenced life. Acting as a before picture to the trauma of deindustrialization, this study emphasizes football's ubiquity in the lives of the Midlands' working class. Dedicating attention to absence, automation, mergers/liquidations, and redundancies, this dissertation is also devoted to detailing deindustrialization's destruction of the working-class community, leaving a landscape defined by absence, memories of football entangled with private histories of loss. The departed family members, workplaces, shops, and even smells continued to live on, as deindustrialization transformed football into a trace of the rich Midlands' industrial heritage.

Keywords: Deindustrialization; The History of Football in the Midlands; English Working Class History; Loss; Oral History; Community; Cultural Meaning of Sport, Wolverhampton; Coventry; Walsall; Birmingham; West Bromwich

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of Andrew Lomax Strathdee.

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Introduction

Loss and its continued memory shape human life. A form of disorientation, loss separates individuals from what is familiar and places them in a state of uncertainty. Responses to loss, whether hidden or forthright inform the stories we tell about the world. History, as a concept, is a progression of loss and ruins, a series of lives marooned in an impenetrable, fading past. In his poem “Die Verganglichkeit” Swiss-German writer Johann Peter Hebel approaches loss and our understanding of its inevitability through a frank exchange between a father and son as they make their way home by oxcart in the dark of night.

Do you see how the sky is splendid with bright stars? Each star is as it might be a village, and farther up perhaps there is a fine town, you can't see it from here, and if you live decent you will go to one of those stars and you'll be happy there, and you'll find your father there, if it is God's will, and poor Bessie, your mother. Perhaps you'll drive up the Milky Way into that hidden town, and if you look down to one side, what'll you see—

Roettein Castle! The Belchen will be charred and the Blauen, too, like two old towers, and between the two everything will be burnt out, right into the ground. There won't be any water in the Wiese, everything will be bare and black and deathly quiet, as far as you can see; you'll see that and say to your mate that's with you: “Look, that's where the earth was, and that mountain was called the Blechen. And not far away was Wieslet; I used to live there and harness my oxen, cart wood to Basel and plough, and drain meadows and make splints for torches, and potter about until my death, and I wouldn't like to go back now.”¹

¹ W.G Sebald, *A Place in the Country*. (New York: Random House, 2014),

Perched high above the earth and reflecting upon the impossibility of return, the memory of Hebel's narrator restores his world from a geography of oblivion, long after he has died. Not unlike an historian drawing conclusions from the physical remnants of the past, this passage conveys how the concept of loss leaves indelible, but often invisible marks upon identity, physical geography, memory and the writing of history. Like the blackened wreckage of Hebel's Basel, the post-World War II communities and cultures of England's industrial working class exist now, only in ruin and memories of loss. Displaced physically by the bulldozers and wrecking balls of urban regeneration and slum clearances, working-class communities were also dispossessed of their basic social fabric by deindustrialization. Provoked directly by the sterling crisis of 1966 and the subsequent implementation of a deflationary budget by the Labour government, the dismantling of England's industrial workforce profoundly fragmented the country's social and psychological landscapes. Addressing the extent to which deindustrialization challenged working-class identities and self-image Simon J. Charlesworth stated:

Deindustrialization has, clearly, had the effect of wrapping many in a powerful sense of entrapment, as low wages, the cheapening of the qualifications they might reasonably aspire to obtain, and the shortening length of time that they hold jobs, have given them a sense of inescapable destiny, of being individuals collectively overwhelmed by historical change.²

Estranged from their own time by the shattering of social continuity, members of displaced working-class communities attempted to reconstruct the past by continuing to enact the customs and cultures of their lost worlds. Of these rituals imbued with loss,

² Simon J. Charlesworth, *A Phenomenology of Working Class Experience*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 71.

attending a football match was one of the most visible ways dissolving working class communities could temporarily restore a sense of the past. Like Hebel's castle, football teams were ruins of a world existing and adapting to the present. Carrying with them vast histories of loss, they were perhaps one of the few functioning traces of a once vivid world.

Coexisting with the present through memory (or the lack thereof), traditions and archival preservation, loss and its relationship to historical time is perhaps best articulated by the French medievalist Philippe Aries in his book *Le Temps de L'Histoire*. Expanding upon the concept that "History" (the total aggregate of past human experience) encompasses both tradition and the practice of history, Aries perceives "History" as "an interplay between two ways of understanding historical time; one as it flows through living tradition, the other as it punctuates historical reconstruction."³ For Aries the time of tradition is distinctly existential. It embodies lived experience as it emerges out of the past and confirms our sense of continuity. The time of history is hermeneutical; it deconstructs the meaning of the past by dividing it into distinct eras, enabling us to interpret the differences between the present and the past.⁴ If we are to approach historical time as an interplay between the past and the present, loss allows us to understand how fragmentation, ruptures in continuity and dispossession imbue tradition, culture and language with a distinct symbolic property; the embodiment of the past in the present. While loss has always informed the time of tradition and lived experience, historians

³ Patrick H. Hutton, *Philippe Aries and the Politics of French Cultural History* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004), 15

⁴ Ibid

such as Peter Fritzsche assert that loss, melancholy and nostalgia have only recently become a defining characteristic of historical consciousness. In his book *Stranded in the Present*, Fritzsche argues that the French Revolution and its fragmentation of social continuity permanently changed the ways individuals interpreted the past. Fritzsche proposes that the trauma of displacement, mass arrest, execution and occupation transformed the past into a source of melancholy.⁵ Drawing examples from the writings of Chateaubriand, Francois Buzot, Dorothea Schlegel, and the poetry, memoirs and letters of individuals experiencing the aftershock of revolution firsthand, an image of an irretrievable past emerges. Exiled from their homelands or cut off from their old ways of life, late 18th century Europeans became “stranded in the past.” While the majority of Fritzsche’s writing emphasizes the melancholic relationship individuals were developing with the past, it would be incorrect to characterize his interpretation as exclusively negative.⁶ Through the processes of exile and the attempt to create a society unburdened by the customs and laws of the past, Fritzsche argues that Europeans began to develop a contemporary historical consciousness. By actively participating in this redrawing of the social fabric, individuals were coming into closer contact with their contemporaries and were contextualizing their own lives within a larger social narrative. This increased awareness of other people’s lives and the similarities or differences to their own, gave the ‘present’ new historical dimensions. Paired with a pronounced longing for a past which they could not return, historical time (as Aries has conceptualized it) became

⁵ Peter Fritzsche, *Stranded in the Present : Modern time and the Melancholy of History* (Cambridge, Mass. ; London: Harvard University Press, 2004), 33.

⁶ Robert Wohl, “Stranded in the Present: Modern Time and the Melancholy of History (review), *Modernism/ Modernity* 12 no.3 (2005), 517-519.

fragmented. For those “stranded in the present” one way to briefly reenter the past was through the preservation of artifacts. Proposing an alternative reality, these artifacts stood in for what had been lost. While Fritzsche’s work is undermined by its Eurocentrism, its effective silencing of contradicting narratives and the arbitrariness of dividing historical time into a “before and after”, *Stranded in the Present* is a crucial text in understanding how legacies of loss are transferred into the present through cultural artifacts, memory, customs and ideals. History does not repeat itself; it becomes reiterated through common patterns. Whether it’s the displacement individuals experienced during the French Revolution, or the dissolution of working class communities during deindustrialization, the constant ruptures of social continuity that have occurred since the late 18th century have transformed time into a series of departures, and the past into a source of loss.

This dissertation examines English football in the Midlands between 1945 and 1990 through the concept of loss. Seeking to place football clubs and the meanings, memories, and roles attached to them into the greater mosaic of working-class life, this dissertation explores the reactions to loss through leisure activities and participation in a wide variety of footballing fandoms. My research question is: How did the memory of working-class communities, culture and industry continue to exist or live on through football? Intimating a relationship to the dead or to the recent past, the phrase *to live on* can be understood as the presence of the past in the present. Inseparable from the fabric of English working-class identity, football’s role in remembering, or preserving the past is multifaceted. For many of the older participants in the Heritage Lottery funded oral history of Shrewsbury Town Football Club, *Shrews Tales & More*, memories of

football organize, or inform their memories of community and work. In an interview with lifelong fan Tim Thomas, memories of football stood in for the lost intimacy of his old workplace:

And err, I, at that particular time I was working for the Co-op on the Whitchurch Road, on the Whitchurch Road there, there was some shops, there's still a shop there now but it's a gymnasium or something that and then erm, there was quite a few young chaps because there was more labour in those days, working in the shops you know, and round the corner was a big green in front of some houses so between, for our lunch break, between one and two, we used to gobble our sandwiches and go round to this green and err, play football, just have a kick about. And then one of the ladies, one lady customer of ours come in one day and she said her husband erm, had seen us play football and he was a bit shy and could she ask on his behalf if he could come and have a game of football with us (laughs) and he was George Baker the Shrewsbury Town's number nine...⁷

Similarly, in a study conducted by the Warwickshire City Council on "Working Lives in Nuneaton and Bedworth", football reinforced a sense of community at work. Engineer John Heathcote remembered:

Say it was...we're encouraged by an apprenticeship supervisor who we could go and talk to if we had problems with our homework or tech work or whatever and um and we got together as a group we started a football team, umm and in the mid 60s the works team not only had umm a lot of players from the works but a lot of other players joined us we were the first, umm Nuneaton team to be invited to play in Coventry in the middle

⁷ Tim Thomas, interview by Sam Crumpton and Tate Gallingham, *Shrews Tales & More*, Shrewsbury Town Supporters Trust, Shrewsbury Town Football Club, Greenhous Meadow Ground, February 6th, 2011.

60s....that also helped everybody, because you got a sense of belonging to Clarkson's, Clarkson's football team....⁸

Emphasizing football's role in creating and maintaining a working-class identity, the subsequent loss of manufacturing employment in the region dissolved these important bonds working men had developed to their workplace and to one another. The enduring importance of these bonds is demonstrated by Heathcote's reflections later in the same interview:

We had a reunion, um a year past September in the Fire street workingman's club, and um somebody said John why don't you, cos you know i was captain of the football team and I'd come back from South Africa, why don't we have a get together. So um, my mate who's a sports editor now, Derek Brown on the, on the local Coventry Telegraph he put a bit in the paper and we had a fabulous, a fabulous night. A real, you know a real get together. All people from, from the sixties and one bloke even flew in, Les Carten an apprentice, he even flew in from America just to be there that night. I say that, that camaraderie it was superb.⁹

Reenacting a relationship dissolved by deindustrialization, the reunion of Clarkson's football club emphasizes the drastic changes in societal structure that the Midlands' working class have experienced in the last half century. A shadow play embodying the landscapes, buildings, friendship and everyday life of a lost past, Heathcote's reunion with his old co-workers is an example of how the memory of working-class communities and culture *lives on* through English football. Locked in antinomy, the

⁸ John Heathcote, interview by Allison Clague, *Working Lives: Memories of Work and Industry in Nuneaton and Bedworth*, Warwickshire City Council, Interview Recorded at Interviewees Home, April 19th 2006.

⁹ Ibid

present is at once a stage for the performance of the past and a bier affirming its passing. While this dissertation approaches memory's relationship to the past through the context of change and dispossession, the ambiguity of the present is also examined. Informed by Henri Bergson's work on perception and memory, the present is composed of perspectives consistently overlapping, and co-existing with one another. In regards to working-class communities dissolved by deindustrialization, the present is not simply a contrast to the past. Nor is memory an aggregate of all experience. For Bergson, the idea of neatly categorizing the relationship between the past, the present and memory is impossible:

What right have we, then, to suppose that memory...divides physical life into definite periods and awaits the end of each period in order to rule up its account with perception?... This is to ignore the fact that the perception is ordinarily composed of successive parts, and that these parts have just as much individuality or rather just as little as the whole. Of each of them we can as well say that its object is disappearing all along, how, then could the recollection arise only when everything is over?¹⁰

For many the past has not ended. Shaping perspectives and responses, the memory of their former lives bleeds into the present.

This dissertation contributes to sports scholarship and twentieth-century social history in three ways. First, I hope to help instigate a shift away from the prevalent themes currently dominating football scholarship. Overly dependent upon narratives concerning extreme subcultures such as hooligans, the role of globalization in redrawing the football map, and oral histories conducted to survey consumption patterns of

¹⁰ Henri Bergson, *Mind-Energy, lectures and Essays*, trans. H. Wildon Carr (westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1975), 127.

self-identifying football fans, much of the existing scholarship structures itself around a similar theoretical framework while neglecting its subject matter's rich interdisciplinary potential.¹¹ Accompanying the reluctance of sport historians to engage with football's relevance to studies of day-to-day life, social historians and scholars working in the field of class studies rarely include football in their analyses. Represented diametrically as either a pathological component of working-class culture or as a complete sociological non-factor, this dissertation unpacks the meaning of football in everyday life through the lens of loss and memory. Secondly, this dissertation asserts the role of loss in understanding and writing history. While sports historians confront loss by examining changes to ticket prices, the cessation of club operations, or the psychological fallout following failure, more nuance is needed to properly contextualize sport and its relationship to society as a whole. This dissertation expands the scope of sports scholarship, by analyzing how loss outside of a sporting context shapes sport. John J. Parkson's intimately detailed architectural history of Manchester, Lionel Esher's *A Broken Wave: The Rebuilding of England*, and the collection of essays that make up *Urban Memory; History and Amnesia in the Modern City* all discuss the integrality of physical loss and the re-making of urban geography in understanding the social landscape of post-war

¹¹ Ernest Cashmore, *Football's dark side: corruption, homophobia, violence and racism in the beautiful game* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Pilot, 2014), Anastassia Tsoukala. *Football hooliganism in Europe: security and civil liberties in the balance*. (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). Richard Giulianotti & Roland Robertson. *Globalization & Football*. (Los Angeles; London: SAGE, 2009). Liz Crolley. *Football and European identity: historical narratives through the press*. (London; New York: Routledge, 2006). Cornell Sandvoss. *A game of two halves: football, television, and globalization*. (London; New York: Routledge, 2003). Eric Dunning eds. *Fighting fans: football hooliganism as a world phenomenon* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2002) Adam Brown eds. *Fanataics!: power, identity, and fandom in football*. (London; New York: Routledge, 1998). Steve Redhead. *Post-fandom and the millennial blues: the transformation of soccer culture*. (London; New York: Routledge, 1997). Colin Ward. *All quiet on the hooligan front: eight years that shook football*. (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1996). J.H. Kerr. *Understanding soccer hooliganism* (Buckingham; Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1994). Bill Buford. *Among the Thugs* (New York: Norton, 1991) John Williams, Eric Dunning & Patrick Murphy. *Hooligans abroad: the behaviour and control of English fans in continental Europe*. (London; New York: Routledge, 1989.)

England.¹² Similarly, monographs such as John Singleton's *Lancashire on the Scrapheap* and Tony Blackshaw's *Working-Class life in Northern England* argue that wide-scale economic loss and its impact on human psychology were defining characteristics of working-class life during the age of deindustrialization. If we are to understand football and its role in the working-class history of the Midlands, we have to address these theories, as the larger implications of loss and ruin have been left largely unexplored by sports historians.

Finally, this dissertation contributes to the larger body of literature concerning oral history, memory, and working-class experience. Previous oral histories concerning football often directly explore individual relationships to the sport. These can be individuals who have played professionally, fans who attend the matches, or those attached to the sport through more tenuous links such as online forums.¹³ In turn, this skews history solely to reflect the perspective of the dominant, most visible group. By seeking out individuals who actively participate and engage in football culture, historians neglect the more subtle, complex ways football interacts with community. Creating scholarship that focuses on consumption patterns and the vested meanings individuals attach to them, oral histories on football often produce the same inarticulate responses and offer little information relevant outside the parameters of descriptive sports history. In contrast scholars working in social history such as Alessandro Portelli, Simon J. Charlesworth,

¹² Lionel Esher. *A Broken Wave: The Rebuilding of England*. (London: Allen Lane, 1980)
Mark Crinson eds. *Urban Memory: history and amnesia in the modern city*. (London; New York: Routledge, 2005)

¹³ Rogan. P Taylor & Andrew Ward. *Kicking and Screaming : An Oral History of Football in England* (London, Robson Books, 1995). Features Profiles and Interviews with Association Football Players.
Cornell Sandvoss, *A Game of Two Halves: Football, Television and Globalisation*. (London: Routledge, 2003) Discusses how television has changed consumption habits in football. Lots of interviews with German fans, discussing why they support clubs and how they watch them.

Paul Thompson, Pierre Nora and Raphael Samuel have used oral history to “escape the tyranny of the big story” and examine how memory can be used indirectly to reflect an individual’s relationship to time and place. For example in his book *Voice of the Past*, Paul Thompson states that oral history can be used to illuminate how social structures unfold in people’s minds.¹⁴ Asserting that silences, gaps and deceit in interviews are informed by trauma and societal pressure, Thompson’s work can be applied to gain a greater understanding of the meaning sport and leisure hold in society. Oral history exists in the realm of the possible. Oral sources tell us not just what people did but what they intended to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think they did.¹⁵ Encountering this potential in the vast annals of David Kynaston's work, his commentary on the 1949 FA Cup reveals the unique role of football in slowly disintegrating working class communities:

Valerie Gisborn, growing up in Leicester listened to the match on the radio with her mother, but her father travelled down to Isleworth where an ex-naval friend who had invited him to stay, specifically to watch the match on their set. Although City lost, the womenfolk keenly anticipated the report of his trip: “He was so thrilled he could hardly wait to get indoors, to tell us about it. What a weird and wonderful thing it was. He kept us in suspense as he related every step from arriving at their home to leaving. He told us that the house was full of men who had been invited to watch the match on the small television in the lounge. Dad described how the set was held in a large, dark brown cabinet, with the television bit in the top half. The screen measured nine inches square

¹⁴ Paul Thompson, *Voice of the Past* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 159

¹⁵ Alessandro Portelli, “What Makes Oral History Different” in Robert Perks Alistair Thomson eds. *The Oral History Reader* (London: Routledge, 1998), 67

and the picture was black and white. Constantly there were white flashes and a muzzy picture but their cameras followed every move the players made. He reckoned it was better than actually being at Wembley. ¹⁶

Definitions, Contextualizations, and Frameworks:

In order to outline the approach I have taken in exploring my research question, working definitions and basic theoretical frameworks for the terms *deindustrialization*, *community*, and *memory* must be established.

At its most straightforward, deindustrialization is the process of removing or reducing the industrial capacity of a region or country. Rather than being emblematic of the world becoming less industrialized, deindustrialization is the product of the continual movement of capital “from one location to the next in search of competitive advantage through cheaper labour costs and reduced environmental obligations.”¹⁷ A representation of redundancy, the derelict factories and disused smokestacks deindustrialization leaves in its wake are not necessarily indicative of a country’s overall economic security, but rather are symbols of what Joseph Schumpeter characterizes as capitalism’s “gale of creative destruction”.¹⁸ In other words, formerly functioning factories, shipyards or heavy industrial sites are necessary bits of detritus in a process that “sweeps the globe devouring the old in order to create the new.”¹⁹ In the context of England, deindustrial-

¹⁶ David Kynaston, *Austerity Britain, 1945-1951 (Tales of a New Jerusalem)*, (London, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2007), 336.

¹⁷ Steven High, David K. Lewis. *Corporate Wasteland: The Landscape and Memory of Deindustrialization*. (Toronto: Between The Lines, 2007), 7.

¹⁸ Thomas K. McGraw. *Joseph Schumpeter and Creative Destruction*. (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007).

¹⁹ Ibid

ization was an economic period that started anywhere from the late 19th century, when the rate of growth of demand for Lancashire's textile products began "its gradual and ultimately irreversible decline", to the sterling crisis of 1966, when the increase of employment produced by the government-sponsored export drive following the war finally and irrevocably collapsed.²⁰ In their book *The Geography of De-Industrialisation*, economists Ron L. Martin and Bob Rowthorn propose three theses that attempt to explain the historical basis for England's rapid transition into a post-industrial economy.²¹ The first theory, referred to as the "maturity thesis", posits that England's decline in industrial capacity was the product of its advanced position in economic development.²² If we consider industrialization being the economic process of transitioning from an agrarian economy to a standardized, industrial economy, deindustrialization occurs when a country or region's service sector begins to overtake industry in the percentage of total employment. Due to the small percentage of labour required by the agricultural sector in a mature economy, the only way a service sector can continue to increase its share of total employment, and avoid economy stagnation is to do so at the expense of the industrial sector. The second theory, referred to as the "trade specialization thesis" argues that deindustrialization was a product of England's reduced role in the international division of labour.²³ Transforming into a highly specialized workshop economy by the early

²⁰John Singleton: Lancashire on the Scrapheap: *The Cotton Industry 1945-1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 6

²¹ Ron L. Martin, Bob Rowthorn. *The Geography of de-industrialisation*. (London: Macmillan, 1986). 9

²² Ibid

²³ Ibid, 16.

1950s, the unprecedented levels of inflation on items England had depended upon for import, such as food and raw materials, created an enormous deficit in non-manufacturing trade. In order to cover this deficit, England had to export almost all of its manufactured goods. Creating this surplus through practices such as industrial protection and export promotion, which were markedly unsustainable in the long term, the eventual disappearance of the non-manufacturing deficit made it illogical to maintain a large surplus of manufacturing trade. Once England stopped being a workshop economy and developed other sectors such as civil aviation, construction, finance and oil, the manufacturing sector was accordingly contracted. The third theory, referred to as the “failure thesis” is perhaps the most straightforward. Losing their protected markets in former colonies such as Egypt and India, England’s industry failed due to decentralized structure, an unwillingness to modernize and its dependence upon an industrial system based on exports rather than indigenous demand.²⁴

While Rowthorn and Martin’s theses cover the economic facets of deindustrialization, the process’ social implications are left unaddressed. In Steven C. High and David W. Lewis’ book, *Corporate Wasteland; The Landscape and Memory of Deindustrialization*, the phenomenon of internalizing ruin is explored. Interviewing ex-workers whose lives were disrupted by a loss of employment, the palpable sense of alienation, fragility, and uncertainty in their responses is imbued with a phantasmagoric connection to their lost work spaces. Waiting in a van to say goodbye to his beloved factory, Polish immigrant Henry Rembecki’s connection to his place of work extends beyond mere employment: “...that place has been a homestead to me. I know every hole in the place. I’ve

²⁴ Ibid, 21.

worked from one end of it to another. I put three kids through school on it.”²⁵ Internalizing a physical history of loss, such as a place of work or a home, or a way of life, is fundamentally at odds with the propulsive momentum of capitalist society. As place and society move on, individuals like Henry Rembecki become stranded in the present, securing themselves to the past through a process of remembering. As Rilke has stated, “Indeed as I see it now...it is not a building, but is quite dissolved and distributed inside me, here one room, there another, and there a bit of a corridor, thus the whole thing is scattered about inside me...”²⁶

Scattered throughout the memories and landscapes of the Midlands working class, football became a vestige of a past, a reminder of a way of life which had receded or disappeared altogether. Rising to popularity in an age when free time and consumer products had become more accessible, football became attached to a way of life that remained stable for half a century. Once that stability dissipated, football transformed into an internalized symbol of the past and, much like Rembecki’s farewell to his factory, became a site where the past and its histories of loss were performed. Pitting the cherished against the unknown, deindustrialization, at its heart, is change. Kathryn Marie Dudley stated:

The abandonment, gentrification and outright destruction of old factory buildings signifies not just social change, but a particular kind of social change. When chrome and glass skyscrapers rise out of the rubble of an industrial plant, when bombed out factories are left to crumble in urban wastelands where vibrant communities once thrived. The

²⁵ High, Lewis. *Corporate Wasteland: The Landscape and Memory of Deindustrialization*, 23.

²⁶ Rainer Maria Rilke. *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge: A Novel*. (New York: Random House, 1990), 25.

message is not just about the inevitability of change but about the obsolescence of the past.²⁷

Moving on to the recipient of deindustrialization's threat, community is defined as any social unit that shares common values. An overly simplistic interpretation of a fluid, almost indefinable entity, to theorize community is to subject yourself to centuries' worth of research and conflicting interpretation. Rather than wading too deeply into the epistemological labyrinth of definition, this dissertation explores community's relationship with other terms such as class, class consciousness, culture and the "everyday" in concerns to the theoretical framework of my dissertation. In her book *Working Class Cultures in Britain 1890-1960* Joanna Bourke defines class as the embodiment and expression of common traditions, experiences, and values.²⁸ Focusing on the minutiae of everyday life, Bourke's writing explores how and why working-class individuals "retained their self-identified identity as working class despite impressive improvements in their material well-being."²⁹ Bourke asserts that the realization of one's class position emerged from these every day activities, creating a sensation of belonging which connected them to the individuals, geography, and circumstances surrounding them. These traces of lived experience, referred to by Raymond Williams as a "structure of feeling," bound individuals together over generations, creating internal structures and relationships that are distinct and quite separate from the general ideological and institutional

²⁷ Kathryn Marie Dudley. *The End of the Line: Lost Jobs, New lives in Postindustrial America*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 175.

²⁸ Joanna Bourke. *Working Class Cultures in Britain 1890-1960: Gender, Class and Ethnicity*. (London: Routledge, 1994), 4

²⁹ *Ibid*, 5.

organization of society.³⁰ Applying this concept to an English context, David Hall stated that the working-class community was established through the shared experience of labour, economic insecurity and hardship.³¹ Reflected by the strong affiliation between manual workers and public sector workers to their trade unions before and during the age of deindustrialization, an individual's place in their community was held secure by their employment.

While these socially inherited bonds, which Bourke argues, compose class and community, are more abstract and internal, a community's culture represents the physical facet of a "structure of feeling". Stating that culture encompasses the interests of a people, T.S Eliot lists, "Derby Day, Henley Regatta, Cowes, the twelfth of August, a cup final, the dog races, the pin table, the dart board, Wensleydale cheese, boiled cabbage cut into sections, beetroot in vinegar, nineteenth century Gothic churches and the music of Elgar." as examples of English culture.³² This dissertation explores what happens to the connective tissue of culture when its community or "structure of feeling" is disrupted or dissolved.

Extending this concept of shared experience beyond locality, Marxist historian E. P. Thompson asserts that working-class communities were created through the language of class consciousness. Defined as a "consciousness of identity of interests between working men of the most diverse occupations and levels of attainment" and a

³⁰ Raymond Williams. *The Country and the City*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975)

³¹ David Hall, *Working Lives: The Forgotten Voices of Britain's post-war Working Class*. (London: Bantam Press, 2012)

³² T.S. Eliot. *Notes Towards a Definition of Culture, 1949*. 30

‘consciousness of the identity of interests of the working class or productive class as against those of other classes,’ the everyday cohesiveness and solidarity of a community are transformed into forms of resistance.³³ The problem with this form of analysis is that it overtly politicizes history to the brink of distortion. According to Dennis Dworkin, English Marxist theorists practiced history as an effort to restore the working class and progressive movements to their revolutionary past.³⁴ Academic studies such as Maurice Dobb’s *Studies in the Development of Capitalism*, Christopher Hill’s *Absolutism in England* and Victor Kiernan’s *The Tudor State in English History*, depict the English working class as radical, coming to age through class struggle and revolution. Appropriating history to promote a political agenda, the work of England’s postwar cultural Marxists vastly overstates the social cohesiveness of working-class communities. Depicting the working class as a monolithic identity, this form of analysis works to romanticize the past while effectively silencing voices that do not conform. Miranda Joseph argues that the concept of community is obfuscated by the penchant of historians to associate it with “a high quality of life, a life of human understanding, caring, selflessness and belonging”.³⁵ This effectively transforms a human social structure into a fraudulently aestheticized social realist painting. Curating the history of England’s working class to give it an autonomous, authentic, cohesive identity, historians such as Richard Hoggart removed evidence of Americanization or mass culture such as “Mechanix Illustrated, Betty Boop, or

³³ Edward Palmer Thompson. *The Making of the English Working Class*. (London: Gollancz, 1963), 807.

³⁴ Dennis Dworkin. *Cultural Marxism in Postwar Britain: History, The New Left, and the Origins of Cultural Studies*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 38.

³⁵ Miranda Joseph, *Against the Romance of Community*. (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2002), vii

the Films of Keaton and Chaplin” from their studies of working-class communities.³⁶ As Michael Collins writes in his historically informed biography of the white working class *The Likes of Us*, It would be impossible to attempt a biography of the urban working class without focusing on a particular landscape, as this class more than any other is deeply linked with the concept of home, a street, a neighbourhood, a community...there is no definitive story.”³⁷

Historians are not the only ones prone to romanticize. Joanna Bourke states that in working-class autobiographies and oral histories, communities and social relations are often recalled through a golden haze: “Conflict is forgotten in favour of doors that were always open, the neighbour who always shared and tiring workdays are ignored in favour of nearly forgotten games which diverted children even during difficult times.”³⁸ Simply living in a neighbourhood or belonging to a community did not necessarily entitle individuals to meaningful human connection, access to social networks or use of local institutions. Some individuals, such as immigrants from the Caribbean or East Asia, were excluded or isolated themselves from the community. Other individuals, such as a sullen railwayman from one of Bourke’s oral histories, did not feel compelled to join neighbourhood clubs, participate in social intercourse or regularly visit the local pub.³⁹

³⁶ Nigel Whiteley. *Reyner Banham: Historian of the Immediate Future*. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press) 378.

³⁷ Michael Collins. *The Likes of Us: A Biography of the White Working Class*. (London: Granta, 2004), 11.

³⁸ Bourke, *Working Class Cultures in Britain 1890-1960*, 137

³⁹ Ibid, 143 Worth Quoting at length, “Social intercourse does not bother us much; as a family we get very little of it and what does enter our lives is usually in the family circle. We very rarely visit a place of amusement, picture house or theatre, neither have we any particular pub or club we visit. If we are out for a walk and fancy a drink, we have it.”

Working-class communities have been traditionally defined as including solidarity, close by family and social networks, shared lifestyles, and limited spatial mobility. This dissertation examines dissolved communities, communities no longer defined by easily discernible boundaries such as locality. Eroded by the process of deindustrialization, the ways that community, culture, and class continued to be marked upon an individual's body are explored. Contested and undermined by the impossibility of reaching a definitive definition, community and its relationship with the terms culture and class are perhaps most useful when discussing what Linkon and Russo describe as "communities of memory".⁴⁰ Creating a sense of shared history and identity through the active retelling of stories, studying communities of memory will help to understand how working-class communities and culture actively *lived on* in the form of English football clubs. To approach how these physically dissolved structures *lived on* in individuals, a theoretical framework for examining memory is necessary.

W.G. Sebald's *Rings of Saturn* begins with a cryptic excerpt from the *Brockhaus Encyclopedia*: "The Rings of Saturn consist of ice crystals and probably meteorite particles describing circular orbits around the planet's equator. In all likelihood these are fragments of a former moon that was too close to the planet and was destroyed by its tidal effect."⁴¹ Using an astrophysical phenomenon to comment upon the layers of destruction that compose contemporary society, memory or the memory of an earlier modernity co-exists with and alters the present. In this dissertation, the memory of work-

⁴⁰ Sherry Lee Linkon, John Russo. *Steeltown U.S.A: Work and Memory in Youngstown*. (Lawrence; University Press of Kansas, 2002)

⁴¹ W.G. Sebald. *The Rings of Saturn*. (New York: New Directions Publishing, 1998)

ing-class communities is a lot like the debris of Saturn's rings. Existing in a fragmented condition they become attached to the present in an attempt to ward off oblivion. The indissoluble link between memory, forces of history, ruin, and the present is perhaps at the heart of my research question. But what is memory, and how does it inform, differ from and influence history?

In his monograph *History and Memory*, Geoffrey Cubbitt states that memory "is the enabling capacity of human existence, the scaffolding upon which all mental life is constructed".⁴² Transmitted orally through story, myth, reminiscence or humour, memory is a method in which an individual and/ or group reconstructs their past in order to render it relevant and meaningful in the present. As Cubbitt continues:

...if we must regard it as a thing, we should think of it as anything like a fical element never appearing in a pure state but always mixed up in other things- in our processes of learning and perception in our sense of identity and selfhood, in our awareness of time or place in our habits of narration and our capacity for social interaction in our sense of traditional or our potential development.⁴³

In this way, memory does not exist in any fixed state, or place. Its dynamism does not trap it in the past as something that is behind or detached from us, but rather it's encountered again and again, shifting, and reshaping itself to time and context. For a discipline defined by its emphasis on objectivity and the written word, memory's intangible and vaporous nature has significant implications in the way we write history. Commenting upon the difficulties of using oral history to complement pre-established historical

⁴² Geoffrey Cubbitt, *History and Memory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), 1

⁴³ Ibid, 6.

narratives, Portelli compares an individual's memory/ life story to a bicycle wheel. Organized by a central core of meaning, the spokes branching out from the wheel represent an individual's memories. Whether interviewing coal miners in Harlan County, survivors of Nazi massacres in Rome or members of Italian workers' unions, Portelli found that an individual's anecdotes or memories often contained the essence of the bigger story, or the organizing principle and its themes, motifs, patterns and structures.⁴⁴ Shaped by variables such as locality, culture, class, religion or gender, these frameworks illustrate the extent into which a society's value systems and organization overlaps into the thought process of the individual. French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs goes even further. He states that "No memory is possible outside frameworks used by people living in society to determine and retrieve their recollection."⁴⁵ Arguing that the content of individual memory is conditioned by the necessity of establishing social bonds, Halbwachs states that public versions of events and their constructed cultural scripts often shape personal memories to conform to their conclusions, significance and narrative.⁴⁶ Reinforced by the sharing of individual memories to strengthen social bonds, individuals often willfully change or distort their personal understandings of their own past. Defending themselves against alienation, or exclusion, a social framework can suppress stories or memories which threaten its stability.

⁴⁴ Joan Tumblety. *Memory and History: Understanding Memory as Source and Subject*. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 38.

⁴⁵ Maurice Halbwachs. *On Collective Memory*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 43.

⁴⁶ Ibid

This uneasy relationship between memory, the individual, and the public is presented at its most brutal by Michael Schudson who argues that individual memory does not exist. Dispelling any notion of personal agency, Schudson asserts that “the information about the past that individuals rely on in orientating themselves in the present is not stored in their own individual minds, but is distributed across social institutions and cultural artifacts.”⁴⁷ Using these three theories of memory to approach my research question I have explored:

- a) How the persisting framework of dissolved working class communities informs stories about football. (Portelli)
- b) How the stories and collective memory of working class communities are stored in football. (Schudson)
- c) How individual memories of deindustrialization may be shaped by cultural scripts and social frameworks. (Halbwachs)

While memory’s unique properties shifts the writing of my dissertation away from a fanatical attachment to documents, memory is susceptible to the same limitations and oppressive power dynamics that have always informed the written word. In his article “Between memory and history”, Pierre Nora perceives a basic incompatibility between memory and the writing of history:

Memory is life, borne by living societies founded in its name. It remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive reformations, vulnerable to appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived. History on the other hand, is the reconstruction, always

⁴⁷ Michael Schudson, “Dynamics of Distortion in Collective Memory” in *Memory Distortion: How Minds, Brains and Societies Reconstruct the Past*, ed. Daniel L. Schacter (Cambridge: Harvard, 1995) 346-64.

problematic and incomplete of what is no longer. Memory is a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present; history is a representation of the past.⁴⁸

Derived from this incompatible relationship, memory becomes materialized by history's process of "legitimization". That is, it transforms from the immaterial into something that can be stored in an archive: a typed out transcript, a tape recording, a photograph. Controlled by an evaluative system, archives can thus decide what memories are relevant, and which can be discarded. In their materialized form, memories can also be used to rehabilitate the past. In his book *Theatres of Memory* Raphael Samuels discusses the role of the photograph in romanticizing the working class:

...backbreaking tasks appear as honest toil...In place of the bow legged tailor, the tubercular Sheffield grinder coughing out his lungs...We have the sturdy blacksmith, a vulcan at the forge, the colliers assembled for a worker photograph demonstrating their determination to work.⁴⁹

Whether it's through the creation of false memories, the suppression of subversive memories or the materialization and control of memory, memory has a paradoxical relationship with the writing of history. It needs to be contextualized and supported by an historical framework, yet in doing so it can become subjugated to an artificial coherence. In this dissertation memory is examined not only as source, but as a subject. As a subject which reflects and responds to the dissolution of a social framework, and projects this loss unto surviving cultural artifacts, namely football clubs.

⁴⁸ Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire" in *Representations No.26, 1989* 7-24

⁴⁹ Raphael Samuels. *Theatres of Memory : Past and Present in Contemporary Culture*. (London: Verso, 1994), 324

The difficulty in writing a dissertation about football and working-class reactions to loss is the extent into which the lives and psychological processes being studied have ultimately passed through the world without being noticed or documented. Aside from the inherent barriers of time and documentation, the internal worlds of marginalized individuals are often rendered inaccessible by a practice of learned silence. Commenting on the experience of deindustrialization in Rotherham, Simon J. Charlesworth asserted that the central issue of his work “was muteness, silence, inarticulacy and the problem of accounting for the available sense that grounds these lives... ”⁵⁰ Impairing the ability to recount their own lives, the stigmatization or invalidation of personal experience compounds the issue of source material for social historians already disadvantaged by the relative invisibility of their subject matter. While a comprehensive history or re-creation of a lost community’s relationship to football is a nearly impossible task, an interdisciplinary approach to conducting research helped to offset my subject’s immeasurable silences and absences.

Drawing from a pool of over 600 oral histories, the 69 I have included in this dissertation were selected intuitively. Including the 21 available transcripts of the Wolverhampton Heritage Project (1983-1988), a 300 page transcript collecting Bilston’s Documenting the Workshop of the World (2007), 50 interviews comprising Blakenhall’s Stirring Memories (2006), Walsall historian Jack Haddock’s collection of 162 oral histories (1970s to early 2000s), Birmingham’s Millenibrum Project (150 oral histories completed and released to the public in 2001), Paul Thompson’s Coventry Car Workers Oral History project (95 interviews conducted in 1986) and the 67 interviews of Memories Made in

⁵⁰ Charlesworth, *Phenomenology of Working Class Experience*, 2-3

Sandwell (2000), the oral database available in the archives of the Midlands was too extensive to fully transcribe and analyze in three weeks. A lack of accessibility impeded research in both Wolverhampton, where the majority of oral histories were stored on reel-to-reel tapes and restricted from public access, and Coventry, due to the archive's policy of imposing a £1 fee per photograph.⁵¹ Giving priority to interviewees whose reminiscences coincided with the timeline of deindustrialization, oral histories detailing working-class experiences from before the Second World War were discarded or overlooked. While these oral histories provided rich information concerning the dynamics and continuity of working-class life in the Midlands, their lack of perspective on the process of deindustrialization reduced their relevancy to the aims of this dissertation. Shaped by their time, oral histories capture memories of the past rather than the past itself. Informed by the immediacy of deindustrialization, oral histories conducted in the mid to late 1980s are brimming with details concerning the ongoing changes to the Midlands workplaces and physical landscapes. In Paul Thompson's study on Coventry's car workers, interviews are structured by set questions charting where the interviewee was born, where they went to school, what their parents did, and how they got their first job. Occurring not too long after the events of deindustrialization, these structured interviews help to emphasize the difference between the past and the present. When the questions shift into a discussion concerning changes at work or redundancy, the impression of loss, anger, or resignation is at its most immediate and palpable. Similarly, oral histories

⁵¹ Coventry's policies in particular made it difficult to make the most of their resources. Of the 95 interviews available to the public in Paul Thompson's study, I was only able to transcribe 30. While I chose the interviews which best fit my research's delimitations, male aged 20-50 at the time of interview, there were many I was unable to get to. Coventry's policies also made it difficult to access oral history projects beyond Paul Thompson's. I was unable to gain access *Coventry Lives* and *the Oral History Project* due to time constraints. As such while this dissertation's sampling size is large and diverse, it is unfortunately quite incomplete.

conducted twenty years after deindustrialization bear the traces of time's passing. Nostalgic and effervescent in their construction of the past, memories, at times, are informed by the region's shifting racial demographics. Melvin Haigh recalled:

And they started to see the area of Stratford Road, where as it had been sort of white owned shops, it started to change to...a lot of Asian shops started to appear in the area, particular corner shops and I think the character of the Stratford Road then changed quite dramatically, probably in the early 70s. They decided at that particular time that like possibly thousands of other working class Brummies that they wanted to move to another area because although they weren't racist as such, they felt that they didn't want another culture to be parachuted into their area. Rightly or wrongly, and I think a lot of people at that time moved out of Birmingham, quite a few thousand. In fact you'll probably...it will probably bear it out if you read letters from the Evening Mail, Birmingham Evening Mail or maybe even letters to Carl Chinn where they were reminiscing about old Birmingham but they actually live in places just on the outskirts of Birmingham now. They don't actually live in Birmingham any more. And I think it was because they, a lot of people felt that they, that there was kind of an alien culture came in and they didn't feel as if they could cope with that.⁵²

Paralleling the strains of estrangement and dispersal that colour working-class memories of deindustrialization, Haigh's old Birmingham is a barely concealed euphemism for whiteness. A reactionary, conservative construct, nostalgia is a yearning to return to the familiar. Intertwined with the dissolution of full industrial employment, white working-class responses to the loss of racial homogeneity are muted throughout the oral histo-

⁵²Melvin Haigh, interviewed by Helen Lloyd, 2000. Transcript. Millenibrum, MS2255/2/028, Birmingham Central Library, Birmingham, U.K.

Carl Chinn is the preeminent social historian of Birmingham. Housed in the Birmingham Public Library, I was unable to gain access to Chinn's collection as researchers need permission from Dr. Chinn personally.

ries but appear most prominently in projects conducted in the early 2000s. Part of the idealized world that departed in the wake of deindustrialization, a prolonged analysis of race and working-class experience is absent in this dissertation. Prompted by time constraints during my abbreviated stay in England, oral resources dedicated to minority experiences in the Midlands were not incorporated into this study. While inquiries into the treatment of black footballers such as Brendon Batson, Laurie Cunningham, and Cyrille Regis, the participation and inclusion of minorities in working men's clubs, and race relations in the workplace did help shape the experience of the everyday in working-class communities, their absence in the collected oral histories indicates the extent into which the topic of race was left unspoken. While I am aware of Ben Rogaly and Becky Taylor's belief that it is "impossible to study the experience and identifications of any particular class in isolation from other classes", the seismic social changes brought about by deindustrialization were felt most acutely by white, working-age males employed in the manufacturing industry.⁵³

As my research contextualizes football in the day-to-day life of working-class communities during and after the processes of deindustrialization, this dissertation's use of oral history is structured around three broad categories. First, I analyzed oral histories which focused on the memory of working-class life and the everyday. Oral histories or interviews concerning work, leisure time, relationships with social institutions, friendships, family, life at home and participation in consumer culture are essential in properly contextualizing the role of football in the "everyday" and its relationship to working-class identity. Secondly, I examined oral histories which emphasized the social experience of

⁵³ Ben Rogaly, Becky Taylor. *Moving Histories of Class and Community*. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 3.

deindustrialization. This category includes experiences of prolonged unemployment, forcible relocation, inter-country migration and feelings of loss. While emphasis is placed upon the recollections of individuals who directly experienced deindustrialization, oral histories of individuals indirectly affected or perspectives which fall outside of the widely canonized narrative of displacement and trauma were also included. Finally, I included oral histories directly related to football. Overlapping with the second category and its emphasis on the everyday, recollections of fans were integral to accomplishing this project's goal of illustrating how memories of loss, community and working-class identity are inextricably intertwined with memories of football.

Relying heavily upon studies of memory, this dissertation contends with some of the inherent difficulties of incorporating oral sources into an historical framework. One of the main jobs of the historian is to evaluate the validity and authenticity of source material. When working with oral sources, historians must always be aware of the instability of memory. Recent research by K. Tschuggnall suggests that when individuals recall events from the distant past, their memory superimposes images or events from the present.⁵⁴ In other words the end product of oral histories (collected transcripts, audio tapes, videos) are "much more closely linked to the real and immediate social situation of the interview than to things one would correlate with historic facts of lives lived."⁵⁵ Far from invalidating oral sources, the reshaping of memory by current events and contexts is a process which allows individuals to come to grips or make sense of their past.

⁵⁴ Brigitte Halbmayr, "The Ethics of oral History: Expectations, responsibilities and disassociations " in *Oral History The Challenges of Dialogue*, ed. Marta Kurkowska-Budzan & Krzysztof Zamorski (Amsterdam; Philadelphia: John Benjamins Pub., 2009) 196.

⁵⁵ Ibid

Donald A. Ritchie draws the comparison between the regular reevaluation of past decisions and actions by an individual to the process of an historian rewriting history to incorporate new evidence and fit different theories.⁵⁶ As history is controlled by the historian and what they deem to be significant or relevant, the inclusion of oral sources in an historical framework directly empowers the individual and their perspective. People remember what they believe to be important, or what society has conditioned them to believe is important, not strictly what the historian believes consequential. The instability of memory not only showcases the internal process of individuals, it can illustrate the existence of silences or contending perspectives. In Diane Manning's *Hill Country Teacher: Oral Histories from the One-Room School and Beyond*, racial segregation is hardly mentioned by white teachers.⁵⁷ In contrast, these same issues dominate the testimonies of African-American teachers. Despite experiencing the same transition from single-room schoolhouses to modern consolidated schools, memories of segregation are determined by the extent into which the individual had been affected. Opening up history to include the mapping of the human mind, oral sources allow the vastness of the "everyday" to be approached.

Whether conducting an interview or reading through a transcript, the oral historian is confronted with two main questions: "Do I want to obtain knowledge about this person, his or her individuality, social background and ways of remembering" and "Am I primarily interested in mainly historic events?" According to Brigitte Halbmayr, these two

⁵⁶ Donald A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 33.

⁵⁷ Diane Manning, *Hill Country teacher: oral histories from the one-room school and beyond* (Boston: Twayne, 1990) xx-xxi

questions are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but they must be taken into account every time an historian conducts or engages with oral history.⁵⁸ If the oral historian insists on attempting to elicit precise historical facts they must be aware of their active role in the production of history. Their questions, tone of voice and social background can inform and shape an interviewee's responses. When using archived oral histories, the historian has to have a clear grasp of the study's parameters and context. Writing in his book *Exploring Oral History*, Michael V. Angrosino states:

I would be quite suspicious of any body of narrative material that conformed exactly to the expectations of the researcher at the outset of the project; that result might suggest that the interviewer was too controlling, and directive in conducting the interviews. By the same token, I would wonder at the set of narratives that bore little or no relationship to the initial statement, a result that suggests that the original project was either not clearly formulated or that the interviewer let the interviews go off on too many tangents. The ideal result would therefore be a set of narratives that clearly addressed the stated topics/ themes but in ways that were not entirely predicted.⁵⁹

Aside from the importance of clearly understanding the immediate context of the studies themselves, historians must consider how credible or valuable the interviewees are as witnesses. Did the interviewee experience their recollections directly or are they a product of secondhand information? What biases have informed and shaped the interviewees original perceptions? Do silences in interviewees' accounts stem from trauma and/or a reluctance to remember or have they forgotten their past experiences due

⁵⁸ Halbmayr, "The Ethics of Oral History," 200

⁵⁹ Michael V. Angrosino, *Exploring Oral History A Window on the Past* (Long Grove Ill.: Waveland Press, Inc., 2008), 77

to more natural causes? Perhaps their pasts are no longer important to them. Perhaps the minutiae which interest the historian have been forgotten as the routine nature of everyday life can be designated as unremarkable and unworthy of retention in the brain. Interviewees can also willfully lie to present themselves in a good light to the interviewer. In the context of my dissertation and its emphasis upon the nature of loss, present conditions can work to distort the gravity of experiences from the past. If individuals are dissatisfied with their lives in the present, the past can be perceived as far better than it actually was. Similarly if the interviewee is content or happy with the current conditions of their lives, the past can be presented as an unwelcome memory.

While this system of evaluation can help with content analysis, the transcription and preservation of oral histories presents historians with several concerns. Referring specifically to the limitations of transcription, David Crystal states that:

Extracts of informal spoken conversation look weird in print because it is not possible to show all the melody, stress and tone of voice which made the speaker sound perfectly natural in context...Speakers often do not complete sentences. The listener can get the gist of their meaning, but in written form these fragmented sentences can be unclear and a source of frustration.⁶⁰

Despite the passage oral history grants historians into the lives of individuals, to work with oral sources is to contend with absence. A good oral source can imbue history with a humanity and immediacy that is often lacking in documents and written text. However, oral history cannot be used as a single source. In my dissertation, oral history is used in conjunction with written sources not as a way to recapture “the way it really

⁶⁰ David Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 214

was” but to illustrate how the relationships between memory, community, loss, and football are formed, reinvented and stored in the history of everyday life.

In regards to a model of analysis, aside from the theoretical framework I have previously outlined concerning the concepts of deindustrialization, community and memory I approached my research from a Sebaldian perspective. Defined by their complexly interwoven layers of cultural history and memory, the novels of W.G. Sebald are melancholic travelogues through the remains of worlds destroyed by modernity. Whether meditating on the collapse of the herring industry in Lowestoft or the introduction of sericulture during the Third Reich, Sebald uncannily manages to encapsulate the histories of loss and ruination that underlay all human experience in the present. Discussing Sebald’s fascination with the *longue duree* of European modernity, German literature scholar Mark. M Anderson stated that “The roads in Sebald’s work do not all lead to Theresienstadt. The view of human devastation and darkness is much longer, at once geophysical and metaphysical, though their roots lie in a profound meditation on the violence of European modernity.”⁶¹ Inspired by the thematic concerns of Sebald’s novel *The Rings of Saturn* this dissertation reveals and analyzes the histories of loss and destruction that remain hidden in the memories of English football.

Interrogating disparate threads of the distant past to comment upon the meanings and duration of loss in history, my selection of secondary sources is also informed by Derrida’s interpretation of bricolage. Defined by Claude Levi-Strauss as using the means at hand, or that which is already there to create, bricolage is the process of bor-

⁶¹ J.J. Long, *W.G. Sebald: image, Archive, Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 3.

rowing from the past to properly situate one's own discourse or concepts.⁶² While Levi-Strauss makes a demarcation between the bricoleur and the engineer, a subject who constructs discourse out of nothing, Derrida argues that every finite discourse is bound by bricolage.⁶³ Drawing from a pool of diverse, arguably incompatible philosophical schools rather than working through a specific theoretical model, the secondary sources included in this dissertation were carefully selected in an attempt to connect the relationships between deindustrialization, class, memory, football and the Midlands into the larger body of knowledge concerning loss.

As I have previously stated, the body of literature in the field of sports history examining the intersection of football, community, class, and identity is almost entirely devoted to themes of hooliganism, globalization, masculinity, and consumption habits. Conceptualizing football as an extension of individual, communal or national identity, narratives are almost entirely framed around conflict. This thematic trend includes but is not limited to; Supporters v Commodification (Haynes)⁶⁴, Supporters v British social stratification (Bebber)⁶⁵, historically motivated Supporters v historically motivated Supporters (Kuper)⁶⁶, local identity v globalization (Giulianotti & Robertson)⁶⁷ and communi-

⁶² Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 360.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Richard Haynes. *The Football Imagination: The Rise of Football Fanzine Culture*. (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Company, 1995)

⁶⁵ Brett Bebbler. *Violence and Racism in Football: Politics and Cultural Conflict in British society 1968-1998*. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2012)

⁶⁶ Simon Kuper. *Football Against The Enemy*. (London: Orion, 1994))

⁶⁷ Richard Giulianotti, Roland Robertson. *Globalization and Football*. (Los Angeles; London: SAGE, 2009)

ty v national government (Brown).⁶⁸ Transforming the football stadium into an arena where contrasting ideologies always meet, this thematic trend works to obscure studies rooted in local history and everyday interactions with football.

Partially filling this gap in literature, studies such as *Lost Teams of the Midlands* by Mike Bradbury⁶⁹, *Engineering Archie* by Simon Inglis and *Excavations and the after-life of a professional football stadium, Peel Park Accrington, Lancashire; Towards an Archaeology of Football*, by Richard Peterson and David Wayne Robinson, depict football as a palimpsest of lost communities, architecture, and ways of life. Permanently altering the geophysical and psychological landscapes of England, football is not depicted as a hyperbolically contested space but rather is properly contextualized within the processes of modernity and capitalism. In Peterson and Wayne's study, an archaeological excavation of a defunct football team's disused stadium acts as a concise metaphor for the lost working-class cultures of post-war England.⁷⁰ Recovering physical artifacts such as marble seals from carbonated drink bottles, dry tobacco, pipe stems, coinage, and even ammunition, Peterson and Wayne not only give us an understanding of life inside a football stadium, they illustrate the process in which the past, its rituals, objects and ephemera can co-exist with the present.⁷¹ Not unlike factories, or housing developments

⁶⁸ Adam Brown, Tim Crabbe, Gavin Mellor eds. *Football and Community in the Global Context : Studies in Theory and Practice*. (London: Routledge, 2008)

⁶⁹ Mike Bradbury, *Lost Teams of the Midlands*. (xlibris, 2013)

⁷⁰ Richard Peterson, David Wayne Robinson. "Excavations and the afterlife of a professional football stadium, Peel Park Accrington, Lancashire; Towards an Archaeology of Football" in *World Archaeology* 44(2) 263-279

⁷¹ Ibid

which have been physically dissolved and rendered obsolete by modernization, Accrington's Peel Park is a ghostly site, a ruin, a stand-in for a world that had vanished.

This idea of lost space and the largely unknowable experiences and feelings attached to them is also a central theme in Simon Inglis' biography of influential stadium architect Archibald Leitch. Almost singlehandedly fashioning the way people experienced football in England throughout the twentieth century, Leitch was responsible for "the recommendation that crush barriers be installed in unbroken lines between aisles. That those aisles should be sunk in order to deter spectators impeding crowd circulation...the geometry of stand design, which dictated the all important calculation of sight lines..."⁷² While Leitch's concept of spectatorship directly shaped and informed many of the memories and experiences my dissertation explores, almost all of his stadiums have been demolished. Lost hubs of culture and sites of mass communal gatherings, these vanished stadiums also represent the predominant exigency of modern survival: the business of renewal. As Inglis states:

Spectators today expect not to have to watch matches with columns in their way. They demand better food outlets, more toilet facilities...To pay for all these changes and to feed the demands of the game's evermore cash hungry players, the stands of today have to be brimming with hotels and lounges, shops and offices.⁷³

Distinct from the narrative of conflict preoccupying most football scholars, these studies are defined by their melancholia, their sense of loss. Similar to the phenomenon of amateur historians constructing personal, local histories of their beloved football

⁷² Simon Inglis, *Engineering Archie*. (English Heritage, 2004), 9.

⁷³ *Ibid*, 199.

teams, these studies act as celebratory epitaphs to a vanished epoch. Emphasizing the importance of experience and our relationship to place and object, these studies use football to examine how we as individuals or as social units encounter the past and its lasting ruin on a daily basis.

Ruin is also a central theme in the body of literature regarding English architectural history. Important in understanding how and why working-class communities were dismantled by deindustrialization and post-war housing plans, the history of English architecture reveals that a constant threat of demolition was central to English identity and experience. In studies like John J. Parkinson Bailey's *Manchester: An Architectural History*⁷⁴, Ben Flatman's *Birmingham: Shaping the City*⁷⁵ and Charles Hackney's *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*⁷⁶, streets are widened for transport, commercial pressure on urban centres displace working-class communities to the outskirts of the city, dirty Victorian neighbourhoods become windswept plazas and towering concrete housing developments and concert halls where Chopin and Mendelssohn have performed are transformed into cheap motels and demolished. Entire cities are built, demolished, rebuilt and demolished again, leaving what Roland Nicholas sees as "the lack of architectural form...each of a different style, width, height and ornamentation and behind this motley facade a huddle of buildings where thousands spend their working days in cramped, dark and badly ventilated offices."⁷⁷ While most of these studies are simple

⁷⁴ John J. Parkinson- Bailey. *Manchester: An Architectural History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000)

⁷⁵ Ben Flatman. *Birmingham: Shaping the City*. (London: Riba Publishing, 2008)

⁷⁶ Charles Hackney. *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly: Cities in Crisis*. (London, F.Muller, 1990)

⁷⁷ John J. Parkinson- Bailey, *Manchester; An Architectural History*, 162.

chronologies of events, important individuals and significant architectural patterns, their adherence to a traditional historical narrative succinctly illustrates the startling lack of power working people had over their own destiny.

Characterized by an authorial neutrality, the detached objectiveness of these studies are completely contrasted by the palpable frustration of Colin Amery and Dan Cruickshank's polemic *The Rape of Britain*. Casting city councils, developers, planners, and architects in the role of villains, Amery and Cruickshank interpret the rebuilding of post-war Britain as an exploitative cash grab that mutilated towns and communities beyond recognition. "I hear words like complex, conurbation, precinct, pedestrianization and that other couple of words which mean total destruction, comprehensive development. Places cease to have names, they become areas with a number. Houses become housing. Human scale is abandoned."⁷⁸ While I consider works such as these and those mentioned in my methodology as the body of literature which my dissertation is responding to, there really are not many direct precursors. In the context of England there have not been many published studies on the subject of deindustrialization. Aside from the collected works of Tim Edensor⁷⁹ or dense economic monographs such as Singleton's *Lancashire on the Scrapheap* and *The Geography of Deindustrialisation* by Rowthorn and Martin, the majority of texts in this field of research have been focused on Canada and America.

⁷⁸ Colin Amery, Dan Cruickshank. *The Rape of Britain*. (London: Paul Elek, 1975)

⁷⁹ Works such as *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life* (Oxford: Berg, 2002), & 'Mundane Hauntings: Commuting through the phantasmagoric spaces of Manchester, England' in *Cultural Geographies 15: 313-333 (2008)* deal directly with materiality, ruin and cultural memory.

In terms of geography, the regions of the East and West Midlands were the main focus of my dissertation. Placing a concerted emphasis on the West Midlands, due in part to its rich reserve of oral history resources, the term “West Midlands” can refer to two distinct geographical areas. A catch-all phrase for an official English region and a metropolitan county, this dissertation is most concerned with the latter. While the county is located in the region, other counties in the West Midlands such as Staffordshire, Shropshire, Warwickshire, Herefordshire, and Worcestershire are not included due to a lack of available or relevant oral histories.⁸⁰ Renowned for their reputation as the industrial backbone of England, the physical and psychological landscape of these regions was once defined by the omnipresence of the steel mills, foundries, and factories. Possessing a regional identity inextricably linked to industry, the particularly traumatic experience of deindustrialization in the Midlands made it a natural fit. Unlike other areas devastated by industrialization, such as South East England and the North East, the Midlands possess a strong and incredibly diverse football culture.⁸¹ Experiencing sustained success throughout the age of deindustrialization, teams such as West Bromwich Albion (FA Cup winners in 1967) and Wolverhampton Wanderers F.C. (winners of Division One in 1958 and 1959) helped to make the Midlands synonymous with the direct, rough playing style which characterizes English football. Rather than making this dissertation about one club, I analyzed the relationship between the dissolving working-class communities of the Midlands and their local clubs. I did not include the English national

⁸⁰ Refer to Appendix for Map of the region.

⁸¹ The South East known for its Ports does not have a particularly strong football culture, while the North East’s footballing landscape is dominated by the duopoly of Sunderland A.F.C. and Newcastle F.C.

football team in my dissertation as I wanted to analyze the role of local clubs to working-class memories of loss.⁸²

“When history piles wreckage upon wreckage, ruins evoke not only the buildings from which they hail but also a transhistorical iconography of decay and catastrophe, a vast visual archive of ruination.”⁸³ Ruin and loss permeate every facet of this dissertation. They inform the absences in space, the recent past, and the everyday. The loss described in this story, that of working-class communities in the wake of deindustrialization, could be interpreted as the simple progression from an industrial to a post-industrial society. As such, my chapters are organized chronologically, spanning from the historical identity of England’s working class to the aftermath of deindustrialization. Paradoxically though, while each chapter works to progress the narrative towards its natural conclusion, they are all informed and defined by ongoing loss. That is to say, loss and ruin aren’t so much a process of history, but something that is occurring at all times. In his book *Stranded in the Present*, Peter Fritzsche explores individual’s relationships with “the ruin of the past”. Arguing that the traumatic rupture of the French Revolution created an historical consciousness throughout European society, individuals began to identify the past as something which was receding into a permanent abyss.⁸⁴ Recognizing the fragility of their identity, ways of life and culture, individual’s responded to this loss of

⁸² The teams included in the study are; Wolverhampton Wanderers F.C., West Bromwich Albion, Birmingham City F.C. , Walsall F.C. Coventry City F.C., Aston Villa F.C. Nottingham Forest F.C.

⁸³ Julia Hell & Andreas Schonle eds. *Ruins of Modernity*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010)

⁸⁴ Fritzsche. *Stranded in the Present*, 12

stability with nostalgia and a deep sense of melancholy. Since this time, Fritzsche argues, every subsequent generation has dated the ruin of the past to their childhood.⁸⁵

Necessitating an understanding of what had been lost, chapter one analyzes the dynamics and relationships of the Midlands working-class communities prior to deindustrialization. Exploring working-class relationships to the body, employment, social environments and the everyday, this chapter argues for the existence of a distinct working-class experience and culture while challenging its archetypal or stereotypical historical representations. Emphasizing the importance of work in developing identities and organizing relationships between an individual and their community, an analysis of the everyday experience of the Midlands working class revealed the extent to which work controlled and influenced behaviour, custom and memory. In his book *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory*, Ben Highmore approaches what a history of the “everyday” should entail. He states that “on the one hand it points to those most repeated actions, those most travelled journeys, those most inhabited spaces that make up, literally the day to day. This is the landscape closest to us, the world most immediately met.”⁸⁶ Arguing that a sustained analysis of the mundane or unnoticed helps to reveal how an individual perceives or relates to the world around them, he states that “the most travelled journey can become the dead weight of boredom. The most inhabited space a prison, the most repeated action an oppressive routine. Here the everydayness of everyday life might be experienced as a sanctuary, or it may bewilder or give pleasure, it may delight or de-

⁸⁵ Ibid, 49.

⁸⁶ Ben Highmore, *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory: An Introduction*. (London: Routledge, 2002),

press, or it's special quality might be its lack of quality..."⁸⁷ In order to understand the role of football in working-class communities, its historical place in the everyday needs to be situated.

Chapter two is concerned with the concept of absence. Interpreted as both a defining construct of day-to-day life, and the direct legacy of deindustrialization, memories of the changing landscape of the working class' public and domestic spaces provide a trace of the lasting psychological implications of loss. In the third chapter, initial responses to changes in the workplace are examined through the delayed and asymmetrical introduction of automation in the Midlands industrial sector. Chapter four analyzes how processes of industrial mergers and liquidations threatened traditional working-class conceptions of work. Dismantling the intimate bonds working-class men had developed towards their workplaces, the loss of small business firms was a form of defamiliarization, alienating the Midlands working class from their own communities. The most tangible human fallout of deindustrialization, Chapter five explores how redundancy or the loss of work forced the Midlands working class to construct new occupational identities. Reshaping the relationship between time, work, and the everyday, this chapter argues that while redundancy was not experienced uniformly, deindustrialization disrupted the historical or personal continuity between the Midlands working class and the constructs of family, community, and work. The sixth and final chapter centres around football, and its role in preserving the cultural heritage of the Midlands. A culmination of this dissertation's emphasis on responses to loss and absence, football is conceptual-

⁸⁷ Ibid

ized as a metonym, a stand-in for the past, a physical remnant representing people, places, and sensations that no longer exist.

Chapter 1: Incoming Storm: The dynamics and relationships of Working-Class communities before deindustrialization

The stereotypical trajectory of a traditional English working-class existence in the first half of the twentieth century was to be born, work, marry, have children, retire, and die. A coldly precise template of humanity, the interplay between the competing structures of work, private life, and social life created innumerable perspectives, identities, and conceptualizations of community. Cultural depictions of working-class communities and identities emphasized the supposed linearity of this template through nostalgic romanticization and/or downcast cynicism. In other words, the ontological imagining of the working class has inherently been intertwined with the pageantry of socialist politics. Stripped of the political manoeuvring which typecasts the working class as either an idyllic, hardworking, tough-nosed microcosm of social unity or the barely sentient victims of capitalistic exploitation, this chapter illustrates what working-class life was like, and how it was lived, strictly through the words of those who experienced it. On the first day of my visit to the Wolverhampton archives, I struck up a conversation with an elderly woman while I was waiting for material on the area's working-men's clubs. Upon mentioning that I had attended a West Bromwich Albion match the night before, she began to tell me the story of her recently deceased brother-in-law. A life-long Baggies fan⁸⁸, he had spent the entirety of his working life at the Bilston steelworks prior to being made redundant during the late 1970s. A devout fan herself, the woman recalled that she had stopped attending matches at the Hawthorns in the mid-1980s after nearly being hit in the head by a bottle, but that she regularly watched the matches at home with her hus-

⁸⁸ Nickname for West Bromwich Albion

band. Her brother-in-law, she explained, had kept his season tickets decades after the end of his working life, and rarely missed watching his beloved team play. Illustrating the enduring importance of West Bromwich Albion to her brother-in-law, his will had stipulated that his ashes were to be spread at the Hawthorns, a place he had come to describe as a “home away from home.” Journeying to the Hawthorns with her husband for the first time together in nearly thirty years, they discovered that it was no longer permissible to spread an individual’s ashes on the pitch or inside the ground. Instead, due to the number of such requests, West Bromwich Albion had designated a specific patch of land for fan memorials known as the “garden of remembrance” near the car park around the East Stand. While it’s tempting to dismiss this informal, relatively threadbare anecdote as unverifiable, its content is archetypal. Emphasizing the physical body, lifetime employment, sociality, community and relationships to leisure, this anecdote encapsulates what it meant to be working class in the Midlands following the Second World War.

This chapter begins with an analysis of the body’s role in configuring working-class identity. Experiencing a loss of bodily autonomy from the beginning of their working lives, working-class men subjected their bodies to repeated exertion. Mapping the responses to the difficulty of working life, this chapter argues that the working-class body was far more than a site of exploitation or control. Coming of age in a social environment which valued stoicism and physical strength, working-class men were conditioned to interpret work as an organizing principle of life. As life was impossible without work, the body was sacrificed to this purpose without question. Far from forming an unthinking relationship between workers and their bodies, the widespread acceptance of

working conditions was the result of the unique social and cultural environment of working-class communities. This chapter outlines the diverse relationships workers developed with their bodies to highlight the traumatic impact deindustrialization had on working-class identity and culture.

Following the analysis of the body, this chapter investigates the relationship between the working class and work. Examining how work defined identity from an early age, the culture of life-time employment, the networks individuals used to find work, and the transition from school to the workplace are analyzed. In this chapter, the absence of a single relationship to work is explored by including contesting voices. In some oral histories, work is characterized as intimate. For others, work held little meaning aside from a paycheque. Other voices forego emotional responses entirely and detail its physical experience. Structurally reflecting the contrasting ideologies, beliefs and social standings that compose community, the details of these memories, whether they are mundane or strikingly poignant, help to illustrate the dynamics of a world soon to be lost.

The chapter's third part examines intersections between the working class and their social environments. An extension of both household and workplace, this chapter argues that a working man's social life was informed by work. Depending heavily upon memories of shop floor banter, working-men's clubs, and the atmosphere of the workplace, this chapter explores how working-class men interacted with fellow workers and other members of the community. Challenging the narrative that industrial relations were atomized, the warmth and depth of friendship recorded in the oral history uncovers the complex relationships that workers developed with one another. This chapter also analyzes how relationships were maintained and encouraged by employers through the

proliferation of employee magazines and works football teams. Recognizing the importance of strong work-based bonds, employers created in-house magazines. Filled with articles detailing initiatives abroad, human interest pieces, and the company's newest products, employee magazines helped workers feel a part of something larger than themselves. Similarly, the prominence of works football teams, elicited how deeply individuals identified with their workplaces. A physical reminder of the entrenched trajectories of football and industry in England, works football had been played in the Midlands since the founding of the football association in 1863. As this entire chapter reiterates how identities were created in the everyday, works football merits inclusion as it illustrates how seamlessly football fit into the daily lives of the working class. While individuals could and did watch or play football outside of work, the popularity of works football underscores how deeply connected football was with work and therefore with developing a working-class identity.

In the chapter's final part, the relationship between the working class and the everyday is explored. Working through how the everyday has been constructed in historiography, the formative role of landscape, and responses to physical sensations, this chapter illustrates how and why our relationships to social space are developed. As large components of the everyday have already been detailed, the conclusion to this chapter places emphasis upon the ephemeral; memories that make up the daily grammar of life, football for example. Intertwined within the mundane and profound moments that constitute everyday life, attending a football match or being a fan of a local club encapsulated much of what it meant to be working class. Analyzing oral history sources that contextualize memories of football within larger narratives of work, family, friend-

ship, social phenomenon and loss, this chapter argued that football is a trace of a world that once existed. As the relationships outlined in this chapter were completely fragmented and restructured by the process of deindustrialization, football is at once a physical representation of the past and a reminder of the loss that defined it.

Working-Class Relationships to the Body

Discussing the historical construction of the worker's body, Michel Foucault states that

Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience.) In short, it dissociates power from the body; on the one hand, it turns it into an aptitude, a capacity which it seeks to increase, on the other hand, it reverses the course of the energy, the pose that might result from it, and turns it into a relation of strict subjection.⁸⁹

While our bodies and their relationship to space are fundamentally determined by biological or physiological processes, the “docile bodies” of workers described by Foucault are transformed and marked by their relationship to work, power, and culture. Neglecting the physical processes in favour of the symbolic ones, Drew Leder argues that our conscious awareness of our own bodies is very limited. Stating that instrumental activity, such as labour, enhances awareness of objectives or relationships outside of ourselves, Leder argues that the experience of our own body becomes lost, or buried beneath these contesting perceptions.⁹⁰ Relinquishing bodily autonomy in exchange for employment, this transaction is a catalyst in the development of working-class identity. Taking pride in your work, subjugating your body and its well-being for the

⁸⁹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Random House Inc., 1977), 138.

⁹⁰ Drew Leder, *The Absent Body* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 33.

attainment of higher goals or enduring pain, the aptitude of the body and its capacity to work is an organizing principle of working-class society. In short, to be working class was to exchange your body for money, it determined who you were and how you were perceived. It is not surprising then that the archetypal working-class man was an individual who was defined by his body. Aleksei Grigoreveich Stakhanov, Lulu Massa before his injury in Elio Petri's film *The Working Class goes to Heaven*, Sillitoe's Arthur Seaton, fleshly or fictionalized these men were cultural synecdoches, stand-ins for ways people identified themselves and others.

In order to meaningfully understand the body's relationship to labour in the conceptual framework of working-class identity, the archetype of a strong, stoic worker needs to be approached. In an interview, steelworker Dennis Turner was asked what his father did at the steelworks:

He had a very heavy job. He carried the steel, the blooms, through the 40 inch mill, through the big passes. They used to have tongs, you know, there used to be 6 men that would take the blooms through the passes, until the steel became smaller sections. If you think about it, it bordered on cruelty, that people had to work with the intense heat as well as with the strength they needed. He was a big man; very, very muscular and powerful, but it destroyed his health in the end, because he used to come off shifts every day, every night, always around the clock, shift work and he was always soaking wet. All of his underwear, everything had to be changed when he came from work. Well you see, as you do that over a period, the effect on your health is such that he got pneumonia and it

weakened his constitution, so from being a very powerful man he became relatively weak in the sense that the pneumonia and the bronchitis sort of destroyed his health.⁹¹

Detailing the transformation of his father's body from muscular and powerful to weakened and destroyed, labour becomes a site of ruin. Enduring the demanding, unyielding physicality of his job, the silence of Dennis Turner's father is symptomatic of an historic relationship between many working-class men and labour. In the preface of his collection of autobiographies written by British working-class people, John Burnett addresses this seemingly unthinking acceptance of poor working conditions:

One of the most remarkable characteristics in much of the writing is the uncomplaining acceptance of conditions of life and work which to the modern reader seem brutal, degrading and almost unimaginable- of near poverty and sometimes, extreme poverty, of over-crowded and inadequate, housing accommodation, of bad working conditions, periodic unemployment and generally restricted opportunities and of the high incidence of disease, disablement and death. Yet most of those who experienced such conditions are not, in their writings at least, consciously discontented, let alone in a state of revolt. There is a sense of patient resignation to the facts of life, the feeling that human existence is a struggle and that survival is an end in itself.⁹²

Burnett states that work was never a "central life-interest to the working class", arguing that the development of personal relationships with family, friends, workmates, and the community mattered the most. Constructed in an attempt to foster intimacy in the midst of the materialistic, accumulative impulses of the Victorian age, working-class

⁹¹ Dennis Turner, interview by Cheryl Williams and Cheryl Bailey, June 15th, 2007. Transcript, Documenting the Workshop of the World: Bilston Oral Histories, LS/ LB6/2, Wolverhampton Archives and Local Studies, Wolverhampton, U.K.

⁹² John Burnett, *Useful Toil: Autobiographies of Working People from the 1820s to the 1920s*. (London: Allen Lane, 1974), xiv

communities were protests against anonymity. Unable to find fulfilment at work, providing for their families, and forging a relationship with the community were deemed more important than individual happiness, or physical well-being. In the writing of Hannah Arendt, labour is depicted as nothingness, as dead space, as a great carcass stretching across time.

It is indeed the mark of all labouring that it leaves nothing behind, that the result of its effort is almost as quickly consumed as the effort is spent. And yet this effort, despite its futility, is born of a great urgency and motivated by a more powerful drive than anything else, because life itself depends upon it.⁹³

While oral histories collected from both semi- and highly skilled labourers contradict Burnett's findings concerning work's importance, his description of labour as a given, as inescapable, is indispensable in understanding the motivations of individuals such as Dennis Turner's father. Hermetic and rife with deeply entrenched value systems and societal pressures, by the age of 15 the majority of working-class children had already left school and begun to integrate themselves into the workforce.⁹⁴ Therein lies a rather plaintive paradox. Reoccurring throughout the collected oral histories, parents with working-class backgrounds expressed a concerted desire for their children to avoid the factory, the foundry or the mine. Positioning themselves and their bodies as conduits navigating their families away from the "dehumanizing" experience of working life, even the pronounced efforts of parents or family members could not overcome the economic

⁹³ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1958), 87.

⁹⁴ For more information on the history, controversy and difficulties of Raising the School Leaving Age (ROSLA) in the United Kingdom consult T. Woodin, G. McCulloch & S. Cowan, *Secondary Education and the Raising of the School Leaving Age: Coming of Age?* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013)

realities of growing up working class in the Midlands. Work could not be separated from working-class life. Reflecting on his decision to stay in school longer than his peers, an anonymous worker in Coventry's car industry demonstrated the economic and psychological impact of delaying entrance into the workforce, for even a small amount of time:

There were a few lads working there that had been there, they'd been at the same school as me, but left when they were 15, I ended up in the same place, but of course, they'd been there that much longer, and they were quite established, they were, they were getting better jobs, you know, better money, so that stuck in my throat a bit as well. You know so I'd actually had to pay for stopping on at school you know. Pay in terms of lost wages.⁹⁵

Negotiating the conflict between desire and duty at an early age, the precarious economics of pursuing education directly coerced working-class children to forego any venture that put stability at risk. Depended upon by their families to provide an income by the age of 15, school became an obstacle to economic survival. Helping to explain the "unthinking acceptance" of work, the working-class body was not just a site of unflappable strength, but rather one of compromise, sacrifice, and surrender. The complexity of this relationship is reflected in the testimony of Bilston native Roger Deans, a third-generation Siemens steelworker. Encompassing prevalent attitudes towards work, the workplace, and "putting up and shutting up," Deans' memories illustrate how the archetypal relationship between work and the body was based upon actual lived experience- until it wasn't. Men broke down, invincibility was a myth.

⁹⁵ anonymous interview, interviewed by Paul Thompson, 1986. Transcript. Coventry Car Workers Oral History Project. PA1647,#66, Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry

Q: Any tales that your father told from his time there? Did he enjoy working at the steelworks?

A: I'm going to say yes, without a doubt. I can't remember him ever not enjoying his job. I think it was quite a... as I was saying it was certainly an important job, and it must have been quite a stressful job, but he never showed it to me. I think he was quite a hard man, never to me, but, for instance, in his office- bad language was not an option at the steelworks- but if I was in his office, no one swore. Now this was when I was 22, 23 but nobody swore. I think his men- a lot may disagree with this- I think they respect him. Because it wasn't an easy job, but I think he was fair as well, which you had to be to do it, I think. But I never heard him moaning about the job, and I never heard him moaning about any of his men. I don't know how many men worked for him, but it was quite a big workforce, and some of the conditions they worked in were absolutely appalling, awful. Underneath the furnaces- this is in the Siemens- if the chequers had to be replaced, this is the heating system underneath, it's bricks in a chequer formation; the heat down there was absolutely horrendous, and they'd go in there, and the dust...face masks were available but I can't remember anybody wearing them. So yeah, the bricklayers had a very, very hard job. That's one reason I went into the engineering

Q: How many hours did they stay in that temperature?

A: Well, you moved away from the furnace. When they were fettling they used to lift the door- fettling is throwing additives in with shovels- and they'd wrap a towel, wet a towel, soak a towel, wrap it round the head, go up and go the fettling and they they'd come back the towel was dry, and the steam was going up, so that was hard work. It used to draw them out as well, draw their stomachs out, the heat; that was something else you started to notice. I was talking the other day, and I was saying that probably the best

thing that ever happened to me was being made redundant, because I'm sure a lot of people's lives were shortened by the working conditions they were in. There were three men that died while I was in the locos- all three died of lung cancer. All three did smoke, but when you used to go in, in the mornings, they used to fire the engines up and you couldn't see across the workshop for diesel fumes, and we were assured that diesel fumes weren't carcinogenic and this was by a doctor- don't know where he went to college- but anyway, so we carried on, and that was it, we just carried on working in them. And we used to use things that wouldn't be dreamed of today- carbon tetrachloride for cleaning- we used to use it with bare hands, and things like that. And something else, that thinking back on it I can hardly believe it happened- the locos, all the exhaust systems were covered in blue asbestos. Now when the locos came in we used to blow that out, to get the dust out of it, just blow it out. When blue asbestos became taboo they turned up in breathing apparatus, they took it off and triple-bagged it and we were thinking we've been working in this all our lives and never thought twice about it. There was a lot of asbestos, a lot of pipe lagging around the Works, obviously.

Q: Did you hear of anyone having lung problems?

A: Well, lung problems yeah. Loads of people had lung problems. But as far as asbestosis or anything like that...never heard of anybody. There're could have been, I mean, the majority of them may have been, but we'll never know. But I'm sure that the conditions that you're working in had got to make a difference, without a doubt, and as I say, it was probably not a good thing, in a way...because very few people made good ages after working in the steelworks, it was surprising how many people died within a year of...

Q: Really?

A: Oh yes, yeah. The two chaps who are in the retirement photograph, that's George Ewell and Joe Grant they died very soon after leaving.⁹⁶

Incorporating informed speculations regarding his father's work-life into the narrative fabric of his own working history, work's continuity (its sensations and ethics) formed a direct link from Roger Deans' life to the past and the lives of people sociologically similar to him. It is at once an individual story, and one that represents an entire family's way of life. Unearthing the pulse of the past by punctuating the ephemeral, Deans' memories of dismal, fume-stuffed rooms, of heat dried towels and unused face masks are all traces of a working world on the brink of disappearance. It is through these memories that an entire past, the entire "dead time" of work can be approached. Using representative memory such as Deans', the petrified, monolithic archetypes of working-class "experience" and/or identity are challenged, deconstructed and evaluated. For example, the relationship between Deans' father and work brings the findings of John Burnett into dispute. Functioning as a critique in two ways, Deans' father's enjoyment of work not only challenges the belief that work was never a central interest among members of the working class, it illustrates how concepts of fulfillment and enjoyment were defined in a working-class context. Assuming his father felt a degree of contentment in his job due to his silence, Deans interprets his father's response, or lack thereof, as positive. For Deans, the lack of dissent concerning work was akin to proclaiming enjoyment or fulfillment. The traces that this absence of words have left on Deans' understanding of his father are what Mikhail Bakhtin describes as "hidden dialogue":

⁹⁶ Roger Deans, interview by Cheryl Bailey, July 24th, 2007. Transcript, Documenting the Workshop of the World: Bilston Oral Histories, LS/LB6/2, Wolverhampton Archives & Local Studies, Wolverhampton, U.K.

Imagine a dialogue of two persons in which the statements of the second speaker are omitted, but in such a way that the general sense is not at all violated. The second speaker is present invisibly, his words are not there, but deep traces left by these words have a determining influence on all the present and visible words of the first speaker. We sense that this is a conversation, although only one person is speaking and it is a conversation of the most intense kind, for each present, uttered word responds and reacts with its every fibre to the invisible speaker, points to something outside itself, beyond its own limits, to the unspoken words of another person.⁹⁷

This dialogue between son, father, and memory also informs Deans' depiction of his father's moral character. Marvelling at the strict disciplinary atmosphere of his workplace, Deans' characterization of his father's refined conduct contradicts the stereotypical representation of working-class men. Long associated with the vulgar, the lascivious, or the immoral, the working-class body has been marked by the anxieties and value systems of England's middle or upper classes. Beginning with the slum journalism of Henry Mayhew in the mid-19th century and resurfacing during the moral panic surrounding Chav culture, the working-class body continues to be a veritable magnet for class missionaries.⁹⁸ It demands to be saved, redeemed from its crass tastelessness by outsiders who desire control, under the guise of empathy. While the strict code of Deans' father was arguably a form of self-policing, the extent to which

⁹⁷ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Ed and trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 197.

⁹⁸ More about Henry Mayhew's surveys and correspondences with London's poor can be found in Anne Humphrey's 1977 monograph *Travels into the poor man's country: the work of Henry Mayhew* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1977) and a collection of Mayhew's writings edited by Bertrand Taithe *The Essential Mayhew: Representing and Communicating the Poor*. (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1996). For work on Chav Culture I refer to Anoop Nayak's article "Displaced Masculinities: Chavs, Youth, and Class in the Post Industrial City" in *Sociology* 40(5), 2006 813-831.

class informed these actions cannot be known. The working class did not have a unanimous identity; it was not resolute. It can concurrently embody and contradict the archetypal relationships between individual and environment. For example, while Deans' father's recorded stance against workplace vulgarity could be considered anomalous or atypical, the disregard he displayed for the well-being of his body evoked a larger trend.

By 1960, thirty years after the danger of asbestos was identified, malignant mesothelioma was detected in the blue asbestos fields of South Africa's Northern Cape.⁹⁹ In contrast to diseases typically confined to the workplace such as asbestosis or pneumoconiosis, mesothelioma could be contracted from environmental or incidental exposure. Directly incriminated as an agent of disease for the first time, the negligence of the asbestos manufacturers to inform their workers of potential risk represents a chilling apogee of industrial exploitation. Manufacturers like Turner and Newall knowingly thrust workers into steelworks, dockyards, or buildings sites where "the insidious dust...came down like snow on them...in the form of dust, asbestos cuttings or dried out monkey-dung as asbestos paste was called..."¹⁰⁰ Detailing the indifference of Turner and Newall in his book "*Magic Mineral to Killer Dust*," Geoffrey Tweedale argues that Turner & Newall were fully capable of providing an adequate compensation for victims' families, but chose instead to engage in a policy of systematic denial.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Jock McCulloch, "Surviving blue asbestos: mining and occupational disease in South Africa and Australia", *Transformation: Critical Perspectives on South Africa* 65 (2008), 69

¹⁰⁰ Kynaston, *Austerity Britain 1945-1951*, 411.

¹⁰¹ Geoffrey Tweedale, *Magic Mineral To Killer Dust: Turner & Newall and the Asbestos Hazard* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001)

Using the full, boundless weight of their power to avoid any liability, Tweedale illustrates how the working-class body was denied and negated its distinction as a body at every level of industrial relations. Looked upon explicitly as an appendage to profit, Roger Deans' unaffected recollections of his experience with asbestos and other work-borne hazards form a counterpoint. Acknowledging that conditions "probably" made a difference in the long-term health of his community, Deans' reserved response seems to imply a tacit acceptance of lung problems and early death amongst steelworkers. If we interpret work as an indissoluble component of working-class identity, handling carbon tetrachloride or inhaling carcinogenic fumes become part of the job. Work was unavoidable, so the effect of work upon the body was unavoidable as well. Through Deans' testimony we also see how industrial reforms were framed and experienced in everyday life. Alluded to by Deans as he discussed the introduction of breathing apparatuses in his workplace, the link between blue asbestos and mesothelioma had instigated a chain reaction in asbestos manufacturers. Seizing on the opportunity to turn crocidolite into a scapegoat for all asbestos related diseases, by 1969 the U.K. asbestos industry had voluntarily ceased importing blue asbestos.¹⁰² Possessing a minor role in the asbestos industry in comparison to chrysotile and amosite, the increased regulation of crocidolite was not simply a response to public safety concerns. Rather, by enforcing stricter rules on blue asbestos, blame could be shifted away from the industry's cash cows. If the asbestos industry were to survive, a facade of mindfulness was necessary. Reflected in the content of Deans' oral history, these increased regulations and

¹⁰² Geoffrey Tweedale & Jock McCulloch, "Chrysophiles versus Chrysophobes: The White Asbestos Controversy", *Isis* 95 (2004), 242.

restrictions in the handling of blue asbestos were only experienced minimally by the workers, at least in their memories. As Dean states: “they took it off and triple-bagged it and we were thinking we’re working in this all our lives and never thought twice about it. There was a lot of asbestos, a lot of pipe lagging around the Works, obviously.” As demonstrated by Deans’ interview, perceived harm to the body did not always incite bitterness or raw anger. Embedded in the meaning of work itself, working men were obligated to accept working conditions. Placing their bodies under extreme duress, this unquestioning relationship to work formed the cornerstone of working-class identity in the post-war Midlands. While workers rarely complained directly about conditions, the evident difficulty of their job and its toll upon their sense of physical or mental well-being consistently informed their memories of work. Imperative in reevaluating existing archetypal relationships between the working class and their environment, the possibility that an individual confined their protests to silence, obscurity or sublimation needs to be approached.

For sociologist George C. Homans, man’s actions expressed and embodied what preceded them. While Homans’ philosophy was engaged with analyzing the body’s observable behaviour, Homans was more interested in what lies outside the body and controls it. Interrogating the absences in the oral histories of the Midlands’ working class, several similar questions arise. How is the working class body controlled? What controls it? What has preceded the actions of working men that gives them direction and meaning? Approaching these inquiries can help us to understand what enforces decisions such as silence, but they can also guide our attention to where and how these silences are being directed. To draw an example from the work of Louis Althusser on

Spinoza, “The history of philosophy’s repressed Spinozism thus unfolded as a subterranean history acting out at other sites, in political and religious ideology and the sciences, but not on the illuminated stage of philosophy.”¹⁰³ Just as the ideas of Spinoza were branded as heretic by the existing structure of society, the demonstration of weakness in the working-class body was socially unacceptable. Similar to Spinoza’s philosophy, these ideas or feelings became redirected to other sites. Just because something is not visible or recorded does not mean it has not produced effects upon the world.

Introduced to the imposing power of the factory by the time they were teenagers, the repetition, noise, heat, smell, and dirt of work were sensations that individuals learned to endure. Helping to provide an income while maintaining a generational class identity, the body was often sacrificed on the altar of work and its vast cultural meanings. Rather than directly protesting the lasting effects work had upon their bodies, individuals sought coping mechanisms to deal with their everyday burdens. In a group discussion recorded at the Croft Mental Health Resource Centre, Ronnie Davies discussed the methods he and his father used:

My father worked at the steelworks - he was a torch burner. He was a massive man; he died when he was 41. Where he worked, there were bars coming through and he had to cut them. He wore clogs with steel toecaps because if one of those bars landed on your toes they’d be cut off. It was very dangerous. I remember going to a factory in West Brom and the men were stripped down to their waists pouring molten lead- the smell

¹⁰³ Warren Montag, *Bodies, Masses, Power: Spinoza and His Contemporaries* (London: Verso, 1999), xiv

was awful. Men worked shifts and had six or seven pints lined up- they thought it would push the rubbish through the lungs but it didn't and men died young.¹⁰⁴

Further discussing safety procedures in a later interview, Mr. Davies continued

...these kids, come at 14 years of age, there were no special spectacles and no masks, the fumes they had and the noise from the riveting; sometimes it would be a tube, and you could imagine what that would sound like. Some for the better riveting, some of the ladle carriages, which was a solid steel thing, but that was still noisy, and I think everybody eventually suffered with their hearing. You'd finish your work and go home, and your ears would be ringing like mad. I would have to put some cottonwood in my ears to deaden it a bit, never did really, but it probably helped a little bit.¹⁰⁵

Similarly, Ray Timms a New Conveyor LTD. worker from Smethwick wryly reflects on his work's noxious environment and the ways his co-workers endured:

Q: What were the working conditions like? Was there a lot of noise...

A: No it wasn't a pleasant place to work. The foundry was a particularly dirty place to work. Because what you are working with is sand and when sand is burnt it turns black. So you are basically working with black sand. And it gets everywhere. Then from three o'clock people are pouring molten metal all around you and the smell and the smoke and your eyes run. And another part where there are lots of smells and dirt is where the steel are assembled because it has to be treated so it doesn't go rusty. There are lots of red oxide paint. Which wouldn't be used now because of the lead content. Battle ship

¹⁰⁴ Ronnie Davis, Group Discussion Croft Mental Health Resource Centre, August 20, 2007. Transcript. Documenting the Workshop of the World: Bilston Oral Histories, LS/ LB6/2, Wolverhampton Archives and Local Studies, Wolverhampton, U.K.

¹⁰⁵ Ronnie Davis, interviewed by Cheryl Willams & Cheryl Bailey, June 12th 2007. Transcript, Documenting the Workshop of the World: Bilston Oral Histories, LS/LB6/2, Wolverhampton Archives and Local Studies, Wolverhampton, U.K.

grey paint and it all stunk. And the poor man who used this paint was given a pint of milk each day. So somebody knew that it wasn't all that good for us!

Q: A pint of milk wouldn't do much good.

A: No¹⁰⁶

Exposure to chemicals, pain, and “minor injuries” were just part of the job, part of life.

Dennis Barnsley recalls, rather fondly, the “pleasures” of the job:

Burns were bad, particularly burns in the eyes. You were sweating and when a spark came towards you, you always seemed to catch it between your eyelids, and they would be stuck together. All you had to do was scrape the spark off with your fingernail and carry on. On the back of your hands you had red hot scale going on everyday. Of course you could not loose the link cause you were hitting it with one hand and holding it with the other. You just had to suffer it. If a spark went down your boot the only thing you could do was get your foot and put the whole lot in the cold water bosh to cool saying “Oh that's bloody lovely that is!” Then you would carry on- you hadn't got time to undo your laces.¹⁰⁷

Futilely treating themselves with cold water, cottonwood, beer or milk, the muted responses of the three men to their work's gruelling conditions was characteristic. Fighting to maintain their servitude as if it were salvation, it is not as though working men did not suffer or express their suffering to others. At least in the memories collected in the oral histories I have read, they tried to prevent it from affecting their ability to work. Even in cases when the physical and mental effects seeped beyond the threshold

¹⁰⁶ Ray Timms, interviewed by Sabine Skae, June 15th, 2000. Transcript, Memories Made in Sandwell, Sandwell Community History and Archives Service, Smethwick, U.K.

¹⁰⁷ Ned Williams, *Black Country Folk at Work* (Wolverhampton: Uralia Press, 1989), 35.

of the factory door, individuals endured. Tom Carpenter, a former employee of Salters, recalls the lasting din of work:

...the noise was fairly horrendous. I remember at one stage I was working on power presses and walked out into West Bromwich Street and couldn't hear any traffic noise because of the noise of the presses. No one had ear protection or eye protection or any kind of protection in those days. You had an overall and that was about it to try and keep the dirt off your clothes. But it would end up getting soaked in slurry and grease. No-one knew the dangers of it all in those days.¹⁰⁸

The sensation of work could continue after hours in other ways as well. As a man interviewed for Nick Hedges & Huw Beynon's *Born to Work* details:

My job was to work on head-linings and I had to fasten a plastic- type material to the inside roof of the cars. I was doing this job for about two years and toward the end of it it was getting so bad that I could not relax at all. I could not get away from the job. Even in my dreams I seemed to be back on the track. It was putting a great strain on my home life. Everything on the track seemed to be a rush. Men would be running everywhere in an attempt to get a few cars ahead so that, when the bell went for the end of tea break, you would have a few extra minutes to yourself. There just seemed no end to it. The assembly track would start running dead on 8.00pm when I arrived for the night shift and it would not stop until exactly 10.30 when we would have a ten-minute tea break. By then the men, cramped together, fighting to get a few cars ahead on the track would be shouting and screaming at each other.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Tom Carpenter, interviewed by Nicola Shepherd, January 1st 2000, Transcript. Memories Made in Sandwell, Sandwell Community History and Archives Service, Smethwick, U.K.

¹⁰⁹ Nick Hedges & Huw Beynon, *Born to Work: Images of Factory Life* (London: Pluto Press, 1982), 27.

Realistically inescapable, working people understood that “if you ain’t going to come here you’ve got to go somewhere else”. Challenging the unwavering, enchained, abusive archetypal relationship between the working class and their bodies, oral history illustrates the complex, deeply personal bonds that individuals developed between their bodies and work. Bodies were at risk, bodies broke down, bodies engaged in protest, bodies silenced themselves, individuals all responded as individuals. There is no evidence of a singular relationship, despite similarities or patterns. If we are to use representational terms such as “working class” to understand identity in an historical context, the lives of individuals should not be interpreted using the grammar of political dogma.

In a 1964 presidential address to the American Sociological Association entitled “Bringing Men Back in”, George C. Homans echoed this exact sentiment. Expressing discontent with the dizzying emphasis placed upon structures, institutions, and other abstractions, Homans lamented the diminishing role of “individual consciousness” in sociology, urging sociologists to put ‘the blood back in men.’¹¹⁰ Draining the lifeblood of history and its participants, macrostructures such as “working class” need to be evaluated, when possible, through the experiences and memories of individuals. Archetypal representations of the relationship between members of the “working class” and their bodies need to be challenged. The “working class” of the mid-century Midlands was not locked in a state of entrapment; it existed. Some workers like Mr Higgingbottom of Albright & Wilson actively loved their jobs:

Q:Did this camaraderie mean that it wasn’t such a lonely thing after all

¹¹⁰ George C. Homans, “Bringing Men Back in” *American Sociological Review* 29 (1964), 816.

A: Yes, the cafes that you pulled into to have your breakfasts and lunches that there would be someone there whom you would know 9 times out of 10.

Q: It must have been quite nice?

A: It was, I never regretted a minute of it. I love my job that is why I still go. I would never ever have a day off work just for the sake of having a day off work, unless I was ill. I wouldn't.¹¹¹

Others, such as the men in the memories of Mrs. Pittway, attempted to escape through symbolic gestures:

And they'd just sit there. And I remember asking him why? Because I was young, so I asked "Dad why do they sit there for hour after hour?" and he used to say because they all work in filthy industries around here and they've all got horrible jobs. So with the peace and quiet of sitting there at the side of the canal, it was a different world. Even though it was surrounded by factories, there was the tube works for a start, and you could hear the stamping of the machines going on the various factories around there, it was still always so quiet, considering that we were in the middle of an industrial area.¹¹²

The majority of memories recorded in the working-class oral histories of the Midlands *about work* are concerned with the work itself. Telling a permanently incomplete story of the past, these fragments reveal how members of the working class actually, physically, developed relationships between their body and the act of work on a day-to-day basis. To understand what these day-to-day experiences meant over a lifetime, the relationship between the working class and work will be examined.

¹¹¹ Mr. Higginbottom, interviewed by Sabine Skae, April 13th 2000. Transcript, Memories made in Sandwell, Sandwell Community History and Archives Service, Smethwick, U.K.

¹¹² Mrs. Pittaway, unknown interviewer/ date, Transcript, Wolverhampton Heritage Project, DX- 869, Wolverhampton Archives and Local Studies, Wolverhampton, U.K.

Working-Class Relationships to Work

In a 1985 report to the Wolverhampton District Health Authority, regional mental health practitioners advocated the importance of restructuring the city's fledgling industrial therapy unit.¹¹³ A normalizing process "whereby an individual is encouraged to perceive her or himself as taking part in an activity which the vast majority of the population of working age in this country also undertake", industrial therapy attempted to help individuals cope with the stress of transitioning from working life to unemployment.¹¹⁴ The urgency of the report, noted in its call for sheltered employment and increased accessibility for individuals at risk, was undoubtedly informed by the deteriorating economic situation of the West Midlands by mid-decade. Employing 50 percent more people in the manufacturing sector than the national average, and 24 percent more in metal-related industries, the Black Country's over-reliance on traditional industry meant that the ongoing processes of deindustrialization had a disproportionate impact. Acutely affecting the city of Wolverhampton, employment fell from 124,000 jobs to 108,000 between the years 1978 and 1981.¹¹⁵ Restructuring the economic landscape through take-overs, closures, and redundancies, deindustrialization also traumatically disrupted the archetypal relationship between the working class and employment: if you did your job well you would have it for life. Dr. Donald Dick, a consultant psychiatrist who treated the recently unemployed at Herrison hospital, noted that

¹¹³ Wolverhampton District Health Authority, *Moving an Industrial Therapy Unit into the Community, 1985*, DX662/1, Wolverhampton Archives and Local Studies, Wolverhampton, U.K.

¹¹⁴ Ibid

¹¹⁵ Ibid

The patients that I see are not usually so bothered by the loss or lack of income that comes from unemployment, as they are by other feelings. Shortage of money is a difficult enemy, but at least it is visible and there are some choices to be made in the combat. The real pain comes from a sense of uselessness, of not contributing, of not being able to describe oneself as part of the common endeavour.¹¹⁶

Arguing that lives can lose meaning following the loss of a job, the oral histories of Simon J. Charlesworth indicate the extent to which deindustrialization reshaped individual and communal identities:

Yer wun't [would not] believe it but AH [I] waked of eighteen y'r in pit an' then Ah've dun' nowt but bi unemployed. Life ended when Ah finished in pit an'it an't never started again. All thi's [there has] bin [been] is this nothingness. Mi life stopped. Ah'll niver [never] w'k age'an [again] an' so this is it fo' me, *forever!* Just bein' stuck wi' nowt!¹¹⁷

While debilitating mental illness and the unwillingness or inability to find work were not the experiences of all workers, the relatively extreme reactions demonstrated in the excerpts from Dick and Charlesworth indicate the structural and societal importance of employment in the culture of the working class. If we are to explore the concept of employment and its relationship to working-class identity, an understanding of how such a mentality could be developed must be approached. We must ask, *what in working-class culture made it possible for such relationships to be formed and passed on to following generations.*

In the opening chapter of his book *Labour's Apprentices: Working Class Lads in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*, historian Michael J. Childs argues that the

¹¹⁶ Ibid

¹¹⁷ Charlesworth, *A Phenomenology of Working Class Experience*, 93.

family unit was the primary source of working-class identity.¹¹⁸ Exposed to the realities of working-class life, children were taught the behavioural norms, skills, and attitudes that were necessary to navigate the world in which they lived. Recreated, reformed, and applied to the child's life, this assemblage of perceptions, expectations and behaviours passed down from their parents formed the basis of class identity. Reading the rest of the chapter as it detailed how the instability and squalor of the external world becomes internalized in the dynamics of the working class family, I couldn't help but think of an interview I had read during my time researching oral history at the Herbert Museum in Coventry. Relaying a woman's efforts to escape the tedium of housework, raise two children, and find time to become involved in the region's Labour Party, the interview also discussed the intimacies of her early life at home and the relationships she developed or witnessed. Characterizing her father as a particularly difficult man to talk to, the woman's (WC) memories of him are directly related to his job or his position in the family:

...he would come in from work, okay and he'd be covered in plaster, and he'd sit down, and he'd have his tea, and he'd have his sort of six slices of bread by the side of him, and his big plate of dinner, and he'd eat it, and then he'd watch the telly, and I'd probably be doing homework or something, and then i'd probably just go out, you know, but I mean, when i started going out, that's when I had the contact with my dad, you know, he sort of whacked you round the head.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Michael J. Childs, *Labour's Apprentices: Working Class lads in Late Victorian and Edwardian England* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill- Queen's University Press, 1992), 3.

¹¹⁹ anonymous interview, interviewed by Paul Thompson, 1986. Transcript. Coventry Car Workers Oral History Project, PA 1647 #68, Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry

Illustrating the sharply structured gender roles that existed in most working-class homes, the duty of the man was to be employed, to provide for his family. The pressures to perform this cultural role often materialized in strained, distant relationships between the patriarch and the rest of the family. While discontinuous forms of alternative income, such as the occasional employment of the wife or children, were depended upon in most working-class households, some patriarchs attempted to wield absolute control over their family:

...my dad didn't like the idea of my mum working anyway, he always had the attitude that women's place was in the home and he would provide for her, and he wanted her at home with the children, but it used to be a real struggle, and I can't ever remember my dad and mum going out together at all, I mean, we never got left with babysitters, never. I just don't remember them going out, ever, so it must have been quite hard, I mean, sort of when you're a child, you don't think of those things, but you know, looking back on it now, when I think of the times that they never went out, then I think it must have been a struggle, and I can remember my dad, sort of coming home, with the wages, and my mum would open them, and she would say, "well it's just not enough."

Q: Do you think she'd liked to have worked?

A: Oh yeah, I think she wanted to work, it's just the fact that he didn't like the idea of it....that was the way they used to live, the father went out to work, and the mother stayed at home...¹²⁰

Shouldering the blame for his family's poverty while interpreting the desires of his wife as a potential threat to his role as the breadwinner, the actions of WC's father were complex but archetypal. Believing a woman's role should be restricted to domestic

¹²⁰ Ibid

duties, WC's father demonstrated that employment not only gave meaning to an individual's everyday life, it also helped to organize the household. It maintained an order rooted in gendered spheres of influence; the man was to work and the woman was to maintain the house and the children. It is unsurprising then to see that when WC married her husband, the domestic roles her mother and father performed continued on unchanged and unquestioned. That is until WC's husband openly challenged working-class relationships to work by voluntarily quitting his job and refusing to find another:

He was bored with it, a blind man could do, a monkey could do it and he was sick of it... well of course from his point of view, he was doing a job and he hated it, and he didn't want to do it, but from my point of view with a baby and a mortgage and you know trying to survive, it was a real catastrophe, and how dare he just say, "well i'm bored with my job and I'm giving it up."¹²¹

Choosing a strange time to rebel, the husband's irresponsible choice not only proved to be financially short-sighted, it flipped the family's traditional power structure sideways. Listing the little disappointments he could no longer endure, the husband's refusal to embody working-class values regarding work was met with disbelief by his wife. Disassociating himself from the sacrifices he was expected to make, for a working-class man this behaviour was considered selfish.

In the years following the birth of WC's second child, a deep-seated malaise prompted WC to reevaluate the role she had been conditioned into accepting since birth:

¹²¹ Ibid

We just sort of lived from day to day, nothing exciting happening, just really mundane things going on, I'd be very depressed and he'd come home from work at night and he'd say, "Well what's the matter with you" and I used to say, "Depressed" You used to always be smiling, " and I'd say "Well I don't know, I don't know why I'm depressed, I'm, I've got a house, I've got a car, I've got two lovely children, got a husband, why should I be depressed", and I just couldn't understand it, what I didn't realize at the time, was that outside of the home, I'd got nothing. I used to go unto the play-school, and sit with the mums up there, and they'd talk about nappies and things, and what new dresses they'd got for the kids, and it was, it was boring....¹²²

Provoked in part by her husband's atypical relationship to employment, WC's experiences were similar to those of Midlands families in the wake of deindustrialization. Undergoing fundamental challenges to core social dynamics, families had to reconcile unemployment with class identity. Disrupting the inherited cultural meaning of employment, deindustrialization threatened both the stability and character of what it meant to be working class. However, the systemic creation and strengthening of archetypal relationships to employment is not fully explained by "seeing your father in plaster" every evening of his working life. In his essay *Sources of Variation in Working Class Images of Society* sociologist David Lockwood argues that distinct working-class images of society were derived from different interactions to work and community.

For the most part men visualize the class structure of their society from the vantage points of their own particular milieu and their perceptions of the larger society will vary

¹²² Ibid

according to their experience of social inequality in the smaller societies in which they live out their daily lives¹²³

Ranging from the class-conscious proletarians, the conservative, status-conscious deferentials and the calculative, consumption-minded privatized workers, Lockwood's categorization of working-class belief systems reevaluates the concept of class identity by decentralizing it. Characterizing the proletarians through their militancy, Lockwood argues that "their class identity tended to absorb other potentially conflicting sources of self-identity: the sense of being a man became a proletarian masculinity, the youthfulness of most early militants became the youthful modernity of the working class."¹²⁴ As proletarians were the most politically vocal sub-group, their relationships to class, conflict, and employment were interpreted as the expression of an entire population. Subsuming conflicting voices to strengthen their political coherency, the actual day-to-day experiences of the working class became obscured. In regards to employment, by challenging the homogeneity of working-class identity Lockwood argues that relationships to work were not informed by one factor. These relationships were not products of masculinity, class-consciousness, or socialist ideology nor were they just a matter of familial or environmental factors; they were derived from locations of intersection.

One of the most prominent locations of intersections was in the class room.

Characterized as inconsequential in the vast majority of working-class oral histories, it is

¹²³ David Lockwood, "Sources of Variation in Working Class Images of Society" *The Sociological Review* 12 (1966), 249.

¹²⁴ Michael Man, "Sources of Variation in Working Class Movements in Twentieth Century Europe" *New Left Review* 212 (1995), 18.

paradoxical that the structure of England's educational system unwittingly shaped relationships to employment. Published in 1977 as a case study of counter-school culture in the Midlands, Paul Willis' *Learning to Labour* argued that class identity was a product of will and experience.¹²⁵ Focusing on un-academic, disaffected males, Willis' work depicted how individuals sought to impose frameworks, exercise their autonomy and find enjoyment in environments over which they had no formal control. Defining themselves in opposition to authority, school was interpreted as an enforced holiday, a vague abstraction that bore little resemblance to the real world. Structuring an individual's sense of self and their understanding of class through contact with like-minded peers, Willis argued that school prepared working-class males for employment through its division of power. Solidifying nascent attitudes towards masculinity, social capital, humour, and authority, individuals who identified themselves within the determinate conditions of counter school culture reproduced these perspectives in the shop floor culture of factory work.

Having illustrated how an individual's relationship to employment was established, reinforced, and passed on by their experiences of home, community, peer groups, and cultural institutions it is important to understand how these relationships were developed and lived out in the everyday.

Representing a definitive break from the odd jobs and schoolyards of adolescence, the passage of working-class men into the workforce was influenced by

¹²⁵ Paul E. Willis, *Learning to Labour: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1977), 2.

their relationships to existing social and economic structures. For men like Colin Davis the transition was simple:

I left school at fourteen and within, I don't know about a month, I started at Cadbury's...I was supposed to have an interview there in them days like, Cadbury's was a very good firm in as much as they like family, there was that sense of respect. If a child or a young chap like myself worked there, if I'd got parents or relatives who worked there I was going to be good...my two sisters worked there, my brother-in law worked there, my brother worked there...When I was leaving school,[they'd say] "You'll be going to Cadbury's won't you, Col?" and I says "Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah". It was just taken for granted, I mean there was jobs about in them days and I could have probably done for lots of different things but my family worked at Cadbury's and yeah, oh yeah I'll be going to work at Cadbury's so when I went for an interview, they said, "Yeah, ok, come down and we'll have an interview," but we had our sports day, and I thought oh, what do I do? Do I not run for the school like and it was actually at Cadbury's on the Bournville Rec. Cadbury's the family they did this for all the teams and all the schools all the way around the area and I wrote them a letter and I said I am supposed to come for an interview but I am running for you Rec, and I am running for me school and they sent me a lovely letter back and they said, "You carry on son, you run for your school, we'll fix you up another time!"¹²⁶

Fostering an intimacy between employees and their site of work, the hiring of relatives or friends created a sense of continuity. Using a management style that emphasized functional, compassionate relationships between all levels of the workforce, employers like Cadburys attempted to motivate its employees by reproducing the

¹²⁶ Colin Davis, interviewed by Helen Lloyd, 2000. Transcript. Millenibrum,MS2255/2/063, Birmingham Central Library, Birmingham, U.K.

dynamics of family. Nurturing a deep sense of commitment and loyalty lasting well beyond their last shifts, men such as Colin Davis held an archetypal relationship to work; it was inherited, tight-knit, and life-long. Characterizing his transition from school to Cadbury's as inevitable, Davis is the product of a perpetually regenerating social structure that affixed working-class bodies to certain, pre-ordained workplaces.

Requiring a strong social network, to gain access to the working world meant having a reputable source vouch for you. Bill Shreeve of Nechells remembers:

Q: Did you get the job through your father?

A: Yes, I did indeed...It was an accepted thing and a known thing in those days that people, I think the term was "spoke for you" and my Dad "spoke for me". The works engineer of the day was Mr JH Darrer, and in those days a man who occupied the position of Mr JH Darrer was regarded somewhat as a demi-god by the employees and my dad, well I called him automatically my old man, that's a term of endearment, not offensive, and my old man "spoke for me" and so he told me the words were to the gaffer, "Well if you employ him, give him a trial, and if he is no good, send him through the gate, but if you send him through the gate, you'll have to send me with him" which in actual fact was a warning to me. The family name was at stake and if I didn't show, then that was it...¹²⁷

For men like Bill Shreeve's father, to "speak for someone" was more than just putting their reputation on the line. Informed and supported by work, part of working men's sense of self-identity was to ensure that their place in the world was inherited by their offspring. Issued a subtle reminder by his father on the importance of a successful

¹²⁷ Bill Shreeve, interviewed by Helen Lloyd, 2000. Transcript. Millenibrum, MS2255/2/108, Birmingham Central Library, Birmingham, U.K.

interview, the failure to gain a place in the workforce would not only be interpreted as a personal failure, it would disrupt the inter-generational relationship between Cadbury's and the Shreeve family. Using their fathers, friends, or neighbours as references, interviews typically consisted of nothing more than "What have you done before? Does your dad work here? and "Who else do you know that works here?" An informal nepotism, the process of employment in working-class communities emphasized the role familial and social relationships had in creating and sustaining identity. For men from highly regarded working families like Bill Shreeve and Colin Davis, passages into the workforce were rather straightforward. However, for semi-skilled workers who lacked a reputable support group or a direct link to the community, the process of finding employment was considerably more difficult. For GC, a Glaswegian immigrant seeking work in Coventry's booming car industry, his status as a social outsider prevented him from finding work for four months. Eking out an existence in the rundown industrial hostels of Chase avenue, it wasn't until a connection was made through his wife back home that his fortunes began to change:

My wife knew a guy who worked in Coventry, or she knew his brother, sorry, she knew his sister, and they said, well get in touch with me there. And funnily enough, he lived just round the corner, and he worked for the council. And I said, you know, "This is bloody awful" and he said, "I've got some mates who work in the car factory" he said, "Why not"... eventually got a job with Chrysler's..."¹²⁸

Relying on reputable, well-established members of their extended ethnic communities, immigrants like GC could grasp a foothold in the Midlands' highly

¹²⁸ anonymous interview, interviewed by Paul Thompson, 1986. Transcript. Coventry Car Workers' Oral History Project, PA 1647, #67 Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry U.K.

parochial workforce. Gaining further access to social networks unavailable to him as an unknown migrant, the working trajectory of GC became very similar:

I knew somebody whose father, the NUVB was going at the time, you know, the National Union of Vehicle Builders, it was through that I got in and one of the guys that I knew, that he introduced me to, his father was a full time officer down in Oxford, at Cowley, and he sort of had a word with the guy up here and he said, you know, "If you're looking for somebody you know" and I as, I was ideal for Chrysler you see, because when the guy interviewed me, he said, "Oh" he said, "this is great" you know, buying your own house, kids mortgage, you know, you're the kind of people we love" And he said "You ever worked in a ...", and I said you know "I've worked with my hands all my life", you know "I'm sure you don't do anything I can't do, if you give me half a chance" and then I found myself in the Body and White at Ryton, on general welding, spot welding, braising and then I did all sorts of welding...¹²⁹

Despite their dissimilarities, men like Shreeve, Davis, and GC all shared a rootedness in their relationship to employment. It was a loyalty to a company or an industry, a philosophy of life. This rootedness, whether a continuation of an identity affixed to them through lineage or the result of financial necessity, was a relationship that shaped working-class identity in the first half of the twentieth century. But even within the structural uniformity of working-class relationships to employment points of silence existed. Some interviewees emphasized what their work was, could express a sense of pride in the company's history or the communal atmosphere of employment, but couldn't or didn't want to articulate their own personal feelings and memories:

¹²⁹ Ibid

I have worked at Timken's Wolverhampton plant, which is based on Upper Villiers street, for over twenty six years, in the building that was originally built to manufacture the Sunbeam motor car. We have been manufacturing ball and roller bearings which are used by the aerospace industry for over sixty years. Many of our employees have been working here for over twenty years and we also have quite a few families here, where grandfathers, fathers and sons have worked here.¹³⁰

Others challenged the supposedly mundane dynamics of long-term employment by charting their own progression through the constantly evolving landscape of work.

I started work at Bilston steelworks in 1948- I've been here about twenty nine years. The first job I had was pig lifting. We had three old furnaces and we had twenty ton ladles that carried six tons of iron. Any iron that was left we used to run down into a pig bed, where we made pig iron. It used to be broken up when it was still hot, and when it had cooled down we had to pick it up and load it into railway trucks and it went out to different foundries. It was hard work. In those days a good worker would come and stop, but a bad un- he came and he looked and he went! From there I moved onto bye-turning and then moved on to No.2 furnace and worked there until they built this furnace in 1953....The years went by and I worked my way up. At one time 80% of the shift managers were old furnace men...Now I'm a blast furnace shift manager. My responsibilities are to try and keep production the way higher management would like it. We do take that responsibility seriously, in fact I think we put our jobs before our own families at home. We worry more here than we do at home. We get to know the men and get to know how much responsibility we can shove on each one.

¹³⁰ Martyn Jones, unknown interviewer/ 2005, Transcript, *Stirring Memories of Blakenhall*, Wolverhampton Archives and Local Studies, Wolverhampton, U.K.

At Bilston most people have worked here a long time. Even after twenty nine years I'm only a rooky- I'm still a baby compared with some people here. I've had blokes working with me in their seventies and we had one who was eighty two! It's like being in a fishing village where everyone is a fisherman or being in a mining community. It's the same here- it was a family concern and the works is the main topic of everybody's conversation.¹³¹

Perhaps most interesting though, the stability and ubiquity of employment in the Midlands is made most apparent by the existence of industrial mercenaries. Possessing either a highly developed skill-set or a tremendous sense of self-confidence, industrial mercenaries were workers who went from factory to factory, testing their market value without any concern for long-term unemployment. An anonymous car worker from Coventry recalls:

The best 2 or 3 men in the office were, had the ability to do that (come and go). I mean the worst guys didn't do it because they, having gone out they might not get back in. We used to call it playing your ace. You played your ace at least once a year. You went into the gaffer and you said "Look gaffer I think I'm worth another 7 and a tanner a week" which was a lot of money in those days... And the gaffer would say "alright leave it with me, I'll go and see the executive". It's a very short line of command and he'd come back and he'd say "well we've had a talk about it, we're going to give you 5 bob" So you say "alright gaffer I'll stay" But if he came back and said "well no, we might go to half a crown" you'd say "alright I'm off" and you'd go down the road.

Q: And you would get another job ?

¹³¹ Ned Williams, *Black Country Folk at Work*, 17-18

A: You'd get another job just like that. You'd just open the paper, all the sub- contract companies which were working for you as well, the rates would be there, everyone knew his price. And you could just go and get a job just like that, if you were a good bloke and come back 6 months later.¹³²

While widespread unemployment and job insecurity had not always been unknown in the Midlands, in the years leading up to deindustrialization worker's relationships with employment were defined by rootedness and flexibility. Throughout the collected oral histories, stories of workers quitting their job at lunch and immediately finding another one nearby are common. Some men started their working lives as temps, or relief cover, only to maintain the same job for 45 years. Others switched jobs dozens of times, moving from one small company to the next. Even the urban topography of the region reflected the working class' stable, ineluctable relationship with employment. Reflecting on the narrow world of a working-class man, Smethwick resident Ray Timms remembered that his technical school was 100 yards away from his future employer's factory. The only thing in between was a church. Sombrely concluding the anecdote by stating that all three buildings had since been demolished, the physical traces of Timms' working life had vanished entirely. Rendered invisible by the processes of deindustrialization, the destruction of the working class' traditional places of employment was the most visible and immediate transformation of social dynamics. A little less conspicuous was the loss of the working class' vast social networks that been supported by these vanquished factories, workshops, and/or foundries.

¹³² anonymous interview, interviewed by Paul Thompson, 1986. Transcript. Coventry Car Workers' Oral History Project, PA 1647, #83, Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry, U.K.

Working-Class intersections with Social Environments

At this intersection there's an atmosphere of memories,
 meetings, strange significant events
 Orange and Green blossoming in the drugstore display
 Enamel inscriptions on the cafe window
 The song of a passerby is the same as it is anywhere else
 Streetlight the same
 Houses like any other
 Same pavements
 Sidewalks
 Same sky
 Yet many people stop in this place
 Seeming to find their own odours here
 And the sweet smell of former loves
 Irremediably buried in the anguish of forgetting
 -Robert Desnos, *Intersection*¹³³

The incautious romanticism of Robert Desnos' poetry makes it a seemingly unsuitable resource for approaching the complexity of historical evidence. Perpetually reshaped by an individual's impressions of the present or the past, Desnos' intersection becomes an unstable image, existing as both place and memory. Recognizing the personal histories hidden in sidewalks, skies, and houses, Desnos interrogates how relationships with the familiar are formed and enacted upon. Useful in the context of historical methodology, the destabilization of primary sources can help to reconstruct landscapes that evade words, or documentation. Water-damaged and in disrepair from years of neglect, the nominal ledger of Essington's Working Men's club is like Desnos'

¹³³ Robert Desnos, *The Voice of Robert Desnos: Selected Poems* trans. William Kulik (Riverdale-on-Hudson, New York: The Sheep Meadow Press, 2004), 74.

intersection. An accumulation of expenses, the ledger has preserved what it entailed to run a Working Men's Club: floor polisher, additional burglar alarms, yearly expenses for stewards, cleaners, bar assistance, doorkeepers, entertainment and concerts during Easter and Christmas, a sport supper, fishing trip catering, membership renewals, sports trophies, sale of playing cards, football trip money, dart boards, pigeon clocks, a trip to Wembley in 1973, raffle ticket printing, bingo tickets, sherry, whiskey, pool table rental, performance fees for the pancho villa show, the Johnny Carroll show, pantomime tickets.¹³⁴ Every transaction relating to the club's accounts between 1969 to 1982, from the minutiae to the fundamental, exists as both a physical documentation of the past and the trace of a memory. In the article "Movement, Options and Costs: Indexes as Historical Evidence, a Newfoundland Example", the historical value of nominal ledgers and indexes is approached through a series of questions:

...how does the source reflect the specific historical context in which it was generated?

Why were specific types of information and not others recorded in the source? What function of purpose was the source designed to serve...in short although indexes are very useful finding aids, we believe they should first be analyzed as historical evidence.¹³⁵

Transcending its use as an unemotional record of human interaction, the thoroughness of the nominal ledger not only provides historians with an exhaustive list of events, it illustrates how relationships between community and identity develop. Indicated by the frequent entries into the ledger, the club's long-term commitment to

¹³⁴ Nominal ledger of *Essington Working Mens Club, 1969-1982*, D-SSW/2/EW. Son & Wilkie, Chartered Accountants, Darlington Street, Wolverhampton collection, (1863-1998), Wolverhampton Archives and Local Studies, Wolverhampton, U.K.

¹³⁵ Robert C.H. Sweeny, David Bradley, & Robert Hong. "Movements, Options and Costs: Indexes as Historical Evidence, a Newfoundland Example" *Acadiensis* 22 (1992), 112

providing its members with annual events, such as football tournaments, children's outings, and commemorative dinners, were instrumental in organizing an individual's social life around the club. Writing about her own experiences with Working Men's Clubs in the introduction to her book *Not Just Beer and Bingo*, Ruth Cherrington stated

Club life was instilled in us from an early age with its annual calendar of Christmas parties, Easter bonnet parades, and summer outings, as well as the weekly routine of concerts, raffles, games nights, glamorous granny contests, and talent shows. A club was much more than its bricks and mortar. More often than not clubs were paid for even built by the founder members. Going to the club was a regular feature of everyday life.¹³⁶

Originating in the era of mass industrialization, working men's clubs were formed in part to provide an alternative to the pub or friendly society. A non-profit organization that depended upon volunteers and elected committees, at the height of their popularity working men's clubs boasted more than four million members nationwide.¹³⁷ An embodiment of the role employment played in the development of social relationships, the financial stability of working men's clubs depended upon the collective experience of working. Mr. Ashcroft, an employee at John Thompsons' in Bilston, remembers:

A big part of my working life that I'm proud of was being on the committee for John Thompsons' Sports and Social Club. We organized all sorts of events; children's Christmas parties, dominoes, holidays, dances, and swimming sessions at Bilston Baths. People were happy with spending their social time with their work colleagues and families, which is probably why there was such a community spirit. My work on the

¹³⁶ Ruth Cherrington, *Not Just Beer and Bingo: A Social History of Working Men's Clubs* (Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2012), xii

¹³⁷ Ibid

committee kept me really busy and I would be working on committee activities until about 11 o'clock in the evening after being at work all day.¹³⁸

Located at an intersection of work, community, and home, working men's clubs demonstrated how thoroughly working-class identity was determined by employment. An extension of work and its personal dynamics, working men's clubs allowed individuals to strengthen relationships to the people they went to work with as well as those who lived close by. Couched in the language of familiarity, for an anonymous Irish migrant working in Coventry, a drink at the Working Men's club was a family affair:

The Tom Mann club down here, you know, like the Coach Makers which is me own club I'm a member of and the wife goes in and has a game of bingo and I have the kids...they got the kids room up the Coach Makers which is handy you know. You can keep an eye on them...That's where you'd go normally for a drink is it.If we did.

Q: If you went for a drink?

A: Yeah, we'd, we'd that's what we do, you know, we'd go to a club, the Working Mans club, you know. And the wife she foes and usually have a game of bingo and I sit in the lounge with the kids and back home at 10 o'clock.¹³⁹

For others, attending a club helped to reinforce the strict gender roles that informed working class masculinity:

Q: Did they drink together, your parents, or did he meet his friends up there?

A: They would go to the club together all night, you know, my dad might go and have a game of darts with somebody, or a game of snooker, but they would certainly go to the

¹³⁸ Mr. Ashcroft, unknown interviewer/ date, Transcript, Documenting the Workshop of the World: Bilston Oral Histories, LS/ LB6/2, Wolverhampton Archives and Local Studies, Wolverhampton, U.K.

¹³⁹ anonymous interview, interviewed by Paul Thompson, 1986. Transcript, Coventry Car Workers' Oral History Project, PA 1647 #59, Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry, U.K.

same club together, yes. They would sit in a group of people, the wives would sit together and the husbands would be round the table, and each one would shoot off wherever he wanted to go, the darts, cards, dominoes snooker.¹⁴⁰

Maintaining an archetypal relationship to community and industrial sociality, a working man's social life was an extension of his workplace and his household. Considering the role of employment in maintaining these private, self-contained communities, it is unsurprising that the processes of deindustrialization significantly threatened the financial and social stability of working men's clubs. Facing a crisis of membership in the wake of unemployment, since the mid-1970s more than two thousand clubs have been permanently shuttered.¹⁴¹ Losing the collective experience that facilitated membership, clubs that managed to survive the trauma of deindustrialization became defined by their ageing patronage. Despite being created by the conditions of work, the social structures supported by working men's clubs did not simply dissipate into thin air. As Contactor Switchgear employee Malcolm Palmer recalled:

We didn't let Contactor just fade away. We wound up the sports and social club and used the money to put on a grand dinner at a local hotel for the last 120 employees and their wives and a number of retired workers. Even the management put on a buffet on the final day that the firm was open and folks who had left up to thirty years earlier turned up for that. My father came back to Wolverhampton for the occasion- it was that important to us. Letters appeared in the Express and Star mourning the closure. I said

¹⁴⁰ Ernie Sephton, interviewed by Paul Thompson, 1986. Transcript, Coventry Car Workers' Oral History Project, PA 1647 #24, Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry U.K.

¹⁴¹ Cherrington, *Not Just Beer and Bingo!*, xvi

earlier there was something of the phoenix about Contactor switchgear and sure enough not only have many of us remained in touch with one another; but five chaps have started their own business Contactor Controls. ¹⁴²

Not unlike Desnos' urban wanderers caught in hidden reverie, the relationships formed between fellow workers were not simply environmental reflexes. Helping individuals to orient themselves in the social landscape, this chapter will analyze how work shaped perceptions of social relationships, organized time and became useful for employers to construct a sense of community.

Tracing the thread of paradoxes between friendship and politics throughout the history of philosophy, Jacques Derrida's *Politics of Friendship* questions the extent to which we can define or understand social relationships. Interpreting the friend as the one who is near or present, Derrida destabilizes his own conclusions by interrogating their limitations:

How will we know if there is *philia* or *homonía* between us, if we are getting on well, at what moment and to what degree? How are we to distinguish between ourselves, between each of us who compose this as yet so undetermined 'we'?¹⁴³

Dissolving the structural coherency of friendship as a social concept, Derrida's work is useful in both reassembling the history of friendship in an industrial context and understanding how social relationships were formed and influenced by the conditions of work in the Midlands.

¹⁴² Ned Williams, 63-64

¹⁴³ Jacques Derrida, *Politics of Friendship* trans. George Collins (New York: Verso, 1997), 231.

In late 18th-century Birmingham, changes to the work week were beginning to occur. Formerly employing a graduated working schedule, in which workers would begin the week with a day off and end the week working long hours in order to earn a living wage, the days of informal, flexible employment drew to an end.¹⁴⁴ Characterized by regular attendance, uniform hours of labour, dismissals for misconduct and an increased attention to time, the working class developed new relationships to their co-workers. Arguing that the strength of worker relationships depended on technology, the work of Robert Blauener responded to totalizing narratives of widespread change. Defining strength as the willingness of co-workers to defend each other in the face of challenge, Blauener suggests that the social relationships between skilled workers were more nuanced and resolute than their unskilled or semi-skilled counterparts.¹⁴⁵ Using the example of a craft-based trade like printing, Blauener states that printers became more closely bound to their workmates through their shared experience of craft guilds and their ability to freely interact with one another. Contrasting this intimacy with the social life of car-workers, the automation of factory work and the dependence of the individual upon the pace of the machine meant that workers were given less time to interact with one another. Resulting in a lack of cohesiveness and under-developed social relationships, Blauener's work suggests that at least two distinct forms of industrial relationships existed in working-class communities. While Blauener's theory is based upon the nature of social relationships in post-industrial workplaces, his

¹⁴⁴ Eric Hopkins, *Birmingham: the First Manufacturing Town in the World 1760-1840*. (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1989), 102.

¹⁴⁵ Tony Watson, *Sociology, Work & Industry*. (London and New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), 164.

conclusions are undermined by the patterns of early 19th-century Birmingham. By the 1830s, workshops which had not imposed factory methods of discipline were being priced out of business by larger manufacturers.¹⁴⁶ This suggests that the workshop intimacy Blauener heralded in his theory of 20th-Century industrial relations actually began to be threatened and replaced almost a hundred years earlier. While it is important to stress the continued significance of smaller manufacturers and workshops well into the twentieth century, the structural transformations of the late 18th century signalled the entrance of the Midlands into the era of industrialization. Work became standardized, clocks, constant supervision, fines, and bonus schemes had largely replaced the intimate, individualized relationships working-class men had developed to their workplace. In addition to the new methods of workplace discipline, working-class relationships to community became reshaped by the drastic changes to Birmingham's physical appearance. Rapidly urbanizing, the city's new canals, turnpikes, roads, municipal buildings, housing projects, railway stations, factories, workshop, and churches defamiliarized the landscape, submerging the city's open spaces in the bricks and dust of construction. Concerning the work of Blauener, in addition to the dwindling differences between the practices of the workshop and the factory, extraneous variables such as urbanization and mass internal migration make generalizations about the historical nature of friendship in the workplace nearly impossible. The imposition of definitions or imagined boundaries on the nature of social relationships negates the experience of the individual, sacrificing their memories and their interpretation of the

¹⁴⁶ Hopkins, *Birmingham: The First Manufacturing Town in the World 1760-1840*, 113.

past on the altar of historical coherency. An automotive worker at the Standard factory in Canley remembers:

Q: But looking back on the job, I mean, what would you say that you liked most about being in a car factory?

A: I think a good set of lads. I mean it's funny when you're there, you've got your, you're going, you're saying, Oh god, he's an idiot, and this and "I can't get on with him", and I think this, that and the other, and yet when you're away from them, and you're in another environment, or you're away from them, you think "Well he was a bit of a character", you know, when you think about it. Like there was an old guy Scoby, I'll never forget, he was he actually goes to...and watches the rugger, and he came in one morning, I always remember, he, he pulled his clock card out the rack, he ripped it up into shreds, he threw it on the floor and he jumped up and down and I said "What's the matter with you" and he said someone had passed him on the road, coming to work and of course they hadn't given him a lift and of course when he got there, and hew was a few minutes late, and no-one had even clocked him in as such...."What kind of crisps do you want plain or ordinary?" he used to say. You know, little characters like that, which made the place.¹⁴⁷

Contradicting Blauener's characterization of car factories as cold, remote realms of alienation, the memories of this Canley man are tinged with warmth and a profound nostalgia. Similarly, the oral testimony of another man working in the car factory industry elicited a response which seemed to support the conclusions of Blauener:

Q: In any of the factories that you worked in, were there any social facilities provided by the company?

¹⁴⁷ anonymous interview, interviewed by Paul Thompson, 1986. Transcript, Coventry Car Workers Oral History Project, PA 1647, #81, Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry U.K.

A: At Chryslers and at the standard, there were clubs, works clubs and that's as much as I know about it.

Q: Did you use them?

A: Well, I used to use them, but just for drink.

Q: Were they quite widely used by people?

A: They were, there were various other things attached to them, I suppose, groups, kind of thing, one part had a fishing section, and another part had an art section, there were things like that. There was facilities there for darts and snooker and bingo and all that kind of thing-concerts- and then there was boxing and weight lifting, quite a few things attached to it. It depended whether you wanted to get involved in those things....Football...

Q: People would go with their wives, and....

A: Yes, yes.

Q: It would be like a family affair.

A: No I wouldn't say so. Not really, no. The supervision used to use them, the lower supervision, the foremen and superintendent, they would use the clubs, and they more or less kind of at Rover anyway, they used them and their attitudes...would be when they went there, and they would talk about work as well, you know...the whole thing was kind of based around the job. I'll give you an example a superintendent at our place, was taken to hospital, oh he was in hospital for about three weeks, another superintendent went up to see him, while he was in hospital. They were talking about the welding shop and when he was in hospital, all that kind of thing. You know he says I've been thinking here, lying here, he says, you know those so-and-so , so and so parts of the chassis, kind of thing, well i was thinking if we put a red x of them, red lead paint or something, red oxide paint you'd ono that they were such and such, that they were able to comply

with such and such a Standard (laughs) This was when the poor devil was in hospital- so you can imagine the way their minds work, kind of thing.¹⁴⁸

In line with Derrida, the impulse to categorize or construct a generalized narrative needs to be avoided or, at the very least paired with inconsistencies in an effort to emphasize the impossibility of historical singularity. Friendship in the workplace needs to be analyzed on an individual level, using larger historical movements or patterns to help contextualize it properly. History dependent upon theory, or blanket demarcations of experience dissolves the meaning of friendship and social relationships, losing the unpolished immensity of human experience to politics.

Having established how industrial relations began or were thought to have begun in the Midlands, it is important to evaluate the ways in which they were maintained and encouraged. Reflecting the historical ephemerality of day-to-day factory work, existing examples of employee magazines or house organs provide historians with slivers of a long-receded industrial consciousness. Articulating a sense of community from the perspective of the company, employee magazines were published in an effort to overcome the impersonality or physical isolation of the industrial workplace. A marketing tool which sold employees to each other, departments to each other, plants to each other and the management to employees, the employee magazine re-created the organization in the mind of the reader, allowing each individual to gain an awareness of the necessity of their work. Writing about employee magazines in one of the innumerable guidebooks that flooded the market in the first decades of the twentieth century, noted house organ consultant Peter F. O'Shea stated:

¹⁴⁸ anonymous interview, interviewed by Paul Thompson, 1986. Transcript, Coventry Car Workers Oral History Project, PA 1647, #49, Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry, U.K.

In all articles every opportunity should be seized to draw a comparison between the functions of the plant, department or job which is the subject of that article, and the functions of other plants of the company, or other departments and occupations. The idea should always be played upon that there is a common logic running through all the people and all the functions in the company. That logic is woven of the following threads:

1. Each individual man in the plant is having done for him by the rest of the men those processes which he does not do.
2. Each individual man is doing for the rest of the men in the plant, something which they have no time to stop and do for themselves.
3. No man's work would be of much use without the others.
4. Since the work of all is supplementary, the interests are all identical.¹⁴⁹

Expressing the voice and personality of an institution through the printed word, the content of employee magazines emphasized the humanity and interconnectedness of work. Human interest stories, photographs of successful quotas, global initiatives, educative articles, and ads for local social or athletic societies were used strategically to locate the worker inside a larger community. Envisioned as a site of cohesion and unity, it's difficult to discern the extent in which employee magazines managed to help construct or strengthen relationships between working men. Available at the canteen, the office or through the post, employee magazines could have been read at the dinner table or discussed amongst coworkers during lunch-break. However due to their relative absence from both the archives and oral histories of the Midlands, it is more likely that they were discarded in the trash and soon forgotten about. Mentioned in only two of the

¹⁴⁹ Peter F. O'Shea, *Employees' Magazines for Factories, Offices and Business Organizations* (New York: H.W. Wilson Company, 1920), 8

interviews, employee magazines were described by one Bayliss, Jones & Bayliss worker as offering “a fascinating glimpse of the working lives and social lives” of employees.¹⁵⁰ Another worker from Langley remembers several photographs of himself being published as well as a record of Sarah Ferguson assembling a perforator.¹⁵¹ In total, only ten editions of employee magazines could be located in the archives, and they were all copies of *Villiers Magazine* from Wolverhampton. Ranging in date from April 1955 to Spring 1962, *Villiers Magazine* thoroughly mirrors both the content and philosophical structure of the ideal employee magazine laid out in the work of Peter F. O’Shea. In *Villiers Magazine* Number 22 dated July 1960, the increasing global stature of Villiers is celebrated by an article detailing the complexities of transporting 120 engines from a manufacturing plant in Wolverhampton to Ab. E. Fleron in Malmo.¹⁵² Travelling to Nottingham by road to the docks of Hull on a fast Trent Barge and finally to Sweden by bund cargo boat, the article’s emphasis on the process is an attempt by the editorial staff to transform an historical moment fated to exist only in the invoices of a shipping and receiving ledger, into a symbol of each worker’s indispensability. Using photographs to signify the importance of every dockworker, lorry driver, and consultant, Villiers forwards the idea that success was only possible when everyone was working together. In addition to providing readers a sense of accomplishment in their work, the process of clearing customs, properly designing containers and developing partnerships

¹⁵⁰ Ned Williams, 70.

¹⁵¹ Mr. Frank Jones, interview by Sabine Skae, May 4th, 2000, Memories Made in Sandwell, Sandwell Community History and Archives Service, Smethwick, U.K.

¹⁵² “Villiers Deliver the Goods to Malmo” *Villiers Magazine* 22 (1960), LS/L6292275/1, Wolverhampton Archives & Local Studies, Wolverhampton, U.K.

with shipping agents and British Waterways allowed the factory worker to gain a wider consciousness of Villiers' business affairs. It helped the individual to place his work into a meaningful context.

The rest of the issue is composed of similar stories which aim to assert the necessity of the company's work by associating *Villiers* with community-building, technological innovation, and elegance. On the first page, a photograph of fifteen two-tone green Singer Gazelle cars are arranged in a semi-circle outside of the Bentlands Hotel in Codsall. The caption exclaims that they are "the biggest single fleet ever placed with the Rootes Group for Singer cars." In an article entitled "*Diesel Engine Production Tempo Increases*" various stages of the assembly line are depicted in photograph. A travelogue is included. Vividly recounting a 15,000 mile adventure two men took through South America with Dot trial motorcycles, the dependability of a *Villiers* engine makes the uncertain quality of the region's petrol and roads easier to navigate. A photographic spread of recent acquisitions and investments in Tottenham, Wednesfield, and Spain makes the reader conscious of larger patterns that could be informing developments or changes in their own workplace. Finally, an article informs the reader that

Rain is the enemy of most outdoor sports, but sports clubs geared to deal adequately with waterlogged grounds are very few and far between. Admittedly suitable equipment has not always been available, but Forge Craft Ltd., of Brownsfields, welwyn Garden City, Herts, have sought to remedy the deficiency by introducing a range of Aquadri water-collecting rollers...¹⁵³

¹⁵³ Ibid

Accompanied by a photo of a lab coated scientist demonstrating the product in a vacant football stadium, the inclusion of this “advertisement” in *Villiers Magazine* is indicative of a wider trend in English industrial relations. Associating the company with the collective interests of the workforce, in this case football, employee magazines were an effort to get individuals to conceptualize their job as being an extension of their own identity. Creating space for the performance of these identities in the form of factory football teams and athletic facilities, individuals were not only able to strengthen their sense of self-identification with the company, they were given a platform to establish closer, more fully developed relationships with their co-workers.

In his book *Lost Teams of the Midlands*, Mike Bradbury reproduces the forgotten world of 19th-century works football through the trail of traces left in local newspapers.¹⁵⁴ The proliferation and success of teams such as Smethwick Carriage Works FC, Wednesbury Old Park FC and Unity Gas Works indicates the historical relationship between the workplace and the popularity of football in the Midlands. Compulsively listing the grounds, colours, cup competitions and leagues of each team that have been preserved in recorded history, Bradbury’s book is more of an inventory than a social history. Only felt in the text’s references to attendance records and the condition of the grounds, the dynamics or atmosphere of these early matches are reduced to score lines and the names of players.¹⁵⁵ What the text does provide the reader with is a context for understanding why the tradition of works’ football became a

¹⁵⁴ “Works football” is an umbrella term used to connote workplace football teams

¹⁵⁵ Mike Bradbury, *Lost Teams of the Midlands* (XLIBRIS, 2013)

defining characteristic of working-class communities well into the twentieth century. Mr. Sedgley of Chance Brothers remembers:

We had an inter department football competition. And we did manage to win that. I played for the works team in the Birmingham works team league. And I still went back to play for them even when I was in the forces but duty and sometimes I was collared to play for the company team so I could only play for one. But the work league was very competitive. There were some really good footballers amongst them.

Q: Was there also the Palesthorpe cup?

A: Yes, the Palesthorpe cup. They were pork butchers. I played at Palesthorpe many a time... almost every company in the area had a football team it was one of the many attractions because they didn't have television and radio was limited. Everybody made a habit of either playing football or going up to the football match on the Saturday afternoon.¹⁵⁶

Characterizing works football as a viable form of weekend entertainment, the increasing availability of leisure time in working-class communities made football's popularity possible. For the players themselves, the prestige of representing their place of work on the football field coupled with their willingness to spend their free time in service of their employers underlines how deeply conceptions of identity and work were intertwined. In an excerpt from an interview with Mr. Farley, another Chance Brothers worker, the relationships between works football, community and sociality is further clarified:

¹⁵⁶ Mr. and Mrs. Sedgley, interviewed by Nicola Shepherd, May 10th 2000. Transcript, Memories Made in Sandwell, Sandwell Community History and Archives Service, Smethwick, U.K.

Before the war the chairman of Chances was Walter Chance and the chairman of Accles and Pollock was a Mr. Hackett. They were close business friends but they were deeply divided on one thing and that was football. And in those days they ran a cup called the Oldbury challenge cup for a football competition. It was open to any Works team in a two mile radius of the war memorial in Oldbury. Now that is a lot of teams. And the competition was played mainly at night because most of the works teams were playing in the league on Saturdays. And there must have been sometimes 70 or 80 teams playing. The ground had to be such that they were enclosed because admission was charged it was tuppence to see these play. And all this money went to the West Bromwich district hospital. They raised a lot of money. Walter Chance and James Hackett had a bet that who ever won the cup, the loser had to entertain the winning team at dinner at the Sandwell hotel, West Bromwich.¹⁵⁷

Creating a sense of community through football, competitions such as the Oldbury Challenge Cup, and the Palesthorpe Cup brought workers from disparate industries or departments into contact with one another. Performing a similar role to the employee magazine, works' football had the potential to help an individual acknowledge that they were part of a bigger picture. In Mr. Farley's memories, works' football is linked to social aid and sportsmanship. Organized to raise money for local institutions, competitions such as the Oldbury Challenge Cup helped working-class individuals feel a greater connection to the dynamics of the world in which they lived. As a Mr. Shaw of Salters remembers, works' football provided working individuals with an opportunity to interact directly with bastions of the community:

¹⁵⁷ Mr. Farley, interviewed by Sabine Skae, August 4th, 2000. Transcript, Memories Made in Sandwell, Sandwell Community History and Archives Service, Smethwick, U.K.

Q: Did they sponsor the football also?

A: They didn't sponsor the football. But West Brom Albion started from Salter's players. When they had the bi-centenary of Salter's they had a football game at Salter's. The Salter's team consisted of definitely one old Albion player which was Wilf Insley and the Albion came with their top team. They beat Salter's 13-1.¹⁵⁸

However by the 1960s the stability of works' football had begun to become threatened by the increasing influence of unions and the onset of deindustrialization.

It was a very pleasant atmosphere if you behaved yourself. You know everyone and everyone knew you. We had a sports day and this sports day was tremendous. We used to have crowds there. We used to have a night at the cinema. I can't explain it, it was a feeling that grew on you, it was Salter's. You feel as though you could die for Salter's. It's amazing but that's how it was. Up until the years of 1960, the feelings were changing, mainly because the unions were interfering too much. Pressure, because the company had to make money and you had to do two jobs instead of one.¹⁵⁹

Made redundant by Salters in 1968, Mr. Shaw's experience parallels the demise of company athletic and social facilities in the Midlands by the late 1960s. While not all workplaces had the ability to provide facilities to their employees at all, even enormous corporations like Siemens were beginning to feel the pressure of England's deteriorating economic situation:

We did, yeah, I very rarely used it at night, but at lunchtimes, yes, because there was so much to do. I mean, you'd got rifle shooting, they'd a rifle range. When I first went there, there was a swimming baths, a heated swimming baths, heated from the blast furnace.

¹⁵⁸ Mr. and Mrs. Shaw, interviewed by Sabine Skae, May 2nd, 2000. Transcript, Memories Made in Sandwell, Sandwell Community History and Archives Service, Smethwick, U.K.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid

And it got quite warm in there sometimes! But that went into disrepair very early on in the 1960s, I don't think it lasted to the mid 1960s to be honest, but it was a beautiful swimming pool when I first started. So there was a lot to do. And another thing was the usual kick-about football, but because of certain things-accidents-they virtually stopped it. Because we'd all go safety boots on- in other words steel toecaps- and you were kicking hell out of each other, so invariably there were injuries. And nine times out of ten, no problem, but as soon as there was a lost time injury then...so we were stopped playing football.¹⁶⁰

As evidenced by employee magazines and works football, creating strong social relationships in the workplace was motivated by economics. Using advertising, social facilities and athletics to help foster a bond between the individual and their fellow workers, the concept of work or the image of the employer became deeply intertwined with identity and all of its extensions. Outside of employers, unions, and political parties evoked the importance of community and social relationships through the language of solidarity. Informed by ulterior motives such as political representation, increased influence/control in the workplace, or improvements in production, these forms of sociality were dependent upon external influences. As evidenced by the dereliction of Siemens' workers facilities or the memories of Mr. Shaw, once these social platforms became economically disadvantageous they were quickly abandoned. If we are to interrogate the archetypal properties of relationships workers formed with one another, an analysis independent of these variables must be conducted.

¹⁶⁰ Roger Deans, interview by Cheryl Bailey, July 24th, 2007. Transcript, Documenting the Workshop of the World: Bilston Oral Histories, LS/ LB6/2, Wolverhampton Archives & Local Studies, Wolverhampton, U.K.

Aside from using oral history to gain an understanding of the everyday meanings of work, the main goal of this chapter is to challenge the archetypal or historically idealized relationships workers developed towards one another. Previously addressed during this chapter's analysis of Lockwood's categorization of working-class belief systems, working-class experience has traditionally been conflated with the experience of the proletariat. The most politically vocal of Lockwood's subgroups, the proletariat's preeminent representation in the media helped to ensure that its ideological interpretation of work, class consciousness, and the everyday took up the most space in public memory. Epitomized in the song-filled pubs of Terence Davies' cinema, Andy Capp cartoons, or the public expressions of solidarity in Bill Morrison's *Miners Hymn*, popular representation of working-class experience is often depicted in an "us vs them" dichotomy. Depicting working-class communities as tight-knit homogenous entities struggling against the systematic oppression of the capitalist system or crime-ridden hotbeds of degeneracy, alternative experiences of working-class life are often excluded. In the work of Joanna Bourke, Mass Observation or research on Tory-voting union members, the inconsistencies or divergences inherent in any historical narrative are approached and firmly placed into context. Expanding upon these frameworks, examples from oral history help to destabilize the coherency of the "us vs them" narrative. By placing emphasis on memory we can understand how individuals conceptualized their own experiences in the present; what was important, what has been forgotten, what is left unsaid. In some examples such as that of an anonymous Nottingham worker at Raleigh, his memories neatly fit in with archetypal images of working class social relationships:

Q: How did your workmates get on together, was there sort of a factory atmosphere at all?

A: Oh yes, it were a marvellous atmosphere in...I eventually I went into when I was eighteen I went into Sturmev-Archer machine shop, which was called the three speed hub and er oh we had a marvellous rapport with all the people in there. We had a grand football team, a cricket team, we got everybody interested, we used to have raffles to get some money for kids and things like that. And er, we had more fun there than going to the Empire. The Empire and the Hippodrome were the music halls in those days. But oh life was great. And we hadn't got a lot of money and often we were laid off. But er all in all we all made fun of each other and every body too: it in the right spirit. ¹⁶¹

Others such as the testimony of a car worker from the Bell Green neighbourhood of Coventry encapsulate Marek Korcynski's idea that social relationships in the workplace were coping mechanisms or measures to disrupt monotony:

Oh yeah, on the track we worked, we used to have a little machine that used, it used to heat, be a certain temperature, and we used to put bearings in there to fit them on some of the jobs, cos they expand and that, and when the blokes used to go to the loo, we used to put their tools in there, and then we used to see them coming back, and we used to take them out, put them on his box, and they used to pick them up, you know, and different things. We used to pain blokes shows and you know, different things, the things we used to do were ridiculous, you know, stick things on their back and they wouldn't know, I mean a bit of wire with a note on their back, you know...But that was just a way of getting out the boredom, you know, you'd write things on a bit of cardboard and stick on the conveyor that used to go round, and as you used to take your parts off, this

¹⁶¹ anonymous interview, interviewed by Simon Harris, October 12th, 1982, transcript, The Nottinghamshire Oral History Collection, A5a, Nottingham Local Studies Library, Nottingham, U.K.

cardboard would go round, and it would go round all the factory, you know, just for a laugh, just to break the monotony, that's all it was.¹⁶²

Co-existing in the same region and in the same factories with individuals who formed completely different social relationships to the workplace, these memories at once confirm and negate the existence of an archetypal working-class identity. They are confirmed through the emphasis they place on shop-floor humour, an affable atmosphere, and treating their workmates like members of the family. They are confirmed by the demarcation interviewees place between the present and the past. Interpreting the past as stable and understandable, these memories are crystallized and rendered coherent by the disorder of the present. They are negated by the experiences of individuals who don't define the past through memories of warmth. John Cherrington of Coventry remembers the lack of intimacy he experienced amongst his co-workers:

Yes you used to I suppose talk about general things that blokes talk about, who they went out with the night before or where they went or a soccer match or, I suppose women were a big subject.

Q: Were they?

A: As soccer was a big subject you know. There was usually...

Q: So people would talk about their relationships

A: Yes but I think it was shied upon to get too personal really. I mean you would never, you would rarely seek advice. I would say that you would be your own man, that is to say you would sort any problems that you had our yourself. You would, it was not close relationships, it is not like a friend as such if you can draw, they were colleagues and you

¹⁶² anonymous interview, interviewed by Paul Thompson, 1986. Transcript, Coventry Car Workers Oral History Project, PA 1647 #80, Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry, U.K.

were mates but you would not wish certainly when there's 5 or 10 people sitting around just for a short period of time to get into anything heavy. That is to say any sort of personal thing i.e. you were all cut up because your girlfriend was worried that she hand't come on or, I mean that....

Q: You wouldn't...

A: You wouldn't...¹⁶³

Similarly a couple from Nottinghamshire reflect on their preference for little to no social engagement. Opting instead for small, pre-planned gatherings at another couple's house:

Q: And how about the sort of social life you had. Was your husband one for socializing with people from work or did you have yourself a life as a family.

Husband: We lived together, socialized together.

Wife: No you've never socialized with anyone and I haven't. No, we never used to have baby sitters, we used to stop in ourselves didn't we.

Husband: The nearest thing to socializing we did was with the Swains.

Wife: Yes we used to play cards once...

Husband: Once a fortnight. For years.

Wife: Oh, sixteen years. On a Saturday. Used to play cards from about eight o'clock till about midnight. Used to have a drink and a bite to eat. One week here then a fortnight after it was their house wasn't it.

Husband: Yes.

Wife: We really enjoyed that didn't we.

¹⁶³ John Cherrington, interviewed by Paul Thompson, 1986. Transcript, Coventry Car Workers Oral History Project, PA 1647 # 31, Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry, U.K.

Husband: Yes Mr. Swain was working at Taunton, building a new factory at Taunton, and he used to come home and we still kept on with the rendezvous, solo, even all the time he was there. ¹⁶⁴

Giving the reader insight into some broader aspects of working life such as the effect of short breaks on social relationships, it is the mundanity of these two excerpts that makes them an invaluable resource. The reluctance to over-share at work or the casual Saturday nights spent playing cards are exactly the type of details that are so often deemed irrelevant by the urgency of history, or the expectations of readership. In creating the past it depends on what the historian wants these details to do; they can be placed into a narrative to forward a “story” or they can be included simply to help understand the dynamics or atmosphere of a world that has long since disappeared. In the context of this paper they help to challenge the uniformity of experience. These memories are fragments of what has been retained; they do not represent certain, absolute worlds. They help to explain or at least illustrate how the past continues to exist. Consisting of unrecoverable conversations, gestures or experiences, the lost nights of working lives are only hinted at by ledger-books and memories. If we are to understand how deindustrialization reorganized working- class society, the relationship between the working class and the everyday must be approached.

Working-Class relationships to the Everyday

In the writing of W.G. Hoskins, the dynamics of everyday life in England are intimately connected to the changing shape and appearance of regional landscapes.

Possessing an acute historical curiosity, for Hoskins the fields, lanes, footpaths, canals

¹⁶⁴ anonymous interview, interviewed by Julie O'Neill, July 2nd 1984 and July 4th, 1984, The Nottinghamshire Oral History Collection, 38d, Nottingham Local Studies Library, Nottingham, U.K.

and hedge banks of the English countryside provide dormant traces of long-forgotten historical processes.¹⁶⁵ Arguing that any undertaking of local history must be complemented with a rigorous study of regional geography, Hoskins recognized the formative impact landscape had upon the individual. Conceptualizing everyday history as an interplay between individuals, their environment and the desire to change their environment, Hoskins' work on the industrial revolution depicts how landscape configured human experience and memory. Undergoing a process of physical upheaval that transformed the Black Country from farmhouses, cottages, and countryside into a strung out web of "iron working villages, market towns next door to collieries, heaths and wastes..." individual perceptions of space, identity, and community realigned to fit industry's social landscape.¹⁶⁶ Discussing a 1789 painting by Joseph Wright of Derby which depicted the tiny yellow night-time lights of a cotton mill, Hoskins stated that the shift from human labour to water-power meant factories no longer needed to rest. Resulting in "tall fortress like structures" that were lit from top to bottom at night, Wright's isolated lights were the "forerunners to the tremendous galaxies of light that one now sees from the Pennine moors after sundown."¹⁶⁷

A reoccurring motif in the oral histories of the working class, the inescapable shadow of the factory was both an aesthetic reality in day-to-day life and a symbol of how the everyday had been crafted through the reshaping of landscape. Determined by changes in the direction of capital, the history of industrial landscapes and the

¹⁶⁵ W.G.Hoskins, *The Making of the English Landscape* (London: Hodder & Stoughton LTD, 1955), 14

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 162.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 166

movements of individuals through these spaces makes the everyday a source of inherent conflict and political dissonance. Represented most prominently in historiography by the German school of *alltagsgeschichte*, the historical significance of the everyday is split between two principal foci. The first, which emphasizes the repetitiveness and pragmatism of everyday activities, reduces the will of the historical figure to that of a passive swimmer drifting along the “current of constraints, obligations, and routines.”¹⁶⁸ Flattening out the dynamism and complexity of life, theoreticians such as Peter Borscheid assert that the comfortable monotony of the everyday is a reflexive response to uncertainty. Controlled by processes outside the individual, the everyday becomes a symptom of history rather than a site. In contrast, a second *alltagsgeschichte* theory positions the everyday as a “concatenation of actions, a dense sequence of questions involving human decisions...a succession of acts where individuals interact and communicate in which social behaviour is both shaped by and creates its own rules.”¹⁶⁹ Shifting human behaviour into the foreground of inquiry, this method renders the everyday indefinite, acknowledging the limitless interactions, influences, and agencies that converge unto the historical stage. Seemingly antagonistic to one another, these two theories are necessary counterpoints in approaching a history of the everyday. Including Hoskins pan-psychic interpretation, it can be stated that the same historical process which fashioned the looming steel artifices from the landscape of the Midlands eventually reduced them to the scrapheap.

¹⁶⁸ Alf Luedtke, ed. *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life*. trans William Templer. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 5

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 170.

The atmosphere of everyday life, what individuals saw or experienced were at once specific responses to environment and also the traces of larger, almost invisible processes. As Hoskins' emphasis on landscape helps us to understand why and how our relationships to social space developed, working-class memories of the everyday recreate the intimacies and idiosyncrasies of life. In his book *Ordinary Lives: Studies of the Everyday*, Ben Highmore describes the way emotions, memories, energy, affect, sensuality, and experience overlap or congeal with one another in ways that are impossible to translate into a "scientifically exact biological activity."

A tired parent washes a small baby. The baby is teething: his red face is crunched up in displeasure. The parent struggles with the sympathy he knows he should be feeling, but sympathy is too mixed-in with last night's broken sleep and the vague animosity that he knows he shouldn't be feeling. Yet somehow the mixture of cutaneous contact, mediated by water and soap, and the baby's buoyancy, which requires the merest touch of support, allows animosity to dissipate, allows a bond to be remade.¹⁷⁰

Using a simple hypothetical situation, Highmore depicts the complex internal mechanisms that go into processing or responding to a daily routine. Illustrating the ways in which our perception of sight or sound form personal landscapes through their interaction with our value systems, Highmore emphasizes the importance of synaesthesia in constructing a history of the everyday. For Highmore synaesthesia is a process by which bodily sensations become associated with certain activities or responses, such as the red face of a child and sleeplessness.¹⁷¹ Implementing this approach to the memory

¹⁷⁰ Ben Highmore, *Ordinary Lives: Studies in the Everyday* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 140

¹⁷¹ Ibid

of everyday life in oral history, the lost worlds of the Midlands are rendered more transparent and real:

And also another thing that I remember well, were the fogs that we had, again unless you had lived through them, you cannot appreciate how bad they were. For instance you could walk down the garden path, go 10 feet down the road and you were totally lost, you didn't know where the house was at all and you couldn't see...because generally speaking, these fogs would descend of a night time and although perhaps they might linger during the course of the day, as soon as people came home and set coal fires going, it would increase the flume. And I always remember the traffic coming from the Austin of an evening, half past five and the fog was that thick that the traffic sound was muffled, you cannot imagine how fog can muffle sound and it is true.¹⁷²

Forming a connotation between the visual memory of fog and the deadened sounds of the late afternoon roads leading away from the Austin, experiences like those of Birmingham auto worker Barry Matthews help to strengthen historians' understanding of the everyday and its relationship to work. Seeping out into the streets beyond the factory, Matthews' fog is both a physical and a metaphoric representation of work's pervasive influence on space in the working-class communities of the Midlands. Unlike memories directly organized around work, like those of employment, family or social gatherings, atmospheric excerpts such as Matthews' indicate that the very geography of the land itself was intimately related to work. As Leslie Brown of Darlaston remembers:

Many people who worked there lived in company houses as they did at Rubery Owen. If you left the firm - you had to leave the house. The houses were opposite the factory and

¹⁷² Barry Matthews, interviewed by Helen Lloyd, 2000. Transcript. Millenibrum, MS2255/2/028, Birmingham Central Library, Birmingham, U.K.

if you went in you would find everything hanging on hooks, and when the large hammers were operating everything would jump up and down it was like living in an earthquake all the time. Even where we lived about three miles away, we could hear the crump, crump of the large hammers working day and night.¹⁷³

Continuing to inform life outside the factory, living under the duress of constant din and adapting to the daily rearrangement of household items were compromises employees of Rubery Owen had to endure. Forfeiting silence in exchange for affordable housing, the overbearing sound of heavy machinery conveys how work infiltrated and shaped the everyday experiences of the working class. Overstuffed with smells, sights and sounds, the Midlands' rich landscape of senses was unique to the post-war era of full-employment. Discussing the inescapable smell of a local factory, a former drop forger and his wife reflected upon the impact industry had on their health and well-being:

Mr. Garratt: It used to smell through Langley, the amount of chemicals as you went through there. Albrights used to be the worst they used to throw out a fog. You couldn't breathe. I lived in Langley for 25 years near Albright & Wilsons.

Interviewer: It hasn't done you an harm.

MG: No but it has a good number of other people. We were alright, we got away with it, but it did kill a good many people there. It used to rot your washing on the line. It used to make holes in your washing. You could see it doing that but the next time you turn them on they'd fall to pieces

Mrs. Garratt: There used to be a thick crust on the windows and it used to rot the window ledges. It was but. But we lived there so many years I was born there. I

¹⁷³ Ned Williams, 21.

was 48 when I left there.

MG: Langley forge you could hear the big steam hammer all over here.¹⁷⁴

Similarly, two former Midland Tar Distilleries employees recall the stench that hung in the air in the community of Oldsbury:

Smith: The first job I went to what was known as a knackers yards, they used to take the old horses or the horses that had been killed in horse racing and that sort of thing. If there was recoverable horse meat it was sold and a lot of work was in connection with the bones. They used to make an awful smell in the district. There was several of them and there was one near the Oldsbury Works. But then at the time I don't think the smell from the bones could beat the smell of Oldsbury Works.

Mountain: It was a different sort of smell but pretty strong. The locals used to think it was beneficial for the children if they had coughs and colds to go down to the tar Works and smell the tar and try to remove the Bronchitis. It was a regular thing in those days wasn't it Ron.

Smith: In fact they made little bags on a cord, what they called tar wattle, which was only true tar in a bag which they put round the child's neck and lay on the child's chest. And they considered the fumes from this would help them, some of the fumes would clear anything actually. It could have cleared the plaster off the walls.¹⁷⁵

A visceral snapshot of the Midlands' harsh living conditions, the memories of Mountain and Smith not only gauged how landscape influenced an individual's experience of the everyday, it highlighted how members of the working class responded to

¹⁷⁴ Mr. Garratt, interviewed by Sabine Skae March 24th, 2000. Transcript, Memories Made in Sandwell, Sandwell Community History and Archives Service, Smethwick, U.K.

¹⁷⁵ R W A Smith & HF Mountain, interviewed by Sabine Skae, February 17th, 2000. Transcript, Memories made in Sandwell, Sandwell Community History and Archives Service, Smethwick, U.K.

and engaged with their environment. Folkloric in its depiction of the supposed homeopathic properties of fumes, the lives imperfectly reassembled by excerpts such as these are so often subsumed by the giant narratives of history. Too specific or mundane to be invested with any particular political or social significance, the small quiet details of history are difficult to properly contextualize. Existing within an historiographical structure aiming to make sense of the past, life's small moments are silenced or neglected in favour of coherency and narrative.

A paradox, this chapter's reevaluation of working-class identity replaces a traditional narrative with one which is decentralized and ambiguous. These disparate experiences, in a way become the new larger structure. Relying on unconnected moments from different people's lives to tell a story, it is difficult to discern if something organized or complete could possibly emerge. All of these memories are simply impressions of the past, or, impressions of the everyday. There are impressions of physical space, such as this visually detailed recollection of a community's preferred method of transportation:

A: Getting to work I suppose that was always, getting to and from work.

Q: Yes?

A: There's thousands of bikes, I always remember that.

Q: Most people went on their bikes did they?

A: Most people went on bikes, or motorbikes

Q: Did you go on your bike?

A: Started, when I started I went on a pushbike. You know, I always remember the bike racks being absolutely full. Hundreds of bikes and motorbikes

Q: And everyone arriving at the same...

A: Yes, it was chaos. Going home on Friday nights, you know, it was in and out the bikes, yes. Yes. Not so many cars.¹⁷⁶

There are impressions of a community's class dynamics, such as Ray Simpson's memories of social etiquette on a Wolverhampton bus:

Also down Park Lane was the Ever Ready, the black shop. The girls all used to come out of there covered in black carbon from the batteries. You'd be educated too if you got on the bus with Ever Ready wenches, with their language. People would cringe at some of the things they would be saying, the tales they would tell. The office staff from Guys-Meadows and ABC Coupler would try to get on the bus on the Cannock Road before the black shop wenches. They would literally run down Park Lane to get at the front of the queue, otherwise they'd stand back and let them get on first, both because of the language and the blackness. There was a chip shop on the Cannock Road, I think a family named Smith kept that, and the Ever Ready wenches would go in there for their chips, all black, and their fingers would be white by the time they finished eating their chips. One of the the senior foremen there, who'd come up to open the Ever Ready from London, lived about five doors away from us, and he said he'd never let anyone else from his family work there.¹⁷⁷

There are also impressions of intimacy, the feeling of closeness that neighbours could experience in their lives together

Q: You say that people, you know, would help, roundabout, you know they'd always be there for support, would they just drop in casually?

A: Oh yeh

¹⁷⁶ anonymous interview, interviewed by Paul Thompson, 1986. Transcript. Coventry Car Workers Oral History Project, PA 1647, #43, Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry, U.K.

¹⁷⁷ Alec Brew, *Wolverhampton Voices* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: The History Press, 2004), 96

Q: Like the door was always open, was it?

A: Oh yeh that's right

Q: And what, would your mother give them a cup of tea?

A: Oh yeh, yeh, they used to come and help themselves, sometimes, and you know, you'd go round their house, we used to drink Oxos in them days, you know the Oxo cubes, we used to have Oxo cubes, and many a night, we'd be sitting on the doorstep in the summer, out the back, and next door would come out, and the kids from next door wanted to come round, and you low we'd probably have 10 of us in the back garden, drinking Oxo uses and things like that, you know. But of course, they used to bring their own Oxo but that's how we used to be. A very close community really, I mean, I can name everybody that lived in that road in them days, more than I can say, where I live here now, I don't know anybody, you know what I mean? It's a different way of life completely now.¹⁷⁸

Coloured by a barely concealed longing for the past, these memories of the everyday are reflections on loss. As the world of the past reveals itself to the reader, their images are almost always footnoted by dissolution. Phrases like "That has all gone now", or "Everything has changed" are littered throughout the oral histories. Providing a stark contrast to the warmly described memories of work, family, and community, these downcast codas illustrate how an individual's experience of loss continued to influence the interpretation of their own lives in the present. Aware that these memories have no physical foothold in reality, each recollection attempts to bring the vanished world of the industrial Midlands back. However, as extinction is inherent in oral history, the past, and

¹⁷⁸ anonymous interview, interviewed by Paul Thompson, 1986. Transcript. Coventry Car Workers Oral History Project, PA 1647, #80, Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry, U.K.

all of its overwhelming detail can never be fully recovered. Instead it becomes replaced with a memory contaminated by the knowledge that it no longer exists.

Working to reassemble a vanished landscape, from its workplaces, to the shops that lined its streets, it is telling that of all the social structures mentioned in the oral history, football is perhaps the only one left intact by deindustrialization. Holding a lasting importance in the day-to-day lives of working-class men, football was a living remnant of a lost world. While some workers expressed a clear preference for alternative hobbies such as auto-work, pigeon racing or day-trips to the local horse-track, a love of football would often begin at a very young age and continue after working life. Intertwined with memories of work, friendship, identity, and ideas of community, the act of playing football was part of the atmosphere in the Midlands. Not unlike the hordes of people going to the same factories everyday, playing football, listening to the radio, or witnessing an impromptu match on the streets coloured everyday life:

Q: Can you tell me, I mean...the free time that you spent as a young boy when you were still living at home, what sort of things you did?

A: Football. Yes, football was probably my main interest. Well that was virtually it, I used to revolve round playing football or going over the woods and having a kick around, something like that.

Q: Can you remember what people did for a living round about? You know, what...?

A: In the same street there, where I lived the majority of them in fact worked either at Standard or Massey's. There was no teachers or anything like that round that area, no.

Q: So did it seem like most people had a fairly similar standard of living to the one that you...?

A: Yes, yes. we all, the whole street used to go to the pantomime at Christmas, you know, because everybody's father worked there kind of thing.¹⁷⁹

Played in informal settings such as alleyways or mud-logged fields, football helped to shape relationships to the everyday by dictating how many working-class youths spent their free time. An activity where socially dominant forms of masculinity became validated and propagated, playing football helped working-class boys to develop archetypal identities and relationships to their cultural environment. While young boys playing impromptu football matches on the concrete of neighbourhood streets was a reoccurring image in the oral histories of the Midlands, by the time most of the interviewees entered the workforce their relationship to football transitioned to spectatorship. Without diminishing the importance of works teams or participation in recreational Sunday leagues, the imbalance between participating and watching can partly be explained by uneven patterns of urban development . Founded in 1925 by the Duke of York, the National Playing Fields Association aimed to “stimulate the provision of playing fields and playgrounds, especially for children, by propaganda and financial assistance.”¹⁸⁰ Raising nearly a million and a half pounds between 1925 and 1959 from donations, the NPFA's desire to provide ten acres of parks and playing fields for every thousand people embodied England's scattershot approach to post-war urban regeneration. An improper response to the populations dislocated by war, many of the NPFA's initiatives were of little practical use to the communities they sought to improve.

¹⁷⁹ anonymous interview, interviewed by Paul Thompson, 1986. Transcript. Coventry Car Workers Oral History Project, PA 1647, #55, Herbert Art Museum and Gallery, Coventry, U.K.

¹⁸⁰The Central Council for Physical Recreation, The Wolfenden Committee on Sports, *Sport and Community: The Report of the Wolfenden Committee on Sport* (London: The Central Council for Physical Education, 1960), 17

Published in 1960 as an assessment of sport in England, the *Wolfenden Report* stated that:

It is sometimes argued that the provision of playing fields cannot be as inadequate as the enthusiasts maintain, for it is said, there are thousands of acres of playing fields all over the country which, for the greater part of each week are lying idle and unused. The first point in the answer to this contention is the one we have already made, that the provision is not always in the right place. This does not necessarily mean that the playing fields were unintelligently sited in the first place. It often happens that populations move, and that what used to be a central situation for a playing field becomes peripheral, with the consequences that acres may be lying idle now, because the neighbourhood is no longer thickly inhabited, whereas in earlier days they were used regular and gratefully.¹⁸¹

Unsuccessfully predicting the leisure habits of the working class, the geographical mismanagement of open space coupled with the exhausting demands of work and family made it much more convenient to watch football than to play it. As a Daimler worker remembered:

Yes although I say it myself, I ate, drank and slept football in those days in my youth. We played for the fun of it. It was lovely. I could get around a bit, I could play a bit. Now I watch the football you know, but there's such a vast difference between football now and in my day....¹⁸²

Rife with connotations of violence informed by class, the historical experience of attending a football game in the Midlands has been obscured by deeply entrenched

¹⁸¹ Ibid, 32

¹⁸² anonymous interview, interviewed by Paul Thompson, 1986. Transcript. Coventry Car Workers Oral History Project, PA 1647, #1, Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry, U.K.

stereotypes. Reproduced in the literature, this imbalance renders the “average” fan’s experiences and memories invisible in favour of the more digestible fanaticism of hooligans. In this study, fans who have difficulty explicating their love of football are given a voice. Often brief and conflated with work, friendship or family, these memories of football are complex statements of identity and community. In the historical analysis of text, it is unsurprising that historians gravitate towards the sensational, towards memories of events that are described deeply and passionately, memories brimming with detail. Helping the past to become more vivid and in turn understandable, there is also great value in sources that are shaped by silences. In this context silences refer to anything that could be possibly left out of an interview. Informed by an interviewee’s reluctance, their discomfort with unnatural settings, their belief that a memory is unimportant, or memory loss, silences are a natural part of writing history. History is always returning in different forms; it is always left incomplete. The succinctness of these memories indicates that while football was deeply cherished it also belonged to the framework of the everyday. Not unlike the dinner table or the assembly line, it is an activity that helps historians to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the everyday. For the tightly knit family of Paul Collins, attending a football match was arguably an act of revolt.

Q: What was their leisure? I mean, did they go for a drink, or...

A: No, no, my father’s not a Working Man’s club man at all, and my mother hates them, she’s not a tremendous social animal, in terms of new people, she, she lacks confidence in terms of new people. It would be picnics, my dad would go and he used to take me when I was a kid, up to see Coventry City play. I can remember going up there on the c

cross-bar of his bike, and it would be doing things together, rather than him going out with his mates, which is very untypical yah. No there wouldn't be, nights or anything like that, or a best mate who she'd spend a fair amount of time with...¹⁸³

Defying the social expectations of being a working-class man, Mr. Collins' choice to not attend a club or to drink regularly with friends illustrates the wide spectrum of relationships individuals held to their communities and families. Through a simple memory of riding on his father's cross bar on the way to see Coventry City play, the archetypal image of the distant father is contested, breathing life back into a social history withered by generalization. In a similar manner, Coventry native Frank Perry's experiences with his father at Villa Park lastingly influenced his relationship to the everyday:

Q: What about, what sort of things did you do as a family together when you were growing up?

A: What did we do? I can remember going to Villa Park with my dad to watch the match. Never supported Coventry City but we always used to go across the Villa Park

Q: So he kept his Birmingham...?

A: Yes, yes I suppose so. And to this day I always, the first thing I look at in the paper is see how the Villa have got on, rather than Coventry.¹⁸⁴

Shaping his future reading habits and conceptions of identity, cheering for Birmingham provided Mr. Perry with a direct connection to his father.

¹⁸³ Paul Collins, interviewed by Paul Thompson, 1986. Transcript. Coventry Car Workers Oral History Project, PA 1647, #73, Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry, U.K.

¹⁸⁴ Frank Perry, interviewed by Paul Thompson, 1986. Transcript. Coventry Car Workers Oral History Project, PA 1647, #46, Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry, U.K.

In the larger context of both these interviews, football composes very little of the content. Its role is decidedly in the background, subsumed by more detailed memories of working in Coventry's car industry. These are not men who were selected as interviewees due to their specified interest in football. Rather they are men who were asked to recall as much of their past as they could. From their earliest memories of family to the waning hours of their working lives, the prevalence of football in these oral histories gives historians a stronger idea of how important football was to the Midlands than studies which trace the memories of self-identified fanatics. Even when interviewees applied these labels to themselves, their memories of football are still thoroughly contextualized within the grammar of the everyday:

Q: Did you have any other interests outside of work, or things you belonged to, or were, you very much a man of work?

A: No, I was a football fanatic. Not as a player but as a supporter. I was a Nottingham Forest supporter for years. I went to see Nottingham Forest when they won the cup in 1959, and my good lady went with me to our eldest- my eldest brother in High Wycombe and er...

Q: You went up from there, didn't you?

A: I went up from there to Wembley from High Wycombe. And cost my brother a television set. Yes cos he says, I was to go and I says if you haven't got a television I'm not coming. And he bought one, didn't he. I'll not tell you what he said (laugh) Oh yes. We went down, didn't we, in the car and we'd got red and white ribbons on, hadn't we?¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁵anonymous interview, interviewed by Julie O'Neill, July 2nd 1984 and July 4th, 1984, The Nottinghamshire Oral History Collection, 38d, Nottingham Local Studies Library, Nottingham, U.K.

Analyzed through the lens of the everyday, memories of football also help to illustrate how the power dynamics and imbalances of work could be replicated and reinforced outside the workplace. For Ken Winyard, memories of football represented an extension of the pronounced intimacy of his workplace:

One day Mrs. Gill, my boss at F.A. Gill's, asked me why I wasn't going to a football match. It was an important match, and everybody else was going to it. I just said that I wasn't. She said "Ken why aren't you going, everybody else is?" Then she just opened the till and put her hand in and gave me a shilling and told me to go to the match. She was very kind like that. It was in the week, on a Wednesday. I think Wolves were playing Arsenal and I ended up going to the match on the work's bike, which had a sign for the shop on it.¹⁸⁶

A platform for strengthening the bonds of work, when men travelled to the terraces of a football stadium together it emphasized the centrality of industrial relationships to the dynamics of community in the Midlands. As a miner from Nottingham remembered:

Q: Are there any other stories about the pit?

A: Well, one very interesting story was we got a chap come out of Yorkshire. Er, he come after a job and of course he got the job as electric welder and he got to be foreman. He was the foreman when he took over, and er, I got very friendly with him. He were a nice chap, and then we were all interested in football you know, and he said "What do you think, Gil" he said "Should we run a trip to Hampden park to the England and the Scottish" and of course we did. We paid, er all winter- I forget how much it cost us, but I remember quite well we had to get to Midland station in Nottingham and we

¹⁸⁶Ken Winyard, unknown interviewer/ 2005, Transcript, *Stirring Memories of Blakenhall*, Wolverhampton Archives and Local Studies, Wolverhampton, U.K.

booked. All the seats were booked and we went to Scotland and we played cards all the night. Right the way through till we got to Glasgow.

Q: Did you go by train or...?

A: Yes, we went by train. We had breakfast in Kelvin Hall. We've seen it a time or two when we've been up there holidaying. It's still there. The, er, oh, massive place it was. Then we had buses come and picked us up and took us on to Loch Lomond, and then from there to Hampden Park to see the English international and Reg from Nottingham, a cousin of mine, was the referee. He was the only man, Englishman, that's refereed England and Scotland yes.¹⁸⁷

Conversely for an unnamed Coventry worker born in the late 30s, football reminded him of the fearful and tyrannical atmosphere of factory work:

Q: So you would be a bit frightened of them?

A: Oh yes. Oh yes. Very much so. They were very powerful men. Because they, they'd go the hiring and firing to some extent as well. Now I remember when I started going to the football match and the foreman was, happened to be where I was standing and he had his group of friends round him, foreman and the charge hands and there was a lot of sycophancy and so on going on...¹⁸⁸

Challenging the overwhelmingly positive reputation of the post-war football stadium, this excerpt demonstrates how the tensions and anxieties of industrial relations could be inescapable for the working class. While reverential or positive language is consistently used to evoke memories of football in the oral histories, the power of just

¹⁸⁷ Gilbert Kirkby, interviewed by Betty Jones, March 25th 1984 and March 30th, 1984. The Nottinghamshire Oral History Collection, 86 a-f, Nottingham Local Studies Library, Nottingham, U.K.

¹⁸⁸ anonymous interview, interviewed by Paul Thompson, 1986. Transcript. Coventry Car Workers' Oral History Project, PA 1647, #83, Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry, U.K.

one disparate voice unearths worlds of possibility. As these testimonies only offer brief glimmers of insight into the lost world of the working class, it must be reiterated that they are far from conclusive. Instead they can be used to create a mosaic of overlapping images. For one West Bridgeford man, the popularity of football was a deflating reminder of the frustrations, apathy, and resignation he interpreted in the bodies and disposition of his friends and fellow co-workers:

Q: Do you think the people outside of politics, did they care what was going on abroad.

A: No, not generally speaking I don't think, no. I don't think they are today they aren't today either. You go in a pub, and this is the big issue and try and get a discussion going. If Forest win on Saturday, or if Notts win on Saturday and they're playing at home, there'll be plenty of discussion about the football match but you try and get a discussion going on any political, topical political subject, people aren't interested and it's apathy that I think will lead to the destruction of this world. The apathy of ordinary people. They're either being brainwashed, and they won't take any time off to study or to read between the lines. They take it for granted what they're told, and there's going to be trouble.¹⁸⁹

A stand-in for feelings of entrapment and immobility, this excerpt interprets football as a symptom of widespread social malaise. Dislodging narratives that football was uniformly beloved by the working class and viewed uncritically, these historical dissonances help to question the way source material is analyzed or contextualized. Whose voices are being left out, what is being silenced, who is not or cannot be represented? Even in memories where football is viewed uncritically it is important to

¹⁸⁹ anonymous interview, interviewed by S. Livesey, January 24th 1984, The Nottinghamshire Oral History Collection, A76, Nottingham Local Studies Library, Nottingham U.K.

consider what has been left incomplete. For Edward Holmes of Walsall, it is bodily sensations and score lines that remain:

Nobody expected Walsall to win but they ran out 2-1 winners and all down the 15 that night all the pubs were full coming back with everyone celebrating so, after that they had a civic dinner at the town hall for the players and they did a big flower display for the arboretum...Then the next home match was against Newcastle which Walsall played to a packed house there were 25,000. I wouldn't like to see 25,000 on that ground again because I used to smoke at the time and we were packed that tight in the ground I couldn't even get my hands down to me pockets to get a cigarette out.¹⁹⁰

For others, the football matches of the past are restored by strong passions and personal attachments:

Q: Can you just talk a bit about how you've spent your free time? I mean, you said you're always, you know, what sort of things did you do?

A: I never have any free time. I just work. Literally, work. I, I like football, I go and watch football any time. I take it personally if Coventry City get beaten, I really do, I can't stand people who don't support Coventry city who live in Coventry. In fact, I can't stand people running Coventry down.¹⁹¹

Working to stabilize conceptions of identity and community, football also helped to preserve it. Possessing an encyclopedic knowledge of Rushall Olympic, the vast changes that swept through bricklayer Derek Evans' community are organized by his memories of football:

¹⁹⁰ Edward Holmes, interviewed by Jack Haddock, February 24th, 1988. CD transfer, The Walsall Oral History Collection, 426/57b, Walsall Local History Centre, Walsall, U.K.

¹⁹¹ anonymous interview, interviewed by Paul Thompson, 1986. Transcript. Coventry Car Workers' Oral History Project, PA 1647, #67 Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry U.K.

Q: Can you tell me a bit more about Rushall football club?

A: The players! (Anything!) I can remember some of the old players I mean I don't I go and support 'em now every saturday but the changes what's coming around it ain't the same team every saturday. I remember the old Rushall Olympic starting up when there was Don Parker in goal, there was two Hyde brothers Desi Hyde and Edwards, Johnny Edwards which is, he was a good footballer Johnny was unfortunately he died of cancer... There must have been a hundred local lads who played for Rushall Olympic....

Q: And how was the ground changed then over the years?

A: How's the ground changed? Well they used to play on the old Rushall playing fields where the brass band practice now in that concrete hut. Have you been up Rowley place? (No) Well when you go by the Miners Arms up New Street you've got the doctor's surgery on the corner, the Miners Arms well they've got a football team and they play on the playing fields now, but that's where Rushall Olympic used to play well when they went into this higher division they'd got to have a ground that was fenced in so that they could charge the people and it had to come up to FA standards so they no longer could play on the Rushall playing fields so they'd had to go up to Dales lane and that's where the football club is today Dales Lane.¹⁹²

Tracing Rushall's vanished streets, playing fields, and men, the importance of Evans' memories rests in the detail that they provide. At risk of overcomplicating the past and memories of it, that which has been left unexpressed will remain lost to us. Working-class relationships to the everyday exist in these details and the structures that inform them. These relationships also exist in the silences and absences. In some excerpts concerning football, the structures and silences that pervade the everyday

¹⁹² Derek Evans, interviewed by Vicky Woodridge, August 6th, 1997. Transcript, The Walsall Oral History Collection, 426/184, Walsall Local History Centre, Walsall, U.K.

come together and provide historians with a nearly complete illustration of daily life.

Norman Cliff of Wolverhampton remembers:

So at twenty one I became a journey man, full blown journey man, as a compositor. A journey man is a person who has done his apprenticeship time. He's come out and he is free to journey anywhere in the country for a job, because he's got an apprenticeship ticket. Wolverhampton then was a much more friendly place. It was a much more same place. When you were 18,19, 21 you supported the Wolves. I started going down to support them the day I started work, 1932. You would go down to the match, take your brother or your sister or your Mother and Father, in perfect safety. It was a family occasion. No bad language, like there is today. And you would go down there with perhaps a crowd of forty thousand and it could be a very friendly atmosphere. Friends and I used to travel away to watch cup matches with them. Sheffield and Manchester and those sorts of places and you would mingle with the opposing supporters and you had some good times. It is a bit different today isn't it? I don't think you can quite do that. There used to be what we called runs when I was a lad. Dudley Street was one. At night, all the lads and lassies would parade up and down Dudley street. That is window shopping. Ogling the girls. Tettenhall Road was another one. Penn Road was another. You'd walk from here to Tettenhall and back, with you friends, pass a few remarks, but it was safe. And if you took a young lady for a dance, the three main places were the Civic Hall, the Victoria Hotel and the Star and Garter Hotel, in Queen's square, which was a very nice place, very nice hotel, but of course it has been knocked down since. ¹⁹³

Quoted at length to demonstrate the ways in which the past is organized by memory, football co-existed alongside Cliff's conceptions of family, work, friendships,

¹⁹³ Norman Cliff, unknown interviewer/ date, Transcript, Wolverhampton Heritage Project, DX-869, Wolverhampton Archives and Local Studies, Wolverhampton, U.K.

courting, and loss. Condensing thousands of hours of lived experience into the confines of a formal interview, Cliff's attendance at Wolverhampton Wanderers matches acted as a guide through the landscape of the past. For Cliff, memories of his youthful experiences at the Molineux reminded him of deeply personal incidents like entering the workforce or the closeness of family. Football also helped Cliff to contextualize and validate his perceptions of larger social changes that had occurred during his lifetime. Emphasizing social etiquette and the threats of violence he experienced in the present suggested that Cliff interpreted the past through loss. "It is a bit different today isn't it?" he bemoaned. Tinged with a longing for the intimacy of the past, even his utopia of football failed to escape the isolation of deindustrialization, urban blight, and aging. In other oral histories, football is contextualized within dominant societal structures. Fondly recalling the abusive relationship between his grandparents, Ralph Allcock's interview demonstrates how football played an active role in the consolidation and performance of hegemonic masculinity:

After he had his lunch he used to walk up to West Bromwich to go the football match, he did this every Saturday while the season lasted and this one particular Saturday grandmother had gone out with her sister, Auntie Ginny and they used to like to drink beer, so they went into a public house which was called The Windmill in Windmill Lane Smethwick and sat down to have a drink of beer and left me outside in the pushchair when my granddad came up I said "Hello granddad" and he always used to call me Nip, he said "Hello Nip" and then he went into the public house and saw my grandmother sitting there and he said "Harriet I haven't had my dinner" which was 12 o'clock lunch, so she said "I'm coming Bill" with that he walked across the bar and picked up a table which the top was marble with iron legs in one hand and with the other hand he picked up my

grandmother by the scruff of her neck and lifted her out. One of the men in the bar was going to tackle him when another man stopped him and said “You shouldn’t do that, that’s Bill Treddle”. The reason I know this, the man who stopped the other man from getting up eventually I met him working later on and he told me the tale and grandfather brought grandmother out of the pub, took her home without her feet touching the floor which was rather a long walk and carried the pushchair under his other arm with me in it. When we got home grandmother cooked his dinner, he ate his dinner and then he went off to West Bromwich football!!!¹⁹⁴

Depicting how experiences of the everyday can be rendered invisible through selected silence, the prideful reverence of Mr. Allcock’s interview arguably masks the darker undertones of working-class society. Buried between the lines of recollection, secret histories of abuse or alcoholism are only hinted at in fleeting glimpses. Normalized and interwoven into local folklore, the actions of Bill Treddle are an example of how football, not unlike work or the shape of the roads or the smells billowing through the streets, was a fundamental part of the everyday working-class life. Throughout the collected oral histories, football helped to define or organize an individual’s sense of the past. Whether the memories were intimate such as the warmth of a father-son relationship or reflective like the recognition of time passing, football helped to tell the story. Part of what makes football an indispensable tool in understanding the impact of deindustrialization is the fact that it is among the few traces of everyday life in the industrial age that remain in the present. With the closing of factory after factory in the Midlands during the 1970s, the basis of what constituted everyday life became

¹⁹⁴Ralph Allcock, interviewed by Helen Lloyd, 2000. Transcript. Millenibrum,MS2255/2/005, Birmingham Central Library, Birmingham, U.K.

irreversibly restructured. The networks that working-class men depended upon for employment and social relationships were weakened or dissolved entirely. Individual's relationships to their bodies were destabilized. Without employment the mentalities and skill-sets that had been developed had no direct outlet. Work organized the dynamics of community and helped to centre identities. For some individuals, life without employment rendered it meaningless. Perhaps most importantly, the very shape and feel of life disappeared. The landscape lost its familiarity. Architect David Wilkinson recalls the ambience of Nottingham's St. Ann's neighbourhood before deindustrialization and the wave of demolition that it left in its wake:

One of the fascinating things about the area was that it was full of little backyard industries. There were some big factories as well. But there were many things going on in individual people's houses and small backyard industries. None of it made noise or nasty smells so it was perfectly sensible to keep it within the development of the area. But of course, in those days the planned ideal was to clear everything and zone the city. There would be an industrial zone, so these business owners would be pushed out into shiny new factory units which they couldn't afford, so their businesses died.¹⁹⁵

Phrased in the bureaucratic language of urban development, Wilkinson's memories nevertheless capture how deindustrialization and slum clearances buried the vibrancy of working-class communities beneath their own detritus. Stripped of the sensations provided by the commingling of smells and sounds from backyard industries, deindustrialization transformed the streets of Midlands towns into landscapes of loss. In a study of surviving sites associated with the leather trades in Walsall, Paul Collins

¹⁹⁵ Ruth I. Johns, *St. Ann's Nottingham: Inner City Voices* (Nottingham: Plowright Press, 2002), 242

provides this concept with a topographical footing. Painstakingly retracing the former locations of Walsall's neighbourhood industries, Collins uncovers how work physically shaped the region.¹⁹⁶ Listing street numbers that once corresponded to a leather worker, Collins creates a map in the mind of the reader using addresses to emphasize how important and ubiquitous leather was in Walsall. Including a complementary list of surviving sites, Collins findings are representative of the Midlands' fate following deindustrialization. Once brimming with a diverse mixture of saddlers, boot makers, bridle cutters, and curriers, streets with names like Bath, Stafford, and Lichfield have almost been washed clean of their industrial pasts. Attracted by the existence of a landscape beneath a landscape, I decided to take a walk to a surviving site on Cecil Street when I visited the town. Tucked away amongst an unassuming row of terraced housing, the former covered buckle maker is now owned by the fancy leather goods manufacturer E. Hulme Ltd. As I stood beneath the shop's sign in the silence of night, it became difficult for me to imagine that this street and thousands like it were once the cradle of English industry.

Summary

Portraying life before deindustrialization in the working-class communities of the Midlands, this chapter challenged the stability of representation. While some men's memories fit nicely alongside long-held stereotypes of the working class, others seemed anomalous. Even in the testimonies of the men who embodied archetypal working-class masculinity there were divergences or sublimations. For example, while most working-

¹⁹⁶ Paul Collins, *The Identification and Evaluation of Surviving Sites Associated with the Leather and Allied Trades In Walsall*, (Walsall M.B.C., (1990). Typescript MSS), 80

class men were conditioned from an early age to form an unyielding relationship to work, individuals employed coping mechanisms to silently express their displeasure. Similarly, while familial networks helped thousands of young men transition from the schoolyard to life-long employment in the factory, others built their own networks or moved jobs frequently. Less like a puzzle which awaits completion and more akin to a mosaic with constant overlapping intersections and contradictions, the dynamics of a working-class community exist in all the exchanges and interactions of the everyday. As all relationships in working-class communities are either explicitly controlled or influenced by work or indirectly impacted through its absence, working-class experiences of the everyday are completely dependent upon work. From attending a football match with a relative to playing for a works football team, from working men's clubs to quiet nights spent at home with the family, from a young's man's fleeting interaction with the education system to the fog-lined streets leading up to the factory, employment was how individuals oriented themselves in the post-war landscape of the Midlands. While this historiographical structure illustrates how and why social relationships were formed in working-class communities, it does not fully explain how relationships were developed in the everyday or the nature of these relationships. The memories of shop floor pranks, small-talk, purchasing food for your family from a local co-op, public transportation, or the sound of the streets filling with men leaving for work enrich our understanding of working class life before deindustrialization. To paraphrase George Homans, it puts blood back in the working-class man by challenging representations offered to the public in film, literature or even the idealized industrial relations of employee magazines. As this chapter meticulously disentangled the

complex dynamics, identities, and individual lives that composed working-class communities before deindustrialization, the following chapters recount their destruction. By establishing a correspondence between the historical process that emptied the streets of Midlands towns like Walsall of industry and the personal lives of workers estranged from their identities, this dissertation argues that public and private time dissolved into one another.¹⁹⁷ Dislocated from their relationships to their bodies, work, social environment and the everyday by the trauma of deindustrialization, cultural rituals like football took on the weight of a past rendered permanently intangible.

¹⁹⁷ This sentences borrows ideas and exact wording from Peter Fritzsche's "Stranded in the Present"

Chapter 2: Living With Absence: Landscapes of Loss and Memory

Capturing the twilight of Shenyang's Tiexi district, Wang Bing's nine-hour film *West of Tracks* is perhaps cinema's most vivid, sprawling portrait of deindustrialization. Doggedly following the working lives of men through a labyrinth of break rooms, factory floors and poorly lit passages, the intimacy of Bing's camera sketches out the routes and routines smelting workers used to compete with boredom and complete their tasks. Consistently assailed by smoke, unflinching heat and red light, the film at times feels like an image of hell. Existing in a world closed off from nature, when Bing returns to the smelting plant after its closure roughly three hours into the film, all that is left is a defamiliarized husk of steel and concrete. Having laid out the contours of collective movement earlier in the film, Bing retraces his steps through the emptied smelting plant emphasizing not only how the rhythms of daily life have been disrupted but how the past is always co-existing with the present. In perhaps the film's only moment of cinematic trickery, Bing's camera winds through an interconnected system of underground passages before pausing on an abandoned bathtub full of steaming water in an old workers' bathing room. Dissolving to an earlier shot of men quietly washing themselves in the mist, the scene ends with a return to the tub in the present. A barren reminder of Tiexi's prosperous industrial past, the dereliction of the plant's baths illustrates how deindustrialization detached landscapes and individuals from their former functions and identities. Influencing and defining space even after all former traces had been removed, Bing's bath is a palimpsest, an illustration of how memories and culture continue to exist even in absence. Analyzing absence in working-class life, this chapter examines how deindustrialization transcended shuttered windows, crumbling brick, and

abandoned lots. In the collected oral histories, landmarks lost to upheaval were not just remembered for what they looked like, or how they informed the past. Symbols of a world that once was, the lost shops, smokestacks and factories of the Midlands were small pieces of a much larger loss. Seeping into conceptions of time, place, and memory, absence detached the Midlands from its cultural heritage and reshaped working-class relationships to the everyday. Estranged from their own surroundings, this chapter employs absence to illustrate how loss formed the backdrop for working-class life well before deindustrialization. Helping to contextualize the experience of mass layoffs and factory closures, earlier histories of loss such as slum clearances and shifts in transportation technology emphasize that the Midlands landscape was a meeting point of past and present. Contending with the loss of community, working-class responses to absence suggested why football became a refuge for the past: the rest was gone.

The Persisting Wound: Landscapes after Deindustrialization

A cornerstone of Jean-Paul Sartre's work concerning negation, absence is defined as a pervasive feature of modern society and daily life:

I have an appointment with Pierre at four o'clock. I arrive at the cafe a quarter of an hour late. Pierre is always punctual. Will he have waited for me? I look at the room, the patrons, and I say "he is not here"...It is certain that the cafe by itself with its patrons, its tables, its booths, its mirrors, its light, its smoky atmosphere, and the sounds of voices, rattling saucers and footsteps which fill it- the cafe is a fullness of being... But now Pierre is not here. This does not mean that I discover his absence in some precise spot in the

establishment. In fact Pierre is absent from the whole cafe; his absence fixes the cafe in its evanescence.¹⁹⁸

Preoccupied by the absence of Pierre, Sartre's cafe itself dissolves phenomenologically. Its furniture, lighting, faces and smells shapelessly blend together to create a void, rendering everything that is not Pierre incoherent. Absence, according to Sartre, can directly influence an individual's understanding of the material world. Rather than consisting of two antonymic categories, the relationship between that which is there and that which is absent is a continuous and ambiguous spectrum.¹⁹⁹ Extending beyond a strict spatial meaning, absence can be defined as a state of longing, or nostalgia. Measuring the past against the present, absence materializes itself in the body when individuals experience the presence of people, places, or things that have been lost, are missing or have yet to exist. Writing about the deceptiveness of human sense in *The Sixth Meditation*, Rene Descartes uses the phenomenon of phantom pains to illustrate how physical reactions and sensation can exist well after loss:

In an infinitude of other cases I found error in judgements founded on the external sense. And not only in those founded on the external senses, but even in this founded on the internal as well; for is there anything more intimate or more internal than pain? And yet I have learned from some persons whose arms or legs have been cut off, that they sometimes seemed to feel pain in the part which had been amputated, which made

¹⁹⁸ Jean- Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (London: Methuen 1957), 9

¹⁹⁹ Mikkel Bille, Frida Hastrup, & Tim Flohr Sorensen, ed. *An Anthropology of Absence: Materializations of Transcendence and Loss* (New York: Springer, 2010), 4

me think that I could not be quite certain, that it was a certain member which pained me, even though I felt pain in it.²⁰⁰

Similarly experienced in the social realm, the lost limbs in the writing of Descartes are replaced with lost homes, family members, or places of employment. Excised from the individual through trauma or a loss of social stability, these spaces of absence continue to exist sensuously, emotionally, and ideationally for the affected individuals. Expressing a desire to return, the feelings of homesickness, and melancholia are akin to the phantom pains of Descartes' amputees. In context to deindustrialization in the Midlands, absence is experienced not only in the vast physical changes to local landscapes, but changes in the psychic landscape as well. Interrupting the trajectories of working-class identity, individuals helplessly watched as deindustrialization swallowed up sites of personal memory. Discussing the physical changes that were transforming her community, Mrs. Ashcroft, the daughter of former Bilston Gas Works superintendent Joe Smart, states:

Bilston used to be a really busy area with all the factories that were there then. In the morning the buses would be full of people; almost everyone travelled by public transport then. When it was the end of the day workers filled the town, it was like people coming out of a football match because there really were so many people. People moved to Bilston from other areas for work. There were a lot of people who moved from Wales to work in the steel industry including many of my ancestors. Another company I remember on Ward Street was Noad's, the brick works. They used to dig the clay to make the bricks. Thompson's was another really big firm in Bilston. The shops in Bilston have

²⁰⁰ Rene Descartes, *Meditations of First Philosophy in Focus*, ed. Stanley Tweyman (London: New York: Routledge, 1993), 90.

changed a lot: at the top of the town was Joe Suttons, where we have our hot pork sandwich; Bills was the fresh fish shop and there was a Snapes, which was a haberdashery and ladies and gents clothes fitters; Taylor's sold cakes; Peark's was the grocers and Tafano's was an Italian ice-cream shop. There was also Bonne Marsh, Dugmores, Wiltshires, Price & Beeby, Walters, Marks & Spencers, Marsh & Caxters, Burtons, Dales Electrical Showroom, Gas Showroom and the Indoor market.²⁰¹

Outlining a cartography of absence, Mrs. Ashcroft's reflections illustrate the extent to which Bilston had become a defamiliarized space. Physically unrecognizable due to the vast changes in the town's social landscape, the continuing absence of the shops and factories also disrupted the town's rhythms. Defined by Henri Lefebvre as any interaction between place, a time and an expenditure of energy, rhythms provide consistency to place and landscape.²⁰² Emphasizing the flows that "emanate from, pass through and centre place", rhythms help historians address the fluidity and situated dynamism of place as well as engaging with material, sensory, social and cultural contexts.²⁰³ In Mrs. Ashcroft's account, the act of going to Joe Suttons for a hot pork sandwich, taking public transport, or walking through the streets brimming with local businesses and people were all rhythms representing a specific time and place. Interrupted by deindustrialization, for individuals living in the Midlands time was lost to the past, while place became defined by absence. Providing Bilston with its postwar identity, these specific flows of people from the domestic sphere, to work, to places of commerce and leisure only sur-

²⁰¹ Mrs. Ashcroft, unknown interviewer/ date, Transcript, Documenting the Workshop of the World: Bilston Oral Histories, LS/ LB6/2, Wolverhampton Archives and Local Studies, Wolverhampton, U.K.

²⁰² Henri Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis: space, time, and everyday life* (New York: London: Continuum, 2004), 15.

²⁰³ Tim Edensor, ed. *Geographies of Rhythm: Nature, Place, Mobilities and Bodies* (Farnham, Surrey, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 3.

vive in memory, or the nostalgic poetry of locals. Trevor Johnson, a contributor to the *Black Country Bugle* writes:

Let's remember Bilston/How it was years ago/When there were three cinemas/The Theatre Royal for a show/Trolley buses went through the town/With conductors shouting "Fares"/The old market hall/Tradesmen sold their wares/It was a unique market hall/Had character and grace/You could buy almost anything/From food to cotton lace/Remember Jack Rosa's snooker hall/Tables busy every day/It's where budding future champions/Would wait in turn to play/The town had lots of pubs/A smoke room and saloon/And there was always a pianist/Who could "Knock aert a tune"/Home and Colonial, Marsh & Baxter's/Downs the butcher's too/Cotterill's old toy shop/Just to name a few/Joe Sutton's hot pork sandwiches/Went down really well/Before going for a sing song/In the old Pipe Hall Hotel/If you were really hungry/You would lick your lips/At the thought of Campbell's/Mushy paes and fish n chips/Stewart's furnaces lit the skies/They gave a mighty roar/Another Bilston sight and sound/Sadly gone for ever more/The old Central railway station/Hanging baskets full of flowers/Smoke bellowing from the funnels/Train spotters wait for hours/The battery-powered milk floats/Made a purring sound/Early morning clink of milk bottles/Milkman's on his round/Factory bull would sound/Every morning five to eight/Workers would then hurry/Towards the factory gate/On a Sunday morningThe Scouts and Boy's Brigade/Brownies and Girl Guides/Marched proudly on parade/They played trumpet and drums/People lined the streets to see/Children march in unison/It's church's anniversary/Town Hall dances were popular/It was the main venue/Ladies and gents smartly dressed/On Saturday nights would queue/Bilston Town Hall clock was a landmark/It's where people used to wait/To meet one another/Perhaps on a first date/The old clock stopped for awhile/It's working now again/Having survived all the elements/The sun, the wind, the rain./Bilston's Flower Show and Carnival/Visitors came

from miles around/There was always something for everyone/In old Hickman Park
ground/Bilston was such a vibrant town/All those years ago/People could walk out safe
at night/And would stop and say "hello"/So Bilstonians have their memories/Of a town
they'll always treasure/Memories locked in people's minds/Of a town that gave much
pleasure./²⁰⁴

Concealed by its celebratory tone, the poem's deep sense of loss is revealed by how Bilston is framed in the present. Existing only in the past tense, the Bilston detailed in the poem's imagery has been lost, its intimacies resigned to oblivion. Defined by what had disappeared, or what once was tangible and important, the landscape that had replaced Trevor Johnson's memory of Bilston, wasn't Bilston at all. Rather it was something different altogether, a dead landscape only linked to the past by its absence. Speaking to the impermanence of place, this poem illustrates the extent to which working-class communities in the Midlands were defined by specific spatio-temporal rhythms and sites of memory. Interrupted or irreversibly fragmented by deindustrialization, the Bilston that existed in memory was impossible to uphold. Creating an incongruity between identity and place, towns like Bilston became crystallized ruins of memory. Repeated over and over again in the oral histories, certain sites of memory became so entangled in loss they formed complex landscapes of absence that co-existed with the present. Physically dominating Bilston's skyline, one of these sites were the blast furnaces:

The blast furnaces? Well you know, as children, boys, we would, October nights, you know, nice nights in October, getting dark a bit early, we would walk along the canal to a certain spot, in front of the steelworks, there always used to be a bridge there, where the

²⁰⁴ Trevor Johnson, "Bilston in the 50s and 60s" *Black Country Bugle*, June 17th, 2016, accessed July 3rd, 2016, <http://www.blackcountrybugle.co.uk/bilston-50s-60s/story-29394642-detail/story.html>

boats used to go along into the basin, we used to sit on this bridge and watch the carriages that went up the ramp to tip the burden into the furnace there. When they tipped the burden there it would all light up. It was quite a wonderful sight that was.²⁰⁵

Comforting the interviewee by their association to childhood, the subsequent demolition of the blast furnaces symbolized the growing detachment between Bilston's physical landscape and its situated identity. As Roger Deans remembers:

It had been there all my life...not all my life because it was built in the early 1950s, but it was there all the time I lived in Wolverhampton, and it was the skyline, whenever you came down the New Road, there was Elisabeth, and it was an awful day. When I say awful - it was a pleasant enough day, but it was awful to see that go down, and you think, how can you get attached to a damn great..like that. But people did and it was extremely sad...And I walked up with a chap and we walked round the corner of the shell plant, and that was the first time we saw the furnace lying down, and he said to me, this is the end of Bilston as we know it, and it was. And he was virtually in tears, I couldn't believe it, he wasn't your...and he was virtually in tears.²⁰⁶

Lovingly given the woman's name Elisabeth after the daughter of Stewart and Lloyd's chairman, the works' blast furnace was both a physical and metaphorical representation of stability and order in Bilston.²⁰⁷ Lit in December of 1954, Elisabeth produced 275,000 tons of steel a year before being mothballed in 1977 and demolished on October 5th,

²⁰⁵Ronnie Davis, interviewed by Cheryl Willams & Cheryl Bailey, June 12th 2007. Transcript, Documenting the Workshop of the World: Bilston Oral Histories, LS/LB6/2, Wolverhampton Archives and Local Studies, Wolverhampton, U.K.

²⁰⁶Roger Deans, interview by Cheryl Bailey, July 24th, 2007. Transcript, Documenting the Workshop of the World: Bilston Oral Histories, LS/LB6/2, Wolverhampton Archives & Local Studies, Wolverhampton, U.K.

²⁰⁷ This is the official version of how Elisabeth got her name. According to Jim Dacre in Ned Williams' *Black Country Folk at Work*, Elisabeth was given a female name on account of how unpredictable 'she' was.

1980. Beginning with the proclamation by BSC deputy chairman and chief executive Dr. Monty Finneston that open-hearth steelmaking would be phased out during the mid 1970s, Bilston steelworkers and their families fought for seven years to prevent the closure of their works.²⁰⁸ Forming action committees and writing to local MPS and trade councils for support, by the time a white paper was released by the British Steel Corporation in February of 1973, it was clear that major new investment in Bilston's steelworks would not be forthcoming.²⁰⁹ Decreeing that the steelworks must be expected to close during the decade, the February white paper was the first formal step in permanently halting steel and iron production in Bilston. Persisting in the shadow of impending dissolution, even the traditionally celebratory atmosphere of relining Elisabeth acquired an aura of hopelessness. Relined six times, Elisabeth's final relining in August of 1976 was captured by a film crew and released as a 27-minute documentary entitled *The Last Sentinel*.²¹⁰ Referring to Elisabeth's position as the Black Country's last existing blast furnace, *The Last Sentinel* follows steelworkers over a four-week period as they meticulously prepared Elisabeth for another 'campaign'.²¹¹ Refitting cooling pipes, cleaning supplement tanks, replacing 25 miles worth of wire, forming assembly lines to process freshly made fireclay bricks, and painting over walls weathered by the wear and tear of work, the collaborative efforts of Bilston's steelworkers, engineers, and management

²⁰⁸ "Steelmaking Ends in 1980- BSC" Steelworks News, Bilston & Wolverhampton ed, March 29th, 1979

²⁰⁹ Steel industry. 1973. British Steel Corporation: 10 year development strategy. (Cmnd. 5526) London. Stationery Office

²¹⁰ Andrew Simpson "Relining Elisabeth" British Steel Bilston <http://britishsteelbilston.com/gallery/relining-elisabeth/> (accessed July 14th, 2016)

²¹¹ In the Shadow of Elisabeth's Facebook Page accessed July 3rd, 2016 <https://www.facebook.com/itsoe1/videos/1651643058439046/>

were loaded with the symbolism of rebirth. An allegory of the community's own rhythms and cycles of life, the ceremonial re-lighting of Elisabeth was almost always undertaken by the daughter of an important member of Bilston's administrative staff.²¹² Sound-tracked by the overtures and intermezzos of Bizet's *Carmen*, the film is the final record of an industrial ritual which had connected Bilston's present to both its past and future. Returning to the memories of Rogers Deans, the image of Elisabeth lying down after its demolition was an explicit statement on both the futility of seven years of opposition and the end of an identity which had stabilized the community for over 200 years. Reoccurring in the collective memories of Bilston's working class, the loss of Elisabeth was the loss of Bilston. When the absence of a landmark so overwhelms its site in the present, the sensation of loss leaks into the memories of all those affected, infiltrating the past like a grand delusion. As Peter Hill writes in his poem entitled "Ghost Town":

Come with me now to days when steel mills stood
 And furnaces scorched night skies bright blood-red
 When Bilston men had jobs and times were good
 You'll see the happy land of our childhood
 Where father's work and pride kept us well-fed
 Come with me now to days when steel mills stood
 You'll see a time of sweat and toil and blood

²¹² The relevant dates and names are as follows:

First Campaign December 1954 : Lit by Miss Elisabeth Stewart, daughter of Chairman of Stewarts & Lloyds.

Second Campaign March 1960 : Lit by Mr Frank Hartland, retired Blast Furnace Manager.

Third Campaign March 1963 : Lit by Miss Carol Dean, daughter of Mr Norman Dean, Blast Furnace Manager.

Fourth Campaign July 1967 : Lit by Miss Nicola Forster, daughter of Mr Godfrey Forster, General Manager Bilston.

Fifth Campaign August 1971 : Lit by Miss Elisabeth Saul, daughter of Mr Derek Saul, General Manager, Bilston

Sixth Campaign August 1976 : Lit by Miss Anita Hunter, daughter of Mr David Hunter, Blast Furnace Manager.

Andrew Simpsons "Relining Elisabeth" British Steel Bilston <http://britishsteelbilston.com/gallery/relining-elisabeth/> (accessed July 14th, 2016)

Yet men looked forward to the day ahead
 When Bilston men had jobs and times were good
 See how our town provided livelihood
 For countless homes in areas widespread
 Come with me now to days when steel mills stood
 A Bilston man of steel knew then he could
 Walk tall and straight and proudly hold his head
 When Bilston men had jobs and times were good
 See molten flowing steel- our town's lifeblood
 Where now tall weeds and poppies grow instead
 Come with me now to days when steel mills stood
 When Bilston men had jobs and times were good.²¹³

Regardless of whether the site of loss is the blast furnace or the act of buying a hot pork sandwich at Joe Suttons, these haunted spaces acted to transform Bilston from a place of life to one of death and absence. Forming a collective history of loss, these memories illustrate the extent to which absent landscapes still informed individual's perceptions of the present. Even as the brick and stone-clad factories of the Midlands became replaced with easily ventilated single-floor buildings and retail warehouses, the landscape *itself*, its history, remained defined by absence. Not unlike the bullet-holes which pock-mark Berlin or the surviving timbre structures on Spon street in Coventry, the emptied landscape of the Midlands can be interpreted as a text of past loss.

²¹³ In the Shadow of Elisabeth's Facebook page, accessed July 3rd, 2016 <https://www.facebook.com/itsoe1/photos/a.1420013524935335.1073741827.1419704684966219/1724138964522788/?type=3&theater>

In a series of photographs included in Ned Williams' *Past and Present, The Black Country: The Changing Face of the Area and its People*, the concept of land as text is used to explore the relationship between space, ruin, and the present.²¹⁴ Using a "before and after" template to frame the region's gradual shift towards a service-based economy, Williams illustrates how the Midlands' former industrial spaces became re-contextualized to fit into the rhythms of post-industrial society. Beginning with a photograph of a modest fireclay and coal mine, a caption informs the reader of the pits' location and historical context.²¹⁵ A remnant of an even earlier age of industrialism, Williams states that pits like these had nearly all stopped working by the end of the Second World War. Already on the cusp of dereliction, by the time Williams returned to the site in 2002, an industrial estate had replaced the pits. Rising out of the ground like a sapling, the photograph's tall thin methane vents also indicate the landscape's layered history. Found throughout the Midlands' former mining sites, methane vents are a symbol of how landscape is constantly reclaimed and reshaped by and from forces of destruction. In working-class communities these changes in landscape often created a deep fissure between time and space. Writing about the relationship between ruin and place Tim Edensor states:

In the ruin, these sequences of productive action reliant on the organization of time, space and materiality are now absent. For abandoned factories suddenly lose their position in the networks which render their meaning and function stable, as the complex infrastructure which surrounds the operation of an industrial site comes apart. Suddenly

²¹⁴ Ned Williams, *Past and Present, The Black Country: The Changing Face of the Area and its People* (Stroud, UK: Sutton Publishing, 2002)

²¹⁵ *Ibid*, 18.

detached from these enduring sets of heterogeneous associations, entirely sidelined from a network or perhaps only possessing residual connection- for instance as corporate real estate- the ruin loses its former purpose and meaning.²¹⁶

When sites lose their use, they are discarded and either left to rot or cleared for redevelopment. Aimed at erasing all remnants of the past, the steely silence of the industrial estates, shopping malls, and housing developments, masked the profound sense of alienation working-class communities experienced during deindustrialization. Implied by the organization of Williams' photographs, the entirety of the Midlands landscape is defined by what once was or what has become absent. Established in 1826 and operating until the mid 70s, the Cannon Iron foundry is an example used by Williams of how deeply deindustrialization reconstituted the physical topography of the Midlands.²¹⁷ Heavily damaged by a fire in 1980 before being completely demolished shortly thereafter, the Cannon was eventually cleared to house rows of modern homes. Preserved in the Black Country museum, the foundry's chimney is all that exists of a company that had contributed to the region's economy for nearly 150 years. Similarly, the casting shop at the Round Oak Steelworks became the Merry Hill Shopping complex, Noah Hingley's chain and anchor works became the Washington Centre, Baggeridge colliery became landscaped parkland and so on ad infinitum. Finishing the caption of one his photographs with the proclamation that very little of the Black Country's land surface can be

²¹⁶ Tim Edensor, *Industrial Ruins: Spaces, Aesthetics and Materiality* (Oxford, UK; New York: Berg, 2005), 66

²¹⁷ Williams, *Past and Present, the Black Country*, 21.

considered natural, Williams' work reveals the ways in which an untold number of historical processions can converge to create absence.²¹⁸

Contesting Absences: Histories of Loss in the Midlands

While absence is a central feature of deindustrialization, both in terms of landscape and individual or collective memory, its historicity is complicated by the nature of history itself. As all landscapes are the accumulated dusts of the past, all forms of loss are the result of contesting destructions. Commingling with the crushing gravity of deindustrialization, other patterns of loss were also helping to restructure the physical landscape of the working class community. Frank Jones of Meyer's pen factory in Langley remembers:

Q: Could you tell me where the factory was?

A: Right by the railway line, Langley. I am flogging the praises of a company that doesn't exist any more. It was a firm that tended to keep families employed people who worked there met their wives there. Their children were brought in, nieces and nephews. This was the same in a lot of industries because the people were acting as sponsors for good behaviour. And we had a sports club with a sports ground along the railway at the back of the houses on Causeway green road. We had a cricket team, I have some photographs. I never played but I am on one of the photographs. I started courting.

There was a cinema there, on the corner near the brewery.²¹⁹

Bought by the American firm Avery International in 1985 before being closed and cleared for housing developments, Frank Jones' memories of Meyer's pen factory seem

²¹⁸ Ibid, 19.

²¹⁹Mr. Frank Jones, interview by Sabine Skae, May 4th, 2000, Memories Made in Sandwell, Sandwell Community History and Archives Service, Smethwick, U.K.

to fit neatly within a linear narrative of loss. A seemingly straightforward product of deindustrialization, Frank Jones' memories are decidedly marked by the natural cycles of social transformation that occur in any industrialized region. Reflecting on lost cinemas, breweries, and cricket teams, oral accounts like Frank Jones' reveal how ongoing or natural processes of loss became intertwined with memories of deindustrialization. As loss is not unilateral, it is important to not reductively attribute the experience of absence in the oral histories to one cause. Changes in transportation, housing, employment, and community were always occurring in the Midlands and inarguably informed working-class identity. In order to articulate the everyday experience of absence, an analysis of other cycles of social change will be undertaken.

Reflecting upon her time working as a child with her father in maintaining the canals that carved their way through Wolverhampton, Mrs. Pittaway remembers:

The stretch that I lived on, they filled in completely. They've pulled the bridges down now. I couldn't believe it when I first saw what they had done. It really did hurt, to see that they had destroyed something that I had grown up with, and I think (something) I had learned to love. So many people had got so much enjoyment from it. And to see that they had filled all that in completely. I just could not think why. I remember my dad saying at the time. "They can't do that". And I said "Well, they have". He said himself, it was hard to imagine the place being there at all without the canal... This happened after we moved, in 1964. They filled it in after that. They had some mad fad on filling in canals all of a sudden and they filled them in all over the place. It is just not the same now. People build bonfires on what used to be the canal. You look and you think, it's not right. Yet when it is

the late autumn, you still get the mist hanging over there that used to hang there when there was a canal.²²⁰

Structurally resembling oral histories that were strictly concerned with factory closures and job losses, Mrs. Pittaway's account illustrates how working-class communities were experiencing different forms of loss before and during deindustrialization. As this thesis analyzes how broad socio-economic patterns were experienced in the everyday, the processes that filled the canals are indispensable in approaching a concept of absence in the age of deindustrialization.

Beginning in 1766 with the Trent- Mersey, Staffordshire and Worcestershire canals and continuing in 1768 with the construction of the Birmingham and Coventry canals, James Brindley's system of inland navigations sought to provide the land-locked Midlands with heightened access to English shipping routes. Winding through the landscape like the vein patterning of a leaf, by the mid 19th century British leaders had already begun to withhold support for almost all modern ship canal projects.²²¹ An uncharacteristic decision within the context of western economics in the 19th century, geographer Jacob Shell argues that Britain's about-face in policy was the product of bias against canals and canal people.²²² Employing the decline of canals to make an allegorical statement on British fears of the working class, subversive political groups, civil warfare, and violent anti-imperial agitation, Shell deconstructs how infrastructure and physi-

²²⁰ Mrs. Pittaway, unknown interviewer/ date, Transcript, Wolverhampton Heritage Project, DX- 869, Wolverhampton Archives and Local Studies, Wolverhampton, U.K.

²²¹ Jacob Shell, *Transportation and Revolt: Pigeons, Mules, Canals, and the Vanishing Geographies of Subversive Mobility*. (Cambridge, London: MIT Press, 2015), 64

²²² Ibid

cal landmarks can succinctly symbolize limitless historical actors, attitudes, and movements. This feature of Shell's writing is perhaps most evident in his conclusions concerning the role of rail in the industrial obsolescence of canals:

Certainly the technical limitations of canals compared with railroads were to some extent a factor militating against British canal investment, at least in certain areas. Conveyance by canal was, after all, quite slow, rarely exceeding few miles per hour on narrow canals or ten miles per hour on wide, modern ship canals. To industries dependent on factors of speed, rail transport represented a clear improvement over shipping by canal. Moreover in some regions, canals were frozen for many months of the year and needed to be either de-iced or left seasonal dormant. Finally compared with railroads, canals were relatively constrained by inland physical geography.²²³

Emphasizing how loss is a subtextual component of all histories concerning technological progress, it is unsurprising that even at the height of British industrial power, certain working-class communities and identities were placed under considerable threat by shifting patterns in the economic landscape. Losing their usefulness nearly a century before the throes of deindustrialization unfolded across the Midlands, the canals that had once provided a livelihood to boat workers and canal people became passive but symbolically loaded backdrops to experiences of the everyday. Idle wastelands brimming with the unwanted casualties of daily life, the physical loss of the canals still contributed to feelings of estrangement that had become pervasive in conceptions of working class identity. For Mrs. Pittaway and other interviewees, canals intertwined with memories of leisure, loss, and deindustrialization. Bill Neale and his wife remember:

²²³ Ibid

Bill Neale: We always used to play football beside the canal and we was playing there one day. The football went into the air and I didn't realize how close it was to the canal. I shouted "It's my ball" and I went flying into the canal. We lived in the prefabs. I gets in my motorbike imagine the canal is really full of oil and muck and what have you

Mrs. Neale: Green Slime

Bill Neale: I gets on my motorbike and I gets home and knocks the door. And I said I'got a get changed" and she said "Yes, but you go into the coal house and get those clothes off" She said "you're not coming in here with them on"

Mrs. Neale: He was green, head to foot in green slime.²²⁴

Similarly, for Alice Turner the canal is included in her memories of her dead father and the loss of the Bilston Steelworks:

My father-in-law (Joe Turner) went to reline the furnace at Bilston Steelworks- it took two people to take the shirt of his back afterwards as it was stuck with sweat. He used to play the trumpet on the corner of Mars Street and play the new year in. He started to suffer with his chest and he used to come home for dinner- one day he couldn't get his breath. And that was the beginning of the end really. He had an allotment at the side of the canal.²²⁵

Between 1850 and 1950 half of the Black Country's canals were filled in. One of the many histories of absence that working-class communities encountered, loss was an ongoing process. Absence was not unique to deindustrialization. Geographer James Vance writes:

²²⁴ Mr. Bill Neale, interview by Sabine Skae, February 1st, 2000, Memories Made in Sandwell, Sandwell Community History and Archives Service, Smethwick, U.K.

²²⁵ Alice Turner, unknown interviewer/ date, Transcript, Documenting the Workshop of the World: Bilston Oral Histories, LS/ LB6/2, Wolverhampton Archives and Local Studies, Wolverhampton, U.K.

...in 1960 walking from the eastern outskirts of Birmingham completely across the very large city to Smethwick in the west, always along the towpath of the Birmingham Canal navigations. In the entire time I met not a soul on the towpath save one city garbage boat drawn by a single horse and steered by a lone elderly man at the tiller. For this period of five or six hours I hardly saw anyone as the canal crawled under streets, behind buildings with windows often bricked up, and always walled away from the currently used part of the city. In one place there was a slight suggest of interest in the canal as a door in a wall was open and a canvas hose was dropped into the green motionless water of the canal. the local fire brigade was using that nearly forgotten source to extinguish a fire. But no one was looking at the canals.²²⁶

Haunting the age of deindustrialization, the wreckage of the past provided a backdrop to everyday life. Walsall F.C. fan A.R. Davis remembers “playing football until dusk in the field alongside Rushall Level crossing on the Walsall to Lichfield Railway Line...and showing off his skills to the passengers on the train as it was halted by the signal...”.²²⁷

A casualty of the Beeching Report, Davis’ memories of his youth and love of football are inseparable from the seemingly parallel histories of railway closures and changes in regional transportation. Similarly, Norman Cliff of Wolverhampton remembers:

I remember the open trams. One, I used to have a ride on. My Dad took me, it was the one that used to run from Wolverhampton out to the Pennfields. It used to run along the Lea Road. There was the overhead wire and the rails it used to run on, clanky clank and sparks all over the place...Then there was the advent of the trolley bus. That was a real advancement if you like. They ran on rubber wheels. They were quiet. There were no

²²⁶ James Vance, *Capturing the Horizon: The Historical Geography of Transportation since the Sixteenth Century* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1986), 101

²²⁷ A.R. Davis, *In the Saddle for the Saddlers* (Dumfries: Creedon Publications, 2006), 5

fumes...They gradually appeared all over town...They were marvellous they were, but of course in their wisdom the town council finally decided that the Trolley buses were detrimental to the town because they were rigid in their routing and that if they had motor buses, they would be more manageable, they could pull into the side of the road to turn around and go anywhere. So of course, the trolley buses were phased out.²²⁸

Memories are situated by place and as destruction removes the physical traces of the past, memories can become rootless. Leading to pronounced nostalgia or longing, examples such as the dereliction of the Black Country's canals, Norman Cliff's trolley buses, or A.R. Davis' childhood football fields illustrate the prominence of absence outside deindustrialization.

While these examples are relatively passive forms of loss and absence, the slum clearings that marked the lives of working class-families before and during deindustrialization were not. The product of mass urbanization during the industrial revolution, working-class slums crammed thousands into squalid back-to-back houses lacking the most rudimentary sanitation. Hotbeds of infectious diseases such as typhoid and cholera, as early as 1851, philanthropists, social reformers, and politicians attempted to create a more adequate system of social housing for working class communities. As the specifics of pre and post Second World War urban renewal have been researched and

²²⁸Norman Cliff, unknown interviewer/ date, Transcript, Wolverhampton Heritage Project, DX-869, Wolverhampton Archives and Local Studies, Wolverhampton, U.K.

discussed with exhausting detail, slum clearings' influence on conceptualizations of absence will be explored.²²⁹

Experiencing physical dislocation from waves of public health acts and the constant upheaval of urban renewal, the extent to which public officials held power over working-class communities was staggering. Presenting his observations of the Housing Act 1936 at a conference amongst his peers, chief sanitary inspector of Brighton, Howard Holt stated that:

Some of the poor are “undesirable” but many of the “undesirables are not poor, consisting of families who have no idea of their responsibilities as citizens. Generally speaking, by reason of their long acquired habits and the low level of their education, these families prefer to live herded together in slums, houses let in lodgings and overcrowded conditions, and practical attempts to improve their surroundings and standards of housing are met with resentment.²³⁰

Tinged with airs of moral superiority, Holt's paper typifies the approach of English urban planners to working-class communities throughout the first half of the twentieth century.

Applying rigorously philosophic principles to the construction of housing estates and

²²⁹A selected bibliography: John English, *Slum Clearance: the social and administrative in England and Wales* (London: Croom Helm, 1976), Dennis Hardy, *Utopian England: community experiments, 1900-1945* (London; New York: Rutledge, 2000), Junichi Hasegawa, *Replanning the blitzed city centre: A comparative study of Bristol, Coventry, and Southampton* (Buckingham; Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1992), Liam Kennedy, ed. *Remaking Birmingham: the visual culture of urban regeneration* (New York: Routledge, 2004), Phil Jones, “Different but the same?: Post-war slum clearance and contemporary regeneration in Birmingham, UK”, *City* Vol 12, No.3 (2008) 356-372, P.J. Larkham, *The agents of Urban change: a case study of the agents involved in changes to the built fabric in West Midlands conservation areas* (Birmingham: University of Birmingham, 1986), P.J. Larkham, Keith D. Lilley, *Planning the City of Tomorrow: British Reconstruction Planning 1939-1952- An annotated Bibliography* (Pickering, North Yorkshire: Inch's Books, 2001), Simon Roodhouse, *Cultural Quarters: principles and practice* (Bristol, UK; Portland, Or: Intellect, 2006), Andrew D. Thomas, *Housing and urban renewal: residential decay and revitalization in the private sector* (London; Boston: G. Allen & Unwin, 1986), Jerry A. Webman, *Reviving the Industrial City: the politics of urban renewal in Lyon and Birmingham* (New Brunswick, N.J. : Rutgers University Press, 1982), J.A. Yelling, *Slums and slum clearance in Victorian London* (London; Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1986)

²³⁰ A. Howard Holt, “The Operation of the Housing Act, 1936: some observations” *The Journal for the Royal Society for the Promotion of Health* Vol 59, 3 (1938), 248

tower blocks, human life itself, its rhythms, its desire for light and green spaces were severely neglected or forgotten about altogether. Outlining a plan influenced by controlled dwellings in Rotterdam and Den Hague, Holt suggested solving the proliferation of slums and troublesome tenants in England by implementing a system reliant on surveillance and positive reinforcement.

Tenants, on being moved into the scheme, are housed in the third-class street, the central street with a very small garden and front. If they maintain their new house in a satisfactory manner they are moved into one of the side streets- second class- of a slightly better type, and subsequently to a first-class street, which has a fair sized garden...The entrance block consists of a two storey building containing shops, infant welfare clinic, and rooms which re used for cookery, sewing and handicraft classes for members of families in the scheme. The control office is occupied during the evening by a gendarme and after 10pm the entrance gates are closed, when admission can only be had by passing through the control office.²³¹

Treating members of a marginalized community like cattle, Holt's suggestions not only fail to take human nature into accord, they demonstrate the willingness of public officials to dislocate and fragment working-class communities. Indiscriminately removing individuals from communities whose situated dynamics helped to sustain identities, an analysis of inter-war figures concerning housing in Wolverhampton and Walsall helps to give an idea of how slum clearances were a ubiquitous feature of working class life well before deindustrialization. Amounting to forty percent of Wolverhampton's total housing stock, 16,210 houses including 8,978 council houses were built in the city between 1919

²³¹ Ibid, 249-250

and 1939. In contrast, 4,343 slums and sub-standard properties were demolished.²³² In Walsall, 5,400 council homes were built between 1919 and 1935, while extensive slum clearances in Lower and Upper Rushall Street, Digibeth, Peal Street, Hill Street, the Ditch, and Bullocks Row were undertaken.²³³ Reflecting national trends in urban redevelopment, Anthony Minoprio estimates that upwards of two hundred surveys and outline plans for Great Britain were prepared during the same period.²³⁴ Concealed by the stony chill of numbers, the nature of absence as experienced in the everyday is emphasized in the oral histories. An anonymous interviewee from Coventry remembers:

I mean when Wood End was first built, it was an estate that won an award, and a lot of the houses where I used to live where all slums, on the mains road, if you go from Bell green to town, there's a lot of old back-to-back houses there, they're not there now, they've all been flattened, and of course what they're doing, I mean, them people used to hang their washing in they always used to have their washing hanging in the front room, on a line you know and what did they do? You know, they moved them people from a slum, into a brand new house, and this is where I'm saying education should come into it, and instead of moving people, say, like my mother, if she wanted, that's if they wanted to move into a house like that, would respect it more than somebody who come from the slum, and the simple reason is, when you come from a slum into a new project, you're going to treat it as slum, because that's how you're used to living. You're not going to alter your ways because it's a new house. Some might, but very few will,

²³² Reconstruction Committee, Wolverhampton Borough Council, *Wolverhampton of the Future: a Report on Post-War Planning* (Wolverhampton, 1945)

²³³A P Baggs, G C Baugh and Johnston D A, 'Walsall: The growth of the town', in *A History of the County of Stafford: Volume 17, Offlow Hundred (Part)*, ed. M W Greenslade (London, 1976), pp. 146-165. British History Online <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/staffs/vol17/pp146-165> [accessed 13 July 2016].

²³⁴ Peter J. Larkham, "Rebuilding the Industrial Town: wartime Wolverhampton", *Urban History*, 29, 3, (2002), 388

you know, I mean you're still going to hang your washing from the ceiling, even if you've got a clothes line outside because that's something, because that's the way you live, you know unfortunately...An that's where education should come in, they should've and that's why Wood End is like it is today, for that reason, well that's just my belief, any rate.²³⁵

Voicing irritation with the organizational incompetence of town authorities as well as the behaviour of his fellow residents, the interviewee's sense of loss is stated in a straightforward manner. Mentioning the absence of back-to-back houses on Mains Road, his lament for the Wood End of his youth is subdued, tempered by the outrage he felt in the present. This is not atypical. For many, the loss of a home or the absence of a neighbourhood was not met with unbridled despair but rather a muted acceptance. Informed by the experiences of their parents and the slum clearances of their youths, communal dislocation and its subsequent absences were an expected outcome of working-class life. Alma Darby recalls:

I was born in a little road just off Oxford Street, in 1930. It was a basic slum house- one up, one down, outside toilet no cooker- mother did the cooking on the fire grate and there was a brewhouse outside shared with the people next door. In 1936/37 when I was six or seven years old, we were part of the slum clearance and the majority of my friends were accommodated in new council property at Millfields Estate, but mother didn't want to go that far out and we got a council house on the Harrowby road estate, Moxley.²³⁶

²³⁵anonymous interview, interviewed by Paul Thompson, 1986. Transcript. Coventry Car Workers Oral History Project, PA 1647 #80, Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry, U.K.

²³⁶Alma Darby, unknown interviewer/ date, Transcript, Documenting the Workshop of the World: Bilston Oral Histories, LS/ LB6/2, Wolverhampton Archives and Local Studies, Wolverhampton, U.K.

For others, experiences with slum clearances reflected the lack of foresight on the part of city officials. Excerpted from a parliamentary debate taking place on March 31st, 1936 Birmingham Deritend MP Smedley Crooke questioned the Minister of Health if he was aware of the glaring housing shortage in Birmingham following a slum clearance earlier in the year. Estimating that 10,000 houses worth of tenants awaited accommodations, Crooke inquired if steps would be taken to produce evidence of ability to rehouse before any further displacement occurred.²³⁷ In November of the same year, Crooke also questioned if the Minister of Health's attention had been drawn to the plight of small shopkeepers on Great Barr street, whose entire clientele had been removed owing to the slum clearances.²³⁸ Met with appeals to consult relevant legislation, it is unclear if Mr. Crooke's impassioned pleas were ever acted upon.

Disrupting communal rhythms, this unwillingness to directly engage with concerns regarding the impact of slum clearances was a theme that continued well into the 1960s. Threatened with insolvency, Melvin Haigh recounts the impact of slum clearances on his family's livelihood:

So they decided anyway to make a break from the pub trade and they bought a shop, a general store in Balsall Heath in Wenman Street, Balsall Heath. And we were there for a couple of years or so, two or three years but regrettably it was the time when all the... this being like the early 60s that there was a lot of slum clearance going on in Birmingham at the time, massive amounts and they found that there was lots of houses

²³⁷HC Deb 31 March 1936 vol 310 cc1833-4W

²³⁸HC Deb 30 November 1936 vol 318 cc841-2

and factories all being demolished around them. They lost the trade dramatically and unfortunately they went bankrupt.²³⁹

Summary

If this arrangement of fragmentary names, places, contexts, neighbourhoods, and years has a disorienting effect upon the reader, it successfully reflects the role of absence in working-class identity. Attempting to encapsulate the complex circuitry of dislocation, the experience of absence is an entangled web of loss. Determined by events unfolding in the present and those which had continued to reverberate from the depths of a distant past, conceptualizing the experience of absence is complicated by a lack of definable boundaries. Folding into itself, time and overlapping memories of loss makes the stage of the present, one cluttered with contesting absences. Using oral histories from the decades preceding deindustrialization to analyze the historical identity of absence, experiences magnified by the trauma of deindustrialization, such as unemployment, urban blight, factory closures, and the failure of small businesses had always been realities for members of the working class. Far from minimizing or diffusing the historical uniqueness of deindustrialization, the inescapable presence of absence in day to day life firmly contextualizes it. Gradually consuming the landscape, if we are to further understand the experiences of loss and absence, deindustrialization's initial impact upon work and its relationship to the everyday must be analyzed.

²³⁹Melvin Haigh, interviewed by Helen Lloyd, 2000. Transcript. Millenibrum, MS2255/2/028, Birmingham Central Library, Birmingham, U.K.

Chapter 3: Deindustrialization, automation, and the changing experience of work

Who built the seven gates of Thebes?
 The books are filled with names of kings.
 Was it the kings who hauled the craggy blocks of stone?
 And Babylon, so many times destroyed.
 Who built the city up each time? In which of Lima's houses,
 That city glittering with gold, lived those who built it?
 In the evening when the Chinese wall was finished
 Where did the masons go?²⁴⁰

Inscriptions of Loss: Technology and its discontents

One evening in 1858, while measuring the facade of the cathedral in Wetzlar, German civil engineer Albrecht Meydenbauer made a slight misstep climbing into a window and nearly plummeted to his death.²⁴¹ Using a basket suspended from block and tackle to calculate the building's dimensions by hand, Meydenbauer's experience inspired him to seek an alternative to the inherent and unnecessary danger of his work. Recognizing the ability of photography to objectively represent its subject, Meydenbauer sought to use the photographic image as a form of scale measurement. Relocating engineers to the safety of their desks, Meydenbauer's fear of death helped to lay the foundation for photogrammetry.²⁴² The product of an industrial mindset, photogrammetry removed the necessity of presence. Capturing objects and spaces at a distance, the twin desires of industry, to optimize efficiency and limit uncertainty, were embodied by the ideas of Albrecht Meydenbauer. Devised as a strategy to reduce the difficulty of labour, photogrammetry reshaped the manner in which Western society approached reality. First used by the military at Saarlouis fortress in 1868, photogrammetry's closing of space

²⁴⁰ Bertolt Brecht, *Bertolt Brecht: Selected Poems*, trans. by H.R. Hays (New York: Grove Press, 1959), 108.

²⁴¹ Albrecht Grimm, *720 Jahre Photogrammetrie in Deutschland: Das Tagebuch van Albrecht Meydenbauer* (Munchen: R Oldenbourg Verlag, 1977), 15-16.

²⁴² Harun Farocki "Reality would have to Begin" in Thomas Elsasesser eds. *Harun Farocki: Working on the Sightlines* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2004), 194

inspired the philosophies and technologies of satellites and surveillance systems and in effect permanently linked photography with violence, control, and exactitude.²⁴³ In writing history, the relationship between technology and progress, or the extent into which uncertainty can be measured or predicted, has organized our understanding of the world. Overpowered by the allure of genius, the unintended, unspoken consequences of technology are lost in narratives of progress. In its intention to decrease the distance between humanity and the unknown, technology can separate individuals from themselves and the world that surrounds them. This duality illustrates how Meydenbauer's slip can be interpreted as both the catalyst in discovering an advanced method of measurement and the impetus that allowed English bombing squadrons to annihilate German cities during World War II.

Similarly, years of experimenting with oxygen in steel refining and smelting by Swiss metallurgist Robert Durrer led to the advent of basic oxygen furnaces, but also permanently dissolved working-class communities around the world whose livelihoods depended upon producing steel with open-hearth furnaces.²⁴⁴ Resulting in enormous productivity gains, basic oxygen furnaces required a much smaller volume of blown-in gas and could decarburize 300 tons of iron from 4.3% to 0.04 C in just three quarters of an hour.²⁴⁵ Open hearth furnaces took nine to ten hours. In labour terms, basic oxygen furnaces required 0.003 worker-hours to produce one tonne of steel, while open-hearth

²⁴³ Ibid

²⁴⁴ Vaclav Smil, *Transforming the Twentieth Century: Technical Innovations and their Consequences* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 108.

²⁴⁵ Ibid, 109.

furnaces needed three. As global trade shifted away from open-hearth furnaces, British Steel's large workforce in the Midlands could no longer be supported. Similar to other British industries reliant on antiquated, labour-intensive technologies such as textiles, car manufacturing, and coal mining, a lack of strategic investment had made it impossible for British steel to compete in a modernized global market. Becoming the wreckage of innovation, this chapter analyzes how the Midlands working class was reshaped by automation. Threatening the bodies of knowledge and craftsmanship that had helped develop the Midlands, automation subjugated workers to their machines. Like how language provides a platform for the voice, drawing a jig or cutting a gear connected workers to their jobs, it inspired feelings of pride and autonomy. Placing value on volume, this chapter argues that automation alienated workers by removing work's meaning. Contextualizing workers' responses to automation, this chapter examines how Britain's failure to adapt politically and economically to the post-war landscape led to deindustrialization. Basking in nostalgic reverie for the years when its flag adorned the world, Britain's attempt to uphold its imperial power diverted funding away from the modernization of its infrastructure. Toiling at aging machines and unable to keep up with the resurgent economies of Japan and Germany, British automation may have dampened work's meanings and incited unemployment, but the country's arrogant refusal to modernize doomed the Midlands working class long before.

The Meaning of Labour: Automation and Identity

Grounded in the concept of physical labour, working-class identities were threatened directly by the prospect of automation. For Herbert Marcuse, increased mechanization

not only reduced the physical energy expended in labour, it threatened the subversiveness of working-class identity:

Now the ever-more-complete mechanization of labor in advanced capitalism, while sustaining exploitation, modifies the attitude and the status of the exploited. Within the technological ensemble, mechanized work in which automatic and semi-automatic reactions fill the larger part (if not the whole) of labour time remains, as a life-long occupation, exhausting, stupefying, inhuman slavery- even more exhausting because of increased speed-up, control of the machine operators (rather than of the product) and isolation of the workers from each other.²⁴⁶

Couched in the language of Marxism, Marcuse argued that increased automation threatened the possibility and coherency of future class struggle. A harbinger of technocracy, automation subjugated the worker to the machine, dissolving any sort of professional autonomy. Losing the physical bond workers held to work, the skill-sets, relationships, and particulars of day to day life were lost. Binding an individual to a position in the manufacturing process, automation also impeded a worker's ability to resist exploitation. If we are to characterize Marcuse's conceptualization of factory life before automation, it is a site concurrently defined by exploitation and resistance towards it. In contrast, in an overly mechanized factory individuals have no reason to interact, problem solve, or feel a meaningful connection to their work. For Marcuse automation obscured the sources of exploitation and prevented workers from confronting them. Whereas managers or foremen represented exploitation in the past, automation transformed the factory's symbols of power into bureaucratic functions in a vast corporate

²⁴⁶ Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), 25.

machine. Disappearing into the dizzying hierarchy of executive boards beyond the factory itself, exploitation became concealed by automation, allowing the production of inequality to continue unchallenged. Increasing productivity, and individual comfort and liberty, automation in a sense acted as an invisible wall, stripping individuals of their political agency and protecting the prevailing social apparatus from being challenged meaningfully. Repressing critiques, attitudes or values that threatened its existence, the prevailing social apparatus nullified these sites of resistance by integrating them. As the factory had always been a site of subversion, automation acted to eliminate those who resisted (the workers), while keeping that which produced (the machine.)

While Marcuse's analysis deconstructs the origins of alienation, unhappiness and complacency in modern society, his distrust of automation is motivated by the loss of potential revolution, not by the condition of the workers themselves. Portraying the working class as abstract figures maligned by the constant violence of their landscape, Marcuse's work is an example of why working-class history needs to reflect people's realities and experiences; otherwise it works to erase the past, replacing it with its possibilities. Returning to Lockwood's categorization of working-class belief systems, it can be argued that Marcuse's work reflects the proletariat image of society, but what else? Aligning the memories of the Midlands' working class with Marcuse is to experience disconnect. Rigorous, poetic, pessimistic philosophy is difficult to reconcile with the fleshiness of personal memory. In order to fully understand how automation reshaped the everyday, an analysis of the Midlands' oral histories is required.

Discussing the impact job stability had on identity, Lucas Aerospace worker Alan Saunders described how automation threatened bodies of technical knowledge:

...You felt, if you wanted it you had a job for life. And that was a very comforting thought because that...you could build on that, I feel that we have lost something in the short term contracts. How can anybody plan their life when they know that, or they feel that all they've got is 6 months, or 12 months in a job- you can't apply for mortgage, you can't plan to get married, you can't plan to have children and I think this country has lost a lot in that....And I think industry has lost a lot because you got no continuity. I mean I remember when Rolls Royce crashed in 1971 and I was a member of our union and... I had to handle the redundancies on our side, they...Lucas's panicked and they got rid of 1,000 people overnight and the factory manager had to go round to a gear cutter...a fellow who worked as a gear cutter and he pleaded with him to come back to work because we hadn't...they hadn't got a gear cutter and he stood on his doorstep, this fellow did he says "I've realized there is life after work and I am enjoying what I am doing now and I told you and told you and told you that there was nobody to take my place" and I think you lost something there. I remember a very good designer sitting in front of me at Lucas Aerospace telling the gaffer of the office I am retiring in two years...18 months, then six months later, I am retiring in 18 months, not to say, to remind him to get a whip round for a present, it was just that he needed somebody to sit with him and try and extract some of the information he had got in his brain for the next generation of things. And they...I thought it was really stupid...they sat somebody with him for the last day of his working life. And what a waste, what an absolute waste- you can't...I can't begin to describe how stupid I thought that was. Sit somebody with somebody for a few hours and try and extract what he has spent a lifetime perfecting. I think that sums it up basically.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁷Alan Saunders, interviewed by Helen Lloyd, 2000. Transcript. Millenibrum, Ms2255/2/2015 Birmingham Central Library, Birmingham, U.K.

Much like a language, a culture, or a ritual, industrial skill-sets allowed individuals to communicate with one another. Forming a relationship with the past, these bodies of knowledge were passed on like heirlooms, marked personal growth, and expressed an individual's professional autonomy within the structured discourse of industrial production. Automation, on the other hand, was like the death of a personally transmitted language. A product of commercial or social interactions, when a body of knowledge ceases to have a purpose or an outlet for expression it falls into disuse. If no efforts of preservation are made, or when those possessing the knowledge die, it becomes lost. Like the loan-words of extinct languages, certain techniques may survive within the context of the new structure, but they become detached from their origins, existing as palimpsests or reminders of loss.

For men like Alan Saunders, the replacement of human beings with machines awakened a realization that the world he had come of age in was changing forever. Similarly, Colin Davis remembered:

You know, people are inventing machines, and they're doing jobs for people and it's frightening when you look to the future, say grandchildren and things like that, like I say there was ten thousand people there and little by little these machines were being made like robot type things and they would do the jobs of people. Well you know, they started buying machines that would do the jobs of people and now...it makes you wonder whether in another ten years time, another decade whether there's going to be about ten people working at Cadburys and they will go in the morning and they'll press the green button and start the machines and they'll probably finish at five and press the red button and there'll be ten people running a factory or something like that. But it's hard to get your head round and think well, if there's only ten people running, and it's not just

Cadbury's it's every factory and it's all over the world, it's society the way it is today, and nobody seems to be able to see, well the people who are not at work, they won't be able to have the money to buy the stuff that these ten people are running the factories with and it's a little bit frightening.²⁴⁸

Interviewed in 2000, Mr. Davis had worked at Cadbury's for 16 years until he was declared redundant in 1968. Recognizing the socio-economic trends of deindustrialization in both his experience as a worker and Cadbury's plight as a company, Mr. Davis' interview illustrates how automation was and is an ongoing process. A symptom of capitalism's reliance on technology to increase productivity, automation in the initial stages of deindustrialization was often the last gasp of air for the Midlands' dying industries. As I will discuss later in the chapter, the process of automation in the Midlands rarely introduced new technology, but rather was the delayed application of earlier innovations. This meant that for many workers, automation came far too late to save their jobs. Instead, in industries like car manufacturing and metal work, the final months of individuals' working lives were characterized by unfamiliar machinery, reduced responsibilities, and less direct control over their workplaces. An official of the National Union of Lock and Metal workers recalled:

The job satisfaction has been completely eroded. When I started when I was 21, we had a drawing, we sawed our own steel, we progressed our own machining, we marked it off and we did all the relevant parts; we could basically say that we had made a tool. Now because of the techniques of the day, you do one part of it; it takes four or five people to make a tool. The techniques of the job have destroyed the job satisfaction. It can't go

²⁴⁸Colin Davis, interviewed by Helen Lloyd, 2000. Transcript. Millenibrum,MS2255/2/063, Birmingham Central Library, Birmingham, U.K.

back, engineers are getting new techniques every day. These spark erosion machines are tape controlled, the computer takes the tape off the drawing, the tape is fed into the machine and all the chap has got to do is to see that it is running safe and the functions are functioning. In whatever field we're in- industry, business, whatever strata of society we belong to, money is the governing power at the present time.²⁴⁹

Expressing a resentment at the changes sweeping through the workplace, automation offended the sensibilities of many working-class men. Whether it was losing the craftsmanship created by the slowness of open-hearth furnaces or the precision of glove-making, automation not only further detached workers from the process of production, it restricted their ability to take pride in their work.

For others, automation simply made life less interesting. Designed to conceal the traces of labour from production, automation made it difficult for individuals to challenge themselves physically or respond to work-borne problems with spontaneity. More tangible than existential fears concerning a trade's future, these responses to automation indicate, at least on some level, an incompatibility between identity and the Midlands' changing definition of work. As working-class identities were intimately linked to the body and physical labor, automation challenged those relationships by replacing the energy of the worker with the hum of the machine. Stating that work became less interesting following the introduction of transfer machines at his factory, the memories of a car worker from Coventry indicate the extent to which automation rearranged this worker's concept of time:

²⁴⁹ Hedges & Beynon, 12

Q: Mm. But with this, these new transfer machines at that time what, did that, that affected your job presumably? And you had to learn how to...?

A: It effected my job quite considerably yes in that we were tooling for individual machines and doing individual jigs which would say, you'd put a small component into a jig and drill 2 or 3 holes in it and you take it out out it, turn it through 90 degrees in another jig on another machine and another operator and drill holes, 2 or 3 in that. And then cut a bit off on a third jig. So we were designing for one say simple component maybe 7 or 8 jigs. Say 3 or 4 days a jig. And a lot of work. With the advent of transfer machines and more and more automation those jigs would come in with the machine. You wouldn't have, need individual jigs for individual machines. You'd just need a work holding, something to hold the thing as it went in at one end and it would be automatic. So they would come, all come in with the machine so we weren't needed to draw jigs to that extent...²⁵⁰

Valuing speed more than accuracy, quantity more than quality, some members of the working class expressed their belief that automation undid the familial atmosphere of the workplace. Learning the job as trainees and taking great interest in how machines worked and what they produced, automation disrupted the familiar. Fraught with anxieties concerning the uncertainty of life following automation, it is important to distinguish that while many members of the working class remembered the initial stages of deindustrialization unfavourably, others embraced it.

Q: So you both worked at Salters?

Both: Yes

Q: How long did you work there for?

²⁵⁰anonymous interview, interviewed by Paul Thompson, 1986. Transcript. Coventry Car Workers' Oral History Project, PA 1647, #83, Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry, U.K.

Mr. Shaw: I worked there for 31 years from 1937 until 1968 when I was made redundant.

Mrs. Shaw: In all I think I have done about 25 years. In two periods

Q: So when did you finish work?

Mrs. Shaw: 14 years ago I was 60 then in 1986. the last lap lasted 18 years

Q: Were you working full-time?

Mr. Shaw: Yes. She was mainly in the Salter place on Spring Road off Spon Lane, and then I was transferred to the top of Spon Lane at S.I.M. I did all the pinions. It was an interesting job, I enjoyed it. Especially when we had the new machine come in.²⁵¹

Describing the excitement of a new machine at work without a trace of bitterness or longing in his voice, the prospect of learning and adapting to new technology made Mr. Shaw's job *more* interesting and dynamic. Reflecting a larger trend in the oral histories collected for this thesis, Mr. Shaw's memories indicate that redundancies and increased mechanization were positive experiences for some members of the working class. A nuance in an indistinct mosaic, the widely dissimilar responses to the initial stages of deindustrialization readdress the nature of working-class identity. Differences in ages, skill-sets, schooling, workplaces, political beliefs, and job stability all influenced an individual's experience and interpretation of the past. Weathered by the drudgery and squalor of a lifetime's work, dog-weary men welcomed automation as it offered a respite from the back-breaking days of the past. Mr. H. of G. Ltd remembered:

Q: Going back to what you said earlier about how the one man was depressed about how the work was changing...did many of the old employees feel that?

²⁵¹ Mr. and Mrs. Shaw, interviewed by Sabine Skae, May 2nd, 2000. Transcript, Memories Made in Sandwell, Sandwell Community History and Archives Service, Smethwick, U.K.

A: No, not a great deal. I mean my father for instance, he worked there as a beam man to start with...and after the war,...my dad changed from the currying to the Drum House...and they were doing in drums what used to take week of work with the vats and they could do it in four hours. He never expressed any wish to go back to the old days. In the old days it was really hard, it was hard work. I mean they had to do everything by hand.²⁵²

A patchwork of histories that this thesis has previously addressed, namely the generational structure of work and the psychological repercussions of automation, Mr. H.'s interview illustrates how contesting working-class experiences co-exist and interact through memory. Interpreting his co-workers' lack of indignation as a product of the difficulties they had experienced in the past, for these men, automation represented a definitive break.

Sharing similarities with a larger paradigm of workers who had grown malcontent with their shop-floor's old machines, wasteful business practices, and poor industrial relations, Mr. H's memories reveal the complexity of the Midlands' response to deindustrialization. For Mrs. L.F. Strain of W.D. and Co. LTD in Walsall, automation and its subsequent redundancies, not only provided a break with the past's difficult working conditions, it inspired individuals to find better work:

Q: Interesting. The firm was really going downhill, wasn't it?

A: As I say, whether it was the recession which finally finished it, I don't know, whether they could have kept going longer, because bear in mind while we were at Bentley Mill Lane they had a hundred year centenary, so the place had been running quite a long

²⁵²Harry Hill, interviewed by Jack Haddock. Transcript, The Walsall Oral History Collection, 426/200, Walsall Local History Centre, Walsall, U.K.

while and yet it had folded in '82...Dickins no longer exists, but the Three Spires Works does, I notice that there's a carpet place in our old place...

Q: It must have been a great blow to you when the firm finally closed down?

A: Well it was in a way but I'm afraid that most people had started to lose interest any way.

Q: Were people leaving anyway and going into other employment?

A: Well, if they could better themselves yes, and they could better themselves nine times out of ten.²⁵³

Broadening the narrative of deindustrialization beyond the boundaries of loss and dislocation, the experiences of individuals who responded with indifference or excitement to change, does not discredit the unhappy experiences of others. Class is a conglomerate of identities. Not everyone lost their jobs or remained unemployed. Not everyone defined themselves through work. However, as deindustrialization reorganized the social, economic and cultural character of working-class communities, the realities of these upheavals were unavoidable. Intricately expressing the diversity of automation's impact on everyday life, oral histories also can help to contextualize individuals within larger, national histories. Making use of its impressionistic qualities, oral histories can reveal how Great Britain's failure to implement industrial automation fully was experienced in the everyday.

²⁵³Mrs. L.F. Strain, interviewed by Jack Haddock. Transcript, The Walsall Oral History Collection, 426/227, Walsall Local History Centre, Walsall, U.K.

The Queen's Naked Army Marches on: Empire, Arrogance, and Economy

Between 1972 and 1982 the compound growth rate of car production in the United Kingdom fell 6.1 percent.²⁵⁴ A result of the delayed and incomplete application of Fordist organization and practices, automobile manufacturers in the Midlands suffered from outdated machines, devolved styles of production and labor management, overmanning, underinvestment, an overly fragmented domestic market, and the proliferation of models and plants within the firms themselves.²⁵⁵ Experiencing a period of stagnation in the ten years prior to 1972, the reluctance of the British government to initiate a clear break with the comfortable and familiar methods of the past left Britain behind the fully automated car industries of Japan, Germany, the United States, Italy and Sweden. Expressed in the oral histories through workers' experiences with operating or witnessing the gradual introduction of earlier innovations, car workers confronted the realities of automation with resignation, anger, and relief. Frank Perry remembered:

FP: It was production workers that were going. And modern machines coming in.

Q: Yes. You're, the things that you were using, the machinery that you used, did that change?

FP: No.

Q: So what was the new machinery that was coming in?

FP: That was on the shop floor.

Q: Yes.

²⁵⁴ Sue Bowden & Paul Tyler, "Uncertainty and the Competitive Decline of the British Motor Industry: 1945-75" in *New Political Economy* 3 (1998), 107

²⁵⁵ Jonathan Zeitlin, "Reconciling Automation & Flexibility? Technology and Production in the Postwar British Motor Vehicle Industry" in *Enterprise & Society* 1 (2000), 10

FP: Yes, Whereas it, instead of doing one operation it would probably do four or five.

Q: Oh. What would it, meant making or...were there specific machines that were changed? Did they have a name?

FP: Now you've got me beat. What was the name? But a lot of them were German, the new machines that came in. I don't know I can't remember. You mean I suppose a multi operation machine.

Q: Hmm. When did they start introducing those?

FP: When did they start introducing them? I suppose they were starting to be introduced from the time that I went there. Very slowly.

Q: Do you think people realized what was happening? You know, what the threat...?

FP: I don't think there was a great deal of awareness. I think they were happy when they first came in for, rather than a few operations that a machine would make things easier for them. And because, when they first started I can remember there wasn't a reduction in the work force really. You know. But as they became more widely used that's when the reduction in the work force started.²⁵⁶

Impeded by material shortages and policies of austerity following the Second World War, the transition to mass-production strategies was diffuse and imbalanced. Some factories, like Austin Motor's Longbridge, underwent comprehensive renovations and aimed to automate unskilled positions like materials handling and production control between 1946 and 1951.²⁵⁷ However, aside from Britain's most prominent luxury firms, most of the country's automotive industry failed to embrace automation and became

²⁵⁶ Frank Perry, interviewed by Paul Thompson, 1986. Transcript. Coventry Car Workers Oral History Project, PA 1647 #46, Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry, U.K.

²⁵⁷ Zeitlin, "Reconciling Automation & Flexibility? Technology and Production in the Postwar British Motor Vehicle Industry", 20

uncompetitive both domestically and globally. Touched upon in Frank Perry's reminiscences of his working life, the uneven introduction of innovations like high throughput machinery and automatic transfer equipment forced some firms to rely on considerably older technology. This reluctance or unwillingness to fully modernize was not unique to the car industry. An anonymous worker from tractor manufacturer Massey Ferguson's stated:

Q: Mm. what I mean you were saying there's been a lot of changes in the plant since you've worked there, what what have been the major things?

A: Well the shedding of half the workforce for one.

Q: Yes.

A: We've had numerous managers from different places who've decided that their, their answer is the right one and they've all failed.

Q: What sort of...has that meant changes in the actual work?

A: New ideas, yes. Yes like we've got shortage problem no, I'll sort the shortage problem out in a couple weeks and there eight years later they still haven't done anything about it. They're just now getting into new technology in a big way and that's coming in, robots and things like that.

Q: Have they started introducing them?

A: Yes...Over the last two years they have.

Q: In which part of the factory?

A; We've got C. & C. machines in the machine shops and we've got robots in the paint shop spraying the tractors and now we've got on the heat box build in the assembly where they build, actually build their gear boxes they've now got automatic guided vehicles which go round the track, with a man standing on the side of it building the heat

box. And racking systems they've introduced sorts of things. And there's a lot more to come.

Q: Mm. is that, just been happening fairly recently?

A: Yes. the last two years they were way behind everybody else but then all of a sudden....Because you know Massey's went through that refinancing thing not so long ago where they were virtually bankrupt? The American, the Canadian government had to bail them out. Well the refinancing package that they did involved chopping a lot off the top

Q: Mm.

A: And it worked and they've now got money to invest in new technology.

Q: Was there, before that, before the last 2 years did the machinery change at all?

A; No

Q: So...

A: Very old and clapped out.

Q: Was it? Yes.

A:Yes.

Q: So it's stuff that had been there since the war then?

A: Oh yes, yes, very much so, yes.²⁵⁸

Propped up by the dollars of foreign governments after its brush with insolvency, the origins of delayed automation at Massey Ferguson can be explained in part by the psychological legacy of British imperialism. Virtually bankrupt at the end of the Second

²⁵⁸anonymous interview, interviewed by Paul Thompson, 1986. Transcript. Coventry Car Workers Oral History Project, PA 1647, #55, Herbert Art Museum and Gallery, Coventry, U.K.

World War, Britain received a loan of \$4 billion from the United States.²⁵⁹ Used to replenish the Bank of England's depleted gold reserves, the American loan allowed Britain to retain administrative and economic authority in the Sterling Area.²⁶⁰ Clinging to its past pretensions of global preeminence, the prioritizing of distant industries over its own infrastructure was only the first step in a succession of grave miscalculations. Receiving over \$2.7 billion in Marshall Aid from the United States between 1948 and 1951, the British government opted to concern itself with its continued presence in the Sterling area and securing the imports of timber, food, and tobacco rather than modernizing antiquated industrial infrastructure.²⁶¹ In 1952, after Marshall Aid had formally ended, Britain received another transfer of \$350 million from the United States.²⁶² Compensated for \$50 million under the Katz-Gaitskell agreement, the remaining \$300 million was used to assist the British military's build-up in accordance with the Mutual Security Act.²⁶³

Similar to treating aggressive gangrene with La Prarie foundation, the British government's infatuation with the past and its dreams of empire inscribed their industries with failure. Just as relevant to conceptualizing the relationship between automation and the everyday, the experience of using old machinery in the memories of the Midlands

²⁵⁹ Correlli Barnett, "The Wasting of Britain's Marshall Aid" *BBC, March 3rd 2011*, accessed August 5th 2016, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/modern/marshall_01.shtml

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.* The Sterling Area was a geographic area outside the United Kingdom where the Pound was pegged against national currencies or adopted as a national currency. Examples include Nigeria, Singapore, and Malaysia

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*

²⁶² Henry Pelling, *Britain and the Marshall Plan* (Houndsmill, Basingstoke, London: Macmillan Press, 1988), 121.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

working class indicates the extent into which British industry had fallen behind. Melvin Haigh remembered:

And I started there as I say when I was 21 and it was actually a fascinating place. The work was very hard, contrary to popular opinion. It wasn't just pressing buttons. We found that for instance when I was working on the machinery there, I was working on what they call a multi-driller and on it was this...we're talking now 19...about 1965 and on the side of the multi-driller was stamped 'made in 1914'. Bearing in mind that we used to get daily onslaught from papers like the Sun telling us how lazy we were and we couldn't keep up with the Japanese, well at that particular time the Germans and the Japanese had got what they called machinery, multi-machinery that actually turned out things sort of like in one, in a line of machines and there'd only be maybe two operators whereby we were working literally on First World War machinery. And it used to annoy us but we were supposed to turn out the same production and in actual fact we hadn't got a prayer of doing it.²⁶⁴

Revealing how historical structures are internalized by individuals, Melvin Haigh's memories of national identity, industrial competition, and the political role of media emphasize how automation, or the absence of automation, transformed working-class relationships to the everyday. Paradoxically threatened by both conditions of automation, the working class directly experienced the trickle down of Britain's post-war decisions. A car worker who was made redundant:

A:Leading up to Edwardes. Edwardes was seen as the final sort of hatchet man, you know, to really sort things out, it was a last attempt to hide that, whip the factory into line, or close it, which he did.

²⁶⁴ Melvin Haigh, interviewed by Helen Lloyd, 2000. Transcript. Millenibrum, MS2255/2/028, Birmingham Central Library, Birmingham, U.K.

Q: You said you saw the closure coming, I mean, you knew it was coming for...

A: Oh yeh, that's it, we couldn't, we couldn't hope to compete, even given, given complete shop floor co-operation, we could've literally have been running round in circles, but with the equipment we'd got, there was no way we could compete on a world wide scale, with...

Q: The machinery, you mean?

A: Yeh, with the kind of investment that other companies were getting.

Q: Were you aware of that?

A: Yeh, oh yeh.

Q: That there was no investment.

A: Yes, oh yeh.

Q: So the machinery was sort of out of date?

A: That's right, and as I saw it in some, in some SWP pamphlets, Chrysler was a museum full of antiquated machinery, and the same applied to the Standard, we were still working machines that had been built in the '30s, probably before that, and they had to compete against computerized assembly lines without any, without any labour.²⁶⁵

Deemed expendable, factories like the one described in the oral history above were left to rot in the scrapheap. Reorganizing the physical geography of industry and how work was experienced in the everyday, the initial stages of deindustrialization also challenged the internal structure of industry. As the Midlands working class began the belated process of automation, changes in management became a necessary reality. Replacing familiar faces with men who often held no connection to the factory and its community, it is important to analyze how these inter-work relationships were conceptualized.

²⁶⁵ anonymous interview, interviewed by Paul Thompson, 1986. Transcript. Coventry Car Workers Oral History Project. PA1647,#66, Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry, U.K.

Expressing his displeasure with the changes in management style, Longbridge worker Barry Matthews recalled:

A: Yes, the earlier management which I have already broached on were very hands on, they knew the job inside out and it worked towards the managers' benefit because obviously there was nothing you could say about the job that he didn't know, so there was no way of hoodwinking him or pulling the wool over his eyes. Unfortunately, the same isn't true today, we have managers now and I hate to say it, they see their job as delegating. That is ok up to a point but if you have got a problem and you happen to say to a particular manager, well you know I have got this problem, I am stuck, how do I...you know, how do I overcome this problem? Oh well, I don't know you sort it out as best you can, that is the sort of response that you get now compared to 20,30 years ago.

Q: When did that change come?

A: Oh that is hard to say, but I would think probably mid-80s. There was this notion that if people were university educated they would, you know, they would do a better job and where that is true up to a point, administration wise, I probably would agree, they are very good, but where you have a problem with the job itself then, puff, you know you sort of paddle your own canoe, it has certainly changed.²⁶⁶

Dating the change in his own workplace to the mid-1980s, Matthews' observations are an example of how work had been changed by the language of deindustrialization. As communication in working-class communities was structured by work, automation and deindustrialization threatened individuals' ability to communicate with one another. For Matthews, the new management's inability to solve problems or think on their feet was a

²⁶⁶ Barry Matthews, interviewed by Helen Lloyd, 2000. Transcript. Millenibrum, MS2255/2/028, Birmingham Central Library, Birmingham, U.K.

language issue. Detached from labour and traditional skill-sets, management no longer needed to be personally skilled at the job, or work up from the shop-floor to their position. In a position of power without acquiring the language traditionally needed for that role, an entire system of communication was lost.

Restructuring communication within the factory, automation and deindustrialization also held wider implications for working-class communities. As the language of work had changed, relationships to authority, co-workers and the very concept of work itself became redefined. An Unbrako worker remembered:

Q: Did the style of management change, you know, in terms of,

A: Oh very much, very much so, yeh. Before that we had this sort of foreman that used to come down and, if they wanted anything, you know a bit of overtime or something, for instance, arm round the shoulders, you know, "Do you think you can possibly manage to come in this weekend? You know, "Lads we need some extra lay shafts out", or whatever, you know just do the best you can, sort of thing, you know, you do't have to get, keep to any particular number. The whole attitude changed when the measured day work system came in, you know, they could come down and ask you why you weren't working. If a bloke was having a fag or a cup of tea, or something, and tea breaks were really tied down, if they said ten minutes they meant it. I mean, I was caught mashing up a couple minutes early once, and the same foreman caught me three times, a new foreman, by the way, he wasn't one of the old crowd, why was i mashing up early? Did i realize that i could get disciplinary action taken against me because of this, and all that rubbish, you know. Of course after a while, I got past caring, and I just told them, that if

they didn't like it they could sack me. I could never understand why they didn't sack me at the time.²⁶⁷

Similarly, Wolverhampton brewery worker Bill Werton reflected on the correlation between automation and poor industrial relations:

Q: So how have the working conditions changed since you started?

A: They've changed an awful lot... I only go down to the brewery if I want an allowance, but as far as the brewer is concerned now it's all automated. Whereby we used to get a man to put them on the rail, they still do that now, but the cask now goes on a roller and when it comes to the siphon it automatically finds its way to the entrance of the rollers and the siphon comes own and finds the shaft hole. There's no messing about as far as finding the shaft hole...they used to rack approximately, in my day, 80 barrels to the 1/2 hour but now they can do it in 20 minutes and they don't work half as hard as the blokes used to do, say 40 years ago.

Q: So how do you think the industry's changed?

A: As far as I'm concerned now the industry when I knew it to what it is now is vastly different because there is no...contact with the bosses to what there was when I used to be in the brewery, no contact at all because men start at 6 o'clock in the morning and they're probably finished at 11 o'clock and they don't see any bosses none at all.²⁶⁸

Summary

An intersection of technological innovation, personal memory, and the lingering psychology of Britain's experience of empire, the Midlands' diverse response to increasing automation indicates the extent into which deindustrialization challenged the structure of working-class iden-

²⁶⁷ anonymous interview, interviewed by Paul Thompson, 1986. Transcript. Coventry Car Workers Oral History Project. PA1647,#66, Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry, U.K.

²⁶⁸ Bill Werton, unknown interviewer/ date, Transcript, Wolverhampton Heritage Project, DX- 869, Wolverhampton Archives and Local Studies, Wolverhampton, U.K.

tity. Delayed and incomplete in a British context, the process of automation abruptly redefined working-class relationships to work and threatened to dissolve the language individuals used to navigate through the everyday. A last-ditch effort to prevent insolvency, responses to automation not only illustrate the impact of British economic policy on the individual, but reveal the inevitability of loss in capitalism's structure. If Britain had modernized its' industries in the years following World War II, what would have become of the Midlands' working-class communities? Would anything have changed? While complete modernization would have allowed the Midlands industry to remain competitive for longer, loss would be still written in the future of its workers. Skill-sets would still have been lost, machines would still have replaced bodies, and feelings of nostalgia or longing would still have been pervasive. A symptom of impending deindustrialization, automation attempted to reorganize the Midlands industry by forcing smaller firms out. In order to further understand deindustrialization's impact on the psychological landscape of the Midlands, an analysis of industrial mergers and liquidations is necessary.

Chapter 4: A Loss of Intimacy: The experience of Industrial mergers and liquidations

We used to produce water fittings so it was er from the raw ingot, melting the raw ingot down and pouring the hot metal into a die when we produced a water fitting and we, as I say, I stayed there for about three or four years, about 1960 to 1963 it's very difficult to...I eventually, things got pretty quiet there so I moved on to another company doing the same sort of thing which was James Barwell which was in Great Hampton street and I worked there well, Delta Metal eventually took it over you know. The bigger companies then were starting taking over smaller companies and, you know, Delta Metal was one of the companies in the Midlands which was taking over quite a lot of small firms.²⁶⁹

Accelerating in the mid to late 1970s, the United Kingdom, and the Midlands in particular, experienced a prolonged phase of industrial contraction. Swallowing up smaller firms through strategic mergers and liquidations, deindustrialization left the Midlands in physical ruin. Turning former sites of industrial production into emptied wastelands, the loss of the region's smaller firms also had pronounced psychological, cultural, and societal repercussions. Analyzing how symbolic conceptions of community were fractured by deindustrialization, this chapter will evaluate how the loss of smaller firms impacted workplace intimacy, pride, identity, and memory. Arguably a natural progression of capitalism's unceasing desire to expand, the experience of mergers and liquidations was nevertheless distinctly dissimilar to any previous periods of loss, or unemployment in the region's history. Preserved in the names and dates of the companies that were absorbed or folded, this protracted scope of loss cannot be expressed in a list detailing times and places. As such, this chapter does not unfold chronologically, but rather will emphasize what smaller firms meant to the working class through underscoring their integral role in forming networks between individuals and the wider world. Us-

²⁶⁹Desmond Hughes, interviewed by Helen Lloyd, 2000. Transcript. Millenibrum, MS2255/2/135, Birmingham Central Library, Birmingham, U.K.

ing oral history, ephemera, memories of football, and local hotels to express how smaller firms impacted working class conceptions of everyday life, this chapter addresses the ways in which the past is internalized and remembered by individuals. As these smaller firms became lost, so to were the bonds that had helped tether entire communities to one another.

Constellations of factories: Football and the Intimacy of Industry

Where is history, where will it go? At its site, unable to be contained, the past resounds outwards. Unfolding like the roots of a great forest, history cannot be worked through from start to finish. Instead history is piecemeal. It begins and ends at thousands of different places. In writing, historians must select where history is, where the traces of the past are felt most directly, where its impressions can be analyzed and made sense of. An interaction of perspectives, the historical fabric of the Midlands lost factories cannot be neatly organized into an intelligible narrative without leaving some threads out. As memory, statistics, or documentation provide neither a limpid nor guaranteed passport to the past, this history of deindustrialization is not only incomplete but selective. Many firms that were swept away by deindustrialization have little to no records or recorded oral histories, making it difficult to reflect the intimacy of these once dynamic environments. However, as deindustrialization decidedly marked the Midlands regional geography, psychology, and everyday life, the sociological importance of some dissolved firms can be discerned through the ephemeral remnants of industry.

Preserved ephemera, such as works football match reports, can underline the human relationships firms held to their communities. An example of this is the usefulness of the Roy Yeoman cup in explaining the importance of Wolverhampton's manufac-

turer Contactor Switchgear to its employees. Founded in October 1936 by Harry Rayner and Jeanne Liwiski, Contactor Switchgear's fifty-year history was defined by expansions, take-overs, prolonged financial uncertainty and, finally, closure in 1986.²⁷⁰ Exemplifying a common historical arc for many of the Midlands smaller firms, by using archival resources we can learn when Contactor was opened, who founded it, how many people were employed, how successful it was, who it traded with, what it made, and how it responded to changes in the economic landscape.²⁷¹ While this provides Contactor with a legible and succinct history, it reduces the dynamism of factory life to a chronology of events. Over-reliance on official documentation crystallizes the past and fixes it to a site. Incorporating available ephemera and oral history to underline how the influence of an event or place can travel unknown distances, for an unknown time, our perception of the past is broadened. Bernard Startin of Walsall remembered:

On the evening of the 4th May 1957, after Aston Villa had famously beaten Manchester United in the F.A. Cup Final that afternoon at Wembley, Contactor Switchgear F.C. (Wolverhampton) played Britool (Wolverhampton) in the Roy Yeoman Cup Final. This match was played on a very pleasant sunny evening on the Mitchells & Butlers ground in Springfield Road, Wolverhampton. A match report read as follows:-

"Switchgear beat Britool for Yeoman Cup: Beating Britool by four goals to two on Saturday, Contactor Switchgear won the Wolverhampton Works League's Yeoman Memorial Cup. They took the lead in the 15th minute through Startin who scored from a

²⁷⁰ "Main Assembly Bay, Contactor Switchgear Ltd., Wolverhampton", P/3975 Wolverhampton Archives & Local Studies, Wolverhampton, U.K.

²⁷¹ David Rose et al, "Economic Restructuring: the British Experience" *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 475 (1984), 137-57 By the mid 80s England was experiencing accelerating factory closures. Recording 12,466 company liquidations in 1983, the rate of closure had increased 12 percent from the previous year and 51 percent from 1981

20 yard drive and he obtained a second 20 minutes later. Britool could make no impression on a quick tackling defence, but reduced the lead when Grafton converted a penalty after 40 minutes. Contactor increased their lead through Lockley. Britool rallied, Pagett scoring an opportunist goal. However, Henry put the issue beyond doubt with a fourth goal after 75 minutes. Mr. S.J. Mercer, Chairman of the league, presented the cup". It was a double celebration for us as we also won the Wolverhampton Works League Division IV title that year. We were told, although I cannot authenticate this, that the cup was named in memory of Roy Yeoman who was a local amateur goalkeeper. He had apparently been injured in a match and had subsequently died from those injuries. If someone who reads this article can confirm or correct this information, that would be great. It would also be nice to know if this cup is still played for today, or if its whereabouts are known. In 1957, Contactor Switchgear Ltd., was a very prosperous medium/large electrical control gear manufacturer, employing at its peak five hundred (plus) people. It was a very happy place to work during its heyday in the 1940's, 1950's, and 1960's. Very regrettably it was taken over in 1969 and a number of times after that, and finally went out of business in the late 1980's. Britool are of course a world famous tool manufacturer and its name still exists today. I hope this half a century old reminiscence may bring back some happy memories to people who worked at Contactor during these times. I was employed there from 1949 until 1969.²⁷²

If we were to conceptualize Mr. Startin's memories as a flowchart or a map, Contactor Switchgear would be the cornerstone for a boundless network of affinities. Providing the platform for its workers to integrate themselves into communities and relationships un-

²⁷²Bernard Startin, "Double cup success - for Contactor Switchgear F.C. and Aston Villa - on the same day half a century ago!" *Black Country Bugle*, January 25th, 2007, accessed August 13th, 2016, <http://www.blackcountrybugle.co.uk/double-cup-success-contactor-switchgear-fc-aston-villa-day-half-century-ago/story-20152797-detail/story.html>

available to them otherwise, Mr. Startin's participation in works football encompasses many of the historical patterns and constructs that defined the region. For example, through Contactor's football team, Mr. Startin came into contact with other men of similar class background and age. Corporeal representatives of local businesses, playing on the football field in competitions such as the Roy Yeoman Cup, secured conceptions of community and identity by exposing individuals to worlds beyond their own work gates. Like working men's clubs, or bars, or football stadiums, works football made individuals conscious that they were involved in a larger network, that there were men just like them who worked at other firms in their neighbourhoods, across the Midlands, and throughout Great Britain. Lapping the landscape like a flood, the details of Mr. Startin's memories also reveal how the fates of many of Wolverhampton's firms were to be coalesced into dust by deindustrialization.

Taking place "on a very pleasant sunny evening on the Mitchell and Butler's ground on Springfield Road", the Roy Yeoman Cup final of 1957 involved three firms that were to be profoundly changed by deindustrialization. In 1969 Contactor Switchgear was taken over by M.T.E and stopped producing its own parts. In 1974 M.T.E was taken over by R.H.P. which planned to demolish Contactor's Wolverhampton factory before Lawrence Scott and Electromotors of Norwich purchased the company.²⁷³ In 1980 Lawrence Scott became incorporated in Mining Supplies and by 1986 another takeover finally sent Contactor Switchgear to the scrapheap.²⁷⁴ Their competitors in the Cup final, Britool, endured a similar ordeal. Taken over by Sheffield-based tool-making

²⁷³ M.T.E.- Machine Tool Electrics. R.H.P- Ransome Hoffmann Pollard

²⁷⁴Main Assembly Bay, Contactor Switchgear Ltd., Wolverhampton", P/3975

conglomerate James Neill in 1969, Britool moved to Cannock from Bushbury little more than a decade later.²⁷⁵ Even the field the two teams competed on was to become a symbol of the region's economic upheaval. Sponsored by Mitchells & Butlers according to Mr. Startin, the field would have actually been owned by Springfield Brewery for the 1957 Roy Yeoman cup. Not Mitchells & Butlers' property until 1960, the firm was taken over again by Bass in 1961, where it functioned as a brewery until 1990.²⁷⁶ The physical landscapes of Startin's memories are not the only portents of deindustrialization's trauma; consider his memory itself. Outlining how he conceptualized the events of his own life, the absences in Startin's memory suggest deindustrialization's impact on relationships to the past. Separated from the intimacies of his region's industry, Startin wasn't sure if the Roy Yeoman Cup still existed or was still played for.

Demonstrating the objective limitations of using memory in writing history, these imperfections offer other riches such as how history becomes internalized. Drawing a parallel between his own success on the football field and the unexpected victory of Aston Villa in the 1957 F.A. Cup final, Startin uses football to mark the passing of time. Using the F.A. Cup to contextualize a personal accomplishment, Startin's memories are an example of the difficulty in isolating working-class relationships to football from experiences of the everyday. What begins as a memory of a football match transforms into a statement on deindustrialization, regional identity, memory, and Contactor Switchgear's enduring role in one individual's life. Contextualized by Mr. Startin's football memories,

²⁷⁵ "General Metal and Hollowware, British Tool and Engineering Co. Ltd.: Britool Ltd." *History Website*, accessed August 15th, 2016, <http://www.historywebsite.co.uk/Museum/metalware/britool/britool.htm>

²⁷⁶ K. Davies & TW Hartland, *Mitchells and Butlers: A History of Capel Hill Brewery 1878-2002* (Smethwick: Smethwick Heritage Centre, 2003), 1.

the history of the Midlands mergers and liquidations becomes grounded in lived experience. Through the use of ephemera and oral history, the numbers and years of corporate relocations and disbanding are no longer faceless, they become imaginable.

Losing Place: The Defamiliarized Community

A synecdoche of how industry bound individuals to their community, the past and one another, the Roy Yeoman cup is just one layer, one ripple in the history of the Midlands and Contactor Switchgear. The immensity of historical possibility is almost incomprehensible. A cartography of Mr. Startin's memories could expand to include more and more couplings rippling outwards, further underscoring how Contactor Switchgear and firms like it profoundly shaped their communities. Demonstrating the seemingly limitless ways deindustrialization restructured the Midlands social networks through their physical dissolution of industry, these ripples or affiliations became discontinued or isolated. One of the only social relationships that remained physically uninterrupted by deindustrialization was football. In the memories of Mr. Startin, Aston Villa's F.A. Cup victory was a method of remembrance, a way of organizing what Contactor Switchgear meant to him. In attempting to analyze the feelings of uncertainty and melancholia that accompanied the mergers and liquidations of industrial firms during the years of deindustrialization, it is easy to become overwhelmed. Unrecorded or obscured by memory, the private contours of many workplaces are not available. Necessarily incomplete and selective, the historical memory of deindustrialization is dependent upon firms like Contactor Switchgear. Made intelligible by Startin's memories, the complex role of Contactor Switchgear in the lives of its employees – if indeed Startin is a case-in-point – is made explicit by the extensive oral reflections of Malcolm Palmer:

I worked for Contactor Switchgear Ltds, Blakenhall, Wolverhampton for thirty five years in which time I saw a happy efficient family firm prosper and grow and then decline through a series of take-overs. As a loyal workforce we always believed that we would survive, that we would go on re-emerging from these take-overs like a phoenix rising from the ashes but in the end that was not the case. Contactor Switchgear had started in 1936 when two men, Harry Rayner and Jeanne Liwski acquired a licence to manufacture switchgear to the design of a French firm- La Telemecanique Electrique. Including the founders, the firm began with a workforce of eight but they had a good product and the high cost of tooling and setting up production paid off. Work began in premises in Moorfield Road- a part of Wolverhampton- associated with many famous industrial enterprises. The machine shop established in 1943 was since used by Sunbeam to build their 1920s record card . Many people who joined the firm as it progressed stayed for the rest of their working lives- it was that sort of place. One old chap I knew as a foreman in the Test department had arrived in 1938 and he was a genius with electrical switchgear- he knew it outside in and inside out, and was treated like an adopted son by the founders. We prided ourselves that we built the “Rolls Royce” of switchgear, even though we never became as mighty as the giants like GEC and English Electric. Of course there had been another company in Wolverhampton in that field- the Electric Construction Company- and before the war they tried to prevent their employees leaving and coming to Contactor! My first acquaintance with Contactor Switchgear was just after the War. It was before I had left school and I started travelling about with my uncle in his coal lorry. About 1948/49 we used to call at Moorfield Road to collect scrap from Contactor. It was a fascinating place. There were the Sunbeam presses where they had been making trolley buses, later I saw Villiers motor bikes coming off the production line, and I remember seeing lines of “Yeomen of England” tractors made by Turner’s

standing in Moorfield Road. Nowadays we would think of the area as an industrial estate and obviously it had been a prime German target during the war. Many old Contactor employees entertained me with their stories of fire-watching and the Home Guard.

I started work at with Contactor Switchgear on 1st January 1951- straight from school. For the first three months I worked in the stores which was quite a good training as it familiarized me with all the components used in our products. After that I was transferred to the Machine Shop where I spent the next nine months. At the time I was sent to college on a one day release and two evenings basis as part of my apprentice training. I had such a good report from the college that the management decided to offer me a vacancy that existed in the Test Department. So I worked for three months on simple testing, but seeing the finished panels is quite a different thing when you are expected to know what goes on inside them! I was still very much a trainee so I was moved to the Sub- Assembly department, and at last all the knowledge I was gaining began to fall into place. I spent five or six years in that department learning how to read wiring diagrams and schemes, and engineering drawings. At Contactor we used to tailor-make equipment to the customer's requirements- we didn't really make finished items on a production line. It wasn't like making soap powder! There were certain standard components and standard lines we could make in reasonable quantities, but most switchgear was made to order and we were proud of its quality- much of the equipment we made then is still working today-forty years later. I moved from assembly back into Testing and stayed there until 1959. The nature of the firm's work caused problems in maintaining its flow. We worked on a monthly basis and everything seemed to happen towards the end of the month as we tried to get everything out. The last week of each month was panic stations, followed by a slack period as we waited for the next build up of work from the shop floor! In October 1957, the firm celebrated its 21st Birthday- and

we were all entertained at the directors' expense at a dinner at Wolverhampton Civic Hall. By then the company had almost six hundred employees. Typical of the family atmosphere of the business was the fact that we also had works trips- but at the company's expense- not paid for by the social club like at some other firms. By 1959 the company had become so big they decided to build a new works at Leominster in Herefordshire. I think they dreamed of building houses and establishing a company based- community out in the country. My father, who was foreman in the Sheet Steel department, where we made our own panels and cases for the Switchgear was moved down to Leominster- so we all had to go! For a company that had prospered, and in which people were happy to work, the turning point came in 1969. From then on it was a "downhill slide" We were taken over by MTE. We had to stop making our own components and use theirs. The factory at Leominster was closed and 120 people were made redundant. Harry Rayner had already passed away and Jeanne Liwski was approaching retirement. MTE brought in their own directors. We carried on until 1974, when MTE was swallowed up by a firm that made ball bearings- RHP. They decided to sell our original 1936 buildings and probably would have sold the lot had it not been for the fact that a Norwich firm, with which we had long done business, stepped in and saved us from closure. By 1984 we were down to a workforce of about 121 but work seemed to be picking up slightly. There was even a little overtime that made people happy. The management was very loathe to make any pay rises, and if they did it was balanced by further redundancies. In 1985 they announced we would have to go into a three day week- unheard of in the company's history. we were invited to take a gamble- work three days a week for three months and see if work picked up to avoid further redundancies. We lose money by only working three days a week but we felt at least we were keeping our jobs. That lasted from October 1985 until February 1986, and although

we had lost out financially, we felt the gamble had paid off and work had picked up again. In July 1986 MS announced that we were to be sold off. These changes were always supposed to be well kept secrets but the shop floor could usually sense impending changes and accurately predict matters that we were not supposed to know anything about! Really you didn't need a degree to suspect what was going on. It is easy to spot rats deserting sinking ships! On 1st July we had new owners and on 1st August it was announced that we would have to close and that everybody would finish on 31st October 1986. Some people, by then had worked for the company for over forty years- and as it turned out even the 120 of us still there were not going to survive that last three months, We were told that 36 of us had to be off the ground within a fortnight. If there was any argument the company would send in a heavy gang over the weekend to clear the factory. Take it or leave it.²⁷⁷

Worth quoting in its entirety, Malcolm Palmer's warm reflections of the time he spent working for Contactor Switchgear reveal the trajectory and structure of one man's experience during deindustrialization. Tracing Mr. Palmer's entrance into the workplace directly from school until he was laid off in the late 1980s, Palmer characterized Contactor Switchgear as a workplace attuned to the needs of its workers. Providing opportunities to learn new skill-sets, earn promotion, and gain lifetime employment, Contactor Switchgear's culture of intimacy engendered a deep-seated bond between the company and its employees. Palpable in the memories of Malcolm Palmer, the pride individuals took in their work before deindustrialization was a defining characteristic of everyday life. Tailor-making equipment to meet their customers' requirements, favourably comparing the quality of their switchgear to Rolls Royce, and lauding management for their fre-

²⁷⁷ Ned Williams, 63-64

quent all-expense paid work trips and dinners, Palmer's memories equate feelings of pride with familiarity and meaningful work. As the process of deindustrialization swallowed up smaller firms through mergers and liquidations, feelings of intimacy were replaced with apathy and frustration. No longer expected to perform with the detail and craftsmanship that had defined Contactor Switchgear to both its employees and clientele, changes such as the discontinuation of component production interrupted the familiarity and comfort of day-to-day life. Separating workers from their source of pride, work became about survival, about producing as much as the company could to stay afloat. As if being sent into exile in their own house, the disjunction between the way things had been, and what they had become was difficult for many members of the working class to accept. Disregarding the principles that Contactor Switchgear had prided itself upon, the act of work no longer reflected the worker.

If we interpret the memories of Bernard Startin and Malcolm Palmer as landscapes of interaction, firms such as Villiers, Britool, Sunbeam, and Turners reflect how the Midlands' industrial heritage shaped everyday life. Forming a regionally specific identity, employment at places like Contactor Switchgear helped to position individuals in their communities. It rendered the past legible. As deindustrialization dissolved or changed the structure of many of these local companies, what had been symbolic, in earlier times, of communal identity became lost and non-representative. What constituted community and how it was imagined, became rewritten. Deeply intertwined with individuals' everyday experience, symbolic representations of workplace intimacy extended into the buildings of the community itself. As mentioned in the memories of Mr. Palmer, local halls or hotels often hosted work events, galas, and lighthearted get-togethers.

Wolverhampton's Molineux hotel was one such building. Converted from a mansion into a pleasure grounds and then a public house by Oliver McGregor in the late 1860s, the Molineux hotel became a stage for the intersecting relationships of work, leisure, and family. Nigel Williams, an ex-Wolverhampton Wanderers apprentice, remembered:

The Molineux Hotel was a magical place full of life, laughter, music, and companionship!

The Molineux Hotel was a great meeting place for a huge cross section of 1970s

Wolverhampton. The clientele included Wolves apprentices, students from the then

Wolverhampton Polytechnic; the stage of Wolverhampton Art gallery, staff from the

Tarmac office just down the road and construction workers from nearby building sites.

The Hotel, like the rest of Wolverhampton was vibrant. The dartboard was in constant

use; the juke box in the corner never stopped, with a huge variety of tracks to cover the

cross-section of tastes throughout the bar. ²⁷⁸

Housing meetings for the Wolverhampton society of chartered accountants, the Britanic Insurance Company, and W. Butler & Co, among others, the Molineux Hotel catered to clientele of diverse class and age. Located close to Wolverhampton Wanderers F.C.'s stadium, memories of the Molineux Hotel are interlaced with football. Demonstrating how football informed daily life in Wolverhampton Avis Bargery recalled:

Whilst doing my Nurses training at Wolverhampton royal hospital, my friend Sally Tinkler

had her 21st birthday at Molineux Hotel in 1958 or 1959. I thought what a lovely place it

was. When I married on April 28th 1962 at St. Peters, we had our wedding reception at

the Molineux Hotel. Guests were able to walk across from St. Peters. It was very busy, as

²⁷⁸ Nigel Williams, unknown interviewer/ date *Molineux Memories* LS/L92MOLp, Wolverhampton Archives and Local Studies, Wolverhampton, U.K.

Wolves were playing at home. Billy Wright's era! The reception was upstairs in a large room.²⁷⁹

Similarly D. Page stated:

I remember Boxing Day 1972. I was the best man to my pal Barry Shapeless who held his wedding reception here. Wolves were playing Everton and I had to run outside find out the score and report back as part of my speech! Wolves won 2-0.²⁸⁰

Hosting post-match dinners since the club's founding, the Molineux hotel was a building where autograph hunters could stalk out their next signatures,²⁸¹ fans could pause for a beer and peruse the Wolves memorabilia that adorned the wall²⁸² and workers could shoot billiards with the footballers themselves. Peter Williamson remembered:

The Snooker Hall was popular with Wolves Players. I remember Ron Flowers (Wolves' England half-back) being told 'Watch out there's the foreman' (meaning Billy Wright,

²⁷⁹ Avis Bargery, unknown interviewer/ date *Molineux Memories* LS/L92MOLp, Wolverhampton Archives and Local Studies, Wolverhampton, U.K.

²⁸⁰ D. Page, unknown interviewer/ date *Molineux Memories* LS/L92MOLp, Wolverhampton Archives and Local Studies, Wolverhampton, U.K.

²⁸¹ Roy Holloway unknown interviewer/ date *Molineux Memories* LS/L92MOLp, Wolverhampton Archives and Local Studies, Wolverhampton, U.K. "...a few of us boys used to talk down to the Billiards Hall and wait at the bottom of the steps which led up to the Hall to collect autographs off the Wolves players as they came and went to play Snooker or Billiards. Some of the players included Billy Wright, Bert Williams, Sammy Smyth, and Jimmy Mullen to name but a few. Unfortunately I lost my autograph book over the years. There was also a tunnel...which went under the Billiard Hall down to the turnstiles for the South Bank End...WE used to take our football rattles and cheer the Wolves on. I am now seventy-three. The average crowd in those days was 40,000."

²⁸² Malcolm Meredith, unknown interviewer/ date *Molineux Memories* LS/L92MOLp, Wolverhampton Archives and Local Studies, Wolverhampton, U.K. "In the 1960s I was a regular Wolves supporter and I used the public bar in the Hotel. I remember the photographs of past and present Wolves players that were hung around the room. I also worked at the hotel in the 1960s, refurbishing the restaurants and kitchens." Blac and Tan refers to an alcoholic drink which layered pale and dark beers.

Wolves' captain). Ron said "Never mind the bloody foreman, I'm finishing my Blac & Tan'.

Ah many memories.²⁸³

A reflection of Wolverhampton's multifaceted cultural identity, landmarks such as the Molineux hotel were attuned to the intimate, the familiar. Joining the city's industry in dissolution, the Molineux Hotel's closure in 1979 is almost the perfect metaphor for deindustrialization's exhaustive impact. As much an attack on the Midlands culture as it was on its economy, the loss of the Molineux hotel stripped the city of a meeting grounds, a place where the dynamics and intersections of working-class life were played out and experienced. Interviewed for a pamphlet produced by the Wolverhampton City Archives, ironically housed in the restored Molineux Hotel, a woman succinctly recalled her grief at the building's closure : "I could have wept you know. I felt terrible I really did".²⁸⁴ With the loss of firms such as Contactor Switchgear and businesses possessing uniquely local flair like the Molineux Hotel, Wolverhampton became defamiliarized.

Gauged through the lens of two institutions and a selection of reminiscences, to what extent does this approach conflate the experiences of deindustrialization in order to appease our desire to make sense of history? Furthermore, what makes these forms of social disorientation unique? On a systemic level, European history is defined by the layers of loss piling beneath its roots. Rooted in upheaval, human life was constituted by the restructuring of reality. Movements from one place to the next, changes in living

²⁸³ Peter Williamson, unknown interviewer/ date *Molineux Memories* LS/L92MOLp, Wolverhampton Archives and Local Studies, Wolverhampton, U.K.

²⁸⁴ Patrick Quirke, *History of Molineux House*, 2009, LS/L7114/3, Wolverhampton Archives and Local Studies, Wolverhampton, U.K.

spaces, loss of money and work, or death, the difficulty in assessing the impact of deindustrialization on the Midlands' working class is the ceaseless nature of loss itself. How can loss be split up temporally, when it is always ongoing, when the loss of businesses and industry had become a part of the everyday during capitalism? Arguing that destruction was necessary and essential, economist Joseph Schumpeter stated that capitalism not only never is but never can be stationary.²⁸⁵ Incessantly recreating itself through destruction, the society in which the Midlands' working class existed had to disappear in order for the system to progress. Written into each building or workplace, destruction was not something that necessarily came from the outside, but rather was the realization of a tendency inherent in the deepest layer of existence in the destroyed.²⁸⁶ By-products of capitalism's organic destructiveness, the mergers and liquidations of local businesses in the Midlands occurred throughout the region's industrial history. For example, Jenks Brothers Ltd. and its subsidiary company British Tool and Engineering Co. Ltd (Britool), were taken over by Wolverhampton firm John Shaw and Sons in 1937.²⁸⁷ Similarly in 1962, G. Ltd of Walsall was bought out by Harvey's, stripped of its assets and moved to Northwich.²⁸⁸ However, what made deindustrialization distinct from the patterns of destruction that naturally accompany capitalist economies was its scope

²⁸⁵Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (1942; reprint, New York: Harper and Row, 1976), 82-3

²⁸⁶Georg Simmel, "The Ruin" (1911), in *Essays on Sociology, Philosophy, and Aesthetics*, ed. Kurt H. Wolff (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 263

²⁸⁷ General meetings Jenks Brothers Ltd. DB-24/C/540, Wolverhampton Archives and Local Studies, Wolverhampton, U.K. While there was a merger between the two companies, the Jenks family had actually taken control of Shaws.

²⁸⁸Harry Hill, interviewed by Jack Haddock. Transcript, The Walsall Oral History Collection, 426/200, Walsall Local History Centre, Walsall, U.K.

and permanence. Unlike the mergers and liquidations of the past, these patterns of destruction were not symptoms of industrial progress. The closure of local businesses was not a means to accelerate industrial commerce through greater organization, nor was it an effort to redefine social space in urban areas. They were symptoms of a paradigm shift.

Between 1945 and 1983, industries which had traditionally composed the backbone of the English economy experienced large-scale contraction. Employment in the mining industry fell from 750,000 to 305,000, in shipbuilding 250,000 to 90,000, railways 500,000 to 180,000 while motor manufacturing declined from 600,000 to 270,000.²⁸⁹ Between 1978 and 1983, an additional quarter of a million jobs were lost throughout the country in mechanical engineering while a further 110,000 electrical engineers became unemployed.²⁹⁰ Accounting for 16 percent of the workforce, 358,000 workers lost their jobs between January 1980 and June 1983 in the West Midlands alone.²⁹¹ During the same period, 161,000 lost their jobs in the East Midlands.²⁹² In Coventry between 1976 and 1982 36,000 people became unemployed.²⁹³ Indicative of a structural change in employment, by 1982 just twenty-nine percent of the city's workforce was employed in

²⁸⁹ Huw Beynon, "Closures: The threat and future of Labour" in *The Politics of Industrial Closure*, ed. Tony Dickson & David Judge (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, London: MacMillan Press, 1987), 98

²⁹⁰ Ibid

²⁹¹ Des McNulty, "Local Dimensions of Closure" in *The Politics of Industrial Closure*, ed. Tony Dickson & David Judge (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, London: MacMillan Press, 1987), 36

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ Beynon, "The Threat and Future of Labour", 98

the manufacturing industry.²⁹⁴ Half a decade earlier manufacturing had accounted for 57.4 percent of all jobs in the city. Representing a national trend in which English management bought out smaller businesses, closed them down and invested abroad, the Midlands' industry no longer could sustain the levels of employment that had defined the region culturally. In 1978, Birmingham's leading manufacturing companies employed a total of 686,694 worldwide with 75 percent of its workforce based in the United Kingdom.²⁹⁵ Four years later the total labour force had fallen 23 percent, but most notably the percentage employed in the United Kingdom fell 60 percent.²⁹⁶ Companies bled employees. Inaugurating the permanent dissolution of much of the Midlands traditional industry, deindustrialization was the apex of destruction within a capitalist system. Having exhausted all channels of expansion in the Midlands' heavy industrial sector, for capitalism to continue to progress it needed to transition elsewhere. In other words, the widespread destruction that defined deindustrialization was still identical to *progress*, but what was being destroyed was the existing structure and what was replacing it was a structure through which growth and expansion was possible. R.W. A Smith and H.F.

Mountain remembered:

HM: The family were losing their influence in the business. Other people were coming in and the family were in some cases dying or retiring so that unions did begin to exert more influence. And reluctantly, I must admit, I did join. Well, it was beneficial. I think it put our point of view, didn't it?

²⁹⁴ Ibid

²⁹⁵ Ibid, 99-100

²⁹⁶ Ibid

RS: The takeover was becoming the order of the day.

Interviewer: A government takeover?

RS-HM: No company takeovers

RS: Larger people were coming and swallowing up smaller people And the more intimate element of one's employment, the relationship with the power's that be was disappearing. It was becoming more and more impersonal. And in consequence I suppose psychologically the security that one felt existed previously the foundations began to shake.

HM: Well, from our point of view job security did become an issue because the supplies of crude tar were beginning to dry up with the introduction of natural gas. An I think that was in everybody's mind.

RS: Well, things were changing. the whole world... It began in the 1960s. And in point of fact in 1967-68 we, the Midland Tar distillers merged with Yorkshire tar distillers and this was the sort of thing that was happening. And obviously a lot of the outlying distillation works were which were largely collection points and distribution points for the intake of crude tar, outlet for road tar surfacing, creosote and the cruder elements of the distillation products they were being closed down. And we merged with the Yorkshire tar Distillers in 1967-68. Survival was part of the story. Natural gas began to come in the 1960s. By 1970-ish crude tar from gas producing organizations was very nearly dead... this is the story of many industries. This is why you've got so many derelict factory sites in the West Midlands. They've had a lifespan, either the type of business has died out or become updated, taken over, moved somewhere else, moved overseas. People are forever looking for more so-called efficiency and productivity. And of course, this seems to be the order of the day in so many industries. But the older industries have had their life spans and then just die out...The older industries have died and the newer industries

like plastics and electronics industries of course are the things that have largely taken pride of place these days. And the older industries which people looked upon as being fairly stable in their day with generally speaking a smaller character and more personally involved character and this is why so many of the older generation sigh for the old days but although in many ways it was not too well paid but the difference is that the expectations of people were rather lower than they are today. So people didn't keep stopping and analyzing the situation and am I well paid or poorly paid and which section of society do I belong to. They were far more concerned with getting a modest living and getting on and doing what was necessary to sustain that level of living.

HM: Then I think there were a lot more family owned businesses and there was a lot of loyalty to the company you worked for. I suppose people even then looked around. But to a large extent they were happy with what they got and with the family loyalty it meant a lot.²⁹⁷

Coupling the phenomenon of industrial mergers with the growing impersonality of work, Smith and Mountain used words such as family, security, overseas, and values to translate their community's experience of dislocation during deindustrialization. Convulsively devouring the small companies that had historically defined the Midlands, deindustrialization stripped communities of their regionally specific identities.

Summary

Through the process of mergers and liquidations, deindustrialization physically transformed the bustling urban areas of the Midlands into open wounds of dereliction. Underscored by the reminiscences of Mountain and Smith, deindustrialization also restructured the psychological landscape of the Midlands. Responding to the closure of

²⁹⁷R W A Smith & HF Mountain, interviewed by Sabine Skae, February 17th, 2000. Transcript, Memories made in Sandwell, Sandwell Community History and Archives Service, Smethwick, U.K.

firms and the absorption of family-run businesses with expressions of uncertainty, deindustrialization often negatively impacted workers' feelings of fulfilment, pride, and financial security. Destroying the unique bonds small companies had developed and maintained within their communities, deindustrialization also replaced the extensive industrial, cultural, and communal networks of the Midlands with unfamiliar and unstable relationships. Using oral histories, statistics, ephemera, and memories of football to map out how relationships between individuals, their communities, and work were conceptualized and retained, all histories of deindustrialization are naturally defined by omissions, and absences. Preserved through extensive written and oral documentation, firms such as Contactor Switchgear coexist historically with companies whose past can only be gleaned from the most insubstantial of traces. To answer a question I posed earlier in the chapter, history is everywhere and in everything. It exists in the methods of organization an individual uses to make sense of the past and in the absences that memories are unable to fill. Piercing the carapace of stable employment, deindustrialization not only swallowed up the Midlands traditional symbols of industry, it left thousands dependent upon redundancy payments to survive.

Chapter 5: Redundancy as Loss: The end of mass industrial employment

Q: They'd just give out a piece of paper, would they?

A: Well they'd give you an envelope, with your name on it, and your check number

Q: And it's got a letter in it as well

A: Yeh, you know, "Thank you very much for your services, but you're not required anymore" see, yeh. But some blokes, kinda blokes, I never thought, I'd see, end up I can see it now, because of the job I'm in now, but I never would've thought I'd see blokes cry, they really were crying some of the blokes, you know, when they were made redundant. Of course, some of them that were made redundant, you know, I said to them afterwards, "Well i kept telling you you were going to be made redundant" you know, but they wouldn't have it.²⁹⁸

On November 21st 1981 Wolverhampton Wanderers F.C. defeated Birmingham City F.C. 3-0 before a crowd of 18,223. An anticipated clash between two impassioned rivals, in the context of the English First Division, the match was to be of little consequence. Representing half of Wolverhampton's away victories during the 1981-82 season, the club finished second last and was relegated to the Second Division. Ending the season in 16th place, Birmingham City only managed to escape a similar fate by defeating Coventry 1-0 in the season's last match. Doing little to affect the outcome of either team's season, the match's historical intrigue extends beyond the stadium's terraces and turnstiles. On the previous day, employees of the Guy Motors Plant in Fallings Park, Wolverhampton were informed by letter of their impending redundancies. S. Burton, the Plant's director wrote:

To all employees at Guy 20 November 1981

At meetings with national trade union officers in London and locally with plant trade

union representatives this morning, Leyland Vehicles announced a series of urgent and

²⁹⁸anonymous interview, interviewed by Paul Thompson, 1986. Transcript. Coventry Car Workers' Oral History Project, PA 1647, #80, Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry, U.K.

fundamental actions designed to reshape the business so that it can become fully competitive once again...It is with great regret that I have to confirm to you that these actions will mean the closure of Guy at the end of August 1982...The actions will also radically affect the Bathgate, Leyland and Albion operations where there will be a loss of 3,360 jobs...You will want to know why Guy must be closed when we are so busy? The overriding reason is that Leyland trucks has now got so much excess assembly capacity that it has been forced to restructure the business and concentrate its activities into the smallest operating area. By closing Guy the company saves the fixed costs of this plant. If Guy remained open it would not be possibly to make an equivalent saving at any other plant.The recent and current performance of Guy has been good but unfortunately no amount of performance improvement can now overcome Leyland Vehicles basic problem of surplus capacity. The decision to close Guy will no doubt be a shock to you, but the Company is determined to minimize hardship. In particular, a generous redundancy package will be available on completion of the run-out programme. No employee, however short his service, will leave the company with less than 18 weeks pay and a 50 year old with 10 years service will be entitled to 46.5 weeks pay providing the run-out programme is completed on time and without disruption. The redundancy terms are summarized on the attached sheet for your information. In view of the impact of the Guy redundancies on the surrounding communities, the Company has set up a high level team, under the leadership of Mr R J Hancock, Chairman of leyland vehicles, which will contact the local authorities and employers to explore ways of promoting alternative employment. Personally, I will make every effort to help you through the problems arising from the closure decision.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁹ "Letter From S. Burton, Plant Director, to all employees" *Documents re proposed closure sent to all Guy Motors Employees on November 20th, 1981* D-SO-26/6/2/13/1, Wolverhampton Archives & Local Studies, Wolverhampton U.K.

Involving two cities possessing strong bonds to Leyland Motors, November 21st's football match was attended by men who would interact with redundancy over the course of the next decade.³⁰⁰ Played a day after one of the Midlands' biggest job providers announced its intention to reorganize, the match provided a safeguard for working-class men whose identity had been placed under threat. While football's symbolic performance of working-class identity was uninterrupted by redundancy, relationships to time, work, family, money, and the future were not.

Outlining the events which had informed the company's decision, S. Burton's letter illustrates how management responded to redundancy, but it does not capture its effect on everyday life. Analyzing how redundancy forged new relationships between the working class, time, work, and identity, this chapter evaluates how and why individuals responded to losing their jobs. Emphasizing cultural and structural contexts, personal experiences, and agency, this chapter will also underscore how working-class responses to redundancy were dependent on environmental factors.³⁰¹ Lastly, translating the subjectivity of redundancy through memories of part-time work, unemployment, re-training, and career change, this chapter argues that redundancy disconnected individuals from their immediate pasts and permanently restructured the dynamics of the Midlands working class communities. Regardless if an individual was made redundant, knew

³⁰⁰Redundancy is the termination of employment. It can be part-time, or full-time. When someone is made redundant they have been deemed unnecessary to the structure of the workforce moving forward.

³⁰¹ Jean Gardiner et al, "Redundancy as critical life event: moving on from the Welsh Steel industry through career change" *Work, employment and society* 23(2009), 733. Gardiner defines structural and relational contexts as financial resources and expenditure, care responsibilities, working hours, training opportunities, labour market opportunities, expert systems and guidance. Cultural context is composed of gender identity, parental identity, occupational identity, legitimacy and personal and career development. Biographical experience includes, continuity/ variety of leisure and work experience, education and training. Agency will be discussed in detail later in the chapter.

someone who lost their job or remained unaffected, day-to-day life became informed by loss.

The Shape of Redundancy: Differing responses to workplace change

At its most unadorned and unembellished, the word deindustrialization describes an economic process where a shift in the structure of employment has occurred and/or is ongoing.³⁰² Imbued with a certain magnitude through the semantic implications of the word itself, deindustrialization does not propose the end of industry, nor does it explain how or why the older structures of employment changed. Invoked to help make sense of the diverse processes that were converging upon Britain during the late 1970s, the term deindustrialization at once succinctly narrativized the environment of economic upheaval and worked to obscure the diverse responses to these changes. Despite being shouldered by the working-class communities of Britain, deindustrialization was not experienced uniformly. The responses of individuals living in the same town, house, street or working at the same firm were influenced by a diversity of factors. For an individual, redundancy was not just the loss of employment. As working-class identities were not solely derived from paid work, for some individuals, the impact of redundancy restructured the dynamics of their day-to-day life. Collected for a study contextualizing the experience of workers following the closure of Birmingham's Longbridge factory in 2005, research suggested that workers who had been made redundant or had lost their jobs from plant closures were at significant risk for a multitude of social issues.³⁰³ Using an

³⁰² David Rose et al, "Economic Restructuring: the British Experience" *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 475 (1984), 137-57

³⁰³ D. Bailey et al *Life After Longbridge: Three Years On: Pathways to re-employment in a restructuring economy* (Birmingham & London: Birmingham Business School and the Work Foundation, 2008), 11.

extensive bibliography to illustrate the wide-reaching impact of redundancy, the study reveals that higher levels of alcohol abuse, conflict and stress within households, domestic violence, psychological distress, divorce, physiological change, increased rates of disability, changes in hospitalization rates, and low self-esteem were reported.³⁰⁴ Similarly, the body of research regarding redundancy and re-employment rates has produced a remarkably consistent set of findings.³⁰⁵ Concluding that younger skilled male workers were more likely to re-enter the workforce, workers over the age of 50 were at risk of remaining unemployed or withdrawing from the workforce. Ranging from diminished desire, age discrimination, lack of transferrable skills, and unrefined work-finding strategies, the explanations listed in Steven Pinch and Colin Mason's comparative case study of redundancy in Southampton are inconclusive. As each individual's experience was bisected by diverse sets of variables, identifying a singular experience of redundancy is difficult. Not everyone over the age of 50 was left behind, nor was every young worker successful.

Revealing patterns and probabilities, Pinch and Mason's qualitative data illustrated how many processes were at the root of individual responses to redundancies. Predictive of re-employment, a worker's skill set helped to determine how an individual adapted. The result of labour-cost cuts, the least specialized services that companies offered, such as maintenance, cleaning, and catering, were outsourced.³⁰⁶ Among the

³⁰⁴ Ibid

³⁰⁵ Steven Pinch & Colin Mason, "Redundancy in an Expanding Labour Market: A Case-Study of Displaced Workers from Two Manufacturing Plants in Southampton" *Urban Studies* 28 (1991), 735.

³⁰⁶ Lidia Greor, "An Institutional Approach to Redundancies in the Chemical Industry: The Cases of Teesside(UK) and Brindisi (Italy) *European Urban and Regional Studies* 11(2004), 146

first workers to be rendered redundant, unskilled workers experienced fewer opportunities for similarly paid employment than their skilled counterparts. Disrupting the rhythms of daily life, unskilled members of the working class and even employees who had worked in engineering, training, or consultancy became part of an emerging precariat class. Coined by economist Guy Standing, precariats were members of the working class who had adjusted to redundancies by taking whatever jobs had become available in their local labour market.³⁰⁷ Employed in low paid, low skilled, part-time work that was defined by short-term contracts and fragmented working patterns, members of the precariat class experienced considerable changes in quality of life, and faced a future with little hope for growth.³⁰⁸ Once conduits for wider social engagement, the loss of a stable relationship to employment not only separated individuals from their former work-based identities, it negatively impacted their ability to participate socially in their communities.

In Blyton and Jenkins study *Life After Burberry* 58% of interviewees reported a marked deterioration in their social life and relationships with friends following their redundancies, while two in five reported a decline in direct social involvement.³⁰⁹ No longer able to organize their lives around work, the lack of guaranteed hours, and low pay meant “going out with friends” or even planning future social endeavours became difficult. Focusing on the mostly female employees of a Burberry factory in the Rhondda Valleys of South Wales, it is worth noting that Blyton and Jenkins study took place some

³⁰⁷ Guy Standing. *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011), 1.

³⁰⁸ Tony Dobbins et al, ““Make do and Mend” after redundancy at Anglesey Aluminium: critiquing human capital approaches to unemployment” *Work, Employment and Society* 28(2014), 517.

³⁰⁹ Paul Blyton & Jean Jenkins. “Life after Burberry: shifting experiences of work and non-work life following redundancy” *Work, Employment and Society* 26(2012), 37.

twenty years outside the scope of this paper. However, despite the research's divergent gender, temporal, and regional emphasis, its conclusions are not at all dissimilar to those which occurred in the Midlands; precariat work in the wake of redundancy restructured individuals' relationships to the everyday. An anonymous car worker from Coventry remembered:

Q: What changes have you seen in the as it were, the sort of culture of the City of the car workers?

A: Oh its changed dramatically. We were talking about that over lunch with the milkman who used to be a skilled track worker. There was a cocky confidence in Coventry when I first came here, this, I suppose, independence, in the sense that if you worked in a car factory, you got a good wage, and you weren't pushed around, that's gone. The workforce, generally, are demoralized, there's no doubt about it, for example, members of my family, who were car workers who now work in other factories in Coventry, where the union is not as strong, such as Courtauds, they suffer conditions that would never ever been tolerated in the car factory, but they just feel impotent to actually do anything about it. Pretty tough. Some of them are in incredibly sad circumstances, I mean, I know one chap who was a tool maker, who's taken his family off to the south coast, and they're living in bed and breakfast establishments while he's scratching around trying to get a job as a hotel porter, and this is a chap who five years ago, had a relatively good lifestyle...

Q: And do you find any people who, you know, use their sort of craftsmen skills to sort of earn money in some way or other?

A: No, no, you can't you mean if you're taking a 5 thou casting of a, a hub bearing on a triumph dolomite, I mean that's skilled wasn't really transferrable, I mean you're not, I

mean you might be able to potter around in your shed making bits of woodwork of what have you, but really there's very little scope for it. Very little scope.³¹⁰

Similarly, another Coventry car worker stated:

They don't have to talk about it, you can see it in their faces. Who wants to get up every day and not know that you, you haven't got to go to work, and you've got no money, you know, well your bills are, well some of your bills are being paid by social security or whoever it is who pay them, but it's not the same as working is it, I mean it's not the same as getting up every day and going out, I mean, even if you only get 20 a week, it's not the same. Some of these blokes, you know, they ask me to get them jobs, but I can't get them jobs, because they're not setting on where I am now, I mean, if i finished there, they'd never set me back on, because they're just not setting anybody on at all.... No, would you heck, no, would you heck, you know who wants to go fetch and carry? That's all you are. But they're just dead end jobs. But now they're not, it's a job now.³¹¹

Reflecting on the social changes brought about by the extensive redundancies in Coventry's car industry, both men conceptualized deindustrialization as a force that loosened the roots of community. Unable to depend on friends and members of their families to find work, the existing social networks of employment in the Midlands were disrupted by a lack of opportunity. While some workers moved, sought self-employment, or retired, those who were willing to *make do and mend* encountered an imbalance between their skill-sets and the quality of work available.³¹² Despite having access to a

³¹⁰anonymous interview, interviewed by Paul Thompson, 1986. Transcript. Coventry Car Workers' Oral History Project, PA 1647, #74, Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry, U.K.

³¹¹anonymous interview, interviewed by Paul Thompson, 1986. Transcript. Coventry Car Workers' Oral History Project, PA 1647, #80, Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry, U.K.

³¹² Dobbins et al. "Make do and Mend' after redundancy at Anglesey Aluminium", 524.

wide range of training resources and re-skilling initiatives, workers were unlikely to find employment that utilized their skills or paid as well as their previous jobs. Written on the bodies of the men discussed in these oral excerpts, dead-end, fetch-and-carry jobs were often all that remained. Transforming Coventry's working class from one which "exuded independence and confidence" to a demoralized, insecure group seeking work of any sort, mass redundancy may not have had a uniform impact upon the Midlands working class but it marked a definitive end to the region's era of full-time industrial employment.

A ubiquitous feature in the collected oral histories, memories of part-time work were tinged with a nostalgia for former workplaces, co-workers, and atmospheres. Containing less detail, interviewees' memories of part-time work paid little attention to the intricacies and skills of the job, memorable shop-floor personalities, and relationships they had developed. Typically providing the interviewer with a start time, a basic description of their responsibilities and the length of their employment, these workplaces were depicted as stop-gaps, transient spaces where future redundancies always loomed. Despite lacking the warmth and colour of workplace memories before deindustrialization, reducing the experiences of part-time work to a narrative of disenfranchisement and poverty would fail to capture the social complexity of mass redundancy. Expressing little anger or resentment at the way things had unfolded, some members of the working class resigned themselves to the realities of post-industrial life. Content with finding any form of employment, this acquiescence can perhaps best be explained by research concerning the collective psychology of Britain's working class during deindustrialization. In a 1983 study entitled *Household Work Strategies in Economic Recession*,

Pahl and Wallace concluded that society was experienced as complex and beyond individual control.³¹³ Using their resources of time, energy, and skill into making their domestic world more secure, the volatility individuals experienced by participating in the local labour market had the potential to be assuaged. Accepting that Britain's declining industrial economy and its subsequent waves of unemployment were inevitable and at the fault of no political party in particular, individuals sought to determine their own destinies and increasingly insulated themselves from the pull of society's major institutions. Similarly, in a poll conducted for Paul Barker's 1979 article "Whistling in the Dark", 68 percent of participants expected their own futures to be determined by themselves.³¹⁴ In the same poll, 70 percent expressed a philosophy of taking each day as it came, and 60 percent believed that Britain had less control over its national destiny.³¹⁵ Concluding that British society grew decidedly individualistic in the wake of economic uncertainty, these studies suggested that members of the working class continued to believe they were responsible for their own lives, despite possessing little faith in their government's ability to enact meaningful change. Interpreting deindustrialization as a natural progression for a nation that no longer had control of its future, redundancy, just like work itself, was perceived as something to be endured. Former foundry worker William George Baker remembered:

³¹³ Ray Pahl and Claire Wallace, "Household work strategies in Economic Recession" *Household Work Strategies Report No 4* (Canterbury: University of Kent, 1983)

³¹⁴ Paul Barker, "Whistling in the Dark" *New Society* 29 (1979), 481-82.

³¹⁵ Ibid

Since Sterling close I've worked in what...half a dozen more, small foundries...it's been just sweatshops, they just wanted as much work as they can get out of ya for what they're paying you. I mean, the last one I worked in, I mean if you stopped to blow your nose the gaffer wondered what wrong with you....what you stop for, you know what I mean, it was unbelievable you couldn't breathe

Q: How does it feel to be made redundant after all those years?

A: Umm I don't know... the thing is you come out you think ok got no trouble in getting a job, another thing is the complete foundry industry were in decline you know and where you'd thought you'd get a job there were already 10 waiting to get in before you, know what i mean? So you traipse, here there and everywhere...and i went back and like i say I went back and it didn't go too long before they shut it down completely...they shut it all down. So i thought well, ok it's I had 8 months on the dole which was hard I mean...(I'd never been unemployed for a great length of time) I went back there, when that finished, I got a job at Lutterworth and me mate come down and say "oh" I've just started at the place...do you want to come work with me run the foundry for 'em...so i went there and then he died so I took over the job like and then I...we went on holiday and come back and there a letter on the door...we've got made redundant we'd got to claim off the government and all this, um, and uh, you know and that were that and since then I've just been going from job to job, you know I mean there's just getting crap jobs...no nobody'd touch em...and as you get older you don't want that so...luckily I mean I came out the last foundry...I went with an agency...I thought our mortgage is paid for, you know I don't need to be earning so much now, I'll get a lighter job, so I got a lighter job, I did 12 weeks on the agency, then a firm took me on, and I had an accident at work and...been on incapacity ever since....When we were at the Sterling we thought we had a job for life. I mean three brothers, we all thought we had a job for life. I still see,

one, I only see about one bloke that used to be at the Sterling, on a regular basis... everybody else I can think of, have gone....I mean he went till he was 73, my granddad did, they made him redundant and, he just flipped, lost his mind...and he, and he, sort of thing, you know making him redundant, I mean he used to walk to work and back an hour each way, everyday... they made him redundant he couldn't cope with it.³¹⁶

Working at Sterling Metal's Marston Lane factory in Nuneaton for the entirety of his adult life, William George Baker's memories of post-redundancy employment are couched in the language of instability. Living like an itinerant as he moved from foundry to foundry, Baker's difficulties in keeping a job are contextualized within the industrial histories of both the Midlands and his own family. Experiencing unemployment for the first time since he left school at the age of fifteen, Mr. Baker's memories revealed a world in which factory after factory fell into disrepair, and close relatives and friends lost jobs they had believed they would hold for life. Unfavourably comparing the atmosphere of the anonymous foundries where he had found part-time work to sweatshops, the intimate dynamics that defined his life at Sterling, such as the close relationships he had developed with his co-workers, evaporated. He no longer saw anyone from the old days, and the stable rhythms of his former life were replaced with unannounced redundancy slips hanging from the front door. Informed by his age and reduced financial responsibilities, Mr. Baker's memories are an example of how responses to redundancy were dependent on the individual. While the word deindustrialization implies a paradigmatic shift in a region's socio-economic framework, this shift, regardless of its breadth and force, materialized differently for every single person who experienced it. Perhaps

³¹⁶William George Baker, interviewed by Allison Clague, August 22nd, 2006. Working Lives: Memories of Work and Industry in Nuneaton and Bedworth, Warwickshire City Council,

the only unifying experience was that of loss. Expressing little outward anger, or resentment at his inability to find full-time work, Mr. Baker's memories are nevertheless coloured by loss and lasting frustration. Ending his interview by discussing his grandfather's struggles with mental health following the loss of his job, the potential for redundancy to destroy the self-image of working-class men was made clear.

Removing half the threads from the mesh of a fishing net, even the knotting that remains sturdy will travel through the water differently. Redundancy's immense scope meant that it was experienced diversely, but left little untouched. Mr. Baker's response to redundancy was determined by his stable finances, the experience of his grandfather, and an unknowable amount of other factors lost to the past, or left unsaid.

For Alan Saunders, despite remembering redundancy as a bitter experience that left him under-employed, losing his job at Lucas Aerospace prompted a change of careers, and brought him closer to his wife.

So I went to Lucas's and I was there for 28.5 years. And then I was made redundant and that was a bit of a traumatic time, so I was actually a deputy warden of the athletics centre in Solihull and I had been there for about 10 years, just two nights a week and everybody who came through the door, I said, give us a job, you know like Yozzer did on television, give us a...got any jobs? Well a friend of mine who was an associate at a construction consultancy engineers in Knowle said, "We're looking for a draughtsman" I sort of joked with him and says "But yah I am not of your discipline" he says "Well you can draw can't you" I says "Well yah I can draw" he says, "Well we'll get you an interview and see how you pan out." And actually I was there for 3.5 years, most enjoyable and then the construction industry took a nose dive in the early 90s and I along with another two or three colleagues were made redundant and I was out of work for about 18

months but I had worked as a social photographer in my spare time- I had done all the photography for the company I was working for in Knowle and I was building up a bit of a reputation as a wedding photographer...my wife was extremely supportive, because when I came home from work, from Lucas's saying I had been made redundant after 28.5 years , she...I remember she was vacuuming down the stairs, because we were decorating and she said, "Well, we will fight it together" And we did and we went working for TPA which was the transport people, the agency counting cars on motorways- we were getting up at 3 o'clock in the morning and going right the way up the M6 and the M1 and counting cars on bridges in freezing cold and lorries in freezing cold conditions...and sitting in the car in a lay-by and it was ...well, anyway...it was bringing in a living and Jan was right by my side, doing that.³¹⁷

For HF Mountain, the unexpectedness of his redundancy was disruptive and left him feeling unsettled. Finding work with his cousin as an unpaid plumber, Mr. Mountain adjusted to unemployment by finding interesting part-time work that he enjoyed.

HM: When we were told of our retirement or redundancy I was a bit taken aback really I didn't feel that I wanted to retire at that time I thought I had a few years left in me after that...I did actually apply for several part time jobs and I did some voluntary work because I found I found I was very much at a loose end really but you adjust as time goes on...A cousin of mine he was a plumber and he used to employ casual labour to help him when he needed it. I was always interested in do it yourself so on the odd occasion I went along and helped him. It wasn't a paying job but it kept me busy so I

³¹⁷Alan Saunders, interviewed by Helen Lloyd, 2000. Transcript. Millenibrum, Ms2255/2/2015 Birmingham Central Library, Birmingham, U.K.

quite enjoyed that. Oh I think a lot of people find themselves at a loose end when they retire.³¹⁸

Emptying time of its productive value, redundancy could stretch out the hours of the day into a long, interminable slog. As full-time industrial employment stabilized time and rendered it knowable, part-time work or unemployment reorganized it around a void. For men like Alan Saunders, involvement in their community and an increased attention to their hobbies assisted them in adapting to their new schedules. Other men, like HF Mountain who struggled to find meaningful employment, found the transition more difficult. What is similar in both Saunders and Mountain's accounts is the need to find work in order to return meaning to time. Restructuring the relationship between work and time, deindustrialization forged a new reality as it rendered the dynamics and familiarity of the past irretrievable. While redundancies often created a gap between work and time, it also had the potential to fill time up, or force men to dedicate more time to work. An anonymous car worker remembered:

Q: You left Rover when it closed down then?

A: Yes.

Q: What about the closure then, did ...how did it build up to that? Did you see it coming?

Did you know what was happening?

A: We were told about 3 months before, but I learnt afterwards- this is some of the kind of duplicity which goes on- the convener at Solihull had negated the closure with management 6 months previous to when we were informed.

Q: Yet you were going over there.

³¹⁸R W A Smith & HF Mountain, interviewed by Sabine Skae, February 17th, 2000. Transcript, Memories made in Sandwell, Sandwell Community History and Archives Service, Smethwick, U.K.

A: Yes I was going to Solihull constantly, and nobody had told me.

Q: How much contact did you have with them?

A: Well regular meetings once a month, or something like that, sometimes more than that.

Q: So when the news broke, what happened?

A: Oh we were informed, first thing they informed us, they took us into the office and informed us that the factory was closing down, and that anyone that wanted could go to Solihull, as the job was being transferred over to Solihull which was 15 miles away, which meant a minimum of a 30 mile round trip every day to and from work, and that they were even anxious for the operators to go over there. Well, we informed the men, most of them said they didn't want to you know, after thinking it over for awhile, they didn't want to go, they didn't think it would be worth it, we were offered up to a 1000 pounds, taxable for the first year as expense for, you know, compensation, for traveling to and from Solihull, which worked out somewhere in the region of 600 after tax, and there was a small minority that went over. But the thing was, that we asked for closure money, factory closure money, which was supposed to come to an extra 1,000 for people who were being made redundant because the factory was closing down, but the management said it wasn't a closure, it was just a transfer of work.³¹⁹

Refusing a transfer to Solihull in protest of unpaid redundancy money, the interviewee's decision to leave Rover was also informed by the extra time he had to spend travelling. Adding thirty miles to their daily commute, for some men this was too much. For the individuals who accepted the transfer to Solihull, their willingness to move represented a unique pattern in working-class responses to redundancies. An indicator of successful

³¹⁹anonymous interview, interviewed by Paul Thompson, 1986. Transcript. Coventry Car Workers' Oral History Project, PA 1647, #16, Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry, U.K.

reintegration into the industrial workforce, a worker's willingness to move not only depended upon their personal preference, but the compatibility of their skill-set to the changing structure of the Midlands labour market.³²⁰ For many men, searching outside of their communities for employment was impractical. Needing to uproot themselves from their families and social networks, these personal sacrifices were not negated by the part-time or low paying jobs that were available. The only choice was to stay. An anonymous car worker stated:

Q: Have you ever considered migrating, you know, moving anywhere else? To find work.

A: Well I haven't got any particular skills, what you'd call like qualifications to go into another country, me supervisory skills in the motor industry could be used, I suppose, but the idea behind this driving instructions the same the world over, so um, If i did think about the future of moving anywhere then you know, I've got something I can go with as a safeguard....I'm sure its a big factor in people, particularly in the Coventry area, that do want to, do go abroad because of their redundancy and what have you, they think there's a better life elsewhere.³²¹

Underscoring deindustrialization's pervasive impact upon the Midlands working class, even the men who accepted new positions following mass redundancy experienced considerable changes to their relationships with work. Responding to and experiencing redundancy differently, regardless of age, skill-level, or willingness to move, deindustrialization always separated workers from their recent past.

³²⁰ M. Vermeulen "Forecasting Regional Differences in characteristics of the labour force" in *On the Mysteries of Unemployment: Causes, Consequences and Policies* ed. C.H.A. Verhaar and L.G. Jansma (Ljouwert: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1992), 387.

³²¹ anonymous interview, interviewed by Paul Thompson, 1986. Transcript. Coventry Car Workers' Oral History Project, PA 1647, #25, Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry, U.K.

While this transitional period was defined by instability and widespread change, characterizing these individuals as helpless casualties of capitalism's whirlwinds is inaccurate. It is important to recount how individuals themselves interpreted redundancy within the context of their own lives, and how they formulated, or were forced to formulate, responses.

Using a data analysis framework based upon biographical, structural, and cultural contexts such as financial resources, working hours, parental identity, work experience, skill, education, and training to evaluate the economic and social impacts of redundancy on steelworkers and their families, Gardiner et al's 2009 study of *Redundancy as a Critical Life Event* attempted to deconstruct how and why redundancy affected individuals differently.³²² Adopting T.K. Hareven's definition of transition as processes of individual change within socially-constructed timetables, and turning points as individual's subjective assessments of continuities and discontinuities over a lifetime, the study argues that in addition to the influence of environmental factors, responses to deindustrialization were determined by temporal dimensions of agency.³²³ Comprised of iteration, the extent to which individuals were informed by the past, projectivity, the capacity to imagine alternative future possibilities, and practical evaluation, the contextualization of past habits and future projects in the contingencies of the present, temporal dimensions of agency represented subjective processes of thought and decision-making.³²⁴ Interview-

³²² Gardiner et al, "Redundancy as critical life event: moving on from the Welsh Steel industry through career change", 733

³²³ T.k. Hareven, *Families, History and Social Change* (Oxford: Westview, 2000), 156.

³²⁴ Gardiner et al, 731.

ing 125 redundant steel workers, Gardiner et al's research identified three distinct subgroups of responses. The first, and most infrequent, were active career planners. Planning and preparing for redundancy before they had even lost their jobs, the biographical, structural, cultural, and subjective contexts of active career planners contributed positively to finding a new career or gainful employment. Applying this theoretical framework to the collected oral histories of the Midlands, Eric Woolley of Wolverhampton remembered:

I left Sankey's in 1982- there was redundancies coming and I could see the way things were going so I left early. I used my redundancy money to set up an old postcard business- buying and selling. I did 29 years service at Sankey's in total. I had a lot of friends at Sankey's. I've still got a lot of friends from Sankey's. I still see them round the market. Most people were made redundant in the finish. ³²⁵

Recognizing the inevitability of losing his job, Eric Woolley's experience of redundancy was determined by the fact he had formulated a clear plan for his life outside of the metal industry. Aided by the redundancy money he had received from leaving Sankey's early, Mr. Woolley's transition from employee to business owner was an example of how, for some, deindustrialization was a period defined by adjustment rather than displacement. Providing context to the world outside of himself in his memories, details such as the number of years spent at Sankey's or the ubiquity of redundancy in his community underscored how Mr. Woolley was still very much part of his historical milieu despite responding to deindustrialization uncommonly. Continuing to interact and co-exist with individuals from his working days at Sankey's, deindustrialization may have

³²⁵Eric Woolley, unknown interviewer/ date, Transcript, Documenting the Workshop of the World: Bilston Oral Histories, LS/ LB6/2, Wolverhampton Archives and Local Studies, Wolverhampton, U.K.

been experienced unequally by the working class, but the lasting intimacies of workplaces and communities helped to expose individuals to responses and circumstances that differed greatly from their own.

Antithetical to the active career planners' calculative approach to redundancy, Gardiner et al's second sub-group, those at a career crossroads, were characterized by uncertainty. Much larger in size than the active career planners, those at a career crossroads had difficulties in deciding whether or not to invest in training, transition out of the industry, or focus on getting a job. Unlike the active career planners, those at a career crossroads expressed constraints in their structural and cultural contexts, biographical experience and temporal dimensions of agency. Influencing their decision-making process, variables such as familial responsibility, care responsibilities, financial resources, lack of opportunity in the local labour market, and their occupational identity complicated decision-making processes.³²⁶ Feeling torn between the unknowable stability of future careers and the familiar dynamics, rhythms and routines of the Midlands disappearing industrial world, those at a career crossroads often took lower paying part-time work or endured sustained periods of unemployment. An anonymous car worker remembered:

Q: So you don't know what the future holds for you?

A: No all I know I'm getting a bit of redundancy money which will see us through for the first 6 or months, thereabouts you know. And hopefully in the meantime I'll have found some other means of making money or go into some sort of training scheme or found some other method of making money. I don't know. That's all I can say, you know. I'm

³²⁶ Gardiner et al, 735-36

not duly bothered. I've got me health and strength and that's the main thing and it hasn't bent the mind anyway. So I...

Q: I mean how important is work to you in terms of your life as a whole?

A: I think it's been very important It conditions you with disciplines, your work does, you know., You come to the stage where, you know, you go out every morning, the job's there, you do your job and you've got your money and you pay your mortgage you pay your rates, pay this, you know the end of the day you've got so much for a pint and so much for the kids and this that...It's a disciplined way of life. You don't with the wife working part time as a nurse and that, you know, you spend half your week babysitting for the kids and that while she's working and vice versa and so on. So now suddenly all this coming to a stop and me probably having so much time on my hands and being on holiday for the last two weeks, I've been looking round the job centres and various jobs ads and seeing what potential there is around you know. And yeh its opened me eyes up a bit...I'm you know I'm getting on a bit now, I'm 39 last week so I'm near enough the dead end stage of 40. If you haven't...Settled and fixed it by 40 you've had it, you know, you're on the scrap heap...³²⁷

Similarly, Melvin Haigh discussed his difficulties in finding work for nearly two years after his redundancy:

Q: What plans did you have when you left?

A: If I'm honest more or less in a fit of pique I kind of like thought: I'm going to go and get a job, no matter what. And I took a job as a double glazing salesman for what I wasn't suited to at all and that was an absolute dismal failure. And then as I was over 40 I found it quite difficult to get work but after about 18 months I went to a place in Kings Norton

³²⁷anonymous interview, interviewed by Paul Thompson, 1986. Transcript. Coventry Car Workers' Oral History Project, PA 1647, #59, Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry, U.K.

called Burmans and I spent a couple of really happy years there. That was engineering again but I really enjoyed my time there. And then unfortunately some new owners came in promised us the world and they turned out to be basically asset strippers. And they thinned the place down and made hundreds redundant. We were rather fortunate in the fact that at that particular time Land Rover were asking for people again and my record couldn't have been all that bad because they took me on again....They were happy but there was always this thing that it was very repetitious and very hard work and and in this time I was coming into my mid to late 40s. And all of a sudden you kind of turn round from being a young man on the track or the machine or what have you which you were a few years previously and then you see all these younger people around you and find you that you're one of the older people there at sort of like 45, 46, 47. And the work just became increasingly difficult and hard and it was always sort of repetitious and boring.³²⁸

Hinted at by the memories of training schemes, job centres, part-time work, and repeated redundancies, for workers at a career crossroads, deindustrialization dissolved their sense of continuity between the past, present, and future. A shadow world lying beneath the stability and structure of full-time employment, redundancy forced individuals to reconsider their occupational identities, who they were, and what they would become. As redundancy attacked the structural and organizing conceptions of time and identity in working-class communities, it forced individuals to acknowledge the uncertainty of the future; perhaps for the first time. Restricted in their response to redundancy by the contexts of their life experience, environments, and psychologies, workers at a career crossroads had limited options in the wake of deindustrialization.

³²⁸Melvin Haigh, interviewed by Helen Lloyd, 2000. Transcript. Millenibrum, MS2255/2/028, Birmingham Central Library, Birmingham, U.K.

Identified as triggered career changers, Gardiner et al's third sub-group fell between the active career planners and those at a career crossroads. Often expressing shock at the closure of their workplaces, triggered career changers responded to redundancy with an initial period of panic.³²⁹ Taking time to acclimatize to their new circumstances, triggered career changers interpreted deindustrialization as an opportunity to pursue training with a steadfast dedication. Benefiting from strong support systems at home, triggered career changers temporarily depended upon their significant others financially, and took on responsibilities such as babysitting, cooking, and cleaning. Despite experiencing reductions in personal freedom, disruptions in daily rhythms and increased anxieties concerning the future, triggered career changers did not remember redundancy as an exclusively negative event. Facilitating the construction of new identities and new possibilities, redundancy became a catalyst for reinvention. Former sheet metal worker Ian Cartwright remembered:

Q: Was there ever any sense when you were there that it was kind of on its last legs?

A: A little bit yes to be honest with you, umm the sheet metal trade has always been particularly that aspect has always been very dependent on the car trade...and I mean the car trade in the 70s... you know I mean factories being on strike or being laid off and this and that and that had a direct effect on us...Then I went to LBJ Sheet Metal ...and they did a different type of work...a lot of it was machine guards for machine tool manufacture, a lot of it was uh, heating and ventilating ducting work which was interesting...but even then we started to run out of work...and then when I left I was with LBJ for about two years and um I went into the heavy side of the industry, I went cos I

³²⁹ Gardiner et al, 737-38 . Triggered Career Changers are defined as people who responded to redundancy by making sweeping changes in their lives. This could mean entering education, or finding employment in another industry. Thus being made redundant triggered changes in an individual's life.

wanted to do that... I've always been interested in mechanical things comes from my steam engines I think um and I went to work at a place at Arley industrial site where the old pit yards used to be where the old pit used to be, uh a place called Alex Rolle Mechanical Handling. I used to make cranes and conveyors and um that was that was very interesting work, cos the money was awful but the variety of work I, I mean I didn't know from one day to the next what I'd be working on. One day I might be working on a lathe as long as this house cos we had a lathe there as long as this house, or the next day I might be on a milling machine, or the next day I might be welding a crane up, the next day I might be in the drawing office doing some drawings all sorts of things it was a fascinating job. But eventually that sort of work ran out. Um and I was out of work for a while I was out of work for six, eight months, um and I bumped into Malcolm Lyons who used to be the welder at Midland sheet metal works and he said well I've gone into teaching, and I thought pfft well if he can do it...so I went down the job centre and i saw this job "instructor wanted" I thought "Give that a whirl" and it was Lloyd's school of welding and I ended up as an instructor at Lloyd's school of welding teaching welding, sheet metal work and all sorts of stuff...³³⁰

Transitioning into education after a prolonged period of part-time work following his initial redundancy, Mr. Cartwright used his existing skill-set to secure a new career. Successfully adapting to the changes in the industrial employment structure of the Midlands, Mr. Cartwright's decision to become an instructor at Lloyd's school of welding was only made possible by deindustrialization. Employed at the school for two years before accepting another position teaching metalwork at Keresly Newland school, Mr. Cartwright enrolled at the University of Nottingham before leaving the industry altogether.

³³⁰Ian Cartwright, interviewed by Allison Clague, September 5th, 2006. Working Lives: Memories of Work and Industry in Nuneaton and Bedworth, Warwickshire City Council,

er to become a music teacher. Welcoming the change to his working life with excitement, Mr. Cartwright's dedication to training helped him to construct a new occupational identity and disrupted a personal cycle of unemployment, part-time work, and redundancy.

Fortunate enough to face few constraints in both his structural and cultural contexts, the experiences of Mr. Cartwright are contrasted by those of an anonymous car worker from Coventry:

Q: Well you lost your job.

A: Oh I viewed it as a merciful relief. I think the one thing that's noticeable about a company that's contracting and redundancies are the name of the game, is the morale is just absolutely atrocious. It's like, I dunno, waiting in a queue, you know, when are they going to, get me out of this blood misery? You know And that's it really. I, I felt when I got made redundant, that in some ways, you know, this was perhaps a push I needed. The unfortunate thing about it was that in 1981 when I got made redundant, I don't think things are much better now, you couldn't even get an application form for jobs, I don't know, obviously, you can get an application form now, but that, that was it really, you know and I think the company were...

Q: You've been, you've not been working?

A: I must admit, I've considered the possibility of maybe never working again, and that thought doesn't actually horrify me, basically because I think in the last four years, I've seen myself keeping myself active, both through studying and doing a little bit of building, and helping, doing my own thing. So that thought doesn't fill me with horror, although I do see problems now, is that financially, just now, I've hit, I mean, I've literally hit rock bottom. I know I have to do something now, although I really don't know what.

I'm like most of the kids on YTS (Youth Training Scheme), I'm beginning to think I'm just looking for the main chance, you know and can I win the football pools this week, no I'm hoping something's going to turn up. I'd like to think I can afford to do the MA but if the Social Science Research Council people don't turn up with the grant very soon, I'm going to sort of actively have to go round, knocking on doors again, you see.³³¹

Interpreting his redundancy in 1981 as an opportunity for personal growth, the interviewee's initial optimism was deeply challenged by the economic realities of the Midlands during deindustrialization. Falling into the financial pitfalls of under-employment, the interviewee attempted to extricate himself from his situation through a single-minded devotion to education and training. However, without a grant from the Social Science Research Council to do a MA, the interviewee could not afford to transition out of industrial employment. This is an example of how deindustrialization could leave individuals behind. Unwilling to endure the low-morale and precarious conditions of part-time work, constraints in the individual's structural and cultural contexts reduced the interviewee to depending on football pools and the hope that something would turn up. Revealing the diversity of experience, even within Gardiner et al's theoretical framework, redundancy was responded to and interpreted differently by every working-age man in the Midlands.

Summary

Analyzing the relationship between responses to redundancy and factors such as age, skill set, willingness to move, availability of training, financial resources, local opportunities, biographical experience and temporal dimensions of agency, this chapter used oral history to illustrate the sprawling impact mass job loss had on the Midlands

³³¹anonymous interview, interviewed by Paul Thompson, 1986. Transcript. Coventry Car Workers' Oral History Project, PA 1647, #67, Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry, U.K.

working class. Workers who had identified themselves by their trade or their workplace had to construct new occupational identities. Relationships to work, once defined by their long hours and stability, were fractured. Adjusting to the dearth of opportunities in their local labour markets, some members of the working class took part-time, low-paying jobs that were unskilled and held little room for occupational advancement. Relationships to time and the rhythms of everyday life were also restructured. Detaching the economic value of time from the individual, redundancy emptied the day of its former dynamics and meaning. While some individuals devoted this newfound free-time to transition themselves out of industrial employment, others experienced displacement and long-term joblessness. Representing a definitive break with the era of full-time industrial employment, redundancy may not have been experienced uniformly amongst the working class but its violence, its disembodiment of working-class identity irrevocably changed all relationships between individuals and their communities. While not all working-class men were made redundant or experienced lasting dislocation in the wake of deindustrialization, the workplaces they had once known, and the history of continuity between community and work had been permanently changed. Disrupting relationships to work, workplaces, physical geography, and co-workers, one of the only facets of working-class identity that remained comparatively untouched by deindustrialization was football. Continuing to exist well past the height of deindustrialization, football became a symbol of the past, an implicit reminder of how the everyday was once organized. As conceptions of the present are articulated by absence, the persistence of football helped to inculcate the importance of the Midlands' industrial heritage. Preserving the workplaces, geographies, families, and familiar minutiae of everyday life that had been

threatened or dissolved by deindustrialization, football became a symbolically charged remnant of an entire world's spirit and complexion. Whether it was demonstrated through attending a match, organizing football pools, playing with friends, watching on television, listening on the radio or discussing players and results during breaks at work, football was a central part of everyday life. Providing the Midlands working class with a sense of continuity, football became a refuge of the past in part, because of its shared trajectory with British industrialism. Defined by mass public assemblies, homogenous likes and dislikes, and an emphasis on material goods, football was created by and maintained by Great Britain's burgeoning consumer society. Wholly embodying industrialism, football became a surrogate as the former disappeared. So while John Roberts' header, Andy Gray's deflection, and Colin Brazier's opportunistic tap-in may have secured victory for Wolverhampton on November 21st, 1981, it also emphasized the perceived stability of football in the face of redundancy.³³² Men might not have had a job on Monday, but their team always took the pitch on the weekend.

³³² "Birmingham City v Wolves, 21st November 1981" YouTube video, 22:53, posted by "Mercian1969", September 26th, 2011 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JGX-iVc-AaQ>

Chapter 6: Industrial Palimpsest: Football, the Past and the Midlands Working-Class

*Popular memory is on the face of it the very antithesis of written history. It eschews notions of determination and seizes instead on omens, portents and signs. It measures change genealogically, in terms of generations rather than centuries, epochs, or decades. It has no developmental sense of time, but assigns events to the mythicized good old days (or bad old days) of workplace lore, or the once upon a time of the storyteller.*³³³

Working-class memories of football are intimately linked to family, community, and place. As football is a fundamental aspect of both working-class identity and everyday experience, its role in the social history of deindustrialization is unique. Restructuring relationships to work, community, place, identity, and the dynamics of everyday life, deindustrialization facilitated a sense of loss and uncertainty as the Midlands became enveloped by redundancies and factory closures. Permanently disrupting the stability of the Midlands traditional working-class identity, pervasive changes in the region's physical, social, and psychological landscapes made football a metonym for a world that was disappearing. Deeply embedded in individuals' understanding of the past, memories of football were not simply composed of goals, victories, or defeats; they were crystallized representations of an individual's response to loss. When reading working-class memories of football, individuals were not solely recounting the efforts of twenty-two people playing on a pitch, they were remembering their fathers, their family's dynamics, the feel of their neighbourhoods, the lasting importance of places they had once visited, work, their childhood, senses of the body and friendships. Translations of a time when working-class communities were defined and perceived as having familiar relationships and

³³³ Raphael Samuels, *Theatres of Memory* (London, New York: Verso, 1994), 6.

dynamics, memories of football reveal how people positioned themselves in the world following deindustrialization.

Arguing that football became a site of remembrance, this chapter analyzes how sports helped to preserve or recreate the past. While it is important to acknowledge the enormous structural changes English football underwent between the 1980s and 1990s, namely its commodification, increasing fan violence and the changing face of the teams themselves, this chapter interprets football as a lasting symbol of individuals' imagined past. Beginning by analyzing the relationship between football, place, and memory, this chapter uses oral history and posts from the fan-run internet forums of Coventry City Wolverhampton Wanderers, West Bromwich Albion, Birmingham City and Walsall F.C. to illustrate how and why football became a metonym for the Midlands lost industrial past. Buttressing the detail expressed in the oral histories, the inclusion of internet forum posts illustrates how experiences of deindustrialization, loss, and football intermingle in memory. As the most effusive portraits of football were used in earlier chapters, these posts merit inclusion as they provide a more informal perspective. Dependent on sources both specifically concerned with football and those in which it is mentioned in passing, the ways in which football organized and informed individuals' memories is explored. As football became a remnant of an entire network of relationships that no longer existed, its popularity in the Midlands indicated how the past continued to exist and influence the present.

The Living Lost: Football's role in preserving the past

Opening on October 3rd 1938 with screenings of *A Yank at Oxford* and *Bulldog Drummond's Peril*, ABC's Savoy became Walsall's first purpose-built cinema.³³⁴ Described in a commemorative booklet released for the occasion as "most modern in its design...providing the ultimate in luxurious comfort and convenience", the Savoy, a huge brick building with a seating capacity reaching nearly 2,200, became a popular destination for the town's working class.³³⁵ Undergoing a series of name-changes and reductions in size, by 1993 the Savoy was no longer able to compete with multi-screen cinemas and was closed. Marked for development and demolished within eighteen months, the loss of the Savoy in Walsall was an example of how prominent symbols of the Midlands traditional working-class culture were in the process of gradual dissolution. Reaching its peak in 1946 when one-third of England went to the pictures at least once a week, cinema attendance was determined by factors such as age, gender, and geographical area.³³⁶ Arguing that going to the cinema was not simply the country's most important leisure activity, but more important to the English than any other nationality, historian Ross McKibbin asserted that picture-going was an integral component of working-class identity.³³⁷ An inexpensive, accessible form of entertainment, cinemas were popular amongst the working class for the community-like atmosphere that they provided. Kim Cockbill of Walsall remembered:

³³⁴ Savoy Walsall Souvenir Brochure, WASMG : 2010.0045, Walsall Local History Centre, Walsall, U.K.

³³⁵ Ibid

³³⁶ Ross McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England 1918-1951* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998(419-420)

³³⁷ Ibid

With the Savoy, the queues getting in it when it was new was a job to get in, even in the week. Thursday afternoon, that was a very big day because it was Walsall's early closing day in those days, all the main shops used to shut. They always had to have a special extended matinee or an extra performance. The Savoy was very popular and I remember once when the whole place was really crowded out, when this would be after the way, when Wolverhampton Wanderers won the Cup final. They used to have a children's matinee on a Saturday morning, and Wolverhampton Wanderers football team turned up with the cup. That day the cinema was full of kids, every kid in the neighbourhood tried to get in there. There was thousands of them there to see Billy Wright and all the gang and Johnny Hancox...something that sticks out well in my memory because it was a friendly place. As a little child you'd be taken along there, but I mean this would be in the evening. You remember little things like Miss Smith some of the girls. I mean I'm convinced they taught me how to walk. I don't know whether its a "told" memory or one that I really remember but I seem to remember being put up in the foyer with my back against the wall and being told to come towards somebody and this was while the films were going on in the cinema, so while they were getting prepared for the halftime interval, they were playing with me in the foyer, football or learning how to walk, because there was a different range of things that went on whilst the punters were all in there watching the films. So, yes there was a good atmosphere there. ³³⁸

Referencing local celebrations following Wolverhampton Wanderers 's 3-1 victory over Leicester City in the F.A. Cup final of 1949, Kim Cockbill's memories of Walsall's Savoy cinema are deeply intertwined with football. A community centre that provided programmes such as Saturday morning cinema clubs for young boys, or corridors for par-

³³⁸ Kim Cockbill, unknown interviewer, March 28th, 1996 The Walsall Oral History Collection, 870/4, Walsall Local History Centre, Walsall, U.K.

ents to teach their children how to walk, the intimacy of the Savoy also enabled attendees to interact with regional heroes like Billy Wright and Johnny Hancox.

Associating cinema going with the success of Wolverhampton Wanderers (Wolves) F.C. in the F.A. Cup, youth programs, the formative moments of childhood, and times of unbridled joy, the Savoy Cinema was identified as a site of interaction, an amalgam of once prominent working-class identities. One of many places in the Midlands where the physical and psychological landscapes of the past became increasingly irretrievable, the Savoy Cinema of Mr. Cockbill's youth ceased to exist at the time of his interview. Not directly related to the traumas of deindustrialization, the vast changes in the Midlands film industry nevertheless provided an example of how working-class culture experienced a prolonged period of accelerated change in the years following the Second World War. Standing in for the sense of estrangement that the Midlands working class experienced, the continuity of football helped to demarcate between the present and the past. Symbolizing both the Savoy cinema and the era in which it existed, the continuing presence of Wolves worked to remind individuals of their own pasts, the former identities and character of their communities, and the changes that occurred or were ongoing. Preserving and reinforcing working-class identities in the face of disruption, football helped individuals to interact with their pasts long after it was impossible to physically do so.

In his article "We are the boys from the Black Country", Stefan Lawrence explored how Walsall's football club reproduced, preserved, and connected individuals to the Black country's cultural heritage. Defined by Lawrence as being marked by a pride in industrial landscape, a predominantly working-class community and culture, a unique

sense of humour or perspective, and a regional dialect or accent, the stability of the Black Country's cultural heritage was decisively threatened by the loss of full employment.³³⁹ Conceptualizing the continued participation in football culture as a defensive response against the uncertainty of post-industrial Walsall, Lawrence argued that football fandom might be best understood as a performance.³⁴⁰ Filling the void left as traditional Black Country working-class identities and communities became destabilized, Lawrence underlined how football offered working-class men a sense of belonging in a world where their existence had become isolated or transitory. Through its sights, smells, songs, food, and drink, football stadia not only connected attendees to prior matches and their associated memories, but to a romanticized past, a time in people's lives when everyday reality reflected what they believed to be the region's traditional identity. Along with the architecture of industry such as gasworks, foundries or smoke-stack-dotted skylines, football stadiums were an integral part of the Midlands local landscape when full employment and material stability had been enjoyed.³⁴¹ A geographical dialogue with loss, as deindustrialization emptied the Midlands of both its cultural and industrial heritage, the continuity of football was concurrently a dialogue with the past and a reminder of changes the community had undergone.

Addressing football's metaphysical significance in creating and preserving the Black Country's working-class identity, Lawrence's research also provokes questions

³³⁹ Stefan Lawrence, "We are the boys from the Black Country! (Re) Imagining local, regional and spectator identities through fandom at Walsall football club" *Social & Cultural Geography* (17),2, 2006, 282-299.

³⁴⁰ Ibid

³⁴¹ A. Nayak and M.J. Kehily, *Gender, Youth and Culture: Global Masculinities and Femininities* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 54.

about the relationship between place, its fixity, and memory. Analyzing the responses of fans following Walsall F.C.'s move from their historical home at Fellows Park to their new modern stadium in the Bescot neighbourhood, Lawrence concluded that football stadiums played a crucial role in preserving a club's dialogue with the past.³⁴² For Walsall F.C. fans, the end of Fellows Park was more than just the loss of a building. Lovingly characterized as a ramshackle venue with an incomparable intimacy, Fellows Park's historical relationship with the Black Country's industrial epoch marked its destruction as the latest in the region's incessant succession of loss. Given that Fellows Park was an organizing structure of memory, how do memories of working-class communities and cultures actively live on in the form of football following a team's displacement? The answer is not readily apparent. Unlike workers who were dispossessed of their livelihoods, social networks, and local geography during deindustrialization, the loss of a football stadium did not permanently prevent an individual from establishing a dialogue with the past. Able to physically interact with the team, the loss of a stadium may have disrupted the fixity of place, but the club itself still existed.

However, fans' memories can be uniquely informed by place, by the stadium - its appeal to the senses its intimacy and its architecture. For supporters of Walsall F.C. and Coventry City F.C., the loss of their historical stadiums was perceived to be akin to the loss of home. Swallowing up a site of spatial memory, the loss of Highfield Road and Fellows Park threatened Coventry City and Walsall's roles as refuges of the Midlands' waning industrial heritage. In a thread revisiting memories of Highfield Road on Sky

³⁴² Lawrence, "We are the Boys from the Black Country, 282-299.

Blues Talk, an internet forum dedicated to Coventry City F.C., several fans expressed a longing for return. Four fans remembered:

I just had a moment when I seen [sic] this picture, tears of joy, as the great memories came back to me. WT5 ROW 22. every season from when the seats was put in prior to that from 1971 aged 9. TAKE ME HOME TO HIGHFIELD ROAD.³⁴³

No but to me Highfield Road represents a time when I believed football was a bit simpler and the game wasn't full of money grabbing owners, over exaggerated wages/ transfer fee's [sic] players were idols and I could locally go and watch MY Football club in the one place I will always call home.³⁴⁴

I remember the 1969-70 season average attendance around 32,000 at HR- floodlit games- how green the pitch looked, the smell of Rothmans menthol cigars and frying onions from the burger vans. Watching from the KOP the whole west end (we never called it the West Terrace) holding sky blue scarves aloft and the roar if it was a big game and we simply won a corner- you could feel that as well as hear it.³⁴⁵

My first ever league game with my dad, sat in the Main stand. April 6, 1963 hooked for ever! Two other games from that time, v Sunderland F.A. cup 5th round, and Manchester Utd in the quarter final, so a great start to my Highfield road career. Maybe that's why I'm still in denial over leaving Highfield Road!³⁴⁶

³⁴³ Covcraig@bury, October 16th, 2012, comment on "Pictures of Highfield Road", *Sky Blues Talk: Coventry City FC Fans Forum*, October 15th, 2012 <http://www.skybluestalk.co.uk/threads/pictures-of-highfield-road.21911/page-2>

³⁴⁴ ROBOCCFC90, February 21st, 2014, comment on "Pictures of Highfield Road", *Sky Blues Talk: Coventry City FC Fans Forum*, October 15th, 2012, <http://www.skybluestalk.co.uk/threads/pictures-of-highfield-road.21911/page-4>

³⁴⁵ tommydazzle, November 29th, 2014, comment on "Pictures of Highfield Road", *Sky Blues Talk: Coventry City FC Fans Forum*, October 15th, 2012, <http://www.skybluestalk.co.uk/threads/pictures-of-highfield-road.21911/page-6>
A kop is a steep terrace in a football stadium. The term itself comes from a battle in the Second Boer War which took place on Spion Kop Hill.

³⁴⁶ Cov kid 55, April 13th 2015, comment on "Highfield Road Memories: games", *Sky Blues Talk: Coventry City FC Fans Forum*, April 12th, 2015. <http://www.skybluestalk.co.uk/threads/highfield-road-memories-games.55745/>

Identifying a seat, a smell, a sound, or a moment with family, spatial memories of Highfield Road reflected what Yi-Fu Tuan defined as rootedness.³⁴⁷ Conceptualized as a state of being that can occur outside of quotidian reality and its anxieties, to experience rootedness is to feel “unreflectively secure and comfortable in a particular locality.”³⁴⁸ Expressing a pride in their bonds to Highfield Road and an awareness of its history, the loss of Coventry City F.C.’s football stadium dislocated individuals from their sense of rootedness. A central text in the everyday lives of working-class men during the Midlands’ industrial epoch, football stadiums connected individual social memories to the collective experience of living in a neighbourhood, a city, or a county. A place which had endured deindustrialization, the collective wistfulness following the demolition of Highfield Road was intimately linked to the region’s recent perception of loss.

Even for fans whose home stadiums were not demolished, changes to the structure of seating plans or layouts provoked an outpouring of nostalgia, and melancholy. Bryn Williams of Wordesley, a fan of Wolverhampton Wanderers, reflected upon the personal significance of the Molineux Street Stand before its demolition:

The other great significance of that particular match is that it was the last game to be played before the famous old Molineux Street stand was demolished to make way for the new John Ireland (now the Steve Bull) stand. The old stand, with its seven distinctive zig-zag gables, was designed by the famous Scottish architect Archibald Leitch and opened in 1932 to coincide with the team’s triumphant return to the First Division. Leitch, incidentally, was also responsible for the design of many other iconic football stands of

³⁴⁷ Yi-Fu Tuan, “Rootedness versus sense of place”, *Landscape (24)*, 19801, 3-8

³⁴⁸ Ibid

the time including those at Aston Villa, Derby, Sunderland, Manchester United, Newcastle, Liverpool, Everton etc., plus Twickenham rugby stadium....As a Wolves supporter of 25 years standing - most of it literally, on the South Bank - I felt a great sadness and nostalgia at the realization that the wonderful old stand with its own peculiar charm which had dominated my viewing since childhood and had overseen the great Wolves triumphs of the 1950s was soon to be no more...³⁴⁹

Writing a sentimental letter to Wolves manager John Barnwell in the summer of 1979, Williams was presented with one of the seven pointed conical finials from the apexes of the stand by assistant manager Richie Barker shortly after the start of the following season. Rescued from its intended place amongst the rubble, Williams described his finial as a keepsake, a cherished memento from a time when he believed football stadiums reflected the community in which they were built. Using words such as unique, homely and quaint, Barnwell contrasted the intimacy and spirit of Wolverhampton's Molineux street stand, to the corporate non-places of modern football's glass superstructures.

In another incident of souvenir-seeking during the demolition of the Molineux's South Bank, Wolves fan Graham Gallimore managed to convince a group of workmen to bring an entire turnstile over to his garage opposite the ground.³⁵⁰ Too cumbersome to be stored properly by his relatives following Gallimore's death, the turnstile was do-

³⁴⁹ Bryn Williams, "A keepsake of the Molineux Street stand" *Black Country Bugle*, October 16th, 2008, accessed July 19th, 2016 <http://www.blackcountrybugle.co.uk/keepsake-molineux-street-stand/story-20152280-detail/story.html> As the relationship between an individual and the consumption of football is dependent upon the act of seeing, the contributions of architect Archibald Leitch cannot be overstated. Leitch's trademark pedimented gables, criss-crossing steel balustrades, balconies, installation of crush barriers and attention to sightlines, made foot were responsible for creating the way people experienced football in England during the twentieth century, An architect of industrial landscapes such as the Union Tube Works at Coatbridge, Leitch's work with the Clyde Company is an example of how the visual grammar of football, modernity and industry were intertwined. Simon Inglis, *Engineering Archie: Archibald Leitch- Football Ground Designer* (Swindon: English Heritage, 2005)

³⁵⁰ "Turnstile relic from old days of Molineux", *Black Country Bugle*, September 27th, 2007, accessed July 19th, 2016 <http://www.blackcountrybugle.co.uk/turnstile-relic-old-days-molineux/story-20138078-detail/story.html>

nated back to the Molineux to be renovated and placed on display. Characterized by brother-in-law Peter Wilson as a symbol of a bygone era of football for the working man, Gallimore's disembodied turnstile and Williams' finial are physical representations of place's importance in interpreting the lasting meaning of football.³⁵¹ Imperfect as a metonym for the Midlands industrial heritage, football is nevertheless a patchwork of temporal meanings, remnants of the past and reflections of the present.

Returning to the question of how memories of working-class cultures and communities lived on in football clubs which had been displaced, it's important to consider the duality of sporting institutions. Football clubs exist/ed as both a physical and abstract structure. A club's financial resources, attendance, players, stadium, owners, managers, employees, and successes are/were examples of its physical structures. These structures are flexible as they undergo quantitative changes over time. Conversely, a football club's abstract structure is immeasurable. Transcending the standardized rules and performance of sport, an abstract structure is the extent into which individuals internalize the club, remember it, talk about it and organize their past and present around its existence. Supported by the club's physical structures, an abstract structure depends upon disruptions or changes in success, players, owners, etc, in order to reproduce itself. Existentially, a club must adapt in order to survive; the nature of competition compels it to do so. Thus, while changes to a club's physical structures are necessary, the club's abstract structure, its inexplicable poetry, its soul, its rootedness in

³⁵¹ Turnstiles were not only symbols of football as a paying spectator sport, as they provided the barriers regulating flow in and out of the stadium, they embodied football's relationship to industrialism. Manufactured by W.T. Ellison of Erlams O' Th' Height, Ellison's turnstiles were advertised as rush preventive and were fit with foot pedals to allow the operator maximum control over movement. Representing the first physical interaction fans had with the stadium, passing through the turnstiles was an important ritual associated with attending a football match. Simon Inglis, *Played in Manchester: The Architectural Heritage of a City at Play* (Swindon, English Heritage, 2004)

a shared collective history remain wholly intact. In the context of deindustrialization, memories of the Midlands' industrial heritage continued to live on in the region's football clubs as a result of their continued presence in the everyday experience of the working class.

Loss and its continued memory: Football, time, and change

As the factories, working men's clubs, and shops which had once defined the Midlands social landscape receded, individuals used football to organize their memories of what had disappeared. Terence Mills remembered:

My Dad first took me to see Wolves play in 1963 when I was 7. The problem with Saturdays was that my Dad worked until 1pm. So by the time he cycled home to Moxley it was nearly half past. After he had had his dinner it would be about quarter past two when we went for the bus. Frequently we would not be able to get on the first one as it would be full, so by the time we caught the second one we would arrive at the Molineux after kick-off. As we approached the entrance of the stand you could hear the various noises from the crowd, depending upon what they were seeing and we could only guess at. Once inside the volume and tone of the crowd noises changed as we were now enclosed within the structure of the stand. As we hurried along the inner corridor you could see light illuminating the steps from the aperture to the seating entrance. Then you would be standing at the foot of those wooden steps. At first, looking up you would see sky, take another step up and the top of the opposite stand came into view. Then another and the heads of the players appeared, all the time the crowd noise getting louder and clearer. Another step and the glorious Wolves shirts were visible and finally in full view in contrast, yet in harmony, was the beautiful green Molineux grass. I still feel that thrill now

when I recall those childhood experiences shared with my Father. It was indeed out of darkness cometh light.³⁵²

Fondly recalling the Saturday afternoons he spent with his father at Wolverhampton's Molineux stadium, Terence Mills' memories of football are firmly rooted to place. Dictated by the certainty of his father's work schedule, the disappointment of arriving late to the stadium was offset by the wealth of its sensory detail. An iconographic portrait of the relationship between Mills and his father, the glowing orange of the Wolves shirts, and the richness of the grasses green intimates how football held a meaningful role in enshrining the region's cultural heritage and identity to subsequent generations. Similarly, coupling personal narratives of football, familial tragedy, and redundancy, a reflective poster on West Bromwich Albion's internet forum discussed the heightened importance of the Hawthorns following the death of an uncle:

The sight of the green turf as I came over the top of the Smethwick end corner, the smell of pipe smoke from the old boys, the lads who walked around selling fags, sweets and drinks from their white plastic trays, watching the man put up the half time scores from inside the Woodman Corner scoreboard, the floodlights flickering into life and taking an age to warm up, leaning on a terrace barrier, the company of my Uncle who died of a heart attack in 1982... he took me up the Albion from 1971 onwards, he was the personnel manager at Birmetals in Clapgate Lane, when it was closing and the company made people redundant, he was the one giving them redundancy, people he had called friends for years turned on him, understandable I know, but he was just

³⁵² Terence Mills, "Joy of Going to First Wolves Game aged 7" *Black Country Bugle*, February 13th, 2015, accessed on July 19th, 2016. <http://www.blackcountrybugle.co.uk/joy-going-wolves-game-aged-7/story-26008192-detail/story.html>

doing what he was told to do, the stress of the situation contributed to a heart attack, he died aged 59, makes the Hawthorns very special to me, many memories.³⁵³

Venerated as a holy site, the Hawthorns' historical significance is informed by individual memories of the past, and the crowd's embodiment of the region's social dynamics. Closed in 1980 following substantial trading losses in each of the company's previous two calendar years, over 600 employees were made redundant by aluminum and magnesium alloy component producers Birmetals. Speaking to the House of Commons a month after the factory's closure, Birmingham Northfield representative Jocelyn Cadbury proclaimed that none of the men made redundant were able to claim their unemployment benefits.³⁵⁴ A markedly rancorous break-up between Birmingham's working class and the metallurgical industry, the cultural legacy of Birmetals persisted within the gates of the Hawthorns. Suffering a heart attack following the stress of informing co-workers and friends of their redundancies, the untimely death of poster The Black Pearl's uncle interrupted the continuity of a game-day ritual. Hinting at the fractious atmosphere deindustrialization released upon the Midlands working class, Black Pearl's memories illustrate how the importance of place expands beyond architectural boundaries. Like the rise of a submerged landscape, football stadiums bring the past to the surface. An historical cache of memory, football stadiums interlock a multiplicity of events in the lives of its attendees.

³⁵³ The Black Pearl, March 10th, 2013 (10:24 PM), comment on "Things you miss about matchdays from the past", *West Brom: The Independent West Bromwich Albion Site*, March 19th, 2013. <http://westbrom.com/forum/index.php?topic=10998.25>

³⁵⁴ HC Deb 8th, July 1980 cc510-8

Reflecting on the waning allure of Villa Park over the course of his life, former car worker and occasional Aston Villa fan Bob Pemberton remembered:

Q: What about football?

A: I wasn't too interested in football, I have always supported Aston villa with Christie me wife, we had season tickets at one time when they were in the 3rd division, but when they come up into the 1st it didn't get so interesting, so we stopped having the tickets, but going back to me schooling football, I could never understand the positions. Swimming was my forte, I liked swimming, in fact I went in for some swimming competitions. When Lewis' the store in Birmingham, that isn't there now- it was sad when that closed- I liked Lewis'. I swam in the Lewis' competition and I think I come second, I won't lie about it, I think I come second, I didn't come first, I could say I come first, but I didn't- the records would show if anybody kept the records, I come second I think. But I think there was eight in the race so I didn't do too bad but going back to football, no, football was better than cricket because I couldn't understand this hard ball, I've never been able to understand this bloomin' hard ball being hit at people and could never grasp it.³⁵⁵

Articulating the nature of his indifferent relationship with football, Mr. Pemberton's memories of Aston Villa helped to facilitate a reflection on his love of swimming, the competitions of his youth, and the changing landscape of the Midlands urban area. Linking football to a defunct department store and the long departed years of his childhood, football continued to organize the narrative of Mr. Pemberton's past even after his interest in the club had wavered. Sinking into the nothingness of the earth, the society in which Bob

³⁵⁵Bob Pemberton, interviewed by Helen Lloyd, 2000. Transcript. Millenibrum, MS2255/2/006, Birmingham Central Library, Birmingham, U.K.

Pemberton had grown up vanished. Providing an afterlife for the Midlands of the industrial age, football clubs not only enabled working-class communities to create a continuity between the past and the present, they reasserted the identities and geographies that deindustrialization had destabilized.

Analyzing the relationship between Kirkcaldy, a Scottish city defined by linoleum production before deindustrialization, and their football club Raith Rovers, Euan Hague and John Mercer argued that football's instrumental role in developing a region's cultural identity and social memory was due in part to its geographical significance.³⁵⁶ Using the term geographical memory to characterize the fluid relationship between social memory and place, for Hague and Mercer the support of a local football team implied "a lifetime of growing up in one place, experiencing childhood, adulthood, and numerous memories that have little or anything to do...with football."³⁵⁷ Using an example of an interviewee comparing the atmosphere following Raith Rovers' victory in the Coca-Cola Cup to VE Day, Hague and Mercer asserted that football's rootedness to place made it an ideal springboard for an individual's vast reserve of memory. This malleability, which connected the seemingly disparate threads of an individual's life, can be partially explained by the ways in which human beings construct the past.

Characterizing memory as the product of a constructive analytical imagination, Collingwood contended that the historical past is not a remembered past or an aggre-

³⁵⁶ Euan Hague and John Mercer, "Geographical Memory and Urban Identity in Scotland: Raith Rovers FC and Kirkcaldy. *Geography* (82), 2, 1998. 105-116

³⁵⁷ Ibid

gate sum of moments, but rather an idealized one.³⁵⁸ Echoed in the work of Dilthey, memory is interpreted as an active parser of information, keeping moments that render the past understandable and coherent while allowing the unessential to be consigned to oblivion.³⁵⁹ In order to understand how the idealized past of the Midlands industrial era lives on through football, this chapter section analyzes how memories of the sport reflected experiences of community, work, and family.

The son of a skilled sheet metal pattern-maker, Harry Reeves reflected on the relationship between his childhood neighbourhood Aston and football:

Q: Can you talk about the team's you've supported in Birmingham?

A: Yes, well when were...I think I mentioned that when my father and mother returned to Birmingham and I was two and my sister was just born, when I was about three, oh no, sorry about five, we moved to Aston, they had a rented house in Victoria Road, Aston... no longer there now. So, of course, and I went to junior school in Aston, I can't remember the name of the school and I began to support Aston Villa. Strangely enough, my father and all his brothers...all the family had lived Small Heath as children, so of course they were dyed in the wool Blues supporters. But we went down every week, either to Aston Villa or to the Blues, standing up in the terraces, packed together like sardines and just went one week to one, one week to there other and although you know a lot of banter and cat calls and one or two fist fights, there were never any real mayhem, no knives came out or anything too bad and it worries me a bit...mind you a lot of it's gone now, I think with football, of course, I think they've seen the red light, but I still don't like the ob

³⁵⁸R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History: with lectures 1926-1938*. ed Jan Van der Dussen (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 154.

³⁵⁹ H.P. Rickman, ed., *Meaning in History : W. Dilthey's Thoughts on History and Society* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1961), 86.

scene chanting and the booing of the opposition...I can't stand booing, I used to try and instil that into the children, if you lost you lost, but you didn't boo the other team, you know. A little derisory booing isn't too bad but when it becomes a terrible chant and booing players you've supported before. But after I'd...and I supported Aston Villa, I still support them today and it's 82 now. Isn't it, so it's many years I've supported Aston villa...82 years old, I mean, not the year '82!³⁶⁰

Growing up in close proximity to Villa Park despite later moving to Tyseley and Hall Green, Reeves' support of Aston Villa was symbiotic. Similar to his father's family, who had come of age in Small Heath and were Birmingham F.C. fans, Reeves' explanation for his choice of club was tautological: he supported Aston Villa because he was from Aston.³⁶¹ Presenting an argument for place as the most influential determinant of support, even over family, the memories of Harry Reeves also bear the traces of how Birmingham's working-class communities had been organized during the city's industrial era. Located in a highly industrialized area of Birmingham, Villa Park was in walking distance of Hercules Cycle and Motor Co, Hudson and Co., Norton Motorcycle works, the H.P.

³⁶⁰Harry Reeves, interviewed by Helen Lloyd, 2000. Transcript. Millenibrum, MS2255/2/071, Birmingham Central Library, Birmingham, U.K.

³⁶¹ This tautological exclamation of allegiance applied to fans of teams throughout the Midlands. Poster Nathan from West Bromwich's fan forum stated:

Pretty similar to you, all of our family were from the St. Pauls Road, Oldbury Road, Spon Lane areas of Smethwick, every single one being an Albion fan. My Grandad worked at Salters for 50 years, supporting the Albion was a given! Like you say, it was never an option!
(Nathan, March 20th, 2015, (10:44 Am), comment on "Why West Bromwich Albion?", *West Brom: The Independent West Bromwich Albion Site*, March 20th, 2015
<http://westbrom.com/forum/index.php?topic=16078.0>)

Founded by George Salter's Spring Works employees in 1878, West Bromwich Albion was intimately tied to local industry. Not unlike the role of geography in affixing individuals to support, working for Salters meant being a West Bromwich Albion fan.

sauce factory, Ralph Martindale and Co and the Saltey-Nechells gasworks.³⁶² Although working hours in Birmingham historically were highly dependent upon employers, by 1853 most firms began to designate Saturday as a half-day.³⁶³ Allowing workers to leave the factory by one o'clock, Villa Park eventually became a popular destination for working class men on Saturday afternoon.

Experiencing increased leisure time, disposable income and access to Birmingham's highly developed transportation infrastructure by the turn of the twentieth century, Aston Villa recorded an attendance of nearly 20,000 for every home match.³⁶⁴ Dipping below this watermark only twice between 1920 and 1985, Aston's hold on the imagination of local working-class communities was mirrored throughout the Midlands. Reaching the height of their popularity in 1950 when Wolverhampton Wanderers F.C. recorded an average attendance of 45,466, interest in Wolves began to crash in the early 1980s as the club experienced considerable financial insecurity and lack of success on the pitch.³⁶⁵ Similarly, both West Bromwich Albion F.C. and Birmingham City F.C. recorded average attendances of over 30,000 multiple times between the end of the Second World War and the height of deindustrialization in the early 1980s. Long considered to be the bad relations of the Midlands professional football clubs, Walsall F.C.'s atten-

³⁶² Adam Benkwitz and Gyozo Molnar, "The Emergence and Development of association football: influential socio-cultural factors in Victorian Birmingham" *Soccer & Society* (1), 2016. 1-18.

³⁶³ Ibid

³⁶⁴ <http://www.european-football-statistics.co.uk/attnclub/astv.htm>

³⁶⁵ Russ Evers, "Is that all you take away/" in Charles Ross eds. *We are Wolves: Wolverhampton Wanderers- the fans' story* (Wolverhampton: Juma, 1997). Taken from a compilation of articles from Wolverhampton's fanzine *A Load of Bull*, Evers regales his readers with stories of traversing the country supporting his hometown club. Expressing contempt for the Bhattis, a pair of Saudi Brothers who brought Wolves to the brink of dissolution, Evers' memoirs poignantly expressed the difficulties Wolves had with attendance, success, and finances throughout the 1980s.

dance may have been considerably lower than its more successful counterparts, but its role in helping to develop a sense of community and identity in the town's working-class population was no less significant. Francis Preece, an electric company worker, remembered:

Q: Did football feature largely in mens [sic] lives in Palfrey as you were so close to the ground?

A: It did, it did you know the old Walsall football club was always very popular, the faithful 4,000... they never did much the Arsenal match of course was the one outstanding one, they never reached the heights really until after the war. I think it was the 1956 season 1956/57 they were promoted to the second division...if i remember right they were in 2 seasons and came down again. I think the record gate was 20, 25,000 it was a night match versus Newcastle one August before the floodlights were installed and I was there at that one...the old club was always a favourite especially with the people of Palfrey.³⁶⁶

Reflecting the topographical layout of Walsall F.C.'s Fellows Park, the organization of Preece's memory nestled the above excerpt in between reminiscences of Orgill's laundry and the railway. Overlooking the pitch until 1965 when it was demolished, the physical closeness of Orgill's smokestack symbolized how football geographically interacted with the working class' experience of the everyday. Returning laundry and dry cleaning in brown cardboard boxes, and issuing booklets to its customers to organize their transactions, Orgill's laundry was a beloved family-run business that at one time helped to

³⁶⁶Mr. Francis Preece, interview by Joyce Hammond, April 29th, 1987, The Walsall Oral History Collection, 425/30, Walsall Local History Centre, Walsall, U.K.

define the physical landscape of Walsall.³⁶⁷ Preece's oral history, in which Walsall F.C. was intimately linked to an important community staple and the city's one-time position as a rail hub, indicated the extent into which football became a metonym for the past following deindustrialization.

Even for working class men who weren't able to attend more than a few games in their lifetimes, football helped to structure their memories of the town, their imagining of community and their perception of Walsall's identity. Fred Lloyd recalled:

Oh, well, obv...If you could imagine, people in those days wore caps. Uh there, the working class people wore caps and I can still see those caps when the goals went in uh, flying in the air. People just picked their caps up and threw them up into the air and it was like.... confetti to see those caps coming down. Uh, there was unfortunately we only had 11,000 there. People boycotted the match because they doubled the gate money, instead of charging a shilling they charged 2 shillings to come in and people wouldn't pay it. And in any case it was a foregone conclusion because Arsenal were supposedly to be the top team in the world then. And uh, I believe it was headlined in the uh even the New York Papers it got a headlines there that Walsall beat Arsenal it, it was the most fantastic victory. I have seen, there is a film a short film of it, a part of it, i have seen the film and I think that it's uh still owned by umm Bill Harrison the um, well Ron Harrison I should say the son of Bill Harrison who was the chairman at one time and uh I'm sure that's Ron got this ta- well not tape a film of it. I think that was one of my outstanding memories of the club although there's been a lot of, I never saw much working as such...³⁶⁸

³⁶⁷ "Booklet" WASMG : 1997.0036, Walsall Local History Centre, Walsall, U.K.

³⁶⁸ Mr. Fred Lloyd, The Walsall Oral History Collection, 426/?, Walsall Local History Centre, Walsall, U.K.

Expressing a pronounced pride in the then third division club's 2-0 victory over Arsenal in the third round of the 1933 F.A. Cup, Fred Lloyd's memories are consistent with the research of Tom Clark and his study on North Lincolnshire team Scunthorpe United. Renamed "the Iron" in the 1950s as a tribute to the town's booming steel industry, Clark argued that the performance of song at Scunthorpe United matches helped to construct and preserve the town's collective identity.³⁶⁹Uniting a group of diverse individuals through the local specificity of the song's lyrics, the town's shared cultural heritage, which had been restructured by deindustrialization, was reasserted and stabilized. In direct dialogue with Fred Lloyd, Clark's work illustrates how and why football can give a community an identity. Referencing Walsall's inclusion in a New York City newspaper, for Mr. Lloyd, football allowed his town, one that was primarily known for its leather industry, to gain entrance into national or even global conversations.

A platform for remembrance or cultural protectionism, football was also an area in which changes in a community's methods of communication, social life, and technology were measured. As football was so deeply situated in the everyday experience of the Midlands' working class, changes in everyday life were reflected in memories of football. Coventry City F.C. supporter Lionel Bird remembered:

Highfield Road truly witnessed an historical event on Wednesday 6 October 1965. The Sky Blues away match at Cardiff City was televised and the pictures were relayed back to Coventry. Viewport Limited provided the technology to make this happen and the experiment certainly captured the imagination of Sky Blues supporters. Whilst 12,639 fan witnessed the game live at Ninian park, a total of 10,295 assembled at Highfield

³⁶⁹ Tom Clark, "I'm Scunthorpe 'til I die: Constructing and (Re)negotiating identity through the terrace chant" *Soccer and Society* (7),4, 2006. 494-507

Road to watch the relayed pictures on four giant screens...Night matches were always special but this one was something different. I sat in the Sky Blue stand and can remember fog jeopardizing proceedings before lifting. City wore red and white striped shirts, borrowed from Stoke City to help distinguish them, from Cardiff players during the black and white and white transmission. Prior to kick-off several young City supporters went across the pitch and sat underneath the screens, continually lighting up cigarettes. The red/orange glow looked like a swarm of lightening bugs.³⁷⁰

Becoming available to the Midlands two years after the passing of the Television Act in 1954, commercial television restructured the way working-class communities spent their leisure time and consumed sporting events.³⁷¹ Growing from 3 million licenses to well over 13 million in the following decade, the popularity of television in the household reflected the increasing consumerism of British society.³⁷² Enjoying the benefits of full employment and its disposable income, working-class families purchased washing machines, freezers, vinyl record players, new cars, vacations abroad, and more modern housing. A continuation of the growing culture of individualization that had been interrupted by the United Kingdom's involvement in the Second World War and its ensuing policies of economic austerity, working-class communities began to rely upon television for entertainment purposes. Initially broadcast in 1938 by the BBC, the FA Cup first reached a mass audience in 1953 when Stanley Matthews' heroics led Blackpool to a 4-

³⁷⁰ Lionel Bird, "Closed-Circuit Televised Match", *Coventry Memories*. accessed October 30th, 2016. http://www.coventrymemories.co.uk/memory/?id=1059&title=CLOSED-CIRCUIT_TELEVISED_MATCH

³⁷¹ Rob Turnock, *Television and Consumer Culture: Britain and the Transformation of Modernity* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 1.

³⁷² *Ibid*, 2.

3 come-from-behind victory against the Bolton Wanderers.³⁷³ Falling into a stark silence as radio and television transmissions beamed into the households of its transfixed audience, Blackpool's local newspaper recalled that during the match, the city seemed deserted.³⁷⁴ Gluing individuals to their television sets, Joe Moran argued that television transferred the ritual of communal viewing from the stadium to the home.³⁷⁵ Referencing an article from the *Daily Mirror* entitled "The fans hunted TV Aerials," Moran relayed a story of a Midlands' man being interrupted in his own living room by two complete strangers inquiring if they could watch the match.³⁷⁶ Reiterated often in the collected oral histories, televisions disrupted the visual fixity of football and made the comfort of home, rather than the atmosphere of the stadium, the site of action and memory.

Melvin Haigh recalled Birmingham City's 3-1 loss to Manchester City in 1956:

One of the sad memories while I was there talking of football was that my Uncle Fred he started to get me interested in football and he used to tie me down the Blues and I followed the blues. I still do for that matter, you know, 50 years on or so. But I used to go down, strangely enough, I could go down there on my own or with a friend and it wouldn't be a problem at all. But the sad part of it was that they got to the cup final in

³⁷³ Martin Johnes and Gavin Mellor, "The 1953 FA Cup Final: Modernity and Tradition in British Culture" *Contemporary British History* (20),2, 2006. 263-280.

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

³⁷⁵ Joe Moran, *Armchair Nation : An Intimate History of Britain in Front of the TV*. (London: Profile, 2013), 62.

³⁷⁶ Ibid

1956 which I watched on the television an old black and white television and of course as usually they lose. I ended up in tears that day! Ha Ha. I think a lot of us did.³⁷⁷

Memories of communal viewing, where men, women, and children huddled together to share the spectacle of football may have characterized early inter-relationships between the working class, sport, and television but as televisions became available in more and more British households, communal forms of consumption began to be challenged by individualized ones. Partly due to the volatility of the terraces and the crumbling conditions of the stadiums themselves, decreased attendance was also impacted by television. Eliminating the barrier of distance, by the era of deindustrialization more and more members of the working class chose to watch football by themselves or with their families at home. Corresponding to experiences of social fragmentation following deindustrialization, the loss of employment, geographical familiarity, and social networks were not the only changes sweeping through working-class communities.

Advents in technology, such as the television, meant that relationships to community, space, and consumption also underwent a process of reconstruction. While Raymond Williams has stated famously that the organic community is always gone, always in a state of loss, it's important to refrain from denouncing estranged relationships to the present as mere whims of nostalgia. Encapsulated by working-class memories of football, life before television was recalled fondly. Defining the past as familiar or understandable, for some of the Midlands' working class, life before television represented a time in which the region's traditional industrial identity, and spirit were still palpable. Mr Cholerton of Wolverhampton remembered:

³⁷⁷Melvin Haigh, interviewed by Helen Lloyd, 2000. Transcript. Millenibrum, MS2255/2/028, Birmingham Central Library, Birmingham, U.K.

On a Saturday night now you can get the football results on t.v. but I can remember as a boy going out with a van on a Saturday night into the heart of Wales from Hereford dropping packets of the pink off at every village. It was amazing, there was a crowd of people waiting for it. That was the only way they could get the football results from the Hereford journal football pink being delivered...they used to go 30/40 miles from Hereford to places like Monmouth, Brecon, Abergaveny and so on...³⁷⁸

Using the relationship individuals had with football to measure the changes he had witnessed, Mr. Cholerton's memories of nighttime drives down the A49 and A666 are, for him, remnants of a time when an involvement with community was necessary to keep abreast of the outside world.

Seemingly in awe at the state of Wolverhampton in 1988, Mr. Cholerton contrasted his experiences of delivering newspapers to kids who "walk down the street now with radios in their pockets."³⁷⁹ Associating the Wolverhampton of his youth with prosperity, intimacy, technological innovation, and success on the football field, for Mr. Cholerton the spirit of the Midlands before television was intimate and familiar. Appending these thoughts on the region's lost spirit de corps, Birmingham native Colin Davis remembered:

Q: Were there special football buses or?

A: Oh yeah, oh yeah and they used to send them out like the council or whoever it is like the transport, they used to send them out...but nobody else would they wouldn't pick anybody up until they got to the square, that was where the supporters go and

³⁷⁸Mr. Maurice Cholerton, unknown interviewer/ May 28th, 1988 SB/MNDC. Wolverhampton Heritage Project, DX-869, Wolverhampton Archives and Local Studies, Wolverhampton, U.K. The "pink" is a colloquial term used to describe a sports newspaper.

³⁷⁹ Ibid

sometimes there'd be a couple of buses, you know and if you missed the bus, oh, you was in trouble. You had to try and catch other buses the local buses and get yourself down Villa Park which was a long way in them days on a bus and everybody sort of... well, I know my family did..we was never at the back of the queue, we was always there on time, that was me dad, you've got to get up the Square, we've got to get in the queue like and it was jus fantastic to go, sixty odd thousand people all shouting, no aggro, I mean in them days nobody would hear about...well, I say nobody had heard...not like today, you didn't have fights because your team lost and things like that. It'll be "we'll get you next time, we'll have you next time. Wait till we come down to your place!" and things like that and everything seemed to be a lovely friendly atmosphere, even though it was like against the others like there was...it's ever so difficult to explain, you look now and you think, oh God, it's a pity these people nowadays couldn't see how it was then and enjoy it and everybody seemed so much happier for it.³⁸⁰

Articulating a perceived shift in Birmingham's cultural values, Davis' oral history intertwined memories of community, spirit, and football to express a sense of loss for an older, disappeared landscape. Teeming with joyful supporters peacefully taking public transit, Davis' idealized past conflicted with a petty, aggressive, and violent present. A metonym for the spirit of an older Birmingham, football teams weren't just remembered as configurations of a community's value systems and identities, they were also representations of their demographics. Not infrequently hailing from working-class backgrounds, players themselves carried the legacies of the Midlands industrial heritage. Composed of professional footballers, who were prevented by the club from seeking

³⁸⁰Colin Davis interviewed by Helen Lloyd, 2000. Transcript. Millenibrum,MS2255/2/063, Birmingham Central Library, Birmingham, U.K.

additional work, and semi-professionals who held jobs in the region's factories, the marked sense of intimacy between club and fan was shaped in part by their similarities; men saw themselves on the field, their values, their backgrounds, and their work ethic.³⁸¹ An example of what Markova would characterize as a symbolic social environment expressing itself through the activities of individuals, the fact that the working class supplied the Midlands football clubs with their backbone enabled fans to identify with the players.³⁸² Interpreting a former West Bromwich Albion captain as an image of the region's working class, poster "Iwastherein68" remembered:

In 1954 when we won the cup, I was 8 years old and living in Coseley. Len Millard the Albion captain (over 600 appearances) lived nearby. My dad was secretary of the Coseley branch of the supporters club and went on a coach to the final. I remember him getting home in the early hours. On Sunday morning at 10.30 dad took me to Len's house where I sat staring at his Cup Winners medal in my hand. 10 years later, Len came to work in the factory of a business where I worked in the office. A great man, very humble he received no fuss just immense respect. Believe me...those really were the days my friends.³⁸³

Similarly, Doug Quinton of Wolverhampton reflected:

I used to play football for Heath Town Wesley, the Wesleyan Chapel team; in fact I was the captain. WE were all friends together, all muckers, always stuck together. Johnny Nicholls was one of the team, and one day he said "I've been signed on by the Baggies."

³⁸¹ James Walvin, *Football and the Decline of Britain* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1986), 47.

³⁸² Ivana Markova, "Towards an Epistemology of Social Representations" *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* (26),2, 1996. 177-196

³⁸³ iwastherein68, February 25th, 2016 (6.00 AM), comment on "Us and them", *West Brom: The Independent West Bromwich Albion Site*, February 23rd, 2016. <http://westbrom.com/forum/index.php?topic=18184.25>

He played in the A Team, the reserves and so forth, until he got in the first team. He played with Ronnie Allen, and they called it Ronnie for Johnny, because Ronnie used to put the passes through and he scored; he scored thirty two goals in one season. He played with Ronnie Allen in the England team at Hampden Park against Scotland, when England won 4-2 and Ronnie and Johnny got a goal each. I used to go with him to watch the Baggies. You know the way they drive up to matches in their Mercedes these days, well me and Johnny used to go on the bus, and we used to have to change at Wednesbury. He got 10 pounds a week to ply for the first team, and I think it was 2 bonus for a win and a 1 for a draw. I was getting 8 pounds at Bayliss, Jones and Bayliss. Both me and Johnny were Wolves' fans actually, but I used to watch him play for the Albion.³⁸⁴

Embodying a time when the structures of the Midlands working-class communities were stable and predictable, memories of a club's social representativeness reflected yearnings for a lost intimacy. Coming from working-class milieus, sharing social habits and earning similar wages, players were symbolic extensions of community. Thus, as footballers became defined by their inflated salaries, Mercedes Benz cars and lack of connection to community, complaints concerning this change weren't solely commentaries on the loss of representativeness on the playing field, they were melancholic expressions attached to a larger loss- the decline of the Midlands labour-based identity.

When the macro-structures of any society undergo periods of reorganization or large-scale change, traces of ritual, customs, or culture persist. These traces, whether they are a restaurant, music, or a football game, help individuals adjust to change, preserving a sense of the familiar, or the past, in the present. For the Midlands' working

³⁸⁴ Alec Brew, *Wolverhampton Voices* (Stroud: Tempus Publishing, 2004), 88.

class, memories of football not only reflected how individuals internalized conceptions of community, they revealed how relationships to work changed over the course of a lifetime. Hired as a 15-year-old apprentice in 1969, William Newman and Sons worker Robin Lyndon used football to convey the intimacy of his workplace:

Q: Talk a bit more about your working life in those early years.

A: Well, the apprenticeship lasted for 12 months and basically after the 12 months, you were then put into an area on the shop floor where you had to do work and I mean I'd served my 12 months apprenticeship up until I was just gone 16. When I was 17 I was there then on an assembly line having to do piece work and earning a living so to say and you soon learnt that obviously the more that you done the more money you got but at the time, I can remember in the early days, I used to go home and the first thing I'd do was go and collapse on the bed and have an hour's sleep because it was just so tiring. We used to work from 8 o'clock of a morning till 5 o'clock of a night, 5 days a week, have a 45 minute dinner break, where me and the other trainees would go to a local bit of grass just across the road from the factory and we'd play football because football was a love you know for most people.

Q: You didn't eat anything?

A: We used to have sandwiches, but you know you'd have people like that would turn round and say "I'll go in goal first" and they'd be standing there with a bag of chips, like and this kind of thing, during the lunch but it was just the happy environment and you'd even get some of the chaps that were 40 and 50 from the factory, come over and stand watching us and make comments like, "you ought to go and have trials form the local teams" and wind us up and all this but it was a good happy environment and it continued form the dinner time through into the afternoon and the general talk would be about what

had happened of a dinner time and things like this. It was good, it was a nice atmosphere to work in.³⁸⁵

Left relatively unscathed by deindustrialization, the intimacy and camaraderie that had once defined William Newman and Sons was impacted by the region's shifting structure of employment. Arguing throughout his interview that reforms to England's apprenticeship program had caused day-to-day interactions to become oppressively cautious and inexpressive, Mr. Lyndon bemoaned the lack of skill and preparedness of teenagers entering the workforce. Expressing a belief that his workplace's past atmosphere had been the product of learning on the job and the freedom to fail, Mr. Lyndon's discontent with the state of industrial relations underlined the incompatibility between the government's new system of Youth Training Schemes (YTS) and the Midlands' traditional working-class identity. Claiming that apprenticeships placed too much emphasis on developing narrow skill-sets and time-serving, YTS sought to provide modular methods of training suited to the complexities of modern industry.³⁸⁶ Meant to support a system that had become undermined by the declining power of unions and high apprentice wage rates, apprenticeships as a percentage of manufacturing employment fell 54 percent between 1981 and 1987.³⁸⁷ Symptomatic of the country's decreasing role in global manufacturing, the decline of skilled youth entering the workforce substantiated Mr. Lyndon's belief that changes in William Newman's shop-floor atmosphere were the result of discontinu-

³⁸⁵Robin Lyndon interviewed by Helen Lloyd, 2000. Transcript. Millenibrum,MS2255/2/087, Birmingham Central Library, Birmingham, U.K.

³⁸⁶ H.F. Gospel, "Whatever Happened to Apprenticeship Training? A British, American, Australian Comparison" *Discussion Paper* No 93/15. Studies in Economic, University of Kent, Kent (1994), 7-8.

³⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 10.

ing apprenticeships. Aligning football with the lightheartedness and intimacy of work before deindustrialization, the oral history of Mr. Lyndon is an example of how football was conceptualized by the working class as a cultural gateway to the past. No longer attainable or experienced as a daily reality, traces of Mr. Lyndon's past were spread throughout the fields where he once played football with his co-workers during their dinner breaks.

Embodying the failure of YTS in working-class communities, memories of football also mapped the trajectories and migrations of workers who left the Midlands during deindustrialization. Contributing their experiences to a thread sentimentalizing Coventry City's lone FA Cup triumph in 1987, poster "sotonskyblue" remembered:

I had the misfortune to leave Cov in 1986 to start a new job in Southampton where I have lived ever since. However through friends I was able to get tickets for quarters, semi final and final. Travelled up to Wembley via Waterloo station. After a truly momentous day I finally arrived home late Saturday night, well oiled and almost voiceless from screaming my head off. Would love to have been able to get to Cov city centre for what would have been best nite out ever...³⁸⁸

A response to, or attempt at reconciling his exile from the West Midlands, sotonskyblue's continued support of Coventry City F.C. helped to recreate a sense of "Coventryness" or home in an unfamiliar landscape. It is what Albert Camus described as, when writing of the sense of loss which pervaded his life, the journey to rediscover those two

³⁸⁸ sotonskyblue, October 29th, 2015, comment on "Memories of 87", *Sky Blues Talk: Coventry City FC Fans Forum*, October 27th, 2015. <http://www.skybluestalk.co.uk/threads/memories-from-87.61044/#post-982279>

or three simple images in whose presence the heart first opened.³⁸⁹ These images which can be called home, or the warmth of familiarity, help to root individuals by placing them in a world to which they feel connected, where they belong and are given purpose. Defined by Edward Said as “the unsealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home...” exile is a state of existence, a sense of absence or detachment from a land, person, or time to which return has been made impossible.³⁹⁰ During and after deindustrialization, as the intimacy of a Friday night, the factory gate, or the lathe became inaccessible, football was a door through which the lost could return. Compelled to leave the Midlands for work, the joy that sotonskyblue experienced following Coventry City’s unexpected F.A. Cup success was undermined by the inability to return home with fellow fans. Excluded from experiencing every man, woman, and child waving and cheering out the back of their houses, sotonskyblue’s connection to Coventry remained symbolic, incomplete.³⁹¹ A recognition of sport’s ability to transcend geographical boundaries and tether members of a diaspora to the past, sotonskyblue’s memory also indicated or at least suggested the extent into which deindustrialization fractured or reorganized social networks. While it would be negligent to presume that sotonskyblue’s move was prompted by redundancy or unemployment, its North-South trajectory reflected the migratory trends that had occurred historically during disruptions, or changes to Britain’s economic structure. In their longitudi-

³⁸⁹ Albert Camus, “Preface”, *The Wrong Side and the Right Side*, in *Lyrical and Critical Essays*, trans. Ellen Conroy Kennedy (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968), 16-17.

³⁹⁰ Edward Said, *Reflections on Exile and other essays*. (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 173.

³⁹¹ Buster, October 28th, 2015, comment on “Memories of 87”, *Sky Blues Talk: Coventry City FC Fans Forum*, October 27th, 2015. <http://www.skybluestalk.co.uk/threads/memories-from-87.61044/#post-982279>

nal study of 16,091 people born between 1750 and 1930, Pooley and Turnbull hypothesized that the volume and direction of Britain's internal migration was dictated by the geography of industry.³⁹² Characterized by imbalance, Britain's zones of industrialization were either small, rapidly modernizing enclaves, or technologically wayward regions whose infrastructure and work practices developed improperly. Graphing the 73,864 residential moves made by their subjects over the course of their lives, Pooley and Turnbull argued that up until the second half of the twentieth century the West Midlands was a frequent destination for internal migrants.³⁹³ A product of deindustrialization and the sectoral movement of workforces from declining industries to those that expanded, the Midlands transformation from a destination to a departure point reiterated how the region's conceptions of home and identity were reconstructed.

Reasserted in working-class memories of football, the past is structured upon the intersections of loss, family, work, and community. As loss persists, it becomes difficult to measure its meaning and relationship to memory. Internalized, conflated, and influenced by other moments, loss can never exist in a pure state, it is always an accumulation. Encompassing anything from replacing a faulty stove, losing twenty dollars, or burying a loved one, loss detaches an individual from their own life. Even when loss transcends the boundaries of the everyday and reconstructs relationships to the world, loss is always a patchwork, a space defined by contesting absences. In analyzing individual's memories of deindustrialization, it is important to recognize that responses to

³⁹² Colin Pooley and Jean Turnbull, *Migration and Mobility in Britain since the eighteenth century*. (London; Bristol, Penn: UCL Press, 1998), 137.

³⁹³ *Ibid*, 143.

loss were not entirely informed by the physical or psychological changes that had occurred. Lamenting the widening rift between past and present, these memories were also informed by the sense of loss that accompanies the passing of time. Seemingly anterior to deindustrialization, but undeniably bearing its traces, this language of loss can be located in the perpetually growing barrier between people and the world of their childhoods.³⁹⁴ Often introduced to the sport by family members at an early age, working-class memories of football reflected the losses that involve family over a life's course. Imbuing clubs with a meaningful relationship to deceased relatives, memories of football recognized the inability to return. Separated from their youth by time, like the displacement individuals expressed following deindustrialization the loss of family was a loss of the familiar. Coventry native Kevin Halls reflected:

I was born in Coventry at Gulson Hospital and have lived here in Coventry ever since, so you could say I am a true Coventrian. My late father Reg Halls was a big Coventry City fan and he took me to Highfield Road as a kid to watch the team....I wish my father had lived to have taken in some games at the Ricoh because like me he would have enjoyed the new surroundings, but with me following his beloved Coventry City football club, I can keep the tradition going, I'm sure he would be pleased with my loyalty.³⁹⁵

Similarly, Aston villa fan "waynejames" remembered:

³⁹⁴ Glances into the past, memories naturally revolve around loss or the movement of time. As both deal with a separation from the familiar, reflections on deindustrialization and the process of growing up are uniquely linked. If we return to Joanna Bourke's theory that working class memories are constructed through a "golden haze", the past becomes something of a paradise lost. Is this sense of dislocation originate from the impact of deindustrialization, or is it simply a response to the passing of time? Perhaps the longing for the past or these long, long thoughts of youth were given more gravitas by the Midlands working class due to the fact that the landscapes which formed their backdrop were distorted beyond recognition.

³⁹⁵ Kevin Halls, "Sky Blues Forever" Coventry Memories. accessed October 30th, 2016. http://www.coventrymemories.co.uk/memory/?id=1076&title=SKY_BLUEES_FOREVER

When i caught the villa bug about a year after, dad would let me go down the villa with my mates and their dad who lived across the road. You see my dad was always working so he didn't have the time to watch football, at one point during the 80's he had three jobs on the go. I remember him once being so tired, he fell asleep whilst eating his dinner...Dad didn't bother with football all that much, but it was always our first conversation piece when we were together. 'whats going on down the Villa?' he would say. I did take dad down the villa once (that saddens me, only once) it was against Leeds in the FA cup when Carbone scored that screamer!. We went for a pint in the Villa Tavern before the game. We sat on the lower Holte and cheered for the Villa together, dad was singing Carbone's name with me when he scored, i'll never forget that for the rest of my days.³⁹⁶

Marking the passing of time, memories of football express both the loss of growing older and the estrangement evoked by deindustrialization.

Summary

Materializing a multiplicity of meanings for the Midlands working class, football was a symbol of continuity between individual and community, a reminder of a workplace's dynamics, the backdrop for the fondly recalled afternoons of childhood, and a memorial to lost loved ones. A defining characteristic of the everyday, football was synonymous with the intimacy of a lost landscape. Useful in deconstructing the extent into which deindustrialization reshaped the dynamics of the Midlands' working class, football measured how relationships between work, community, and family informed and constructed identity. So intertwined with the Midlands' industrial heritage, football continued to hold the

³⁹⁶ waynejames, February 13th, 2013 (12:32 PM) post on "My Dad 01-02-1945-09-01-2013 R.I.P. Dad", *Heroes and Villains: The Villa Fanzine*. <http://www.heroesandvillains.info/forumv3/index.php?topic=49154.0>

memory of all those dissolved pasts, like the plinth of some ruined forum. First used in a geographical context by Donald Meinig in 1979, the word palimpsest implies a co-existence between the past and the present.³⁹⁷ A composite of the forgotten, destroyed, re-stored, changeless, or new, landscape is shaped by and holds the traces of time. A palimpsest of the Midlands industrial heritage, football, like the half-erased text adorning medieval parchment paper, was simultaneously a game unfolding in the present, and the remnant of a story that once was. Similar to the reflective properties of landscape, football is a time capsule, revealing both the absence and enduring influence of the past.

³⁹⁷ Donald Meinig. (ed.) *The interpretation of ordinary landscape* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).

Summary

Working-class relationships to the body were defined by sacrifice. As work was the fabric of working-class life, men consented to endure harsh conditions and an early exit from public education. Far from an unthinking relationship, working-class men enlisted a variety of coping mechanisms to deal with the difficulty of work. Work's effect on the body and mind extended well beyond the factory gates. Working-class relationships to employment were shaped by social networks. Gaining access to employment by having someone speak for you, a good reputation was important to successfully transition into the workplace. As employment was the trade of the body for capital, employment structured domestic dynamics. Positioning the man as breadwinner and head of household, employment stabilized traditional gender roles. Work was the central platform working-class men used to form social relationships. Despite the rigorous standardization of factory work, workers were still able to develop close bonds to one another. Supported by the generational structure of full industrial employment, working men's clubs were a popular outlet for social expression in the Midlands. Employers reinforced and strengthened these bonds by distributing employee magazines and founding works football clubs. Not everyone in working-class communities shared intimate bonds to their co-workers or their workplaces. Working-class relationships to the everyday were organized by work. As the smells, sounds, and atmosphere of industry could not be avoided in urban areas it defined how the Midlands working class moved through and responded to space. Contextualizing the details of everyday life, football was a central feature in working-class memories. Reflecting how workplace dynamics were replicated in social contexts, the importance of relationships to family and friends, and working-class pat-

terns of leisure, football helped to stabilize and preserve conceptions of community and identity in the Midlands.

Following deindustrialization, the Midlands landscape no longer represented the region's traditional working-class identity or heritage. As the Midlands derived its identity from industry, without it, place became defined by absence. Guiding experiences of the everyday, the loss of familiar buildings, dynamics, and sensations created a disconnect between the working class and community. The experience of absence recounted in the collected oral histories was not strictly informed by deindustrialization. Composed of contesting histories of loss, such as abandoned transportation routes and the legacy of slum clearances, absence had always been a part of working-class experience in the Midlands.

Automation reduced the amount of labour needed to support industry in the Midlands. Reconfiguring working-class relationships to the body, the traditional skill-sets that had structured workplace communication were rendered obsolete. Dependent on the prowess of machines rather than human craftsmanship or agency, automation transformed the constitution of work. Applied in an incomplete and asymmetric fashion, the experience of automation in the Midlands was the product of British economic policies following the Second World War. Preoccupied with sustaining their global position, Britain's lack of investment in industrial infrastructure loosened its foothold in the global market and led to deindustrialization. While experiences of automation were diverse, working-class relationships to employment were reshaped.

The Midlands industrial landscape was shaped by a constellation of smaller firms. Deindustrialization made it difficult for these smaller firms to remain competitive.

Undergoing a prolonged period of industrial contraction, the process of mergers and liquidations permanently dissolved the intimate bonds thousands of workers had developed to their workplaces.

Mass lay-offs in manufacturing, engineering, mining and steel marked the end of full employment in the Midlands. While working-class responses to redundancy were determined by a diverse set of variables, young skilled males were the most likely to quickly re-enter the workforce. As redundancies disrupted traditional methods of employment, individuals could no longer depend on reputation, family, and social networks to find work. Once defined by long hours, inter-generational links to place, and lifetime employment, the Midlands job market became defined by part-time, insecure, unskilled labour.

Football and industry had parallel histories in the Midlands. Coming to prominence as a result of full industrial employment, football matches were structured around the working week. An example of the working class' increased leisure time, weekend football matches were attended in the tens of thousands. As deindustrialization dissolved the Midlands traditional employment structure and its accompanying dynamics, football became a remnant of a way of life. A physical symbol of the industrial era due to its continued existence, football was also a refuge of the past for the way it was contextualized in the collected oral histories. Remembered in conjunction with lost family members, closed workplaces, and childhood sensations, memories of football were shaped by the experience of change.

Conclusions

To what extent should history be tasked with reproducing the past? Using an accumulation of details to draw conclusions, historians are concerned with rendering a concrete representation of human reality. Recognizing that singular cause-and-effect relationships over simplify the courses in which history takes, this dissertation argues that to represent the past properly, absence and loss must be accounted for. Positing suggestions for how identity was constructed on a day-to-day basis in the working-class communities of the Midlands, the first chapter examines the diverse relationships that existed between the working class, the body, employment, social environment and the everyday. Disentangling the complex fabric of working-class experience, this chapter has a contrapuntal impact on the narrative; it recreates a world in order to understand and explicate its death. Emphasizing deindustrialization's pervasiveness by illustrating the dynamics and diversity of the communities affected, this chapter challenges the monolithic representations of class that dominate historical discourse. By determining the absence of uniformity in working-class experience, this chapter argued that history must reflect the paradoxes, contradictions, and mysteries in life. Why did some individuals express a sense of intimacy in their work while others defined it through its monotony and lack of meaning? Why were some workers active in social endeavours such as working men's clubs while others preferred the company of their families? Brimming with an almost immeasurable gravity, these relationships were all informed by work. Conceptualizing the lived reality of working-class communities before deindustrialization, this dissertation underlines how identity, culture, and customs were dependent upon the existence and stability of work. Once work lost its historical continuity and tra-

ditional relationship to the Midlands landscape, the characteristics that had made working-class communities unique became threatened. Finding expression in the flecks of memory collected in oral histories, life's daily syntax, its sights, smells, and routines, became disrupted by physical destruction. In a context of disorder, the relationship between football, memory, and deindustrialization was forged. Organized within larger social narratives of work and family, football formed an integral component of everyday experience. An activity inhabiting both the social and individual realm, attending or playing a football match was laden with symbolic implications. An extension of the household or the workplace, football embodied community. Following deindustrialization, football's social meaning evolved. A physical representation of a community in both a contemporary and historical context, football also became a metonym for loss. In a landscape that had become defined by ruptured continuities, both the shared historical trajectories of football and industrialism and its intimate relationship with working-class identity imbued the sport with an elegiac quality. As the structures, minutiae, and relationships that once defined working-class life were no longer predominate, football became a refuge for the past. Transfixing football as an emblem for a world that had passed, the lasting atmosphere of loss which befell the region was created by absence, Whether these absences were physical, such as the loss of a house or a beloved shop, intimate, such as the familiar rhythms of a workday, talking with a family member, or economic, such as shuttering a factory, or a redundancy slip in the doorway, deindustrialization caused sites of personal importance to fall away into the earth. While the diverse responses in the collected oral histories suggested the impossibility of diluting the

experience of deindustrialization down to one digestible story, the idea that the present was a landscape of absences reoccured time and time again.

As stated in this dissertation's opening line, loss and its continued memory shape human life. Loss defines the boundaries of living until the moment of death. It's sheltered in the earth, hidden, silently coexisting with the present . Like history, its flesh and blood are scattered through documents, or memories. It dissipates without a trace. Loss leaves people stranded in grief, disconnecting them from time and place. As returning to the past is impossible, people return to the feeling of the past. Attending a football match allows a dialogue with the lost working-class communities of the Midlands to continue. Acting as a surrogate for the lathe, the street filled with familiar shops, or the days spent with a loved one, football is able to contain these pasts because of how deeply it informed them. The memory of working-class communities, culture, and industry continue to exist or live on through football as football once helped to define and shape all three. It continues to exist whereas the others, do not.

Recommendations for future research

Dependent upon the oral resources of Wolverhampton City Archives, The Herbert Art Gallery & Museum of Coventry, The Sandwell Community History and Archives, Birmingham's Public Library, and the Walsall Local History Centre, further research on the relationship between football, the Midlands and deindustrialization must expand geographically into the region's other urban areas. Excluded from this dissertation's narrative, cities with prominent football histories such as Stoke-on-Trent, Derby, and Leicester could perhaps give a fuller depiction of the interaction between football, memory and everyday experience. Smaller towns and cities such as Dudley, Worcester, and Telford

which lack the prestige of prolonged involvement with higher flight football should also be included in future research as their exclusions risks jeopardizing one of the central aims of this thesis: to reclaim sports history from extremism, or exaggeration. Drawn to areas within the Midlands defined by integral relationships to both football and industry, in this context the most quiet, understated historical narratives, and voices are not given a platform. Representative of the Black Country conurbation, and the county of the West Midlands, towns big and small from both the West and East Midlands *regions* need to be included in future research concerning football and deindustrialization.

Overstatement or problems pertaining to representation can also be confronted in future research by analyzing geographical regions without a deep rooted history in either heavy industry or football. This can include but is not limited to other areas in England, Europe or North America. Applying the theoretical framework adopted by this dissertation, conceptualizations of loss, memory, the past, and work can be used to approach the ongoing experience of post-industrialism. For example, the lasting memory of deindustrialization in the United States, particularly the Rust Belt had a profound impact upon the country's 2016 presidential election. Restructuring the dynamics of working class communities, future research can evaluate experiences of deindustrialization and loss through the historical continuity of regional sporting traditions. Deconstructing how loss influences the development of identity, future research can examine how the present is constructed. An accumulation of absences and consistencies, the present is an entire tapestry of historical development, a conflict between presence and loss. Histories of objects, geographies, social movements, transportation, biographies, and representations compose the present, transforming an event like a football match into an

amalgam of what has come before. In terms of prospective oral histories, a more direct interrogation of this dissertation's central questions is necessary.

While the tangential nature of the oral histories included in this dissertation allows football to assume the role it performed in the day-to-day lives of the Midlands working class, the creation of new oral histories would allow a more direct line of questioning to be possible. Arguably pushing football to the forefront rather than allowing its meaning to emerge naturally in context to constructs such as family, work, and sociality, oral histories solely concerned with deindustrialization and football would help clarify the relationship between work, identity, and the refuges of the past; namely sport. Noticeably absent from this dissertation, research centering on the experience of minorities, LGBTQ communities, women, and members of the upper class is needed. Perhaps providing a foundation for future historical work on deindustrialization and football, oral histories such as Wolverhampton's Black and Ethnic Minority Experience Project and Apna Gar, a collection of testimonies from South Asian Women located in Sandwell, could help to provide insight to experiences neglected by this dissertation.

Addendum

In accordance with a commission by regional MLAs(Museums, Libraries and Archives Councils) to document audio-visual collections between 2005 and 2008, Julia Letts published a report on the West Midlands.³⁹⁸ Providing what was, in her own words, a snapshot indicating the scale and diversity of the subject area, Letts' compilation provided the backbone of my own research. Meticulously listing the town or city, name of the oral history project, its availability and whom to contact, I made a preliminary list of archives I intended to visit on a three week trip to England in August 2015. Sending a series of emails to the region's archivists to confirm which collections were available, I experienced a setback when I was informed that The Wolverhampton Heritage Project, a set of 66 interviews conducted in the mid 1980s, was only partially transcribed, while the tapes themselves were not available to the public. Worried at how fruitful my trip to Wolverhampton was going to be, when I arrived at the city's archives my concerns were assuaged by how well organized the collections were. Available in an online database, the archives easy to navigate catalogue was compatible with my intuitive process of research. For example, after I read or listened to all the archive's available oral history resources, I was able to find complementary materials such as ledger-books from working men's clubs, redundancy letters and employee magazines from long defunct companies. Inspired by the places, names or institutions I had heard about in the oral histories, subsequent journeys through the archive's winding collections were made possible by the act of research itself. Learning about the West Midlands as I transcribed or pho-

³⁹⁸ Julia Letts, "Directory of Audiovisual Collections in West Midlands" *Oral History Society*. Accessed on March 7th, 2017. <http://www.ohs.org.uk/documents/archives/wmlac.pdf>

tographed documents I believed to be relevant to my research, I would never have been able to make a list including some of the materials I accessed from across the ocean; I needed the pressure and experience of searching for the threads of the past to light a fuse in my imagination. However, not all experiences at the archives were to be so simple. In Coventry, a charge of one pound a photograph was enforced. Blessed with a seemingly limitless reserve of oral history, the bulk of my trip was spent transcribing the interviews most likely to provide me with relevant detail. Needing to type in the specific code for the collection in an older computer, I chose younger male interviewees as I felt their experiences would correspond more directly with the limitations of my research question. Difficult to navigate and unavailable outside the confines of the Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, the obstacles of Coventry's catalogues would have been even more disheartening had it not been for the helpfulness of archivist Carolyn Ewing. I feel as though there is a lot more work to be done in Coventry and that future researchers concerned with deindustrialization, football or memory will need much more than a week to explore this collection. In the archives of Birmingham, Sandwell, and Walsall the experiences more or less melded into one another. Transcribed, laminated and organized in rows of easy to access binders, researching oral history at these locations was straightforward. In Walsall, the archivist even suggested that I could take several of the un-transcribed oral histories home with me. Flushed with gratitude from the offer, it wasn't until I was about to leave that I realized I did not have a device to play the CD. Perhaps the only failure of my trip was my excursion to Nottingham. Home to collections focusing on the experience of work in the first decades of the twentieth century, the material was not only outside the scope of my research but organized in an antiquated cat-

alog card system. While the oral histories were transcribed and bound in a similar fashion to the archives in Birmingham, Sandwell, and Walsall, it was impossible to efficiently comb through their content.

Appendix~Map of the West Midlands

Map of The West Midlands (region)³⁹⁹



³⁹⁹ ChrisJB. *West Midlands Region* [map]. scale unknown. *Wikipedia*. Accessed on March 7th. 2017. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:WestMidlandsRegion.jpg>

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Curriculum Vitae

Education:

Degree	University	Department	Year
BA(Hons)	Guelph	History	2011
MA	Western	History	2012
PhD	Western	Kinesiology	2017

Teaching Experience:

Year	Position
2016	TA-Exercise, Sport, and the Body in Western Culture, Western University
2015	TA- Sport and the Body in Western Civilization, Western University
2013	TA- Critical Thinking and Ethics in Sport, Western University
2012	TA- Olympic Issues for Modern Times, Western University
2011-12	TA- Modern Germany 1815 to the Present, Western University

Conference Papers:

2014	“Unchained: Physique Magazines and the Liberation of the Homosexual Body”, 3rd <i>Tri-University Conference: Cross-Pollinating the Field: Pluralistic Approaches to the Study of Sport</i> , London, Ontario
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Unpublished Research

2012	MA Thesis- <i>Tokyo Story: England, Football, and the Origins of Failure at the Intercontinental Cup</i> . Western University. Supervisor: Don Morrow
2011	BA Honors Thesis- <i>Sonnets of Dark Love: The Trajectory of Spanish Cinema Under General Franco</i> . University of Guelph. Supervisor: Karen Racine