

**‘That rather sinful city of London’:**

**The coal miner, the city and the country in the British cultural imagination, c. 1969-**

**2014<sup>1</sup>**

*ABSTRACT*

*The article proceeds from the observation that in the contemporary British cultural imagination, the figure of the coal miner tends to be presented as the embodiment of anti-urban and organicist qualities that in continental Europe are more commonly associated with the peasantry. Drawing on the theoretical insights of Raymond Williams, the article traces the genealogy of this ‘structure of feeling’ back to the time of the miners’ strike of 1984/85 and beyond into the 1970s. It argues that the ‘ruralised’ miner was one imaginary in a complex power struggle over the ‘real’ identity of miners that was waged between the industry and the state, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and the National Coal Board (NCB), and crucially, inside the NUM itself. ‘Ruralisation’ was most vigorously promoted by union militants who sought to displace an alternative vision, championed jointly by the Coal Board and Union moderates, which had situated miners firmly at the heart of industrial modernity. It was only in the wake of the defeat of the miners in the 1984/5 strike, and during the subsequent cultural reworking of this strike, that this structure finally gained dominance.*

In his famous study, *The City in History*, Lewis Mumford denounced the classic industrial city of the nineteenth century in the sharpest possible terms. In a chapter sarcastically called

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‘Paleotechnic Paradise: Coketown’, the great urbanist deplored the way in which the industrial revolution had transformed towns into ‘dark hives, busily puffing, clanking, screeching, smoking for twelve and fourteen hours a day.’<sup>2</sup> The first edition of *The City in History* was published in 1961. It may serve as a salutary reminder that urban modernity was subjected to a scathing critique long before deindustrialisation brought in its wake challenges of its own. Indeed, Mumford’s concern with the environmental and social fallout of industrialism stretched back to the interwar period. To Mumford, the classic industrial city was but the built manifestation of much broader atrophying tendencies that had swept Western civilisation since the onset of the industrial revolution: Far from marking an advance over previous centuries, *laissez faire* capitalism had brought forth a ‘New Barbarism’, representing ‘the lowest point in social development Europe had known since the Dark Ages’, as he put it in *Technics and Civilisation* in 1934.<sup>3</sup>

To Mumford, pecuniary self-interest and utter disregard for organic traditions were epitomised above all by an activity that had become one of the ‘generating agents’ of this rise of ‘paleotechnic civilisation’ itself: the mining of coal.<sup>4</sup> Writing when coal was still among the most important sources of energy, Mumford explicitly linked mining with industrialism and the industrial city. He emphasised the instability inherent in the activity of coal getting and felt that there was little direct connection between effort and reward in mining.<sup>5</sup> In doing so, Mumford drew a stark contrast between mining and agriculture: While agriculture was restorative,

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<sup>2</sup> L. Mumford, *The City in History: its origins, its transformations, and its prospects* (London, 1961), 446.

<sup>3</sup> L. Mumford, *Technics and Civilization* (London, 1934), 153f.

<sup>4</sup> L. Mumford, *The Culture of Cities* (London, 1938), 152. It should be noted that Mumford took care to distinguish between the denunciation of the environment in which the miners lived and passing judgement on the miners themselves. As he put it in the same chapter: ‘Perhaps as compensation, the most debased urban environments sometimes stimulated the most valiant efforts at change: Were not the miners, more than once, the leaders in revolutionary unionism – and in Europe did they not provide out of their own membership great choral societies?’

<sup>5</sup> ‘But the rewards of mining may be sudden, and they may bear little relation, particularly in the early stages of the industry, either to the technical ability of the miner or the amount of labour he has expended.’ Mumford, *Technics and Civilization*, 67.

creating ‘a balance between wild nature and man’s social needs’, mining was ‘destructive’: ‘Mining thus presents the very image of human discontinuity, here today and gone tomorrow, now feverish with gain, now depleted and vacant.’<sup>6</sup>

A very different set of associations can be observed when we turn to popular representations of mining and miners in Britain today. Far from embodying the social and cultural ills of urban modernity, mining is more commonly associated with practices and modes of consciousness that carry distinctly organicist and anti-urban characteristics, this article argues. This ‘ruralised’ image finds in miners and their communities repositories of qualities which in continental Europe have been most commonly associated with the peasantry: rootedness, community, endurance, conservatism.<sup>7</sup> Working its way backwards from contemporary articulations to the early 1970s and drawing on published as well as archival sources, the article proceeds in three stages. Firstly, it examines depictions of coal miners in contemporary popular culture in order to outline a ‘structure of feeling’ that ‘ruralises’ coal mining. In a second step, the article traces the genealogy of this structure by locating its origins in competing political discourses at the time of the miners’ strike of 1984/85 and further back into the 1970s. Finally, the article offers some observations on ideas of ‘the urban’ that went with the ruralisation of the miner and examines the political implications of this process.

The term ‘structure of feeling’ is borrowed from the British cultural Marxist Raymond Williams, who coined it to capture the articulation of ‘affective elements of consciousness and relationships’, of ‘meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt’.<sup>8</sup> Williams was concerned to develop a framework that would allow for the study of change over time, but which would also be able to register elements of continuity. Williams recognised that culture

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<sup>6</sup> Mumford, *City in History*, 451.

<sup>7</sup> On the historical dimension of the positioning of the working class in Britain see Mike Savage *et al.*, *Social Class in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (London, 2015), p. 27f.

<sup>8</sup> R. Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford / New York, 1977), 132.

tends to be an ‘internal[ly] dynamic’ process with constant movement between often conflicting imaginaries and articulations.<sup>9</sup> To this end, Williams refined the Gramscian concept of ‘hegemony’ by distinguishing between ‘dominant’, ‘residual’ and ‘emergent’ processes.<sup>10</sup> Williams also recognised that the various elements of a particular cultural formation can travel at different speeds.

While in its classic articulation, as found in *Marxism and Literature* (1977), Williams was above all concerned with change over time, this essay will seek to bring the temporal dimension into dialogue with spatial categories. In doing so, it draws on another of Williams’ works, *The Country and the City* (1973), in which Williams examined contrasting images of the urban and the rural in British literature from the middle ages to the early twentieth century.<sup>11</sup> As Williams demonstrates, both were dynamic concepts, encompassing a range of meanings that oscillated between contrasting poles: the country could be imagined, at one extreme, as a place of ‘pastoral innocence’, or at the other, as a residuum of ‘rural idiocy’. The city, meanwhile, could be depicted as the seat of civilisation or, alternatively, as a hotbed of corruption.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, as Williams emphasises, images of the urban and the rural were in correspondence with each other, but this relationship was informed by an asymmetrical distribution of political, social and cultural resources: It was the city, and the metropolis of London in particular, that shaped the material environment and social composition of the countryside. Crucially, it was also form within the city that the dominant modes of representation for the countryside emerged: the city represented both itself and the rural, which was othered into a counter-image of the relational and temporal qualities that were ascribed to urban life.<sup>13</sup> In what follows, this article will show

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<sup>9</sup> Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 121.

<sup>10</sup> Williams, 121-27.

<sup>11</sup> R. Williams, *The Country and the City* (London, 1973).

<sup>12</sup> Williams, *Country and the City*, 290.

<sup>13</sup> P. Dirksmeier, ‘Providing places for structures of feeling and hierarchical complementarity in urban theory: Re-reading Williams’ *The Country and the City*, *Urban Studies*, 53 (2015), 884-98, here: 892.

what the ruralising of the miner entailed, who was behind this project and what the political consequence were.

### **The ruralised miner**

The image of the ‘ruralised miner’ tends to dominate popular memories of the coal miner in Britain today. The constituent parts of this structure may be illustrated by examining a cultural artefact which was released in 2014 to critical acclaim and popular success, the feature film *Pride*.<sup>14</sup> Directed by Matthew Warchus, the film is set in Thatcher’s Britain. It takes an episode from the 1984/85 miners’ strike as its subject matter. The strike in question was the bitter stand-off over pit closures between the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), on the one hand, and the National Coal Board (NCB) and the Thatcher government on the other; a year-long struggle around which most cultural memories of coal mining have been crystallised and which ended, as is well known, with the defeat of the Union.

*Pride* tells the story of the encounter between a group of metropolitan-based gay and lesbian activists, on the one hand, and striking miners living in a closely-knit community in an industrial pit village in South Wales, on the other.<sup>15</sup> The idiom of the Welsh valleys, pit villages and community mediates this encounter. Indeed, the vast gulf separating the two communities is one of the central structuring principles of the film. It is symbolised by the visual prominence of the Severn estuary bridge that the metropolitan activists need to cross on their way from London to the Dulais valley. The distance separating the two communities is as much socio-cultural as it is spatial. The feature film’s official trailer accentuates this contrast further by opening with the lines, ‘In a small Welsh mining village / Deep in the Valleys / The locals are

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<sup>14</sup> Similar processes of ruralisation underpin the two iconic feature films on the miners of the New Labour years, *Brassed Off* (Dir: Mark Herman, 1996) and *Billy Elliot* (Dir: Stephen Daldry, 2000i).

<sup>15</sup> On the historical episode itself see D. Kelliher, ‘Solidarity and Sexuality: Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners’, *History Workshop Journal*, 77 (2014), 241-62; also M. Joannou, ‘The Miners’ Strike and Me: A Very Personal Response to *Pride*’, *Women: A Cultural Review*, 27 (2016), 107-12; L. Robinson, *Gay men and the Left in post-war Britain: How the personal got political* (Manchester and New York, 2007), 164-9.

about to get / the surprise of their lives’, all set to the tune of the Welsh hymn Cwm Rhondda (Bread of Heaven).<sup>16</sup>

Initially, it is above all the shared experience of victimhood in Thatcher’s Britain that draws the two groups into an uneasy alliance. As might be expected, there is plenty of misunderstanding and suspicion on both sides – a rich seam for the slapstick comedy that punctuates the film. But ultimately, the two groups learn from each other, transcending their own limitations and thereby turning defeat in the larger struggle over pit closures into a moral victory. This is illustrated by the closing scene, in which a miners’ delegation from South Wales joins the activists on the London Gay Pride parade in the summer of 1985. It is not so much that in *Pride* straight masculinity gets a ‘moral makeover’ by ‘magical queers’, as Brendan O’Neill has alleged in a scathing blogpost written for *The Telegraph*,<sup>17</sup> but that both groups, Gay and Lesbian activists as well as miners, are transformed: the individualism that threatens to tear apart the identity-politics of the metropolitan activists is tempered by the discovery of a collective purpose. Meanwhile, the class-based communitarian struggle of the ‘industrial proletarians’ is enriched by learning of the value of individual self-expression. As if to underline this point, the character Cliff Barry, a retired miner and active trade unionist, reveals himself to be gay towards the end of the film.

In the contemporary cultural imagination, then, the miners feature as ghosts from a bygone era. They are imagined as ‘industrial proletarians’ who live in ‘occupational communities’ far away from the London metropolis in villages in rural Yorkshire, County Durham or the valleys of South Wales.<sup>18</sup> The miners serve as powerful reminders of the Old England that was lost in

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<sup>16</sup> *Pride – Official Launch Trailer* (2014), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vsFY0wHpR5o> [accessed 18 April 2018].

<sup>17</sup> Brendan O’Neill, ‘This gay-friendly makeover of the miners’ strike is deeply patronising’, <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk> [...]

<sup>18</sup> On the news coverage surrounding the closure of the last commercial deep-coal mine in December 2015 see J. Arnold, ‘“Like being on death row”: Britain and the end of coal, c.1970 to the present’, *Contemporary British History*, 32/1 (2018), 1-17.

the de-industrial revolution of the 1980s; they embody the values of communitarianism, solidarity and endurance that seem the very opposite of the hyper-individualism, acquisitive materialism and ubiquitous marketisation that characterise the present. They also serve as reminders that there was a time in which people could take pride in what they did rather than in who they were or in what they consumed.

### **Village Radicals**

The juxtaposition between the country and the city, between a set of values and beliefs emphasising roots, tradition and communitarianism, on the one hand, and an opposing set of values, on the other, is not a twenty-first century invention. Ever since the 1930s, there had existed a strand in metropolitan culture that looked to Britain's coalfields as repositories of social values and patterns of sociability that appeared to have been marginalised by the frantic pace of change characteristic of high modernity. It was in the primitive art of 'pitmen painters' such as the Ashington group or the Polish emigré Josef Herman, and later, in miners' ballads and songs that bohemian intellectuals found the authentic expression of English and Welsh folk culture.<sup>19</sup>

The juxtaposition between the rural and the urban also formed an important structuring principle during the time of the miners' strike of 1984/85: it resonated throughout the spheres of popular culture, political discourse and scholarly understanding. Perhaps one of the clearest expositions of this contrast can be found in the sphere of popular culture, in an alternative rock song by the Yorkshire-based post-punk formation New Model Army, which was called 'The

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<sup>19</sup> N. Vall, 'Bohemians and 'Pitmen Painters' in North East England, 1930-1970', *Visual Culture in Britain*, 5 (2004), 1-21; J. Mitchell, "'Farewell to 'Cotia'": The English Folk Revival, the Pit Elegy, and the Nationalisation of British Coal, 1947-1970', *Twentieth Century British History*, 25/4 (2014), 585-601. On the Ashington group itself: W. Feaver, *Pitmen Painters. The Ashington Group 1934-1984* (Manchester, 1993).

Charge'.<sup>20</sup> Released in the aftermath of the strike in 1987, the song uses Alfred Lord Tennyson's famous poem 'The Charge of the Light Brigade' as a template. In that, it is possible that the band was inspired by a journalistic piece on the strike published in the *Daily Mail* on 7 March 1984.<sup>21</sup>

The song tells the history of the strike as the story of a 'civil war' in which the miners have been doubly betrayed: lured into a trap by the Conservative government of the day, the miners are urged on by their 'leaders at the back' to embark on a suicidal charge 'into the valley of death', just as the cavalry brigade in the Crimean war that was immortalised by Tennyson's poem.<sup>22</sup> In contrast to the heroic tone struck by the original poem, however, the prevailing mood in the song is one of desperation: The 'massacre' leaves in its wake nothing but mutual recrimination and isolation: 'Their leaders offer the cliché words, so righteous in defeat / But no one needs morality when there isn't enough to eat / The unity bonds is broken and the loyalty songs are fake / I'll screw my only brother for even a glimpse at the piece of the cake', as the lyrics put it in almost Brechtian terms.

More generally, the strike is described as a conflict between the world of 'the village hall' and the world of 'the city': 'Our history speaks in thunder from a thousand village halls / In blood and sweat and sacrifice, in honouring every call', the song opens to the beat of marching drums. The lines conjure up a set of associations that revolve around the values of collective struggle and sacrifice, of loyalty and solidarity that derive their power from an unbroken line of continuity between the past and the present. The radicalism resides in the rural environment of 'the village'. In some respects, then, the miners are placed in a long tradition of indigenous radicalism whose excavation was one of the central concerns of the Cultural Marxist tradition

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<sup>20</sup> J. Sullivan / R. Heaton, 'The Charge' (1987), <http://newmodelarmy.org/index.php/the-music/lyrics/247-the-charge> [accessed 18 April 2018].

<sup>21</sup> P. Johnson, 'The Coal War: Scargill's leading the miners on a charge as futile as the Light Brigade's', *Daily Mail*, 7 Mar. 1984, 6.

<sup>22</sup> Interview by the author with Justin Sullivan, lead singer of New Model Army, 14 December 2013.



ever since the 1950s.<sup>23</sup> By designating this rural tradition as part of an ‘olden world’ to which the lyrical narrator juxtaposes a metropolitan ‘brave new world’, the song conceives of the miners’ strike as a contest between different temporalities just as much as between different spaces. There is clinical preparation on one side, the ‘baiting’ of snares and ‘the laying of traps’; an emotional invocation of past struggles and of tribal loyalties on the other. The village and its attendant values represent the past. The future lies with the city and an altogether different set of values. In ‘The Charge’, then, the contrast between country and city, between ‘village hall’ and ‘offices of the city’ is not between identity politics and class politics, as in *Pride*, but between organised labour and the neoliberal state.

Turning from popular culture to scholarly interventions, we find a similar process of ‘ruralisation’ at work. The most prominent example is *The Enemy Within: Pit villages and the miners’ strike, 1984-5*, a collection of oral testimonies that was edited by the Marxist historian Raphael Samuel and published in 1986.<sup>24</sup> As Samuel’s private papers make clear, the book was self-consciously intended as a political intervention and an attempt to shape the memory of the strike. As Samuel and his co-editors put it in a call for first-hand testimony for the book in early 1985, ‘The meaning of the coal strike will [be determined] by the way in which it is assimilated in popular memory, by the retrospective understanding both in the pit villages themselves and in the country at large.’<sup>25</sup> While Samuel professed to give a voice to rank-and-file stories ‘from below’, he took great care to integrate these experiences into a very specific interpretative framework. In a lengthy preface and introduction, Samuel likened the miners’ struggle in 1984/85 to the ‘village radicalism of nineteenth century England’.<sup>26</sup> ‘One sees the same

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<sup>23</sup> See Dennis Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism in Postwar Britain* (Durham and London, 1997), 10-44.

<sup>24</sup> See also P. Gibbon and D. Steyne, *Thurcroft: A Village and the Miners’ Strike* (Nottingham, 1986).

<sup>25</sup> Bishopsgate Institute, The Raphael Samuel Archive, RS4/250, Raphael Samuel, ‘The enemy within’. Pit villages during the strike of 1984-5’ [undated].

<sup>26</sup> R. Samuel, B. Bloomfield and G. Boanas (eds.), *The Enemy Within: Pit villages and the miners’ strike of 1984-5* (London, 1986), 22.

preference for direct action [...]. One finds the same attachment to customary rights, the same territorial sense of place', as he put it. On this interpretation, the guiding ideology of the strike was what Samuel called 'radical conservatism' – defensive in nature, wedded to a received way of life and resistant to change.

Not everybody was impressed by Samuel's recasting of the highest paid, and in some respects, most privileged industrial workers of the 1980s as nineteenth-century village radicals. Jean McCrindle, for example, a lecturer at Northern College and influential protagonist in *Women Against Pit Closures*,<sup>27</sup> found the introduction 'rather too romantic and mythologised'. 'My own impression of the strike as it was lived by people here was a lot more painful, difficult and black, than your account makes room for', she wrote in a letter to Samuel.<sup>28</sup> Beatrix Campbell, too, disapproved of both the conduct of the strike and of Samuel's interpretation of it. As Campbell wrote in a letter to Samuel, 'I think the strike was doomed from the beginning, though I myself supported it and went on supporting it like an awful lot of people despite my criticism of the first fatal mistake.'<sup>29</sup> In an earlier intervention in the *New Statesman*, Campbell found noteworthy not so much the rural dimension of the miners' struggle but its peculiarly 'English tone', which she equated with muscular masculinity:

Something stiffer, more strident, more English [than the poetic politics of working class culture found in Scotland and Wales] has dominated the political conversation. Violence isn't, of course, a peculiarly English problem. It is enclosed within an English culture that once ruled the world by brute force [...] it appears on the terraces and playing fields of England. It is a peculiarly masculine characteristic. Which perhaps explains the tendency of the male left to equate 'muscular militancy' and violence with political strength.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> See F. Sutcliffe-Braithwaite and N. Tomlinson, 'National Women Against Pit Closures: gender, trade unionism and community activism in the miners' strike 1984/85, *Contemporary British History* 32/1 (2018), 78-100, at 80f.

<sup>28</sup> Bishopsgate Institute, The Raphael Samuel Archive, RS4/250, Jean McCrindle to Raphael Samuel, 11 June 1986.

<sup>29</sup> Bishopsgate Institute, The Raphael Samuel Archive, RS4/250, Beatrix Campbell to Raphael Samuel, undated.

<sup>30</sup> B. Campbell, 'Politics old & new', *New Statesman*, 8 March 1985, 22-25, at 24.

The irony that the ‘ruralisation’ of the miner was most vigorously promoted by metropolitan intellectuals such as Samuel was not lost on critics from the Right either. In a scathing review written for the *Sunday Telegraph*, the ex-Marxist Bruce Anderson claimed that the book’s authors ‘belong to that group of anthropologically minded North London and north Oxford intellectuals, who really enjoyed themselves during the strike, because the proletariat was at last behaving as it ought to.’<sup>31</sup>

The ‘ruralised’ view of the coal miner as an industrial proletarian living in closely-knit village communities did have some grounding in the social reality of the lives of the 200,000 or so industrial workers employed by the National Coal Board across Britain’s coalfields in the early 1980s. But it was a highly selective view that prioritised certain environments, circumstances and outlooks over others. It focused heavily on the coalfields of South Yorkshire, the North East and South Wales, disregarding, for the most part, the much less homogenous coalfields of Nottinghamshire, North Wales, Derbyshire, Lancashire and others. The view took as representative the relatively few environments in which, by the 1980s, coal was still the main source of employment and where there were limited opportunities for women.<sup>32</sup> Finally, it was a view that was incapable of accommodating the substantial evidence of mineworkers actively seeking to leave the industry, if not for themselves then at least for their children. Indeed, this was an image of coal miners that owed as much to the classic sociological study of a Yorkshire pit village from 1956, *Coal is Our Life*, and to sociologist David Lockwood’s construction of the miner as a ‘traditional proletarian’ as to careful observation of the social realities of miners’ lives in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> B. Anderson, ‘Dangerous Wives’, *Sunday Telegraph*, 18 January 1987.

<sup>32</sup> J. Phillips, ‘The meanings of coal community in Britain since 1947’, *Contemporary British History*, 32/1 (2018), 39-59.

<sup>33</sup> N. Dennis, F. Henriques and C. Slaughter, *Coal is Our Life: An analysis of a Yorkshire mining community* (London, 1956); D. Lockwood, ‘Sources of Variation in Working-Class Images of Society’, *Sociological Review* 14/3 (1966), 16-31. For a careful contextualisation see: T. Strangleman, ‘Mining a productive seam? The coal industry, community and sociology’, *Contemporary British History* 32/1 (2018), 18-38.

More importantly, in the 1970s and 1980s, the ‘ruralised’ image of the mineworker as promoted by Raphael Samuel and other sympathetic observers on the Left was just one strand among several competing imaginaries of who the mineworkers really were. It was one strand in a complex power struggle that was fought out between the National Union of Mineworkers and the National Coal Board, the nationalised industry and the state, and crucially, inside the NUM itself. In his book, Samuel aligned himself with a structure of feeling that had been promoted by self-confessed militants inside the NUM from the late 1960s onwards. Throughout the 1970s, this was an emergent structure that mobilised residual imaginaries from the interwar period to advocate a decisive break with the corporatist settlement that had characterised the 1950s and 1960s. To this end the militants sought to dismantle the hegemonic structure which had been put in place jointly by the National Coal Board and the so-called ‘moderates’ in the NUM. This structure had wedded the Coal Board’s modernisation narrative to a vision of miners as ‘affluent workers’, and thereby, the militants believed, bred defeatist acquiescence and sapped the miners’ strength.

Both militants and moderates drew on the example of historical miners’ leaders to lend legitimacy to their views. The militants looked to Arthur James Cook (1883-1931), the General Secretary of the Miners’ Federation of Great Britain (MFGB) at the time of the 1926 General Strike.<sup>34</sup> Cook was a radical socialist and ‘revolutionary agitator’ (John Saville) under whose leadership the miners continued the desperate struggle against the coal owners long after the General Strike had collapsed. While reviled as a demagogue by some contemporary observers inside the labour movement, Cook was elevated to the status of a legendary figure by Robin Page Arnot, the official historian of mining trade unionism. To the new radicals of the 1970s, Cook was the embodiment of a leader who had stayed true to his principles and

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<sup>34</sup> For a brief sketch of Cook’s life and career see R. H. Desmarais & John Saville, entry ‘Cook, Arthur James’, *Dictionary of Labour Biography*, vol. 3, ed. by J. M. Bellamy and J. Saville (London & Basingstoke, 1976), 38-49; H. Francis, entry ‘Cook, Arthur James’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edition (OUP, 2018).

who had refused to be bought off, whatever the consequences. In a revealing interview with researchers from Swansea University in 1981, then President of the Yorkshire Area, Arthur Scargill, remarked that Cook was the only miners' leader that he respected.<sup>35</sup> A radio feature broadcast in 1979 went so far as to speak of an 'uncanny similarity' between the two leaders, suggesting that 'Arthur Scargill could almost be Arthur Cook'. Scargill himself referred to the comparison as the 'greatest compliment'.<sup>36</sup>

By contrast, the moderates pointed to the example of the American miners' leader, John L. Lewis (1880-1969), as an inspiration. Lewis was a complex figure, but by the early 1970s his name was invoked in support of a policy that cared less about the size of the industry than the size of the miner's wage packet. He was remembered as a leader who had actively collaborated with management in the rationalisation of the industry, accepting the consequence of fewer employment opportunities for as long as those who remained would be better off as a consequence. As then North Western Area secretary and future national president, Joe Gormley, put it in an open letter to the chairman of the National Coal Board, Lord Robens, in September 1970, 'I personally wouldn't mind if I went down in history as a miners' leader who, like John L. Lewis, brought British miners to the top of the wage table for industrial workers [...]. So, whatever the size of the Industry, the wages paid must be amongst the highest to be earned by any industrial workers.'<sup>37</sup> Upon succeeding Gormley as President of the Union in 1982, Arthur Scargill drew an explicit contrast between himself and his predecessor by repudiating the legacy of the American miners' leader: 'I do not subscribe to the philosophy of John L. Lewis, who encouraged contraction so that the wages of those who

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<sup>35</sup> Swansea University, South Wales Coalfield Collection, AUD/126: Interview of Scargill, Arthur, no date [1979-1982].

<sup>36</sup> LBC / IRN, 'Down to earth', <http://bufvc.ac.uk/tvandradiolbc/index.php/segment/0031800070001>, at 17:57 ff. (accessed 28 August 2018).

<sup>37</sup> J. Gormley, 'Open letter to Lord Robens', *The Miner*, September 1970. See also 'Time we got off our knees', *The Miner*, June 1970; 'This time we mean business', *Coal News*, September 1970. For a brief sketch of Gormley's life and career see P. Routledge, 'Gormley, Joseph', *ODNB* (online edition), accessed 19 April 2018.

remain could be raised’, as he told the delegates in his first Presidential Address in 1982. ‘If we do not save our pits from closure, then all our other struggles become meaningless.’<sup>38</sup>

### **Affluent Workers**

The hegemonic structure within the industry that the militants sought to displace can be illustrated with the help of two images. The first is taken from a recruitment leaflet of the National Coal Board from the mid-1970s. Produced by Colbear Advertising, the leaflet employs a brightly coloured comic-strip aesthetic. It emphasizes the skilled nature of ‘modern mining’, security of employment and the social value of mining. Above all, however, the advertisement celebrates the material and social rewards – notice the flashy motorbike and the smiling girl – that would flow from employment in the industry.

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<sup>38</sup> NUM, *Annual Reports and Proceedings for the year 1982* (London, no date [1983]), 337-347, at 337.



The militants and their supporters on the radical Left despised the Coal Board for the promotion of an image of miners that, they reasoned, would cut them loose from their history. In an autobiographical account co-authored with the American political scientist Joel Krieger, ‘active revolutionary’ and working miner David Douglass self-consciously took on what he considered to be the Coal Board’s deliberate attempt to ‘sever’ the miner from his past.<sup>39</sup> In a chapter called, ‘The Pit is still the Pit’, Douglass explicitly referred to the Coal Board’s cartoon-style promotional literature explored above:

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<sup>39</sup> D. Douglass and J. Krieger, *A Miner’s Life* (London et al., 1983). See also D. Douglass, “‘Worms of the Earth’: The Miners’ own story”, in: R. Samuel (ed.), *People’s History and Socialist Theory* (London, 1981), 61-67. For the quotation: Samuel, *People’s History*, 61.

The NCB works hard to embellish mining's new image [...] The NCB public relations department has even produced a promotional pamphlet for recruitment which features multi-coloured day-glow pits and colliers on fast motorcycles with pretty girls in tow.<sup>40</sup>

Douglass considered publications such as this as part of a broader campaign to 'deny the miner his claim to continuity with the past.' This was particularly insidious as 'without this sense of continuity, work down the pit would be meaningless'. To Douglass, 'History' – a carefully selected 'parade of events, some lived and all remembered' – was an essential political resource which helped the miners in promoting industrial and political action in the present. Douglass concluded that:

between the pitmen and the Board [...] the most scarring battles are over the meaning of the industry – about whether the present can be severed from the past. Is the contemporary face worker a collier or a machine operator? When the collieries are closed and the men moved into spanking new cosmopolitan installations, can they still claim their pride of place beside the big hewer?

Significantly, just like other militants, Douglass generalised his view, purporting to speak not just for himself, but for miners in general, or at the very least, for 'real' miners. It was therefore no coincidence that his autobiographical account was called *A Miner's Life*.

The second strand of the hegemonic structure revolved around the notion of miners as affluent workers. It can be illustrated with the help of another image, which was published in the Coal Board's paper, *Coal News*, in November 1981. The press photograph shows NUM president Joe Gormley kissing Tricia Liedl, the Coal Queen of Britain for 1981. It celebrates male status – notice Gormley's immaculate suit and tie – and female beauty alike as symbols of the quality of life in Britain's coalfields, a message powerfully celebrated at the annual Mining Weekend held at the British seaside resort of Blackpool.

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<sup>40</sup> Douglass and Krieger, *Miner's Life*, 13.





Indeed, the beauty pageants, first held at local colliery level in the aftermath of the Second World War, but elevated to an industry-wide event in 1969 were designed to emphasise the modernity of life in the coalfields. They underlined the extent to which the dark past of the interwar years with its drudgery, misery, unemployment and despair, had been left behind.<sup>41</sup> Although likely to offend early twenty-first century sensibilities on account of the blatant objectification of women, contemporary news reporting emphasised the self-confidence, (financial) independence and agency of the female contestants. The world that they inhabited and the lives that they led had nothing in common with the 'slum girl' so powerfully evoked by George Orwell in his travelogue, *The Road to Wigan Pier*, in 1937. In the book, Orwell recorded

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<sup>41</sup> 'One of Britain's best', *Coal News*, March (?) 1972.

his impressions of a young woman who he observed through the window of his carriage as he departed from the first leg of his journey as follows:

At the back of one of the houses a young woman was kneeling on the stones, poking a stick up the leaden waste-pipe which ran from the sink inside and which I suppose was blocked. I had time to see everything about her – her sacking apron, her clumsy clogs, her arms reddened by the cold. She looked up as the train passed, and I was almost near enough to catch her eye. She had a round pale face, the usual exhausted face of the slum girl who is twenty-five and looks forty, thanks to miscarriages and drudgery; and it wore, for the second in which I saw it, the most desolate, hopeless expression I have ever seen. [...] For what I saw in her face was not the ignorant suffering of an animal. She knew well enough what was happening to her – understood as well as I did how dreadful a destiny it was to be kneeling there in the bitter cold, on the slimy stones of a slum backyard, poking a stick up a foul drain pipe.<sup>42</sup>

Orwell's observation may have been dramatized for effect, and it was, in any case, based on the author's reading of someone else's life of which he knew very little. But vignettes such as this had come to shape the cultural memory of a time that was separated from the present of the late 1960s by no more than one generation, but which seemed to hail from a different epoch altogether. Of the 14 contestants that were presented in *Coal News* for the 1972 pageant, for example, only two gave 'housewife' as their occupation. One was described as a 'mining mum'. One woman still went to school, another attended university as a drama student. The other contestants gave occupations as diverse as typist, civil servant, wages clerk, drama student, bank clerk, NCB film unit interviewer, hairdresser and 'bunny girl'.<sup>43</sup> All contestants were linked to the coalfields by virtue of kinship ties, but they were depicted and, as far as can be judged from the surviving evidence, saw themselves as thoroughly modern women, fully availing themselves of the opportunities that the contest offered.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> G. Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier* (London: Penguin Classics, 2001), 15.

<sup>43</sup> *Coal News*, August 1972, 8f.

<sup>44</sup> 'It's a great life for a girl at the top', *Coal News*, April 1973.

Looking back on the contests of the 1970s and early 1980s as part of an exhibition held at the National Coal Mining Museum for England in 2010, positive memories predominated. The former ‘Coal Queens’ spoke of how important and proud they felt, and how thrilled they were at winning cash prizes, visiting London, travelling abroad and representing the coal industry and coal communities – ‘like a fairy tale’, as Elizabeth Thornton, the Nottinghamshire Area Queen of 1975, put it.<sup>45</sup> By staging the Coal Queen of Britain contest at the Derbyshire Miners’ Holiday Centre in Skegness between 1969 and 1976, and making them the central event of the annual Mining Weekend at Blackpool between 1977 and 1983, the coalfields celebrated themselves as both ‘special’ and as fully partaking in the comforts and delights of industrial modernity. Not only were the Beauty Contests and Mining Weekends designed to show off the modernity of life in the coalfields and the relevance of the industry for contemporary Britain. They also served as an example of the success of corporatism between the National Coal Board and the NUM. The events were co-organised by *Coal News*, the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation (CISWO) and the NUM.<sup>46</sup>

### **Cosmopolitan underminers**

As part of their endeavour to displace the dominant structure of feeling inside the industry, the militants adopted an anti-urban and especially anti-metropolitan rhetoric. During his election campaign for National president of the NUM in 1981, Arthur Scargill presented himself as a man who under no circumstances would ever ‘prostitute’ his principles – unlike the leaders who had come before him, the unspoken assumption went.<sup>47</sup> While the militants sought to reassert

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<sup>45</sup> *Memories of the Coal Queens*, compiled by A. Bradley and R. Hudson. National Coal Mining for England Publications; 11 (Overton, 2010).

<sup>46</sup> *CISWO Annual Reports and Accounts 1977*, 12-16; *CISWO Annual Reports and Accounts 1978*, 14-16; *CISWO Annual Reports and Accounts 1979*, 14-16.

<sup>47</sup> NUM Archives, Barnsley, box Arthur Scargill. Speeches 1981- early 1982. Folder 81: Presidential campaign: ‘Presidential Campaign’, October 1981.

a strict ‘them’ and ‘us’ dichotomy between management and miners,<sup>48</sup> they despised the Union’s National Executive Committee (NEC) even more than the NCB for what they saw as the moderates’ eagerness to strike dirty deals in the corridors of power in Whitehall and Hobart House, the seat of the National Coal Board. The militants considered the NUM president, Joe Gormley, as one of the driving forces behind the introduction of area incentive schemes to the industry in 1978, which the National Executive Committee had condoned despite an Annual conference decision and a subsequent pithead ballot to the contrary.<sup>49</sup> The incentive scheme was bitterly opposed by the Left because it was seen, in Scargill’s words, as ‘setting area against area, pit against pit, man against man’ and thus as undermining the cross-coalfield unity that had underpinned the successful strike actions of 1972 and 1974.<sup>50</sup>

The antagonism reached its climax in the transition period between Arthur Scargill’s election as the new Union president in the autumn of 1981 and the retirement of Joe Gormley in the summer of the following year. When the outgoing president intervened in a pithead ballot on industrial action by publishing an opinion piece in the *Daily Express* in which he urged fellow mineworkers to go against the NEC’s recommendation and accept the Coal Board’s offer, the Left accused him of treasonous collusion with the employer.<sup>51</sup> In its February 1982 edition, the *Yorkshire Miner* reported Gormley’s intervention under the headline of, ‘Joe’s Rich Seam – Thousands for Gormley as miners accept peanuts’.<sup>52</sup> In a commentary headlined with ‘Time is on our side’, Arthur Scargill reassured fellow radicals that ‘next year things will be very different. [...] most important of all, we shall no longer be burdened with a Judas at the head of our union.’ In a separate comment, the paper’s editor wrote:

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<sup>48</sup> Arthur Scargill and Peggy Kahn, ‘The case for conflict’, *New Society*, 7 January 1982, 7-10.

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<sup>50</sup> LBC / IRN, ‘Down to earth’, at 21:00.

<sup>51</sup> Joe Gormley, ‘My message to the miners: think – before you destroy what we have built up’, *Daily Express*, 13 January 1982.

<sup>52</sup> ‘Joe’s Rich Seam’, *Yorkshire Miner*, No. 55, February 1982.

A man's retirement is something special in life. No matter what differences there were in the past, all unpleasant feelings are temporarily suspended as the new pensioner is wished well in his later years. However, we should be wise to forget all such courtesies when it comes to the retirement of Joseph Gormley as President of the NUM. [...] We cannot wish him a happy retirement. All we can say is bloody good riddance.<sup>53</sup>

To the militants, there was an important spatial dimension to the union's malaise. One of the reasons the leadership of the past had so frequently fallen short of what the 'rank and file' expected of them, was the location of the NUM headquarters in the centre of London, on 222 Euston Road. The leaders were simply too close to the centres of power and too far removed from the coalfields, they reasoned. Lest power corrupt and the perks of office continue to drive a wedge between the leaders and the 'rank and file', militant coalfield areas campaigned for a removal of the head offices from their present premises in the centre of London back to the coalfields. To that end, the Kent area submitted a resolution to the 1982 NUM National Conference which demanded that 'the Headquarters [...] shall in future be situated at a suitable venue within the coalfield areas.'<sup>54</sup>

To be sure, there was a consensus that the present offices on Euston Street, into which the National NUM had moved in 1960, were no longer fit for purpose. There was also an economic argument to be made for selling the property in London and using the proceeds to build a spacious and modern headquarters that would provide for research facilities and a library in addition to staff and executive offices, boardrooms and meeting rooms.<sup>55</sup> Even more important than the financial benefits, however, were the anticipated political gains. 'For a long time there has been a feeling among the membership that the Headquarters has been too remote and

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> *National Union of Mineworkers Annual Reports and Proceedings 1982*, 364-76.

<sup>55</sup> See the official letter by the NUM to six architectural firms stipulating the requirements of the new headquarters. NUM Archives, Barnsley, box New HQ: Architects, Design, Sculptors: L. Daly to architects, 'NUM National Headquarters', 27 October 1982.

divorced from the pits and the miners it serves’, as the mover of the resolution, Kent miner J. Moyle, put it.<sup>56</sup>

This point was underlined and fleshed out by the seconder of the resolution, G. Crawford, who spoke on behalf of the Scottish Area. He argued that the matter was of ‘great importance to the rank and file miners’ as one of ‘the great fears of ordinary miners is that our National Officials get out of touch, out of sympathy and out of control, that they will be subdued, seduced by the life in London’. It was above all the leaders’ proximity to the centres of privilege and political power that made them vulnerable, Crawford claimed. To him, ‘London’ was a symbol of all the corrosive pressures to which miners’ leaders had repeatedly fallen victim in the past. ‘London is a prostituting place. It is not in a coalfield. [...] It is full of undermining influences from the media, the hostile politicians and the N.C.B. The only safeguard or safe way we have of protecting our Officials from its influence is by moving them into a coalfield.’ Although Crawford did not expect the new President to be susceptible to the lure of the metropolis, he invoked past experience to back up his claim. In his opinion, ‘only [General Secretaries] Horner and Paynter [had] been immune to the effects of London life, so let us lift them out of London and plant them where the miners work and live’.<sup>57</sup>

In the debate following the moving of the resolution, concerns were raised about the treatment of the London office staff and the ‘double standards’ of the NUM: ‘Remember we have rank and file members employed at Euston Road’, as delegate I. Morgan, representing the Cokemen Area, expressed it: ‘They are our employees and we should treat them with the respect we demand from the National Coal Board’.<sup>58</sup> More broadly, J. Varley, representing the white collar section of the NUM, argued that the ‘efficiency’ and reputation of the union rested

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<sup>56</sup> *National Union of Mineworkers Annual Reports and Proceedings 1982*, 365.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 366.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 367f.

precisely upon the ability of the leadership to leave behind the coalfields both physically but also, to some extent, intellectually and emotionally.

Let me remind delegates here, that the National Union of Mineworkers has made its reputation, served its members and has been led by a string of National Officials who were household names, who left the coalfields and went to London to do their jobs [...] Where, I ask you, is the logic of moving away our office away from the places where our National Official need to do their business?

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Rather than return union leaders to their roots, Varley argued, it would cut them off from the corridors of power. Referring to an earlier delegate's polemical demand that the Prime Minister come up to the coalfields if she wanted to talk to the miners' leaders, Varley pointed out sarcastically, 'You might talk about Maggie getting in her helicopter to come and see Arthur. There is no way she will come down to see him. We will become isolationists.' Arthur Scargill intervened personally in the debate from the presidential chair in order to, as he put it, 'dispel some of the assertions' that had been made in opposition to the resolution and to express the support of the National Executive Committee.<sup>60</sup> The motion to move the NUM headquarters was carried 'overwhelmingly' as the minutes recorded.<sup>61</sup>

As we have seen, to the militants, Joe Gormely, the recently retired President, was the most notorious example of a miners' leader who had turned his back on the 'real' interests of the miners. But the most painful case from the point of view of the Left was the development of Lawrence Daly, the hugely talented Scottish miners' leader who had become the torchbearer of a 'new Left' radicalism in the coalfields in the late 1960s.<sup>62</sup> Within months of being elected to the post of General Secretary as the candidate of the Left in December 1968 and of taking up

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 368.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 374.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 376.

<sup>62</sup> Daly became a national figure with the publication of his pamphlet, *The Miners and the Nation* (Glasgow, 1968). See also M. Davies, "'Among Ordinary People": New Left Involvement in Working-Class Political Mobilisation', *History Workshop Journal* 86 (2018), 133-59.

his post in London, he seemed to have moderated his views, notoriously failing to come out in support of the unofficial strike action over surface hours that spread across the coalfields in the autumn of 1969. In the judgement of Vic Allen, professor of sociology at the University of Leeds and himself an active agent in the radicalisation of the coalfields,

Daly's reputation amongst his friends suffered and was never fully restored [...] So although Lawrence Daly was actively associated with the left-wing until after the 1974 miners' strike and played a prominent leadership part in the 1972 miners' strike, the stain caused by his 1969 intervention was indelible.<sup>63</sup>

To be sure, not everybody's verdict was as uncompromising as Allen's *ex post* judgment from 1981. In 1972, at the height of the first official national miners' strike since 1926, E.P. Thompson compared Daly's intellectual stature in the trade union movement to that of Raymond Williams among intellectuals: 'In his stamina, in his search for the uniting affirmatives, in his sense of solidarity against the real enemy, Daly performs among the trade unionists of the left something of the same role as Raymond Williams performs among intellectuals.'<sup>64</sup> But soon after the triumph of 1972, Daly would embark on his long descent into alcoholism, forcing him into early retirement in 1984. Friends had voiced concern over his drinking habits since 1969.<sup>65</sup> In an autobiographical sketch penned in rehabilitation in the mid-1970s, Daly himself expressed the view that the frequent commuting between London and the coalfields had worsened his 'drinking problem'. The root cause, however, he located elsewhere altogether, in the traumatic aftereffects of two visits to the Nazi Death Camp at Auschwitz in 1965 and North Vietnam in 1968.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> V. L. Allen, *The Militancy of British Miners* (Shingley, 1981), 156.

<sup>64</sup> E.P. Thompson, 'A special case', *New Society*, 24 February 1972, 402-4, at 404. See also the verdict by L. Goldman in the ODNB entry on Daly: L. Goldman, 'Daly Lawrence', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (OUP, 2013): 'Daly's astute leadership of the NUM in 1972 was his finest achievement.'

<sup>65</sup> Letter to Lawrence Daly, 11 October 1969, Modern Records Office L. Daly Papers, MSS.302/3/5.

<sup>66</sup> Undated autobiographical sketch, Modern Records Office L. Daly Papers, MSS.302/5/8.



Echoing the sentiments expressed at the 1982 National Conference, Scargill would later declare in an interview that at last the NUM had returned to where it belonged, in the heart of the coalfields; and of how glad he was to be away from ‘that rather sinful city of London’ where all ‘the underminers’ were engaged in their schemes of betrayal and collusion. While Scargill here drew on the well-established trope of the metropolis as a hotbed of corruption, in the NUM’s wider campaign against pit closures of the early 1980s another set of images was mobilised: the spectre of the ‘ghost town’, the colonisation of the coalfields, so to speak, by the blight of the inner cities. As Raphael Samuel has observed, ‘A spectre which Arthur Scargill conjured up [...] was that of the urban disaster, the ‘helplessness’ and the ‘hopelessness’ of youth in the big city [...] in which the reality of life ‘becomes something to escape from on the end of a hypodermic syringe’.<sup>67</sup>

Whatever the prospects of pit villages turning into inner city zones of devastation as a result of colliery closures,<sup>68</sup> there can be little doubt that the adoption by the NUM of a traditionalist stance at the expense of a ‘modernising’ vision made the miners vulnerable to the claim that, in the last analysis, they were engaged in nothing more than a Luddite attempt to stop the tide of change itself. In one of her rare public interventions into the miners’ strike, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher declared that Britain must not turn into a ‘museum society’. As the Prime Minister put it to an Independent Television News interviewer on a visit to York on 26 September 1984,

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<sup>67</sup> Samuel, *Enemy Within*, 24.

<sup>68</sup> On the long-term effects of closures on coalfield communities see M. Foden, S. Fothergill and T. Gore, *The State of the Coalfields: Economic and Social Conditions in the Former Mining Communities of England, Scotland and Wales* (Sheffield, 2014). On the problems and discursive construction of the ‘inner city’ see Alistair Kefford, ‘Disruption, destruction and the creation of ‘the inner cities’: the impact of urban renewal on industry, 1945-1980’, *Urban History* 44,3 (2017), 492-515; the contribution by Otto Saumarez Smith in this issue.

Just think, if the argument had been used – old uneconomic factories, uneconomic farms, uneconomic machinery – ‘Old? Uneconomic? It must never close!’ We should be a museum society, and you wouldn’t have a fraction of the standard of living you’ve got now.<sup>69</sup>

Her advisor Alfred Sherman, another ex-Marxist who had turned neo-liberal, put the case more aggressively in an article that was published in *The Times* in August 1984: ‘I argue advisedly that social as well as economic change is resisted by the NUM. [The effect of the NUM’s reactionary policy] is to keep [the miner] in the equivalent of what Marx called ‘rural idiocy’, in an isolated quasi-tribal one-class society’.<sup>70</sup>

While opponents of the NUM seized upon the image of the ruralised miner in order to portray the 1984/85 strike as a backward-looking Last Stand against the tide of History itself, it was from inside Britain’s big cities, and the capital in particular, that striking miners received the most sustained support.<sup>71</sup> According to a survey undertaken by the Labour Research Department in 1985, the network of support groups comprised at least 300 organisations.<sup>72</sup> Support for the miners in 1984/5 most typically took the form of donations in cash or kind rather than secondary strike action. To Raphael Samuel, outside support for the miners was based on a sense of difference rather than of shared interests: ‘it owed more to Christian notions of charity [...] or ‘good works’ than to class-consciousness as classically conceived’, as he wrote shortly after the end of the strike in 1986.<sup>73</sup> This emphasis on the miners’ ‘otherness’ formed a central strand in Samuel’s ruralisation of the miners as ‘village radicals’. Samuel’s interpretation has recently been contested by social geographer Diarmaid Kelliher, who emphasises a more

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<sup>69</sup> Margaret Thatcher Foundation, Press Conference in York, 26 September 1984.

<sup>70</sup> Alfred Sherman, ‘How Scargill is betraying Marx’, *The Times*, 21 August 1984.

<sup>71</sup> D. Massey and H. Wainwright, ‘Beyond the Coalfields: The Work of the Miners’ Support Groups’, in: Huw Beynon (ed.), *Digging Deeper: Issues in the Miners’ Strike* (London, 1984), 149-167, here: 151.

<sup>72</sup> Figures according to Diarmaid Kelliher, *Solidarity, Class and Labour Agency: Mapping Networks of Support between London and the Coalfields during the 1984-85 Miners’ Strike*, Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Glasgow 2017, 8.

<sup>73</sup> Samuel, *Enemy Within*, 33.

egalitarian, and mutually transformative, relationship between mining communities and support groups in 1984/85, the beginnings of which he traces back to the late 1960s.<sup>74</sup>

## Conclusion

Following the 1982 Annual Conference decision, the National Executive Committee accepted an offer by Sheffield City Council of a freehold site in a prime location adjacent to City Hall in the centre of town. In a circular letter inviting local architects to submit designs for the new headquarter, the NUM stipulated a useable floor space of approximately 50,000 square feet, incorporating office accommodation for 50 to 60 staff, executive offices, board and committee rooms, but also space for a library of working class history, an exhibition centre with research facilities, lecture rooms and other educational facilities.<sup>75</sup> Clearly, the new headquarters were designed to showcase the self-confidence of the miners and to underline their special role in British society not just in the present and the past, but for generations to come.

The NUM vacated their London premises soon after the Conference decision and moved into temporary accommodation in St. James' House on Vicar Lane in Sheffield in April 1983.<sup>76</sup> By the time the new headquarters was completed five years later in December 1988, the status of the miners had changed dramatically.<sup>77</sup> Operating in the aftermath of the defeat

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<sup>74</sup> Kelliher, *Solidarity, Class and Labour Agency*; idem, 'Constructing a Culture of Solidarity: London and the British Coalfields in the Long 1970s', *Antipode* 49/1 (2016), 106-124; idem and D. Featherstone (eds.), *London and the 1984-5 Miners' Strike* (no date).

<sup>75</sup> NUM National Headquarters, 27 October 1982, in: NUM Offices Barnsley, Box: New HQ. Architects, Design, Solicitors.

<sup>76</sup> *NUM Annual Reports and Proceedings 1983*, 118.

<sup>77</sup> *NUM Annual Reports and Proceedings 1989*, 204. See also *NUM Annual Reports and Proceedings 1987*, 277. See also Owen Hatherley, *A Guide to the new ruins of Great Britain* (London & New York, 2010), 104f.

in the strike and within a fast contracting industry, the NUM was rapidly becoming a shadow of its former self, isolated within the Labour movement, ignored by the National Coal Board and increasingly occupied within acrimonious infighting. Even to their erstwhile enemies (although not to Margaret Thatcher herself), the miners were starting to look pitiful rather than dangerous. Under the pressure of financial constraints, the NUM vacated their National Offices in July 1994 and relocated to the Yorkshire Area Headquarters on Huddersfield Road in Barnsley where they still reside at the time of writing.<sup>78</sup> It was in the wake of defeat in the 1984/85 strike that the notion of the ‘ruralised miner’ finally became hegemonic,<sup>79</sup> crowding out alternative structures of feeling which had offered an alternative vision and sought to locate the miner at the very heart of urban modernity.

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<sup>78</sup> *NUM Annual Reports and Proceedings 1994*, AR 7.

<sup>79</sup> A history of the ways in which the miners’ strike has been memorialised remains to be written, but see my paper on “The Missing Link – De-industrialisation, Memory and the Left Behind” (unpublished manuscript).