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The north of England has been subjected to stereotype, misrepresentation and myth. Although this has been examined in various cultural forms,\(^1\) the Literary North of England has not hitherto been considered in any systematic way. In focusing on the Literary North, the essays in this collection examine the strategies and recurring motifs in literature in English from the mid-nineteenth to the twenty-first century. Beginning with the association of the North with industrialization, Josephine Guy considers the mythologizing construction of the North in the industrial novel of the mid-nineteenth century. The city of Manchester, in particular, has been rendered a synecdoche for industrialization. The diversity of Manchester's thriving business, artistic and cultural landscape has been occluded by the overpowering image of the grimy mills. Guy restores the significant fact that Manchester's rising power and its potential to challenge the metropolis emerges just at the point when novelists such as Elizabeth Gaskell were strategically representing it in such starkly contrasting terms.

The literary criticism of the provincial and regional novel has paid most attention to the phenomenon of the North.\(^2\) Phyllis Bentley attributed the ‘watchwords’ of ‘locality, reality and democracy’ to the English regional novel (Bentley 1941: 46), claiming that the English regions exhibited unique characteristics. She refuted the charge that the regional novel ‘is too local, not sufficiently universal in its reference’ by asserting that in the local the universal may indeed be discernible: ‘the gaze is certainly narrowed if one surveys Yorkshire rather than human destiny. The writer of genius can, however, see human destiny through his chosen region, as appears in the case of Hardy’ (44–5). Nevertheless, the assumption that the task of literature is to render the universal rather than the local tends to make an oxymoron of the Literary North.
This tension between the universal and the local proves to be a recurring feature in the Literary North examined here.

The richness and longevity of influence of some literary texts authored from and about the north of England warrant their closer study in this collection. This is not to claim that these literary texts are more truthful with regard to the expression of a northern identity. Literature may imaginatively rework the environment with significant effects on its readership. The literary forms and conventions deployed in these literary texts become meaningful when situated within the framework of literary history. They present with a range of recurring features: realist form; myth and fantasy; the strange; the primitive; the rural or industrial-urban setting; an association with the universal or specific; nostalgia or the present; gender, especially masculinity; emotion; ambivalence; and irony. Clearly none of these features is unique to literary representations of the north of England.

It is not proposed here that there is an *essentially northern* identity or means of representing it. However, this is precisely what some literary texts either assert or assume. Why they would do this is a fruitful question for consideration. What has become clear is the tenacity of the stereotyping of the North. When literature does not perpetuate these stereotypes, it tends to enter dynamically, sometimes perversely, into a dialogue with them. The stereotypes and myths of the North seem so familiar that they need no discussion. But even in Stuart Maconie's *Pies and Prejudice* (2007), aimed at a general readership, there are localized differences apparent within the broader region of the North (Maconie tends to dwell on the North-West) and contradictions emerge.

Location has often been relegated to a matter of setting or backdrop in literary studies. As early as 1978, the 'Literary North' was examined by D. C. D. Pocock in a brief geographical paper, 'The Novelist and the North'. Pocock adopted a humanist, empirical approach, focusing on the perceived location of the North by a small group of literature students and by various novelists, collecting the evidence by means of a questionnaire. The features of the landscape were described as grim, disfigured and monotonous; it is a place from which to escape, while its people are forceful, direct, honest, but lacking 'graciousness' (1978: 29).

The new framework presented here for investigation of the Literary North, with its principal focus on literature, has been informed by insights from outside literature, taking a geographical turn. Cultural geography has produced two recent studies of the North. Christoph Ehland's collection, *Thinking Northern: Textures of Identity in the North*
of England (2007), has a diverse range of interdisciplinary, cultural and political essays of which those by Stephan Kohl, Jan Hewitt and Annisa Suliman are pertinent here. In his analysis of twentieth-century literary travel narratives of England, Kohl (2007) identifies the ‘postlapsarian’ dimension of the North–South divide, the mechanism of ‘estranging the North’, and he establishes that ‘northern England’ appears to be an oxymoron. Like Peter Davidson’s fascinating The Idea of North (2005), Moller and Pehkonen’s Encountering the North: Cultural Geography, International Relations and Northern Landscapes (2003) extends the view of the North to the Arctic Circle and examines the interrelationships of culture, geography and politics. One chapter in Encountering the North, from the field of marginality studies, focuses on literature, namely the ‘Literary North’ of Finnish author Rosa Liksom with a postcolonial reading of the Finnish North and South.

In an attempt to revitalize cultural geography, Nigel Thrift has proposed the adoption of an ‘awkward perspective’ (Thrift 2004: 133). In this spirit, and with no hostility towards cultural studies, a return to the specificity of literature in the formation of the ‘Literary North’ is attempted here while foregrounding the processes by which meaning takes place in the interplay of literary devices, forms and genres and takes effect in its dialogue with social being and consciousness. The premise in critical geography that ‘space is a representational strategy’ (Crang and Thrift 2000: 1), provides this collection of essays with a new perspective on the Literary North. Rather like the shift created in gender studies by the contention that the category ‘sex’ is a construct rather than to be taken as a given (Butler 1990), the conceptualization of space itself as both strategic and representational has proven to be illuminating. Instead of atomizing the study of the Literary North by focusing on genre, specific texts or authors, the essays in this collection take a range of different critical approaches to examine the strategies and effects of the northern space in the literary text. If ‘knowledge is always emplaced and localised’ and we reconceptualize ‘space as process and in process’ (Crang and Thrift 2000: 3), then the North is not fixed, but is rather still forming, or becoming. This creative process becomes most apparent in literary texts. It is the acknowledgement of such a dynamism at work in constructions of the North that the textual strategies outlined below present themselves as collectively meaningful.

The prosperity of the north of England in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries did not survive and tends to be absent from the stereotypes associated with the North. In a complex history of the North–South relationship from the medieval period to the eighteenth
Introducing the Literary North

century, Helen Jewell (1994) traces the beginnings of a ‘northern consciousness’ to the early eighth century. In the twentieth century attempts were made by government to redress the ravages on the North by the unemployment of the 1920s and 1930s with the implementation of regional policies, especially promoted by the postwar Labour government and emphatically withdrawn by the Conservative government under Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s, which reinforced the regional divide. Increasing tensions in the North arising from patterns of migration and settlement have been exploited in the early twenty-first century by political extremists such as the British National Party. The stark binary serves to fix the subordinated North, reinforcing the hegemony of the South. Such a restricted map, which erases any other compass points, often implicitly configures the indeterminate Midlands as North simply because they are not-South. The North therefore functions strategically as the Other. In applying Benedict Anderson’s definition of the nation to a region, the North becomes an imagined community. Its inhabitants cannot know each other, not having met, but nevertheless experience a ‘deep, horizontal comradeship’ (Anderson 1991: 6–7) which binds them together.

When articulating a northern way of speaking, these literary texts contribute to the ‘structure of feeling’ of the North. They are, nevertheless, as Mikhail Bakhtin states, ‘defined by an anticipation of another person’s words’ (Bakhtin 1984: 205), and these include a readership which is southern or at least not northern. This creates a contradictory position at times, appearing even to be complicit in the privileging of the perspective and values of the South. Geographers have adapted Bakhtin’s idea of the chronotope to understand space:

A dialogical landscape indicates the historical moment and situation (time and space) of a dialogue whose outcome is never a neutral exchange. Landscape becomes not only ‘graphically visible’ in space but also ‘narratively visible’ in time, in a field of discourses all attempting to account for human experience. (Folch-Serra quoted in Holloway and Kneale 2000: 83)

Tess Cosslett uses the chronotope in her analysis of children’s literature in Chapter 13. The chronotope of the train journey features in many literary encounters with the north of England. For Orwell it is indeed the rail road to Wigan Pier he takes as investigative author for the book which had been commissioned by the Left Book Club. It was this mode of transport in the nineteenth century which opened up the possibility
of travel at a time of industrial expansion, facilitating travel to and from the North for leisure as well as trade purposes.\(^5\)

In the twentieth century it is the construction of motorways in Britain, namely the M1, which characterizes northward travel, and it has created what Marc Augé has designated ‘non-places’. Thus, Augé explains, ‘If a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place’ (Augé 1995: 77–8). The Watford Gap service station features in many media engagements with the North, and its liminality raises questions about boundaries between North and South. Where the traveller’s perspective of the North is foregrounded it may transform it into a non-place:

space in which solitude is experienced as an overburdening or emptying of individuality, in which only the movement of the fleeting images enable the observer to hypothesize the existence of a past and glimpse the possibility of a future. (Augé 1995: 87)

The mobility of the boundaries between North and South demonstrates the imaginative creation of these places. Hence the Staffordshire novels of Arnold Bennett become virtually northern. Famously the ‘Wigan Pier’ of Orwell’s title does not exist; it symbolizes the North but as a non-place. More seriously, in his book the North has disappeared from Orwell’s narrative by Chapter 13, with its concluding focus on the success of socialism and the end of class prejudice. For Orwell the North had become a non-place in his journey to the socialist future.

In East Yorkshire in the north-east of England and on the banks of the River Humber, the city of Hull has a long-standing and vital relationship with poetry, while its fascination for poets has tended to centre on ideas of ambivalence, dislocation and stasis. In Chapter 9, Sean O’Brien explores the imagined status of Hull in the poetry of Philip Larkin, Douglas Dunn and Peter Didsbury. O’Brien notes Philip Larkin’s conceptualization of Hull, acutely observed, as a blank space. While Larkin is the participant-observer in an anthropological aesthetic, Douglas Dunn is more of a witness. Dunn offers insights into the inner life and inner world of the streets and muddy, watery roots of the city. Peter Didsbury’s Hull has the depth and resonance of the city seen and felt by a resident; it has proximity while conjuring a sense of ‘elsewhere’. O’Brien alights upon the paradox which emerges from Didsbury’s depiction of Hull. The challenge posed by the Literary North often generates oxymoron or paradox, a tension drawn between desolation and depth,
defying the literal and logical and intimating the poetic powers of the unconscious.

The complex relationships of power and place, region and nation, across borders have been examined, for instance, in American studies where José Limón’s work is unexpectedly illuminating for the Literary North. Limón has evoked ‘ideas of “region,” the “local,” and “place” as part of an alternative to critical globalization as it is practiced with respect to the US–Mexico border’, but instead of reviving the idea of ‘such sites as utterly distinctive, rigidly bounded, and impervious to external influence’ (Limon 2008: 165), Limón proposes a new perspective:

Through the concept of critical regionalism, a case seems to be developing for a renewal of regionalist thinking, not in any isolated sense, but rather within yet in tension with globalization. (Limon 2008: 165)

The relationship between the (northern) country and the city is at work in many of the literary texts examined here. As Raymond Williams (1973) argues, ideas about the country and the city have an ancient history but in relation to the history of Western industrialization they persist in complex forms. The geographical relocation of centres of work in Britain from rural agriculture to urban industries led to migration, a nostalgia for the countryside and a demonization of the new cities as dangerous and alienating. Within this process, the North is often mapped as grim, polluted, industrialized and demonic; the northern cities have been regarded not as centres of innovation, like the southern metropolis, but rather as dehumanizing places of production where the worker becomes degraded. The automatizing effect of urban living is symbolized by the northern female drudge, glimpsed by George Orwell from the train in The Road to Wigan Pier (1937). To some extent the fate of cities in the north of England during the bombing in the Second World War has affected their amenability to refashioning in light of modern architecture. They are not uniformly configured. A relatively homogeneous idea of the northern English city, however, persists and it has its roots in the early twentieth century. While Paris has been identified as the ‘metonymic space’ of modernity and Los Angeles has marked the mechanisms of postmodernism (Crang and Thrift 2000: 13), the north of England was the characteristic location of socialist realism in the 1930s. As a Yorkshire novelist, Phyllis Bentley reported that local authors responded to the impact of the Depression of the 1930s on the
cotton industry of Yorkshire (Bentley 1941: 38), with as many as 108 local authors attending a Yorkshire Authors’ Dinner in 1938 (41). Thus, the North tends to be associated with the social deprivation of working-class communities which were the object of fascination of well-meaning, politically committed authors during, what Auden named, that ‘low, dishonest decade’. The extent to which this association has lasted will be considered in Chapter 15 below.

The north of England is not, in reality, a 1930s theme park. The gentrification of football has affected the economy and status of Manchester and its Cheshire environs. Prestige shopping centres have been located in Leeds and Manchester. The glocalization of postmodernity has also affected rural Yorkshire. Many television viewers have come to know Yorkshire through the long-standing British television series *The Last of the Summer Wine*. As Simon Armitage’s essay, ‘Huddersfield is Hollywood’, in *All Points North* (1998) recounts, the location of a television programme transforms the local economy and local relationships:

Some locals stood in circles gawping at the action like hangers-on at a party or lonely kids on the edge of a game of football, waiting to be asked to play. The image of Nazi collaborators came to mind, but no one actually said it [...] Someone who’d rented out his premises as a set would never need to work again. (Armitage 1998: 121)

The appropriation of the town during filming, with its impact on the increased traffic and even the unofficial closing of streets during filming, met with some resistance. But in the face of the southern invasion, nevertheless, the response of some locals was of ‘waiting to be asked to play’. However, they serve a local agenda, playing with the expectations of visiting journalists. The idea that the North has ancient roots which may attract tourists (as well as explain the strange local customs) is offered and then rejected with dour irony:

The musician tells him he’s heard it said that Hebden is connected by ley-line to Glastonbury and Stonehenge.

MacCarthy: Do you think it’s true?

Musician: No, I think it’s a load of old bulldozers, myself. (Armitage 1998: 123)

The strategic identification of the North with the strange and primitive often implies that it is culturally bereft in order to preserve for the South not simply cultural prestige and dominance but indeed the natural
possession of civilization and humanity as a matter of evolutionary fact. This kind of culturalism, the idea that biological rather than cultural determinants produce these differences, would simply attribute inequalities to an unfortunate accident of birthplace.

This situation is tested in Elizabeth Gaskell’s *North and South* (1855), where southerners, Mrs Hale and her daughter, have relocated further north to Milton where they enter the industrial world of Mr Thornton. In preparation for her encounter with the northern natives, Mrs Hale is obliged to respond to local servant Bessy Higgins’ surprise that, as relatively impoverished folk, they have been invited to dinner at the Thorntons:

‘But we are educated people, and have lived amongst educated people. Is there anything so wonderful, in our being asked out to dinner by a man who owns himself inferior to my father by coming to him to be instructed? I don’t mean to blame Mr Thornton. Few drapers’ assistants, as he was once, could have made themselves what he is.’ (Gaskell 1970: 199–200)

While Thornton’s wealth provides him with social standing and power in Milton, the Hales have the education which he lacks. North and South are invariably taken to diverge, the cerebral South gaining cultural power from the physical strength of the visceral North. Romance provides a magical solution for reconciling the two regions. As Cora Kaplan explains, Gaskell engages with the work ethic in *North and South*, ‘a story in which gender inequality and class and regional differences are resolved both in terms of plot and affect by allowing the middle-class heroine, Margaret Hale, first to inherit and then to invest in the factory of the man she loves’ (Kaplan 2007: 100–1). The nineteenth-century industrialization of the North has a long legacy which has been revived in cultural forms for modern purposes in the neo-Victorian novel, exemplified by David Lodge’s *Nice Work* (1989) in which he famously revived Gaskell’s plot.

Dave Russell’s study, *Looking North* (2004), focuses on the relationship between representations of the North and Englishness. Russell usefully allocates individual chapters to broadly different genres or cultural forms such as writing, performance, film and song, but they are treated as vehicles for a set of ideas. While he rejects a simple correlation between image and reality, his primary concern is ‘the way in which regional imagery […] has been disseminated and deployed in the interest of the agendas of competing and contending social groups’ (Russell
2004: 10). In contrast, the examination here has both a more specialized focus (on the Literary North) and a concern with the complexity and diversity of literary form, and the aesthetic strategies and effects deployed in the Literary North, while attentive to their use in other apparently unrelated contexts.

Literary representations of the north of England developed in the regional and industrial novels of the nineteenth century but have become associated with the socialist realism of the 1930s (and its reprise in the 1950s), the documentary movement and the social deprivation of working-class communities in the industrial cities which it recorded. A scientific mode of observation and record-keeping often sits alongside the voyeurism of class tourism, the North being portrayed for the curiosity of the (implied southern) reader. The formal characteristics of realism are all inflected with a northern significance: the detailed definition of character, by means of physical description and realistic dialogue, which is embedded in a complex social environment; the foregrounding of causally connected events which link together logically to act as the narrative motor driving towards closure; the hierarchy of discourses which clearly places all voices within the narrative, relegates the northern voices, leaving the North with no hope. In literary history, realism as a dominant mode in the representations of the North situates it in a tradition of social protest and commentary, and associates it with socialism and the documentary movement. Given the primacy of modernism in literary history, the critical devaluing of realism tends to risk lumbering the Literary North with illiteracy. As Ruth Robbins establishes in Chapter 5, Arnold Bennett’s narrative aesthetic has suffered at the hands of Virginia Woolf, who famously designated the realists as ‘materialists’ obsessed with the trivial and the superficial and unable to delve into the inner world of their characters. In order to appreciate the complexities of the Literary North it is often necessary to establish how the text engages with realism, especially the strategic geographical location of the hierarchy of discourses. The influence of naturalism is therefore examined in the novels of George Moore and Arnold Bennett in Chapters 4 and 5. Robbins reassesses the function of detail in Bennett’s novels and establishes the determining nature of place, mediated through ‘clay’ in Bennett’s *Clayhanger*. In Chapter 6, Claire Warden explores the Literary North on stage in Ewan MacColl’s little-known play about Salford. MacColl’s ambivalent relationship to the place is mediated through an anti-naturalist dramatic form which disrupts and challenges.
The North is audible. An attempt to render regional variation in spoken English is common in the literary representations of the North but not always successful. As Phyllis Bentley noted, it is risky; the non-native reader may be alienated and the characters rendered ‘quaint’ (Bentley 1941: 43). In the novel, the northern character is especially identifiable by a distinctive accent. The hierarchy of discourses in the realist novel places the extradiegetic narrator in an authoritative position. The attribution of Standard English to this authoritative voice, while distinguishing the characters by means of regional variations, sets up a hierarchy which is geographically and socio-politically located. The implication is to reinforce the power of Standard English even while the narrative as a whole appears to treat regional variation with respect by reproducing it authentically. In Walter Greenwood's *Love on the Dole* (1933), the habits of the young people at leisure on a Saturday are narrated in two voices, that of the extradiegetic narrator in Standard English with the authority of the translator and through the regional dialect of the characters which is quoted directly:

This was life! Nothing else was to be desired than to stand here smoking, spitting manfully, chatting wisely on racing and forking out threepence for a communal wager: ‘Ah tell y’, lads the – thing’s a dead cert, a dead – cert,’ said Bill Simmons, adding, confidentially: ‘Ar owld man (father) heard it from another bloke whose sister-in-law’s one o’ Sam Grundy’s whores. He wouldn’t tell her that i’ he hadn’t heard summat good, him bein’ a bookie. Anyway, Ah’m havin’ thippence on it. Wha’ d’y say?’ (Greenwood 1993: 56)

Greenwood’s indigeneity appears to guarantee the authenticity of the spoken word, but he is also an expert in Standard English. The voice of the extradiegetic narrator carries with it a more complex burden of motivations. The implication of translation, rendered parenthetically here, becomes clear in the frame of the Literary North: the reader is assumed to require it. This may relegate the reader to the out-group of non-native speaker. It may emphasize the power of Standard English to frame and organize the local voices for a southern, literary readership.

The North is often seen as underdeveloped and distant from the main action, even primitive or savage. There are different trajectories at work and it is by no means a straightforward matter that an invocation of the primitive is derogatory to the North. In some cases it serves to celebrate its mystery, defiantly creating its own ancient history. It is this latter implication, identified in Chapter 12 by Robert Lee, which associates
the North with the pagan or ancient rather than the modern Church of England with its southern power base. There is a long history of dissenters and radicals – John Wesley, the Chartists, the suffragettes – having arisen from or having been welcomed in the North. The distance from the south-eastern seat of government provides the opportunity for unorthodox ideas to flourish in the North. Where the North is also a rural location, its classification as primitive would be consistent with a similar rendering of the rural in contrast to the sophisticated metropolitan space in the regional novel.

Stephan Kohl has proposed that the ‘estranging [of] the North’ serves to ‘emphasise the difference of the North’ (Kohl 2007: 104), representing it as ‘an exotic country’ (107). But there is a great deal more at stake. The strangeness of the North can be exploited for local and other purposes, to create a mysterious, mystical image; to forge an identity of resilient independence; to deter intruders as much as to attract tourists. As discussed in Jan Hewitt’s essay in Chapter 3 on the late nineteenth-century Middlesbrough local newspaper, the *Northern Weekly Gazette*, local smuggler stories were popular, attracting visitors with the promise of heroic adventure in a wild landscape. The North promised to test outsiders, providing a place where they might prove themselves by withstanding the dangers and risks of a hostile environment. The potential which the North has had for fostering development together with the association with nostalgic fantasy lends itself to children’s literature. In Chapter 12 it is children who develop strength of character in the face of the strange phenomena they discover. However, when strangeness becomes excessive it risks demonization, the designation of abnormality, the monstrous, the abject. The familiarization of all things strange shapes the narrative in the work of David Almond and creates for the child reader privileged membership of a magical world, the setting for a stormy rite of passage. If the northern setting of this world is taken to enhance this strangeness, the narrative would appear to be South-facing or at least have a southern gaze in mind. Further research may establish whether there is a significant engagement with the Gothic and the uncanny in the Literary North. Sean O’Brien certainly identifies the Gothic in the work of Peter Didsbury in Chapter 9.

In some literary texts, the north of England has been positioned as a colonized territory, perhaps with the potential for rebellion; sometimes configured as a dominated feminine landscape and at others as the masculine subaltern. An awareness of the significance of colonialism in the history of England as the seat of power of the British Empire and in the relationships of England to the other constituent nations
of Britain, provides a more complex reading of this metaphorical treatment of the Literary North. However, the power relationships involved in the margin–centre dyad figure in the histories of other nations. In relation to the literary representations of the North in Finland, Juha Ridanpää has used Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1974) to demonstrate the exploitation of the North. Stephan Kohl has examined the representation of the north of England as a place exploited by industrialization and notes the ‘moral terms’ employed (Kohl 2007: 102). However, the spatial relationships appear to make sense in the context of colonialism, with the north of England being reconfigured imaginatively as if it were a separate territory to be plundered. As Philip Dodd says of the regional novel in the 1930s, an ‘imperial language’ was common (Dodd 1998: 134). It is principally within the (English) national context that Dave Russell situates his investigation of the north of England (Russell 2004: 2). Any regional identity operational in the north of England is also imbricated in numerous others (gendered, sexual, social class, inter- and intra-regional, national and international).

Regional variation is apparent in a sense of humour, like the language which conveys it, but jokes do not always travel well. The use of comedy in the Literary North is more complex than might be expected. Northerners may take on insults and revel in them in a reverse discourse: ‘to speak in its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or “naturality” be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was [...] disqualified’ (Foucault 1981: 101). A northern performativity sees the northerner playing up to the role, parodying the stereotype, daring the audience or reader to have a laugh (or pick a fight). In Chapter 8, Nick Bentley identifies this process in relation to *Billy Liar* (1959). Katie Wales states that ‘self-parody is a characteristic of Northern popular culture generally’, citing various music-hall performers who adjusted their dialect in their acts ‘to be laughed at rather than with’ (Wales 2006: 139). In the Literary North there may be an interpellation of a northern audience, inviting them to share the joke. In Chapter 3 Jan Hewitt demonstrates how, in the various types of writing in the nineteenth-century northern local newspaper, ideas of a northern identity were constructed, interpellating knowledge of local places and events.

While the Literary North has an intimate relationship with the realist tradition, especially the realist novel, it is in the use of anti-realist forms that an alternative imaginative space for the North may be created. In some cases this takes on an escapist form, as in *Billy Liar*, discussed in Chapter 8. As Robert Lee demonstrates in Chapter 12, by lifting the
northern narrative out of history it seems to challenge the specificity which threatens to drag it down. In some respects, the North welcomes the ‘what if’ of speculative fiction through a defiant, ‘why not’? There is nothing to lose. The discovery of an angel in the garage is made to seem quite plausible in David Almond’s *Skellig* (1998), especially perhaps because the angel’s reticence and brusqueness is not out of place in the North-East. In Chapter 15 the contemporary drama and novel find various means of creating a parallel space for narrative adventures. Through such mythopoeic experiments, the Literary North of contemporary fiction appears to have found a potential escape route from the realism with which it has so long been associated.

There is a common association of the north of England with the plain-speaking, the awkward and the diffident, yet the motivations and directions of this ambivalence are complex and diverse. The awkwardness, whether actually felt by the subject or perceived by outsiders, may relate to a lack of confidence in different social settings. However, it may equally signify a confident refusal to adapt, an intransigence which is defiant and knowing. Just such an ambivalence about the northern location itself appears to be a significant characteristic in the literary texts explored here. Arguably the complexity of this ambivalence lends itself to expression in complex aesthetic forms. Ewan MacColl’s ambivalence about Salford, as Claire Warden shows in Chapter 6, is shared by other writers. The idea that inequalities may be innate is, of course, one which is perpetuated by the northern stereotype. Cheryl Herr (1996) has argued that the ‘relationality’ envisaged by ‘critical regionalism’ looks beyond a dualism and extends from the local to the global.

The specificity of realism in the Literary North is sometimes rejected in favour of an abstract, universalizing mode. This may reinforce the canonical and southern-located prestige by losing the link to the North. It works best when the conflicted nature of location and the diffidence about place is allowed to emerge. In ‘By Ferry’, Sean O’Brien explores the north-eastern coast, attributing to the watery landscape a moral intervention, describing the jelly fish at the jetty as:

*A race of drowned aunties*  
*Come back to chastise us* (O’Brien 2007: 10)

Unlike the ominous mountains of the Lake District which took an active role in the moral development of a young Wordsworth, the north-eastern equivalent takes a more banal form of a watery invertebrate promising a familial clip round the ear. The instrument of chastisement
in the northern household is just as likely to be female, or from the extended female line, as from the patriarchal male. The shift from the abstract to the familiar works in O’Brien’s poem by means of an ironic image located within family relationships where guilt and punishment are the routine experiences of youth. In Chapter 7, Tony Sharpe demonstrates the means by which W. H. Auden renders universally applicable his intimate engagement with the North which he treats as most dear, even sacred. Possibly the North as Auden’s birthplace and from which he is distanced until puberty, takes on such a formative role on his identity that in universalizing it, it falls into the realm of the semiotic. In Chapter 8 Nick Bentley shows that Alan Sillitoe’s *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1958) addresses a collective, embracing the reader in the northern community depicted. Perhaps the most effective challenges to northern stereotype have been those which establish the diversity and complexity of northern experience.

In qualifying Raymond Williams’ argument in *The Country and the City* (1973), Philip Dodd (1998) argued that the regional novel is involved in relationships with gender as well as social class. However, in the Literary North the flow of power follows a complex course through gender, dislodged from sex, and an unexpectedly dynamic trajectory may become apparent. The threatening aspect of fluid gender roles is identified in *Love on the Dole* (1933), where the redistribution of power within a marriage operates as if within a closed system; the rise in power of one party resulting in the fall of the other. Thus Mrs Bull challenges Mrs Cake, a dominant woman, by attributing Mrs Cake’s primacy to Mr Cake’s disempowerment: “‘an’ y’ can tell her wi’ lum-ba-go across street wot thinks she’s a lady that we ain’t all married to ’usband wots lets wife wear the trousers”’ (Greenwood 1993: 58). The subordination of the North is associated with feminization. It is symbolized not simply through the emasculation of the northern male but by the abandoned woman seen from a train; the struggling housewife; the unemployed man; the drunk; the derelict; the domestic. This feminization works effectively alongside the hyper-masculinity of the North. The worst insult to cast at a northern man is that he is like a girl; or in the catchphrase of the comic actress Hylida Baker, merely her clothing: ‘a big girl’s blouse’.

The symmetrical form of *Love on the Dole* emphasizes both stasis and the potential for change through the female characters. While Sally has the power to bring employment to her father and her brother, Helen has taken on the same role as her mother had at the beginning of the novel. With the exact repetition of the domestic chores performed by
Mrs Hardcastle, Greenwood positions Helen, just like the woman viewed by Orwell from the train, as trapped in drudgery. Women bear the symbolic burden of being trapped in the North, and the desired flight from the North is realized by the male. To some extent the domestic nature of women’s confinement is normalized by the male traveller’s gaze.

Emotional restraint is both associated with the English masculine and postulated as an element of the northern identity, as a sign of endurance and strength. The gloominess of the North provides the context for a brooding melancholy, a regional affective disorder. The relative subordination of the North has resulted in its denigration as a figure of fun. There has been much work to do by authors in establishing a northern subjectivity which is capable of being taken seriously. As Tony Harrison’s poem ‘Them & [uz]’ asserts: ‘[Uz] can be loving as well as funny’ (2007: 133). Claire Warden in Chapter 6 finds romance in unexpected places. Many literary texts, especially the novel and lyric poem, present the experience of the northern subject as a private, idiosyncratic matter. This may mystify the causes and possible means of resistance when the use of comedy or romance privatizes what are evidently structural and contradictory impulses linked to social hierarchies.

George Orwell memorably emphasizes the miners’ physical strength as both a virtue and a necessity. The displacement of brain for body serves the insult: ‘Yorkshire born, Yorkshire bred, thick in the arm and thick in the head.’ Orwell referred to the specialization and physical sacrifice of the miners on which we all depend. A complementarity is proposed whereby the northern body keeps alive the southern brain. A similar image has been found by Chris Baldick (1987) to have been dominant in the industrial revolution with the masses configured as a Frankenstein’s monster. In Chapter 15 the limits of the body are tested in the posthuman world of a speculative fictional Manchester in Jeff Noon’s *Pollen* (1995) where people turn into plants, hybrid dog-men act as police officers, telepathy enables the journey of a mother’s soul into her daughter’s body, and a breach opens up between fantasy and reality, the living and the dead. Such a delirious narrative generates many more questions than would be possible within realism. What part do literary representations play in a Foucauldian training of the northern body as fit for struggle, capable of operating in a marginalized space and perhaps even partly complicit in its insularity and abjection; a defensiveness and concomitant pride in, and loyalty to, a local identity? To what extent are female characters required to perform the masculine northern body? How are young people initiated into this embodiment of the northern structure of feeling?
The following chapters pursue a chronological journey through the Literary North, beginning with Josephine Guy's exploration of the North in the nineteenth-century novel and Jan Hewitt's exploration of the 'imagined community' created from the 1870s in the new north-eastern town of Middlesbrough in the fiction serialized in local newspapers. Hewitt demonstrates the breadth and complexity of information in the newspaper which framed the literary texts for readers. The socio-historical circumstances of the literary text provide the means for it to enter into the reader's understanding of geographical location. Without time, no space; without history, no future. The 'representational strategy' of the northern space in literature has a history in the changing fortunes of realism. It is with nineteenth-century naturalism and the novels of George Moore and Arnold Bennett that Ann Heilmann explores the potteries of Staffordshire in Chapter 4. In both novels, place determines character, and a tour of the potteries is deployed as a vehicle for the implied southern reader to view the demonic, industrial space sharply contrasted with the sublime, natural landscapes, against which the female characters in particular struggle. Determinism has an uneasy relationship with social transformation. Although determinism underpins these novels, their authors seem to provide evidence to disprove it. Bennett, the indigenous potteries man from whom the reader might expect an authentic and original local portrait, is influenced by that of the outsider, Moore. As in many other later chapters here, the Literary North is invariably constructed, as if to reinforce its status by anchoring it, in dialogue with the weight of existing traditions.

The train is the vehicle which conveys the focalization of the North in many narratives, safely separating its wary occupants from the threatening territories swiftly passed through. In Chapter 5, Ruth Robbins discusses Arnold Bennett’s *Clayhanger* novels, the first of which has a heroic train journey south as a defining feature. Robbins demonstrates that Bennett’s realism, although criticized by Virginia Woolf for its detail, is driven by the empathetic engagement with the democratic world of his characters with which he strives to involve the reader. She argues that Bennett's use of naturalism is distinctive. The dramatic form of naturalism has different impulses and implications: one which limits its attention to a restricted domestic space reproduced realistically; and another, more radical form, which indicates the wider social determinants of the state of affairs depicted on stage. In Chapter 6, Claire Warden explores Ewan MacColl’s little-known play, *Landscape with Chimneys* (1951), set in Salford: the place of his birth and towards which he had an ambivalent attitude. His experimental play specifies
its Salford city location but extends its call for revolution to a wider working-class audience. This tension at work, balancing a unifying call to arms with an impulse to escape, is replicated in Jim Cartwright’s *Road* (1986), discussed in Chapter 15.

While Crewe is a significant landmark for W. H. Auden, and his northern identity was an abiding feature, Tony Sharpe in Chapter 7 argues that Auden understood the North in a European context, placing it in both a specific and a generic way, offering a transnational meaning rather than one restricted to the local possibly by its association for him with the intimate world of childhood pre-memory. The tension in Auden’s relationship to the North was caught between rejection and attachment. He endowed it with a sense of the sacred, the incantation of its specificities providing a means of making it real. In the 1950s, the period of kitchen-sink drama and a new generation of angry young men, the figure of the teenager became a focus for anxieties about social change, including the impact of Americanization and consumerism on English working-class culture. It is the northern location of this transatlantic cultural and generational phenomenon which Nick Bentley explores in Chapter 8, where he identifies the ambivalent attitude to the North in Keith Waterhouse’s *Billy Liar* (1959) and Alan Sillitoe’s *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1958). Richard Hoggart’s anxieties about the milk-bar and juke-box culture which appeared to have a degrading effect on northern youth are given a narrative consciousness and more complex treatment in *Billy Liar*. A novel which exploits the Dick Whittington trope, *Billy Liar* demonstrates the diverse world of northern youth, the ambivalence towards rapid social change associated with the South and nostalgia for a lost organic community in the North.

Taciturnity and its challenge to stereotype are analysed by Jo Gill in Tony Harrison’s *Continuous* (1981) in Chapter 10 and by Robert Lee in children’s literature in Chapter 12. Gill identifies a ‘post industrial tristesse’ in Harrison’s work. The hierarchy of voices (signified by italics) allows the regional dialect to be given a privileged position, but poetry is ambivalent, feminized from the perspective of the masculine North. Gill explores the way that the North becomes a place, rather than a space, in Harrison’s poetry. Harrison writes ‘elegies for a place’ which is the North and self-elegies with regard to the death of a kind of self which is ambivalent, hybrid, passing for something which has gone.

The north-east of England becomes fictionalized in the novels of Robert Westall, which engage in a mythopoeic rendering of the North in both the social spaces of the home and the industrial spaces of work. Based on his intimate childhood memories of Tyneside, Westall’s
Literary North also acknowledges its passing or its imminent mutability. Thus, in Chapter 11, Nolan Dalrymple identifies this tension at the centre of Westall’s novels as characterizing the region. Children’s literature has been given minimal attention in any study of the literary or cultural representations of the North. The significance of the North in children’s literature is therefore examined in three chapters in this collection. In children’s literature the representation of a stoic, working-class North which is also magical may serve to locate the region in a past from which, in adulthood, there is a necessary migration to the socially prestigious South. The infantilization of the North as a place situated forever in the realm of childhood allows other geographical regions to be appropriated for the wisdom and maturity of adulthood. In the (English) nation’s psyche, the North, as the place associated with childhood, may be required to remain untouched, unspoilt and underdeveloped. The relationships of belonging within the North and beyond it are examined by Robert Lee in Chapter 12 in a range of children’s literature set in the North-East. Lee brings a historian’s perspective to children’s literature within the context of the regional novel as well as regional history. In Chapter 13 Tess Cosslett summarizes the difficulties of representing the North nostalgically in children’s literature. She analyses in detail the complex relationships of different kinds of space and time, especially the socially inflected and the creatively imposed fantasy world, and considers the relationship of the North in the construction of childhood in these texts.

The hybridization of genre fiction in relation to the Moss Side district of Manchester in the north-west of England is the principal concern of Lynne Pearce in Chapter 14. The contemporary fiction explored in this chapter arises from the project entitled ‘Moving Manchester / Mediating Marginalities: How the experience of migration has informed writing in Greater Manchester from 1960 to the present’. While many chapters in this collection have focused on the lived experiences within the north of England, the history of Manchester presented here foregrounds migration to this region. The diversity and hybridity of this northern place poses a challenge to many stereotypes of the North as monocultural and in a condition of stasis. Contemporary fiction is also discussed in the concluding chapter, which begins with a reassessment of the images of the north of England which arose in the 1930s, subsequently proliferated and which persist in the difficulties of the realist tradition for the Literary North.

The distinctiveness of this collection of new essays on the literary representations of the north of England is its diversity. In moving off
the beaten track (to consider alongside the work of such literary luminaries as George Moore, Arnold Bennett, W. H. Auden, Keith Waterhouse, Alan Sillitoe and Tony Harrison, literary forms such as cyberpunk and children’s literature) it becomes possible to reassess the myths of the North, making the power relations taken for granted in the literary canon become more visible. A radical remapping of the North in an anti-realist mode in contemporary fiction promises a different configuration, beyond dualism, which operates through a different mode of thought: the rhizomatic North, the performative North, the North with irony and attitude.

Notes

1. The north of England has been examined in relation to the regional novel (Snell 1998), cultural practices and national identity (Russell 2004), northern identity (Ehland 2007) and briefly in relation to the idea of the North in the Northern hemisphere (Davidson 1994).
4. Raymond Williams has described a ‘structure of feeling’ as ‘taken to be private, idiosyncratic, and even isolating, but which in analysis (though rarely otherwise) [have their] emergent, connecting, and dominant characteristics, indeed [their] specific hierarchies’ (Williams 1977: 132).
6. John Bogue explains how Kafka’s comments on the workings of the literature of small groups or nations influenced Deleuze and Guattari, not simply to be taken as the literature of the marginalized or dispossessed. Bogue explains that it is the literature of “‘minorization” of the dominant power structures inherent in language’ (Bogue 2003: 97).

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