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**Landscape and Change: Shipbuilding and  
Identity on the Tyne**

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## Landscape and Change: Shipbuilding and Identity on the Tyne

*Into my heart an air that kills,  
From you far country blows.  
What are these blue remembered hills,  
What are those spires, what are those farms.*

*That is the land of lost content  
I see it shining plain,  
The happy highways where I went  
And cannot come again.*

-A.E. Housman

*Tell me the landscape in which you live, and I will tell you who  
you are.*

-José Ortega y Gasset.



Peter Loud, *Tyne Pride*, Tyne and Wear Archives, 1975, no. 264.

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## Introduction

Able to spit out of his backyard and into the river Tyne, Frank Duke is what some would call a “true Geordie”. Born and having spent his whole life on the banks of the river, I met Frank by chance in February 2015, washing his car outside his home in Hebburn. Both an amateur historian of North East shipbuilding and a former shipbuilder himself – having been an apprentice and then fitter in the Jarrow Mercantile Dock – Frank both remembers and is a part of this region’s industrial history. In the foreground looking from outside Frank’s living room (fig. 1) a steel fence is all that stands in between Frank’s home and a ghostly scene of demolition,



**Figure 1. Redhead & Sons Shipyard, February 2015, Author.**

waste and redundant space: what used to be the bustling Redhead & Sons Shipyard. In the distance we could see a huge square accommodation platform painted red which has stood complete and unused for five years since the offshore oil-rig manufacturer closed, and in Frank’s eyes was destined for scrapping any day now. We could also see the *Princess* ferry, moored and readying its self to voyage passengers to and fro Amsterdam. The cranes in the distance are used as part of the newer containership industries that import goods from around the world. Frank described working on the

*Tyne Pride* while doing a brief stint at the legendary Swan Hunter's shipyard, the largest ship ever to launch on the Tyne at over 260,000 dead weight tons.

The ship was so massive you could see it from miles around dominating the area, not to mention the cranes and the noises from the yard which could be heard clattering through the night. When I think of those yards, which have just been filled in, flattened and abandoned, I think it's a crying shame. We're an island nation that cannot build a ship. If I had to pick a symbol to represent what the shipyards meant to me, it was the comradeship in the yards. We were a close-knit community of people living and working together. Everyone relied on each other and are all linked. When I look at the remains of what's left I feel nothing. The community's gone. There's nothing left. It hasn't changed for the best. You've saved money and destroyed this community.<sup>1</sup>

In the act of remembering this evocative industrial landscape Frank channelled the effects of deindustrialisation's wider significance in a social context. As Nora and Kritzman observe, 'memory fastens on sites' and is by nature multiple.<sup>2</sup> I asked a local resident of South Shields, Kath Smith, how she had seen the landscape change with the passing of shipbuilding. "It's changed a hundred percent. If you looked outside my front door there'd have been a great big ship. The noise of the riveting, even from your home, was like putting your head inside a 45 gallon drum and someone hammering it, and this would go on through the night if a ship was nearing it's launch. I'm struck by the flowers and empty space, the peace and quiet now."<sup>3</sup> For Frank, Kath, and many others I spoke with who lived and worked in proximity to the shipyards it is the remains – or rather the often absent remains – of this industry which defines this present landscape. As Kath put it, "the absence of ruin demonstrates the ruin." Their sense of alienation within this physical landscape around them is compounded by isolation from the past and labour history muting, arguably, a regional sense of identity. 'There was a sense of loss,' shipbuilding historian Ian Rae asserts, 'a mourning for a way of life that seemed at the time to have

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<sup>1</sup> 2/2/2015, Hebburn, Frank Duke, interview conducted by author.

<sup>2</sup> Pierre Nora and Lawrence D. Kritzman, *Realms of Memory* (New York, 1998), p18.

<sup>3</sup> 22/11/2014, North Shields, Kath Smith, interview conducted by author.

ended; shipbuilding has indeed been part of the Geordie consciousness, a proud element of the industry and culture of Tyneside upon which the livelihoods of many families have depended.’<sup>4</sup> What remains is a pervasive sense of nostalgia, which the philosopher Dylan Trigg argues, is determined ‘by a desire maintained by illusion, the essential vacuity of nostalgia guarantees its continuity.’<sup>5</sup> This fundamental quality of vacuity, present on the landscape, not only describes the ruins and absent remains of the shipbuilding industry on the Tyne, but also characterises how these ruins and absent spaces have been internalised by communities living among these liminal spaces. In short, landscapes evoke a sense of the past, however, in the erasure of this visual record there is also, arguably, an erasure of community identity through a forceful disconnection with the past.

We might wish to build on the philosophical assertions of Walter Benjamin’s ‘trash aesthetic’, that ‘the crumbling of the monuments that were built to signify the immortality of civilisation becomes proof, rather, of its transiency.’<sup>6</sup> Benjamin believed that by the act of undermining or falling from a complete form, the ruin beckons the truth of the earth: human existence is determined by its lack of determinacy and allegorically the ruin mirrors this fall into indeterminacy. Although Benjamin’s theories on the aesthetics of decay were used specifically to support an anti-capitalist and Marxist viewpoint of the world, Benjamin nevertheless demonstrates the socio-spatial ties between aesthetics and landscape, in particular ruins, and wider society. According to Trigg, ‘the concern is not what occurs in the ruin, or the social fallout, but how we (by which I mean post-industrial Western culture) relate to an object fallen from its supposed permanency.’<sup>7</sup> In relation to Tyneside, we see this question played out. We might argue, in opposition to Benjamin, that the ruins and absent spaces on the Tyne, instead of being passive symbols which mirror a declensionist view of human culture, are an active force which inform a present sense human identity, or lack thereof. ‘We are thus complicit

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<sup>4</sup> Ian Rae, *Swan Hunter: The Pride and the Tears* (Newcastle, 2008), p52.

<sup>5</sup> Dylan Trigg, *Aesthetics of Decay: Nothingness, Nostalgia and the Absence of Reason* (New York, 2006), xvi.

<sup>6</sup> Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (London, 1989), p170.

<sup>7</sup> Trigg, *Aesthetics of Decay*, xxvii.



with this wasting', writes Tim Edensor.<sup>8</sup> The optimistic promise for the future, which industrial production once signified, is essentially salient in a postcolonial Britain, where the factory and its products – sold far and wide – symbolised “the workshop of the world”. While hoping to acknowledge how, in dereliction, the ruin attests to the inherent tenuous foundations of the logic of capitalism: ‘what was once built to testify to a singular and eternal present becomes the symbol and truth of its mutability,’<sup>9</sup> I hope to avoid becoming mired within a Marxist exploration of ruins as signifiers of capitalist process.<sup>10</sup>

This paper instead attempts to explore a cross section of sources ranging from documentary, interview, archival documents, and memory in conjunction to understanding the cultural significance of changing landscapes on Tyneside. Topographically, the primary locations of interest are where shipbuilding and housing communities were most heavily built up: Wallsend, Shields, and Walker. In terms of period, while the global financial crash of the 1930s proved a desperate time for the shipbuilding industry, with dilapidation and decaying shipyards becoming endemic on the Tyne, it is the more recent closures which began in the 1970s and accelerated in the 1980s with the arrival of Margaret Thatcher’s Conservative Government that are of particular interest. This more recent wave of closures not only has a lasting impact on the physical landscape of Tyneside today, but still resonates within contemporary society, what Alice Mah calls an ‘inner landscape of industrial decline’, which communicates the relationship between ‘memory and place rooted in the lived experience of memory in the present.’<sup>11</sup> The definition of ‘home’ and ‘place attachment’, from which we gain an understanding of local identity, is perhaps also worth clarifying now. There are a number of different definitions of place attachment within the literature, although most definitions emphasise some form of an effective bond between people and landscape. Setha M. Low offers a useful distinction

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<sup>8</sup> Tim Edensor, *Industrial Ruins: Space Aesthetics and Materiality*, (New York, 2005), p103.

<sup>9</sup> Trigg, *Aesthetic of Decay*, xviii.

<sup>10</sup> for further study on socio-spatial significances of ruins in regard to economic process see M. Berman, *All that is solid melts into thin air: the experience of modernity* (London 1983); D. Harvey, *Spaces of Hope* (Berkley, 2000); Sharon Zukin, *Landscapes of Power: From Detroit to Disneyworld* (London, 1991).

<sup>11</sup> Alice Mah, ‘Memory, Uncertainty and Industrial Ruination: Walker Riverside, Newcastle Upon Tyne’, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* (June 2010), 34:2, p401.

between cultural and psychological definitions: 'place attachment is the symbolic relationship formed by people giving cultured shared emotional/affective meanings to a particular space or piece of land that provides the basis for the individual's and group's understanding of and relation to the environment.'<sup>12</sup> The concept of 'home' is closely entangled with that of community, and also carries contested and contradictory meanings. S. Mallett argues that home is a multi-dimensional concept and asks whether home is '(a) place(s), (a) space(s), feeling(s), practices, and/or an active state of being in the world? Home is variously described as conflated with or related to house, family, haven, self, gender, and journeying.'<sup>13</sup> 'Home' is intrinsically tied to a sense of identity, and 'regions, no less than nations, are imagined communities. Who the Geordies are depends upon who they image themselves to be'<sup>14</sup> claim Robert Coll and Bill Lancaster, citing Benedict Anderson's landmark *Imagined Communities*.<sup>15</sup> When people invoke 'home' and its attendant meanings they are imagining geography and creating identities.<sup>16</sup> With regard to Tyneside, as the visual cues which signify home within a landscape erode, so too does this imagined sense of community.

The relevant historiography for this study is, to a great extent, made up of North American social and economic historians, specialising in America's infamous deindustrialised Rust Belt, notably: High and Lewis's exploration of the cultural meanings of deindustrialisation and Cowie and Heathcott's anthology on post-industrial communities.<sup>17</sup> Cities like Detroit, Gary, Chicago and Philadelphia offer a rich visual essay on industrial ruin with photographers, journalists and urban

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<sup>12</sup> Setha M. Low, 'Symbolic Ties that Bind: Place Attachment and Plaza', I. Altman and S. M. Low (eds.), *Place Attachment* (New York, 1992), p165.

<sup>13</sup> S. Mallett, 'Understanding Home: A Critical Review of the Literature', *Sociological Review* (2004), 52:1, p65.

<sup>14</sup> Robert Colls and Bill Lancaster, *Geordies: Roots of Regionalism* (Newcastle, 2005), xiv.

<sup>15</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1991).

<sup>16</sup> Doreen Massey and Pat Jess (eds.), *A Place in the World? Places, Cultures and Globalization* (Oxford, 1995).

<sup>17</sup> Steven High and David W. Lewis (eds.), *Corporate Wasteland: The Landscape and Memory of Deindustrialisation* (New York, 2007); Jefferson Cowie and Joseph Heathcott (eds.), *Beyond the Ruins: The Meaning of Deindustrialisation* (New York, 2003).

explorers often being the first to document urban dereliction.<sup>18</sup> Bluestone and Harrison's seminal *The Deindustrialization of America* was the first to attribute the 'widespread systematic disinvestment in the nation's basic productive capacity' to significant shifts in the global economy producing a growing contradiction between capital and community.<sup>19</sup> Left behind in the ruins of the tension between capital and community were closed factories, displaced workers and unrecognisable cityscapes. Alice Mah's recent sociological study *Industrial Ruins*, which takes the Walker Riverside community of Tyneside as a case study to explore the meaning of ruination, is a key text in the literature. Investigating the present socio-spatial relationship between community, deindustrialisation, industrial ruin and urban regeneration. Mah advances a new theoretical framework: 'industrial ruination is a lived process.'<sup>20</sup> Adopting this theory, I wish to apply it to a more varied range of sources which span the past forty years. If ruination is a lived process, as Mah claims, then we might be able to chart its development as a historical subject. The English landscape, is quintessentially lauded as a legible, enduring, ever-accreting palimpsest, 'the closest thing we will ever experience to a time machine,' according to Oliver.<sup>21</sup> But to understand and appreciate this palimpsest requires historically informed observation.

Many of the primary source accounts and interviews I will be investigating derived from the North East Film Archive in Middlesbrough. The facility's collection of TyneTees Television, Trade Films and Amber documentaries, exist only on redundant viewing platforms like Betacam, 16mm celluloid and tape cassette. For the most part, these films provided dozens of hours of untapped primary source information which has yet to be digitised and pondered by academics.

The power of landscape is inherently visual and for that reason I have included photographs to demonstrate the extent of this changing scenery. In accordance with James Agee, who wrote of Walker Evans's photographic records of mid-west

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<sup>18</sup> See Camilo José Vergara, *The New American Ghetto* (New Brunswick, 1995); a website offering tours as part of Detroit's dark tourism industry is:

<http://www.detroityes.com/fabulous-ruins-of-detroit/> [accessed 16/4/15].

<sup>19</sup> Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison, *The Deindustrialization of America: Plant Closings, Community Abandonment, and the Dismantling of Basic Industry* (New York, 1982).

<sup>20</sup> Alice Mah, *Industrial Ruination, Community and Place: Landscapes and Legacies of Urban Decline* (London, 2012), p9.

<sup>21</sup> T. Oliver, 'CPRE calls for deeds not words', *Conservative Bulletin* (2007), 54, p8.

America in the depressed 1930s, they 'are not illustrative. They, and the text, are co-equal, mutually independent and fully collaborative.'<sup>22</sup> The same sentiment applies here and with the inclusion of lived memory from interviews and North Shields's Remembering the Past Resourcing the Future (RPRF) archive of memories. These oral histories work on both factual and narrative levels and serve to connect the past and present. Thus, memory is not a "passive depository of facts, but an active process of creation of meanings."<sup>23</sup> The question of memory should not be seen as a 'problem that needs to be overcome, but rather as a unique resource, a collective and individual expression of the past in the present.'<sup>24</sup> As Studs Turkel simply puts it, these are 'their truths.'<sup>25</sup>

Chapter one attempts to address how community has internalised these changing landscapes, whether we should homogenise social attitudes in terms of community or if individual accounts should rather exist unto themselves. Drawing on Armstrong, I will consider how these 'uncanny spaces' raise questions for reflective engagement on 'identity, self, other, the psyche and dwelling, the individual and metropolis.'<sup>26</sup> In this section I hope to negotiate these admonitions while describing how changing landscapes resonate within community and a shared sense of identity. In chapter two I will survey why and how deindustrialisation has occurred and struck industry on the Tyne with such force and situate Tyneside within the broader theoretical frameworks of American studies in deindustrialisation. The prolixly discursive Community Development Project (CDP) reports published in the 1970s and 80s are key texts communicating how long term processes like deindustrialisation have affected the local area. In the final chapter we will consider regeneration and reuse of space and what this has meant for those living on the Tyne. Michael Chaplin's journey on foot through Tyneside provides not so much an academic essay on the present state of

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<sup>22</sup> James Agee quoted in Ken Light and Melanie Light, *Coal Hallow: Photographs and Oral Histories* (Berkeley, 2006), p70.

<sup>23</sup> Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories* (Albany, 1991) p1.

<sup>24</sup> Daniel James, *Dona Maria's Story: Life History, Memory and Political Identity* (Durham 2000), p186.

<sup>25</sup> Studs Turkel, *Working* (New York, 1972), p73.

<sup>26</sup> H. Armstrong, "Time Dereliction and Beauty: An Argument for "Landscape of Contempt",  
<http://182.160.150.115/LApapers/conferences/2006/docs/AILA%20Journal%20Armstrong.pdf> [accessed 16/4/15].

urban regeneration, but a personal, multifaceted psychogeography exploring contemporary remodelling of landscape and possible emergent identities which arise from these new reimagined communities.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Michael Chaplin, *Tyne View: A Walk Around the Port of Tyne* (Newcastle, 2012).

## Chapter One

### Internalising Ruin: “‘Baith sides o’ the Tyne aa remember,”<sup>28</sup>

Landscape on the river Tyne has never had fixed permanence. For those that lived on the Tyne in the eighteenth and nineteenth century it was the rapid industrialisation of the landscape which was thought remarkable.<sup>29</sup> The Victorian conversion of pastoral Northumbrian landscape into a ‘nasty, sooty, smoky chaos of a town’ equally transformed this social landscape into a more metropolitan urbanised zone.<sup>30</sup> In a short film commissioned by Trade Films in 1985, Jim Murray, the works convenor of Vickers-Armstrong Naval Yard in Walker, reflects on the industrial origins of this once great war-ship manufacturer:

When Armstrong first built the works in the 1840 making his hydraulic cranes it was all green fields and people complained about him building the dark satanic mills on the green fields in what was a pleasant village then on the banks of the river Tyne. Of course now it’s going back to those green fields. About 150 years of history is ending in demolition, with the contractors moving in and knocking it all down, and in the process destroying the whole social fabric of those that live and work on this patch of the Tyne, destroying the economy of this area, the main bread-winner working here in the yard. The whole of the history of the works is linked with the history of Newcastle and growth since the industrial revolution of the engineering yards and shipyards.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Local song quoted in Fred Robinson, ‘Industrial Structure: The rise and fall of the Tyneside Economy’, Fred Robinson (ed.), *Post-Industrial Tyneside: An Economic and Social Survey of Tyneside in the 1980s* (Newcastle, 1988), p12.

<sup>29</sup> Joyce Ellis, ‘The ‘Black Indies’: Economic Development of Newcastle, c. 1700-1840’, Robert Colls and Bill Lancaster (eds.), *Newcastle Upon Tyne: A Modern History* (London, 2001), pp1-26.

<sup>30</sup> W. MacRitchie, *Diary of a Tour Through Great Britain in 1795* (London, 1897), p137.

<sup>31</sup> *River Work*, Trade Films (1985), NEFA, no. 20656.

Examining the demolished remains of the yard, concern for what the future would hold for this community is the primary concern of this former employee.<sup>32</sup> Jim Murray's requiem for the naval yard compounds the arrival of heavy industry in the North with an emergent industrial identity. According to Colls and Lancaster, 'the later nineteenth century saw the birth of a distinctive modern identity, and this



Figure 2. William Scott Bell, *Iron and Coal*, Oil, 1861, 185.5 x 185.5cm

identity was accompanied by momentous developments in industry, communications, population growth and urban living ... Northernness was constructed.'<sup>33</sup> Not everyone complained of the 'dark satanic mills' however, for many the arrival of heavy industry was celebrated and quickly began to characterise a Northern sense of self.

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<sup>32</sup> A briefing note on the Trade Films collection held at NEFA perhaps explains their interest in Jim Murray, claiming their broadcast agenda as 'social, political and economic issues affecting the North East and the history of the region'.

<sup>33</sup> Colls and Lancaster, *Geordies*, p3.



William Scott Bell's encomium to Northern industry (fig. 2.) is an attempt to convey 'not the processes of industrial production, but the benefits of industrial modernity,' according to Usherwood.<sup>34</sup> Despite anachronistic and geographical inaccuracies in Scott Bell's piece, the pre-Raphaelite pretext to the work instead conveys an emotional and atmospheric realism in its attempt to depict a regional character where the arms, hammers and industrial creations of men are all entwined. Lowenthal



Figure 3. Anon, Smith's Dock at North Shields, September 2007, SDC, no. 9:A.

suggests identity is formed partly through the assumption of permanent landscape. 'We need to sense landscape as abiding; our essential well-being depends on finding our surroundings more durable than ourselves.'<sup>35</sup> Here lies the fundamental dichotomy of present day landscapes of ruin and abandonment and the socially constructed self. In the demolition of the remaining Smith's dry dock in 2007 (fig. 3.) we can see the embodiment of this disjuncture on the landscape. The accompanying description to this photograph states: 'It is hard to see but the diggers and trucks had only been on the site a week and already the place looked like a bombsite.'<sup>36</sup> As Amish and Thrift assert, it is the rapid process of spatial reordering which devastate local community. 'The switch from one form of sociospatial relation to another

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<sup>34</sup> Paul Usherwood, 'William Scott Bell's *Iron and Coal*: Northern readings', Jane Vickers (ed.), *Pre-Raphaelites I: Painters and Patrons in the North East* (Newcastle, 1989), p47.

<sup>35</sup> David Lowenthal, 'Living with and Looking at Landscape', *Landscape Research* (October 2007), 32, p648.

<sup>36</sup> North Shields, Central Library, Smith's Dock Collection (hereafter SDC), *Smith Dock at North Shields*, no. 9:A.



produces alienation, dysfunction, anomie.’<sup>37</sup> Interestingly, Leona Skelton has applied this same model of socio-spatial dichotomy to the radically different landscape of Kielder Reservoir which lies approximately fifty miles upstream of Tyneside. In this case, it is not the erosion of industrial landscape to ruin but the remodelling of pastoral valley into the UK’s largest artificial lake – through damming the North Tyne – that has ascertained similar findings with regard to the loss of community identity.<sup>38</sup>



Figure 4. Anon, Smith's Dock South Bank, August 2008, SDC, no. 8.

Alienation from the landscape is key theme related in an anonymous poem ominously called, *The End*. Written in 2007, the poem is a response to the flattening of the prolific Smith’s Dock South Bank shipyard (fig. 4). After a long lifetime in which hundreds of ships had been constructed over more than a century, the South Bank yard was taken into public ownership in 1977 and later closed in 1986. Its births had fallen into dereliction after nearly thirty years of neglect and the rusting cranes had become a longstanding feature of this landscape.

The trucks and diggers have now arrived in the yard,  
Soon your landscape will look like the moon,  
When people walk past the old place of yesterday,  
Their faces will show a lot of shock and gloom

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<sup>37</sup> Ash Amin and Nigel Thrift, *Cities: Reimagining the Urban* (Cambridge, 2002), p37.

<sup>38</sup> Leona Jayne Skelton, ‘The Uncomfortable path from forestry to tourism: A socially dichotomous village?’ *Oral History* (Autumn 2014), pp81-93.

...

No more workers running around the place,  
In fact not another living soul will come into sight,  
Everything has now been demolished and flattened,  
Which people reckon was scandalous and not right.

...

You stood your ground for well over a 120 years,  
But sadly the good times do not always forever last,  
When the name Smith's Dock is again mentioned by people,  
Of course they will refer to it in The Past.<sup>39</sup>

*The End* combines the loss of the shipyard and their ruined remains, which stood as a haunting spectre on the landscape, with the loss of labour history. It suggests that landscape and ruin memorialised the industrial history of the Tyne. Adopting Kathleen Stewart's theoretical notion of 'agency', which she applies to the wrecked landscapes of West Virginia, we see how these demolished shipyards become powerful allegories of the past. In destroying these visual cues a sense of the past also becomes lost. Via the 'agency' of the ruin 'that remembers', 'history and place, culture and nature converge in a tactile image that conveys not a picture-perfect re-enactment of "living pasts" but the allegorical re-representation of remembering loss itself.'<sup>40</sup> Yvonne Charlton's striking embodiment of this truth eloquently expresses how ruins act as informal memorials to the industrial past.

People move away from the area they grew up all the time. They let go, I don't want to let go. The past is still who I am. It's all still here in my mind's eye. Broken bottles, pieces of broken brick, batteries which leaked acid. I remember growing up amongst the derelict ruins and houses. I see the new buildings and I know that they are physically there but I'm looking through them to what was there before. It's like tracing paper with

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<sup>39</sup> SDC, 'The End', no. 4298.

<sup>40</sup> Kathleen Stewart, *A Space by the Side of the Road: Cultural Poetics in 'Other' America* (Princeton, 1996), p90.

two images showing through. The solid image below and the traced spirit sketch above.<sup>41</sup>

The deindustrialised landscape, like a ruined battlefield that heals over, is ripe for commemoration. As Savage notes, ‘the physical traces of the industrial age – the factories, the foul air – disappear, the urge to reaffirm or celebrate the industrial past seems to grow stronger.’<sup>42</sup>

Crucially, Tim Edensor claims, ‘the ruin as an allegory of memory is fragmentary, imperfect, partial and thoroughly incomplete. There is no clear sign that the meaning of the past is self-evident and easy to decode if you possess the necessary expertise.’<sup>43</sup> In this way, landscapes of ruin possess a multiplicity of meanings to an entire community and chime differently with the memories of each individual person who engages with this landscape. Mah, for example, dissects the different ways inhabitants interpret abandoned shipyards, ‘the interviewees who had the strongest sense of sadness, loss, and disappointment over the decline of the shipyards in the past thirty to forty years were those connected with the industry, either as workers or of close family of workers.’<sup>44</sup> We see this reflected in the archives. *The Chronicle* reports how John Kilpatrick, 65, had worked in the general store of Swan Hunter, then as an apprentice welder before finally becoming a shipwright. Watching the explosion which brought down the iconic and now disused Swan Hunter cranes, he said “Tears were running from my eyes. It would be too upsetting to go into the yard. It’s an icon that has been destroyed. When you come down the coast road, the first thing you see is the hammerhead. The history has finished – its very sad.”<sup>45</sup> Likewise, Barry Martin, 74, said: “I was born and bred within sight and sound of Swans. Borough Road was where I was born so I was used to the noise – rivets, hammering, everything. To see this now, it’s so, so disappointing.”<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, nostalgia was not confined only to the elderly but had been adopted by the younger generations. In an informal conversation with Billy, a student at Teesside University who also happened to be

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<sup>41</sup> *Journey’s Home*, Tyne Tees Television (1999), NEFA, no. 1391.

<sup>42</sup> K. Savage, ‘Monuments of a Lost Cause: The Post-Industrial Campaign to Commemorate Steel’, *Beyond the Ruins*, p254.

<sup>43</sup> Edensor, *Industrial Ruins*, 146.

<sup>44</sup> Mah, *Industrial Ruination*, p85.

<sup>45</sup> ‘Last two Swan Hunter cranes come down’, *The Chronicle* (Newcastle), 5 June 2010.

<sup>46</sup> ‘Last two Swan Hunter cranes come down’, *Chronicle*.

using NEFA archives, he describes ‘The saddest aspect of coming back home to Wallsend is not being able to see the cranes always on the horizon which defined the landscape and, for me, growing up.’<sup>47</sup>

*When the Dog Bites* (1988) is an artistic amalgam of unscripted interviews with anonymous community members intertwined with dramatised fictional sections. It suggests community identity is intrinsically informed by its changing landscape; normative gender roles being the first to decay alongside the industrial remains.<sup>48</sup> Viewing the inanimate prospect of a bulldozed dry-dock outside his home, one interviewee laments, “it is hard to believe it was there... I feel devastated and disorientated because everything I had set my sights on had gone, and the same is for most of the people I know. My whole perspective has had to change because my basic identity, where I am from, is totally gone.”<sup>49</sup> Another man proclaims “We have no identity left. We can’t see what the future holds. We’ve been an industrial community for centuries and here we are faced with total manufacturing and industrial collapse.”<sup>50</sup> The final interviewee explains how after his shipyard closed “I went to art collage, and I’ve worked in theatre for the last six to eight years. I learned Cabaret and singing, talents that could never have come to the fore when I was working as a fitter ... but the irony is I didn’t want the place to close and part of me still wishes that it was open. It still feels like bereavement, a deep sense of loss ... I’d like Shields to have a sense of identity again.”<sup>51</sup> The prolonged decay of the shipbuilding industry had not resulted in its full demise, and this lack of a clear break with the industrial past has had important implications for collective memory. As Mah concludes, ‘local accounts of sites and processes of industrial ruination represent living memories that are defined by a lack of closure with an industrial past.’<sup>52</sup> Judging by these sources, and more recent ones, the deep and meaningful connection between industry, landscape and local identity echoes through decades and generations, especially when the remnants of this industrial past linger in dilapidated forms on the edges of these communities.

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<sup>47</sup> 3/12/14, Teesside, Billy Zagreta, interview conducted by author.

<sup>48</sup> The dismantling of gender barriers is presented along side the ruins of industry in the character Silkstockings, a North Eastern drag-queen entertaining out of work shipbuilders in working men’s clubs.

<sup>49</sup> *When the Dog Bites*, Trade Films (1988), NEFA, no. 14087.

<sup>50</sup> NEFA, no. 14087.

<sup>51</sup> NEFA, no. 14087.

<sup>52</sup> Mah, *Industrial Ruination*, p73.

## Chapter Two

Deindustrialisation: “What is an island nation without a ship industry?”<sup>53</sup>

The first public use of the term ‘deindustrialisation’ identifies the allies’ policy towards Germany after World War II: ‘an active process of victors stripping a vanquished nation of its industrial power. Indeed,’ Cowie and Heathcott postulate, ‘to many workers who walked out of the factory gates for the last time ... it must have felt exactly like an occupying force had destroyed their way of life.’<sup>54</sup> The accelerated loss of Britain’s shipbuilding industries in the 1970s and 80s was representative of shifting industrial trends in the Western world away from heavy industry based economies.<sup>55</sup> According to Anderson, Duncan and Hudson, “Deindustrialisation” and its spatially-differentiated implications in Britain have to be seen in the context of the country’s long term decline as an industrial power.’<sup>56</sup> Many established theories of political economy suppose that the logic of capitalist development, whereby capital leaves behind factories and communities in search of cheaper labour and resources, produces landscapes of industrial decline.<sup>57</sup> However, ‘instead of moving elsewhere,’ Mah observes, ‘shipbuilding companies on the Tyne did not abandon the river in search of cheap labour or resources: they became less competitive and went bankrupt, were acquired by other companies, or sold their assets to foreign companies.’<sup>58</sup>

The Community Development Project (CDP) reports are an excellent series of papers offering in depth statistical analysis of the political economy shaping deindustrialisation and the general social costs of industrial decline in Tyneside, specifically North Shields, up to the 1980s.<sup>59</sup> As Hart and K’Meye observed of similar early American reports reacting to the onset of deindustrialisation, the CDP

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<sup>53</sup> *We Make Ships*, Siren Film (1987), NEFA, no. 7354.

<sup>54</sup> Jefferson Cowie and Joseph Heathcott, ‘Introduction: The Meaning of Deindustrialisation’, *Beyond the Ruins*, p1.

<sup>55</sup> Bluestone and Harrison, *The Deindustrialisation of America*, pp4-15.

<sup>56</sup> J. Anderson, S. Duncan, R. Hudson, ‘Uneven development, redundant spaces?: An introduction’, J. Anderson, S. Duncan, R. Hudson (eds.), *Redundant Spaces in Cities and Regions? Studies in Industrial Decline and Social Change* (Newcastle, 1988), p4.

<sup>57</sup> See Steven High, *The Making of North America’s Rust Belt* (Toronto, 2004), pp23-30.

<sup>58</sup> Mah, *Industrial Ruination*, p198.

<sup>59</sup> Drawing a vast quantity of statistical data the CDP reports were set up by the home office in 1969 to combat urban deprivation in several areas in England, North Shields being one.

reports might too be criticised as relying too heavily on ‘statistical analysis, and aggregate data from the social science and medical fields.’<sup>60</sup> As a result the process and social impact of deindustrialisation was often painted in broad strokes and fails to address certain nuances. By 1890, UK shipbuilding amounted to 80% of the world total, and up to half of these vessels came from the North East. However, the growing rise of international competition in the post-war market meant Japan’s share of the world market grew from 10%-50% from 1955-73 while British firms struggled to maintain the same output over the period, seeing their market share dwindle from 26% to 3.6%.<sup>61</sup> By the mid-1980s, the end of shipbuilding on the Tyne appeared in sight according to several economic surveys: ‘The shipbuilding and repair industry is now also, like mining a pale reflection of its former greatness, marked by a world decline in the demand for ships coupled with a surplus of ships and considerable overcapacity in shipbuilding.’<sup>62</sup> Robinson similarly considers the moribund state of Tyneside shipbuilding but contextualises it within regional decline and the growth of the service sector: ‘Deindustrialisation has thus continued during the first half of the 1980s and while Tyneside’s manufacturing sector is certainly ‘leaner’ than in the 1970s it is probably not ‘fitter’... By 1984 – the most recent year for which figures are available – the service sector accounted for 69% of jobs in Tyneside, compared with 53% back in 1971.’<sup>63</sup> Many workers were absorbed by the expansion of the service industries, especially in the 1960s, but as manufacturing continued to decline the growth in service employment did not keep pace.<sup>64</sup> This short fall has led to massive growth in unemployment figures and patterns of work.<sup>65</sup> Failure to modernise existing yards, which might have maintained a competitive edge against European and Japanese shipbuilding expansion in the world market share, is one explanation for deindustrialisation cited in the CDP reports. In particular, the failure

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<sup>60</sup> Joy L. Hart and Tracy E. K’Meye, ‘Worker Memory and Narrative: Personalised Stories of Deindustrialisation in Louisville, Kentucky’, *Beyond the Ruins*, p385.

<sup>61</sup> CDP, *North Shields: Living with Industrial Change* (London, 1978), vol. 2., p37; 39.

<sup>62</sup> I. Stone, ‘The Crisis in Shipbuilding in the North East’, *Northern Economic Review* (1984), 9, p25.

<sup>63</sup> Robinson, ‘Industrial Structure’, *Post-Industrial Tyneside*, p23.

<sup>64</sup> J. Anderson, S. Duncan, R. Hudson, ‘Uneven Development’, *Redundant Spaces*, p5.

<sup>65</sup> See Appendix B for more on changing patterns of work during the 1960s and 70s.

to implement recommendations in the Geddes Report<sup>66</sup> following the temporary boom in 1966, which temporarily filled shipbuilding order books, meant that ‘after 1968, heavy losses were incurred, especially on fixed price contracts.’<sup>67</sup> The failure to shift from ‘craft’ to ‘bureaucratic’ methods of mass production in the two decades following the Second World War was also crucial.<sup>68</sup> In 1973 the Booz-Allen report was published which argued ‘the main problems were poor marketing, outdated equipment, and poor labour relations. The report also differed from the industry’s own views that the shipbuilding market would continue to grow between 1973 and 1983 ... the OPEC oil price increase in 1974 and the drastic increase in inflation allied to quick and reductions in oil transport and consumption pricked the oil-tanker boom’ according to Ritchie.<sup>69</sup> The CDP report notes how even for one of the Tyne’s most advanced and best equipped yards, like Swan Hunters, ‘its inability to survive and compete, in spite of its success relative to the rest of the British industry, highlights the problems of the British shipbuilding as a whole ... Here again, the physical evidence of decline – vast tracts of vacant land – is there for all to see.’<sup>70</sup>

A similar pattern emerges in narratives of deindustrialisation around the Western world. In Cowie and Heathcott’s *Beyond the Ruins*, we see these broad trends relating to different post-industrial communities teased out. Youngstown, Ohio, for example became a predominant leader in the basic steel industry in the beginning of the twentieth century; while its industrial core differs to Tyneside, it was similarly known for its highly skilled and hard working labour force, but in 1977 a wave of plant shutdowns resulted in the loss of fifty thousand job losses in steel and its related industries over a ten year period.<sup>71</sup> According to Russo and Linkon, the Youngstown story shows ‘deindustrialized communities are vulnerable to all kinds of loss – not just the jobs or economic security but also the loss of identity... Over time the story

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<sup>66</sup> Geddes Report (1966) called among other things for greater centralisation and rationalisation, for the setting up of specialised yards, new standards of efficiency and investment in new technologies.

<sup>67</sup> CDP, *North Shields*, p39.

<sup>68</sup> Edward H. Lorenz, ‘An evolutionary explanation for the competitive decline: The British shipbuilding industry’, *Journal of Economic History* (1991) 51:4, pp911-35.

<sup>69</sup> L. A. Ritchie, *The Shipbuilding Industry: A Guide to Historical Records* (Manchester, 1992), p20.

<sup>70</sup> CDP, *The Cost of Industrial Change* (London, 1981), p89; 92.

<sup>71</sup> John Russo and Sherry Lee Linkon, ‘Collateral Damage: Deindustrialisation and the uses of Youngstown’, *Beyond the Ruins*, p202.



shifts, and community history is erased.’<sup>72</sup> Likewise, in another deindustrialised American city, Paul O’Hara observes how ‘without the sense of itself as a producing steel town, Gary [Indiana,] lost the ability to create or control its own urban image.’<sup>73</sup> While we should perhaps be weary of the limitations in transposing different theoretical ideas across national borders and different industries, this does not render comparative analysis fruitless. For Cowie and Heathcott, all heavy industries are *simpatico*, holding ubiquitous characteristics, in that they represent capital ‘fixed in giant machines bolted to the floors of brick and mortar factories, the industrial culture emerging with an aura of permanence, durability and heritage.’<sup>74</sup> In the last decade, the literature surrounding deindustrialisation and particularly ruins are geographically dispersed and seek out broad trends through cross analysis. Take for example Edensor’s methodology which wilfully dismisses geographical specificity in order to enquire ‘what ruins can tell us about wider social and cultural processes across urban space.’<sup>75</sup> The dramatic change in the composition and viability of local image is one of the strongest and most enduring effects of deindustrialisation, which is repeatedly played out across the globe.

The social cost of deindustrialisation was well documented on camera in the 1980s. In a programme commissioned by BBC North East and Cumbria of the *North Islands* cargo ship launch (1986), the last ship ever launched on the river Tees, the loss of industry is equated with the loss of community in an impassioned interview with Roger Spence, chairman of Middlesbrough’s Smith’s Dock.

We were the last shipyard open on the river Tees. We’ve seen the decline in shipbuilding for several years now and this river hasn’t been the only exception. We never thought we would finish all together; I see it as another symbol of the industrial decline of Teeside and to that extent find

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<sup>72</sup> Russo and Linkon, ‘Collateral Damage’, *Beyond the Ruins*, p217.

<sup>73</sup> S. Paul O’Hara, ‘Envisioning the Steel City: The Legend and Legacy of Gary, Indiana’, *Beyond the Ruins*, p221.

<sup>74</sup> Cowie and Heathcott, ‘Introduction’, *Beyond the Ruins*, p4.

<sup>75</sup> Edensor, *Industrial Ruins*, p15; Mah’s *Industrial Ruination* also has a wide geographical scope comparing ruination across three distinctly different communities and industries in Niagara Falls, New York, Ivanovo in Russia and Walker, Tyneside; High and Lewis’s *Corporate Wasteland* similarly applies broad theoretical schema to unique cases of deindustrialisation through America.

it extremely depressing and disappointing and don't know what will replace it.<sup>76</sup>

The interviewer asks another worker present at the momentous launch if they think it will ever reopen, "Once the yard is closed", he replies, 'it runs down very quickly. You have to get the men back to return it to operation quickly. As with Haverton Hill,<sup>77</sup> without upkeep it became derelict and was as if they'd raped it [in regard to scrappers plundering the site for remaining metals]. Now its just a trading estate.'<sup>78</sup> As well as the social costs of deindustrialisation, the impact on the landscape is a concern regularly expressed in interviews with shipbuilders faced with the closure of their yards. As Peter Callaghan, a representative from the A & P shop stewards, posits: "If we get no orders closure must occur... we are facing mass redundancy and layoffs. If the yard is going to be privatised, its catastrophic in the impact of what it would mean to the town. We have 235 subcontractors based in the North East so the effect would be tremendous. It would be a disaster; this town would end up a wilderness, an industrial wilderness.'<sup>79</sup> With an industry like shipbuilding, which has monumental and visual prowess in both social and physical landscapes, the lines between work, identity and landscape become blurred. In this way we might extend Al Gini's claim: 'To work is *to be* and not to work is *not to be*', because landscape also becomes a signifier of identity.<sup>80</sup> In an interview with Chris Ridley, a former shipwright at Walker Naval Yard, in February 2015, he reflected on what the yard meant to him. He expresses how loss still very much defines present day attitudes to deindustrialisation.

I loved working here – it gave me so many skills and good experiences. Looking at the young men of Walker today, one wonders what has taken its place. The yard was always incredibly busy. I had absolutely no idea it would fold so quickly as it did. It happened so quickly. Look around, there's nothing left of that way of life, just bits of scrap and remains of

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<sup>76</sup> *Launch of North Islands*, BBC North East and Cumbria (1986), NEFA, no. 2398.

<sup>77</sup> Haverton Hill shipyard mainly built war ships and was taken over by Swan Hunter in 1969 before being privatised in 1986 and eventually closing in the same year.

<sup>78</sup> NEFA, no. 2398.

<sup>79</sup> *The Shipyard Tapes: Down the Road Again*, Trade Films (1984), NEFA, no. 13403.

<sup>80</sup> Al Gini, *My Job, My Self: Work and the Creation of the Modern Individual* (New York, 2000), ix.

decaying births. It's just a big black mark where that hub of industry was, very sad. However, that's the way it goes isn't it.<sup>81</sup>

Evidently, deindustrialisation's legacy still lives on and is maintained partly by the skeletal remains of industry which still haunt this landscape.

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<sup>81</sup> 2/2/2015, Walker, Chris Ridley, interview conducted by author.

### Chapter Three

#### Regeneration and Memorialisation

Since the windfall of social and economic histories on Tyneside written in the 1970s and 80s, shipbuilding, and indeed the regional narrative, has been a well documented story of declension.<sup>82</sup> This trend has extended across disciplines and into the 1990s and 2000s with the significant contributions of Durham based geographer Ray Hudson, and Fred Robinson, specialising in the North East's regional and urban development.<sup>83</sup> Recently, there have been several attempts to rebalance the academic field in regard to regeneration on the Tyne. Many of those attempting to redress the scholarship are local to the area, often having grown up on the banks of the Tyne itself. Michael Chaplin's *Tyne View* is one such example charting new commercial investment and environmental renewal on the Tyne; he brazenly attempts to 'shrug off the communal sense of the past: the shipyards and engineering giants have gone and aren't coming back, for reasons which were inevitable and others that weren't.' Instead, Chaplin asks his readers to 'learn the lessons of the past and move on.'<sup>84</sup> Similarly, Leona Skelton has worked on the post-industrial riparian landscape of Tyneside and is currently compiling an environmental history on the 'ups and downs' of the river Tyne, which will mark the first comprehensive study of its kind on this subject and will no doubt encompass environmental, as well as the corporate, regeneration of the river.<sup>85</sup> The landscape of the Tyne has seen vast improvement in terms of wildlife ecology and natural rejuvenation, along with the arrival of new jobs in containership and greener industries like wind turbine construction. While innovation and regeneration should be lauded, they are also fundamental in attempting to reshape a new post-industrial regional identity. However, while some of

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<sup>82</sup> In particular, see F. Atkinson, *North East England. People at Work, 1860-1950* (Ashbourne, 1980) pp289-300; T. Austrin and H. Beynon, *Global Outpost: The Working Class Experience of Big Business in the North East of England, 1964-79* (Durham, 1979) pp43-69; D. Bean, *Tyneside: A Biography* (London, 1971) pp196-245.

<sup>83</sup> Major works include, Ray Hudson, *Wrecking a Region: State Policies, Party Politics and Regional Change in North East England* (London, 1989); H. Beynon, R. Hudson and D. Sadler, *A Place Called Tyneside: A Locality in a Global Economy* (Edinburgh, 1994); Fred Robinson, *Urban 'Regeneration' Policies in Great Britain in the 1980s* (Newcastle, 1989), pp34-87.

<sup>84</sup> Chaplin, *Tyne View* p359.

<sup>85</sup> 'River Tyne's story revealed in study by environmental historian', *The Journal* (Newcastle), 16 January 2015.

these efforts appear promising, memorialisation and regeneration are yet to pay full homage to shipbuilding or fill the void physically left on the landscape.

Almost ten years have passed since the sociologist Alice Mah conducted a major series of interviews with Walker's residents on the subject of ruination and regeneration. At the time of her research (2006), Mah ambiguously concluded: 'with the prospect of regeneration, prolonged processes of deindustrialisation in Walker have perhaps come to a turning point, whether this regeneration will succeed in erasing the legacies of the industrial past, both positive and negative, and for better and for worse, remains to be seen.'<sup>86</sup> With the closure of the last shipyard, Swan Hunter, on the Tyne in 2006, there has arguably been some symbolic closure in this chapter of the Tyne's industrial history. By the summer of 2008, most of the great cranes at Swan Hunter, which sits between Wallsend and Walker, had disappeared from the Tyneside skyline in what was menacingly referred to as the 'scorched earth policy'.<sup>87</sup> Academics of shipbuilding and local residents alike enshrined the loss of this almost mythical shipyard in the process of consigning it to the past: 'The loss of the cranes was mourned by many people', laments Ian Rae, 'a sad gap was left in the skyline of Tyneside, but the name Swan Hunter will forever have a premier place in the history of shipbuilding.'<sup>88</sup> Likewise, Barry Martin, a resident of Wallsend, recognised the historic nature of this momentous occasion: "Although I've never worked at Swan's... I was born and brought up within sight and sound of the yard... When they said the cranes and all the equipment was going to India I thought to myself I must capture this for future generations to see what was on this spot, and I captured nearly everything."<sup>89</sup> These accounts suggest finality in the shipbuilding narrative and a closure of sorts, but what has physically replaced these rusting behemoths and what of the community identity which was once confirmed in the ruin of these structures?

Chaplin attempts to describe these physical and social aspects of post-industrial Tyneside. Visiting the remains of Harrison's Yard, Bill Quay,

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<sup>86</sup> Mah, 'Memory, Uncertainty and Industrial Ruination', p19.

<sup>87</sup> Mah, *Industrial Ruination*, p82.

<sup>88</sup> Ian Rae, *Swan Hunter*, p55.

<sup>89</sup> Barry Martin, 'The Fall of Swan Hunters',  
<http://www.cultureshock.org.uk/stories/the-fall-of-swan-hunters.html>  
[accessed 24/4/15]

We squeezed through a gap in the old gates. The sheds and offices have gone. The site has been colonised by a riot of brambles, the inevitable rosebay willowherb and willow scrub now growing to maturity. The walls of the electrical house are covered in graffiti, the floor littered with empty spray paint and lager cans, the remnants of two slipways are still evident as well as the concrete pillars built as the bases for cranes. There were five fisherman ranged along the quay, including the amiable bare chested Simon, who's drinking Foster's and sunbathing. He praises the graffiti – "it's decorative" – and confides that Harrison's Yard provides other bounties besides fish. "At low tide I collect bits of scrap. It stops your fishing gear getting snagged as well as giving you a bit of pocket money."<sup>90</sup>

In Chaplin's survey around the Tyne in 2012, he notes several post-industrial uses of space on Tyneside. With the evaporation of industry, the Tyne is now officially the best river for salmon fishing in England and Wales, reigniting commercial and recreational line-fishing activity.<sup>91</sup> The return of native species can be associated with Soulé and Noss' process of 'rewilding', achieved through the restoration of the three C's: Cores, Corridors and Carnivores.<sup>92</sup> Chaplin asks us to spare a thought to salmon which spawn once again in the Tyne along with the non-native species of plants that have come to germinate on the banks of the Tyne carried on the ships' hold, these include: hedgerow cranesbill, hoary cress, field eryngo, spotted medick, wild teasel, and rough dog's tail to name a few.<sup>93</sup> 'The natural world will not be so easily dismissed. In waste patches and factory backyards, in gasworks and railway sidings, nature fights back' becoming – what Mabey terms – 'an unofficial countryside.'<sup>94</sup> In this way, informal nature reserves are helping to remodel the landscape of the Tyne which used to be defined by decaying shipyards.<sup>95</sup> This is one such solution to

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<sup>90</sup> Chaplin, *Tyne View*, pp111-14.

<sup>91</sup> Chaplin, *Tyne View*, p62.

<sup>92</sup> Michael Soulé and Reed Noss, 'Rewilding and Biodiversity', *Wild Earth*, (Autumn 1998), pp1-11.

<sup>93</sup> Chaplin, *Tyne View*, p91.

<sup>94</sup> Richard Mabey, *The Unofficial Countryside* (London, 1973), p2.

<sup>95</sup> Although different, Detroit, Michigan, serves as a possible comparison as a city undergoing redefinition, though on a much larger scale. See Mark Benelli, *Detroit is the Place to Be* (New York, 2012) and the documentary *Detroit: Wild City*,

commemorative landscaping. However, all too often regeneration initiatives have meant visual erasure, and the effacement of the past from the landscape. Peter Roberts, the co-director and editor of *Launch* (1973) – a documentary exploring the sites and sounds in the building process of the *World Unicorn* super tanker over the course of two years – revisited the site of Swan Hunter in 2011.

I think it's frightening how we live in a heritage culture; we're standing here on a Roman fort [Segedunum] but the entire industrial heritage has been obliterated. The cranes that were on this river bank used to build hundreds of ships, within only a few years of the shipyard closing they'd been broken up and shipped off to India. It's incredible how all remnant of industry was obliterated off the landscape. It's quite frightening, almost as if it's wilful. There seems to be a desperate urgency to wipe this past off the map.<sup>96</sup>

While Roberts' observations may seem hyperbolic, it is difficult to disagree when faced with the desolation left in the wake of shipbuilding, still presently tangible (fig. 5). The landscape of East Howdon today might appear unrecognisable and alien to Bill Todd, born in the mid 1970s. 'He was brought up in Gainers Terrace,' writes Ian Rae, 'in the shadow of the Wallsend Shipyard and was brought into a family whose livelihood depended on the industry. As a boy he could see ships take place just a few yards from his bedroom window.'<sup>97</sup> This abiding sense of loss is confirmed within the landscape itself, with the fundamental absence of memorialisation highlighting the voids where shipyards once stood. Mah's interviews embody this void: 'I spoke with Roger, a local resident of the neighbouring ward Byker, "With shipbuilding, there is just a loss, a sadness, and there is nothing to replace it... There is a psyche in the North East which is built on the pride of shipbuilding".'<sup>98</sup> Applying the methodologies of Lefebvre and Soja – that the social and spatial are powerfully interlinked, for the spatial is socially constructed and the social exists within the

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Original Title (2011) for further exploration of how the return of nature to the urban environment is redefining understandings of 'wilderness' and the 'city'.

<sup>96</sup> *The Making of the Launch*, BFI (2011), [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pK\\_ZbVSK90o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pK_ZbVSK90o) [accessed 25/4/15].

<sup>97</sup> Rae, *Swan Hunter*, p17.

<sup>98</sup> Mah, *Industrial Ruination*, p85.



Figure 5. View of Tyne from East Howdon, February 2015, Author.

spatial – we can determine that accounts like Rogers’ are informed by his surroundings.<sup>99</sup> Similarly, one of Chaplin’s interviewees concedes, “You drive up and down the river and it’s full of memories, I’ve realised how many of the places I remember have gone. You don’t notice it, but it is happening all the time. Some people say it has changed for the better, and maybe in some ways it has, but in a big way it hasn’t. I mean, there are no jobs anymore are there?”<sup>100</sup> As Lowenthal notes, ‘landscape legacies shore up national identity,’ and in their destruction, ‘those legacies are shown of traditional obligations and rewards, link less and less with everyday experience and embody few long-term memories.’ Bereft of social context, landscape becomes vacant, vacuous, void of experienced meaning – ‘just scenery.’<sup>101</sup>

The failure of the service economy to replace the culturally significant shipbuilding industry on Tyneside and rejuvenate this landscape is, of course, partly to blame. Writing in 1988, Robinson adhered to the new socio-political consensus which held enterprise and opportunity – touchstones of the new Thatcherite orthodoxy – as

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<sup>99</sup> See Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford, 1991), pp22-43; and Edward Soja, *Postmetropolis: Critical Studies of Cities and Regions* (Oxford, 2000).

<sup>100</sup> Chaplin, *Tyne View*, p318.

<sup>101</sup> Lowenthal, ‘Living and Looking at Landscape’, p644;p645.



saviour to Britain's post-industrial woes.<sup>102</sup> 'Certainly it is possible to point to aspects of Tyneside today which lend credence to this modern image. There is the neon shopping extravaganza of Eldon Square and its vast, outwardly anonymous rival, the MetroCentre, across the Tyne in Gateshead ... Any observer in Newcastle's Bigg Market and High Bridge are on a Friday or Saturday night will attest to this consciousness of fashion and high spending power.<sup>103</sup> Likewise, in a television programme about Benwell's nature park, the presenter makes note of how the MetroCentre's arrival, which still stands today as the largest indoor shopping mall in Europe. "We can physically see how the use of the land has changed over the years. The power station has been demolished as has the coke works, the most significant change has been the building of the MetroCentre."<sup>104</sup> The vision of a retail wonderland for the North East may have briefly enlivened the local economy, however we might refute the claims listed on their website, self-declaring a post-industrial age of consumerist Valhalla: 'In 1980 few people realised that, when a power station's waterlogged ash dump on the outskirts of Gateshead was chosen for development, the North East of England would be pioneering a retail revolution ... Since opening in 1986, Metrocentre has become more than bricks and mortar. It is now part of the social fabric of the region.'<sup>105</sup> Surely the lachrymose emotions towards shipbuilding and their remains, which still linger today, are testament to the false promise that retail could offer community rebirth through constructing a new post-industrial identity.

In what Mitchell termed the 'living museum,'<sup>106</sup> that represents the landscape of Tyneside, is a landscape that asks us to view our industrial legacy not as a heroic episode from a golden age but as a living challenge to the present.<sup>107</sup> The conflation of old and new in this way will arguably serve as the basis for any new emergent,

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<sup>102</sup> Fred Coalter, 'Public and Commercial Leisure Provision', *Leisure Studies* (2010), 19:3, pp163-81.

<sup>103</sup> Robinson, *Post-Industrial Tyneside*, p192.

<sup>104</sup> Benwell Nature Park, Archive for Change (1988), [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-I\\_6oPxuds](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-I_6oPxuds) [accessed 25/4/15].

<sup>105</sup> 'General Information', <http://www.intumetrocentre.co.uk/About-Us/General-Info> [accessed 25/4/15].

<sup>106</sup> A. Mitchell, 'The North East', J. Critchley (ed.), *Britain: A View from Westminster* (London, 1986), p32.

<sup>107</sup> See Kirk Savage, 'Monuments of a Lost Cause', pp237-56 for a dynamic proposal for newer, more ethical, and ecological methods of industrial memorialization.

post-industrial identity on Tyneside. The bulldozing of shipyards is clearly not the answer, nor is regeneration in the form of constructing hundreds of new homes on former docks which will not only erase the visual heritage of shipbuilding but also uproot and destroy communities which have existed for generations on the Tyne.<sup>108</sup> A community youth worker interviewed *An English Estate* names such fears in the housing redevelopment projects for Benwell, a community which supplied the Elswick engineering and shipbuilding industries up until the 1980s. “I don’t know what will be there but every time I walk through it changes slightly, a little bit goes missing from my memory... building parks and houses aren’t the answers, splashing paint around aren’t the answers, and here is the proof; a brand new community no one can relate to.”<sup>109</sup> In an Although, we are moving clearly in the right direction with industrial memorials like the Angel of the North and recent plans to commemorate coal through sanitising Dunstan Staiths.<sup>110</sup> If we are to quell what Mah describes as ‘a profound and violent tension between the past, present, and future,’ far more attention must be paid to the derelict shipyards of Tyneside and the communities which still inhabit these liminal spaces.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> This concerns the confirmed plan for housing developers Places for People to build over 800 new homes in North Shields.

<sup>109</sup> *An English Estate*, Channel 4 Television (1992), NEFA, no. 26576.

<sup>110</sup> Erin Gill, ‘Regenerating a River: How the Future of the River Tyne could be its past’, <http://powerwaterproject.net/?p=417> [accessed 25/4/15].

<sup>111</sup> Mah, *Industrial Ruination*, p69.

## Conclusion

If we are to save any aspect of this industrial past, a focused understanding of the cultural significance of derelict and redundant spaces on Tyneside is perhaps more crucial at this present time than ever before. The urgency of this conviction has both informed and presented challenges to partiality of my research. Arguably, there remains an almost wilful neglect to engage with the landscape through memorialisation, and with this neglect we see a creeping process of erasure in terms of community identity. Alice Mah's excellent *Industrial Ruination* still remains the only comprehensive study on the socio-spatial 'no man's land' of industrial ruin, based on a UK industry. There are some encouraging signs for this emerging branch of research however; a recent conference in November at Newcastle University, titled 'Material Memory: The post industrial landscape as site for creative practice', demonstrated how new theoretical approaches to industrial ruination are shaping the field.

A.K. Coomaraswamy first coined the term "post-industrial" on the eve of World War One; he was an art historian who, in the tradition of William Morris, looked forward to an age when machine based industry would die away and be replaced by a new labour system of guilds and handicraft more in tune with nature.<sup>112</sup> His dream has, ostensibly, failed to come to fruition in relation to the once great shipbuilding industry on the Tyne. Chaplin's aspirational advice to shrug off the communal trauma of the past is perhaps overly naïve following the 2008 recession which has hit the North East among the hardest. What serious alternatives stand to replace shipbuilding, and heal the wounds which have been left upon the landscape and exist in people's memory? Perhaps a good place to start might be acknowledging and celebrating the industrial magnificence of shipbuilding's past.

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<sup>112</sup> A.K. Coomaraswamy, *Essays in Post-Industrialism: A Symposium of Prophecy Concerning the Future of Society* (London, 1914).

## **Appendix A: A list of major shipyard closures on the Tyne**

### **South Shields**

- 1) C. Rennoldson & Co opened 1913, closed 1929
  - 2) J. P. Rennoldson & Sons opened 1863, closed 1929
  - 3) Hepple & Co opened 1899, closed 1924
  - 4) J. T. Eltringham Ltd. opened 1864
- Tyne Dock Engineering  
Tyne Tees Dry Dock closed 1999

- 4) J. Redhead & Sons opened 1865, closed 1977

### **North Shields**

- 5) Edward Bros. opened 1882  
later became part of T. & W. Smith (Smiths Docks)  
T. & W. Smith (Smiths Docks) closed...  
A & P. Appledore closed 2000
- 6) Northumberland S. B. Co. Ltd opened 1883, closed 1930

### **Jarrow**

- 7) Mercantile Dry Dock opened 1889, closed 1986
- 11
- 8) Thomas Metcalfe wooden Shipbuilding yard closed 1851
- 9) Palmers S. B & Iron Co. Shipyard and Dockyard opened 1851, closed 1933
- 10) Palmers Jarrow Company (Vickers - Armstrong) opened 1941, closed early 1960s

### **Howdon**

- 11) Clelands (Successors) Ltd opened 1872, closed 1983
- 12) Tyne Iron Shipbuilding Ltd opened 1871, closed 1933
- 13) Palmers S. B & Iron Co. Shipyard and Dockyard opened 1860, closed 1897

### **Wallsend**

- 14) Wallsend Slipway opened 1871, closed 1903
- 15) Ryton Marine opened 1972, closed 1974
- 16) Swan Hunter & Wigham Richardson opened 1873, closed 1993, reopened 1996 and closed July 2007 (Swan Hunter's Neptune yard closed 1987)
- 17) A & P. Tyne opened 1971, last operational ship repair yard.

### **Walker**

- 18) Newcastle S. B. Co. Ltd opened 1919, closed 1921
- 19) Charles Mitchell opened 1853, closed 1897
- 20) Wigham Richardson closed 1988
- 21) Wm. Dobson Co. Ltd opened 1883, closed 1931

22) Vickers - Armstrong Naval Yard opened 1928, closed 1985

### **Hebburn**

23) R & W. Hawthorne - Leslie opened 1853, closed 1981

24) Robert Stephenson opened 1880, closed 1911

25) Palmers S. B & Iron Co. Shipyard and Dockyard opened 1911, closed 1933

26) Cammell Laird opened 1998, closed 2001

### **Bill Quay**

27) Wood – Skinner opened 1883, closed 1925

28) T. Mitchison and Co Ltd opened as a repair dock 1919, closed 1964

Indy Group (1968 Sic)	Rates of Change, No. and %												
	Nos. of Jobs				1961-66		1966-71		1971-75				
	1961	1966	1971	1975	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%			
I. AAF	420	499	489	117	+	79	+ 18.8	-	10	- 2.0	- 372	- 76.1	
II. M + Q	715	106	46	6	-	609	- 85.2	-	60	- 56.6	- 40	- 87.0	
Total Primary	1135	605	535	123	-	530	- 46.7	-	70	- 11.6	- 412	- 77.0	
III. FDT	1327	1302	1328	907	-	25	- 1.9	+	26	+ 2.0	- 421	- 31.7	
IV. Chem. + } V. Allied }	in XIX												
VI. Metal Manuf.	in XIX												
VII. Mech. Engin } VIII. Instr. Eng. } IX. Elec. Eng. }	999	1064	1397	1279	+	65	+ 6.5	+	333	+ 31.3	- 118	- 8.4	
X. Shipdg & M/E	2788	2234	1765	1886	-	544	- 19.5	-	469	- 21.0	+	121	+ 6.9
XI. Vehicles	in XIX												
XII. Metal goods nec.	398	573	924	982	+	175	+ 44.0	+	351	+ 61.3	+	58	+ 6.3
XIII. Textiles	96	155	160	173	+	59	+ 61.5	+	5	+ 3.2	+	13	+ 8.1
XIV. Leather	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
XV. Clothing & Footwear	1114	1088	1157	1193	-	26	- 2.3	+	69	+ 6.3	+	36	+ 3.1
XVI. Bricks	30	13	2	15	-	17	- 56.7	-	11	- 84.6	+	13	+ 65.0
XVII. Timber/Furniture	1262	1445	852	740	+	183	+ 14.5	-	593	- 41.0	- 112	- 13.1	
XVIII. P.p.p.	199	175	227	93	-	24	- 12.1	+	52	+ 29.7	- 134	- 59.0	
XIX. Other Manuf.	2575	3371	2972	2210	+	796	+ 30.9	-	399	- 11.8	- 762	- 25.6	
Total Manuf.	10772	11420	10784	9478	+	648	+ 6.0	-	636	- 5.6	- 1306	- 12.1	
XX. Construction	1376	1992	1542	1479	+	616	+ 44.8	-	450	- 22.6	- 63	- 4.1	
XXI. Gas, elec, water	394	426	624	321	+	32	+ 8.1	+	198	+ 46.5	- 303	- 48.6	
XXII. T + Comm.	2863	2548	1525	1487	-	315	- 11.0	-	1023	- 40.1	- 38	- 2.5	
XXIII. Dist. trades	2978	3041	2844	3213	+	63	+ 2.1	-	197	- 6.5	+	369	+ 13.0
XXIV. Insurance, bkg.	377	377	433	412	0	0	0	+	56	+ 14.9	- 21	- 4.8	
XXV. Prof + Sci. Services	2136	2818	3184	3408	+	682	+ 31.9	+	366	+ 13.0	+	224	+ 7.0
XXVI. Misc. Services	1624	1982	1960	2222	+	358	+ 22.0	-	22	- 1.1	+	262	+ 13.4
XXVII. Public Admin etc.	1005	1120	1219	2087	+	115	+ 11.4	+	99	+ 8.8	+	868	+ 71.2
All Services	12753	14304	13331	14629	+	1551	+ 12.2	-	973	- 6.8	+	1298	+ 9.7
Total	24616	26309	24724	24230	+	1693	+ 6.9	-	1645	- 6.2	- 494	- 2.0	

\*North Shields Employment Exchange Area covers the same geographical area as the Tynemouth County Borough.

Source: CDP Report, *North Shields: Living with Industrial Change*, p133.

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