Powerless, Ageing and Trapped:
Yorkshire Women in British Cinema 1990-2020

Student ID: 10361697

Degree Programme: Drama (BA)

Abstract

This study explores representations of Yorkshire women in British cinema between 1990-2020, as powerless, aging and trapped. It investigates the related influence of mediated Northern-ness and representations of gender on how Yorkshire women are presented and perceived. Through detailed analysis of two films from each decade, *Brassed Off (1996), Little Voice (1998), Calendar Girls, (2003), The Mother (2003), Catch Me Daddy (2014)* and *Adult Life Skills (2016).* I examine the ways in which Northern films of this period perpetuate or develop the gendered and regionalised representations. I explore these films through theorised notions of the North as an imagined space, as commented on in *Heading North*, edited by Ewa Mazierska, and how they are communicated into the national imagination via a breadth of mediated sources. In line with feminist film theory and its consideration of cinema's preoccupation with the masculine struggle and film's filtration through the male gaze, I explore the marginalisation of gendered marked bodies on-screen. I examine the roles Northern female characters are assigned, compared to the male characters of the films and how they subordinate or centralise them to the narrative. I conclude that despite some lessening of marginalisation, the contemporary image of Yorkshire women remains simplified and stereotyped.

Word Count: 11313

Declaration

This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the BA Single Honours Degree in Drama at the University of Manchester.

11th May 2021

I certify that the contents are my own work and that all quotations, paraphrasing and other sources of information have been fully and explicitly acknowledged.

Signed 

Imogen Chillington 10361697

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Vicky Lowe for her continued guidance and support throughout my writing process, and for keeping me as sane as possible. I would also like to thank my housemate Max for making a cup of tea in every interval, be it morning or night and I would finally like to thank Liz for reading each draft and reminding me how to use apostrophes.

Contents

Illustrations

Figure 1: Our Town from That Hill Shot, Brassed Off. Photo Copyright 1996 by Mark Herman

Figure 2: Low-lit Mine, Brassed Off. Photo Copyright 1996 by Mark Herman

Figure 3: Scarborough Coastline, Little Voice. Photo Copyright 1999 by Mark Herman

Figure 4: Scarborough Seafront Lights, Little Voice. Photo Copyright 1999 by Mark Herman

Figure 5: Bird's Eye View of Knapely Nestled in Valley, Calendar Girls. Photo Copyright 2003 by Nigel Cole

Figure 6: Our Town from That Hill Shot, Calendar Girls. Photo Copyright 2003 by Nigel Cole

Figure 7: Mid Shot of May's House, The Mother. Photo Copyright 2003 by Roger Michell

Figure 8: May Leaving the North for the Final Time, The Mother. Photo Copyright 2003 by Roger Michell

Figure 9: Bleak Moorland Introduction of Catch Me Daddy. Photo Copyright 2014 by Daniel Wolfe.

Figure 10: Empty Town Anxiety Landscaping, Catch Me Daddy. Photo Copyright 2014 by Daniel Wolfe

Figure 11: Smoke Obscured Moors, Catch Me Daddy. Photo Copyright 2014 by Daniel Wolfe

Figure 12: Smoke Obscured Moorlands, God's Own Country. Photo Copyright 2017 by Francis Lee

Figure 13: The Vast North, Adult Life Skills. Photo Copyright 2016 by Rachel Tunnard

Figure 14:Northern Bodies Against the Strenuous Outdoors , Adult Life Skills. Photo copyright 2016 by Rachel Tunnard

Introduction

‘The flowers of Yorkshire are like the women of Yorkshire. Every stage of their growth has its own beauty, but the last phase is always the most glorious.’(Cole,2003) In the words of John Clarke, the fictionalised husband whose illness prompts his wife and neighbours to raise money in the film *Calendar Girls,* Yorkshire women represent strength, beauty and intelligence much like the sunflower as explained in the film. Yet the on-screen representations of Yorkshire women present a dual marginalisation through gender and regionality, one that simplifies and stereotypes. The concept of the North, and within that Yorkshire has, in the national imagination, become homogenised and presented through a southern centric male gaze for the majority of on-screen depictions. This image of the North then, is imagined. Ewa Mazierska, in her introduction to *Heading North: The North of England in Film and Television,* discusses this image of the imagined North. Exploring Benedict Anderson’s discussion of nationalism, Mazierska writes, ‘In his seminal book about nationalism, Imagined Communities, Benedict Anderson observes that ‘all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined’. (Anderson in Mazierska, 2017: 1). Mazierska’s introduction to *Heading North* explores the concept of the North of England as an imagined space, created by the Southern centric male gaze, ‘a discursive power: the authority to tell stories about this region.’(2017:3) The image the of imagined North has been perpetuated throughout mass consumed media, from literature of the 1800s through to modern day film. The focus of my exploration is 1990-2020 and I have chosen this time frame to reflect the limited changes in the image of the North even in the most contemporary representations. Prior to this time frame the image of the imagined North has been synonymously linked to the image of the working class as, ‘'Regional' novelists and poet and travellers projected aspects of what is widely accepted to be a consistent and *singular* image of the North as the 'Land of the Working Class' (Laing in

Shields, 1991: 208). These aspects projected as 'a harsh landscape and climate; an often smoke-obscured land of mines or manufacturing; a substandard environment for . . . residence, a land populated by earnest people, ruthless leaders and heroes who may "escape" south'(Pocock, 1979: 62). These Northern images are reflected in the writings of Charles Dickens, Elizabeth Gaskell, D.H. Lawrence and George Orwell. All of whom wrote in response to the rapid industrialisation of the North and presented it as 'a town of machinery and tall chimneys, out of which interminable serpents of smoke trailed themselves for ever and ever, and never got uncoiled.' (Dickens, 2015:37), as Charles Dickens wrote in *Hard Times.* Moving on from the repressive images of the North presented in 19th and 20th century literature, documentary film, such as the Mitchell and Kenyon factory gate films of the early 1900s, set in the North, further iterated the image of the North and the working class as synonymous. They continued to perpetuate the image of 'Northern subjects as just their bodies – inherently classed and gendered bodies, inscribed with 'Northern-ness' – to be displayed, worked, put to use.'(Phillips, 2017: 151), that earlier literature had explored.

These same images entered into the era of the British New Wave, gendered and classed depictions of Northern bodies were reflected on screen, ones that marginalised their female characters through regionality and gender. The New Wave saw a rise in the representation of the North and the Northern woman in the form of Kitchen Sink Dramas that were often literary adaptations. Films such as *A Taste of Honey (1962)* which was 'the first film to feature Northern English accents, attributing it to British actors not wanting to do Northern accents in case their fans would think that was how they spoke for real.' (Lund, 2009: 1). The era's depictions of;

> 'an anxiety about the demise of the 'traditional' working class, associated with work, community and an attachment to place, in the face of consumerism, mass culture and suburbanisation. In so far as these changes are also associated with a certain 'feminisation' of the working class, so these films also extend a degree of sympathy towards the virile, working-class male who seeks to resist the pressures towards

> embourgeoisement and social conformity (including domesticity)' (Ashby & Higson, 200: 250- 251)

This concern with the disillusioned working-class male has continued as a focal image of Northern representations, furthering the marginalisation of the female characters that surround them, by binding them to domesticity. The New Wave had a weighty influence on the images of the North through its dependence on social realism ultimately developing the stylisation of Northern realism. This genre 'passes off as an inherently 'authentic' imagining of Northern working-class history and culture. It exposes how what are, in fact, re-presentations of Northern cultures disguise themselves as authentic, quasi-documentary representations.' (Phillips, 2017:153). The 'quasi-documentary' images of the New Wave presented as 'authentic' entered into the mass consumed national identity as factual images of the North rather than representations. This influence then makes images that do not comply with the Northern discourse lose a sense of believability in their consumption.

Films released beyond the New Wave mimic the realist depictions of the North to comply with the imagined concept of it. The 1980s then again saw refocusing on Northern narratives, and as a response to second-wave feminist focused on female centric narratives with the production of woman's films. This North, without its preoccupation on masculine crisis, offered potential progression from the stereotyped image of the New Wave yet failed to fulfil this. Films such as *Educating Rita(1983), Letters to Brezhnev (1985),* both set in urban Liverpool, and *She'll Be Wearing Pink Pyjamas (1985)* set in the Lake District, presented narratives that looked at Northern women exploring their own identities partially separate to male influence, yet in their presentation of the North as an iconography to be escaped, they further perpetuate the Northern images of the New Wave and marginalise their female characters through their regionality. Although the films across these eras discuss the North,

Yorkshire women still are an underrepresented in British cinema across the eras as a result of the homogenisation of the Northern image. In literature, New Wave and 1980s woman's films' images of the North, the Northern woman remains as a standardised representation. This is described in Mary Linskill's writing as early as the late 1800s as 'hardness, keenness and shrewdness' and 'not quite free from the suspicion of sarcasm' (Linskill in Ehland, 2007: 118). Phillips concurs that Northern femininity is 'often figured as humdrum made sub-feminine by its association with the 'hardness' of working-class culture. Yet at the same time it is figured as excessive both sexually and in terms of being outside dominant standards of taste and self-presentation' (2017: 151). The image of the 'sub-feminine' 'hardness' of Northern women is similarly perpetuated by the representations I will discuss.

Across three chapters I will explore a series of filmic representations of Northern women in reflection of the images that pre-dated them, arguing that there is double marginalisation through gender and regionality. In the chapters I will use the North, Northern and Yorkshire interchangeably.

In Chapter One, I will explore powerless women in a hopeless North, analysing two films from the 1990s, an era in British Cinema often compared to New Wave. Looking at Mark Herman's *Brassed Off (1996)* and *Little Voice (1998),* I will analyse how in the presentation of the North, as a place and space rendered hopeless by the political landscape of the preceding decade and in the pre-mediated images of the North as a deprived industrialised hinterland, Yorkshire woman are rendered powerless in their on-screen representations.

In Chapter Two, I will explore the image of the older woman marked by the North. In this chapter I will draw from the preceding images of the Northern woman in the woman's films and how even in female centred narratives the same character tropes are perpetuated. Considering Nigel Cole's *Calendar Girls (2003)* and Roger Michell's *The Mother (2003),* I

will examine how the representation of ageing informs the depictions of the North as a setting, how these informed portrayals further marginalise the films' images of the Northern woman.

In Chapter Three, I will consider how the representation of the North as iconography to be escaped further marginalises the films' female characters beyond their gendered representations. Exploring Daniel Wolfe's *Catch Me Daddy (2014)* and Rachel Tunnard's *Adult Life Skills (2015)* I will analyse how their representations of the North as a vast landscape that is to be escaped is reflected in the image of the Northern woman presented. Considering the themes of escape equally explored in the woman's films of the 80s I will comment on whether the films reflect any development in the depictions of Yorkshire and its women on screen.

Overall, the reasoning for my exploration of the representations of Yorkshire women as powerless, ageing and trapped is in contemplation of how impactful the images are when considering the theory of interpellation. Interpellation, in the definition as 'the subject (viewer) is constituted by the text, and the power of the mass media resides in their ability to 'position' the subject in such a way that their representations are taken to be reflections of everyday reality'(Chandler, 2011: 213), implies that the on-screen representations of Yorkshire women, not only inform the concept of them within the national imagination, but also in personal identity. Gender representations alone, via interpellation, create the subjectification of woman, as Butler writes 'The concept of subjectivity and the means by which cultural forms and interpellations (or dominant social processes) call women into being, produce them as subjects whilst ostensibly merely describing them as such, inevitably means that it is problematic' (Butler in McRobbie, 2004 :256). Combined with the inaccurate image of the North, Yorkshire woman are dually marginalised by gender and regionality in

their on-screen representations. This image is then being interpellated into national consciousness ultimately hindering the individual concept of Yorkshire women as anything but the mediated image of them, as hardened working-class, ‘sub-feminine’, marked bodies.

Powerless Women in the Hopeless North

'As the 1990s wore on, the potential to make popular woman's films with clear feminist content appeared to diminish as British cinema increasingly focused upon politically ambivalent interrogations of masculinity'(Bell and Williams, 2009: 161).

Brassed Off and *Little Voice,* both released in the 1990s, explore a hopeless North in an era of crisis. *Brassed Off* considers the closure of the local mine and the community devastation it causes, the film looks at the Thatcherite government's impact on the North, 'focusing on politically ambivalent interrogations of masculinity'(2009: 161) as Justine Ashby suggests was the growing on-screen concern of the 1990s. *Little Voice* although looking at a female centered narrative, equally explores this sense of gender crisis and a hopeless North. As Ashby suggests, the era's focus on the masculine narrative limits its ability to communicate a clear feminist message, furthering the presentation of female characters as powerless. This image of powerless women, trapped by the hopelessness of the North is perpetuated through both films and the representations could not further embody Forrest and Johnson's suggestion that Northern women play a clear role in Northern narratives, that of 'suffering mothers, wives and lovers' (2016: 1). Both *Brassed Off* and *Little Voice* explore female characters in positions of service to men even subordinate to their own storylines. They demonstrate how further marginalised Northern woman on screen are by their regionality and the limited representations there are of Yorkshire women on screen.

Mark Herman's 1996 film *Brassed Off* explores a colliery band's fight against the closure of their pit. The film explores a crucial moment in the North's history and reflects the decade's feeling post-Thatcher. The film presents the story through the colliery band and struggles of the male characters who play in it, paying momentary interest to the women who should be central but become peripheral in this representation of the men's lives. *Brassed Off* tells the story of Northern community and identity, looking at the effects of the 1980s' Conservative

government that ‘systematically destroyed an entire industry, our industry, not just our industry, our communities, our homes and our lives’(Herman, 1996) as Danny (Pete Postlethwaite) voices in his acceptance speech at the Albert Hall. In this dark narrative Herman presents the North as hopeless and does so through the image of the mine, as it dies, so does the surrounding town and the lives within it. Using many pseudo-documentary style techniques, images of the North presented are of an overcast poverty-stricken urban landscape of suffering, emblematic of the grim North films that dominated British Cinema in the 50s and 60s. As Yacowar writes;

> ‘This is the kind of film that would have come out of the Ealing Studios in the 1950s and 1960s. A village of eccentrics, united for a common cause, triumph both romantically and in their community mission…. For political import in this diverting lark, one might have claimed its implicit celebration of English eccentricity. ' (1997:1)

The village life, as Yacowar suggests, is one of the images Herman presents alongside the urban suffering and is most clearly communicated by the long shot of ‘Our Village from That Hill’ (Fig 1) that shows Danny cycling to band practice and looking over the land in front of him. This technique is used frequently in films set in the North, *A Kind of Loving (1962)* also illustrates the sort of shot, that is an iconographic cliché, and as Rob Shield’s suggests, that ‘While establishing the general space of action, such shots render Northern towns as spectacular but emptied, distant and alien townscapes in which landmarks are blurred.' (1991: 215).

To add to this image of the north as an ‘alien townscape’, the hopelessness of the image is further iterated in the low-lit shots of the mine that are underscored with dark brass band music. This is Gloria’s first moments playing with the band where she performs Joaquin Rodrigo’s’ Concierto de Aranjuez. The piece was written in anticipation of impending war, with the B Minor middle movement echoing the fear of the unknown and the collapse of the

known. Paired with said shots of the mine, see Fig 2, Herman paints the picture of a North on the brink, a North without hope.

It is against the backdrop of these images of the hopeless North that the women in the film are presented as powerless. As discussed, the characters fall into three brackets mothers, wives and lovers, all roles which further the male focused narrative, a reiteration of Forrest and Johnson's suggestion but also as Jill Dolan writes 'In the most conservative representations, women are mothers, virgins, or whores, the unholy triumvirate that feminist film and theatre critics described and deconstructed beginning in the 1970s" (2013:194). As 'mother', there is Sandra wife to Phil and mother to their children and that is the extent with which the film interrogates the character, her only value related to how she serves Phil's storyline. She is presented as the impatient and uncomprehending wife who nags at Phil and leaves when he does not fulfil his role ,in the pervasively patriarchal world of the film, as breadwinner. Equally, Ida and Vera the wives of two other band members are shown almost exclusively in domestic settings or in support of their husbands, such as the trivialisation of the dying of their hair purple in support of the colliery band. Everything these female characters do is presented as unimportant and minor compared to the masculine suffering of the other characters. As Wayne writes in discussion of the film:

> 'It does show something of the role of the miner's wives in the struggle to keep the pits open in the early 1990s. However, they are portrayed as well-meaning but pathetically ineffectual as a group, always on the margins of the film's narration (seen through the car windows as the male miners drive past them) or, as in the case of Rita, inexplicably hostile to her husband. ' (2006: 295)

They are presented as pathetically ineffectual and through this, completely powerless. Even Gloria, who is the most central female character, follows a subordinate narrative arc. In the role of the 'lover' she has greater sexual intrigue, she is younger, more attractive than the other women in the film and this is reflected throughout the numerous inappropriate

comments made such as ‘Gloria Stitz’ and ‘With legs like that wrapped round ya back you don’t stop an’ ask for a reference’(Herman, 1996). Gloria, despite having left the north and attained an education and a career, is equated with other women and when her time comes in the film, she is subservient to the male character, ultimately begging Andy for forgiveness.

Finally, the hopelessness of the north is what further marginalises the female characters to a state of powerlessness beyond that of their gender. Gloria is able to enter the world of the band but only through her sexual attractiveness and availability, which she only attains through leaving the North. All of the other female characters are women who have stayed in the north, they are older and frumpy, shown to offer no sexual appeal as reflected in the discussion of the women farting at force ten and the response ‘you don’t half know some odd women’(Herman, 1996). The criticisms of male characters suggest the women are uncommunicative, overbearing and sexually unattractive. The implication is that the North is part cause of this, with the discussion between Andy and a friend informing that when Gloria did live in the North she was ‘chubby’ and therefore unappealing much like the women who continued residence in the North. The presentation of the Northern woman is as substandard, or the other in relation to normative standards of youth, thinness and its equation to beauty. In his presentations, Herman prescribes attractiveness to be inherently linked to regionality through the images he presents of the Northern women and their juxtaposition to the more valuable Gloria, further marginalising the Northern women who have remained in the North. Herman trivialisation of the women’s concerns is inextricably related to his discussion of the crisis of masculinity, which in turn is tied to the mine and therefore the North. Not only are the female characters largely shown in domestic settings, their overarching worries are entirely focused around the setting, with Sandra, the ever-nagging wife, concerned only for the continued stability of the home rather than the moral choices that are considered in line

with the community values, shown in her encouragement of Phil to take the money offered for pit closure. This gender oppositional placement reflects the British New Wave's equal concern with the male crisis and as John Hill writes in his discussion of the New Wave;

> 'Terry Lovell for example has noted that 'the economy of interior and exterior space' in working-class realism of the 1960s often corresponds to a sexual division of labour. While women are strongly associated with domestic space, the men in these films command exterior space (and actively resist 'confinement' to the domestic sphere).' (Hill in Ashby & Higson, 2000: 251)

Herman reflects the possibility of the male characters confinement to domestic spaces, through the closure of the mine, to be an immoral act and in so devalues the female characters through their direct link to the domestic spaces. Much like the realism films of the 60s Herman places the male struggle as superior to any discussion of female characters and their equal struggles.

This devaluation of female characters is also shown in the presentation of Gloria as misguided in her attempts to help the miners outside of the domesticated setting the other female characters are placed in, reflecting Smith's comment that 'A woman who 'doesn't know her place' (that is, who has a career besides sex and motherhood) can bring a laugh and move the plot along.' (1972:15). Despite writing twenty years prior to *Brassed Off*, Smith's commentary is still reflected in Herman's perpetuation of traditional gender roles as the status-quo and places Gloria's attempts to exist outside of it as erroneous and ultimately unsuccessful. Gloria's effort to access the exterior space is a suggestion that she may be able to enter the male world and therefore has to be thwarted to protect the norm. The domestication of the female characters and their anxieties being linked to the image of the North presented, further reflects the dual marginalisation of Yorkshire women on screen, Herman maintains the status-quo in his female presentations despite his other politically-charged commentary.

Little Voice similarly presents images of a hopeless North that entraps its inhabitants. The minimal images of the surrounding Scarborough coastline reflect a place forgotten, shot almost exclusively with grey skies and sea (Fig 3). This literary adaptation reflects the same sense of British New Wave stylisation, from its melodrama, misconceptions of the North and play text basis. Starring Brenda Blethyn as Mari Hoff, Jane Horrocks as LV(Little Voice) and Michael Caine as Ray Say, the film explores the vocal talents of Little Voice and the opportunities she might bring to them, success, and through this escape, being core to the film. The location not only being Northern, but also coastal accentuates the claustrophobic element of the village image that was apparent in the British New Wave and clearly echoed in *Little Voice.* This is partly through characterisation, geographical location but also through the muddle of temporal markers that place the film in an indeterminate time. One that has the décor of a 1960s Kitchen Sink drama, and the technology of a 1990s film.

Part of the hopeless image of Yorkshire that is presented in the film, as well as other films of the era such as *Brassed Off* and *The Full Monty (1997)* is a series of working-class signifiers that as, Julia Hallam suggests, are commodifying 'the cultural identities of economically marginalised communities, repackaging their experiences for sale in the global market' (Hallam in Ashby and Higson, 2000: 270). It is within this commodification that the presentation of the North and the working class become synonymous with one another and therefore the image of hopelessness is crucially linked to the presentation of class. Equally, in Justine Ashby's discussion she notes, in her exploration of the 1980s rise in female centric northern films, that 'there is undoubtedly an intersection of discourses in these films which attempts to codify conflicts of class and gender as corollary to one another in English culture.' (2009: 154). The same can be said for *Little Voice* as the image of the working-class

life becomes irrevocably tied to both the character's gender and regionality, furthering the presentation of the North's hopelessness and the powerlessness of the women within it. Another clear example of the hopeless image of the North that is present in *Little Voice* is Scarborough's illumination that echoes Las Vegas. Las Vegas infamously being a performative location planted in an otherwise empty desert, there is Las Vegas and nothing beyond it. The choice to mimic this imagery, as shown in Figure 4, reflects the idea that the location is performative, as is the character Mari, they are painted to look more beautiful than actuality and this is confirmed in the reflection of the lights on the wet pavement.

It is in this performativity that the hopelessness of Scarborough, the North, condemns its female inhabitants to powerlessness. Mari Hoff is a clear reflection of the larger-than-life mother figure that was prominent in the New Wave era of films such as *A Taste of Honey,* a film also adapted from a dramatic text. The femininity presented by Mari is a performance in order to retain some sense of power, it is as defensive against reality as it is one too difficult to bear, much like the force of Lancashire born Helen in Tony Richardson's adaptation of Shelagh Delany's play. A clear summation of this characterisation is explored by Henrietta Phillips in her discussion of Maxine Peake's performances in *Silk, Red Riding* and See No Evil writes;

> 'Northern femininity is often figured as humdrum (below a normative ideal), made sub-feminine by its association with the 'hardness' of working-class culture. Yet at the same time it is figured as excessive (beyond an ideal), both sexually and in terms of being outside dominant standards of taste and self-presentation, in a way less 'marked' bodies are not.' (2017:151)

Mari embodies both the 'humdrum' and excessive image of femininity that Phillips discusses, she is overly loud and over self-sexualised to the point of self-degradation, while, in the eyes of Ray she is lesser than other women he could be with, she is 'past it' and needs to 'wise up' (Herman, 1998) as he says in an uncomfortable confrontation between the two characters.

At the other end of the spectrum, juxtaposed to Mari, is LV, who presents a childlike naivety and general fear of the world, she is the quiet alternative to the brash Mari. The presentation of LV is confusing and perhaps fails in its cross over from stage to screen. She is obsessive over the loss of her father and remains near silent until she sings, only finding some version of a voice at the end of the film. Although LV remains the polar opposite to Mari in many regards, she is equally powerless, ultimately being rescued from danger, the fire, by Billy played by Ewan McGregor. Despite the female character being the driving force of the narrative, the film still depends on stereotypical patriarchal ideals placing a male as the film's metaphorical and literal saviour, one that is essential in LV's emotional rebirth.
The image of Scarborough given is undoubtedly linked to the image of the house they live in, one of aged out dilapidation. This hopelessness then further represses the female characters in the film. Mari, like the house, has aged out in terms of the stereotypical youth equals beauty, with LV embodying everything Mari is not, young, slim and talented. LV presents an opportunity that is otherwise unavailable in the surrounding landscape.

A part of the dual marginalisation of Northern woman on screen is the lack of autonomy over the images presented of them. Much in the way Yorkshire women on screen are represented as powerless, Yorkshire women's power over these representations is minimal. Mari and LV are both characters written and directed by men, all be it Northern men, they are still looking at the female experience through a masculine gaze. Kaplan discusses that;

> 'To suggest that women can be something after being young and desirable to men, after childbearing and motherhood, or to suggest that one need not be chronologically young to be desirable or to have children – is to suggest that women can play a role that does not per se depend upon men, or in particular their voyeuristic gaze.' (1999:190)

Herman places the female characters as entirely dependent on the male characters and because of his presentations of the North as hopeless, and their role as women, presents them as powerless. Ray and Billy offer rescue and opportunity of escape therefore LV and Mari

have to be dependent on them. LV can be something because she is young, the character is allowed to be talented by this youth, as she still offers some value to men, whereas Mari has aged beyond the point of value in line with the male gaze and therefore is incompetent in the world of the film. Her incompetence is again not only linked to her gender but also her regionality, with Ray, the male character she depends on, being Southern. Ray's presence as a southern character further perpetuates the image of the South as centre, he is the character that offers financial gain as he is not representative of the hopeless North as Mari and LV are.

Overall, both *Brassed Off* and *Little Voice* reflect an era concerned with the image of the British working class in film and a post-Thatcher hopeless North. Through the condemnation of their locations, however, the films place the female characters in powerless positions creating a double marginalisation of gender and regionality, reflective of the films of the British New Wave. The films also explore the image of the older woman, notably the image of the older in relation to the younger woman, placing women in conflict or competition with each other. This image of the older woman will be discussed in the next chapter, through an exploration of the triadic marginalisation of the Northern woman, through age, gender and regionality.

Older Women Marked by the North

'Zoe Brennan has illustrated how representations of ageing often possess dehumanizing tendencies, creating two-dimensional images that perpetuate the ghettoization of the aged and eradicate the complexity of their lives.' (Gwynne, 2000: 21). *Calendar Girls* and *The Mother* both explore the difficulties of ageing in a society with growing gerontophobia. Unlike Brennan's suggestion, explored by Gwynne, the two films focus on the female experience of ageing centrally in their storylines. Yet despite the two films' somewhat radical perspective on the narrative of getting older, the representation of the North as a mark on the characters' identities pertains to the recurrent marginalisation of Northern women on screen. Both released in 2003 the films present an era of British cinema that has progressed from the 1990s over concern with the masculine struggle, allowing space for more female focused stories. *Calendar Girls* presents a quaint and pastoral North marking the women of its story on their journey to middle-aged revolution. Although the film presents the concept of female empowerment the ultimate presentations, collated with the image of the North, reinforce the image of the Northern woman as powerless, trapped and now also ageing. Equally, *The Mother* tells the story of one woman's quest to re-affirm her identity, now outside of the maternal and domestic confines of marriage, yet still conforms to some of the traditional values of women's worth being directly linked to their value to men. Both films place their images of women and North as synonymous with ageing, reflecting a dual ostracism.

The image of the older woman in *Calendar Girls* dominates the narrative and gives insight into older female friendships and middle-aged women outside the exploration of them solely as mothers and aunts. Yet it falls into many of the stereotyped tropes of the dominant patriarchal narrative further marginalising through the presentation of the North as quaint suburbia. The film explores a community of women, united by their local Women's Institute,

on their journey to making a nude calendar to raise money for the local hospital's family room. Based on a true story;

> 'Calendar Girls draws on women in the domestic setting and seeming essential qualities of femininity are reinforced by the Women's Institute context of family, community and country. In the film's portrayal of the community the milieu is middle aged. With children teenaged or grown up, these women live in a world where they need to fill their own days and have more time for female friendship' (Whelehan in Bell &Williams, 2010: 173)

The film is trying to convey the message that the Women's Institute 'isn't just Jam and Jerusalem' (Cole, 2003), that these women have more complex lives and are more intricate individuals than the traditional domestic values that are associated with the Women's Institute. Yet as Imelda Whelehan adds to her observation, 'The dreary predictability of Women's Institute events as portrayed in the film reinforces a common assumption about the emptiness of older women ' s lives caused by ' empty nest syndrome, or widowhood.' (2010: 173). The film explores the experiences of white middle-class women whose children have aged to a point where the conventional expectations of motherhood have been overcome. As Whelehan suggests, the film presents the women's lives as losing value and fulfilment once they have gone beyond the expectations of gender, the characters try to find ways to satisfy their lives through trivial experiences, communicated through the events at the WI such as learning about the types of broccoli. Chris, played by Helen Mirren, is the protagonist role who supports Annie following her husband's death, another way in which the women's lives are shown to have become purposeless. Chris's desire to create the nude calendar is, to begin with, considered by the other characters as an absurd suggestion, and 'just another one of Chris's mad ideas' (Cole, 2003), reiterating the idea that the older women offers no sexual intrigue. The film does, however, attempt to present Chris and those who eventually chose to be in the calendar as progressive in their view of the older woman, showing them to ultimately be comfortable naked on camera. The film itself then reflects a somewhat progressive undertone in its focus not being entirely on the nudity of the older woman but on

the story that unravels after, as Peter Bradshaw wrote in his review of the film ‘The crisis is not the baring of bodies, but the baring of souls.' (Guardian, 2003).

Yet despite the attempts to present these women as progressive in their ideals through challenging the image of the WI, the film continues to play into a formulaic patriarchal narrative, using the male characters’ interests to halt the success of the female ones, shown through Chris and Ruth’s storylines. The more the women find themselves or enjoy the opportunities that are arising for them, the more the men that surround them fall apart, reflecting the underlying patriarchal ideals of female sacrifice for male success. As Chris is about to venture to Hollywood with the other women, her son is arrested and her husband is crumbling under the pressure of working alone, Ruth’s confidence boost that enabled her to be in the calendar becomes the fuel for her husband to call her a tart, storming out in the process. In these moments, although Ruth’s storyline eventually resolves in a freeing moment for the character, there is some essence of what Roberta Garrett notes in her exploration of chick flicks, that the female characters’ ‘independence and career aspirations are downgraded in favour of the pursuit of “personal” happiness, understood in relation to men’ (Garrett: 2007: 94). Chris’s storyline depicting the success she has in deciding on the calendar, orchestrating it then successfully publicising it, is downplayed as she has failed in the other, most important, aspects of her life as a mother and wife. Through this, the film again echoes Forrest and Johnson’s suggestion that Northern women fall into the categories of ‘suffering mother, wife and lover’.

The need to bring the narrative back to the ‘simple’ elements of life is further iterated by the presentation of the north as a quaint idyllic suburbia, buried in the landscape of the Yorkshire Dales. Accompanied by long panning shots and a vastness of green surrounds, the

imagined town of Knapely is shown as if a model village nestled in the valley(Fig 5 and 6). Unlike *Brassed Off* and *Little Voice*, *Calendar Girls* shows a middle-class version of Northern life, a part of that being the quaintness of the village. The film does go against the stereotyped image of the North that is emblematic of New wave Era, that Hill notes as;

> 'The iconography of rows of small terraced houses and cobbled streets characteristic of 1960s realism has given way to run-down housing estates with boarded-up windows. Factories have become wastelands and images of work, such as there are, are linked to the service sector rather than manufacturing.' (Hill in Ashby & Higson, 2000: 167)

The urban landscape that Hill comments on, is noticeably absent in Cole's version of the North and the pastoral image presented offers representation of the North's beauty particularly the Yorkshire Dales which is in parts classified as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. However, in this representation, as with the other films discussed, the model village image equally shows Knapely, and the North as an 'emptied, distant and alien townscape'.(Shields, 1991:215)). Exemplified in Figure 6, the film mimics the same 'Our Town from That Hill' framing that Shields discusses. Even in the version of the North that is appealing, it remains as equally isolated and 'if not another nation, a decidedly separate place' (Russell, 2004: 3). Dave Russell writes this in his exploration of the North in the national imagination and in line with his own experiences of living there. Although Russell is exploring the North through a positive lens, i.e., its individuality, his suggestion equally reflects the lack of representation of Yorkshire within the national identity. Both the pastoral and urban images of the North further this separation, *Calendar Girls* metaphorically and visually frames Knapely as physically separate from other spaces. Chris and Annie have to go to London to enact the change and allow them to use the WI name for the calendar. Furthering the idea that the North is rendered powerless without southern ratification.

Cole's quaint and quiet North reflects the narrative of ageing as being a period of decline, the ending of life. Although the film's image of Knapely is of 'a green and pleasant land peopled by proud men and women' (Guardian, 2003) as Mark Kermode wrote in his initial review, it is presented as a place where nothing happens, much like the image of ageing. The presentation is of a momentum-less period of life, with the characters being shown as outside of the norm in their actions as middle-aged women. The North isn't presented as the industrialised urban landscape of chaos as in the films of the 90s that explore the crisis of masculinity. Yet much like *Brassed Off* and *Full Monty, Calendar Girls* presents the same tight knit community that places village expectations on its people, one that depends on the continuation of the status-quo to maintain balance. Without which, the world of the film begins to collapse, as with the mine closure. Chris's push to go to Hollywood creates a ripple effect of chaos. Like Kermode suggest it is a pleasant land, not an interesting one.

Equally, in Cole's pastoral image of the North he falls into one of the two recognisable categories of Northern representation, as Russell suggests 'The North on screen has tended to be either a comic place where daily hardship is softened by humour, or a site for debating serious moral, economic and social issues.' (2004:181). The women, despite the attempts to present them as radically powerful characters, are reduced to the continued image of the humorous Northerner. This presentation then nullifies the empowerment of the Calendar as it is merely a comedic experience, reflected in the juxtaposed arrangement of the women making the calendar and their husbands arriving one by one to the pub, having to drink away the idea of their wives being sexually empowered. In this the film takes away the development in the women's individual narratives and places them once again as crucially linked to and therefore subordinate to their corresponding male characters. Part of these

gender relations is linked to the village ethos that the is explored in the quaintness of Knapely and its Northern location. Despite the middle-class milieu of the film, it still reflects;

> 'A nostalgic discourse of tradition valorises the North as the homeland of a traditional British Working Class and the culture associated with it – ferrets, pigeon racing, mines and mills, fish and chips, regional accents and football – as well as organic communities' (Shields, 1991: 229)

Cole's image of the North does not reflect the mine mill culture of the image of the British Working Class but still explores the same organic communities that are tied to the Northern depictions through a discourse of tradition as Shields suggest. This community image in the film presents itself in part through comedic value and patriarchal norms and furthers the triadic marginalisation the older Northern woman.

Roger Michell's *The Mother* also explores an older female character on a journey to self-actualisation in the wake of her husband's death. It is, as O'Sullivan writes, a 'tingly-making portrait of one woman's sexual rebirth' (2003:1). May, played by Anne Reid, is visiting her children in London at the time of her husband, Toots', unexpected death. Entering into a relationship with a younger man, Darren, played by Daniel Craig, May learns what is to live rather than just exist, as the film explores the ideas of ageing in a world that predominately idealises youth. In line with gender expectations and the film's title, May begins solely as The Mother, with Toots' even introducing her to Darren as Bobby's mum, her identity up until, and immediately after, Toots' death is exclusively her role as wife and mother. This begins the film under the guise of Forrest and Johnson's 'suffering mother, wife and lover' suggestion. The film's introduction shows her taking care of her husband, dressing him, guiding him and to some extent mothering him, there is no exploration of her interests or value beyond the scope of her gender and its expectations. May begins the film as invisible,

at least within her own life. It is through the relationship with Darren and her sexual rebirth that she develops visibility, as Whelehan writes;

> 'In the sexual act she is rendered visible, the taboo more shocking as she has literally stolen this man from her daughter. Clothes mark this move to the visible, and the anorak and the muted beiges of the elderly are replaced by colours and younger fabrics such as denim, accessorised with bright scarves. Her skirts become more fluid, the blouses emphasise her figure and her hair frames her face' (Whelehan in Bell & Williams, 2010: 178)

Unlike the sensitive nude images of the women in *Calendar Girls*, May is explored as an person of sexual desire in the eyes of Darren and ultimately herself. As Whelehan suggests May is changed in every aspect of her life as she ventures through a sexual re-birth and is rendered visible. The film centrally frames her in the camera shots and unapologetically explores her naked form. Yet what the film still perpetuates, is that the older female needs some influx of youth in order to be re-born. *The Mother* also suggests there is a *necessity* for re-birth, as Joel Gwynne writes in his discussion of the film, '*The Mother* does not resist the dominant perception of ageing as a period of decline' (2020: 21). Until her re-birth, which happens only through male intervention and the unexpected death of a male character, May is shown to be a woman in decline solely because of her age and where that places her in society, a woman post-maternity and therefore aged out.

The film's discussion of the North is very limited, giving little iconographic framing and without referencing where in the North the characters are from. Through this lack of specification, Michell uses the image of a homogenous North, rather than an accurately diverse one. Equally, the only imagery present of the North is of a blanket suburbia and could be placed anywhere in England, yet Kureishi and Michell chose the North as the location that reflects the life May no longer wants the live. The visual imagery of the North, although limited, like *Calendar Girls* reflects a quaint street littered with greenery, (Fig 7). The only view of the North given is through May's eyes, showing her house and therefore home and

what that represents to her. The audience is given glimpses of her surroundings through windows to reflect her entrapment in the domestic space. The North is shown as that which keeps her inside, as who she was when Toots was alive, reflected in the line 'If I sit down, I'll never get up again and I'll be like all the other old girls round here.' (Michell, 2003). In this presentation the South i.e., London, is placed as the superior location, one that offers change and growth rather than the North's stagnation. This idea of southern superiority has been reflected in much of the work that discuss the North and as Mazierska writes 'The domination of the South over the North is also reflected in what can be described as discursive power: the authority to tell stories about this region. ' (2017: 3). *The Mother* is a clear example of discursive power where two non-northern creatives have chosen to use the imagined space of the North to symbolise all of the things the protagonist wishes not to be. This is enabled by the fact that,

> 'Northernness has had a long association with failure. The North's socio- economic failure (its declining industrial power and its unregenerated post-industrial moment) has been seen as subtending the political failure of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century socialist/Marxist hopes for the working class' (Mazierska, 2017: 42)

The association between the North and failure is rooted in the national cultural imagination and in the imagined space of the North rather than the physical, with its presentation as a place of failure often coming through southern-centric narratives. This depiction allows Kureishi and Michell to use the North as an iconography of the unwanted and maintain the arthouse realism of the film.

The North ,for May, is representative of domestication and ageing as it symbolises the life she had prior to her 're-birth'. May cannot continue to exist within the North while existing as the woman she has become. Home and the North is to be escaped and although this allows for a fresh take on the narrative of the freed older woman, as Whelehan writes:

> 'What makes the film so refreshing is that May does not return to domestic quietude, and the question of whether she was actually a 'bad' mother (as per her own testimony) is left open. Age in May's terms shifts from inevitable decline to self-discovery and freedom, the journey acting as metaphor for growth and development.' (Whelehan in Bell &Williams, 2010: 180)

It condemns the North as representative of traditional patriarchal ideals and reflects both director and writers' limited understanding of the North, other than it as an imagined space. Kureishi and Michell have imagined the North as a space that reflects said ideals, in line with the image of North presented in the New Wave, also illustrating their own preconceptions and southern-centric male gaze.

This image of the imagined Northern space further marginalises the representations of May beyond her age and gender. Despite the film's choice to not have the character return to domestic solitude and continue in her re-birth beyond the scope of male intervention, it condemns her ability to exist within Northern spaces and be anything but domesticated. The South remains the centre and the North remains othered in line with Mazierska's commentary that;

> 'margins only exist in relation to the centre and that we need to seek margins within the margins; in this case paying attention not only to the North as a periphery of England and the South's other, but also a region internally divided, with its own hierarchies and competing interests. ' (2017: 7)

In her discussion of the post-modernist theory of marginality becoming the new centrality, Mazierska reflects that the margins can only exist in line with centralisation. Michell's North exists as the Other because the South, London, is placed as the centre. May in her existence as a Northern woman, is, despite her re-birth, ultimately still othered through her regionality. This othering of space and therefore identity elements, places May in triadic marginalisation through age, gender and regionality, she is unable to exist as a 'freed' woman and a Northern woman, as Michell polarises the two concepts.

Both *The Mother* and *Calendar Girls* allow for some discussion of how the ageing woman exists within feminine ideals and how older women can deviate from said ideals through self-consideration as attractive, rather than societal placement as so. However, the films still pertain to the narrative journey to self-consideration outside of societal gaze, is hindered by or perpetually tied to masculine allowance or gratification and therefore maintaining a marginalisation of the female characters. Aided by the presentation of the North in line with their age, as quaint and in decline, both films still create a dual marginalisation of the female characters they explore through gender and regionality. The presentation of the North is not only in line with the presentations of age but also as a place to be escaped, as somewhere that has trapped the characters. Part of this is connected to age yet the image of the North as a real and imagined space to be escaped is explored across all age brackets of Northern exploration on screen.

Younger Women Trying to Escape the Inescapable North

The underlying message conveyed throughout the films explored so far is that the North is an iconography to be escaped. It is a space that traps inhabitants both physically and mentally. As John Hill writes 'New Wave films contrast young women's mobility to the stasis of young men, suggesting that travel and mobility play a pivotal role in the period's discourse on sexuality, power and gender.' (Hill in Ashby & Higson, 2000: 234), with many contemporary Northern films still perpetuating the same ideas as those of the New Wave era the same themes of travel and mobility are echoed in the representations of Northern women on screen. *Catch Me Daddy* and *Adult Life Skills* place women in the narrative centre, focal to the dramatic drive and yet continue to fall into some of the existing stereotypes that limit the complexities of on-screen representations of Northern women. Although their representations do not contrast the mobility of women to the stasis of young men in the way *Brassed Off* and *Little Voice* do, the depictions of female characters are framed by the trapping nature of the surrounding Northern landscape and their limited ability to travel through it. *Catch Me Daddy* explores the idea of honour crime and its impact on Sameena Jabeen Ahmed's character Leila, as she tries to escape the confinements of her father's expectations for her life. *Adult Life Skills* starring Jodie Whittaker as Anna explores the character's journey through grieving the death of her brother, living in a shed at the end of her mother's garden, and how the Northern landscape affects her growth.

Daniel Wolfe's 2014 thriller *Catch Me Daddy* offers an image of the North that condemns it as a place to be escaped. In his exploration of the North, Wolfe, through Robbie Ryan's 35mm shot cinematography, presents a dark, bleak and obscured landscape. Phillips discusses this genre layering of Northern terrain when she writes 'The myth of a Gothic, excessive North is written onto the landscape, which becomes 'suffused with a sense of

profound and sometimes apocalyptic anxiety', which is figured as 'a dichotomy of extremes between wild nature and industry/post-industrial decline.'(Hutchings in Phillips, 2017: 159). Phillips' discussion of Hutchings' earlier writing acutely explores how the images of the North on screen, such as in *Catch Me Daddy* feed into the false narrative of the Gothic excess. Hutchings' discussions of these images perfectly summarise Wolfe's North, with the thriller genre of the film creating the almost 'apocalyptic anxiety' of the landscape. This emphasises the building tension and with images of a lifeless, grey and inescapable North used to do so (Figure 9 and 10). These images are taken from the introductory sequence of the film, a montage of images of the film's locale that reflect the dark themes of the film. The sequence is set to a recitation of the Ted Hughes Poem *Hepstonstall Old Church* in a prominent West Yorkshire accent and opens the film with the bleak image that continues throughout. The impact of the poem against the assembled images reflects the type of North that Ted Hughes wrote about, as Brady writes in his review of the film;

'This is recognisably Hughes' Yorkshire: its pitiless poetry is ever ready to engulf its unfortunate human inhabitants. But it is equally the tramping ground of Emily Brontë, where the darkest nights harbour and hide runaways and doomed romantics not unlike the youngsters at the heart of this riveting thriller.' (The Irish Times: 2015)

The submerging nature of Hughes' North is clearly reflected throughout the film and furthers Wolfe's Gothic stylisation.

This North's ability to harbour runways is then clearly explored in the chase between Leila, Aaron and the men hunting them. This sense of being trapped is iterated from the film's very beginning and is an image of the Northern moorlands that has been recurrently seen on screen and commented upon in early literature. The introductory images of Leila and Aaron show them exploring across the moorlands, engulfed by smoke (see Fig 11), they became silhouettes of themselves, absorbed by the surrounding landscape. This imagery sets the tone for how their characters will progress through the film, they are engulfed by the landscape, unable to escape. This imagery is reflective of the later film *God's Own Country (2017)* by

Francis Lee, that equally tries to present a raw Yorkshire that is 'honest' in its depiction of the landscape. Lee, much life Wolfe, uses the same engulfing imagery of smoke to silhouette his characters as they trek in the moorlands (see Fig 12). Despite the non-urban landscape of these two images, both directors reflect 'a harsh landscape and climate; an often smoke-obscured land of mines or manufacturing; a substandard environment for . . . residence, a land populated by earnest people, ruthless leaders and heroes who may "escape" south' (Pocock, 1979: 62). Pocock writes on the novelist's image of the North as a product of industrialisation. Yet despite the moorland setting of the majority of both films, the images remain smoke obscured from heather burning. Obscured landscape again being a common trope of the Gothic, furthering iterating Wolfe's image of a North as a space to be escaped.

Wolfe attempts to present a narrative that places a young female character forefront in the pursuit of her own freedoms. However, Leila is presented as without a reason behind the need for said freedoms outside of her relationship, she is pushed forward and held back by Aaron, placing her at the will of a male character. Much like the images of Northern women prominent in the New Wave, Leila's mobility is hindered by Aaron's status as a white man within the Asian culture of her family. Although the New Wave was a white-wash, female hindrance was a clear theme throughout. In this framing, Leila is another Northern female character that fulfils Forrest and Johnson's commentary on the Northern woman on screen as 'suffering mother, wife and lover' (2017:1). Leila is, as with Mari, Gloria and May another lover who is suffering due to her affiliation with a male character and her Northern-ness.

Leila is hunted by men, isolating her as a female character and rendering her powerless at the hands of the other male characters. Aaron's mum's kidnapping resulting in the characters having to relinquish their minimal freedom, leading to her having to be saved by another

male character. Leila ultimately becomes just another female victim of patriarchal culture on screen, further hindered by the film's geographical location. Wolfe does not place Leila as her own hero but rather Aaron and then Tony are shown as attempted heroes who ultimately fail. The failure of these characters that are positioned in heroic acts is perhaps because

> 'Heroes, after all, establish their status as heroes – and as men – through their penetration and conquest of a feminized space and landscape. If women are to establish an identity as … hero, then this relationship must in some way be challenged.' (Thornham, 2019:1)

Wolfe's depiction of the North is one with a noticeable lack of feminized space and landscape, considering feminized space in line with Hewitt's discussion of Mary Linskill's writing and her presentation of feminine spaces in the North;

> 'The titles of Between the Heather and the Northern Sea and The Haven under the Hill locate their North at a point where topographies meet and boundaries blur, where the 'masculine' geographical features of hill and sea elide with the more empathetic 'feminine' attributes of 'home' and 'haven'.' (Ehland: 2007: 119)

Thornton considers the establishment of the heroes through the conquest of feminized spaces and Hewitt's comments on feminine space being home and haven. The success of the 'heroes' in *Catch Me Daddy* is fatally hindered in the clear lack of femininized spaces. The film's thriller nature removes any sense of safety and therefore haven, the removal of haven means there is no home, Aaron and Leila are in the process of escape, with the interior spaces being shown as temporary. In the lack of femininized spaces Leila is marginalised through isolation, she is as a female character in a masculine dominated landscape and space, ultimately Othered by her gender.

Leila is doomed from the outset and Wolfe makes this clear with his use of dual narratives that edge nearer throughout the film until the climactic moment they collide. For the thriller element of the film, this aids the building of tension, yet by prefiguring Leila's outcome she

is rendered powerless to her fate. This is further consolidated by the vastness of her surroundings and their isolation in the caravan within the 'bog and heather' (Hughes) of the 'loose' moorlands that Hughes poem references in the film's introduction. She is again, engulfed, like the smoke, by a masculine landscape and rendered powerless by the male characters that surround her, reflecting the doubly repressive representation through gender and regionality.

The most rounded image of Northern female identity in discussion, is the 2016 film *Adult Life Skills* that journeys through Jodie Whittaker's character Anna's grieving and how she develops as an individual through the trauma of her twin brother's death. Written and directed by female Northerner, Rachel Tunnard in her directorial debut, the film offers a complex exploration of Northern women across three generations and their differing expectations of life. The film tracks Anna's emotional journey through the process of grief, using the surrounding Northern landscape to visually track it. The exploration of female identity looks at the reality of familial conversations with Tunnard in an interview with the Big Issue saying;

> 'When I was writing Adult Life Skills, I just listened to things my dad, brother and husband said and put them into the mouths of women," she says of her dialogue style. "Somebody said to me once that the grandma in the film is really progressive and I thought: That's just the things my dad says." She laughs. "I listen to the way people talk, steal it and put it into my stories. I think that banter is quite a northern thing.' (Big Issue, 2020)

Tunnard's approach of using natural dialectal phrasing in the writing of script comes through the film as a natural Northern-ness, one that has not be pre-supposed by a southern centric gaze. The three generations of women in the film also aid the exploration of cross generational ideas of and for the Northern woman. None of the female characters are in binding heterosexual relationships and collectively live in one matriarchal household, as opposed to the images of Northern women as domesticated in subservience to the male

characters. Anna goes on a journey of self-discovery that is without the involvement with or of men. In her attempts to escape the inescapable North, Anna is mentally journeying. She attempts this through returning to a childlike state as demonstrated by her behaviour towards her mother and the relationship she develops with a neighbouring child. In her discussion of British Women's Cinema and a series of films from the 1980s that reflected this movement, Justine Ashby writes 'The motif of escape is perhaps best understood here in terms of a movement through a liminal space, a realm of possibility. redefining and re-empowering transformation of identity or rite of passage.' (Ashby in Williams & Bell, 2009: 155). The movement through 'liminal space' is key to the understanding of how the theme of escape is used in *Adult Life Skills,* Anna is going on a transformative journey as a person, separate to her gender and regionality. Once she has successfully rounded herself and processed the emotional trauma, she then enters into a relationship with the film's love interest, rather than the relationship with a man being the transformative process. Although Anna ultimately fulfils the expectations of her nagging Mother by moving out of the shed, dating someone and moving on with her life, she does so on her own terms, empowered by the 'escape' through a liminal space.

Tunnard paints a soft image of the North as a potentially beautiful surrounding landscape. However, showing the world through the eyes of Anna, the images are at points brutally grey and at times showing a nowhere place that reflects how trapped by grief Anna feels. Similar to *Calendar Girls, Catch Me Daddy* and *God's Own Country, Adult life Skills* uses wide panning shots of the Yorkshire landscape to reflect the vastness of the character's surroundings. Despite the lack of browned heather in Tunnard's' image of the North, like Wolfe's and Lee's, there is still a reflection of the North as an inescapable iconography, one that is trapping Anna and to some extent the other characters around her. Bet Rourich, the

cinematographer, uses deep focus (see Fig 13) to illustrate the immensity of the Yorkshire setting. The shot places Anna foreground, yet still small compared to the vastness of her surroundings. Although Anna's journey is emotional rather than physical, Tunnard tracks the progress of this journey through character's relationship to the landscape, reflecting her identity's intrinsic link to the Northern setting. Figure 13 in the film is at the height of Anna's emotional isolation and therefore entrapment by the inescapable North, Tunnard's juxtaposed images of her and the surroundings reflect how emotionally insignificant the character is feeling at this point in the film. The linking of Anna to the North is reflective of Phillips that film discourse presents 'Northern subjects as just their bodies – inherently classed and gendered bodies, inscribed with 'Northern-ness' – to be displayed, worked, put to use.' (Phillips, 2017:151) Anna is not inherently classed but the presentation of the surroundings in line with her emotional state inscribes the character with Northern-ness in a display in which she is worked and put to use, both physically and emotionally. As shown in Figure 14, Anna is silhouetted against the backdrop of the North and its strenuous outdoor, she is lost in the landscape and presented merely as a body.

Although Tunnard presents a layered image of the North that is crucially linked to Anna's emotional state, she still perpetuates the image of the North as a place of hard labour. Anna's job working at an outdoor centre extends Shield's discussion of the divide in North South images writing, 'A gradation from South to North marks an additional shading of supposedly decreasing cultural 'sophistication' with the North being associated with the strenuous 'outdoors' and the South with refinement to the point of indolence (Shields, 1991:215). Anna and Alice, who both work at the outdoor activity centre, are shown as working in the 'strenuous outdoors'. Reflecting how Tunnard's image of the North, mimics the stereotyped

Northern image that contrasts with the generalised image of the South on screen, much like the positioning of London against the North in *The Mother*.

Tunnard presents a series of female characters that exist beyond the guise of their value to men, yet in her presentation of the North she still pertains to the image of the north as an iconography to be escaped. Despite Anna being presented as a person in the narrative and not solely a woman, in the presentation of the outdoors as a place of work, and in line with Phillips discussion of Northern subjectivity Tunnard still presents Anna as an inherently gendered body. Similarly, the bonding of the images of the North to the emotional journey of Anna places the character in constant attempt to escape, the inescapable North.

Catch Me Daddy and *Adult Life Skills* reflect that in all age brackets Northern women are still further marginalised by their regionality, in the exploration of the North as a space to be escaped, be that a literal space or imagined space. Leila is fatally trapped by the combination of geography, gender and race, whereas Anna's journey of emotional redemption, although successful on a personal level, still reflects the North as a space to be escaped.

Conclusion

In summary, the representations of Yorkshire women on screen between 1990 and 2020 are reflective of both the depictions that preceded this time period as well as the contexts and times in which they were created. *Brassed Off* and *Little Voice*, reflecting the 1990s, in their depictions of powerless women in a hopeless North represent Yorkshire women in mimicry of the depictions from the British New Wave. Conforming to the synonymous representation of the North and the working-class, both films double marginalise their female characters through gender and regionality, perpetuating the same 'humdrum' feminine image of Northern-ness that Phillips discusses the prevalence of in on-screen representations. The film's preoccupations with the male struggle continues the emphasis on and centralisation of the masculine narrative, one that subordinates the female struggle and values female characters solely in their relation to men.

In *Calendar Girls* and *The Mother,* in portrayals of the older woman marked by the North, although presenting a female centered narrative, still comply to some of the commonly perpetuated images of the Northern woman. Despite the attempts to show a radical image of the older woman, in the exploration of ageing the films reflect a nullified North, one that offers limited to no development for the characters as a space. *Calendar Girls* representation of naked female form, although based on true story, presented comedically and in performance of female empowerment, plays into the expectations of the male gaze and objectifies the characters through sexualisation. This further condemns them, via age, regionality and gender.

Catch Me Daddy and *Adult Life Skills,* in their contemporary perceptions of the Northern woman and her Northern space mimic the iconographic representations of a vast North that is to be escaped. Although the most recent of the films explored, these echo a much older imagined North. In Wolfe's darkly lit thriller, the North is reminiscent of the 'Darkshire'

images present in the early literature that commented on the North, in contrast to Tunnard's pastoral North imitating the 'green and pleasant' land image that quaintly silences its inhabitants. Both iterations of the North limit and trap their characters. However, across the three decades there is some clear development in the complexities of the depictions of Yorkshire women. By 2016 *Adult Life Skills* is exploring a female character in control of her own decisions, be that one trapped in the Northern landscape, she is still a character with power, unlike the women of the 1990s. The images of Northern characters still perpetuate them as marked bodies, 'inherently gendered', however the representation of class has developed to offer a more multifaceted image of Northern class.

The importance of the representations of the North being truly reflective of the wide and diverse experiences of living in the North is crucial in consideration of what depiction is being interpellated. The dual marginalisation of Northern women, although lessening, still has to develop in the complexities of its presentations, until equalling the more varied on-screen Southern and male images. image of the has a long way to go until it equals the representations of the South and men. As ultimately, 'The flowers of Yorkshire are like the women of Yorkshire. Every stage of their growth has its own beauty' (Calendar Girls: 2003), strong and intricate, the cinematic representations of Yorkshire women should equate to the realities of their existence. Until there are more increasingly complex images of Northern women, through gender and regionality, Yorkshire women remain disadvantaged by their cinematic representations.

Bibliography

Ashby, J., & Higson, A. (Eds.). (2000). *British Cinema, Past and Present* (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203354865

Bell, M. and Williams, M. (2010), *British Women's Cinema,* Oxon: Routledge

Big Issue North. (2020). *Director's thumbs up*. [online] Available at: https://www.bigissuenorth.com/features/2020/05/directors-thumbs-up/#close> [Accessed 1 May 2021].

Bradshaw, P., (2003). *Calendar Girls*. [Online] the Guardian. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/film/2003/aug/29/calendar-girls> [Accessed 8 May 2021].

Brady, T., (2015), *Catch Me Daddy review: a ripping Yorkshire thriller*. [Online] The Irish Times. Available at: https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/film/catch-me-daddy-review-a-ripping-yorkshire-thriller 1.2115830#:~:text=This%20tremendous%20debut%20feature%20by,shabby%20roofs%20of%20nowhere%20towns> [Accessed 9 April 2021].

Chandler, D. and Munday, R., (2011) *A Dictionary of Media and Communication*. 1st ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cobb, S and Williams, L. (2020) Histories of now: listening to women in British film, *Women's History Review*, 29:5, 890-902, DOI: 10.1080/09612025.2019.1703542

Day, E. (2013), Maxine Peake: 'People go to therapy-I've got a hoover' Interview, *The Guardian,* 24 March, p.1.

Dickens, C. et al. (2015). *Hard Times*. New York, New York: Open Road Media.

Dolan, J. (2013). *The Feminist Spectator in Action : feminist criticism for the stage and screen* . New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ehland, C.(2007), *Thinking Northern:* Textures of Identity in the North of England, Amsterdam: Brill

Forrest, D. and Johnson, B. (2016) "Northern English Stardom" *Journal of Popular Television*, 4 (2). pp. 195-198. Available at: http://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/95676/8/JPTV%204.2_2_dossier%20intro_Forrest%20and%20Johnson.pdf

Gant, C. (2014) 'Catch Me Daddy', *Variety*, 324(2), 88, available: https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A371841389/AONE?u=jrycal5&sid=AONE&xid=f88965cb [Accessed 05 Apr 2021].

Gauntlett, D. (2008), *Media, Gender and Identity: An Introduction,* 2nd Edn. Oxon: Routledge

Gorton, K and Peirse, A (2016) 'A Revolutionary Voice': Analysing Maxine Peake's Northern stardom in Silk and Room at the Top. *The Journal of Popular Television*, 4 (2). pp. 213-224.

Gwynne, J. (2020). Mother and Lover: Dissident Desire and the Older Woman in The Mother and Adore. In *Cross Generational Relationships and Cinema*. Cham: Springer International Publishing, pp. 15–31.

Hockenhull, S. (2015). Damsels in Distress: British Women Film Directors and British Cinema Funding Post Millennium. *Film International*, 13 (1), pp 6-19.

Hutchings, P. (2004), 'Uncanny Landscapes in British Film and Television', *Visual Culture in Britain*, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 27–40,

Ince, K. (2016). 'Female Subjectivity in Philosophy and Theory'. *In the Body and the Screen*: *Female Subjectivities in Contemporary Women's Cinema* (pp. 1–26). New York: Bloomsbury Academic. Retrieved February 2, 2021, from http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781501396519.ch-001

Kermode, M., (2003). *Calendar Girls*. [Online] the Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2003/sep/07/features.review> [Accessed 5 May 2021].

Laing, S. (1986.) *Representations of Working*-Class Life 1957-1964 (London:

Macmillan)

Looser, D. (1999). Woodward, Kathleen, ed. Figuring Age: Women, Bodies, Generations. *Journal of Aging and Identity*, 4(3), pp.203–205.

Lund, C.P. (2009). *The portrayal of Working-Class speech in British film : a study of accent in British films from the 1960 s and the 2000 s*, PhD. The University of Bergen

Mazierska, E, (2017) *Heading North:* The North of England in Film and Television, Preston: Palgrave Macmillan

McRobbie, A. (2004) Post-feminism and popular culture, *Feminist Media Studies*, 4:3, 255-264

O'Neill, D. and Wayne, M. (2007). Film as a radical pedagogic tool. *Film international (Göteborg, Sweden)*, 5(5), pp.10–16.

O'Sullivan, C. (2003), *Film: The old ones are the best ; The Mother, [FOREIGN Edition]*, London (UK).

Phillips, H. (2017) 'A Woman Like That Is Not A Woman, Quite. I Have Been Her Kind': Maxine Peake and the Gothic Excess of Northern Femininity', in Forrest, D. and Johnson, B (eds). *Social Class and Television Drama in Contemporary Britain*: London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp 149- 165.

Pocock, D.C.D. (1979). 'The Novelist's Image of the North', *Transactions, Institute of British Geographers*, NS4, pp. 62–76.

Quirk, J. (2009), Northern Exposure, *The Guardian*, 28 February, p.1.

Russell, D. (2004), *Looking North:* Northern identities and the National Imagination, Manchester: Manchester University Press

Sherwin, A. (2016), Maxine Peake told she 'too Northern' for the role, *I News,* 14 April, p.1.

Shields, Rob (1991). *Places on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of Modernity*

(London: Routledge).

Smith, S. (1999). 'The Image of Women in Film: Some Suggestions for Future Research', in Thornham S. (Ed.), *Feminist Film Theory: A Reader*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University, pp 14-19.

Thornham, S. (2019). Spaces of Women's Cinema: Space, Place and Genre, *Contemporary Women's Filmmaking.* London, British Film Institute. Retrieved February 2, 2021, from http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781911239185

Wayne, M. (2006) The Performing Northern Working Class in British Cinema: Cultural Representation and its Political Economy, *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, 23:4,pp. 287-297

Williams, M. (2017). *Female Stars of British Cinema: The Women in Question*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press

Yacowar, M. (1997) 'Against the Hollywood grain: Trainspotting and Brassed off', *Queen's Quarterly*, 104(2), 233-42, available: https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A30411369/AONE?u=jrycal5&sid=AONE&xid=fdfb4206 [Accessed 05 Apr 2021].

Filmography

Adult Life Skills. (2016). Directed by Rachel Tunnard. [Amazon Prime]. Available at: https://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/video/detail/amzn1.dv.gti.6aaa9d35-e094-516c-443b-289811c9878a?autoplay=1&ref_=atv_cf_strg_wb

Brassed Off,(1996). Directed by Mark Herman. [Box of Broadcasts]. Available at: https://learningonscreen.ac.uk/ondemand/index.php/prog/000A7739?bcast=114045787

Calendar Girls. (2003). Directed by Nigel Cole. [Box of Broadcasts]. Available at: https://learningonscreen.ac.uk/ondemand/index.php/prog/00597B2D?bcast=116306111

Catch Me Daddy. (2014). Directed by Daniel Wolfe. [Box of Broadcasts]. Available at: https://learningonscreen.ac.uk/ondemand/index.php/prog/0C3B3EB1?bcast=133934298

God's Own Country. (2017) Directed by Francis Lee. [Box of Broadcasts]. Avaliable at: https://learningonscreen.ac.uk/ondemand/index.php/prog/108FC189?bcast=134160730

Little Voice. (1998). Directed by Mark Herman. [Box of Broadcasts]. Available at: https://learningonscreen.ac.uk/ondemand/index.php/prog/001C325F?bcast=126961401

The Full Monty. (1997). Directed by Peter Cattaneo. [Box of Broadcast]. Available at: https://learningonscreen.ac.uk/ondemand/index.php/prog/000AE246?bcast=131909205

The Mother.(2003). Directed by Roger Michell. [Box of Broadcasts]. Available at: https://learningonscreen.ac.uk/ondemand/index.php/prog/00505AC6?bcast=106754193