

**FRANCIS BRETT  
YOUNG'S  
BIRMINGHAM**

*NORTH BROMWICH – CITY OF IRON*

by

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**FRANCIS BRETT YOUNG'S BIRMINGHAM***North Bromwich – City of Iron***ABSTRACT**

In this thesis I investigate Francis Brett Young's Birmingham portrait in his North Bromwich novels, showing it to be a valid interpretation, though biased to suit the anti-urban prejudices of its author. Chapter One sets Young in his biographical and literary context. Birmingham during the North Bromwich era (c1870-1939) is examined and the role of novels as historical source established. In Chapter Two I define and explore Young's North Bromwich canon, one exemplar among many historical realities, and show that the name and soubriquets of North Bromwich interpret Birmingham. Chapter Three investigates North Bromwich's climate and topography, commercial, political and civic life, indicating clear Birmingham parallels. Chapter Four describes North Bromwich suburbs, housing and transport, each of which accurately replicates Birmingham originals. In Chapter Five I show North Bromwich's recreational and religious life reflecting Young's own Birmingham experience. Chapter Six traces North Bromwich's interpretation of Birmingham's educational provision, particularly concentrating upon its university's evolution. Chapter Seven establishes links between North Bromwich and Birmingham medicine, revealing thinly-disguised fictional characters as key Birmingham practitioners. Summarizing the above, Chapter Eight confirms the integrity of Young's North Bromwich portrait and his seminal role in the on-going literary interpretation of Birmingham.

**FRANCIS BRETT YOUNG'S BIRMINGHAM**

*North Bromwich – City of Iron*

**DEDICATION**

I dedicate

*Francis Brett Young's Birmingham*  
*North Bromwich – City of Iron*

To my family

Sue,  
Cath, Simon, Lin, Jon,  
Thomas and Joshua

whose love is my constant encouragement and support

**FRANCIS BRETT YOUNG'S BIRMINGHAM**

*North Bromwich – City of Iron*

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

# **SETTING THE SCENE**

With every good novel we embark upon a voyage of adventure in which, even though the course be familiar to us, our own senses, dulled by custom, are reinforced by the acuteness of the novelist's.

Francis Brett Young - *Confessions of a Novelist*

*Francis Brett Young's Birmingham: North Bromwich – City of Iron* investigates the image of Birmingham (c1870-1939) named *North Bromwich* and caricatured as *City of Iron* in the writings of poet and novelist Francis Brett Young. Beginning with *Undergrowth* (1913) and developed through twenty-seven works ending with *Wistanslow* (1956), this North Bromwich canon is the most extensive and significant depiction of Birmingham yet undertaken in fiction. Using photographs where appropriate, the detail and accuracy of the North Bromwich image is explored, its bias identified and explained and Young's work placed within its geographical, historical and literary context, comparing the North Bromwich canon with the work of other regional and Birmingham novelists.

My interest in Birmingham's geography and history has been nurtured and sustained by Young's North Bromwich canon to which I was introduced at the age of thirteen when I read *The House under the Water* in the school library during winter dinner hours. This novel excited me. Living just a short bus ride from Birmingham city centre, where the Museum and Art Gallery were regular weekend treats, I was fascinated to encounter a local author who had written about places I recognised. The intricate detail of Young's North Bromwich portrait, with events, locations, people and themes clearly based upon history and topography which I had read and explored for myself, but which were ignored at school, captivated me. My later search for other novelists, earlier than or contemporary with Young, who had adopted Birmingham settings<sup>1</sup> unquestionably revealed Young as the most prolific, whilst the study of Birmingham's Quinton suburb for my M.A.<sup>2</sup> prompted me to re-examine Young's Quinton

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<sup>1</sup> Although Birmingham remains a contemporary regional setting, e.g. Lodge, D. (1988) *Nice Work*, London, Martin Secker & Warburg; Coe, J. (2001) *The Rotters' Club*, London, Viking; Murray, A. (2006) *Family of Women*, London, Pan Books, novelists addressing Birmingham themes post-Young remain outside the scope of this thesis.

<sup>2</sup> Hall, M. (1983) *Who knows but it may continue? A History of Methodism in Quinton from 1781 to 1981*, M.A. thesis, University of Birmingham

portrait and persuaded me of the overall accuracy of his historical and topographical descriptions.<sup>3</sup> Further research for the teaching and learning pack *Introducing Francis Brett Young Novelist of the Midlands*<sup>4</sup> and the video *Francis Brett Young's Black Country*<sup>5</sup> made me aware that though Young may be described as a Midlands novelist, his most detailed portraits are of Birmingham rather than its surroundings. In 1994, with the fascination still vibrant, I was invited by Seren Press to write Young's biography for their *Border Lines* series. This opportunity for further reflection convinced me that, as they bring to life an age and city frozen in time, the North Bromwich novels constitute an insufficiently explored historical source even though a number of important studies have examined various aspects of Young's life and works.

In the first of such studies E.G. Twitchett, an Admiralty Library clerk<sup>6</sup> who adapted *Far Forest* for radio,<sup>7</sup> addresses basic themes in Young's prose and poetry before devoting chapters to each pre-1935 novel.<sup>8</sup> Four pages referring to North Bromwich concentrate upon Birmingham's Welsh water scheme.<sup>9</sup> Twitchett's full-length work grew out of his earlier critique<sup>10</sup> in which North Bromwich is not mentioned. Emeritus Professor of English at Rouen, Jacques Leclaire's doctoral thesis<sup>11</sup> is a thorough literary examination of Young's works with a biographical preface. This wide-ranging study dedicates a sub-section of one

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<sup>3</sup> Hall, M. (July 1989) "Tilton, Brett Young's Neglected Village", *Francis Brett Young Society Journal* 21, pp 10-26

<sup>4</sup> Hall, M (1994) *Introducing Francis Brett Young Novelist of the Midlands*, Hales Owen, The Francis Brett Young Society

<sup>5</sup> Hall, M. (1995) *Francis Brett Young's Black Country*, Hales Owen, The Francis Brett Young Society

<sup>6</sup> Hunt, J. (July 1988) "On the Twitchett Trail" in *Francis Brett Young Society Journal* No 19, p 16

<sup>7</sup> Young's *Far Forest* was serialised on BBC radio during February-April, 1937, see Hall, M. (2005) *Published Works of Francis Brett Young*, Hales Owen, Francis Brett Young Society, p 71

<sup>8</sup> Twitchett, E.G. (1935) *Francis Brett Young*, London, Wishart

<sup>9</sup> Twitchett, E.G. (1935) pp 36-40

<sup>10</sup> Twitchett, E.G. (August 1924) "Mr Francis Brett Young" in *The London Mercury* Vol X, No 58, pp 396-408

<sup>11</sup> Published as Leclaire, J. (1970) *Un Témoin de l'Avènement de l'Angleterre Contemporaine: Francis Brett Young*, Rouen, L'Université

chapter to North Bromwich. Drawing largely on three novels<sup>12</sup> (though briefly quoting or citing others), Leclaire visits two of North Bromwich's eight suburbs,<sup>13</sup> its civic, commercial and medical resources, topography and ambience. In Cambridge academic Glen Cavaliero's investigation of rural themes in twentieth century English novels<sup>14</sup> Young shares a chapter with Winifred Holtby. A single reference to North Bromwich establishes the tension between industrial and pastoral in Young's writing. By contrast in his survey of Black Country writers Wolverhampton academic Paul McDonald presents Young, to whom he devotes an entire chapter, as a Black Country novelist.<sup>15</sup> McDonald's argument is predicated upon a detailed examination of Young's novel *My Brother Jonathan* and admits only a passing reference to North Bromwich Medical School as a curtain-raiser to the main story.

Geographer Leslie Jay's meticulous examination of topography, economics and demography in Young's Midland novels<sup>16</sup> also concentrates upon the Black Country, in particular upon one limited industrial landscape just seven miles from Birmingham city centre.<sup>17</sup> Admitting the distinction (which Young also acknowledged) between Birmingham and the Black Country, Jay identifies North Bromwich as Birmingham but accords it no further attention. Historian David Cannadine, with disconcerting lapses into inaccuracy,<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, London, Collins; (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, London, Heinemann; (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, London, Heinemann

<sup>13</sup> Alvaston (Edgbaston) and Tilton (Quinton, which Leclaire inaccurately identifies as Tipton) – see p 199

<sup>14</sup> Cavaliero, G. (1977) *The Rural Tradition in the English Novel 1900-1939*, London, Macmillan

<sup>15</sup> McDonald, P. (2002) *Fiction from the Furnace: A Hundred Years of Black Country Writing*, Sheffield, Hallam University, pp 37-47

<sup>16</sup> Jay, L. (1972) "The Black Country Novels of Francis Brett Young" in *International Geography*, pp 347-348; (1975) "The Black Country World of Francis Brett Young" in *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* No 66, pp 57-72; (1980) *The Importance of Place in the Midlands Novels of Francis Brett Young*, Hales Owen, The Francis Brett Young Society

<sup>17</sup> Jay, L. (December 1984) "Mawne was a World in Itself" in *Francis Brett Young Society Journal* 12, pp 32-46; Mawne (suggesting the original Hawne) is Young's name for an area of the Stour Valley on the Staffordshire/Worcestershire border to the north west of Hales Owen.

<sup>18</sup> E.g. North Bromwich accountant Owen Lucton is wrongly identified as a solicitor in both Cannadine, D. (1977) "Politics, Propaganda and Art: The Tale of Two Worcestershire Lads" in *Midland History* Vol IV No 2, p 113 and (1982) *This Little World: The Value of the Novels of Francis Brett Young as a Guide to the State of*



uses Young's novels to illustrate the decline of the rural aristocracy and rise of the urban nonconformist elite in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Midlands' society.<sup>19</sup> In particular Cannadine links the nostalgic retrospection of Baldwin's politics with Young's writing<sup>20</sup> where an idyllic rural Midlands confronts the industrial evils of the Black Country and North Bromwich. Two North Bromwich suburbs are merely named,<sup>21</sup> whilst Young's Alvaston portrait illuminates Cannadine's later exploration of Edgbaston.<sup>22</sup>

Young's major biographies are an adulatory study by his widow<sup>23</sup> and my own investigation exploring the novelist through his writing.<sup>24</sup> Numerous other accounts of Young's life and works appear in anthologies<sup>25</sup> and journals.<sup>26</sup> None of these is concerned primarily with North Bromwich. Indeed there has been no previous discrete investigation of Young's Birmingham portrait; no earlier study of Young's life and works has established the

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*Midland Society 1870-1925*, Worcestershire Historical Society, p 20; the error had still not been rectified by the publication of Cannadine, D. (2002) *In Churchill's Shadow*, London, Penguin Books, p 177. In Cannadine, D. (11.06.1984) *Contrasts: Francis Brett Young*, Central Independent Television, it is wrongly asserted that no reprints of Young's novels were available nor had any novel ever been adapted for television. During the 1960s the Birmingham publishers Combridges reprinted twenty of Young's works, with Mayfair adding a further four and Chivers a further three in the 1970s, when four titles were also produced by RNIB. Alan Sutton reprinted *Portrait of a Village* in 1983 and *Marching on Tanga* in 1984, when *The House under the Water* was reprinted by Chivers. *The House under the Water* was serialised on BBC in 1961 – see Hall, M (2005) *passim*.

<sup>19</sup> Cannadine, D. (1982); (1994) *Aspects of Aristocracy: Grandeur and Decline in Modern Britain*, New Haven, Yale University Press,

<sup>20</sup> Cannadine, D. (1977); this article reappeared in Cannadine, D. (2002) pp 159-185; Cannadine, D. (06.11.1984)

<sup>21</sup> Winsworth and Sparkdale – Cannadine, D. (1977b) p 110; (1982) p 11; (2002) p 173

<sup>22</sup> Cannadine, D. (1980) *Lords and Landlords: The Aristocracy and the Towns 1774-1967*, Leicester, University Press. Much of the Edgbaston section of this book emerged from Cannadine's DPhil thesis, *The Aristocracy and the Towns in the Nineteenth Century: A Case-Study of the Calthorpes of Birmingham 1807-1910*, (July 1975) St John's College, Oxford, which in turn gave rise to (1975) "The Calthorpe Family and Birmingham, 1807-1910: A Conservative Interest Examined" in *Historical Journal* Vol XVIII No 41, pp 725-760 and (January 4<sup>th</sup> 1977) "Victorian Cities: How Different?" in *Social History*, pp 457-482. None of these three earlier works mention Francis Brett Young.

<sup>23</sup> Young, J.B. (1962) *Francis Brett Young*, London, Heinemann

<sup>24</sup> Hall, M. (1997) *Francis Brett Young*, Bridgend, Seren

<sup>25</sup> E.g. Church, R. (1943) *British Authors*, London, Longmans Green & Co; Brook, D. (1944) *Writer's Gallery*, London, Rockliff Publishing Corporation; Appleyard, S. (1991) *The Storytellers*, Cheltenham, This England Books

<sup>26</sup> E.g. Gyde, A. (December 1928) "The Arrival of a Novelist" in *The World Today* Vol liii, No 1, pp 14-17; Ervine, St. J. (June 1936) "Francis Brett Young" in *Good Housekeeping*, pp 32,110-112; Ball, D. (May 1975) "Francis Brett Young 1884-1954" in *The Practitioner* No 1283, Vol 214, pp 693-700

range, scope and aetiological significance of his North Bromwich canon or addressed the diversity of North Bromwich themes discussed in this thesis.

## Francis Brett Young in Context<sup>27</sup>

Francis Brett Young was born in 1884, seven miles from Birmingham, at Hales Owen. This ancient parish housed wide-ranging manufacturing-industries including anvils, chains, guns, hoops, nails, pumps, rivets, screws, spades and tubes; its streets had been gas-lit since 1840. In the year of Young's birth Walter Somers installed a four-ton steam-hammer at his Hales Owen works.<sup>28</sup> New British Ironworks, depicted in Young's fiction as "choked from end to end and side to side with shop-roofs, colliery headgear, smoke stacks and furnaces,"<sup>29</sup> hardly suggests a peaceful bucolic landscape. As Young's birth clearly was not into the rural idyll beloved in his writing, his romantic assertion, "I am a countryman born,"<sup>30</sup> suggests aspiration rather than actuality, though the boy who collected butterflies and birds' eggs did grow up to follow the hunt.<sup>31</sup> His antecedents lay far from the industrial Midlands: in the Mendip village of Rowberrow and Somerby in Leicestershire's hunting country.<sup>32</sup> Both locations excited Young's preference over his own birthplace. Soft, green Mendip generates smiling, friendly workers very different from the Midlands' surly colliers.<sup>33</sup> High Leicestershire's workers "had none of the grudging, suspicious looks of industrial England."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Full biographical details may be found in Young, J.B. (1962) & Hall, M. (1997)

<sup>28</sup> See *Littlebury's Worcestershire Journal* (1873) and Hunt, J. (2004) *A History of Halesowen*, Chichester, Phillimore, pp 42, 46

<sup>29</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies*, London, Heinemann, p 270; Hales Owen's New British Iron Company (which included Timbertree & New Hawne collieries) was established in the early nineteenth century and went into liquidation in 1887. - FBY 2270 (30.01.1935) Letter from Young to E.G. Twitchett

<sup>30</sup> Young, F.B. (May 1934) "Country or City" in *Nash's and Pall Mall Magazine* No 492, p107

<sup>31</sup> FBY 96 (1926) Young's Diary; FBY 200 (09.02.1906) Letter from Young to Jessie Hankinson

<sup>32</sup> Francis's father, Thomas Brett Young, came from Rowberrow, his mother, Annie Elizabeth Jackson, came from Somerby, where her father hunted regularly with the Cottesmore – Hall, M. (1997) p 22

<sup>33</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 199

<sup>34</sup> Young, F.B. (1930) *Jim Redlake*, p 44

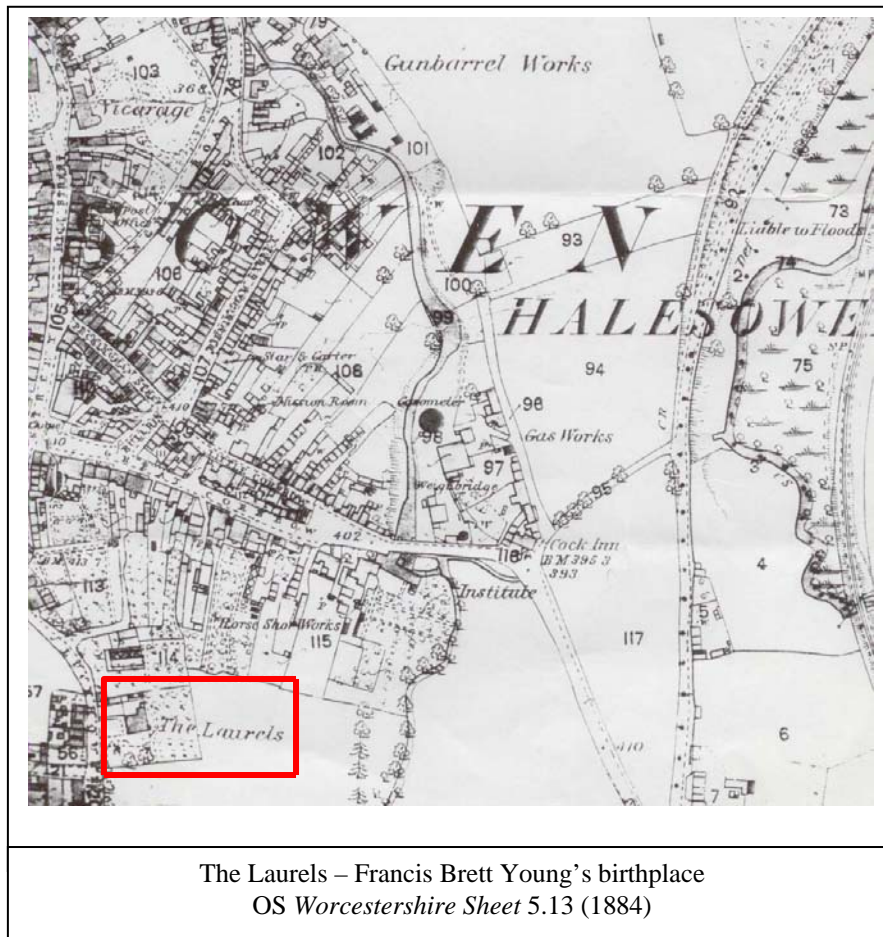
Though Young rightly claimed to be “of those privileged people whose infant lispings were not impeded by a silver spoon,”<sup>35</sup> his middle-class origins obtrude. His family home, amongst Hales Owen’s largest houses, employed resident cook, housemaid and (when necessary) monthly nurse, determining his own future households.<sup>36</sup>



The Laurels, Buckhouse Lane, Hales Owen, Francis Brett Young’s family home

<sup>35</sup> Young, F.B. (December 1932) “I think we are happiest in our working hours” in *Good Housekeeping*, p10

<sup>36</sup> The 1891 Census shows Emma Edwards (monthly nurse) and Sarah Bissell (housemaid) as resident at The Laurels; in 1901 the resident staff was Fanny Dyer (nurse) and Bertha Word (cook). When Young lived at Brixham from 1908-1919 his staff included Nesta Job (cook-housekeeper), Fred Cole (groom) and a surgery maid. At Craycombe House (1932-1945) resident chauffeur Harry Little, housemaid Marietta Massimino and cook-housekeeper Vera Lewis were supported by three gardeners, Collins, Salisbury and Shelton – see Hall, M. (1997) pp 75, 124-125



The likelihood of novelists selecting or distorting evidence to fit middle-class stereotypes about the working-class has been highlighted by Tosh.<sup>37</sup> A middle-class view of domestic hierarchy doubtless encouraged the paternalism expressed in Young’s opinion that the relationship between himself and those who served him was that of father and child.<sup>38</sup> A parallel perception encapsulates the relationship between himself and his readers. The novelist’s function, Young declared, was to be “a spirit superior to that of his time,” and the novel’s function “to give a light that was always there, but which we hadn’t noticed.”<sup>39</sup> Cunningham advances a similar view, acknowledging literature’s main function as a sign-

<sup>37</sup> Tosh, J. (2002) *The Pursuit of History*, London, Longman, pp 93-94

<sup>38</sup> FBY 490 (12.06.1916) Letter from Young to Jessie Brett Young

<sup>39</sup> Young, F.B. (March 1929) “Confessions of a Novelist” in *Yale Review*, pp 528, 537

system and shaper of reality and the novelist's duty to reveal and reflect.<sup>40</sup> Young clearly defines his intended readership. Advised that a Latin title for one of his poems might inhibit some readers, he replied that he did not write for nitwits.<sup>41</sup> His novels, he believed, should be "indispensable to every middle-class bookshelf in four counties."<sup>42</sup> Carr makes the point that history is refracted through its recorder's mind.<sup>43</sup> This thesis shows that Young's North Bromwich portrait, accurate in topographical minutiae, is refracted by his middle-class background, experience and expectation, and interprets facts according to his understanding of his own particular reality.

Medicine, Birmingham and English Literature permeated Young's earliest reality. In 1875 his father had entered Birmingham's Queen's College to study medicine; in the previous generation his grandfather and great uncle trained at Sydenham College, part of Birmingham's General Hospital.<sup>44</sup> Subsequently, the great uncle took a general practice in Birmingham.<sup>45</sup> The novels of Scott, Dickens and Stevenson were familiar to Francis<sup>46</sup> before he entered Iona Cottage High School, Sutton Coldfield in 1891. Later at Epsom College, a school established for doctors' sons to which Young won one of 1895's three entrance scholarships,<sup>47</sup> he joined the debating society, edited the school magazine and received the

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<sup>40</sup> Cunningham, V. (1988) *British Writers of the Thirties*, Oxford, University Press, p 1; (2000) "In the Darg: Fiction Nails the Midlands Metal-worker" in Klaus, H.G. & Knight, S., *British Industrial Fictions*, Cardiff, University of Wales Press, p 37; (2002) *Reading after Theory*, Oxford, Blackwell, p 43

<sup>41</sup> The poem was *Deus Flavit et Dissipati Sunt* (God blew with his wind and they were scattered) Young, J.B. (1962) p 263

<sup>42</sup> FBY 1521 (23.07.1934) Letter from Young to C.S. Evans

<sup>43</sup> Carr, E.H. (1990) *What is History?* London, Penguin Books, p 22

<sup>44</sup> FBY 57 (July 1938) Speech at opening of new wing at Birmingham Throat Hospital, Morrison, J.T. (1926) *William Sands Cox and the Birmingham Medical School*, Birmingham, Cornish Bros., p139

<sup>45</sup> Between 1867 and 1898 Dr Jabez Bunting Jackson had practices variously in Bloomsbury Place, Steelhouse Lane, Ashted Row, Belmont Row and Summer Lane – FBY 3248 (Letter from Young to W.H. Riley); Kelly, E.R. (ed.) *Post Office Directory of Birmingham, 1867-1872*, London, Kelly & Co; *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham, 1880-1898*

<sup>46</sup> Young, J.B. (1962) p19

<sup>47</sup> *Epsom College Register*, October 1855-July 1905 (1905) London, Richard Clay & Sons, p 281

Carr Divinity and Rosebery English Literature prizes.<sup>48</sup> “I left school,” he declared, “having saturated myself with English poetry.”<sup>49</sup> Anticipating reading classics at Balliol in preparation for a literary career, Young’s ambitions were thwarted by his father’s wish that he should become a doctor.

In 1901, with a Sands Cox scholarship,<sup>50</sup> Francis entered the medical faculty of the newly chartered University of Birmingham, located in the city centre’s Mason College. For the next six years he absorbed the atmosphere and experiences which would be replicated in the North Bromwich of his novels. Initially travelling by train each day from Hales Owen to Birmingham’s Snow Hill Station,<sup>51</sup> Young later lived in the city, contrasting the refinements of Edgbaston, where he lodged in Harborne Road,<sup>52</sup> with back-to-back housing and courts near Bath Row, experienced during his midwifery course,<sup>53</sup> and the suburbs of Aston and Hockley, where he assisted local doctors.<sup>54</sup> In the University’s Medical Literary Society, Young presented a paper on condition-of-England novelist Charles Kingsley,<sup>55</sup> and encountered a group of like-minded students of similar solid middle-class background to his own. “The Octette” shared common interests and together attended concerts in Birmingham

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<sup>48</sup> *Epsom College Register*, October 1855-July 1905 (1905) p 277; *The Epsomian* (23.02.1901); Soobiah, S. (July 1979) “Francis Brett Young at Epsom College” in *Francis Brett Young Society Newsletter No 1*, pp 8-10

<sup>49</sup> FBY 2764 (22.08.1951) Letter from Young to H.W.F. Franklin

<sup>50</sup> William Sands Cox, F.R.S., F.R.C.S. (1801-1875) was founder of Birmingham’s Queen’s Hospital (1841) and Queen’s College (1843). At his practice in Temple Row Cox gave lectures in anatomy, physiology and pathology. He personally funded Birmingham’s first medical lecture rooms, museum and library. A public testimonial fund in recognition of his achievements endowed a scholarship “awarded to the candidate amongst those entering the Faculty of Medicine who shall have obtained the highest marks at the matriculation examination in the previous June.” Young won this award, valued at £42p.a., in 1901. - Morrison, J.T. (1926) pp 3, 22, 33, 122-125; *University of Birmingham Calendar for Session 1900-1901* (1900) Birmingham, Cornish Bros, p 305

<sup>51</sup> Hickman, J. (n.d.) *Life History*, Wolverhampton, Steens Ltd., p 3

<sup>52</sup> During 1905-1906 Young lodged at the home of Gertrude Dale, 105, Harborne Road - Hall, M. (1997) p 158

<sup>53</sup> During March 1906 Young stayed at Harry Hixon’s Apartment House, 60, Bath Row - FBY 115 (n.d.) Ms notes for Young, J.B. (1962); *Kelly’s Directory of Birmingham* (1906)

<sup>54</sup> August 1906 assisted Dr George Bryce, Aston; August 1907 locum to Dr William McCall, Hockley - Hall, M. (1997) p 158

<sup>55</sup> Bridgewater, D. (December 1998) “The Octette Revisited” in *Francis Brett Young Society Journal 40*, p 36

Town Hall.<sup>56</sup> Young's acquaintance with the staff, students and routines of Birmingham's Queen's and General Hospitals dates from this period and, along with lunchtime visits to Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery and such student haunts as Joe Hillman's Restaurant in Paradise Street,<sup>57</sup> provided rich source material for his North Bromwich novels.

In January 1907, after qualifying, Young sailed to the Far East as ship's surgeon aboard the *SS Kintuck* of the Blue Funnel Line. Returning home, he married Jessie Hankinson whom he had met at Birmingham's Edgbaston Assembly Rooms and settled in general practice in Brixham where he also embarked upon his literary career. *Miner of Axmoor* and *Roman's Folly*, early short stories, never found publishers; neither did a 60,000-word novel, *Isolde St Gabriel*, nor a second, longer novel, *At Zeal Ferry*. In 1908 *Fry's Magazine* accepted his short story, *Puppets at the Fair*, and in February 1910 *The Thrush* published Young's short story, *The Dead Village*, and poem, *Sea Fancies*. Two years later his musical settings, *Songs of Robert Bridges*<sup>58</sup> was published. Finally, in 1913, after twelve rejections,<sup>59</sup> Secker published *Undergrowth*, a novel written collaboratively by Francis and his brother Eric.

In 1916 Young volunteered for the Royal Army Medical Corps and was posted to German East Africa in charge of a field ambulance unit. The rigours of war severely affected his health causing him to abandon medicine, move to Capri and embark upon a succession of novels set in and around Birmingham. These would, he wrote, "form a definite series

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<sup>56</sup> Laurence Ball, Lionel Hayes, Humphrey Humphreys, Bertram Lloyd, and Selby Phipson came from Edgbaston, Birmingham, Ernest Hird from Coventry and Neville Penrose from Ireland. Hird's father was a doctor, Humphreys' a dentist; Hayes' father was Secretary of Birmingham's Midland Institute, Ball's father Director of Birmingham School of Architecture; Lloyd's and Phipson's fathers were manufacturers and Penrose's father the Duke of Devonshire's Irish Land Agent. - Bridgewater, D. (December 1998) p 41

<sup>57</sup> Somers, F. (03.04.1954) "Obituary of Francis Brett Young", *County Express*

<sup>58</sup> Young, F.B. (1912) *Songs of Robert Bridges*, London, Breitkopf & Hartel

<sup>59</sup> Leclaire, J. (1970) p 25

presenting a more or less complete picture of society in the Midlands before the war. They will be grouped under the name of *The City of Iron*.”<sup>60</sup> Though the series title was never formally adopted, a significant corpus of the North Bromwich canon emerged from Capri at this time.<sup>61</sup> Recognition came gradually. The first review of *The Young Physician* described Young’s style as “attractively clear and simple.”<sup>62</sup> Two years later the reviewer acknowledged an established reputation. “Mr Young, as his readers already know has a true poetic power in weaving together the changes of nature and the changing soul of man.”<sup>63</sup> At the publication of *Sea Horses*, Walpole enthused, “Mr Young writes better prose than any living English novelist.”<sup>64</sup>

The seal of approval came with the award of the James Tait Black Memorial Prize for best novel of 1927 for *Portrait of Clare*, for which Young (having progressed from Secker to Collins to Cassell) made his final change of British publishers avowing, “I am not going to Heinemann as an author on whom they have to make a hazardous speculation, but as a safe and steady seller.”<sup>65</sup> Following the success of *Portrait of Clare*, Young frequently achieved sales of half-a-million copies,<sup>66</sup> financing his move to Craycombe House, Fladbury, just twenty-five miles from Birmingham. Here he entertained the literati – Bernard Shaw and Hugh Walpole, local grandees – Cobhams of Hagley Hall and Beauchamps of Madresfield

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<sup>60</sup> FBY 781 (10.12.1919) Letter from Young to his agent, J.B. Pinker

<sup>61</sup> Young, F.B. (1921) *The Black Diamond*, London, Collins; (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, London, Heinemann; (1928) *The Key of Life*, London, Heinemann; (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, London, Heinemann; (1932) *The House under the Water*, London, Heinemann; (1934) *This Little World*, London, Heinemann; (1935) *White Ladies*

<sup>62</sup> *Times Literary Supplement* (02.10.1919) Review of *The Young Physician*

<sup>63</sup> *Times Literary Supplement* (24.02.1921) Review of *The Black Diamond*

<sup>64</sup> Hugh Walpole in American edition of Young, F.B. (1925) *Sea Horses*, New York, Alfred Knopf

<sup>65</sup> FBY 964 (02.09.1926) Letter from Young to his agent, E.S. Pinker

<sup>66</sup> Leclair, J. (September 1979) *The Brett Young Case*, Francis Brett Young Society Papers 1 and subsequent (unpublished) letter to A. Rankin dated 04.06.1980



Court, and the political establishment – Lloyd George and Stanley Baldwin.<sup>67</sup> “I owe Mr Brett Young a great deal of gratitude for his books,” wrote Baldwin, who was suggested as President of a proposed Francis Brett Young Society.<sup>68</sup> Those who accepted Young’s novels’ dedications or offered dedications to him confirmed his literary reputation.<sup>69</sup> His status as regional novelist was recognised by the organisations which appointed him to their councils.<sup>70</sup> In Birmingham he opened a new wing of the Throat Hospital, and addressed the Faculty of Medicine and English Association,<sup>71</sup> combining both interests in *The Doctor in Literature*, read to the Royal Society of English Literature.<sup>72</sup> In 1950 Birmingham University honoured Young with a D. Litt. at its Golden Jubilee, when the Public Orator commented:

He has written more than a score of books in which the action is laid in and about Birmingham... a contribution to English Literature which has merited him a place beside those authors whose names will always be associated with particular regions. He has done for Warwickshire and Worcestershire what Hardy did for Dorset and Bennett for the Five Towns.<sup>73</sup>

In over forty years of writing, Young produced two volumes of piano music; three collections of poetry (represented in more than fifty magazines and anthologies); four volumes of short stories; three works of non-fiction; three published plays (with others

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<sup>67</sup> Harber, V. [1930s Housekeeper at Craycombe House] (15.01.1996) interview with M. Hall

<sup>68</sup> Baldwin, S. (22.02.1934) *The Times*; FBY 1619 (20.12.1932) Letter from Arnold Gyde to Young; FBY 1620 (04.01.1933) Letter from Arnold Gyde to Stanley Baldwin

<sup>69</sup> E.g. Stanley Baldwin received the dedication of Young, F.B. (1937) *They Seek a Country*, London, Heinemann; David Lloyd George that of Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*. Louis Golding dedicated Golding, M. (1932) *Magnolia Street*, London, Victor Gollancz to Young and Compton Mackenzie dedicated to Young Mackenzie, C.M. (1933) *Literature in my Time*, London, Rich & Cowan

<sup>70</sup> President: Cheltenham Literary Society (1934); Vice President: Worcestershire Association (1934); Executive Committee: Friends of Worcester Cathedral (1935); Vice Chairman: Worcestershire Branch, Council for Preservation of Rural England (1935); Council: Friends of Tewkesbury Abbey (1937); Council: Worcestershire Historical Association (1937); President: Midland Federation of Ramblers’ Association (1939) – Hall, M. (1997) pp 161-162

<sup>71</sup> Addressed English Association, University of Birmingham: May 1930; addressed Faculty of Medicine, University of Birmingham: October 1934; opened new wing of Birmingham Throat Hospital: July 1938 – Hall, M. (1997) p 161

<sup>72</sup> November 27<sup>th</sup> 1935 - Walpole, H. (1936) *Essays by Divers Hands: Transactions of the Royal Society of Literature of the United Kingdom*, London, Humphrey Milford, p 17

<sup>73</sup> Bodkin, T. (1950) “Dr Francis Brett Young”, *University of Birmingham Gazette Vol 2*, p 74

performed) and miscellaneous ephemera in poetry and prose, fact and fiction.<sup>74</sup> His favoured genre was the novel, of which he published thirty, in nearly two hundred different editions, translated into ten languages,<sup>75</sup> serialised in England, America and Australia,<sup>76</sup> with film, radio and television versions.<sup>77</sup> His preferred region was the Midlands where Birmingham plays a frequent and dominant role, impinging directly or indirectly upon history, geography and plot, exerting a pervasive influence upon the characters he creates in fiction or borrows from fact. *The Times* obituary at his death in 1954 paid tribute to “his minute and intimate observation of Midland life and manners.”<sup>78</sup>

The geographical parameters of the North Bromwich novels were determined by Hales Owen’s neighbouring hills delineated by Young as “the Clents whose summits command the extensive theatre of my fictions.”<sup>79</sup> To the south and west stretched rural Worcestershire and Wales; to the north Black Country chimneys smoked; Birmingham dominated the eastern foreground. This limited landscape guaranteed North Bromwich as a constant. Young’s awareness of the landscape, economics and social activity of his chosen region and the careful research underlying his novels’ topography are seen by Leslie Jay as complementing factual regional studies. “The value to the geographer of the novels of Francis Brett Young is that he succeeded in conveying the personality of place through the eyes, emotions and activities of

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<sup>74</sup> Hall M, (2005) *passim*

<sup>75</sup> Danish, Dutch, Finnish, German, Hungarian, Italian, Polish, Portuguese, Spanish and Swedish – Staples, B. (1958) *Francis Brett Young: A Bibliography*, University of London Diploma in Librarianship Thesis, Section D.

<sup>76</sup> E.g. (UK) *Portrait of a Village* serialised in *Good Housekeeping*, March-September 1937; (USA) *The Tragic Bride* in *Metropolitan*, November 1920; (Australia) *Dr Bradley Remembers* in *Sydney Daily Telegraph*, November–December 1938

<sup>77</sup> Films: *Sea Horses* (1926) Lasky-Paramount; *A Man about the House* (1947) British Lion; *My Brother Jonathan* (1948) Associated British Pictures; *Portrait of Clare* (1950) Associated British Pictures. BBC Radio Serials: (1937) *Far Forest*; (1949) *My Brother Jonathan*; (1951) *The House under the Water*; (1960) *Dr Bradley Remembers*; (1965) *Mr Lucton’s Freedom*; (1967) *The Young Physician*. BBC Radio Plays: (1937) *The House under the Water*; (1950) *White Ladies*; (1951 & 1965) *The Furnace*. BBC Television: (1961) *The House under the Water*; (1985) *My Brother Jonathan*

<sup>78</sup> *The Times* (29.03.1954)

<sup>79</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, Preface, p xi

fictional inhabitants of the region.”<sup>80</sup> North Bromwich’s decaying suburbs are observed and interpreted through a schoolboy’s eyes.

Mean rows of mid-Victorian brick... indistinguishable from hundreds of other slummy canons of working-class dwellings interspersed with sordid pubs intensified the drabness of the industrial age.<sup>81</sup>

The recollections of a rustic student visiting a North Bromwich mansion recreate its ground-plan.

A low, stuccoed Regency building, with a square porch supported by fluted pillars. When one opened the front door one looked down the length of a wide corridor to an expanse of green lawn bordered by brilliant beds of geraniums.<sup>82</sup>

North Bromwich workforce’s lunchtime activities evoke a vibrant scene.

From workbenches of the jewellers’ quarter, from office-desks of Sackville Row, from counters of banks, department stores, shops and warehouses, human beings of every condition of life filled each alley and by-way.<sup>83</sup>

In the late nineteenth century the meeting place of black and green witnessed the ascendancy of new wealth over old,<sup>84</sup> the decline of both cottage iron trades<sup>85</sup> and vast integrated coal and iron conglomerates.<sup>86</sup> That these changing emphases, at the geographical heart of which Young’s formative years were spent, should be replicated in North Bromwich is inevitable according to Twitchett. “Birmingham was the centre of his first worldly experiences. We see a great deal of it in the novels and learn a good deal about its inner workings.”<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Jay, L. (1975) p 69

<sup>81</sup> Young, F.B. (1942) *A Man about the House*, London, Heinemann, p 2

<sup>82</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 162

<sup>83</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 343

<sup>84</sup> Young, F.B. (1934) *This Little World*; Hopkins, E. (2001) *Birmingham: The Making of the Second City 1850-1939*, Stroud, Tempus, pp 53-55

<sup>85</sup> Young, F.B. (1937) *They Seek a Country*; Smith, B. (1964) “Industry and Trade, 1880-1960”, in Stephens, W.B. (ed.), *The Victoria History of the County of Warwick Vol vii The City of Birmingham*, Oxford, University Press, pp 140-141

<sup>86</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies*; Twitchett, E.G. (1935) p 13

<sup>87</sup> Twitchett, E.G. (1935) p 39

Making a distinctive contribution to the story of one clearly defined region, the North Bromwich canon, with brief excursions into the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, concentrates upon the period of rapid change from the Franco-Prussian War<sup>88</sup> to World War II.<sup>89</sup> Finely drawn industrial settings symbolise the insouciant utilitarian values of a new manufacturing age. Social upheaval in Young's chosen period is integral to his stories. Cavaliero maintains "as a social historian he takes an honourable place among our novelists – if by historian one means recorder."<sup>90</sup> As Young's chosen era is bounded by war, so the Boer Wars and World War I<sup>91</sup> mark its key stages. The benefits derived by the *City of Iron* from the appetites of war are significant,<sup>92</sup> the novels encapsulating the expansionist ambitions of Birmingham<sup>93</sup> and the consequences for its residents and surroundings<sup>94</sup>, as Leclaire makes clear. "North Bromwich est l'archétype de la ville tentaculaire, face à nature. Le témoignage est riche d'expérience, les aspects présentés sont multiples et se complètent."<sup>95</sup>

Young wrote not out of imagination but experience. As I have argued,<sup>96</sup> his Birmingham canon reveals an awareness of demographic, economic and social background, providing a unique picture in which depth, colour and substance bring to life the statistics, reports, documents, ledgers and minutes which he had undoubtedly studied, but which, without the poet's vision, remained arid. Careful research was part of Young's technical

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<sup>88</sup> E.g. Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies*

<sup>89</sup> E.g. Young, F.B. (1940) *Mr Lucton's Freedom*, London, Heinemann

<sup>90</sup> Cavaliero, G. (1977) p 92

<sup>91</sup> E.g. Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*

<sup>92</sup> E.g. Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, London, Martin Secker

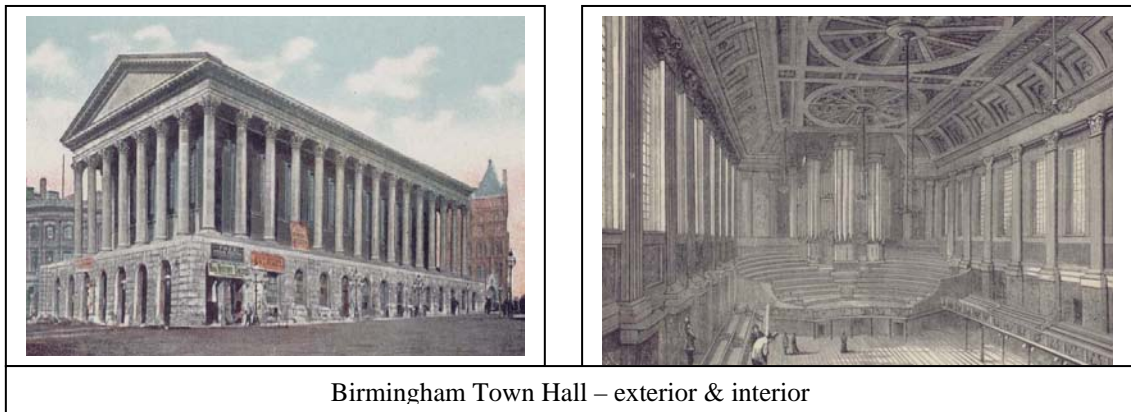
<sup>93</sup> E.g. Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*

<sup>94</sup> E.g. Young, F.B. (1932) *The House under the Water*

<sup>95</sup> Leclaire, J. (1970) p 127 [*North Bromwich is the archetype of the tentacular town, facing nature. The evidence is rich in experience; the aspects presented are multifarious and complement each other.*]

<sup>96</sup> Hall, M. (1977) p 18

accomplishment.<sup>97</sup> Like Collins, who introduced Birmingham surgeon Lawson Tait into *The Star Sapphire*,<sup>98</sup> Young weaves into his imaginary world history such as the 1901 Birmingham riot which threatened Lloyd George's safety,<sup>99</sup> blurring the distinction between fact and fiction. Accurate observation, developed through medical training, focuses upon Birmingham's physicality seen, for example, in its Town Hall. In North Bromwich there is "unexpected grace in the capitals of the Town Hall's Corinthian columns," whilst inside a favourite seat is "on the floor, just below the gallery... by the side of the iron pillar."<sup>100</sup> Photographic evidence corroborates Young's descriptive detail.



Topography was immensely important to Young, who had an eye for marrying landscape with incident, acknowledging that "in all my books the scene has taken shape long before the people."<sup>101</sup>

The North Bromwich portrait, focused through its author's own experience and background, is enhanced by a double bias. First, Young's admission that "beauty for me has a

<sup>97</sup> E.g. FBY 90 (n.d.) Notebook for *Far Forest* - notes on nail making; Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies* pp 14-16; Burritt, E. (1868) *Walks in the Black Country and its Green Border-Land*, London, Sampson Low, pp 219-224

<sup>98</sup> Collins, M. (1896) *The Star Sapphire*, Boston, Roberts Bros, passim

<sup>99</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, pp 372-376

<sup>100</sup> Young, F.B. (1914) *The Dark Tower*, London, Martin Secker, pp 32-33; (1936) *Far Forest* p 260

<sup>101</sup> Young, F.B. (May 1935) "The Secret History of a Novelist" in *Good Housekeeping*, p 135

rural complexion and a rustic speech”<sup>102</sup> guaranteed his discipleship of the newly discovered Traherne,<sup>103</sup> whom he acknowledged “one of the earliest of my literary idols and influences.”<sup>104</sup> Traherne’s urban view is clear. “There are two worlds. One made by God, the other by men. That made by God was great and beautiful... That made by men is a Babel of Confusions.”<sup>105</sup> Birmingham’s invasion of “God’s world” is Young’s recurrent theme.<sup>106</sup> Symbolizing his transition from Hales Owen to Craycombe, migration into the country offers renewal for those damaged by city life.<sup>107</sup>

I was aware from the first of vivid contrasts between woods and fields and the monstrous intrusions of the machine: between native rustic and alien urban... Looking down from the Clents one could see an abrupt line of demarcation between the green and the black.<sup>108</sup>

Green versus black became Young’s chosen imagery for the struggle between light and darkness, beauty and ugliness, good and evil.

There is, however, ambivalence in Young’s rusticity. Though Chaddesbourne D’Abitot’s cottages are “a picture of idyllic peace,” the decay and poverty which they hide “do not enter into the calculations of a casual observer of rural England.”<sup>109</sup> Nonetheless, for Young, Worcestershire “spiritually as well as geographically lies at the heart of England”<sup>110</sup> and the nostalgic dream-fulfilment of the countryside conjures all that he most values. In retrospective regret at change, Tosh identifies not only the search for consolation and escape,

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<sup>102</sup> Young, F.B. (May 1934) “Country or City” p107

<sup>103</sup> Though written in the seventeenth century, Traherne’s *Centuries of Meditations* was not published until 1908 - Drabble, M.(ed.) (1995) *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*, Oxford, University Press, p 1003

<sup>104</sup> Young, F.B. (1939) *This Little World*, Preface to Severn Edition, London, Heinemann, p x

<sup>105</sup> Traherne, T. (1908) *Centuries of Meditations*, London, Dobell, “The First Century”, p 7

<sup>106</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, pp 175-177; (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, pp 307-308; (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 295-296

<sup>107</sup> Young, F.B. (1921) *The Black Diamond*, pp 92-93; (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, pp 307-308; (1940) *Mr Lucton’s Freedom*, pp 167-170

<sup>108</sup> Young, F.B. (May 1935) “The Secret History of a Novelist”, p 134

<sup>109</sup> Young, F.B. (1934) *This Little World*, p 9; Chaddesbourne D’Abitot is Young’s name for Chaddesley Corbett.

<sup>110</sup> Young, F.B. (May 1935) “The Secret History of a Novelist”, p 35

but a subtle distortion of historical reality.<sup>111</sup> Certainly for Young rural England is devastated by encroaching industrialism and urbanization.

Factory-bells

With harsh, impatient clamour summon all –  
Man, wife and child – to swell the carnival  
Of dumb, inhuman labour that shall turn  
Green fields into foul cities.<sup>112</sup>

Greenslade finds that inter-war novelists frequently view the city and city-dwellers as a blight on civilization.<sup>113</sup> For Young city life oppresses. “There is only one valid reason for living in London, which is the delight of escaping from it.”<sup>114</sup> Young never again chose city-living after leaving Birmingham in 1908, preferring homes overlooking Tor Bay, Talland Bay and Esthwaite Water, in the heart of the Worcestershire countryside, on Capri or in South Africa’s Lesser Karoo.<sup>115</sup> In the Midlands Dulston (Dudley) “stood at the very heart of the blighted zone,”<sup>116</sup> whilst Halesby (Hales Owen) is “squalid, degraded, sordid and mean.”<sup>117</sup> Young’s particular apprehension of reality influenced Dudley Stamp’s *Report of the Land Utilization Survey of Britain*. K.M. Buchanan, editor of the Worcestershire volume, needing a quotation to capture the Second Industrial Revolution’s impact within the county, turned to *Far Forest*.

A sunless, treeless waste, within a crescent of mournful hills from whose summits a canopy of eternal smoke was suspended above a slagged desert... forges and pitheads and brickyards and furnaces... mounds on which mineral and metallic waste had been tipped...drowned clay-pits and sullen canals.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Tosh, John (2002) p 17

<sup>112</sup> Young, F.B. (1944) *The Island*, London, Heinemann, p 313

<sup>113</sup> Greenslade, W. (1994) *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel*, Cambridge, University Press, p 241

<sup>114</sup> Young, F.B. (May 1934) “Country or City” p 12

<sup>115</sup> Young lived at the Old Garden House, Berry Head 1914-1919; at Villa Fraita, Anacapri 1920-1929; at Esthwaite Lodge, Hawkshead 1929-1932; at Craycombe House, Fladbury 1932-1945; at Santici, Montagu 1948-1954 – Hall, M. (1997) pp159-163

<sup>116</sup> Young, F.B. (1937) *They Seek a Country* p 28

<sup>117</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician* p 162; (1956) *Wistanslow*, London, Heinemann, p 146; Halesby is Young’s name for Hales Owen.

<sup>118</sup> Young, F.B. (1936) *Far Forest*, pp 27-28; Buchanan, K.M. (1944) *The Land of Britain: The Report of the Land Utilization Survey of Britain, Part 68: Worcestershire*, London, Geographical Publications Ltd, p 474

The consequence of Young's selection of reality, as Cannadine appreciated, "evoked as much in reaction to the unpleasantness of neighbouring Birmingham as by the allure of the adjacent countryside,"<sup>119</sup> is fundamental to the North Bromwich portrait. It is only from a rural perspective that the horrors of North Bromwich are fully discerned.

In the heart of the city... one cannot see the monstrosity as a whole... Go, rather, to Pen Beacon, where one may turn from the dreamy plain of Severn to its pillars of cloud by day and its pillars of fire by night and realise the city's true significance as a phenomenon of unconquered, if not inevitable disease.<sup>120</sup>

In elevating rural over urban Young harmonized with the literary proclivity of his time. Cavaliero demonstrates that "the country was, by the 1890s, associated with all that was desirable in the England that was being changed. Industrial towns were decried as ugly and deadly to the human spirit."<sup>121</sup> It is unnecessary to look beyond book titles to substantiate Cavaliero's argument. Two contemporary accounts of the abject misery and economic degradation of the urban poor were Gissing's *The Nether World* and London's *The People of the Abyss*.<sup>122</sup> Though generally less indignant than either Gissing or London, Young's North Bromwich portrait is entirely consonant with Cavaliero's thesis.

The second strand of Young's bias is a particular aversion to Birmingham. "North Bromwich ranked with the Cities of the Plain."<sup>123</sup> As the city of his most intimate acquaintance, Birmingham was the natural focus of Young's general prejudice. However, when he wrote of North Bromwich –

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<sup>119</sup> Cannadine, D. (1977b) p 108

<sup>120</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, pp 235-236; Pen Beacon is Young's name for Clent Hill.

<sup>121</sup> Cavaliero, G. (1977) p 6

<sup>122</sup> Gissing, G. (1889) *The Nether World*, London, Smith, Elder & Co; London, J. (1903) *The People of the Abyss*, New York, Macmillan

<sup>123</sup> Young, F.B. (1936) *Far Forest*, p 186 - The Cities of the Plain refers to Sodom and Gomorrah, destroyed by God because of their wickedness - Genesis 19. 1-27



It was going to take all the beauty out of life. It was going to ruin all his happiness. It was going to give him ... what? The darkness of a smoky city; its grime; the mean ideals of the people who lived beneath its ugliness.<sup>124</sup>

– he was not merely assessing a fictional hero but expressing personal anger and blighted hope. Young's disappointment at his father's insistence that he should read medicine at Birmingham rather than classics at Oxford frequently surfaces in his novels.<sup>125</sup> At Birmingham Cathedral his father arranged an unsuccessful attempt to persuade the teenage Francis into a religious conformity he was unwilling to embrace.<sup>126</sup> It is hardly surprising, then, that North Bromwich should become the focus of its creator's frustrations and dashed dreams. Leclaire proposes that the precisely accurate picture of energetic, materialistic Birmingham, which banishes beauty and promotes ugliness, represents personal indignation rather than social statement.<sup>127</sup>

Writing within the parameters of his own reality and sometimes contradicting that of others,<sup>128</sup> Young implies that living conditions for Birmingham's working class were invariably squalid. He pays little attention to the cinema as a popular place of entertainment, nor to the city's acquisition of parks and playing fields; canals hardly feature in North Bromwich. Just a small percentage of Birmingham's multifarious trades appear in the novels, with the two largest employers (Cadbury and Dunlop)<sup>129</sup> entirely absent. Also missing is the Bournville garden village experiment. Only suburbs with which he was familiar are described in any detail.

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<sup>124</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 227

<sup>125</sup> E.g. Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*; (1919) *The Young Physician*; (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*

<sup>126</sup> JBY 101 (05.12.1955) Letter from Young's sister, Doris Overed, to Jessie Brett Young

<sup>127</sup> Leclaire, J. (1970) p 127

<sup>128</sup> Briggs, A. (1952) *History of Birmingham Vol II, Borough and City 1865-1938*, Oxford, University Press, p 15; Hopkins, E. (2001) pp 28-29, 91-92

<sup>129</sup> Hopkins, E. (2001) p 39

Cannadine establishes Young's limitations and bias - unfamiliarity with Birmingham's working class except in hospital wards, dislike of industrial cities - but still concludes "to write the history of the West Midlands... without using the novels of Francis Brett Young means ignoring evidence which is vital."<sup>130</sup> With his meticulously delineated little world, Young contributed uniquely to the regional novel genre; his omissions from the city's history and geography, complemented by the bias of the North Bromwich portrait carefully reinforce his chosen image of Birmingham.

## **Birmingham 1870-1939**

By 1870 Birmingham was well established as the *City of Iron* of Young's portrait. As Chinn has shown "manufacturing was the predominant reason for Birmingham's growth and accomplishment."<sup>131</sup> A market grant in the twelfth century was followed by that for a fair in the thirteenth;<sup>132</sup> by the seventeenth century iron manufacture had overtaken Birmingham's other trades.<sup>133</sup> Tolerant of dissenters and unhampered by incorporation prior to Municipal Borough status in 1838, the source of Birmingham's strength and the cause of its rapid advance in prosperity and population was, according to Bunce,<sup>134</sup> that it was a free town. The intellectual melting pot of the Lunar Society and the innovative Soho works of Boulton and Watt located Birmingham at the cutting edge of scientific and technological development.<sup>135</sup> In the opinion of Elrington and Tillott<sup>136</sup> by the eighteenth century Birmingham had become

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<sup>130</sup> Cannadine, D. (1982) p 58

<sup>131</sup> Chinn, C. (2001) *Birmingham The Great Working City*, Birmingham, City Council, p 2

<sup>132</sup> Market (to be held at Peter's castle of Birmingham) granted 1153 in the presence of the King by Gervase Paganell to Peter Fitz William, steward of Dudley; confirmed by Henry II, March 1166. Fair (to be held at the Manor) granted 15.12.1250 by Henry III to William de Burmingeham. - Letters, Samantha (2002) *Gazetteer of Markets and Fairs To 1516: Warwickshire*

<sup>133</sup> Smith, B. (1964) p 7

<sup>134</sup> Bunce, J.T. (1878) *History of the Corporation of Birmingham, Vol 1*, Birmingham, Cornish Bros., p 36

<sup>135</sup> Eversley, D.E.C. (1964) "Industry and Trade, 1500-1880" in Stephens, W.B. (ed.) (1964) p 121

<sup>136</sup> Elrington, C.R. & Tillott, P.M. (1964) "The Growth of the City" in Stephens, W.B. (ed.) (1964) p 7

the principal commercial focus for the Midland Plateau and the leading metal manufacturing centre in the country. The coming of canals and railways enlarged the town's industrial area and enhanced supply and distribution routes.<sup>137</sup>

Birmingham's industry was based on metal-finishing trades from pins, needles, nails and screws through brass bedsteads and aluminium hollowware to vast boilers and hydraulic machinery. The jewellery and toy (buttons, buckles, trinkets) trades flourished; Gillott's produced steel pens and Elkington's electro-plated goods. There was japanned ware, papier mâché and glass; Austin's cars, Norton's motorcycles, Dunlop's tyres and allied electrical trades. By 1914 Birmingham was the centre of bicycle production.<sup>138</sup> Cadbury's was established at Bournville and Ansell's prominent amongst the city's brewers. From armaments to umbrellas, Birmingham really was the city of a thousand trades.

Manufacturer and distributor, hub of the Black Country, Birmingham was famed for the far-flung sources of its raw materials<sup>139</sup> allied with highly skilled and adaptable workmen financed by wealthy and intrepid entrepreneurs.<sup>140</sup> Though there was industrial unrest at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, Birmingham generally enjoyed peaceful working relations.<sup>141</sup> Much of the city's industry which originated as small industrial units or family businesses working from home continued in this way, though there were the great combines such as Nettlefolds which, in the last years of the nineteenth century absorbed

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<sup>137</sup> Eversley, D.E.C. (1964) p 132

<sup>138</sup> Chinn, C. (2001) p 60

<sup>139</sup> Briggs, A. (1952) p 53

<sup>140</sup> Eversley, D.E.C. (1964) p 89

<sup>141</sup> Briggs, A. (1952) pp 65-66

its major competitors.<sup>142</sup> BSA was the first Birmingham factory to employ mass production for its complex processes<sup>143</sup> and by 1914 Cadbury's employed some 6,000 workers.<sup>144</sup>

Diversity of trade guaranteed a wide market as Briggs emphasizes. "Birmingham goods were used by all classes in all walks of life and were produced to suit all income groups."<sup>145</sup> Chinn<sup>146</sup> points out that by the end of the nineteenth century goods made in Birmingham were to be found across the world. Thus, as Birmingham kept pace with technology, progressing from hardware manufacture to engineering, Briggs postulates one irreducible minimum for its success. "Birmingham with its active supply of skilled labour and wide range of products could adapt itself to a changing world."<sup>147</sup> The changing world to which it accommodated, and from which it profited, included the fortunes of war. Hopkins<sup>148</sup> makes clear that when the Franco-Prussian War began in 1870, the gun trade naturally flourished.

Success, however, generated difficulties as Hopkins also states. "Industrial towns, of which Birmingham was a prominent example expanded greatly, producing serious health problems."<sup>149</sup> Whilst many Birmingham industrialists lived in suburban Edgbaston, their workforce was less fortunate as Bunce reports.

In houses not of the worst class, but in front streets inhabited by respectable and thriving tradesmen, intolerable structural evils abound, rendering homes damp and miserable and lowering the health and spirits of the inmates... Infant mortality in such neighbourhoods is frightful.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Briggs, A. (1952) p 50

<sup>143</sup> Briggs, A. (1952) p 49

<sup>144</sup> Smith, B. (1964) p 153

<sup>145</sup> Briggs, A. (1952) p 41

<sup>146</sup> Chinn, C. (2001) p 50

<sup>147</sup> Briggs, A. (1952) p 30

<sup>148</sup> Hopkins, E. (2001) p 34

<sup>149</sup> Hopkins, E. (2001) p 9

<sup>150</sup> Bunce, J.T. (1885) *History of the Corporation of Birmingham Vol II*, Birmingham, Cornish Bros., pp 461-462

In these homes the death rate was double that of Edgbaston.<sup>151</sup> The Artisans' Dwellings Act (1875) empowered local authorities to acquire slum properties in an attempt to address the problem. Birmingham's Improvement Scheme, introduced during Joseph Chamberlain's mayoralty,<sup>152</sup> cleared ninety-three such acres east of New Street for the construction of Corporation Street. This scheme was a natural consequence of the civic gospel doctrine of the Liberal caucus, the origins of which lay with George Dawson<sup>153</sup> and an influential dissenting (especially Unitarian) community, pioneers, according to Hopkins,<sup>154</sup> of changes in middle-class thinking in Birmingham about the responsibilities of urban government.

Religiously, Birmingham, home of the first post-Reformation Roman Catholic cathedral built in England,<sup>155</sup> was complex. Though the decline in church attendance following Mann's 1851 census<sup>156</sup> was less marked here than in other towns,<sup>157</sup> a disappointing 32.4% of the city's population attended church on November 30<sup>th</sup> 1892.<sup>158</sup> The Church of England's reduced share of the total (38.6% compared with 47% in 1851)<sup>159</sup> prompted the city's elevation to diocese in 1905 in an attempt to rekindle support. Two years earlier, Wesleyan Methodists, who contributed little to civic affairs but were numerically significant,<sup>160</sup> opened their vast hall in Corporation Street.<sup>161</sup> Politically, shades of opinion

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<sup>151</sup> Briggs, A. (1952) p 78

<sup>152</sup> Chamberlain served three terms as mayor: 1873, 1874 and 1875 – Bunce, J.T. (1885) p 19

<sup>153</sup> Never ordained to the ministry, Dawson served at Mt Zion Baptist Chapel, Graham Street, 1844-1845 and then at the nondenominational Church of the Saviour, Edward Street, 1847-1876 – Dale, A.W.W. (1909) "George Dawson" in Muirhead, J.H. (ed.) (1909) *Nine Famous Birmingham Men*, Birmingham, Cornish Bros., pp 75-105

<sup>154</sup> Hopkins, E. (2001) p 52

<sup>155</sup> St Chads, consecrated in 1838 became a cathedral in 1850 – Gill, C. (1952) *History of Birmingham Vol 1, Manor and Borough to 1865*, Oxford, University Press, pp 451-453

<sup>156</sup> Census of Great Britain 1851 included a survey of religious worship for 31.03.1851; Census Officer: Horace Mann

<sup>157</sup> Peacock, R. (1975) "The 1892 Birmingham Religious Census", in Bryman, A. (ed.) (1975), *Religion in the Birmingham Area: Essays in the Sociology of Religion*, Birmingham, The University, p 15

<sup>158</sup> Census of Church Attendance in *Birmingham News* (30.11.1892) in Peacock, R. (1975) pp 12-28

<sup>159</sup> Peacock, R. (1975) p 17

<sup>160</sup> Total attendance of 30,702 at 1892 Census – *Birmingham News* (10.12.1892)

were expressed by Birmingham's own newspapers, including the *Liberal Gazette* and the *Unionist Post*.

Prior to the Improvement Scheme, the council had already taken over gas and water supplies,<sup>162</sup> displaying both responsibility and pragmatism, as Chamberlain made clear. "In the case of water, it is a question chiefly of health, while in the case of gas it is a question chiefly of profit."<sup>163</sup> The Welsh Water Scheme, opened in 1904, further enhanced water supply. At much the same time the council took over electricity supply and tramway operation.<sup>164</sup> Such well-planned and executed schemes prompted Birmingham's description as "best-governed city in the world."<sup>165</sup> Hopkins, however, tempers enthusiasm. "Under Chamberlain, Birmingham really was only catching up with the progress being made in other towns and cities."<sup>166</sup> The Improvement Scheme generated problems as well as solved them. Though slums were swept away, the rehousing of dispossessed tenants lagged behind. By 1913 Birmingham still had 43,366 back-to-back houses, to Liverpool's 2,881 and Manchester's none.<sup>167</sup> 73,000 new homes had been built in Birmingham by 1936, but 38,000 back-to-backs remained.<sup>168</sup> Briggs makes clear that "the building of large numbers of new

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<sup>161</sup> Birmingham Central Hall, with a main hall seating 2,000 and ancillary rooms accommodating a further 2,000 opened in 1903, replacing earlier buildings in Cherry Street (opened 1782) and Old Square (opened 1887) – Armitage, R. (1987) *Mission in the Second City: The History of the Birmingham Mission 1887-1987*, Birmingham, Methodist Central Hall, p 6

<sup>162</sup> Gas and Water Purchases Bill was reported passed at the Council Meeting on 27.07.1875 – Bunce, J.T. (1885) p 567

<sup>163</sup> Quoted by Bunce, J.T. (1885) p 409

<sup>164</sup> Purchase of Undertaking of the Birmingham Electric Supply Company approved 14.06.1898 and Tramways Municipalisation approved 07.03.1899 - Vince, C.A. (1902) *History of the Corporation of Birmingham Vol III*, Birmingham, Cornish Bros., pp 414-415. Briggs notes that it took until 1911 for the city to gain complete control of the tramways – Briggs, A. (1952) p 96

<sup>165</sup> Ralph, J. (June 1890) "The Best Governed City in the World", *Harper's Monthly Magazine*

<sup>166</sup> Hopkins, E. (2001) p 64

<sup>167</sup> Briggs, A. (1952) p 86

<sup>168</sup> Watts, D.G. (1964) "Public Health" in Stephens, W.B. (ed.) (1964) p 346

houses on the fringes of the city was the most important feature of Birmingham's civic history in the inter-war years."<sup>169</sup>

In 1870 Birmingham's population of 343,000 was contained within the 1838 boundaries; by 1939 Greater Birmingham's population was 1,048,000.<sup>170</sup> Following the granting of city status in 1889 numerous satellite villages<sup>171</sup> were absorbed. Improved tramways played an important role in Birmingham's expansion, as Upton<sup>172</sup> shows. Elrington and Tillott identify two root causes of expansion.

One was the readiness of manufacturers to build... their factories... where land was cheaper and more ample... The other was the desire of workers to move away from the crowded, noisy and often squalid areas of the centre of Birmingham.<sup>173</sup>

There were also benefits for the new suburbs. Upton<sup>174</sup> points out that Harborne got a library and Balsall Heath a swimming bath. Much of the new housing was uninspiring, what Briggs describes as "the "tunnel-back" type, constructed in long rows... designed to fill space rather than fit into neighbourhoods."<sup>175</sup> However Birmingham did enjoy a prime example of enlightened development: Cadbury's Bournville, begun in 1895, with model housing in garden plots, wide, tree-lined roads, open spaces and no licensed premises!

Though the public house remained the mainstay of working-class leisure,<sup>176</sup> outdoor activities competed. Cannon Hill and Small Heath parks with their swimming pools heralded

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<sup>169</sup> Briggs, A. (1952) p 228

<sup>170</sup> Briggs, A. (1964) "Political History from 1832" in Stephens, W.B. (ed.) (1964) p 302

<sup>171</sup> Harborne, Balsall Heath, Saltley and Ward End in 1891, Quinton in 1909, Aston, King's Norton, Northfield, Yardley, Handsworth and Erdington in 1911, Perry Barr in 1928, Minworth, Sheldon and Solihull in 1931 - Stephens, W.B. (ed.) (1964) *passim*

<sup>172</sup> Upton, C. (1997), *A History of Birmingham*, Chichester, Phillimore, p 188

<sup>173</sup> Elrington, C.R. & Tillott, P.M. (1964) p 16

<sup>174</sup> Upton, C. (1997) p 190

<sup>175</sup> Briggs, A. (1952) p 305

<sup>176</sup> Hopkins, E. (2001) p 123

further open spaces partly created by the closure of burial grounds.<sup>177</sup> Hopkins<sup>178</sup> remarks that in the middle years of the nineteenth century works' outings to places like the Clent Hills became very common. Railway excursions since the 1840s and the cycling craze at the century's end enabled explorations further afield, justifying Dent's opinion. "There are few Birmingham artisans who have not... explored the little world outside the metropolis."<sup>179</sup> Social conditions in the 1870s generated increased working-class leisure. Hopkins<sup>180</sup> makes clear that there was a shortening of the working day, a fall in the cost of living and a rise in real wages. Spectator sports, especially football, thrived on free Saturday afternoons.<sup>181</sup> Music Hall and theatre remained popular; cinema developed.<sup>182</sup> Following the demise of the Triennial Music Festival, a council-subsidised orchestra gave weekly performances.<sup>183</sup> The new central library supported increased literacy.<sup>184</sup> Local benefaction to the City Art Gallery represented a broader patronage, as Hopkins points out. "Middle-class influence over a wide spectrum of social life in Birmingham was very strong... Civic life, cultural life and leisure activities all owed much to middle-class participation."<sup>185</sup>

At the hub of local and national rail networks were GWR's Snow Hill Station, opened in 1852, reconstructed in 1871 and 1910-1912 and LNWR's New Street Station opened in 1854, boasting the world's largest single-span glass and iron roof. The offices, shops, clubs,

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<sup>177</sup> Cannon Hill & Small Heath Parks were the gifts of Louisa Ryland in 1873 & 1876; by 1914 the city had also acquired Highgate, Summerfield, Handsworth and Queen's Parks – Briggs, A. (1952) pp 114 & 352. The Closed Burial Ground Act was passed in 1878 – Bunce, J.T. (1885) p 204

<sup>178</sup> Hopkins, E.(2001) p 124

<sup>179</sup> Dent, R.K. (1880) *Old and New Birmingham*, Birmingham, Houghton & Hammond, p 612

<sup>180</sup> Hopkins, E. (2001) p 123

<sup>181</sup> Briggs, A. (1952) p 313

<sup>182</sup> Briggs, A. (1952) pp 315-318

<sup>183</sup> The Triennial Music Festival, designed to raise money for the General Hospital, lasted from 1768-1912. The City Orchestra was established in 1919 – Briggs, A. (1952) p 318

<sup>184</sup> The new Central Library opened in 1882 to replace that burnt down three years earlier – Briggs, A. (1952) pp 111-11

<sup>185</sup> Hopkins, E. (2001) p 115



hotels and restaurants of New Street, Corporation Street and Colmore Row were complemented by the city's arcades, applauded by a local journalist. "Features like this give a town a distinctive character and certainly no other towns I have seen in England or the continent can compare with our own in this particular."<sup>186</sup> Specialist hospitals existed for eyes, ears and throats, teeth, skin, bones, sick children and women.<sup>187</sup> There was a homeopathic hospital and the Workhouse Infirmary.<sup>188</sup> General care was offered at Queen's Hospital, established at Bath Row since 1840 and the General Hospital, relocated from Summer Lane to Steelhouse Lane in 1897.<sup>189</sup> Educationally, Upton<sup>190</sup> suggests, Birmingham led the country in its energy and organisation. Following Forster's 1870 Education Act, elementary and higher-grade schools expanded King Edward VI Grammar School's middle-class provision and the growing contribution of the voluntary sector.<sup>191</sup> Birmingham's Midland Institute, founded in 1854, paved the way for technical education, whilst Mason College (absorbing the older Queen's College) became Birmingham University in 1900. Birmingham's grandiose municipal architecture included the imposing Council House opened in 1874 and the Victoria Law Courts, described by Upton as "one of the grandest of the city's terracotta palaces"<sup>192</sup> opened in 1891. Setting the seal on civic splendour, the city's mayor was elevated to Lord Mayor in 1896.

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<sup>186</sup> *Birmingham Mail* (19.04.1889)

<sup>187</sup> Eye Hospital established in Cannon Street in 1824, moved to Temple Row in 1861; Ear & Throat Hospital opened in Newhall Street in 1864; Dental Hospital, opened in Temple Street in 1857, relocated to Great Charles Street by 1906; Birmingham & Midland Skin & Lock Hospital opened in Newhall Street in 1881; Orthopaedic Hospital, in existence since 1817, moved to Newhall Street in 1858. In 1868, Lying-In Hospital opened in Broad Street in 1842 became Midland Free Hospital for Sick Children; in 1871 Women's Hospital opened in Sparkhill. - Briggs, A. (1952) p 264; *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham*, (1880-1906)

<sup>188</sup> Homeopathic Hospital, which began life as a clinic in 1845 in Great Charles Street, opened in Easy Row in 1875; Workhouse Infirmary at Winson Green opened in 1889 - Upton, C. (1997) pp 163-164

<sup>189</sup> There were also other hospitals, e.g. City Hospital (Little Bromwich) opened for 'epidemic containment' in 1893; Selly Oak, originally the Infirmary for King's Norton Workhouse, opened in 1877 - Harding, M. (1999) *Birmingham Hospitals on Old Postcards*, Keyworth, Reflections of a Bygone Age

<sup>190</sup> Upton, C. (1997) p 162

<sup>191</sup> Between 1873-1902, Birmingham provided 61 new Board Schools with a total of 60,342 places - Vince, C.A. (1923) *History of the Corporation of Birmingham, Vol IV*, Birmingham, Cornish Bros., p 28

<sup>192</sup> Upton, C. (1997) p 154

Birmingham's historical reality described above is one of many facets. Further realities with which the North Bromwich canon is to be compared are found in the experiences of Birmingham residents. Many stories exist. Those recounted at second hand, such as the biographies of R.H. Best or W.J. Davis,<sup>193</sup> give way here to autobiographies spanning the North Bromwich era. George Holyoake's *Sixty Years of an Agitator's Life*<sup>194</sup> and Will Thorne's *My Life's Battles*<sup>195</sup> show how impoverished Birmingham childhoods led to political activity.

"I naturally care much for Birmingham,"<sup>196</sup> wrote Holyoake (1817-1906). The privations of his upbringing in Birmingham (which sometimes seemed like "Sodom and Gomorrah in the act of undergoing destruction"<sup>197</sup>), uncertain wages at Broad Street's Eagle Foundry and study at Birmingham Mechanics' Institute, fuelled Holyoake's career as lecturer, journalist and author. A fearless activist, Holyoake captured in his writings the harshness of Birmingham life during the early years of the North Bromwich era. Life-shaping for Thorne (1857-1946) were dilapidated houses, oppressive factories and Board of Guardians' handouts experienced in the Birmingham of his youth. As in North Bromwich, Birmingham employers scrimped on workers' wages; unlike North Bromwich employees, Thorne's workmates had "the spark of rebellion glowing bright within them."<sup>198</sup> As Labour M.P. for West Ham,

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<sup>193</sup> Best, R.D. (1940) *Brass Chandler: A Biography of R.H. Best by his Son*, London, George Allen & Unwin; Dalley, W.A. (1914) *The Life Story of W.J. Davis, J.P.*, Birmingham, Birmingham Printers Ltd.

<sup>194</sup> Holyoake, G. J. (1892) *Sixty Years of an Agitator's Life*, London, T. Fisher Unwin. See also Holyoake, G. J. (1875) *The History of Co-operation in England: Its Literature and its Advocates: The Pioneer Period 1812-1844*, London, Trübner & Co; (1879) *The History of Co-operation in England: Its Literature and its Advocates: The Constructive Period 1845-1878*, London, Trübner & Co; (1891) *Self Help A Hundred Years Ago*, London, Swan, Sonnenschein & Co

<sup>195</sup> Thorne, W. (1925) *My Life's Battles*, London, George Newnes

<sup>196</sup> Holyoake, G. J. (1892) p 149

<sup>197</sup> Holyoake, G. J. (1875) p 323 – Young employs a near-identical simile, see p 20

<sup>198</sup> Thorne, W. (1925); edition cited: (1989) London, Lawrence & Wishart, p 35

Thorne fought for working conditions better than those he remembered amid “the roar and rattle, steam and heat”<sup>199</sup> of Birmingham.

V.W. Garratt’s *A Man in the Street*<sup>200</sup> and Kathleen Dayus’s quintet, *Her People, Where There’s Life, All My Days, The Best of Times, The Ghosts of Yesteryear*,<sup>201</sup> illuminate the realities of Birmingham life from the perspective not of professional historian or observant novelist, but of those who experienced its daily vicissitudes firsthand.

Garratt (b1892) recalls “the sombre struggle in which every penny had to be spent subject to a ruthless economy”<sup>202</sup> of Birmingham’s back-to-back housing. Hunger and want generated petty pilfering; drunkenness and violence were commonplace. Musical concerts and the resources of the city library relieved deprived conditions in Birmingham’s factories reminiscent of Tonna’s graphic accounts.<sup>203</sup> Garratt’s eventual escape emancipates. “I saw the smoking chimneys of Birmingham fade into the distance with relief.”<sup>204</sup> Always trying to better herself,<sup>205</sup> Dayus (1903-2003), unique among the autobiographers considered here, lived her entire life in Birmingham. Her story begins with a vivid evocation of the rat-infested industrial slums of Edwardian Birmingham, inhabited by unemployed men, female outworkers and ragged, half-starved children. Suggesting North Bromwich slums, but

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<sup>199</sup> Thorne, W. (1925) p 21

<sup>200</sup> Garratt, V.W. (1939) *A Man in the Street*, London, J.M. Dent

<sup>201</sup> Dayus, K. (1982) *Her People*, London, Virago Press; (1985) *Where There’s Life*, London, Virago Press; (1988) *All My Days*, London, Virago Press; (1991) *The Best of Times*, London, Virago Press; (2000) *The Ghosts of Yesteryear*, London, Virago Press

<sup>202</sup> Garratt, V.W. (1939) p 72

<sup>203</sup> See pp 43-44

<sup>204</sup> Garratt, V.W. (1939) p 135

<sup>205</sup> “Just a Kid from Hockley” (30.09.2006) *The Birmingham Post*

capturing more intimate personal experience, Dayus recalls the harsh conditions of her early life in Hockley, “so crammed with humanity it was more like a rabbit’s warren.”<sup>206</sup>

A further reality is seen in the writings of Birmingham’s visitors, of whom two, from different periods in the North Bromwich era are considered in this thesis. Elihu Burritt, nicknamed “the learned blacksmith”,<sup>207</sup> was American Consul in Birmingham for four years from 1865. *Walks in the Black Country and its Green Borderlands*,<sup>208</sup> conceived as prefatory to his report on the region’s trade with the United States, captures for an American readership Birmingham’s centrality in world industry. A portrait of regional scenery, buildings, history and people enhances the account. Audience-inclined bias is clear: Birmingham appears “a young town... almost as American as Chicago.”<sup>209</sup> However, as this thesis shows,<sup>210</sup> Burritt also recognized the philistinism in industrial Birmingham upon which North Bromwich is predicated.

Already a successful novelist and playwright, J.B. Priestley was commissioned by publishers Gollancz and Heinemann to explore England during the autumn of 1933. The resulting book, *English Journey*,<sup>211</sup> part travelogue, part social history, reflects upon places Priestley visited and people he met, and did much, according to Drabble,<sup>212</sup> to inform and influence the attitudes of its readers. Three nations are identified: old England, cut-price England and industrial England, including the larger part of the Midlands and North.

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<sup>206</sup> Dayus, K. (1982) p 1

<sup>207</sup> Chitham, E. (1972) *The Black Country*, London, Longman, p 137

<sup>208</sup> Burritt, E. (1868)

<sup>209</sup> Burritt, E. (1868) p 67

<sup>210</sup> See (for example) pp 116, 118, 119

<sup>211</sup> Priestley, J.B. (1934) *English Journey*, London, Heinemann; edition cited: (1997) London, The Folio Society

<sup>212</sup> Drabble, M. (1997) Introduction to Priestley, J.B., *English Journey*, p 11

Priestley's unflattering account of Birmingham's "lop-sided oafs, gnomes and hobgoblins,"<sup>213</sup> indicates his discontent with the city, for which blame is unequivocally attributed. "It was Birmingham itself that did most of the mischief."<sup>214</sup>

This thesis shows that within Young's chosen parameters the North Bromwich portrait is faithful to the realities of Birmingham history and the recollections of those who lived or visited here. Briggs, whose study of the period with which the North Bromwich era largely coincides remains authoritative, reminds that insights such as Young's novels should not be ignored. "The themes of Birmingham history... lend themselves to analytical treatment, but in presenting a series of analyses it is important not to overlook that there was a story as well."<sup>215</sup>

## **The Novel as a Source of Birmingham History**

Francis Brett Young's career was nurtured in an age concerned to tell things as they are. In his assertion that "realism rather than symbolism was the trend in 1901," Swinnerton<sup>216</sup> provides the background of an emerging genre: novels portraying suburban life, real places, people with strengths and faults of character illustrating how environment modified behaviour. In addressing social, political and economic change, many regional novelists adopted a realism sharply critical of the problems of town life: poor planning,<sup>217</sup> overcrowding, insanitary conditions, consequent disease,<sup>218</sup> lack of cultural awareness.<sup>219</sup> Keating recognises a discrete

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<sup>213</sup> Priestley, J.B. (1934) p 99

<sup>214</sup> Priestley, J.B. (1934) p 84

<sup>215</sup> Briggs, A.(1952) p 8

<sup>216</sup> Swinnerton, F. (1956) *Background with Chorus*, London, Hutchinson, p 26

<sup>217</sup> E.g. Parkes & Young

<sup>218</sup> E.g. Holtby & Young

<sup>219</sup> E.g. Allen & Young

historical source: “The realistic novel dealing with social conditions within a sub-category of fiction labelled social history.”<sup>220</sup> In the light of contrasting opinions of fiction’s credibility as historical source, the aim of this thesis is to show that Young’s North Bromwich canon does provide a reliable and uniquely important source of Birmingham history.

Cazamian<sup>221</sup> suggests that the novelist’s strength lies in the assimilation of existing ideas rather than the devising of new ones. In Young’s case, according to Cannadine, it is this lack of new ideas that confirms his veracity. “It is precisely *because* the imaginative element is so limited that (his novels) are worthy of attention.”<sup>222</sup> Cunningham acknowledges that fictions not only alter perception of facts, but are themselves history;<sup>223</sup> Kovačević declares that even minor fiction has intrinsic merit that should not be ignored. “Its literary quality is far from negligible and its historical relevance should be obvious.”<sup>224</sup> Dyos and Reeder recognise the value of novelists who “told it how it was.”<sup>225</sup> Pooler<sup>226</sup> confirms that Young’s description of medical life in early twentieth century Birmingham told it how it was. Smith’s premise<sup>227</sup> that the novelist’s subject is society: real life, real places, real people is illustrated in Young’s vibrant portrait of North Bromwich, its identifiable locations and recognisable people. Aydelotte<sup>228</sup> disregards fiction as historically unreliable, Keating<sup>229</sup> suggests that novelists may select and interpret data in biased and judgemental ways, imposing inappropriate values

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<sup>220</sup> Keating, P.J (1989) *The Haunted Study: A Social History of the English Novel 1875-1914*, London, Secker & Warburg, p 285

<sup>221</sup> Cazamian, L. (1973) *The Social Novel in England*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, p 7

<sup>222</sup> Cannadine, D. (1982) pp 9-10

<sup>223</sup> Cunningham, V. (1998) p 2

<sup>224</sup> Kovačević, I. (1975) *Fact into Fiction: English Literature and the Industrial Scene*, Leicester, University Press, p 16

<sup>225</sup> Dyos, H.J. & Reeder D.A. (1973) “Slums and Suburbs” in Dyos, H.J. & Wolff, M. (eds) (1973) *The Victorian City: Images and Reality, Vol II*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, p374

<sup>226</sup> Pooler, H.W. (1948) *My Life in General Practice*, London, Christopher Johnson, pp 46-47

<sup>227</sup> Smith, S. (1980) *The Other Nation: The Poor in English Novels of the 1840s and 1850s*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, p 1

<sup>228</sup> Aydelotte, W.O. (1948) “The England of Marx and Mill as Reflected in Fiction” in *The Tasks of Economic History, Supplement VIII*, New York, p 43

<sup>229</sup> Keating, P.J. (1971) *The Working Classes in Victorian Fiction*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, p 2

and solutions, whilst society thus represented, Howard<sup>230</sup> states, may be no more than caricature. Such caveats are partly true of the North Bromwich canon, where Birmingham's 1891 pantomime season, unusually, is wrongly identified.<sup>231</sup> Jameson<sup>232</sup> warns that no source should be effectively disqualified by a simple enumeration of inaccuracies, omissions, or unanswered questions. Young admits bias. The novel's essence "isn't the aggregation of useful facts... but the reaction of the author's mind to those facts."<sup>233</sup> North Bromwich aberrations, however, are merely a fraction of the truth as the unquestionable similarity with other sources of Young's accounts<sup>234</sup> of Birmingham Council's 1900 visit to the Elan Valley or the 1901 Lloyd George riot clearly demonstrate.

Tosh<sup>235</sup> maintains that novels cannot be treated as factual reports and Kettle<sup>236</sup> concludes that the conscientious use of documentary material does not guarantee the novel's status as serious writing. Whilst this is patently true, it does not negate fiction's historical value. Within the North Bromwich canon, Young reveals similar scruples concerning disparate sources. "Monks had a way of letting their pens run away with them, and their records are just about as trustworthy as historical novels."<sup>237</sup> Cannadine poses pertinent questions: "Is the picture really comprehensive or in fact selective? Does (the writer) comment perceptively on, or distort maliciously, the age in which he lived and wrote?"<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> Howard, D., et al (1966) *Tradition and Tolerance in Nineteenth Century Fiction*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, p 100

<sup>231</sup> See pp 93-94

<sup>232</sup> Jameson, F. (1981) *The Political Unconscious – Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*, London, Methuen, p 13

<sup>233</sup> Young, F.B. (March 1929) "Confessions of a Novelist" p 530

<sup>234</sup> Young, F.B. (1913) *Undergrowth*, London, Martin Secker and (1919) *The Young Physician* respectively – see pp 163-169

<sup>235</sup> Tosh, J. (1984) p 34

<sup>236</sup> Kettle, A. (1964) "The Early Victorian Social-Problem Novel", in Ford, B. (ed.) (1964) *From Dickens to Hardy*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, p 178

<sup>237</sup> Young, F.B. (1924) *Cold Harbour*, London, Collins, p 185

<sup>238</sup> Cannadine, D. (1982) p 5

North Bromwich evidence shows that Young looked at many of the same themes, people and locations as Birmingham's historians and geographers, albeit through a different lens. Dentith establishes the novel's ability to capture realities complementary to those of social and demographic histories as an act of demystification.<sup>239</sup> Rose asserts that fiction as paradigm does not necessarily compromise truth: the novelist may capture reality better than does the historian.<sup>240</sup> Light acknowledges common ground across different genres. "Retrospective re-ordering of the past and an attempt to re-enter the moment... is central to all historical projects... it is also at the heart of novelistic imagination."<sup>241</sup> Every source warrants careful examination of its author's (overt and covert) agenda, intended audience, bias and omissions, as well as contemporary interpretations. Gay ("Treat all documents from the past as if they possessed equal status... literary works, like all other texts, become merely one 'signifying practice' among many."<sup>242</sup>) and Light ("Rather than setting highbrow against lowbrow, serious against escapist, look for what is shared, see all as historically meaningful."<sup>243</sup>) advocate the solution adopted in this thesis. It is when all sources are evaluated together, Tosh<sup>244</sup> considers, that there is at least a chance they will reveal the facts or something very close to them.

As a mirror of its times, Cazamian<sup>245</sup> concludes, fiction may provide insights more interesting and instructive than leaden facts, though Young enters a fundamental caveat when evaluating novels as historical source. "If you want exact information do not seek it in

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<sup>239</sup> Dentith, S. (2000) "Tone and Voice in Industrial Writing in the 1930s" in Klaus, H.G. & Knight, S. (2000) pp 99, 102

<sup>240</sup> Rose, J. (2001) *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*, Yale, University Press, p 112

<sup>241</sup> Light, A. (1991) *Forever England: Femininity, Literature and Conservatism between the Wars*, London, Routledge, p 2

<sup>242</sup> Gay, J. (1996) *The Victorian Social-Problem Novel*, Basingstoke, Macmillan Press Ltd., p 7

<sup>243</sup> Light, A. (1991) p x

<sup>244</sup> Tosh, J. (1984) p 58

<sup>245</sup> Cazamian, L. (1973) pp 6,10



imaginative literature.”<sup>246</sup> This thesis shows that the North Bromwich canon’s precision contradicts Young’s proposition and that imparting information, though not the novelist’s primary aim, is a valid and user-friendly concomitant offering complementary rather than alternative perceptions. The value of fiction as historical source stands or falls by the degree to which it resonates with other sources addressing the same issues. It is not necessarily required of the regional novel to provide new insights; it should, however, make existing knowledge more accessible. However important plot and narrative may be, it is topographical integrity that defines the regional novel, authenticating its use as historical and geographical source. For Young’s North Bromwich portrait of Birmingham to be valid, its confirmation of other sources, which this thesis demonstrates, overrides other debate. It is, therefore, legitimate to conclude, with Cannadine, that Young is “A novelist whose work was once contemporary fiction, but which, with the passing of the years, has become historical evidence.”<sup>247</sup>

Young’s inclination to the regional genre is apparent from his earliest short stories. *Miner of Axmoor*, *Roman’s Folly*, *Furze Bloom* and *The Dead Village* all had Mendip settings.<sup>248</sup> Here, he explained, was his intended locale. “When the stories have increased, we will get a map of Mendip and label the places with their proper names: Highberrow, Roman’s Folly, Great Barrow Farm and the rest.”<sup>249</sup> The successful region, however, was to be centred upon North Bromwich, directly descended (albeit significantly removed) from the nineteenth century’s regional novels, the earliest of which is generally identified<sup>250</sup> as Maria

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<sup>246</sup> Young, F.B. (March 1929) “Confessions of a Novelist”, pp 523-538, p 530

<sup>247</sup> Cannadine, D. (1982) p 7

<sup>248</sup> Hall, M. (1997) pp 85-86

<sup>249</sup> FBY 369 (21.03.1908) Letter from Young to Jessie Hankinson

<sup>250</sup> Drabble, M. (ed.) (1995) p 827

Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent*<sup>251</sup> with its undoubtedly Irish speech, characters and countryside. *Ormond*<sup>252</sup> continues the theme. Young's acquaintance with Edgeworth's work is acknowledged in *The Tragic Bride*. "The romantic education of Gabrielle was accomplished in the school of Maria Edgeworth. *Castle Rackrent* ravished her. She thrilled to the Irish atmosphere of *Ormond*."<sup>253</sup> Young's wider familiarity with the genre through the Scottish novels of Scott<sup>254</sup> and Stevenson<sup>255</sup> has already been established.<sup>256</sup>

Though recognisable, early regional portraits lack the specificity of North Bromwich which this thesis explores. Trollope's Barsetshire,<sup>257</sup> clearly southwest England, remains imaginary; Manchester is the setting of *Mervyn Clitheroe*<sup>258</sup> and *Forbidden to Wed*.<sup>259</sup> In according location equal importance with character and plot, Hardy anticipates Young. Christminster is Oxford;<sup>260</sup> Mellstock is Stinsford.<sup>261</sup> Based on Dorchester, Casterbridge, like North Bromwich, dominates its surroundings as "the pole, focus or nerve-knot of the surrounding country life."<sup>262</sup> Hardy again anticipates Young in his yardstick of sham and pretence: "They build ruins on maiden estates and cast antiques at Birmingham."<sup>263</sup> In castigating Birmingham, Hardy followed in a tradition established by Austen, for whom the

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<sup>251</sup> Edgeworth, M. (1800) *Castle Rackrent*, London, J. Johnson

<sup>252</sup> Edgeworth, M. (1817) *Ormond*, London, Baldwin, Craddock & Jay

<sup>253</sup> Young, F.B. (1920) *The Tragic Bride*, London, Martin Secker, p 56

<sup>254</sup> Scott, W. (1814) *Waverley*, Edinburgh; (1815) *Guy Mannering*, London, James Ballantyne & Co; (1818) *The Heart of Midlothian*, Edinburgh, A Constable & Co in *Tales of my Landlord*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Series, by Jedediah Cleishbotham – pseudonym of Walter Scott

<sup>255</sup> Stevenson, R.L. (1886) *Kidnapped* London, J. Henderson; (1893) *Catriona* London, Cassell & Co; (1889) *The Master of Ballantrae* London, Cassell & Co

<sup>256</sup> See Page 9

<sup>257</sup> Trollope, A. (1855) *The Warden* London, Longman, Brown, Green; (1857) *Barchester Towers* London, Longman, Brown, Green; (1858) *Dr Thorne* London, Chapman & Hall; (1861) *Framley Parsonage* London, Smith, Elder & Co; (1864) *The Small House at Allington* London, Smith, Elder & Co; (1867) *The Last Chronicle of Barset* London, Smith Elder & Co

<sup>258</sup> Ainsworth, W. H. (1858) *Mervyn Clitheroe*, London, G. Routledge & Co

<sup>259</sup> Banks, I. (1883) *Forbidden to Wed*, London, F.V. White & Co

<sup>260</sup> Hardy, T. (1896) *Jude the Obscure*, London, Osgood, McIlvaine & Co, passim

<sup>261</sup> Hardy, T. (1872) *Under the Greenwood Tree*, London, Tinsley Bros., passim

<sup>262</sup> Hardy, T. (1886) *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, London, Smith, Elder & Co; edition cited: (1924) Macmillan & Co, p 70

<sup>263</sup> Hardy, T. (1873) *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, London, Tinsley Bros; edition cited: (1924) London, Macmillan, p 142

town had a discouraging ambience. “Birmingham is not a place to promise much... One has no great hopes of Birmingham. I always say there is something direful in the sound.”<sup>264</sup> Hardly more appealing, but predating Birmingham’s novelistic appearance, Jago’s verse description captures an industrial scene of potent heat, furrowed pavement and clattering blows.

BREMICHAM... on ev’ry Side,  
The tortured Metal spreads a radiant Show’r.  
'Tis Noise and Hurry all! The thronged Street,  
The close-piled Warehouse, and the busy Shop!<sup>265</sup>

This unpropitious beginning laid enduring foundations as a prototype for later novels set in Birmingham and was a graphic precursor of Young’s North Bromwich.

The prominence of the regional genre in the twentieth century is seen in its prize-winning status<sup>266</sup> and Lucien Leclaire’s important study, *A General Analytical Bibliography of the Regional Novelists of the British Isles 1800-1950*,<sup>267</sup> identifying nearly four hundred regional writers. The continuing preference of regional novelists for rural rather than urban settings is demonstrated by writers such as Webb<sup>268</sup> and Gunn.<sup>269</sup> Holme<sup>270</sup> used the landscape and society of her native Westmorland to conjure working life, whilst Walmsley’s

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<sup>264</sup> Austen, J. (1816) *Emma*, London; edition cited: (1984) London, QPD, p 730

<sup>265</sup> Jago, R. (1767) *Edge-Hill or The Rural Prospect Delineated and Moralized*, London, J. Dodsley, lines 519, 537-540

<sup>266</sup> The James Tait Black Memorial Prize was awarded to: D.H Lawrence (1920) *The Lost Girl*; F. B. Young (1927) *Portrait of Clare*; E. Young (1930) *Miss Mole*; W. Holtby (1936) *South Riding*; N. Gunn (1937) *Highland River*; the Femina-Vie Heureuse Prize to C. Holme (1919) *The Splendid Fairing*; M. Webb (1925) *Precious Bane* – Millett, F.B. et al. (1945) *Contemporary British Literature*, London, George Harrap; Browning, D.C. (1960) *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, London, J.M. Dent

<sup>267</sup> Leclaire, L. (1954) *A General Analytical Bibliography of the Regional Novelists of the British Isles 1800-1950*, Clermont-Ferrand, G. de Bussac

<sup>268</sup> Webb, M. (1917) *Gone to Earth*, London, Constable & Co; (1924) *Precious Bane*, London, Constable & Co

<sup>269</sup> Gunn, N. (1931) *Morning Tide*, Edinburgh, Porpoise Press; (1937) *Highland River*, Edinburgh, Porpoise Press; (1941) *The Silver Darlings*, London, Faber & Faber

<sup>270</sup> Holme, C. (1918) *Beautiful End*, London, Mills & Boon; (1919) *The Splendid Fairing*, London, Mills & Boon; (1925) *The Things Which Belong*, London, Mills & Boon

fishing communities evoke Robin Hood's Bay.<sup>271</sup> In Walpole's *Herries Chronicle*<sup>272</sup> the Lakeland setting, though atmospheric, is less vital to the novels' integrity than is location in the North Bromwich novels.

A switch to urban settings did not entirely disallow appreciation of the rural idyll. A product of his own experience, the Birmingham of Peter Chamberlain (1903-1954) is reminiscent of North Bromwich, displaying Young's "black v green" prejudice.

Between Birmingham and Wolverhampton stretches of dismal, waste ground, twisted into grotesque switchbacks, bordered the railway, looking with their broken craters and desolate slagheaps, like a battlefield where man had waged a futile war against nature.<sup>273</sup>

Chamberlain's characters, however, display greater affinity with this dismal place than do most of Young's, even displaying unease on quitting the city.<sup>274</sup> Journalist and racing motorcyclist, Chamberlain boasted impeccable Birmingham credentials. One grandfather was city architect J.H. Chamberlain, the other James Smith, Birmingham's first Lord Mayor.<sup>275</sup> Chamberlain's neglected novel, *Sing Holiday*,<sup>276</sup> begins and ends in Birmingham, with an Isle of Man interlude, allowing the author to indulge his motor racing passion. Two short stories, *Fanciful* and *Journalists are so Sentimental*,<sup>277</sup> also depict Birmingham. The city is conjured by various locations: New Street Station, Bristol Road, the County Ground; familiar sights: a Villa strip, "Midland Red" buses; depressing images: "The low-lying pall of smoke, the drab

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<sup>271</sup> Walmsley, L. (1932) *Three Fevers*, London, Jonathan Cape; (1935) *Foreigners*, London, Jonathan Cape; (1937) *Sally Lunn*, London, Collins

<sup>272</sup> Walpole, H. (1930) *Rogue Herries*, London, Macmillan & Co; (1931) *Judith Paris*, London, Macmillan & Co; (1931) *The Fortress*, London, Macmillan & Co; (1933) *Vanessa*, London, Macmillan & Co

<sup>273</sup> Chamberlain, P. (1937) *Sing Holiday*, London, Arthur Baker, p 82

<sup>274</sup> Chamberlain, P. (1937) p 395

<sup>275</sup> Halward, L. (1938) *Let Me Tell You*, London, Michael Joseph, pp 245-250

<sup>276</sup> Chamberlain, P. (1937)

<sup>277</sup> Chamberlain, P. (1935) "Fanciful", in *What the Sweet Hell?*, London, Chatto & Windus – first published (February 1935) in *New Stories*; (1939) "Journalists are so Sentimental" in *Our Lives are Swiss*, London, Hamish Hamilton

rows of slum houses, the lowering workshops.”<sup>278</sup> Chamberlain’s Birmingham could be North Bromwich.

Drawing upon personal experience, regional novelists frequently include verifiable events and characters, supporting Tosh’s view that in addition to vivid topographical descriptions, creative literature offers insights into the social and intellectual world of the writer.<sup>279</sup> Marjorie Hessel Tiltman (1900-1999) introduces into *Quality Chase*,<sup>280</sup> a tale of Birmingham in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, real people (John Bright, Cardinal Newman) and real events (the Lloyd George riot, Joseph Chamberlain’s funeral). Her Birmingham portrait is authentic not only because it was carefully researched,<sup>281</sup> but also because, like Young, Tiltman wrote from knowledge and experience. Her father, Sidney Hand, who in 1906 opened a fine art business in Lower Temple Street, Birmingham<sup>282</sup> before settling in London’s Grafton Street, is portrayed as Jonathan Chase, who opens his first antique shop in Broad Street, moves to Temple Street and then (through unsentimental Brummagem assiduity) to greater profits in Grey Street, London. His heart, however, remains in Birmingham and the novel ends with a sentiment never experienced in North Bromwich. “He ascended the stairs to bed or, as it was in his imagination, to Birmingham and Heaven.”<sup>283</sup> Unlike North Bromwich, Tiltman’s Birmingham is an undisguised portrait where streets (Carrs Lane, Colmore Row), buildings (Prince of Wales Theatre, Snow Hill Station) and suburbs (Edgbaston, Sparkhill) appear under their own names. Tiltman, however, shares

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<sup>278</sup> Chamberlain, P. (1937) p 83

<sup>279</sup> Tosh, J. (1984) p 34

<sup>280</sup> Tiltman, M.H. (1939) *Quality Chase*, London, Hodder & Stoughton

<sup>281</sup> The historical accuracy of the Chamberlain episodes in *Quality Chase* was researched in the British Museum library –Tiltman, M.H. (1939) Foreword p 5

<sup>282</sup> *The Times* (02.04.1999) “Obit of M.H. Tiltman”; *Kelly’s Directory of Birmingham* (1906)

<sup>283</sup> Tiltman, M.H. (1939) p 320

Young's bias, describing "the insufferably ugly, huddled, inchoate mass that was Birmingham. A dustheap, a scrapheap."<sup>284</sup>

As, by definition, creative writing is inventive, its reliability may well be suspect. However, as this thesis shows, fiction based upon experience of a particular time and place intrinsically carries a self-authenticating validity not found in pure invention, as novelist Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler suggests. "You are so apt to mislay your rivers or to lose a church if you are dealing with a place that exists solely in your own imagination."<sup>285</sup>

Like Young's and Tiltman's, the Birmingham fiction of John Hampson (1901-1953) is authenticated by experience as Simpson argues. "His insistence upon regional settings, based upon his personal knowledge of the Midlands, is an aspect of his veracity."<sup>286</sup> Born in Handsworth, grandson of the Theatre Royal's proprietor,<sup>287</sup> son of an Aston brewer<sup>288</sup> and nephew of surgeon Jordan Lloyd<sup>289</sup> (North Bromwich's Lloyd Moore<sup>290</sup>), Hampson with Walter Allen, Leslie Halward<sup>291</sup> and Peter Chamberlain formed the "Birmingham Group",

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<sup>284</sup> Tiltman, M.H. (1939) p 147

<sup>285</sup> Quoted in Perry, A. (1999) *Ellen's Forgotten Mercia*, Studley, Brewin Books, p 3

<sup>286</sup> Simpson, M.F.H. (1975) *The Novels of John Hampson*, University of Wales M.A. thesis, p 96

<sup>287</sup> Hampson's grandfather was Mercer Hampson Simpson who, succeeding his father, ran Birmingham's Theatre Royal from 1864 - 1892 – Salberg, D. (1980) *Ring Down the Curtain*, Luton, Cortney Publications, p 22

<sup>288</sup> Hampson's father was a partner in the firm of Moore & Simpson – Simpson, M.F.H. (1975) p 8

<sup>289</sup> "In 1887 Mr Lloyd married the eldest daughter of the late Mr Mercer H. Simpson, proprietor of the Theatre Royal." – *Birmingham Post* (05.04.1913) "Obit of Jordan Lloyd".

<sup>290</sup> See pp 366-368

<sup>291</sup> Birmingham-born and educated Leslie Halward (1906-1976) is principally remembered as the author of radio plays based on his short stories: (1936) *To Tea on Sundays* London, Methuen & Co; (1938) *The Money's Alright and Other Stories*, London, Michael Joseph. A general ambience, rather than topographical detail, of working-class Birmingham provided Halward's inspiration, as the *Radio Times* introduction to *Love Story* (broadcast 24.03.1955) explains. "The way the characters address each other (is)... peculiarly appropriate to Birmingham. Then again...the ways in which they spend their leisure time are also of a specifically Brummy character." Halward, therefore, has not been considered as a basic source for this thesis. - Halward, L. (1938); Lester, P. (1988) *The Road to Excelsior Lodge: the Writings of Leslie Halward*, Birmingham, Porteous Press; Collection of Halward's radio scripts Local Studies Department, Birmingham Reference Library.

discussing writing in a public house off Corporation Street.<sup>292</sup> *Saturday Night at the Greyhound*,<sup>293</sup> set in Derbyshire, is interspersed with Birmingham flashbacks. *Family Curse*<sup>294</sup> features a materialistic Birmingham family. *Good Luck*<sup>295</sup> brings a job seeker back to his native Birmingham. Hampson's undisguised Birmingham is a busy, crowded place, the centre of surrounding life. Tyseley and Solihull lie beyond Young's parameters; Corporation Street and the Grand Hotel are familiar North Bromwich locations. Simpson identifies Hampson's social strata, similar to Young's, as a regional, mainly industrial background spanning both middle-class and working-class.<sup>296</sup> Hampson's Birmingham, despite the range and frequency of its locations, wants the vigorous sense of place which shapes North Bromwich, but is not entirely lacklustre, remaining "Good old Brum, there was no other place quite like it."<sup>297</sup>

Novelists' dependence upon local history,<sup>298</sup> government reports, statistics and blue books, builds upon the work of Charlotte Elizabeth [Tonna] (1790-1846):<sup>299</sup>

Individuals have been kept in view throughout in order to engage the reader's sympathies while concentrating her attention more effectually than the pages of a formal report could do. Into the deepest horrors of that report we, however, have dived.<sup>300</sup>

Of particular interest for the North Bromwich lineage in Tonna's largely forgotten industrial fiction is her four-part novel *The Wrongs of Woman (Milliners and Dressmakers, The*

<sup>292</sup> Halward, L. (1938) pp 244-251, where Derbyshire novelist Walter Brierley's occasional identification with the Birmingham Group - e.g., Stringer, J. (ed.) (1996) *The Oxford Companion to Twentieth Century Literature in English*, Oxford, University Press, p 277 and O'Brien, E.J. (1936) Introduction to Halward, L. (1936) *To Tea on Sundays*, London, Methuen & Co, p vii - is dismissed.

<sup>293</sup> Hampson, J. (1931) *Saturday Night at the Greyhound*, London, Hogarth Press

<sup>294</sup> Hampson, J. (1936) *Family Curse*, London, Chapman & Hall

<sup>295</sup> Hampson, J. (Christmas 1939) "Good Luck" short story published in *New Writing III*, London, The Hogarth Press

<sup>296</sup> Simpson, M.F.H. (1975) pp 11, 64

<sup>297</sup> Hampson, J. (1931); edition cited: (1937) London, Penguin, p 30

<sup>298</sup> E.g. Tiltman and Young

<sup>299</sup> Tonna generally wrote under the name of Charlotte Elizabeth

<sup>300</sup> [Tonna], Charlotte Elizabeth (1843-44) *The Forsaken Home*, London, W.H. Dalton; edition cited: (1845) New York, Dodd, p 441

*Forsaken Home, The Little Pin-Headers, The Lace-Runners*)<sup>301</sup> graphically depicting Midlands working life, drawn from government reports. *The Forsaken Home* in particular paraphrases Grainger's Birmingham report<sup>302</sup> concerning female labour and working conditions. Especially concerned with the exploitation of women who laboured under appalling conditions in back-street factories,<sup>303</sup> Tonna, an ardent evangelical, remembered principally for her work for the Religious Tract Society,<sup>304</sup> conducted a fervent, personal crusade to influence legislation and confront employers with their responsibility for the oppression and corruption of women in the workplace. Her wider themes recur in North Bromwich. When, in *The Forsaken Home*, Alice Smith exchanges rural poverty for labour in a Birmingham screw-manufactory where "smoke and dirt and offensive exhalations... streets replete with filth, obscenity and intoxication"<sup>305</sup> anticipate later North Bromwich, Tonna addresses the corruption and corrosive influence of industrial towns, which remain compelling issues for Young. Terry-Chandler is clear that "Tonna's description of an average Birmingham workshop is broadly accurate based on parliamentary evidence."<sup>306</sup>

Contemporary with Tonna's fiction is the moralizing novella *How to Get on in the World: The Story of Peter Lawley*.<sup>307</sup> Son of a poor Birmingham nailer, Lawley determines to improve himself by learning to read. Initially mirroring Tonna's Alice Smith in her descent

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<sup>301</sup> [Tonna], Charlotte Elizabeth (1843-44) *The Wrongs of Woman*, London, W.H. Dalton; edition cited: (1845) New York, Dodd

<sup>302</sup> Grainger, R.D. (1843) *Children's Employment (Trades & Manufactures)* 2<sup>nd</sup> Report of the Commissioners on Trades and Manufactures

<sup>303</sup> Neff, W. (1966) *Victorian Working Women*, London, Allen & Unwin, p 114

<sup>304</sup> E.g. [Tonna], Charlotte Elizabeth (1826) *Anne Bell: Or, My Faults*, London, Religious Tract Society; (1826) *The Simple Flower*, London, Religious Tract Society; (1827) *Philip, and his Garden*, London, Religious Tract Society

<sup>305</sup> [Tonna], Charlotte Elizabeth (1843-44) p 442

<sup>306</sup> Terry-Chandler, F. (1995) *Women, Work and the Family: Birmingham 1800-1870*, Birmingham PhD thesis, p 139

<sup>307</sup> "How to Get on in the World: The Story of Peter Lawley" was published anonymously in *The Family Economist* Vol 1 (1848) London, Groombridge & Sons, pp 5-8, 30-32, 48-52, 83-86, 97-101



into squalor, Peter's mother "before her marriage had been a neat-handed servant maid at a farm-house, but living for some years in a dirty and smoky street... had broken her temper and made her careless."<sup>308</sup> Peter's reading success initiates the reformation of his slatternly mother, his father eschewing strong drink, better health for his sickly brother and his own eventual appointment as draughtsman at £300 per annum. The novella's setting, however, remains unreformed. "The large and busy town of Birmingham... alive with the roar of furnaces and clatter of machinery... very black and dirty... nothing but thump and smite from morning till night."<sup>309</sup>

Birmingham industrial pollution is also the theme of *Living*,<sup>310</sup> second of nine novels by Henry Green (1905-1973), pseudonym of Henry Vincent Yorke, son of a wealthy industrialist. After Oxford, which he left without graduating, Green joined the family firm, H. Pontifex & Sons<sup>311</sup> of Birmingham. Initially living in lodgings, he worked a forty-eight hour week, progressing from storekeeper, via pattern maker and foundry worker, to coppersmith.<sup>312</sup> Though not strictly autobiographical, these experiences produced the social documentary/proletarian novel *Living*, concerned, as Stokes points out, with "seeing things with fresh eyes and registering them with unconventional accuracy."<sup>313</sup> Widely acclaimed as experimental,<sup>314</sup> Green adopted an economic literary style frequently omitting the definite and indefinite articles, possibly, according to Weatherhead, imitating the Warwickshire dialect

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<sup>308</sup> "How to Get on in the World: The Story of Peter Lawley" (1848) p 30

<sup>309</sup> "How to Get on in the World: The Story of Peter Lawley" (1848) pp 6-7

<sup>310</sup> Green, H. (1929) *Living*, London, J.M. Dent & Sons

<sup>311</sup> H. Pontifex & Sons Ltd, Engineers, Coppersmiths and Brewers' Engineers, Kings Road, Tyseley – *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham* (1925)

<sup>312</sup> Green, H. (1940) *Pack My Bag*, London, The Hogarth Press p 236

<sup>313</sup> Stokes, E. (1959) *The Novels of Henry Green*, London, The Hogarth Press, p 12

<sup>314</sup> Kamm, A. (1993) *Biographical Dictionary of English Literature*, Glasgow, Harper Collins, p 190

prevalent in Birmingham.<sup>315</sup> *Living* portrays the monotonous lives of foundry workers resigned to their lot in dreary, industrial Birmingham. The dingy drabness of the city's industry - "Birmingham... all grimy and tiring. It was so dirty there..."<sup>316</sup> - is not escaped in the surrounding countryside. "All here was black with smoke... cows went soot-covered and the sheep grey."<sup>317</sup> The abiding impressions of Green's Birmingham also constitute the prevailing ambience of Young's North Bromwich.

In the mid-nineteenth century social reform was on many agendas. Between the cholera epidemics which began the 1830s and ended the 1840s, a series of Factory Acts<sup>318</sup> improved working conditions; various commissions investigated public health and living conditions;<sup>319</sup> the anti-Poor Law movement was active;<sup>320</sup> Chartists campaigned; the Corn Laws were repealed. Against this background, society's widening divide and the miseries of life in ugly industrial towns captured the attention of a new generation of novelists who addressed Carlyle's condition-of-England question<sup>321</sup> identified by Disraeli as "Two nations; between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy; who are ignorant of each other's habits, thoughts and feelings".<sup>322</sup> Taking Birmingham as a political barometer - "They're always ready for a riot in Birmingham... The sufferings of '39 will keep Birmingham in

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<sup>315</sup> Weatherhead, A. K. (1961) *A Reading of Henry Green*, Seattle, University of Washington Press, p 33. The omission of the article may be due to the influence of W.H. Auden, who had lived in Birmingham and considered Green "the best English novelist alive." - Melchiori, G. (1956) *The Tightrope Walkers: Studies of Mannerism in Modern English Literature*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, p 192; Dennis, N. (04.08.1952) "The Double Life of Henry Green," in *Life*, p 85

<sup>316</sup> Green, H. (1929) pp 35-36

<sup>317</sup> Green, H. (1929) p 108

<sup>318</sup> E.g. 1833: Act to Regulate the Labour of Children & Young Persons in Mills & Factories; 1844: Act to Amend the Laws relating to Labourers in Factories; 1845: Print Works Act; 1847: Act to Limit Hours of Labouring of Young Persons & Females in Factories (Ten Hours Act)

<sup>319</sup> E.g. 1840: Report of the Health of Towns Committee; 1842: Report on Sanitary Conditions of the Labouring Populations of Great Britain; 1842: Report on the State of Public Health in the Borough of Birmingham; 1844: Report into the State of Large Towns & Populous Districts; 1845: Report on the State of Birmingham & Other Large Towns; 1848: Public Health Act

<sup>320</sup> Following the Poor Law Amendment Act, 1834

<sup>321</sup> Carlyle, T. (1840) *Chartism*, London, James Fraser

<sup>322</sup> Disraeli, B. (1845) *Sybil*, London, Henry Colburn; edition cited: (1879) Longman, Green & Co, p 76

check”<sup>323</sup> - *Sybil* explores sympathetically the insentience of the squalid industrial town of Mowbray. Here “men are brought together by the desire for gain... and for all the rest are careless of neighbours,”<sup>324</sup> foreshadowing the pervading utilitarianism of North Bromwich, where industry rules <sup>325</sup> as in Brontë’s *Shirley*, which seeks an explanation for social and political ills. “In Birmingham I considered closely, and at their source, the causes of the present troubles of this country.”<sup>326</sup> Drawing on press reports of the collapse of England’s wool industry,<sup>327</sup> *Shirley* addresses industry’s impact on a rural landscape. *Hollows Mill* is Rawfolds Mill, Liversedge, scene of an 1812 Luddite rising,<sup>328</sup> where the vision of “manufacturer’s daydreams embodied in substantial stone and brick and ashes – the cinder-black highway, a mighty mill, and a chimney, ambitious as the tower of Babel,”<sup>329</sup> anticipates the soulless economics of North Bromwich.<sup>330</sup>

Exact regionalism is not a prerequisite of condition-of-England novels. *Middlemarch*,<sup>331</sup> where urban and rural societies interact during the upheavals preceding the First Reform Act, evokes Eliot’s impressions of Coventry. However the portrait is never precisely developed, as, unlike North Bromwich, location is inessential to plot, as Harvey explains. “While it is obvious that *Middlemarch* is based on Coventry, this is of little

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<sup>323</sup> Disraeli, B. (1845) pp 324, 400

<sup>324</sup> Disraeli, B. (1845) p 76

<sup>325</sup> Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age* p 71; (1919) *The Young Physician* p 235

<sup>326</sup> Brontë, C. (1849) *Shirley*, London, Smith Elder & Co; edition cited: (1924) Edinburgh, John Grant, vol ii, p 319

<sup>327</sup> Gaskell, E. (1857) *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, Edinburgh, John Grant; edition cited: (1924) p 363

<sup>328</sup> Gaskell, E. (1857) p 97

<sup>329</sup> Brontë, C. (1849) vol II, p 470

<sup>330</sup> Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, p 92; (1921) *The Black Diamond*, p 234

<sup>331</sup> Eliot, G. (1871) *Middlemarch: A Study of Provincial Life*, London, William Blackwood & Sons

importance to our general recognition of Eliot's success in creating a dense, coherent and credible social world."<sup>332</sup>

Industrial and domestic squalor, their consequent diseases and potential cures are paramount issues for condition-of-England writers. Young's familiarity with Dickens' sentimentalised contrast between rural tranquillity and industrial squalor has already been established.<sup>333</sup> *Hard Times* addresses the divide between employers and workers in urban Coketown - "an ugly citadel where Nature was as strongly bricked out as killing airs and gases were bricked in"<sup>334</sup> - based on Preston, which Dickens visited in 1854.<sup>335</sup> Though Coketown lacks identifiable locations such as link North Bromwich to Birmingham, its ethos is demonstrably that of North Bromwich. Dickens' attitude to Birmingham was ambivalent. Though he championed its proposals for working-class education and gave readings in its Town Hall in support of the Birmingham and Midland Institute, of which he became president in 1869,<sup>336</sup> his fiction proclaims another reality. "Volumes of dense smoke blackening and obscuring everything... betokened the rapid approach to the great working town of Birmingham."<sup>337</sup>

Having chosen Kingsley as the subject for a student paper,<sup>338</sup> Young was obviously aware of that author's concern for the condition-of-England. *Alton Locke: Tailor and Poet*,<sup>339</sup>

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<sup>332</sup> Harvey, W.J. (1965) "Introduction" to Eliot, G., *Middlemarch: A Study of Provincial Life*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, p 17

<sup>333</sup> See page 9

<sup>334</sup> Dickens, C. (1854) *Hard Times*, London, Bradbury & Evans; edition cited: (1970) Geneva, Heron Books, p 70

<sup>335</sup> Fielding, K.J. (1965) *Charles Dickens: A Critical Introduction*, London, Longmans, p 158

<sup>336</sup> Waterhouse, R. (1954) *The Birmingham and Midland Institute 1854-1954*, Birmingham, BMI, pp 10, 18, 183

<sup>337</sup> Dickens, C. (1836) *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club*, London, Chapman & Hall; edition cited: (1970) Geneva, Heron Books, vol ii, p 361

<sup>338</sup> See page 10

<sup>339</sup> Kingsley, C. (1850) *Alton Locke: Tailor and Poet*, London, Chapman & Hall

a powerful social document, relates the miseries of the industrial poor experienced by the eponymous hero (based on tailor and Chartist Thomas Cooper<sup>340</sup>) in a London tailor's sweatshop, whilst *Yeast*<sup>341</sup> envisages a salvation, still awaited in insensate North Bromwich, when "sanitary reform and a variety of occupation and harmonious education let each man fulfil in body and soul the idea which God embodied in him."<sup>342</sup>

Gaskell, for whom "Brummagem is as black a place as Manchester, without looking so like home,"<sup>343</sup> explored the gulf between worker and employer in *Mary Barton: A Tale of Manchester Life*, set during the 1840's when wheat import duty compounded bad harvests. Gaskell's workingman has "a stunted look about him and his wan, colourless face gave the idea that in childhood he had suffered from scanty living."<sup>344</sup> Identical workers appear in North Bromwich,<sup>345</sup> where Gaskell's faith in the salvific power of Christian principles is not apparent.

Unlike their condition-of-England predecessors, with their perceived solutions to nineteenth century problems, though concerned with society's values, their relation to the past and effect on the present, few twentieth century regional novelists were explicitly reformist, being more concerned with identifying issues than solving them. The condition-of-England novel provides a significant ancestry to the North Bromwich canon, which describes and comments upon one identifiable, unsightly, industrial conurbation, its inhabitants and utilitarian philosophy. Having commented, Young leaves the formulation of solutions to the

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<sup>340</sup> Chinn, C. (1995) *Poverty amidst Prosperity: The Urban Poor in England, 1834-1914*, Manchester, University Press, p 51

<sup>341</sup> Kingsley, C. (1848) *Yeast*, London, John W. Parker & Son

<sup>342</sup> Kingsley, C. (1848) p 65

<sup>343</sup> Gaskell, E. (1848) *Mary Barton: A Tale of Manchester Life*, London, Chapman & Hall; edition cited: (1994) Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, p 100

<sup>344</sup> Gaskell, E. (1848) p 5

<sup>345</sup> Young, F.B. (1915) *The Dark Tower*, p 31; (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 354

reader, as Cavaliero indicates: “He was aware of the problems underlying the age in which he lived, without, apparently, being deeply concerned with them.”<sup>346</sup>

One novelist with a reformist agenda, however, was Mabel Collins (1851-1927). Within the œuvre of her spiritually-enlightening,<sup>347</sup> theosophical,<sup>348</sup> semi-autobiographical<sup>349</sup> and popular romantic<sup>350</sup> novels *The Star Sapphire*<sup>351</sup> is largely set in Birchampton, a clear depiction of Birmingham. Including many of the Gothic novel’s hallmarks – energetic heroine (Laurence Monkwell), hypersensitive hero (Philip Tempest), guilty family secret (Clare Tempest’s alcoholism) – *The Star Sapphire*, reviewed as “a disagreeable book with a grand purpose,”<sup>352</sup> preaches temperance with an evangelical fervour quite alien to Young. Like Young, however, Collins was credited with drawing heavily on her own experience and writing with correctness.<sup>353</sup> In *The Star Sapphire* she unites a regional and medical novel within a Birmingham setting as does Young in *The Young Physician, My Brother Jonathan* and *Dr Bradley Remembers*. Young’s North Bromwich has much in common with Collins’ Birchampton “a dirty, horrible provincial town... dreary squares and crescents... On the whole I think Birchampton the beastliest place I ever set eyes on.”<sup>354</sup> Not one of these descriptors would be out of place within Young’s North Bromwich canon.

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<sup>346</sup> Cavaliero, G. (1977) pp 91-92

<sup>347</sup> E.g. Collins, M. (1885) *Light on the Path, A Treatise Written for the Personal Use of Those Who are Ignorant of the Eastern Wisdom, and Who Desire to Enter within its Influence*, London, Reeves & Turner

<sup>348</sup> E.g. Collins, M. (1888) *The Blossom and the Fruit, a True Story of a Black Magician*, London, The Author

<sup>349</sup> E.g. Collins, M. (1883) *In the Flower of Her Youth*, London, F.V. White & Co

<sup>350</sup> E.g. Collins, M. (1884) *Viola Fanshawe*, London, F.V. White & Co

<sup>351</sup> Collins, M. (1896)

<sup>352</sup> By W. Stebbing on behalf of the Royal Literary Fund – Farnell, K. (2005) *Mystical Vampire: The Life and Works of Mabel Collins*, Oxford, Mandrake, pp 154-155

<sup>353</sup> Farnell, K. (2005), pp 30-31, 32

<sup>354</sup> Collins, M. (1896) pp 154, 157, 187

The regional novel's transition from Edgeworth's rural setting to Young's North Bromwich embraced both a new focus upon urban industrial life and a broadening of regional horizons. Keating demonstrates that for Victorian novelists the urban workingman is predominantly a Londoner and the industrial worker nearly always a Northerner.<sup>355</sup> Gaskell's Manchester reappears in Agnus's *Minvale: The Story of a Strike*;<sup>356</sup> Kennedy's *Slavery: Pictures from the Depths*,<sup>357</sup> Agate's *Responsibility*<sup>358</sup> and Monkhouse's *True Love*.<sup>359</sup> Dickens' London topography re-emerges in Conrad's *The Secret Agent*,<sup>360</sup> set in rundown Soho; Maugham's *Liza of Lambeth*<sup>361</sup> drawing upon the grim realism of the author's experiences at St Thomas's Hospital and Morrison's *Tales of Mean Streets*<sup>362</sup> where the East End is unsentimentally portrayed.

George Gissing's (1857-1903) bleak and discomfiting novels of the demoralising ugliness of urban poverty were carefully researched in government statistics and blue books.<sup>363</sup> In plumbing depths of despair, degradation and squalor never portrayed by Young, Gissing bridges the gap between the condition-of-England novel and North Bromwich. His stated aim is "to bring home to people the ghastly condition (material, mental, and moral) of our poor classes, to show the hideous injustice of our whole system of society."<sup>364</sup> Nowhere is this more obvious than in *The Nether World*.

In the recesses of dim byways, where sunshine and free air are forgotten things, where families herd together in dear-rented garrets and cellars... (live) workers in

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<sup>355</sup> Keating, P.J. (1971) p 28

<sup>356</sup> Agnus, O. (1906) *Minvale: The Story of a Strike*, London, Hodder & Stoughton

<sup>357</sup> Kennedy, B. (1905) *Slavery: Pictures from the Depths*, London, Anthony Treherne & Co

<sup>358</sup> Agate, J. (1919) *Responsibility*, London, Grant Richards

<sup>359</sup> Monkhouse, A. N. (1919) *True Love*, London, W. Collins Sons & Co

<sup>360</sup> Conrad, J. (1907) *The Secret Agent*, London, Methuen & Co

<sup>361</sup> Maugham, W. S. (1897) *Liza of Lambeth*, London, T.F. Unwin

<sup>362</sup> Morrison, A. (1894) *Tales of Mean Streets*, London, Methuen & Co

<sup>363</sup> Gill, S. (1999) Introduction to Gissing, G., *The Nether World*, Oxford, University Press, p x

<sup>364</sup> Letter from Gissing, (02.11.1880) quoted in Gill, S. (1999) p ix

metal... in glass and enamel... in wood... in every substance on earth... that can be made commercially valuable.<sup>365</sup>

What could easily be Birmingham is actually Clerkenwell. *Eve's Ransom*, however, which incorporated material from an abandoned Birmingham novel with the Young-like title, *The Iron Gods*,<sup>366</sup> is partly set in an undisguised Birmingham, which resonates with North Bromwich. Accurately described, Gissing's Birmingham is a substantial city, its traffic "speedily passing from the region of main streets and great edifices into a squalid district of factories and workshops and crowded by-ways."<sup>367</sup> The Birmingham of *Eve's Ransom* is Young's North Bromwich: a utilitarian city of contrasts, questionable ideals and Philistine values, dominating despoiled surroundings. "On the scarred and barren plain which extends to Birmingham there had settled so thick an obscurity... that all the beacons of fiery toil were wrapped and hidden."<sup>368</sup>

Urban-industrial novels refined both the topographical accuracy of later regional novels and the realism of condition-of-England novels, exploiting the local background and precise observation of their exponents. Holtby<sup>369</sup> utilises personal experiences as an East Riding County Councillor's daughter to describe unsentimentally urban conditions of "poverty and disease, stunted, rickety children... battle against dirt, cold and inconvenience..."<sup>370</sup> replicating North Bromwich, whilst her detailed accounts of business and public affairs are echoed in Young's novels.<sup>371</sup>

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<sup>365</sup> Gissing, G. (1889) p 11

<sup>366</sup> Halperin, J. (1982) *Gissing: a Life in Books*, Oxford, University Press, p 207

<sup>367</sup> Gissing, G. (1895) *Eve's Ransom*, London, Ernest Benn Ltd; edition cited: (1980) New York, Dover Publications, p 6

<sup>368</sup> Gissing, G. (1895) p 1

<sup>369</sup> Holtby, W. (1924) *The Crowded Street*, London, John Lane; (1927) *The Land of Green Ginger*, London, Jonathan Cape; (1936) *South Riding*, London, Collins

<sup>370</sup> Holtby, W. (1936) p 299

<sup>371</sup> E.g. Young, F.B. (1913) *Undergrowth*; (1932) *The House under the Water*



Educated at Birmingham's King Edward VI Grammar School and Mason College,<sup>372</sup> William Kinton Parkes (1865-1938) set *Hardware*<sup>373</sup> in Mettingham, a very obvious Birmingham, accurately described with prodigious detail, as an early reviewer observed. "Readers of *Hardware*, a record of the social, commercial, municipal and political development of the famous Midland city of Mettingham... may feel that they are sitting rather too close to a cinematograph show."<sup>374</sup> Richard Astbury, a barely disguised Joseph Chamberlain, masterminds a great improvement scheme, transposing Corporation Street to Municipality Street. Mettingham suburbs, Worburn (Harborne), Osmaston (Edgbaston) and Ladydale (Ladywood) are transparent for, like Young, Parkes regarded setting as paramount, the *TLS* reviewer commenting that *Hardware*'s literary style emphasised settings which were realistic rather than obviously relevant to plot.<sup>375</sup> Mettingham addresses North Bromwich concerns. Expedient civic pride – "the building of the municipal offices, the art gallery, the university college,"<sup>376</sup> working environs – "back yards and mean streets,"<sup>377</sup> miserable homes – "the filthiest slums in the country."<sup>378</sup> Just as North Bromwich was a dull place, so "life at Mettingham ran on devoid of colour."<sup>379</sup> Parkes' final conclusion emphasises strength. "At heart Mettingham was sound: the City and its Council... the life of the City and of its suburbs..."<sup>380</sup> for, like Birmingham, "Mettingham is the best-governed city in the world."<sup>381</sup>

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<sup>372</sup> *Who was Who Vol 3 1929-1940* (1941) London, Adam & Charles Black, p 1044

<sup>373</sup> Parkes, W. K. (1914) *Hardware*, London, T. Fisher Unwin

<sup>374</sup> *Times Literary Supplement* (06.08.1914) Review of *Hardware*, p 378

<sup>375</sup> *Times Literary Supplement* (06.08.1914) p 378

<sup>376</sup> Parkes, W. K. (1914) p 6

<sup>377</sup> Parkes, W. K. (1914) p 60

<sup>378</sup> Parkes, W. K. (1914) p 4

<sup>379</sup> Parkes, W. K. (1914) p 255

<sup>380</sup> Parkes, W. K. (1914) p 299

<sup>381</sup> Parkes, W. K. (1914) p 341

The paradigm shift developed by urban-industrial novelists addressed the contrast between rich - old and new - and poor,<sup>382</sup> urban and rural,<sup>383</sup> emphasizing the Midlands within the regional genre. Young wrote about the Black Country and its green borderlands, where he captured a general ambience rather than the detailed particularity of North Bromwich, as Twitchett explains. “‘Wychbury’ is more or less Clent... ‘Chaddesbourne D’Abitot’ is near Chaddesley Corbett, ‘Wednesford’ is a composite Black Country town; and ‘Wolverbury’ is not quite Wolverhampton.”<sup>384</sup> Black Country settings are also used by Fowler in *The Farringdons*;<sup>385</sup> Andrews in *Doctor Grey*;<sup>386</sup> Woden in *Sowing Clover*<sup>387</sup> and Baring-Gould in *Nebo the Nailer*.<sup>388</sup>

West Bromwich-born David Christie Murray (1847-1907) of the *Wednesbury Advertiser*, *Birmingham Morning Post* and London’s *Daily News*, was a painstaking investigative journalist who spent some time touring the country dressed as a tramp and thus brought home to the public the injustice of the vagrancy laws.<sup>389</sup> Also a prolific and vigorous novelist Murray used his experiences in a variety of settings including the Black Country,<sup>390</sup> Cannock Chase<sup>391</sup> and an undisguised Birmingham, as the opening sentence of *A Rising Star* makes plain. “A young man with a head full of remarkable visions sat in a Birmingham garret.”<sup>392</sup> Mark Stanley, Birmingham reporter with literary aspirations, lodges with theatre folk, rescues Esther Reddy (the “rising star”) from poverty and follows her to London.

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<sup>382</sup> E.g. Holtby & Young

<sup>383</sup> E.g. Walpole & Young

<sup>384</sup> Twitchett, E.G. (1935) p 18

<sup>385</sup> Fowler, E. T. (1900) *The Farringdons*, London, Hutchinson

<sup>386</sup> Andrews, S. (1911) *Doctor Grey*, London, Greening & Co

<sup>387</sup> Woden, G. (1913) *Sowing Clover*, London, John Long

<sup>388</sup> Baring-Gould, S. (1902) *Nebo the Nailer*, London, Cassell & Co

<sup>389</sup> Stevens, G. (Summer 1973) “Atonement” in *The Blackcountryman*, vol 6, No 3, p 62

<sup>390</sup> E.g. Murray, D.C (1896) *A Capful O’Nails*, London, Chatto & Windus

<sup>391</sup> E.g. Murray, D.C. (1886) *Aunt Rachel*, London, Macmillan & Co

<sup>392</sup> Murray, D.C. (1894) *A Rising Star*, London, Hutchinson & Co, vol 1, p 1

Murray's novel introduces specific Birmingham locations (Bath Row, New Street, Town Hall, General Hospital, Theatre Royal, Woodman) and, though lacking the detailed particularity of North Bromwich, suggests the same uncongenial atmosphere. "A dismal autumn rain had begun to fall... the desert streets of night-time... so cold and dreary."<sup>393</sup>

Bennett's *Five Towns* novels<sup>394</sup> describe the cultural and economic realities of the Potteries in documentary detail, depicting the rise of an avaricious manufacturing class with consequent worker-exploitation, anticipating North Bromwich, where rapacious owners rose on the backs of middle men and slum-dwellers.<sup>395</sup> Bursley's workers, walking "through freezing darkness before dawn to the manufactory and the mill and the mine whence after a day of labour... they clattered back to their little candle-lighted homes"<sup>396</sup> are near relatives of North Bromwich labourers. In his Nottinghamshire novels<sup>397</sup> Lawrence wrote of the world with which he was familiar. Brought up (like Young) on the edge of a great city in a satellite town despoiled by mining, Lawrence observed the hardships of working-class communities, introducing into his novels identifiable buildings<sup>398</sup> reminiscent of Young's use of Birmingham sites and streets in North Bromwich. Tevershall, an amalgam of Nottinghamshire towns ("rows of wretched, small, begrimed brick houses"<sup>399</sup>) could equally be a North

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<sup>393</sup> Murray, D.C. (1894) vol 2, p 29

<sup>394</sup> Bennett, E. A. (1902) *Anna of the Five Towns*, London, Chatto & Windus; (1908) *The Old Wives' Tale*, London, Chatto & Windus; (1910) *Clayhanger*, London, Chatto & Windus; (1911) *Hilda Lessways*, London, Chatto & Windus; (1916) *These Twain*, London, Chatto & Windus; (1918) *The Roll Call*, London, Chatto & Windus

<sup>395</sup> Young, F.B. (1913) *Undergrowth*; (1916) *The Iron Age*; (1935) *White Ladies*; (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*

<sup>396</sup> Bennett, E. A. (1910); edition cited: (1976) Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, p 88

<sup>397</sup> Lawrence, D.H. (1911) *The White Peacock*, London, Heinemann; (1913) *Sons and Lovers*, London, Duckworth & Co; (1915) *The Rainbow*, London, Methuen & Co; (1920) *The Lost Girl*, London, Martin Secker; (1920) *Women in Love*, New York; (1922) *Aaron's Rod*, London, Martin Secker; (1928) *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Florence

<sup>398</sup> E.g. Belcote Hall is actually Bramcote Hall; The Royal Oak = The Thorn Tree, Mansfield Road – in Lawrence, D.H. (1915) and (1922) respectively – Pinion, F.B. (1978) *A D.H. Lawrence Companion*, London, Macmillan, pp 300,302

<sup>399</sup> Lawrence, D.H. (1928); edition cited: (1997) Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, pp 14, 158

Bromwich suburb. Nottinghamshire shapes Lawrence's characters much as environment explains the inhabitants of Young's North Bromwich or Allen's Bromford.

The son of a silversmith, Birmingham-born Walter Ernest Allen (1911-1995), journalist, literary critic and academic, was educated at King Edward VI Grammar School, Aston and Birmingham University.<sup>400</sup> His novels *Innocence is Drowned*, *Blind Man's Ditch* and *Living Space*<sup>401</sup> address the political and social tensions of Birmingham working-class life on the eve of World War II. Like Young, Allen writes from personal experience. His Birmingham is thinly disguised as Bromford where Council Street with its Cathedral railings is obviously Colmore Row.<sup>402</sup> His Gardiner family inhabit a nondescript back street; Ralph is a student at the University; Eric works in the Jewellery Quarter.<sup>403</sup> Anderson teaches at King James's Grammar School, "a glorified municipal secondary school... to help the sons of honest working men rise above their fathers by qualifying for posts as clerks."<sup>404</sup> As with Young's, Allen's fiction is anchored in fact. There is discussion of world events: Hitler and Mussolini,<sup>405</sup> and of local issues: Birmingham's Priestley Riots.<sup>406</sup> Allen's Bromford is a mean and pretentious place, assessed in terms more vitriolic than Young ever used of North Bromwich: "Isn't it bloody?" he said, intense loathing in his voice. "Ah well, dynamite's the only remedy."<sup>407</sup>

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<sup>400</sup> *The Times* (02.03.1995) "Obit of W.E. Allen"

<sup>401</sup> Allen, W.E. (1938) *Innocence is Drowned*, London, Michael Joseph Ltd; (1939) *Blind Man's Ditch*, London, Michael Joseph Ltd; (1940) *Living Space*, London, Michael Joseph Ltd

<sup>402</sup> Allen, W.E. (1940) pp 162-163

<sup>403</sup> Allen, W.E. (1938) *passim*

<sup>404</sup> Allen, W.E. (1939) p 130

<sup>405</sup> Allen, W.E. (1938) p 156; (1939) p 115

<sup>406</sup> Allen, W.E. (1940) pp 97-98

<sup>407</sup> Allen, W.E. (1938) p 54

So Birmingham, a point of reference in the regional novels of Austen, Dickens, Hardy, Disraeli, Gaskell and Charlotte Brontë, first appeared as a detailed regional setting at the dawn of the condition-of-England novel. Before Gaskell portrayed Manchester or Dickens depicted Preston, Tonna had used Birmingham as the locale for *The Wrongs of Woman*. Concurrent with Clarke's setting of *The Knobstick*<sup>408</sup> in Bolton and Liverpool's appearance in Tirebuck's *Dorrie*,<sup>409</sup> Murray's *A Rising Star*, Gissing's *Eve's Ransom* and Collins' *The Star Sapphire* were set in Birmingham. Exactly as Bennett was completing his *Five Towns* novels and Lawrence introduced industrial Nottingham, Parkes' *Hardware* translated Birmingham into Mettingham and Young's *Undergrowth* began his detailed exploration of Birmingham. The urban-industrial genre, to which Young's contribution was early and extensive, developed throughout his lifetime bringing in other cities.<sup>410</sup> Of the thirty representative novels mentioned here, eighteen were published within ten years of *Undergrowth*.

The 1930s proved particularly fruitful for the fictional representation of Birmingham, generating virtually half of Young's North Bromwich canon, Hampson's *Saturday Night at the Greyhound* and *Family Curse*, Chamberlain's *Sing Holiday*, Allen's *Innocence is Drowned*, *Blind Man's Ditch* and *Living Space*, and Tiltman's *Quality Chase*.

The continuing popularity of writers such as Gaskell and Lawrence ensures that their chosen regions retain a high literary profile. The derogation of other novelists has the reverse effect, creating the illusion of literary neglect. Such is the case with Birmingham, with

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<sup>408</sup> Clarke, C. A. (1893) *The Knobstick*, Manchester, John Haywood

<sup>409</sup> Tirebuck, W.E. (1891) *Dorrie*, London, Longmans, Green & Co

<sup>410</sup> E.g. Leeds in Stowell, G. (1929) *The History of Button Hill*, London, Victor Gollancz; Liverpool in Hanley, J. (1930) *Drift*, London, Eric Partridge; Bristol in Young, E. (1930) *Miss Mole*, London, Jonathan Cape.

Young's reputation diminished with critics since World War II,<sup>411</sup> and other Birmingham novelists largely neglected as Hopkins indicates of Hampson. "There is a lack of record of Hampson's life and of substantial critical discussion of his work."<sup>412</sup> What is true for Hampson applies to others. Only Gissing, Young and Green appear in both *The Cambridge Guide to Literature in English*<sup>413</sup> and *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*.<sup>414</sup> Tonna, Murray, Collins, Parkes, Tiltman and Chamberlain are not listed in any standard literary reference book, though Murray (along with Young) is considered in McDonald's 2002 study of Black Country novelists.<sup>415</sup> Hampson (along with Young, Green and Allen) merits an entry in *The Oxford Companion to Twentieth Century Literature in English*,<sup>416</sup> but this misleads, wrongly attributing to *Strip Jack Naked*<sup>417</sup> the plot and Birmingham setting of *Family Curse*. Birmingham's comparison with other provincial cities as a chosen regional locale is unequivocal; any apparent literary neglect under which it languishes is more accurately seen as critical neglect of its novelist-exponents.

Standing in the tradition both of regional and condition-of-England novels, North Bromwich reveals striking similarities with other urban-industrial fiction, corroborating that also set in Birmingham. The regional novel, which emerged in a rural setting, is characterised by topographical integrity; the condition-of-England novel by social issues, their causes and remedies. Though not generally concerned with remedies, it is in this joint tradition that the

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<sup>411</sup> E.g. Church, R. (October 1955) "Fashion Passed Him By", in *Books and Bookmen*, Vol 1, No 1; Chitham, E. (1972); Higham, D. (1978) *Literary Gent*, London, Jonathan Cape

<sup>412</sup> Hopkins, C. (1988) "John Hampson" in *Dictionary of Literary Biography Vol 191: British Novelists between the Wars*, Detroit, Brucoli Clark Layman, p 163

<sup>413</sup> Ousby, I. (ed.) (1992) *The Cambridge Guide to Literature in English*, Cambridge, University Press, pp 395 & 1107

<sup>414</sup> Drabble, M. (ed.) (1995) pp 399-400 & 1106

<sup>415</sup> McDonald, P. (2002)

<sup>416</sup> Stringer, J. (ed.) (1996) pp 14 & 277

<sup>417</sup> Hampson, J. (1934) *Strip Jack Naked*, London, Heinemann

North Bromwich canon exists, in the vanguard of a shift to the Midlands from the London or Northern locations of urban-industrial novelists from Gaskell to Holtby.

The North Bromwich canon merits secondary and primary status. At secondary level Young replicates the Birmingham history he has studied. At primary level his novels are original period documents revealing historically significant insight and bias. At the heart of the Midlands, Birmingham is the subject of the North Bromwich canon during the era in which town became city, nurtured a conscience and an improvement scheme and developed suburbs responding to social and health problems generated by overcrowding in inadequate housing, the downside of industrial success. Established as a metal-manufacturing centre by the eighteenth century, Birmingham spawned small family businesses and vast concerns alongside each other. Adaptable manufacturers responded to change in market demands, especially those prompted by the needs of war, enabling the production of goods which sold worldwide. This historical and geographical setting provides the subject matter for Young's *City of Iron*.

References to Birmingham in nineteenth century novels from Austen to Hardy set the tone for subsequent explorations. From Tonna in the mid-nineteenth century through nine further novelists, writing before and contemporaneously with Young, emerges a picture of Birmingham as a discouraging even repellent place, a depressing city characterised by industrial grime, utilitarian ideals and perceived absence of culture, with which North Bromwich entirely resonates.

By far the most prolific of the Birmingham novelists, Young has undoubtedly made a most extensive contribution to the portrait of Birmingham in fiction, adding a significant dimension to the sources of the city's history. Novels, however, are not written as history and may well be biased and selective. Young's bias (generally anti-town, but specifically anti-Birmingham) and omissions from his North Bromwich portrait are carefully calculated to reinforce his desired image. Nevertheless as novelists frequently assimilate facts from their own experience as the basis of their writing, fiction may be user-friendlier than textbooks, encouraging new understanding. It should also be recognised that all sources may be inherently flawed and that provided they are acknowledged such flaws do not necessarily invalidate the novel's use as edifying historical source.

Though other Birmingham novels may lack North Bromwich's detailed particularity, like Young their creators write from personal experience and/or careful research. Thus their novels include detailed and accurate observation, frequently involving verifiable events and characters from Birmingham's history set in recognisable locations. Such conventions, seen in contemporary novelists of other regions (e.g. Bennett, Lawrence) are also characteristic of Young, whose novels are shaped by the geographical and historical context of his own family background and formative years lived within the shadow of Birmingham and later as a medical student involved with various university societies, lodging in Edgbaston and Bath Row, assisting doctors in Aston and Hockley.

This thesis shows that the civic life of North Bromwich, its social gospel, liberal politicians, improvement scheme and grandiose architecture, mirrors the civic life of Birmingham. North Bromwich contains Birmingham's shops, clubs, hotels, restaurants,



streets, arcades, colleges, hospitals, tramways and railway stations. Fictional leisure activities repeat those of fact. North Bromwich and Birmingham residents enjoy their Triennial Musical Festival, city orchestra, theatres, music halls, art gallery, excursions to nearby beauty spots and Saturday afternoon football matches. Like Birmingham, North Bromwich expands its borders into neighbouring villages, the resultant suburbs reflecting the comparative health and housing standards of their Birmingham originals. The comparison of fictional North Bromwich with factual Birmingham is the main aim of this thesis, which addresses seven fundamental issues in measuring the veracity of Young's North Bromwich portrait.

- The potential and fallibility of the novel as historical source is a constant caveat.
- The role of Young's personal Birmingham background and experience, augmented by careful research is basic though biased. The question must be asked whether the imposition of selective values slews the North Bromwich portrait to gross distortion or meaningless caricature.
- Does Young's portrait of Birmingham change from earlier to later novels? How far does discrepancy or altered opinion affect authenticity?
- What are the assessments of Young's biographers and literary critics?
- Is the Birmingham portrait faithful to the tradition in which Young stands? How far are issues previously addressed by regional, especially urban-industrial, novelists developed? Does North Bromwich accord with other contemporary examples within the same genre?
- Is there harmony between Young's Birmingham and that described by the ten other regional novelists identified in this thesis? Is North Bromwich recognisable as the city of other portraits? Are similar events selected, locations visited, people identified, themes discussed? Do other writers reach similar conclusions to Young?

- The most important yardstick remains the extent to which Young's North Bromwich confirms or contradicts what facts, statistics and the research and opinion of expert historians reveal about actual Birmingham events, locations, people and themes during the identified period.

From the issues discussed in this chapter it is apparent that, allowing for bias and particular literary purpose, the urban-industrial novel within the wider regional genre claims a role as authentic historical source, within which the North Bromwich canon, primary source of this thesis, asserts its own validity. Subsequent chapters will develop the understanding that Young's portrait of Birmingham (1870-1939), biased, as the *City of Iron* soubriquet suggests, but generally highly accurate, is drawn from both personal experience and meticulous research. Chapter Two provides a chronological perspective, assessing the evolution of Young's Birmingham portrait; Chapters Three to Seven examine the detailed events, locations, people and themes which are central to North Bromwich and Chapter Eight evaluates the enhanced understanding of Birmingham to be gained from a study of Young's North Bromwich canon.

Critical studies of Young's novels, even when questioning their literary merit, acknowledge their value as social history and topography. What began as fiction has become valid historical evidence. Consonant with other fictionalised Birmingham portraits which this thesis identifies, North Bromwich also correlates closely with the multiplicity of well-rehearsed findings of professional historians. This thesis shows that the North Bromwich canon, the most extensive and effective portrait of Birmingham yet undertaken in fiction, with fresh perspectives and unexpected insights, offers not an alternative but a complementary

picture, contributing significantly to the traditional sources, of general value as regional social history, but of particular significance for an understanding of Birmingham during the period. Thus it may safely be concluded that specifically to the North Bromwich canon, with its minutely detailed portrait of Birmingham, may be applied Young's generality that: "With every good novel we embark upon a voyage of adventure in which, even though the course be familiar to us, our own senses, dulled by custom, are reinforced by the acuteness of the novelist's."<sup>418</sup>

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<sup>418</sup> Young, F. B. (March 1929) "Confessions of a Novelist", pp 536-537

**FRANCIS BRETT YOUNG'S BIRMINGHAM**

*North Bromwich – City of Iron*

## **CHAPTER TWO**

# **NORTH BROMWICH: AN OVERVIEW**

North Bromwich ... A sort of conscious ugliness, mile after mile of regular smoky brick... Lives devoted to the relentless extinction of beauty.

Francis Brett Young – *The Dark Tower*

Young makes clear that North Bromwich's geographical location is unequivocal. "The great Midlands city which I have labelled (and perhaps libelled) as North Bromwich... occupies on the map the position of Birmingham."<sup>1</sup> The same article attempts the half-hearted defence of one who anticipates libel charges. "In the matter of exact topography I am hopeless... North Bromwich is no more Birmingham than Dulston is Dudley."<sup>2</sup> Chapters 3-7 of this thesis show that the disclaimer fails to convince. Young's limited picture of Dulston with its castle hill and Norman ruins<sup>3</sup> leaves no doubt that fiction is based on fact, whilst sheer detail and volume of description ensure that North Bromwich is even more definitively Birmingham than Dulston is Dudley.

Though North Bromwich is close to Worcestershire's agricultural borders and may be approached via rural suburbs,<sup>4</sup> Young generally relates the city's environs to pollution. "Fog-bound street lamps stretch northward in the direction of Wolverbury,"<sup>5</sup> whilst "a degraded thoroughfare was the city's main avenue of approach from Dulston and Wednesford."<sup>6</sup> This is the region of "smoke-breeding cities with North Bromwich and Wolverbury as chiefs."<sup>7</sup> Early in the canon Young subsumes North Bromwich into its industrial surroundings. "The Black Country? Ah yes... North Bromwich, Wolverbury or Wednesford."<sup>8</sup> In an illuminating article defining Black Country parameters, Fletcher<sup>9</sup> excludes Birmingham, which, during the early industrial revolution, like Wolverhampton and Walsall, was separated by belts of open

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<sup>1</sup> Young, F.B. (May 1935) "The Secret History of a Novelist", pp 132, 135

<sup>2</sup> Young, F.B. (May 1935) "The Secret History of a Novelist", p 135

<sup>3</sup> E.g. Young, F.B. (1921) *The Black Diamond*, pp 76-78; (1937) *They Seek a Country*, pp 25-26, 28

<sup>4</sup> E.g. Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 4; (1932) *The House under the Water*, p 26

<sup>5</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 528

<sup>6</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 530

<sup>7</sup> Young, F.B. (1934) *This Little World*, p 5

<sup>8</sup> Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, p 1

<sup>9</sup> Fletcher, J.M. (February 1968) "What is the Black Country?" in *The Blackcountryman* Vol 1, No 1, pp 11-13

countryside from the mineral-producing region eventually labelled the Black Country. By the end of the canon, Young makes the same exclusion, concurrently establishing North Bromwich's regional dominance. "The Black Country smouldered beneath its perpetual smoke-pall; there lay Wednesford and Dulston and Wolverbury, clasped in the grimy tentacles of North Bromwich."<sup>10</sup> Following Seward's literary lead a century earlier -

"Far-resounding Birmingham, the boast,  
The growing London of the Mercian realm"<sup>11</sup>

- Young's North Bromwich dominates not only the neighbouring Black Country but remote rural regions. Though ancient market towns like Hereford and Shrewsbury still signify, its manufacturing, commercial base guarantees that, like Birmingham, by the late nineteenth century, "North Bromwich was the Metropolis of all the West."<sup>12</sup>

Each work in the canon contains contemporary evidence sufficient to date precisely the period at which North Bromwich is portrayed. Young's chosen era extends from Boulton and Watt's partnership, effective from 1775,<sup>13</sup> to the prelude to World War II.<sup>14</sup> The greatest concentration, involving no less than seventeen of the canon's twenty-seven works, covers the period from 1900-1920.<sup>15</sup> References are wide-ranging, including medicine, politics and literature. The "influenza epidemic of 1890"<sup>16</sup> clearly cites the pandemic 'Asiatic Flu', first reported in Russia in May 1889, which invaded Europe, reaching America and Australia by

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<sup>10</sup> Young, F.B. (1940) *Mr Lucton's Freedom*, p 65

<sup>11</sup> Seward, A. (1785) "Colebrooke Dale", in Scott, W. [ed] (1810) *The Poetical Works of Anna Seward*, Edinburgh, James Ballantyne

<sup>12</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 114

<sup>13</sup> Young, F.B. (1944) "Birth of a Monster, A.D. 1776" in *The Island*, pp 311-312; Upton, C. (1993) p 73

<sup>14</sup> *Mr Lucton's Freedom* (1940) passim

<sup>15</sup> See Appendix One

<sup>16</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 24

April 1890.<sup>17</sup> “When the Liberals swept the country in 1906,”<sup>18</sup> describes Campbell-Bannerman’s landslide victory following the Conservative Government’s resignation after the unseating of Prime Minister Balfour.<sup>19</sup> A visit to London to see “that play, *Mrs Tanquerary*,”<sup>20</sup> unmistakably identifies Pinero’s *The Second Mrs Tanquerary*, first performed at London’s St James’ Theatre in May 1893.<sup>21</sup>

International, national and local events also determine the canon’s timescale. Abroad, “the catastrophe in which Wall Street crashed,”<sup>22</sup> captures the New York Stock Exchange slump of October 1929, which precipitated a worldwide economic crisis.<sup>23</sup> At home, “that firebrand Ramsay Macdonald and the recent railway strike”<sup>24</sup> recalls industrial action in September 1919 and the general mistrust with which Macdonald was regarded immediately after World War I.<sup>25</sup> Locally, that “most houses in North Bromwich enjoyed the soft ‘Welsh water,’ which came from the artificial lakes in the Garon valley,”<sup>26</sup> indicates a date post-1904.<sup>27</sup>

Dates are also fixed by disconnected but historically accurate happenings, such as “the death of the great ‘Lafayette’ on the stage of an Edinburgh music-hall.”<sup>28</sup> In May 1911, during a disastrous fire at Edinburgh’s Empire Palace Theatre, eleven people, including the

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<sup>17</sup> Beveridge, W.I.B. (1977) *Influenza: The Last Great Plague*, London, Heinemann, p 30

<sup>18</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies*, p 524

<sup>19</sup> Head, H. (1992) *Chronicle of Great Britain and Ireland*, Farnborough, Chronicle Communications Ltd., p 1030

<sup>20</sup> Young, F.B. (1932) *The House under the Water*, p 411

<sup>21</sup> Fort, A. B & Kates, H. S. (1935) *Minute History of the Drama*, New York, Grosset & Dunlap, p 97

<sup>22</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 268

<sup>23</sup> Weech, W.N. (1960) *History of the World*, London, Odhams, pp 886-887

<sup>24</sup> Young, F.B. (1934) *This Little World*, p 52

<sup>25</sup> Taylor, A.J.P. (1965) *English History 1914-1945*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, p 141; *The Concise Dictionary of National Biography* (1994) Oxford, University Press, vol II p 1875

<sup>26</sup> Young, F.B. (1942) *A Man about the House*, p 47

<sup>27</sup> King Edward VII & Queen Alexandra inaugurated Birmingham’s new water supply on July 21<sup>st</sup> 1904. - Morton, R. (1996) *The Building of the Elan Valley Dams*, Walsall, Brian Lowndes, p 82

<sup>28</sup> Young, F.B. (1930) *Jim Redlake*, p 427

illusionist Lafayette died.<sup>29</sup> Such random events, while not directly impinging upon North Bromwich, illustrate Young's precision in rooting fictional reality in factual events.

A detailed investigation of North Bromwich life and topography via recognisable Birmingham landmarks, events and people follows in chapters 3-7. This chapter's chronological survey of Young's North Bromwich canon explores the city's general ambience, revealing a vast place, the hub of its surroundings. A soot-begrimed city from which beauty has been extinguished fosters harsh living conditions. Not surprisingly there is industrial unrest. Inhospitable climate and stunted vegetation compound this induced malaise.

The focus is sharpened in Chapters 3-7, which make clear that North Bromwich is specifically anchored to Birmingham. North Bromwich rail passengers arrive at stations recognisable as Birmingham's Snow Hill and New Street; cross-city journeys by tram (cable, steam and electric) or bus follow identifiable Birmingham routes. North Bromwich's coat of arms parodies Birmingham's. The ambitions of its Civic Gospel, like Birmingham's, involve Welsh water. In its grand slum-clearance scheme, North Bromwich's Queen's Street<sup>30</sup> follows the route of Birmingham's Corporation Street, linked by arcades to Sackville Row, unmistakably Birmingham's Colmore Row. North Bromwich shops and businesses may be found in Birmingham Trade Directories; its newspapers recreate the concerns of Birmingham's press. North Bromwich's civic buildings - Town Hall, Council House, Central

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<sup>29</sup> Busby, R. (1976) *British Music Hall: An Illustrated Who's Who from 1850 to the Present Day*, London, Paul Elek, p 95

<sup>30</sup> So called in Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician* p 248 but called Corporation Street in (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 125



Library, Law Courts, Police Station and City Gaol - are clearly drawn from their Birmingham originals. The rapacious spread of North Bromwich into the suburbs replicates the growth and influence of Birmingham at the identical period.

Like Birmingham, North Bromwich has an ancient grammar school, modern technical college, theological college and teacher-training establishment. Birmingham's Mason's and Queen's Colleges appear as North Bromwich's Astill's and Prince's Colleges, merged into a newly chartered university. Birmingham's hospitals, doctors and midwives, familiar to Young from his student days, are recreated in North Bromwich. University and hospital personnel have identifiable Birmingham counterparts.<sup>31</sup>

Young's picture of North Bromwich arts is ambivalent, portraying a philistine citizenry, who place cost above worth. Council officials are lampooned as inappropriately paternalistic, extravagant and ignorant. As in Birmingham, influential Nonconformist families are found at the heart of North Bromwich political life. Cultured benefactors sponsor its Art Gallery's acquisitions. Identical musical programmes to those of early twentieth century Birmingham are presented in North Bromwich. Leisure hours may be spent at a North Bromwich Albion football match, at Sackville Row's Grand Midland Hotel, at Battie's confectioners, or at one of the city's several theatres, clubs or inns, each of which find recognisable parallels in Birmingham. North Bromwich's spiritual life is seen in the recently consecrated cathedral it shares with Birmingham, in the Jewellery Quarter's St Paul's Church and the Roman Catholic Oratory and St Chad's Cathedral.

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<sup>31</sup> See Chapters Six and Seven

## North Bromwich and its Sobriquets

Following the paradigm of Hardy's Wessex novels<sup>32</sup> and in company with Collins, Parkes and Allen who respectively christen Birmingham as Birchampton, Metlingham and Bromford,<sup>33</sup> Young renames all the significant and frequently visited places of the North Bromwich canon. However, the names of such occasional, and therefore insignificant, locations as Kidderminster, Coventry and Nottingham<sup>34</sup> remain unchanged. Fictional re-designations are carefully crafted to suggest their factual originals. Sedgebury<sup>35</sup> is clearly Sedgley, Wednesford<sup>36</sup> Wednesbury and Wolverbury<sup>37</sup> Wolverhampton. In these thinly disguised place-names Young follows the example of Bennett whose Hanbridge is, in reality, Hanley, and Bursley, Burslem.<sup>38</sup> As with Lawrence, whose native Eastwood is variously named Eberwick, Bestwood, Beldover and Woodhouse,<sup>39</sup> Young occasionally re-christens. Bromsgrove appears under its own name, but is also identified as Bromsbury and Bromsberrow.<sup>40</sup> North Bromwich is constantly used throughout the canon, though Brum, Brummagem and Birmingham also appear. The paramount importance of North Bromwich is emphasized by a series of explicit sobriquets: "City of Iron;" "town;" "best-governed city;" "second city of the Empire." Young's choice of names both labels and defines his fictional city.

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<sup>32</sup> See p 38

<sup>33</sup> Collins, M. (1896); Parkes, W. K. (1914) & Allen, W.E. (1938); (1939); (1940)

<sup>34</sup> In Young, F.B. (1937) *They Seek a Country*, p 6; (1921) *The Black Diamond*, p 92; (1930) *Jim Redlake*, p 269 respectively

<sup>35</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, passim

<sup>36</sup> Young, F.B. (1926) *My Brother Jonathan*, passim

<sup>37</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 621

<sup>38</sup> Leclaire, L. (1954) p 224

<sup>39</sup> In Lawrence, D.H. (1911); (1913); (1915); (1920) respectively

<sup>40</sup> Young, F.B. (1921) *The Black Diamond*, p 95; (1932) *The House under the Water*, p 41; (1935) *White Ladies*, p 93

In designating Birmingham as North Bromwich, Young rejects the generally accepted Saxon origins of “Bermingehe”<sup>41</sup> as the *ham* (settlement) of Beorma’s *inga* (people)<sup>42</sup> in favour of Hutton’s preferred pre-Saxon “Bromwych” as “Brom perhaps from broom, a shrub, for the growth of which the soil is extremely favourable; Wych, a dwelling, or descent.”<sup>43</sup> Young’s choice of Bromwich astutely reinforces his fiction’s factual basis, insinuating the hamlets of Little Bromwich and Castle Bromwich, parts of the ancient manor of Aston,<sup>44</sup> and neighbouring West Bromwich, mentioned in Domesday Book.<sup>45</sup>

If Bromwich implies geographical reality, North, as the best possible epithet for Young’s desired portrait, confirms the town’s character. “Spring came late to North Bromwich, deterred, perhaps, by the town’s enveloping smoke-screen and the cold soil of the midland plateau over which it sprawls.”<sup>46</sup> From ancient traditions linking a churchyard’s north side with the Devil,<sup>47</sup> via the nursery rhyme “The north wind doth blow and we shall have snow”<sup>48</sup> to Birmingham Botanical Gardens’ designer J.C. Loudon’s frequent advice to architects to avoid northern aspects,<sup>49</sup> comes the tenet that the north is unpropitious. “Ab

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<sup>41</sup> Morris, J. (1976) *Domesday Book Vol 23: Warwickshire*, London, Phillimore & Co, 27.5

<sup>42</sup> E.g. Dent, R.K. (1880) p 4; Barrow, W. (1911) “The Town and its Industries” in Muirhead, J.H., *Birmingham Institutions*, Birmingham, Cornish Bros, p 3

<sup>43</sup> Hutton, W. (1819) *The History of Birmingham*, London, Nichols & Son, p 2

<sup>44</sup> Gill, C. (1952) p 7; Little Bromwich became part of Birmingham in 1891 and Castle Bromwich in 1931. - Stephens, W.B. (1964) p 3

<sup>45</sup> “Ralph holds 3 hides from William in (West) Bromwich. Land for 3 ploughs. In lordship 1. 10 villagers and 3 smallholders have 3 ploughs. Woodland 1 league long and ½ league wide. The value was and is 40s. Bricwin held it.” - Thorn, F. & C. (1979) *Domesday Book Vol 21: Northamptonshire*, Chichester, Phillimore & Co, 36.3

<sup>46</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies*, p 174

<sup>47</sup> *Brewer’s Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* (1999) London, Cassell Publishers Ltd., p 830

<sup>48</sup> *Songs for the Nursery Collected from the Works of the Most Renowned Poets* (1805) Tabart & Co – Opie, I. & P. (eds) (1980) *The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes*, Oxford, University Press, p 426

<sup>49</sup> Loudon J.C., (1806) *A Treatise on Forming, Improving and Managing Country Residences, And on the Choice of Situations Appropriate to Every Class of Purchasers Vol 1*, London, Longman, Hurst, Rees & Orme, pp 144, 178-179, 304; (1831) *An Encyclopaedia of Agriculture*, London, Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown & Green, pp 565-566

aquilone omne malum.”<sup>50</sup> The use of identical imagery in Young’s own poetry confirms the understanding.

Last night the North flew at the throat of Spring  
With spite to tear her greening banners down.<sup>51</sup>

In North Bromwich not just the climate, but the whole of life is harsh.

Young also designates North Bromwich “City of Iron”, entirely appropriate considering this metropolis’s metal-based industry, attracting its environs like the lodestone of Magnetic North. “The wealth of the City of Iron had begun to exert a magnetic influence over all the surrounding countryside.”<sup>52</sup> Iron, however, also carries a malefic nuance - “the iron entered into his soul”<sup>53</sup> which Young certainly knew from the Psalms<sup>54</sup> and quoted in *Captain Swing*<sup>55</sup> where he also cites the steely resolution of the Duke of Wellington “who broke the French tyranny by his iron determination.”<sup>56</sup> Young’s bias and allusion are clear: the City of Iron sobriquet refers not just to North Bromwich’s economy base, but to a pervading remorselessness in its soul.

Throughout the canon North Bromwich is christened “town.” Travelling to the city centre is “going to town” not just for residents of its suburbs,<sup>57</sup> but also for those from the

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<sup>50</sup> Peele (1591) *Hunting of Cupid – The Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs* (1970) Oxford, Clarendon Press, p 576 [*Out of the north all ills come forth.*]

<sup>51</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) “England – April, 1918” in *Poems, 1916-1918*, London, Collins, p 66

<sup>52</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 113

<sup>53</sup> Psalm 105v18 *Book of Common Prayer*, Cambridge, University Press

<sup>54</sup> Young’s familiarity with the Psalms is illustrated by frequent quotations; e.g. Young, F.B. (1914) *Deep Sea*, London, Martin Secker, p 263 – Psalm 118v23; (1937) *They Seek a Country* p 358 – Psalm 114vv1-2; (1956) *Wistanslow*, p 9 – Psalm 17v12

<sup>55</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *Captain Swing*, London, Collins, Act IV, p 80

<sup>56</sup> Young, F.B. *Captain Swing* (1919) Act I, p 13

<sup>57</sup> E.g. Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 547; (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 443; (1932) *The House under the Water*, p 621

wider environs. “‘Town,’ at Sedgebury, of course meant North Bromwich.”<sup>58</sup> The appellation is confirmed by my own childhood experience in Smethwick where “going to town” never meant visiting one of Smethwick’s three shopping centres, but always a trip into Birmingham. Similarly North Bromwich shares Birmingham’s focus as the hub of surrounding communities.

As a result of its various improvement schemes, Young labels North Bromwich “best-governed city,” a clear reference to Birmingham upon which, for similar reasons, the plaudit was first bestowed.<sup>59</sup> Parkes borrows the same accolade for Mettingham<sup>60</sup> (reminiscent of Young’s City of Iron). There is a caveat, however, in Young’s description of “the vast clearance-scheme under which the ‘best-governed city’ had lately salved its conscience and increased its grandeur.”<sup>61</sup> The intention is apparent. Fictional North Bromwich, which shares factual Birmingham’s attributes, subjugates altruism to self-seeking.

Like its original, North Bromwich merits “second city” status. Birmingham’s identical claim, which as Upton shows “by the 1940’s... was not to be second city of Britain, but second city of the Empire,”<sup>62</sup> is generally agreed to have originated with 1911’s Greater Birmingham Act. This trebled the city’s acreage to an area twice the size of Manchester and three times that of Glasgow and increased its population to 850,000.<sup>63</sup> As a consequence,

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<sup>58</sup> Young, F.B. (1930) *Jim Redlake*, p 19

<sup>59</sup> Ralph, J (June 1890) “The Best Governed City in the World,” *Harper’s Monthly Magazine* – see p 26

<sup>60</sup> Parkes, W. K. (1914) pp 5, 341

<sup>61</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 125

<sup>62</sup> Upton, C. (21.01.2004) “Tale of Two Cities and the Prestige of Coming Second,” *Birmingham Post*

<sup>63</sup> Local Govt. Board’s Provisional Order (no 13) Act, 1 & 2 George V, c36 (Local Act) 03.06.1911 brought the Borough of Aston Manor, Erdington & Handsworth Urban Districts, most of King’s Norton & Northfield Urban District & Yardley Rural District within the city boundaries. - Briggs, A. (1952) p 145; Upton, C (1993) p 190; Hopkins, E. (2001) p 165; Leather, P. (2001) *A Brief History of Birmingham*, Studley, Brewin Books, p 49

Hopkins argues, “the Corporation took on greater civic responsibilities than those shouldered by any other local authority in the country save the London County Council.”<sup>64</sup> Resultant from Birmingham’s Civic Gospel and Improvement Scheme, these same developments feature in North Bromwich, which by the 1940s Young similarly identifies as “second city of the Empire.”<sup>65</sup>

The sobriquet Brummagem, interchangeable, as Chinn indicates, with Birmingham since the Middle Ages,<sup>66</sup> and its diminutive Brum, both of which are used by Green, Chamberlain and Tiltman,<sup>67</sup> also label Young’s North Bromwich.<sup>68</sup> “Dear old Brum”<sup>69</sup> is used affectionately. Following the *Oxford English Dictionary* definition of Brummagem as counterfeit, sham, cheap and showy,<sup>70</sup> Young makes identical associations, as in “smart as a brand-new piece of Brummagem pinchbeck.”<sup>71</sup> Such imagery is not unique; indeed is surpassed by Allen with his vitriolic “slovenly, bastard, tripe-mouthed Brummagem.”<sup>72</sup> In employing Brummagem as an alternative designation for North Bromwich, Young establishes an incontrovertible link with Birmingham, at the same time reinforcing his own particular bias.

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<sup>64</sup> Hopkins, E. (2001) p 167

<sup>65</sup> Young, F.B. (1940) *Mr Lucton’s Freedom*, p 105

<sup>66</sup> Chinn, C. (2001) p 2

<sup>67</sup> E.g. Green, H. (1929) pp 95, 200; Chamberlain, P. (1937) pp 420, 421; Tiltman, M. H. (1939) pp 7, 78

<sup>68</sup> E.g. Young, F.B. (1921) *The Black Diamond*, p 345; (1930) *Jim Redlake*, p 422

<sup>69</sup> Young, F.B. (1921) *The Black Diamond*, p 345

<sup>70</sup> *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (1978) Oxford, Clarendon Press

<sup>71</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 426

<sup>72</sup> Allen, W.E. (1939) p 300

Other than in *The Island*, where required by the work's historical nature, the three isolated occurrences of "Birmingham" in the canon<sup>73</sup> seem more the legacies of inadequate proofreading than conscious choice. In the antepenultimate chapter of *Undergrowth*, by which time the name and character of North Bromwich have been thoroughly established, comes an unexpected and unrelated rebaptism. "When I was taking engineering lectures in Birmingham..."<sup>74</sup> Apart from confirming that in Young's perception Birmingham and North Bromwich were wholly interchangeable realities, only confusion is achieved by the unexplained use of the real name.

## **Chronological Survey of the North Bromwich Canon**

Young's novels, with time spans ranging from a few weeks to more than a century and settings moving from the English Midlands to Africa, vary in length from 41,000 to 270,000 words.<sup>75</sup> Leclaire<sup>76</sup> attempts a thematic taxonomy, listing biography with its sub-genres picaresque, mystery, detection, legend and fairytale. These generalisations, he admits, understate the subtlety of Young's conceptions. Within such apparently disparate works Leclaire finds a unifying theme. "Les récits se rattachent aux lieux tout autant qu'aux personnages."<sup>77</sup> This thesis shows that the most frequently cited and carefully detailed of all Young's chosen places is North Bromwich.

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<sup>73</sup> Young, F.B. (1913) *Undergrowth*, p 281; (1928) *The Furnace*, London, Heinemann, Act 1, p 25; (1930) *Jim Redlake* p 282

<sup>74</sup> Young, F.B. (1913) *Undergrowth*, p 281

<sup>75</sup> Young, F.B. (1956) *Wistanslow* posthumously published in its unfinished form is 41,000 words; (1927) *Portrait of Clare* is 270,000.

<sup>76</sup> Leclaire, J. (1970) pp 313-317

<sup>77</sup> Leclaire, J. (1970) p 315 [*The stories are tied to places quite as much as to characters.*]

One play, one poetry anthology and twenty-five novels, representing the entire span of Young's writing career and embracing all of Leclaire's themes, constitute the North Bromwich canon. Resonance with other Birmingham novels introduced in Chapter One, from major themes such as the industrial spoliation of Birmingham<sup>78</sup> to minor incidences such as traffic on the New Birmingham Road<sup>79</sup> is also evident.

Throughout the canon three different intensities are evident. At all three levels, in citing North Bromwich, Young demonstrates specific purposes ranging from appropriate imagery for making a point to quintessential setting for the chosen plot. At the first level of intensity come nine novels (*Crescent Moon*, *Pilgrim's Rest*, *Cold Harbour*, *The Key of Life*, *Black Roses*, *They Seek a Country*, *Portrait of a Village*, *The City of Gold* and *Wistanslow*), the play *The Furnace* and the poetry collection *The Island*. Here, though North Bromwich is not necessarily the setting, its ambient influence is specific. At the second intensity level a significant amount of the action of a further eight novels (*Undergrowth*, *The Dark Tower*, *The Black Diamond*, *Jim Redlake*, *This Little World*, *Far Forest*, *Mr Lucton's Freedom* and *A Man about the House*) occurs in North Bromwich, where selected aspects of life and topography are pivotal. Dominating character, plot and setting at the third and deepest intensity level are the breadth and rich detail of Young's North Bromwich, expressed in a further eight novels (*The Iron Age*, *The Young Physician*, *Portrait of Clare*, *My Brother Jonathan*, *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, *The House under the Water*, *White Ladies* and *Dr Bradley Remembers*).

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<sup>78</sup> E.g. Young, F.B. (1924) *Cold Harbour* & Gissing, G. (1895)

<sup>79</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 339 & Chamberlain, P. (1935) p 106



Clearly demonstrated by the following chronological survey is that Young's portrait of the harsh realities of North Bromwich though occasionally softened is never neutralised and remains largely unchanged from *Undergrowth* (1913) to the posthumously published *Wistanslow* (1956).

*Undergrowth* (1913), Young's first published novel, written in collaboration with his brother Eric, merges factual Abertillery Water Board's Grwyne Reservoir<sup>80</sup> with Birmingham's Welsh Water scheme creating fictional Dulas Fechan Reservoir owned by North Bromwich, in the early twentieth century a large metropolis. "Half an hour later he was still tramping the central streets of North Bromwich... in the business quarter of the city."<sup>81</sup> The first impression of Green's Birmingham also captures its vastness. "Thousands came back from dinner along streets... Thousands came back to factories they worked in."<sup>82</sup> The solid architecture of North Bromwich's business quarter - "columns of Aberdeen granite, poised on immense bases, mahogany doors and Corinthian capitals"<sup>83</sup> - symbolises its uncompromising character. The rest of Young's city depresses with grey side streets, gaunt railway station, crumbling and grimy church, mildewed and broken gravestones untrimmed and stunted trees.<sup>84</sup> City officials are grasping and philistine. The Town Clerk, in contrast to the overfed aldermen is "a little desiccated person," the Mayor a bibulous grocer, ignorant of the lives of workers<sup>85</sup> who, when not in the middle of strikes and disputes, work "in the smoke... huddled together in slums".<sup>86</sup> To the Welsh countryside, sacrificed to the city's rapacious demands, North Bromwich is paternalistic. "A big waterworks ought to be a

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<sup>80</sup> Young, J.B. (1962) p 48

<sup>81</sup> Young, F.B. (1913) *Undergrowth*, p 81

<sup>82</sup> Green, H. (1929) p 1

<sup>83</sup> Young, F.B. (1913) *Undergrowth*, p 76

<sup>84</sup> Young, F.B. (1913) *Undergrowth*, pp 81-82, 86

<sup>85</sup> Young, F.B. (1913) *Undergrowth*, p 170-176

<sup>86</sup> Young, F.B. (1913) *Undergrowth*, pp 179, 232-233

godsend to an out-of-the-way valley like this. Your farmers have to thank the North Bromwich Corporation for opening the place up... It's a rare bit of luck for you."<sup>87</sup>

So *Undergrowth* creates a picture, developed throughout the North Bromwich canon, of a place to be avoided. "He could stay in North Bromwich over night. The idea was distasteful."<sup>88</sup> This powerful city of wide-reaching influence takes account of little beyond its own appetites.

North Bromwich next appears in *The Dark Tower* (1915), also set principally in the Grwyne Valley, home of Alaric Grosmont, who once lived in North Bromwich. The story is largely told by Marsden, one-time literary editor of the *North Bromwich Chronicle*, whose opinions are clear. "North Bromwich is considerably less romantic in point of fact than - than Campden Hill."<sup>89</sup> Should this sophistry fail to make clear that this city is not just the last resort but beyond it, a later comment is unequivocal. "He kicked up his heels and bolted. But fancy bolting to North Bromwich!"<sup>90</sup>

North Bromwich of *The Dark Tower*, just a few years later than in *Undergrowth*, is a big provincial town, the size of which is emphasised through its suburbs: "dull, squat houses... mile after mile of regular smoky brick"<sup>91</sup> leading to plague-stricken warrens, which smell of "cabbage stalks rotting in the gutter".<sup>92</sup> Endless ugly streets return to the city centre, where *Undergrowth's* architectural splendours fail to re-appear. North Bromwich does have

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<sup>87</sup> Young, F.B. (1913) *Undergrowth*, p 27

<sup>88</sup> Young, F.B. (1913) *Undergrowth*, p 85

<sup>89</sup> Young, F.B. (1915) *The Dark Tower*, p 29

<sup>90</sup> Young, F.B. (1915) *The Dark Tower*, p 69

<sup>91</sup> Young, F.B. (1915) *The Dark Tower*, pp 40-41

<sup>92</sup> Young, F.B. (1915) *The Dark Tower*, p 42

an Art Gallery, but it exhibits “washy, sickly pictures”.<sup>93</sup> It does present the “Pathetic Symphony” in the Town Hall, though “very few people in North Bromwich had the least idea who Tchaikowsky might be”.<sup>94</sup> Workers hurry to miserable office jobs like “ants in that dirty ant heap”.<sup>95</sup> Twenty-four years later, Tiltman would employ a comparative simile to describe her Birmingham. “What an amazing city it was. Like a colony of ants”.<sup>96</sup> In *The Dark Tower* the city remains “North Bromwich, where everything is colourless, steeped in smoke and overpowered with soot.”<sup>97</sup> Once again Young conducts his readers through an uninviting and polluted city, where there is little quality of life to enrich the soul. Here survive Gissing’s “poverty-eaten houses and grimy workshops”<sup>98</sup> and London’s inhabitants “unaware of the existence of any Unseen.”<sup>99</sup> Though, unlike Gissing (“There is no chance of a new and better world until the old be utterly destroyed.”<sup>100</sup>) or London (“In a civilization based upon property not soul, it is inevitable that property shall be exalted over soul.”<sup>101</sup>) Young does not preach, shades of both *The Nether World* and *The People of the Abyss* colour the entire North Bromwich canon.

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<sup>93</sup> Young, F.B. (1915) *The Dark Tower*, p 48

<sup>94</sup> Young, F.B. (1915) *The Dark Tower*, p 30

<sup>95</sup> Young, F.B. (1915) *The Dark Tower*, p 31

<sup>96</sup> Tiltman, M.H. (1939) p 190

<sup>97</sup> Young, F.B. (1915) *The Dark Tower*, p 100

<sup>98</sup> Gissing, G. (1889) p 32

<sup>99</sup> London, J. (1903); edition cited: (1977) London, Pluto Press , p 57

<sup>100</sup> Gissing, G. (1889) p 109

<sup>101</sup> London, J. (1903) p 77

In *The Iron Age* (1916) the locus shifts along “the pipe track which runs from the mountain reservoir of the Dulas to North Bromwich”.<sup>102</sup> In the days immediately prior to World War I North Bromwich features “hundreds of brass foundries at the back of smoky streets”,<sup>103</sup> residents housed inadequately in terrible courts.<sup>104</sup> Hard-faced capitalism remains a reality and life a struggle “under conditions of convict labour in North Bromwich,”<sup>105</sup> the city of offensive phonics. “His speech jarred upon her; it was the first time she had heard the accent of North Bromwich.”<sup>106</sup> Hampson, too, identifies the potency of the local accent in his Birmingham novels. “Josephine made her friends laugh with her malicious impersonations of the refined Brummagum dialect.”<sup>107</sup>

Two years after the publication of *The Iron Age*, Young collaborated with William Armstrong of Liverpool Repertory Theatre<sup>108</sup> on *The Furnace*, a four-act dramatisation of the novel, in which the need for an actor with a Birmingham accent is indicated in a stage direction.<sup>109</sup> Though missing the minute topographical detail of the novel, inappropriate in a play, the setting of *The Furnace* – “Mawne, near North Bromwich”<sup>110</sup> – is clear. There is confusion of factual and fictional place names. Characters study together in Birmingham,<sup>111</sup> read the North Bromwich Mail<sup>112</sup> and catch trains in Brum.<sup>113</sup> *The Furnace*, first performed at

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<sup>102</sup> Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, p 59

<sup>103</sup> Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, p 192

<sup>104</sup> Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, p 249

<sup>105</sup> Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, p 193

<sup>106</sup> Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, p 60

<sup>107</sup> Hampson, J. (1936) *Family Curse*, p 104

<sup>108</sup> William Armstrong (1882-1952) joined Liverpool Repertory Theatre in 1914 and was its Director from 1923-1944. From 1946-1947 he was Assistant Director to Barry Jackson at Birmingham Repertory Theatre. - Trewin, J.C. (1963) *The Birmingham Repertory Theatre 1913-1963*, London, Barrie & Rockliff, pp 44, 136, 140

<sup>109</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *The Furnace*, Act I, p 2

<sup>110</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *The Furnace*, Preface

<sup>111</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *The Furnace*, Act I

<sup>112</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *The Furnace*, Act IV

<sup>113</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *The Furnace*, Act III

London's Kingsway Theatre in December 1921, was eventually produced at Liverpool Playhouse in May 1928 and published six months later.<sup>114</sup> Subsequently it has twice been adapted for BBC radio.<sup>115</sup>

In *The Iron Age*, Young's suburbs are the limbo to which those who have forfeited respectable society are exiled. "Even if they didn't fall fatally, they must certainly fall. To the level perhaps of a suburb of North Bromwich."<sup>116</sup> Some new amenities - North Bromwich United Football Team, a Library, Grammar School and Technical College - are introduced and the social divisions of North Bromwich clearly established. The Midland Club admits only gentlemen. Gentlemen, or ladies accompanied by gentlemen, visit the Grand Midland Hotel (the ambience of which is also described in *The Furnace*), whilst "Batties", the big confectioners in the High Street, (is) the only place where a woman could lunch alone".<sup>117</sup>

*The Iron Age* contains the first suggestions that North Bromwich is not entirely abhorrent. Trains carry passengers "to the warmth and light of North Bromwich".<sup>118</sup> The effects of industrial pollution are not solely dilapidation and decay. The city's buildings "glowed with a serene mellowness which smoke had accomplished, anticipating the slow artistry of time".<sup>119</sup> Nevertheless, Young's principal thesis remains unaltered and the predominant image of North Bromwich is of an undesirable place. Simply departing from the

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<sup>114</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *The Furnace*, Preface

<sup>115</sup> 08.09. 1951, producer: William Hughes; 06.11.1965, producer: Anthony Cornish - *Radio Times*

<sup>116</sup> Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, p 252

<sup>117</sup> Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, p 77; Batties' is the North Bromwich equivalent of Birmingham's Pattison's - see pp 253-254

<sup>118</sup> Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, pp 93-94

<sup>119</sup> Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, p 78

city brings renewal: “He’s been so much better since he’s lived out of North Bromwich.”<sup>120</sup> Edward Willis’s bid to be free of North Bromwich is frustrated when his railway carriage is slipped at Ludlow because it contains “the corpse of old Mrs Harley from North Bromwich”.<sup>121</sup> Young’s deliberate selection of this city as the origin of far-reaching death and decay reiterates a corrupt North Bromwich of destructive and consuming inevitability.

*The Crescent Moon* (1918) identifies North Bromwich as the home of a theological college where aspiring missionary James Burwarton receives inadequate training. Ill-equipped, he confronts the horrors of Astarte-worship in German East Africa as World War I destabilises the world, “very much as he might have gone to a Revival meeting in the Black Country... in a collar that buttoned at the back and a black coat.”<sup>122</sup> Gissing expresses a variant though equally vituperative dissatisfaction with the values of higher education in fictional Birmingham: “Mason College, where young men are taught a variety of things, including discontent with a small income”.<sup>123</sup> In its treatment of Burwarton, North Bromwich Theological College reveals the same incomprehension of the real world as North Bromwich City Council displayed in *Undergrowth*. “One gasps at the criminal, self-sufficient ignorance of the people that sent him to Central Africa.”<sup>124</sup> Though Burwarton’s theological college might have been located anywhere, Young chooses North Bromwich, leaving no doubt as to the city’s culpability in the tragic martyrdom which is the melodrama’s inevitable conclusion.

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<sup>120</sup> Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, p 11

<sup>121</sup> Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, p 259

<sup>122</sup> Young, F.B. (1918) *The Crescent Moon*, London, Martin Secker, p 14

<sup>123</sup> Gissing, G. (1895) p 99

<sup>124</sup> Young, F.B. (1918) *The Crescent Moon*, p 14

Young identified in *The Young Physician* (1919) the North Bromwich canon's definitive structure. "This book enabled me to lay down a topographical frame for the Midland novels and gave the fictitious name to the city of Birmingham (North Bromwich)."<sup>125</sup> This semi-autobiographical novel, employing chapter titles that mix sobriquet (*The City of Iron*), fiction (*Lower Sparkdale*) and fact (*Easy Row*), is the major vehicle for Young's portrait of Birmingham from 1901-6, "during those impressionable years when I was best qualified to observe it".<sup>126</sup> Like his creator, Edwin Ingleby, hero of *The Young Physician*, succumbed to parental pressure to substitute classics at Oxford with medicine at Birmingham/North Bromwich. Here both escaped the constraints of unhappy homes. "A few months in North Bromwich made a great change to Edwin."<sup>127</sup> This fiction undoubtedly reveals underlying fact,<sup>128</sup> generating *The Young Physician's* suggestion that neither North Bromwich nor its people are entirely corrupted. Though circumstances inevitably foster mean ideals, "the inhabitants of North Bromwich are a tolerant people who, since they have never known any other conditions of living, make the best of their surroundings".<sup>129</sup> The pleasant suburban green of Alvaston<sup>130</sup> opens the escape route to the country beyond North Bromwich. However, it is not the gentler image that predominates. To enter North Bromwich is to be caught up in "the gloom that always overshadowed the City of Iron".<sup>131</sup> Happiness, a rare commodity here, transports. "It makes me feel as if I weren't within a hundred miles of North Bromwich."<sup>132</sup> Those who live beyond the city are not safe from its corrosive powers not

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<sup>125</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, Preface p xi; *The Young Physician*, begun in 1911 was not published until 1919 in order to avoid competing with Mackenzie, C. (1913-1914) *Sinister Street*, London, Martin Secker. - Young, F.B. (1934) *The Young Physician*, London, Heinemann, Severn Edition, Preface p x

<sup>126</sup> Young, F.B. (1934) *The Young Physician*, Preface p xi

<sup>127</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 278

<sup>128</sup> Hall, M (1997) pp 36-39 includes a description of Young's adolescent home life

<sup>129</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 236

<sup>130</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, pp 385

<sup>131</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 230

<sup>132</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 339

even in “some sweet-smelling village from which the iron tentacles of the city had... sapped life”.<sup>133</sup>

So Young’s thesis remains that North Bromwich has become the City of Iron through the greed and insensitivity of those who “from their childhood have believed that wealth is a justification and an apology for every mortal evil from ugliness to original sin”.<sup>134</sup> This theme is clearly anticipated by Collins. “Birchampton... where nobody ever goes except on business... where no-one even tried to be beautiful... where ugliness was an innate part of... the prosperous commonplace city... where making a fortune as fast as it is well possible”<sup>135</sup> is the *raison d’être*. There is scant regard in either Birchampton or North Bromwich for nourishing the soul. Utilitarian values and the acquisition of wealth for its own sake override other considerations.

*The Black Diamond* (1921) features North Bromwich during the five years immediately following the period of *The Young Physician*. Abner Fellows, born within the shadow of the city, takes the western escape route seeking employment, which he finds with “the corporation of North Bromwich... in their Welsh water scheme”.<sup>136</sup> The city’s energy is not so easily escaped. “Even at a distance of eighty miles from North Bromwich the... influence was felt.”<sup>137</sup> Rural Wales is never far from North Bromwich’s pervasive grime. “He

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<sup>133</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 267

<sup>134</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 235

<sup>135</sup> Collins, M. (1896) pp 154-155, 165, 244

<sup>136</sup> Young, F.B. (1921) *The Black Diamond*, p 112

<sup>137</sup> Young, F.B. (1921) *The Black Diamond*, p 122



could take a train that would transport him in half a day back to North Bromwich, back to the familiar smoke-pale sky, to the chimneystacks, the furnaces and the smell of pit mounds.”<sup>138</sup>

However, in this novel the image of North Bromwich is again not entirely negative. Contradicting Young’s own rural preferences are definite urban attractions. “He had been in North Bromwich and this experience had made him discontented with country life.”<sup>139</sup> Similar imagery modifies Hampson’s city, a correlative though muted version of North Bromwich. “Townspople were kinder than country-folk. If only she’d known, she would have stayed in Birmingham.”<sup>140</sup> Attractive or not, Young’s city is the power-source of “the small towns that lie like knots on the network of tramways that has its centre in North Bromwich”.<sup>141</sup>

*The Black Diamond’s* readers visit Lower Sparkdale, North Bromwich Albion Football Ground and the Infirmary, and North Bromwich shares its original’s affectionate soubriquet. “Back to bleedin’ old Brum, I reckon. I wouldn’t have had this happen not for a bit!”<sup>142</sup> When unemployment threatens and all else fails, North Bromwich offers a final refuge and last resort to which its migrant citizens, however unwillingly, are irresistibly attracted.

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<sup>138</sup> Young, F.B. (1921) *The Black Diamond*, p 234

<sup>139</sup> Young, F.B. (1921) *The Black Diamond*, p 128

<sup>140</sup> Hampson, J. (1931) p 61

<sup>141</sup> Young, F.B. (1921) *The Black Diamond*, pp 74-75

<sup>142</sup> Young, F.B. (1921) *The Black Diamond*, p 306

In *Pilgrim's Rest* (1922) this compulsion reaches South Africa. Into Johannesburg, which suggests little immediate context for Birmingham, Young introduces an expatriate from ravaged and scarred North Bromwich. By implication the two cities suffer the same industrial despoliation. Corroded and corrosive though it may be, North Bromwich exerts an influence which can be neither escaped nor ignored. Unperturbed by the militant trade unionism of the Rand in 1913 is “a stocky Midlander named Hadley... his roots deep planted in the charred and mutilated country that surrounds North Bromwich”.<sup>143</sup> This stolid refugee from the City of Iron remains “slow to anger, placid, unemotional”.<sup>144</sup> Countering any suggestion that the North Bromwich worker has inexplicably become wholly attractive, Young redresses the balance. “Hadley had no imagination... He was content with the burden of toil... his women, his horses, his glass of beer, and his Weekly Post.”<sup>145</sup> Hadley is the epitome – or caricature – of his North Bromwich working-class origins, no further evolved than Tonna’s prototype Birmingham worker. “Every man as gets his wages is expected to lay out a shilling in drink... a man can’t help himself – he must do like the rest.”<sup>146</sup>

The immanence of North Bromwich in the Midlands is accepted fact in *Cold Harbour* (1924), set in the early 1920s and recalling events of the previous decade at the eponymous location, in reality Wassell Grove,<sup>147</sup> “between the main road that runs from Severn to North Bromwich and the edge of the Black Country... an area wrecked and untenable between the

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<sup>143</sup> Young, F.B. (1922) *Pilgrim's Rest*, London, Collins, pp 158-160

<sup>144</sup> Young, F.B. (1922) *Pilgrim's Rest*, p 158

<sup>145</sup> Young, F.B. (1922) *Pilgrim's Rest*, p 162

<sup>146</sup> [Tonna], Charlotte Elizabeth (1843-44) p 428

<sup>147</sup> Jay, L. (June 1981) “Fatherless Bairn” in *Francis Brett Young Society Newsletter 5*, Francis Brett Young Society; OS *Birmingham & Wolverhampton*, Sheet 139 (1997)

armies of Black and Green”.<sup>148</sup> Young’s picture recalls a similar scene described by Gissing. “On the scarred and barren plain which extends to Birmingham there had settled so thick an obscurity, vapours from above blending with earthly reek.”<sup>149</sup> The North Bromwich of *Cold Harbour* provides a constant reference point to topography and plot, even when alternatives would seem more logical. The Hales Owen home of eighteenth century poet Shenstone,<sup>150</sup> for example, is located “under the edge of the hills between here and North Bromwich”.<sup>151</sup> Key information is overheard on a North Bromwich train;<sup>152</sup> major and minor characters are involved with North Bromwich University,<sup>153</sup> which offers scientific facilities to resolve the plot’s unanswered questions;<sup>154</sup> a North Bromwich surgeon and priest both have roles in the unfolding tragedy.<sup>155</sup> In short, North Bromwich is the hub around which surrounding life consciously and unconsciously revolves.

“The iron magnet of North Bromwich”<sup>156</sup> dominates *Portrait of Clare* (1927), which opens in 1896 with Clare as a North Bromwich schoolgirl and closes twenty-five years later as she travels on a North Bromwich tram. First intimations of confrontation between impoverished aristocracy and parvenus appear in that “zone of dubious gentility, houses that had once been respectable, now regrettably fallen into the hands of new North Bromwich people”.<sup>157</sup> There is also the clearest indication so far of genuine culture in that “circle of

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<sup>148</sup> Young, F.B. (1924) *Cold Harbour*, p 77

<sup>149</sup> Gissing, G. (1895) p 1

<sup>150</sup> “The Leasowes” OS *Birmingham & Wolverhampton* Sheet 139 (1997)

<sup>151</sup> Young, F.B. (1924) *Cold Harbour*, p 98

<sup>152</sup> Young, F.B. (1924) *Cold Harbour*, p 71

<sup>153</sup> Humphrey Furnival is on the Council of the University; Dr Moorhouse is a Professor at the University’s Medical School.

<sup>154</sup> Young, F.B. (1924) *Cold Harbour*, p 194

<sup>155</sup> Lloyd Moore & Father Westinghouse

<sup>156</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 64

<sup>157</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 278

North Bromwich whose centre lay in the University and the great Unitarian families who had made it, within which the soul of North Bromwich expressed itself through mediums more gracious than heavy metals.”<sup>158</sup> An exciting place for shopping trips, where “the very latest example of North Bromwich elegance may be obtained,”<sup>159</sup> the city may also overwhelm. “Aunt Cathie was always a little deferential to the magnificence of the North Bromwich shops.”<sup>160</sup> Nor is it entirely pleasant. “We’ve been shopping in North Bromwich. It gets dirtier every day.”<sup>161</sup>

Like its Edgbaston original, with large houses and gardens,<sup>162</sup> Alvaston is North Bromwich’s most attractive suburb, surprising visitors. “I’d no idea that Alvaston could be so beautiful.”<sup>163</sup> Nevertheless, at best each house replicates its neighbour and at worst, Alvaston homes are hideous and depressing,<sup>164</sup> their gardens jarring and polluted. “Chaffinches flung their hard, challenging cries from smoke-blackened apple trees.”<sup>165</sup> Narrow-minded, utilitarian Alvaston solicitor Dudley Wilburn (who appears across the canon) is archetypal, shackled by his North Bromwich milieu. “He pushed the chair back and sat looking at (Clare) as though he were behind his desk at North Bromwich.”<sup>166</sup> Wilburn is a Philistine, who discovers too late that North Bromwich values have withered his life and strangled his soul.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 496

<sup>159</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 23

<sup>160</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 206

<sup>161</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 208

<sup>162</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 449

<sup>163</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 435

<sup>164</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 420

<sup>165</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 52

<sup>166</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 387

<sup>167</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, pp 869-871

Expressing Young's personal viewpoint of "resentment against North Bromwich in general"<sup>168</sup> *Portrait of Clare* also promulgates the urban versus rural conflict. "North Bromwich is rather a rotten hole compared with the country."<sup>169</sup> Parkes selected the identical, derisive metaphor to portray his Mettingham: "This rotten hole of bolts and nuts and screws and nails."<sup>170</sup> Though *Portrait of Clare* partly lifts Young's North Bromwich image, the city remains under "the grey clot of smoke that hid North Bromwich".<sup>171</sup> Whatever the redeeming features, they fail to dispel the insidious crushing aura of North Bromwich, which continues to exert its pervasive and deadening influence.

Bédarida shows that by the end of the nineteenth century urban development covered only five percent of England, whilst seventy-five percent of the population lived in towns.<sup>172</sup> With rural living a minority it is unsurprising that there followed a corresponding emotional divide. Such feeling, viewing the past as alternative rather than prelude to the present, with change heralding loss, had, according to Tosh, been evolving since the Industrial Revolution.<sup>173</sup> Cavaliero suggests that literary development frequently followed suit.<sup>174</sup> His interpretation of the early twentieth century novel depicting rural landscape as paradise, redbrick suburbia as purgatory and industrialisation as hell,<sup>175</sup> accurately interprets Young's North Bromwich canon where town life is debilitating and demoralizing and the countryside the place where a more wholesome lifestyle is possible.

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<sup>168</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 521

<sup>169</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 513

<sup>170</sup> Parkes, W. K. (1914) p 196

<sup>171</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 124

<sup>172</sup> Bédarida, F. (1991) *A Social History of England*, London, Routledge, pp 17, 25

<sup>173</sup> Tosh, J. (1984) p 17

<sup>174</sup> See pp 16-20, 39-40

<sup>175</sup> Cavaliero, G. (1977) p 89

Set in the early 1920s *The Key of Life* (1928) opens in Herefordshire where “this new University, or whatever they call it, in North Bromwich’s taken it into its head to excavate Roman remains... Those labourers of theirs are a poaching lot of devils.”<sup>176</sup> This disparaging beginning paves the way for one brief episode set in North Bromwich, an ill-favoured and desolate place begrimed by “soot-blackened skies”.<sup>177</sup> Once again the contrast between city and countryside is emphasized. “At North Bromwich there were no cowslip meadows.”<sup>178</sup> Travellers arrive at the railway station’s “fogged yellow platform,”<sup>179</sup> pedestrians tread “the barren asphalt pavements of North Bromwich”<sup>180</sup> and visitors encounter a generally oppressive ambience. Specifically in North Bromwich Museum an unwholesome atmosphere prevails with “the hollow echoes of footfalls on marble stairs, the thick devitalised air”.<sup>181</sup> Allen conjures a comparable aura in Bromford Library, though here sounds and environment are discouraging rather than enervating. “The ticking of the clock... an occasional meditative cough... that warm, sterilised atmosphere... He had entered shyly, prepared to run.”<sup>182</sup> In *The Key of Life* Young creates a totally unattractive ethos, with unappealing people, where North Bromwich has few redeeming features.

*My Brother Jonathan* (1928) spanning thirty years from 1890 is set entirely within the shadow of North Bromwich, where industry and atmosphere pollute. “Fogs... caught the

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<sup>176</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *The Key of Life*, pp 19-20

<sup>177</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *The Key of Life*, p 118

<sup>178</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *The Key of Life*, p 58

<sup>179</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *The Key of Life*, p 57

<sup>180</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *The Key of Life*, p 60

<sup>181</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *The Key of Life*, p 118

<sup>182</sup> Allen, W.E. (1940) p 96

sooty exhalations of smokestacks and furnaces, then spread them between North Bromwich and the sky.”<sup>183</sup> Early twentieth century North Bromwich is resourceful, sophisticated and concupiscent, supplying its environs with everything from fish – “marine delicacies such as crabs and oysters and Dover soles from North Bromwich”<sup>184</sup> - to personnel. “You must wire to North Bromwich and get in two more nurses.”<sup>185</sup> Fashion impinges. “Out in the country, such matters were unimportant. At North Bromwich, among town-bred young men, they became conspicuous.”<sup>186</sup> There is nightlife of dubious sexual morality with “seductive theatrical ladies... nightclubs and jazz-bands”<sup>187</sup> inviting libertines “to go dashing off to North Bromwich on some errand of pleasure at whose nature it would be indecent even to hint.”<sup>188</sup> Murray previously evoked the same resource, sophistication and concupiscence.

He came over to Birmingham in search of suits of armour for Saturday night’s representation of ‘Macbeth’... Young bucks, always attended the theatre in evening dress, and fondly thought themselves men about town... The womanly flotsam, jetsam, and legend of the town... slunk timidly round corners to accost him.<sup>189</sup>

North Bromwich in *My Brother Jonathan* is an unreliable place - “If he had been left in North Bromwich heaven knows what would have happened to him”<sup>190</sup> - which not only feeds but drains its surroundings. “The country is dead. North Bromwich sucks it dry.”<sup>191</sup> It also has many positive qualities always counterbalanced by negatives, either immediate – “Those early days of Jonathan’s at North Bromwich were happy... even in that wilderness of

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<sup>183</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 125

<sup>184</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 12

<sup>185</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 379

<sup>186</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 44

<sup>187</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 355

<sup>188</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 381

<sup>189</sup> Murray, D.C. (1894) vol 1, pp 153, 161, vol 2 pp 29-30

<sup>190</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 541

<sup>191</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 167

sooty brick...”<sup>192</sup> - or delayed. Initially Jonathan finds life invigorating in “the rich, stimulant soil of North Bromwich”.<sup>193</sup> Later he realises that “in such an environment the Arts were discredited, if not absolutely tabooed”.<sup>194</sup> Positive and negative may be reversed. Harold Dakers’ “transition to North Bromwich... had sobered and depressed him”.<sup>195</sup> Six years on, however, Harold “was having a good time in North Bromwich”.<sup>196</sup> Even the weather may illustrate the same balance. “The day, in its modified, North Bromwich way, was brilliant.”<sup>197</sup> It is clear that the evocation of this novel is concerned more with ambience than topography and that the overall portrait remains negatively biased.

The sole reference to North Bromwich in the Italian setting of *Black Roses* (1929), though immaterial to the plot, enhances Young’s image of Birmingham, repeating the convention employed in *The Crescent Moon*. Chamberlain adopts a similar technique in an Isle of Man setting where “Birmingham boy... Thomas H. Purvis, known to every follower of motorcycle sport as ‘Tom,’ was fatally injured”.<sup>198</sup> Identification of the rider’s home seems irrelevant, but Birmingham is Chamberlain’s chosen locale for other fiction and the city’s overall atmosphere is intensified by this apparently unnecessary mention. So in *Black Roses* where Paul Ritchie, “an inexpensive portrait-painter, who can be relied upon to... reproduce, at a moderate figure, figures that are anything but moderate”,<sup>199</sup> revisits his native Naples in the late 1920s. His portraits include one of “Astill, the brewer, in the gallery at North Bromwich – negligible as a composition, but really strikingly ‘like’.”<sup>200</sup> Identification of

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<sup>192</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, pp 46-47

<sup>193</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 48

<sup>194</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 127

<sup>195</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 277

<sup>196</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 434

<sup>197</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 131

<sup>198</sup> Chamberlain, P. (1939) pp 244-245

<sup>199</sup> Young, F.B. (1929) *Black Roses*, London, Heinemann, p 5

<sup>200</sup> Young, F.B. (1929) *Black Roses*, p 5



neither sitter nor gallery affects the storyline; the purpose, however, is apparent. Ritchie's talents appeal in places where artistic discrimination is secondary to value for money. North Bromwich is the epitome of such a place.

Unchanged from previous novels, the "sooty city"<sup>201</sup> of *Jim Redlake* (1930) overshadows the eponymous hero's childhood in the early 1900s and is the setting for pivotal events in later years.<sup>202</sup> The biographical roots of this novel are clear. Like his creator's, Jim's grandfather was a Leicestershire doctor. Young acknowledges that fictional Dr Weston is based upon factual Dr Jackson; that Jim is "something of a portrait of the boy I was"<sup>203</sup> and that use of General Smuts' diaries for Jim's wartime service makes "details of the campaign pretty accurate".<sup>204</sup>

Earlier in the canon such parallels develop obvious North Bromwich links. Like Dr Jackson,<sup>205</sup> Dr Weston should be a product of North Bromwich Medical School; like Young, Jim should enter the new University of North Bromwich. In *Jim Redlake* this is not so. Following Dr Weston, Jim studies in a London entirely lacking North Bromwich's detail and vitality, suggesting Young's unease with this setting. No one from North Bromwich shares Jim's African adventure,<sup>206</sup> and of ninety-four named characters in the novel only five have any North Bromwich links.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> Young, F.B. (1930) *Jim Redlake*, p 417

<sup>202</sup> Young, F.B. (1930) *Jim Redlake*, pp 3-21; 417-422

<sup>203</sup> FBY 2594 (15.09.1939) Letter from Young to Bishop of Bloemfontein

<sup>204</sup> FBY 2228 (25.12.1920) Letter from Young to Jan Christian Smuts

<sup>205</sup> See p 9

<sup>206</sup> Compare, for example, with the Burwartons in Young, F.B. (1918) *The Crescent Moon* and Hadley in (1922) *Pilgrims' Rest*

<sup>207</sup> Jim, George and Elizabeth Redlake, Mrs Mudd, Rosita Moger

Interrupting the North Bromwich references comes a deviant substitution: “That’s Birmingham, Jack and the Beanstalk, in ninety-one.”<sup>208</sup> Young is not alone in such transpositions. In the midst of his Bromford portrait Allen similarly deviates, citing the Bishop of Birmingham’s book, *Should Such a Faith Offend?*<sup>209</sup> Allen’s historical reference is accurate; unusually Young’s is not. Birmingham pantomimes in 1891 were *Babes in the Wood* (Prince of Wales) and *Abdalla and his Naughty Forty Thieves* (Theatre Royal). *Jack and the Beanstalk* was not produced in Birmingham until 1903.<sup>210</sup>

Though unquestionably part of the North Bromwich canon, *Jim Redlake*, with unexpected inaccuracy, omissions and digressions, is a hiatus in Young’s use of detailed Birmingham background. As the novel lacks both preface and notebook,<sup>211</sup> it is impossible to say if this was a calculated attempt to renounce the Birmingham influence. That it was a temporary aberration is clearly shown by the next novel as Jessie Brett Young indicates.

Often when driving through the suburbs of Birmingham he had noticed the rows of semi-detached houses, each one with an identical garage. He wondered what sort of life these people lived. ‘I shall have to write a book about them,’ he said.<sup>212</sup>

The book was *Mr & Mrs Pennington* (1931) and the suburb Tilton (actually Quinton<sup>213</sup>) to where real locations and events were transferred. In reality Young had encountered the fictional home of the Penningtons, Ada Road with its bungalows Welbeck and Chatsworth, in Salisbury, Rhodesia.<sup>214</sup> Dick Pennington’s North Bromwich arrest, imprisonment and court appearance were based upon the Naples trial of Alfredo Mazarella at which Young gave

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<sup>208</sup> Young, F.B. (1930) *Jim Redlake*, p 282

<sup>209</sup> Allen, W.E. (1938) p 161; Barnes, E.W. (1927) *Should Such a Faith Offend?*, London, Hodder & Stoughton

<sup>210</sup> *Birmingham Post* (05.01.1891; 05.01.1903)

<sup>211</sup> FBY 85 (1928) Notes for Short Stories - contains some brief notes for *Jim Redlake*

<sup>212</sup> Young, J.B. (1962) p 177

<sup>213</sup> See pp 199-210

<sup>214</sup> Young, J.B. (1962) pp 178-179

evidence.<sup>215</sup> Though *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, in which sordid happenings are reflected in debauched surroundings and shallow characters in shoddy settings, could have been set anywhere, it was a very obvious and conscious return to North Bromwich, recreating in an acerbic description the Birmingham expansion which engulfed Quinton between World Wars I and II.

The Iron City had developed the encroaching activity of a cancer cell... thrusting greedy tentacles of brick and mortar and steel and cement into the healthy countryside, until now the sleepy street of Tilton echoed continually with the grinding of gear-pinions and the stutter of exploding petrol, and its ancient buildings... had become encysted in reticulations of staring new brick: a red and rodent ulcer.<sup>216</sup>

Here are found characters superficial as “Brummagem glitters”<sup>217</sup> whilst all that is new is jerrybuilt, substandard and destructive. Like Chamberlain in *Fanciful*,<sup>218</sup> Young includes amongst the Iron City’s encroaching activity the recently opened Birmingham-Wolverhampton trunk road.<sup>219</sup> Adding nothing to the plot of *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, the reference is used as another negative image, here suggesting disaster, for “at the Wolverbury by-pass the bus skidded on wet tar, avoiding a collision by inches.”<sup>220</sup>

Adjectives employed to describe both North Bromwich (tawdry, grimy, dingy, degraded<sup>221</sup>) and its people (dowdy, sallow, brazen, threadbare<sup>222</sup>) indicate that Young’s thesis of North Bromwich’s conscious ugliness remains unaltered in this novel. The city, “crowded with men hurrying homeward from work and women buzzing like angry wasps

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<sup>215</sup> FBY 2270 (30.01.1935) Letter from Young to E.G. Twitchett

<sup>216</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 179

<sup>217</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 489

<sup>218</sup> Chamberlain, P. (1935) p 106

<sup>219</sup> The “Birmingham New Road” also known as the “Wolverhampton Road” (A4123) was opened by The Prince of Wales in November 1927 – Jones, J.T. (1940) *History of the Corporation of Birmingham Vol V*, Birmingham, General Purposes Committee, p 587

<sup>220</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 339

<sup>221</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, pp 7, 38, 176, 530

<sup>222</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, pp 32, 36, 53, 343

around stalls and shop windows,”<sup>223</sup> is captured with vibrancy and vigour, and is self-evidently a product of research, experience and bias.

*The House under the Water* (1932), like *Undergrowth*, turns upon one significant chapter of Birmingham history: the Welsh Water Scheme, with which Young was well acquainted. Childhood encounters with waterworks’ engineers who came to tea, and navvies whose injuries were treated in his father’s surgery, preceded holidays in reservoir workers’ huts.<sup>224</sup> Young fictionalises the Elan Valley as Forest Fawr and portrays building works from Birmingham originals; Nantgwyllt, Shelley’s home drowned under Caban Coch, becomes Tregaron’s Nant Escob, the house under the water. This waterworks scheme, the novel’s raison d’être, vital to Birmingham’s development, also impinges in Mettingham. “We bought our great water rights, and now the huge profits they bring us go to keep down our rates.”<sup>225</sup>

Even before the waterworks scheme begins North Bromwich is portrayed as a place of technical and scientific resource, supplying turbines, dynamos, wiring and lamps; North Bromwich engineers build hydroelectric plants.<sup>226</sup> Tregaron spends much of his time away in London or abroad, but it is in North Bromwich that he seeks medical advice.<sup>227</sup> Though there is also an aesthetic dimension to the town, “the artistic atmosphere... found in concerts and recitals at North Bromwich,”<sup>228</sup> it is the image of power, strength and brutishness upon which this novel is predicated. The works of nature are dwarfed by the might of North Bromwich.

The people of North Bromwich learnt with awed satisfaction that the roots of Barradale’s dam would be actually tougher than the matrix of mountain into

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<sup>223</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, pp 529-530

<sup>224</sup> Preface to Young, F.B. (1935) *The House under the Water*, Severn Edition pp viii-xi

<sup>225</sup> Parkes, W. K. (1914) p 339

<sup>226</sup> Young, F.B. (1932) *The House under the Water*, pp 129, 240

<sup>227</sup> Young, F.B. (1932) *The House under the Water*, pp 580-587

<sup>228</sup> Young, F.B. (1932) *The House under the Water*, p 133

which they had been thrust. Nature fitted her work for time; the City of Iron built hers for eternity.<sup>229</sup>

Cynically, little concern is shown for workers.

Another village of hutments arose, holding two hundred men, who complained of the cold... but when once the dam was completed no human being would ever again be expected to live there. The spirit of North Bromwich was traditionally humane.<sup>230</sup>

The town itself is a stressful place, daunting to newcomers. “When I got to North Bromwich I had a look round, but the place is too big and I didn’t know where to start.”<sup>231</sup> The novel ends with a reassertion of Young’s perennial preference for green over black. “Just because they’ve impounded the Garon, the poor innocents imagine they own Forest Fawr. But they don’t... Forest Fawr belongs to its ravens and kites and buzzards.”<sup>232</sup> In *The House under the Water*, rich and callous North Bromwich is not permitted to wield the ultimate power.

*This Little World* (1934), however, reverses the portrayal, presenting North Bromwich’s invasive modernity during the social upheaval following World War I, as the antithesis of traditionalist, rural England: two poles between which there is no meeting-point.

Miles Ombersley detested North Bromwich. From his childhood he had conformed to the family’s attitude of treating this growing city... as though it did not exist... None of the older families in the district had ever accepted the possibility of “knowing” North Bromwich people.<sup>233</sup>

Wealthy John Hackett, offering patronage to Chaddesbourne D’Abitot,<sup>234</sup> home of his forbears, is denigrated. “A gentleman from North Bromwich! That’s a contradiction in terms.”<sup>235</sup> Equally city disregards country. “His friends in North Bromwich told him that rural

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<sup>229</sup> Young, F.B. (1932) *The House under the Water*, pp 537-538

<sup>230</sup> Young, F.B. (1932) *The House under the Water*, p 539

<sup>231</sup> Young, F.B. (1932) *The House under the Water*, p 308

<sup>232</sup> Young, F.B. (1932) *The House under the Water*, p 689

<sup>233</sup> Young, F.B. (1934) *This Little World*, p 307

<sup>234</sup> In reality Chaddesley Corbett; see p 18

<sup>235</sup> Young, F.B. (1934) *This Little World*, p 16

England, as represented by places like Chaddesbourne, was dead.”<sup>236</sup> Elsie Cookson, returning to Chaddesbourne from college, misses “the highly-coloured life she had led in North Bromwich.”<sup>237</sup>

Throughout this novel the city’s onslaught is irrevocable and inescapable. “The power of North Bromwich... smoking eternally beyond the hills sucked the youth of the village out of the cottages and the fields to court richer adventure amid their sooty activity.”<sup>238</sup> *This Little World* re-engages with comparable reality, albeit less desperately, the identical conflict of industrial versus rural addressed by Tonna a century before. “John Smith... advised to remove, as many of his fellow husbandmen had done, to the manufacturing districts... has fixed on Birmingham.”<sup>239</sup> In Tonna’s industrial environment “breathing is difficult to a party who never before inhaled other air than that of the open country.”<sup>240</sup> Vulgar and grimy, Young’s city remains that from which a visitor is “thankful to get the tang of North Bromwich out of his mouth.”<sup>241</sup> Its brash, utilitarian ideals submerge ancient values. This “hated,” “smoke-breeding city”, with its “strepitous streets,” invades the countryside like “the raised edge of a brick erysipelas,”<sup>242</sup> making *This Little World’s* the most ominous and malevolent North Bromwich portrait in the entire canon.

Spanning five generations from the Napoleonic Wars to World War I, *White Ladies’* (1935) timescale exceeds the remainder of the North Bromwich novels (see Appendix 1) and

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<sup>236</sup> Young, F.B. (1934) *This Little World*, p 320

<sup>237</sup> Young, F.B. (1934) *This Little World*, p 164

<sup>238</sup> Young, F.B. (1934) *This Little World*, p 55

<sup>239</sup> [Tonna], Charlotte Elizabeth (1843-844) p 400

<sup>240</sup> [Tonna], Charlotte Elizabeth (1843-844) p 419

<sup>241</sup> Young, F.B. (1934) *This Little World*, p 314

<sup>242</sup> Young, F.B. (1934) *This Little World*, pp 5, 146, 308

all other Birmingham novels considered in this thesis. Tiltman's<sup>243</sup> three generations during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries most closely approach Young's epic range. Parkes<sup>244</sup> portrays Mettingham during Birmingham's Joseph Chamberlain era;<sup>245</sup> Murray, Gissing and Collins<sup>246</sup> describe episodes in the late nineteenth century. Tonna<sup>247</sup> captures the early 1840s; Green,<sup>248</sup> the late 1920s; Allen,<sup>249</sup> the late 1930s. Chamberlain<sup>250</sup> focuses upon one month and Hampson<sup>251</sup> upon one afternoon in the mid-twentieth century.

*White Ladies* constantly anchors North Bromwich to fact. Clinchant's surrender during the Franco-Prussian War<sup>252</sup> heralds decline in metal trades. Like Birmingham however, North Bromwich thrives upon versatility. "The brass-trade is so adaptable. Some new outlet always appears."<sup>253</sup> The advent of World War I brings revival. "The Admiralty's given us a new contract for twelve-inch shell-cases."<sup>254</sup> The novel's final catastrophe is precipitated by the Battle of Neuve Chapelle in 1915.<sup>255</sup> Though *White Ladies* spans 120 years, Young's main focus is upon the Chamberlain era, witheringly distilled into the life of one influential North

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<sup>243</sup> Tiltman, M.H. (1939)

<sup>244</sup> Parkes, W. K. (1914)

<sup>245</sup> Joseph Chamberlain moved to Birmingham in 1854, became Chairman of National Education League, Birmingham in 1868, served three terms as mayor (1873, 1874, 1875), entered parliament in 1876, becoming President of the Board of Trade in 1880 and Colonial Secretary in 1895. Illness compelled his retirement from public life in 1906. Chamberlain died in 1914. – *The Concise Dictionary of National Biography* (1994) vol I, pp 515-516

<sup>246</sup> Murray, D.C. (1894); Gissing, G. (1895); Collins, M. (1896)

<sup>247</sup> [Tonna], Charlotte Elizabeth (1843-1844)

<sup>248</sup> Green, H. (1929)

<sup>249</sup> Allen, W.E. (1938); (1939); (1940)

<sup>250</sup> Chamberlain, P. (1937)

<sup>251</sup> Hampson, J. (1936)

<sup>252</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies*, p 80; Threatened by the German army under Werder, Clinchant led the French army across the border in Switzerland, where they were subsequently disarmed and interned, on 01.02.1871. – Howard, M. (1961) *The Franco-Prussian War*, London, Rupert Hart-Davis, pp 429-431

<sup>253</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies*, p 636

<sup>254</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies*, p 639

<sup>255</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies*, p 670; The Battle of Neuve Chapelle lasted from 10-13.03.1915 – Taylor, A.J.P. (1965) p 26

Bromwich Liberal Nonconformist family, whose principles are shaken when Lord Rosebery's Ladas wins the Derby.<sup>256</sup>

These righteous people were so deeply (and honestly) concerned with ordering and influencing the lives of their humbler neighbours in the direction of sobriety and thrift that they had completely lost the faculty of living themselves.<sup>257</sup>

*White Ladies* reiterates *My Brother Jonathan's* ambivalence. Though the rural "pulse of life must surely beat more naturally, more steadily, than amid the bricks of North Bromwich,"<sup>258</sup> the opposite also obtains, relinquishing "green plains, so static and silent, for the keener upland air and bustling activity of North Bromwich."<sup>259</sup> Here the city, rather than its residents, becomes the upstart parvenu,<sup>260</sup> outclassed by its distinguished neighbour. "Worcester was not... North Bromwich, but a Cathedral City in which affairs were still conducted with dignity and decorum."<sup>261</sup> On balance, Young's city demeans rather than enhances. "In North Bromwich... beauty was considered unnecessary if not exactly sinful... Traversing the black heart of the city, the iron of North Bromwich had entered into his soul."<sup>262</sup> Thus North Bromwich continues to exert the inescapably stultifying power that stifles style and withers grace.

The North Bromwich context of *Far Forest* (1936) focuses from without and within upon David Wilden's student years around the turn of the nineteenth century. From without,

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<sup>256</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies*, p 167; Ladas II, ridden by J. Watts, won the Derby in 1894, during the premiership of the owner, Liberal Peer, Lord Rosebery. - Abelson, E. & Tyrrel, J. (1993) *The Breendon Book of Horse Racing Records*, Derby, Breedon Books, p 52

<sup>257</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies*, p 168

<sup>258</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies*, p 316

<sup>259</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies*, p 620

<sup>260</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 278; (1934) *This Little World*, p 307

<sup>261</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies*, p 641

<sup>262</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies*, p 177



the city exhilarates. “When he dashed into North Bromwich... he had looked upon it as a city of dreams, rich in beauty, a scene of imaginary triumphs.”<sup>263</sup> From within, though there are qualified moments of “sudden beauty with which that man-marred portion of earth was drenched,”<sup>264</sup> reality proves very different. The place of dreams is heartless and hateful,<sup>265</sup> imagined beauty reveals dingy dwellings and desolate clearings,<sup>266</sup> the sense of triumph gives way to disinterest and loneliness.<sup>267</sup>

Ninety years before Young wrote *Far Forest*, a fictional visitor “who had been to Birmingham brought back a few second-hand books.”<sup>268</sup> *Far Forest*'s Cobden Street booksellers<sup>269</sup> refine that fiction through Young's precision in creating homologous names for North Bromwich locations. At the parallel period of Birmingham history many booksellers traded in John Bright Street.<sup>270</sup> In transposing Bright to Cobden, Young unites two close political allies, thus subtly suggesting the intended street. Allen continues the convention, placing Bromford's booksellers in Gladstone Street.<sup>271</sup>

North Bromwich is a city of contrasts: wide, smooth streets in the city centre and endless gloomy thoroughfares in the slums; Leafy Alvaston and Lower Sparkdale's brick

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<sup>263</sup> Young, F.B. (1936) *Far Forest*, p 235

<sup>264</sup> Young, F.B. (1936) *Far Forest*, pp 259-260

<sup>265</sup> Young, F.B. (1936) *Far Forest*, pp 237, 287

<sup>266</sup> Young, F.B. (1936) *Far Forest*, pp 238, 239

<sup>267</sup> Young, F.B. (1936) *Far Forest*, pp 236, 237

<sup>268</sup> “How to Get on in the World: The Story of Peter Lawley” (1848) p 85

<sup>269</sup> *Far Forest* (1936) pp 75, 140, 235

<sup>270</sup> Between 1895 and 1903 (the main period of *Far Forest*) Joseph Azzopardi, Edward Baker, Charles Bullock, Catherine Gibbs, Eugene Hector, Walter Holland, G.T. Jukes, William McKenzie, J & W McMillan all sold books in John Bright Street. - *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham* (1895 -1903)

<sup>271</sup> Allen, W.E. (1939) p 49

forest.<sup>272</sup> There are vibrant pictures of the city at night – “North Bromwich never slept”<sup>273</sup> – and of its people.

The physical types bred by conditions of life in North Bromwich are not conspicuous for beauty in either sex; they are generally shrewd, quick-witted, capable, adapted to endurance and solidly built; but grace and charm... are rarely seen among them.<sup>274</sup>

The North Bromwich of *Far Forest* finds Wilden “at the mercy of something as callous as it was vast: a gigantic conglomeration of insensate brick and mortar, terrifying of its very size.”<sup>275</sup> This is a city that takes control of its occupants, shaping them to its mould.

The historical accuracy resulting from Young’s detailed research for *They Seek a Country* (1937) and its sequel, *The City of Gold* (1939), tracing South African history from the Great Trek<sup>276</sup> to the Jameson Raid,<sup>277</sup> is described in his Author’s Notes<sup>278</sup> and acknowledged in his Cape Times obituary. “If neither of these novels gave any great original penetrative insight into our history, they showed a most industrious research and a determination not to be slipshod or superficial in approach.”<sup>279</sup> North Bromwich is never mentioned in either novel, though Brummagem has a specific context in both. Born and raised in the Black Country where he acquires his political grounding, John Oakley, “a regular ‘Brummagem Radical’, ”<sup>280</sup> rebels against the injustice of enclosure in mid-nineteenth century England, is wrongly convicted of poaching, sentenced to seven years transportation, but

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<sup>272</sup> Young, F.B. (1936) *Far Forest*, pp 260, 238, 251, 239

<sup>273</sup> Young, F.B. (1936) *Far Forest*, p 245

<sup>274</sup> Young, F.B. (1936) *Far Forest*, p 248

<sup>275</sup> Young, F.B. (1936) *Far Forest*, p 235

<sup>276</sup> The movement of Voortrekkers from Cape Colony to Natal and the Transvaal from 1835 - Rosenthal, E (ed.) (1961) *Encyclopaedia of Southern Africa*, London, F. Warne & Co, pp 228-229

<sup>277</sup> On 29.12.1895, Dr Leander Starr Jameson led a detachment of mounted police from the Bechuanaland frontier to Johannesburg in an attempt to seize the Boer republic of the Transvaal. – Rosenthal, E (ed.) (1961) p 275

<sup>278</sup> Young, F.B. *They Seek a Country* (1937) p 642; (1939) *The City of Gold*, London, Heinemann, pp vii-viii

<sup>279</sup> *Cape Times* (30.03.1954) Obit of Francis Brett Young

<sup>280</sup> Young, F.B. (1937) *They Seek a Country*, p 16

jumps ship in South Africa. Joining the Great Trek, he survives the massacre at Blauwkrans.<sup>281</sup> Oakley's family's political and financial interests, interwoven with those of named historical characters<sup>282</sup> involved in the drama of Johannesburg gold, provide the framework for the second book, the title of which suggests parallels with the City of Iron.

Oakley never actually visits Brummagem and the label with which Young categorizes him is clearly intended as a generic term for troublemakers who incite others to riot. "A parcel of 'Brummagem Radicals' got stirring them up and setting fools' minds again' their own interest."<sup>283</sup> In much the same way, Tiltman describes the Birmingham of a later generation as a place of radical unrest. "That was Birmingham... Reform Bill riots, Chartist riots... riots for any and every excuse."<sup>284</sup> In the North Bromwich canon, the unmistakable stigma of the Brummagem label, even in distant South Africa, is confirmed by a pedlar who has a watch to sell. "It was one of them Brummagem things, you know that cheap-jacks sell for half-a-crown and make two bob profit."<sup>285</sup> As in *The Crescent Moon* and *Black Roses*, Young's apparently superfluous introduction of Brummagem into *They Seek a Country* and *The City of Gold* is designed to conjure undesirable qualities, supporting the general ambience promulgated throughout the canon.

Life in Monk's Norton, imaginary Worcestershire setting of *Portrait of a Village* (1937), is ineluctably moulded by North Bromwich's influence and proximity. From that city

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<sup>281</sup> On 17.02.1838 c200 Voortrekkers were killed in their Blauwkrans laager by an impi of Dingaan's Zulu warriors. – Rosenthal, E. (1961) p 66

<sup>282</sup> President Paul Kruger, Cecil Rhodes and mining magnate Barney Barnato all feature in *The City of Gold*

<sup>283</sup> Young, F.B. (1937) *They Seek a Country*, p 9

<sup>284</sup> Tiltman, M.H. (1939) pp 8-9

<sup>285</sup> Young, F.B. (1939) *The City of Gold*, p 133

the village receives vital incomers: the schoolmistress, “a graduate in Arts of the University of North Bromwich”<sup>286</sup> and the doctor, “a typical product of the North Bromwich Medical School.”<sup>287</sup> Monk’s Norton residents drink North Bromwich beer - *Astill’s Entire* - and read the *North Bromwich Courier*.<sup>288</sup> To the city young folk migrate: to study, become shop assistants, or “go into service in the poky anonymous suburban houses of North Bromwich.”<sup>289</sup> Dairy farmers sell their milk in North Bromwich,<sup>290</sup> where Captain Grafton visits political meetings and prostitutes.<sup>291</sup>

Like Allen, who pictured a suburban Bromford inn as “rigged and sparred and all but thatched like a sham gargantuan Elizabethan cottage,”<sup>292</sup> Young uses North Bromwich inns as indicators of hollow values, citing “Astill’s the brewers’ glaring essays in the false antique on the outskirts of North Bromwich.”<sup>293</sup> Essential for daily Monk’s Norton life though the city’s resources are demonstrated to be, it is as a metaphor for the insubstantial and counterfeit that Young retains North Bromwich as his yardstick.

*Dr Bradley Remembers* (1938) portrays North Bromwich’s progress over half-a-century, from the eponymous hero’s arrival at Prince’s College (in reality Birmingham’s Queen’s College) in 1880. First impressions are awe-inspiring.

The Town Hall (a Corinthian temple whose mighty columns of Anglesea marble smoke had already blackened) and the tremendous limestone bulk of the

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<sup>286</sup> Young, F.B. (1937) *Portrait of a Village*, London, Heinemann, p 22

<sup>287</sup> Young, F.B. (1937) *Portrait of a Village*, p 73

<sup>288</sup> Young, F.B. (1937) *Portrait of a Village*, pp 13, 80

<sup>289</sup> Young, F.B. (1937) *Portrait of a Village*, pp 15, 19, 60

<sup>290</sup> Young, F.B. (1937) *Portrait of a Village*, p 118

<sup>291</sup> Young, F.B. (1937) *Portrait of a Village*, pp 97-99

<sup>292</sup> Allen, W.E. (1939) p 196

<sup>293</sup> Young, F.B. (1937) *Portrait of a Village*, p 39

Renaissance Council House and Art Gallery were always to remain symbols of the city's majesty.<sup>294</sup>

Murray concurs, citing Birmingham's "Town Hall and General Hospital (offering) some conception of what a palace might be."<sup>295</sup>

North Bromwich's improvement scheme is based, like Birmingham's around "driving a brand-new magnificent thoroughfare, to be called Corporation Street, through the heart of the town."<sup>296</sup> In transport "double-decked horse-drawn omnibuses... give way to steam-trams... to cable-trams... to electric-trams... each acclaimed in succession as the last word in public transport, and each in turn scrapped."<sup>297</sup> North Bromwich hospitals embrace aseptic surgery and "in less than twenty short years, Lister's battle had been won."<sup>298</sup>

This majestic, progressive city attracts the upwardly mobile. "North Bromwich had become the natural goal of all ambitious and impatient young men in search of fortune and of girls who sought more excitement in service or factory-work than could be found at home."<sup>299</sup> Furthermore, despite human intervention, a natural beauty, infrequently perceived in the rest of the canon, exists.

In North Bromwich the density of the air, charged with carbon particles, endows dawn and sunset with unexpected splendours. In this welling of rosy light... the sooty Georgian façade of Easy Row and the foursquare redbrick blocks of the Prince's Hospital ... were enriched, transfixed.<sup>300</sup>

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<sup>294</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 123

<sup>295</sup> Murray, D.C. (1894) vol 1, p 156

<sup>296</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p125

<sup>297</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 121-122

<sup>298</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 502

<sup>299</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 114

<sup>300</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 208

This rare accolade apart, Young's ambivalence towards North Bromwich remains. His preference for country over town contrasts "rural poverty at its worst and the stark degradation of life in this back-to-back den, where even fresh air was an unobtainable luxury."<sup>301</sup> Young's taxonomy is further refined. In other towns, where people "had not yet been drilled into servility like the factory-slaves of North Bromwich,"<sup>302</sup> squalor is "less uniform than that of the North Bromwich slum areas."<sup>303</sup> As Briggs found in Birmingham,<sup>304</sup> North Bromwich's improvement scheme underachieves, leaving "the same dirty streets, the same stifled congeries of back-to-backs, the same solemn lines of soot-bleared factory-windows."<sup>305</sup> In *Dr Bradley Remembers*, despite its planned redevelopment and the fleeting glimpse of its intrinsic beauty, North Bromwich remains scarred by polluted air, industrial oppression and residential squalor.

Much of this well-rehearsed imagery recurs in *Mr Lucton's Freedom* (1940), assessed by its earliest reviewer as social history.<sup>306</sup> Immediately prior to World War II, Owen Lucton briefly escapes the relentless demands of North Bromwich accountancy before the coming conflagration's inevitability asserts "his duty no less than a necessity to return to North Bromwich,"<sup>307</sup> a dim and grimy city<sup>308</sup> "scoured by a multitude of motor-cars."<sup>309</sup> In this vast conurbation "the myriad inhabitants"<sup>310</sup> with their "strident voices"<sup>311</sup> mirror Young's

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<sup>301</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 202

<sup>302</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 319

<sup>303</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 304

<sup>304</sup> See p 26

<sup>305</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 516

<sup>306</sup> *The Birmingham Mail* (10.10.1940)

<sup>307</sup> Young, F.B. (1940) *Mr Lucton's Freedom*, p 440

<sup>308</sup> Young, F.B. (1940) *Mr Lucton's Freedom*, p 452

<sup>309</sup> Young, F.B. (1940) *Mr Lucton's Freedom*, p 64

<sup>310</sup> Young, F.B. (1940) *Mr Lucton's Freedom*, p 225

<sup>311</sup> Young, F.B. (1940) *Mr Lucton's Freedom*, p 354

repeatedly lamented lack of corporate soul. “The culture, such as it was of North Bromwich, was of a stop-press variety and, even so, evanescent.”<sup>312</sup>

Though the North Bromwich of *Mr Lucton’s Freedom* parallels “the great black town”<sup>313</sup> of Collins’ Birchampton, Young reveals a gradually mellowing attitude traced through the sounding of the Art Gallery clock, the softening tones of which reflect an evolving perception of the city, at first harsh and strident, finally harmonious and pleasant. At the outset North Bromwich commercialism enslaves both Owen Lucton and “a multitude of young women employed in business offices whom the hammer-stroke of the Art Gallery clock striking ‘one’ had unshackled at a blow.”<sup>314</sup> Unsurprisingly, once Lucton has escaped, “the thought of returning to North Bromwich revolted him,”<sup>315</sup> a sentiment shared by a rural taxi-driver. “North Bromwich? Good Lord! What d’you want to go there for?”<sup>316</sup>

At the novel’s end, however, “the clock of the Art Gallery campanile chimed.”<sup>317</sup> This pleasing sound heralds affection, quite new to the canon, for North Bromwich “neither so begrimed nor so shabby as he had thought it ... For better, for worse, he was a North Bromwich man, and proud of it.”<sup>318</sup> Young’s frequently reiterated negatives are not the final word of *Mr Lucton’s Freedom*, which ultimately reveals the most sympathetic portrayal of North Bromwich in the canon.

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<sup>312</sup> Young, F.B. (1940) *Mr Lucton’s Freedom*, p 394

<sup>313</sup> Collins, M. (1896) p 187

<sup>314</sup> Young, F.B. (1940) *Mr Lucton’s Freedom*, p 9

<sup>315</sup> Young, F.B. (1940) *Mr Lucton’s Freedom*, p 83

<sup>316</sup> Young, F.B. (1940) *Mr Lucton’s Freedom*, p 449

<sup>317</sup> Young, F.B. (1940) *Mr Lucton’s Freedom*, p 455

<sup>318</sup> Young, F.B. (1940) *Mr Lucton’s Freedom*, p 455

Some of this newly revealed sympathy is continued in *A Man about the House* (1942), in which Agnes and Ellen Isit exchange the “dank reaches” of North Bromwich “where sunlight was rare”<sup>319</sup> for an Italian villa. Compared with Naples’ “meaner fringes... the slums of North Bromwich... seemed homely and sane and safe”<sup>320</sup> and Ellen Isit “would have given her eyes to find herself back in North Bromwich,”<sup>321</sup> where folk, “though hard-fisted are also warm-hearted.”<sup>322</sup>

The “cold of North Bromwich,”<sup>323</sup> a meteorological judgement, carries grim and gloomy overtones of chill reality.<sup>324</sup> Nevertheless, when Italian rain “fell without ceasing... they might just as well have been back in North Bromwich.”<sup>325</sup> Green’s Birmingham weather is similarly evocative. “Rain had fallen and the roadway was wet and the sky dark, so it dully shone like iron when it has been machined.”<sup>326</sup> Young’s microclimatic references frequently establish mood.

Beneath a leaden sky in the dun English fields on the outskirts of North Bromwich, men moved about their job sluggishly, as though their very spirits were burdened with the clay that clodded their boots, faces grim and sullen and even hostile.<sup>327</sup>

North Bromwich’s sullen environs are characterised by deprivation: sterile gardens: “cat-scrabbled beds of sour and hungry soil”<sup>328</sup> and architectural dilapidation: “leaf-choked

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<sup>319</sup> Young, F.B. (1942) *A Man about the House*, pp 109, 85

<sup>320</sup> Young, F.B. (1942) *A Man about the House*, pp 63-64

<sup>321</sup> Young, F.B. (1942) *A Man about the House*, p 66

<sup>322</sup> Young, F.B. (1942) *A Man about the House*, p 34

<sup>323</sup> Young, F.B. (1942) *A Man about the House*, p 106

<sup>324</sup> Young, F.B. (1942) *A Man about the House*, p 95

<sup>325</sup> Young, F.B. (1942) *A Man about the House*, p 60

<sup>326</sup> Green, H. (1929) p 265

<sup>327</sup> Young, F.B. (1942) *A Man about the House*, p 222

<sup>328</sup> Young, F.B. (1942) *A Man about the House*, p 39



rain-pipes and sagging gutters, blank soot-blinded windows.”<sup>329</sup> “Picturesqueness was not a common quality in North Bromwich, where the whole duty of man was to make money.”<sup>330</sup> Though the picture is not entirely unsympathetic, still the “smoky monotones of North Bromwich”<sup>331</sup> prevail, for the harsher elements of Young’s reality are unaltered and North Bromwich’s enduring image in *A Man about the House* remains that of the wider canon.

Young regarded *The Island* (1944), a verse history of England from its geological formation to the Battle of Britain, as his greatest achievement. “I think the best of me is perhaps to be found in my long epic poem, *The Island*.”<sup>332</sup> This work, four years in the writing, was conceived more than twenty years earlier.<sup>333</sup> Research during its protracted parturition ensured that the factual reliability associated with Young’s prose also marked his poetry. Trevelyan attested, “The background of historical knowledge is good, quite as accurate as the poet can be expected to make it within the limits set by his craft.”<sup>334</sup>

Birmingham, which featured in the eighteenth century poetry of Jago and Seward,<sup>335</sup> continued as a theme in twentieth century verse as Auden, whom Young acknowledged a major poet,<sup>336</sup> establishes:

Clearer than Scaffell Pike, my heart has stamped on,  
The view from Birmingham to Wolverhampton.<sup>337</sup>

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<sup>329</sup> Young, F.B. (1942) *A Man about the House*, p 2

<sup>330</sup> Young, F.B. (1942) *A Man about the House*, p 19

<sup>331</sup> Young, F.B. (1942) *A Man about the House*, p 83

<sup>332</sup> FBY 1108 (22.11.1948) Letter from Young to Doubleday & Co

<sup>333</sup> “*Song of the Dark Ages*”, the opening poem in Young, F.B. (1917) *Five Degrees South*, London, Martin Secker, was reworked as “*The Trench Diggers: Salisbury Plain*” in (1944) *The Island*

<sup>334</sup> Trevelyan, G.M. “For Ever England” (03.12.1944) Review of *The Island* in *The Observer*

<sup>335</sup> Jago, R. (1767); Seward, A. (1785)

<sup>336</sup> Young, F.B. (1942) *Mr Lucton’s Freedom*, p 284

<sup>337</sup> Auden, W.H. “Letter to Lord Byron, Part II” in Auden, W.H. & Macneice, L. (1937) *Letters from Iceland*, London, Faber & Faber

In *The Island* Young succinctly captures Birmingham's recognised ability<sup>338</sup> to adapt to a changing world.

To face hard facts with realistic eyes,  
And close the meeting with a compromise  
That leaves the lion sleeping with the lamb:  
That's how we manage things in Birmingham! <sup>339</sup>

Such adaptability, however, may equally underline North Bromwich's disingenuousness.

Brummagem pinchbeck for the trinket-trade –  
The beads we cast for rosaries serve as well  
For barter with the naked infidel...  
Thus, from our workshops, we supply the need  
Of every culture, climate, race or creed.<sup>340</sup>

So the Birmingham of this poetic excursion resonates both with historical evidence and the remainder of Young's North Bromwich canon.

Declining health interrupted Young's final work, the story, set on North Bromwich's periphery, of a great house, a tantalising mixture of Hagley, Himley and Four Oaks Halls.<sup>341</sup> This unfinished, largely autobiographical novella, *Wistanslow* (1956), like *The Young Physician*, is based on youthful memories. In it Young reiterates for the last time aspects from throughout the canon of his portrait of North Bromwich, resource and hub of its surrounding towns. In late nineteenth century Halesby, there was "no theatre or concert hall nearer than North Bromwich."<sup>342</sup> Young first mentioned a North Bromwich concert hall in *The Dark Tower*<sup>343</sup> and theatre in *The Iron Age*.<sup>344</sup> In *Wistanslow*, the football team, debuted in *The*

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<sup>338</sup> See p 24

<sup>339</sup> Young, F.B. (1944) "Fantastic Symphony, A.D. 1918-1939" in *The Island*, p 442

<sup>340</sup> Young, F.B. (1944) "Birth of a Monster, A.D. 1776" in *The Island*, p 315

<sup>341</sup> Hall, M (July 1998) "Wistanslow: Hagley, Himley, or Something More?" in *Francis Brett Young Society Journal* 39, pp 11-17

<sup>342</sup> Young, F.B. (1956) *Wistanslow*, p 8

<sup>343</sup> Young, F.B. (1915) *The Dark Tower*, p 30

<sup>344</sup> Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, p 131

*Black Diamond*,<sup>345</sup> remains “the famous North Bromwich Albion.”<sup>346</sup> North Bromwich scientific and medical resources, supplied to its environs in *The House under the Water*<sup>347</sup> are still sent out in *Winstanslow*.<sup>348</sup> North Bromwich nurses serving Wednesford in *My Brother Jonathan*<sup>349</sup> continue to serve in *Winstanslow*’s Halesby.<sup>350</sup> At the centre of its world, the North Bromwich of Young’s last novel, suggestive of Hampson’s “always something doing in Brum,”<sup>351</sup> continues to exert a far-reaching influence. It also remains ill-favoured. Young’s final view of “those grim congeries of brick and mortar called North Bromwich”<sup>352</sup> confirms in *Winstanslow* a reality introduced half-a-century earlier in *Undergrowth*.

## North Bromwich – One Reality among Many

Young’s North Bromwich portrait of Birmingham is one among numerous realities. These include the realities of other fictional Birmingham portraits with which North Bromwich is entirely consonant. The realities of Birmingham autobiographies, capturing a daily struggle for existence which, though more intense than experienced in North Bromwich, also harmonise with Young’s portrait. Occasional visitors’ portrayals of Birmingham are, like the North Bromwich canon, biased realities presenting aspects rather than distortions of the wider truth. The realities of historical research cover a broader canvas than Young’s limited intention, place and time allow, but are, nevertheless, complemented rather than contradicted by North Bromwich. Whilst none of these realities wholly capture Birmingham, each

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<sup>345</sup> Young, F.B. (1921) *The Black Diamond*, p 50

<sup>346</sup> Young, F.B. (1956) *Winstanslow*, p 23

<sup>347</sup> Young, F.B. (1932) *The House under the Water*, p 129

<sup>348</sup> Young, F.B. (1956) *Winstanslow*, p 151

<sup>349</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 379

<sup>350</sup> Young, F.B. (1956) *Winstanslow*, p 151

<sup>351</sup> Hampson, J. (1931) p 33

<sup>352</sup> Young, F.B. (1956) *Winstanslow*, p 46

contributes a dimension to the total perspective, a shade to the complete palette, without which the comprehensive portrait is diminished.

With few occasional digressions revealing unexpected beauty in North Bromwich, the canon coherently portrays an unlovely place. Young's fictional name for his city emphasizes this unattractiveness, his chosen sobriquets its Birmingham links. In support of the unappealing image, occasional contradictions occur within a novel. Having established North Bromwich's suitability for assignments,<sup>353</sup> the idea is convincingly reversed. In contrast to Düsseldorf, North Bromwich is uninviting, its population dull, its ambience misanthropic.

In North Bromwich the street lights were too cynical; beneath them could flourish no atmosphere of light lasciviousness; and if there were Viennese waltzes, which, indeed, the Alhambra might furnish, there certainly wouldn't be anything very *schwungvoll* about the audience.<sup>354</sup>

When cohesion of plot threatens Young's North Bromwich interpretation, inconsistency accommodates the grand scheme.

Throughout the canon, North Bromwich at the hub of rail and road systems influences a widespread hinterland, bringing benefit and tribulation. Its waterworks scheme provides employment and revenue as far away as Wales. North Bromwich markets everything from fish and beer to medical supplies and technical equipment. In its commerce, industry and domestic service, young people abandon their rural heritage to seek their fortunes. At its colleges and university the youthful elite of surrounding towns and villages are educated. Though this brain and labour drain denudes and devitalises outlying areas, the products of

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<sup>353</sup> Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, pp 78-82, where Celia Stafford & Edward Willis, previously a student at Düsseldorf, are followed by Lilian Willis to North Bromwich's Grand Midland Hotel.

<sup>354</sup> Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, p 131 [*Schwungvoll* = lively, vigorous]

North Bromwich higher education service the district as doctors, nurses, teachers and engineers.

Birmingham's parallel influence is recognised by Burritt, who acknowledges its capital of the Black Country<sup>355</sup> and Holyoake, who locates it at the heart of the Midlands.<sup>356</sup> The scientific survey *Birmingham and its Regional Setting*<sup>357</sup> confirms that Young's fiction, Burritt's impression and Holyoake's recollection merge into historical fact. Already a centre of commerce, industry and trade at North Bromwich's first appearance in the late eighteenth century,<sup>358</sup> as that history ends Birmingham remains a centre of migration.<sup>359</sup> Its ongoing centrality in road and rail communications, its provision of specialist medical, shopping and educational facilities, supplying the whole of its conurbation with fruit, fish and vegetables<sup>360</sup> is the basis of Young's evolving North Bromwich portrait. In short, Birmingham and North Bromwich are equally the undisputed capitals of a region embracing Herefordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire.<sup>361</sup>

Clearly established by the chronological survey is the prepotent physical reality of North Bromwich, a vast place, which grows throughout its history. In the later nineteenth

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<sup>355</sup> Burritt, E. (1868) p 8

<sup>356</sup> Holyoake, G. (1892) p 34

<sup>357</sup> Kinvig, R.H., Smith, J.G. & Wise, M.J. (eds) (1950) *Birmingham and its Regional Setting*, Birmingham Cornish Bros.

<sup>358</sup> Wise, M.J. & Johnson, B.C. (1950) "The Changing Pattern during the Eighteenth Century" in Kinvig, R.H. et al (eds) (1950) p 161

<sup>359</sup> Taylor, W. (1950) "Migration in Birmingham 1931-1947" in Kinvig, R.H. et al (eds) (1950) pp 261-265

<sup>360</sup> Jackson, J.N. (1950) "The Regional Functions and Sphere of Influence of Birmingham" in Kinvig, R.H. et al (eds) (1950) p 323

<sup>361</sup> Walker, G. & Glaisyer, E. (1950) "A Survey of the Industrial Population of Birmingham and the Black country" in Kinvig, R.H. et al (eds) (1950) p 249. See (e.g.) Young, F.B. (1940) *Mr Lucton's Freedom* for Herefordshire, (1921) *The Black Diamond* for Shropshire, (1928) *My Brother Jonathan* for Staffordshire, (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers* for Warwickshire and (1934) *This Little World* for Worcestershire.

century Holyoake comments upon Birmingham's growth into a great community,<sup>362</sup> whilst Burritt estimates its expansion at the rate of 4,000 houses per year.<sup>363</sup> Briggs' assessment of Birmingham's expansion during the North Bromwich era is confirmatory.<sup>364</sup> Young's description of North Bromwich's cancerous invasion of countryside, towns and villages, however, adds opinion to fact, heightens reality and leaves no doubt as to his judgement on civic ambition.

North Bromwich suburbs are places of marked contrast. Lower Sparkdale represents oppressive, overcrowded, unhealthy slums, where industrial workers live in terrible courts. Conversely, Alvaston provides professional and employing classes with the opportunity for more spacious living, though even its homes may be castigated as depressingly uniform. Burritt floridly identifies a similar contrast between Birmingham's "scorched, crimped and ragged" suburbs and others like Edgbaston "embroidered with emerald and gold."<sup>365</sup> From personal experience Dayus offers an insight more intimate and compelling into the dilapidated, bug-infested back-to-back hovels in Hockley where she was born in 1903.<sup>366</sup> Abject poverty fostered mutual support within the community as when "neighbours came to help with hot drinks, cast-off clothes and old boots,"<sup>367</sup> after the Dayus family home was flooded. This degree of intimacy is only approached in North Bromwich during midwifery visits<sup>368</sup> recounting Young's own experiences and supporting Hayward's assertion that "the most conspicuous generic feature of the industrial novel is its aesthetic failure to identify with

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<sup>362</sup> Holyoake, G. (1879) p 323-324

<sup>363</sup> Burritt, E. (1868) p11

<sup>364</sup> See pp 26-27

<sup>365</sup> Burritt, E. (1868) p 97

<sup>366</sup> Dayus, K. (1991) p 1

<sup>367</sup> Dayus, K. (2000) p 15

<sup>368</sup> E.g. Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 439; (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 196-197

the cause of the working class.”<sup>369</sup> Garratt recalls Edgbaston’s quiet roads and well-to-do houses where he once worked as a delivery boy.<sup>370</sup> The ultimate consequences of living in the contrasting conditions of such disparate Birmingham suburbs are confirmed by Vince, whose 1907-1911 statistics reveal a death rate of 23.8 per 1,000 in St Mary’s ward compared with 11.3 in Edgbaston.<sup>371</sup> Even after the demolition of insanitary properties following the 1909 Housing and Town Planning Act, a healthy environment and decent living, Chinn points out, remained unattainable for the poor. Nevertheless, “poverty-stricken neighbourhoods were not slumped in despair – there was friendship as well as offensiveness, laughter as well as despair.”<sup>372</sup>

With limited success in North Bromwich as in Birmingham, improvement schemes sweep away areas of slums. The city centre boasts an array of splendid civic architecture – Corinthian Town Hall, Renaissance Council House and Art Gallery - with further imposing buildings housing hospitals, higher education, commerce and law. In Cannadine’s opinion Birmingham’s identical neo-classical and Venetian Gothic redbrick and terracotta architecture is the most visible expression of the civic gospel,<sup>373</sup> whilst Priestley assesses Victoria Square and its huge Council House as the best view in Birmingham.<sup>374</sup>

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<sup>369</sup> Hayward, I. (2000) “‘Graphic Narratives and Discovery of Horror’: the Feminization of Labour in Nineteenth-century Radical Fiction” in Klaus, H.G. & Knight, S. (2000) pp 5-6. Hayward’s conclusion follows his assessment of Williams, R. (1959) “The Industrial Novels” in Williams, R. (1959) *Culture and Society 1780-1950*, London, Chatto & Windus, pp 87-109

<sup>370</sup> Garratt, V.W. (1939) pp 43, 46

<sup>371</sup> Vince, C.A. (1923) p 153

<sup>372</sup> Chinn, C. (1999) *Homes for People: Council Housing and Urban Renewal in Birmingham 1849-1999*, Studley, Brewin Books, p 32

<sup>373</sup> Cannadine, D. (2002) pp 120-121

<sup>374</sup> Priestley, J.B. (1934) p 81

In a city designed for industry and profit, North Bromwich has little perceived need for open spaces. Burritt identifies the same malady within Birmingham, which “had filled a great area with long and intersecting streets of houses, shops and factories before it thought of leaving a goodly breathing space for the people.”<sup>375</sup> Thorne has no recollection of free air, only cobbled streets as his childhood playground,<sup>376</sup> whilst Dayus recalls only churchyards as recreational spaces.<sup>377</sup> In fact by 1911 for those who lived in the right suburbs Greater Birmingham offered no less than sixty public parks, gardens and playgrounds.<sup>378</sup> In North Bromwich, however, such suburbs are always overshadowed by a more prolific soot-blackened reality, largely devoid of public grass, flowers and trees.

Just as Birmingham’s physical appearance is marked by many realities, ranging from Skipp’s “cruel habitations” of the poor to the “suburban arcadia” of the rich,<sup>379</sup> so the similar realities of North Bromwich encompass plague-stricken warrens and grandiose structures of Aberdeen granite and Anglesea marble. Despite Birmingham’s undoubted splendours, Holyoake’s lasting memories are of smoke, decay and comfortlessness;<sup>380</sup> Garratt’s of cramped and crowded dwellings, taking no account of appearance or health.<sup>381</sup> Dayus recalls broken-down old houses<sup>382</sup> and Thorne neglected streets.<sup>383</sup> For Priestley, the overall impression of his Birmingham visit is of a dirty muddle.<sup>384</sup> Though occasional and unexpected glimpses identified in the chronological survey of the canon reveal undoubted

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<sup>375</sup> Burritt, E. (1868) pp 91-92

<sup>376</sup> Thorne, W. (1925) pp 13-14

<sup>377</sup> Dayus, K. (1982) p 5

<sup>378</sup> Vince, C.A. (1923) pp 230-231

<sup>379</sup> Skipp, V. (1996) *The Making of Victorian Birmingham*, Studley, Brewin Books pp 77-82

<sup>380</sup> Holyoake, G. (1892) p 15

<sup>381</sup> Garratt, V.W. (1939) p 2

<sup>382</sup> Dayus, K. (2000) p 4

<sup>383</sup> Thorne, W. (1925) p 14

<sup>384</sup> Priestley, J.B. (1934) p 80



North Bromwich splendours, the abiding impression, conveyed by Young's purposively repeated adjectives (colourless; crumbling; dank; devitalised; dull; gaunt; grey; mildewed; stunted; ugly) is of a degraded and depressing place.

North Bromwich's quality of life is inextricably linked to its physical attributes, which necessarily shape its inhabitants. Working conditions are harsh, hours long, workers forlorn. Young's picture of fictional North Bromwich shares a reality with factual Birmingham in workers' recollections. Writing such accounts, Burnett stresses, "must always be an untypical activity, requiring time, ability, energy and, above all, a degree of literacy,"<sup>385</sup> the very attributes least accessible to North Bromwich workers. Birmingham's autobiographers, as an exceptional minority with fixed agendas, may be considered unrepresentative. However, it is, Burnett maintains, such writer's selection of personally valued criteria, different from any second-hand account however skilled the reporter, that validates.<sup>386</sup> Rose sees this difference as one of precision. "With remarkable consistency British working people described their mental maps in terms... dominated by streets where they grew up, drawn to enormous scale and etched in fine detail."<sup>387</sup> Thus Garratt recalls inadequate daylight and ventilation, pollution from dense fumes and deafening noise in his early twentieth century workplace.<sup>388</sup> A generation earlier, Thorne laboured twelve hours a day, with every day a working day, at Saltley Gas Works.<sup>389</sup> Though identifying a reduction in hours for the Birmingham workforce in the later nineteenth century, Hopkins adds the rider that average conditions hardly applied

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<sup>385</sup> Burnett, J. (1982) *Destiny Obscure*, London, Allen Lane, p 12

<sup>386</sup> Burnett, J. (1982) p 11

<sup>387</sup> Rose, J. (2001) p 342

<sup>388</sup> Garratt, V.W. (1939) pp 72-78

<sup>389</sup> Thorne, W. (1925) p 37

to the lowest ranks of the working class.<sup>390</sup> Much later in the North Bromwich era, Priestley judges that Birmingham workers “looked as if life... had taken the bloom out of their faces... and dulled their eyes.”<sup>391</sup>

North Bromwich earns a place in world history through the pioneering work of Boulton and Watt who, above all others in Upton’s opinion,<sup>392</sup> set Birmingham on the international map. However, North Bromwich’s reputation founders on the production of shoddy and counterfeit “Brummagem” goods. Similarly, in the midst of plaudits, Burritt admits Birmingham’s cheap and showy jewellery,<sup>393</sup> whilst Priestley considers “Made in Birmingham” a dubious hallmark.<sup>394</sup> The North Bromwich ethic rejoices in income generated by the wars which punctuate its history. Thorne identifies parallel boom periods in Birmingham during the Franco-Prussian and First World Wars;<sup>395</sup> Dayus describes similar full employment in 1914 and 1939.<sup>396</sup> This, as Chinn recognizes, represents an unfortunate paradox for a city involved in armaments manufacture.<sup>397</sup>

With few exceptions, North Bromwich city fathers, largely drawn from the nouveau riche, are, at best insensitively paternalistic, at worst, graspingly utilitarian. Some observers see identical characteristics personified in Birmingham. Burritt, upon whom Young drew for source material,<sup>398</sup> believes that “Birmingham has worked to order without asking questions

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<sup>390</sup> Hopkins, E. (2001) pp 71-72

<sup>391</sup> Priestley, J.B. (1934) p 99

<sup>392</sup> Upton, C. (1997) p 77

<sup>393</sup> Burritt, E. (1868) p 12

<sup>394</sup> Priestley, J.B. (1934) p 80

<sup>395</sup> Thorne, W. (1925) p 22

<sup>396</sup> Dayus, K. (1985) p 124; (2000) p 169

<sup>397</sup> Chinn, C. (2001) p 7

<sup>398</sup> See pp 16-17, Footnote 97

for conscience sake in regard to the uses made of its iron and brass.”<sup>399</sup> Priestley, whose opinion could well have been coloured by Young’s North Bromwich portrait,<sup>400</sup> considers Birmingham “a city of big profits and narrow views, which sent missionaries out of one gate and idols and machine guns out of another.”<sup>401</sup>

North Bromwich, like Briggs’ Birmingham,<sup>402</sup> is an evolving modern city. Burritt bestows the label as an accolade:<sup>403</sup> Young considers it a reproach. Its unappealing ambience exacerbated by weather, North Bromwich is the epicentre of all that Young disliked in urban development. “Mutilation by traffic, suffocation by crowds, asphyxiation by petrol fumes and deafening noises of every monstrous description.”<sup>404</sup> Though contrasted unfavourably with its rural fringes, North Bromwich occasionally reveals an unexpected light and beauty reminiscent of the hawthorn tree that struggled to bloom each spring outside the window of Garratt’s back-to-back Birmingham home.<sup>405</sup>

Such leisure hours as North Bromwich’s working-class have are largely passed at pubs and football matches. Their Birmingham originals enjoy a wider range of activities: street entertainers, tip-cat and five stones, pigeon flying, bare-knuckle, dog, rat and cock fights.<sup>406</sup> Consonant with the picture of Birmingham life portrayed by Thorne and Garratt,<sup>407</sup> North Bromwich’s middle class frequents clubs, teashops, restaurants, theatres and music halls.

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<sup>399</sup> Burritt, E. (1868) p 12

<sup>400</sup> Before *English Journey* Priestley was apparently unfamiliar with Birmingham but knew Young’s works. - Priestley, J.B. (1927) *The English Novel*, London, Ernest Benn, p 76; (1934) p 79. Young regarded himself and Priestley as “among the leaders of our profession.” - FBY 1530 (11.09.1939) Letter from Young to Ministry of Information

<sup>401</sup> Priestley, J.B. (1934) p 80

<sup>402</sup> Briggs, A. (1952) pp 11-27

<sup>403</sup> Burritt, E. (1868) pp 67-68

<sup>404</sup> Young, F.B. (May 1934) “Country or City”, p 12

<sup>405</sup> Garratt, V.W. (1939) p 2

<sup>406</sup> Thorne, W. (1925) pp 25, 33-34,42; Garratt, V.W. (1939) pp 59,66; Dayus, K. (1991) p 5

<sup>407</sup> Thorne, W. (1925) pp 28-29; Garratt, V.W. (1939) pp 24-25, 31

Skipp shows that the divide between uncouth and respectable is categorized by such choice of leisure activities in Victorian Birmingham.<sup>408</sup> Though there are rare pockets of genuine appreciation, there is little evidence that the art on offer at concert hall, museum or art gallery is valued for its own sake in North Bromwich. At Birmingham's Triennial Music Festival, conceived as a charity event, Burritt indicates that income remains at least as satisfying as bravura.<sup>409</sup> Substance is given to this judgement by Dent's account of the Musical Festivals which painstakingly details receipts and profits alongside critical review.<sup>410</sup>

North Bromwich is a city of dubious morality, generally best avoided. Holyoake recalls Birmingham children of the late nineteenth century with a talent for turbulence,<sup>411</sup> whilst Thorne remembers scenes of domestic drunkenness and violence, the consequences of a dehumanising social system.<sup>412</sup> Statistics confirm memories. In 1898, 30% of all admissions to Winson Green Asylum were attributable to drink. Between 1881 and 1911, convictions for drunkenness in Birmingham escalated from 44 to 61 per 10,000 of population.<sup>413</sup> To live or work in North Bromwich is considered a last resort. That renewal comes with departure is a sentiment shared by Garratt and Dayus,<sup>414</sup> both of whom long to exchange the North Bromwich-like environment of their birth for a better world. Young's bias here approaches its extremity. His North Bromwich portrait is not untrue, but paints only part of the picture. The industrial pollution and inadequate sanitation of North Bromwich's back streets may accurately conjure Birmingham, but, as Chinn convincingly demonstrates, poverty and poor

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<sup>408</sup> Skipp, V. (1996) p 137

<sup>409</sup> Burritt, E. (1868) p 71

<sup>410</sup> Dent, R.K. (1880) pp 605-608

<sup>411</sup> Holyoake, G. (1891) p181

<sup>412</sup> Thorne, W. (1925) pp 44-46

<sup>413</sup> Vince, C.A. (1902) p 249; (1923) p 348

<sup>414</sup> Garratt, V.W. (1939) p 72; Dayus, K. (1991) p 45

housing generate communality and resolution as well as insouciance and abasement. “Life in a poor community would have been unbearable without good neighbourliness... There was degradation. But there was also dignity.”<sup>415</sup> This aspect of Birmingham life is frequently celebrated in the autobiographical accounts of untypical, articulate residents.<sup>416</sup> Both Keating (“a representative of one class consciously sets out to explore life lower on the social scale.”<sup>417</sup>) and Cunningham (“the interloper novelist from another linguistic class... anxious to make strange lands known to the rest of the country”<sup>418</sup>) offer explanations for the novel’s variant approach.

Within the parameters established, Chapter Two demonstrates that the North Bromwich canon coheres with historical evidence, other Birmingham novels and the reminiscences of such residents and visitors who share Priestley’s view of Birmingham as “not one single tiny thing that could possibly raise a man’s spirit... miles of ugliness and squalor.”<sup>419</sup> For Young, North Bromwich’s principal reality is the absence of beauty common throughout urban industrial development, which Lawrence also notes. Though once neighbours and travelling companions<sup>420</sup> Lawrence and Young privately deprecated each

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<sup>415</sup> Chinn, C. (1995) p 147; (1999) p 32

<sup>416</sup> E.g. Maynell, L. (1982) *Further Memories of Birmingham*, Padstow, Lodenek Press; Mahar, A. (1991) *Writing it Down Before it’s All Gone: Working Class Life in Balsall Heath*, Birmingham, Tindal Association for School and Community; Smith, G. (1997) *Winson Green My World*, Studley, Brewin Books

<sup>417</sup> Keating, P.J. (1976) *Into Unknown England 1866-1913 Selections from the Social Explorers*, Manchester, University Press, p 13

<sup>418</sup> Cunningham, V. (2000) p 39

<sup>419</sup> Priestley, J.B. (1934) p 85

<sup>420</sup> During 1919-1920 Young and Lawrence both lived on Capri, exploring Sicily together in February 1920. - Hall, M. (1997) pp 117-119

other's accomplishments. "Brett-Young is pompous Brummagen,"<sup>421</sup> Lawrence pronounced, whilst with similar scorn Young fulminated:

Lawrence could write, yet why should I believe  
In one who wears his privates on his sleeve?<sup>422</sup>

However, as contemporary regional novelists they utter the same anathema. "The real tragedy of England," wrote Lawrence, "is the tragedy of ugliness. The country is so lovely: the man-made England is so vile."<sup>423</sup>

North Bromwich is by no means the complete Birmingham reality and its constituent parts are undoubtedly selected and shaded to present a city of which Young did not approve. Like Holyoake and Thorne, whose Birmingham experiences lead to political involvement, Young recognises that the reciprocal influence of North Bromwich upon its denizens is mutually destructive. In that acknowledgement but (unlike the condition-of-England novelists) avoidance of any proffered solution, Cannadine sees a reactionary escapism.

Just as Baldwin represented an explicit rejection of the frenetic, tawdry, discredited world of the Lloyd George coalition and sought to return high politics to its pre-war standards of probity, so Young set out to put the clock back to the days before Freud and Bloomsbury had changed – perverted even? – the course and content of the English novel.<sup>424</sup>

Despite occasional acknowledgments that it is not entirely corrupted, that its buildings may even be mellowed by smoke and that for some people its life may be more fulfilling than that of the countryside, North Bromwich remains the Birmingham of Dayus' and Garratt's

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<sup>421</sup> Lawrence, D.H. (24.12.1925) to Hon. Dorothy Brett in Boulton, J. & Vasey, L. (1989) *The Letters of D.H. Lawrence Vol V 1924-1927*, Cambridge, University Press, p 362

<sup>422</sup> FBY 1520 (06.04.1934) Letter from Young to C.S. Evans

<sup>423</sup> Lawrence, D.H. (1930) "Nottingham and the Mining Countryside" in *The New Adelphi* Vol iii, No 4, p 260

<sup>424</sup> Cannadine, D. (2002) pp 174-175

darker days. Young's general thesis as a disciple of Traherne<sup>425</sup> and in agreement with Lawrence that urban is ugly finds its specific focus in North Bromwich. In this place of particular gracelessness and depredation, from which nobility has been knowingly excluded, the general ugliness of urban development finds its worst excesses. So Young's defining reality remains consistent over forty years of writing. "North Bromwich... A sort of conscious ugliness, mile after mile of regular smoky brick... Lives devoted to the relentless extinction of beauty."<sup>426</sup>

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<sup>425</sup> pp 17-18

<sup>426</sup> Young, F.B. (1915) *The Dark Tower*, p 40

**FRANCIS BRETT YOUNG'S BIRMINGHAM**

*North Bromwich – City of Iron*

## **CHAPTER THREE**

# **A MIGHTY CITY**

The mighty heart of North Bromwich, whose pulsations gave  
life...

Francis Brett Young - *Mr & Mrs Pennington*



North Bromwich, in its early years not a place of much consequence,<sup>1</sup> grows throughout its story.

During the middle of the nineteenth century... all the roads that led to North Bromwich... were scattered with stalwart young men... who had left byre or plough or woodlands to try their luck in the land of promise.<sup>2</sup>

Young's point is illustrated by my forbears. During the 1850s Thomas Stockley, shoemaker, with his extended family, migrated from rural Leicestershire to Birmingham becoming a coal labourer. In the early 1870s Thomas Farmer, accompanied by his grandmother, came to Birmingham from Astley, Worcestershire, exchanging agricultural labour for employment in an ironworks.<sup>3</sup> Greenslade shows that from the late 1870s fiction commonly depicted the city as "a vortex which remorselessly sucked in the fresh-bodied from the country."<sup>4</sup> North Bromwich's population-movement also included emigration: "seepage in the opposite direction of folk tired of the stresses of urban life, who had acquired enough sense to appreciate the treble boon of clear air and space and silence."<sup>5</sup> Similarly between 1881 and 1911 95,000 people left Birmingham.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, Birmingham's population doubled twice between 1851 and 1929.<sup>7</sup> North Bromwich mirrors Birmingham's growth. In 1897 Birmingham's population was 505,772; North Bromwich's half a million.<sup>8</sup> By 1929, Greater Birmingham's population had risen to 981,000, when "the population of the North Bromwich district was approximately a million."<sup>9</sup> During North Bromwich's growth and development

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<sup>1</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies*, p 318

<sup>2</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 113-114; (1935) *White Ladies*, p 20

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Stockley (born 1793 at Ibstock, Leicestershire) my great-great-great grandfather came to Birmingham from Cole Orton and settled in Steward Street, Ladywood. His grand-daughter, Frances, (born 1854 in New John Street West, Birmingham) married Thomas Farmer (my great grandfather) in 1874 and settled in Vittoria Street. Thomas Farmer (born 1854 at Astley) had been brought up his grandmother Lydia Farmer, who was born at Hallow, Worcestershire in 1790. Both families remained in Birmingham during the North Bromwich era.

<sup>4</sup> Greenslade, W. (1994) p 41

<sup>5</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 114

<sup>6</sup> Vince, C.A. (1923) p 150

<sup>7</sup> Bunce, J.T. (1885) p xxx; Jones, J.T. (1940) p 356

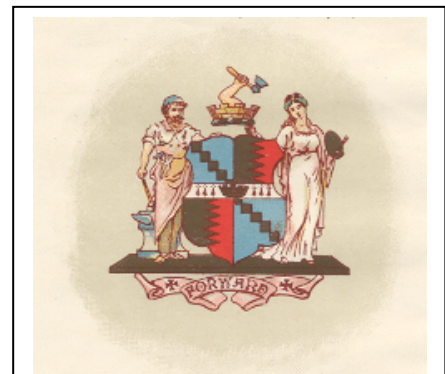
<sup>8</sup> Vince, C.A. (1902) p 124; Young, F.B. (1956) *Wistanslow*, p 145

<sup>9</sup> Jones, J.T. (1940) p 356; Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 294

buildings of flamboyant Victorian Gothic displace sober Georgian facades... Dim, discreet streets... symmetrical globular gas-lamps... garish neon lights and sky-signs; cobbled roadways ripped up and replaced by tar-sprayed macadam and smooth wood pavements.<sup>10</sup>

Though, in Young's view, North Bromwich consequently becomes a place from which beauty has vanished,<sup>11</sup> these fundamentals of city life are the very issues captured by other Birmingham novelists. Tiltman laments the demolition of Birmingham's eighteenth century buildings;<sup>12</sup> Chamberlain's street repairs involve "a smell of tar, men slicing wooden blocks to fit their places in the puzzle."<sup>13</sup> Parkes' Mettingham is illuminated by "globular gas-lamps,"<sup>14</sup> whilst Allen's Bromford's "sky-signs flashed like monstrous semaphores."<sup>15</sup> Even in minutiae and choice of vocabulary, Young's evocation of North Bromwich harmonises with Birmingham's other literary portraits.

North Bromwich arms replicate and lampoon Birmingham originals. At the grant of city status supporters were added to the ancient de Bermingham arms. A smith holding a hammer resting on an anvil depicts Industry; a female figure with book and palette represents Art.<sup>16</sup> In North Bromwich, where Art is marginalised, the sole supporter becomes "a brawny



Birmingham Coat of Arms, granted  
April 1889

slave who carries the hammer with which his chains have been forged."<sup>17</sup> Birmingham's motto, *Forward*, adopted at incorporation, is also North Bromwich's, relating city to

<sup>10</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 121

<sup>11</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 235

<sup>12</sup> Tiltman, M.H. (1939) p 201

<sup>13</sup> Chamberlain, P. (1937) p 421

<sup>14</sup> Parkes, W. K. (1914) p 10

<sup>15</sup> Allen, W.E. (1938) p 276

<sup>16</sup> Vince, C.A. (1902) p 382

<sup>17</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 237

neighbours. Young offers two explanations. The first, “expressing the aspirations of citizens towards the day when all England may be as the Black Country,”<sup>18</sup> implies soulless utilitarianism, fulfilling his chosen North Bromwich reality. The second, “Forward to the day when there shall be no more coal, and the evil, of its own inanition, perish,”<sup>19</sup> underlines his anti-urban prejudices, foreseeing encroaching industry’s destructive consequences for North Bromwich.

The history and development of North Bromwich interpret Birmingham, as do its climate and topography, accurately portrayed in broad sweep and minute detail. In its exploration of commercial, civic and political life, this chapter reveals North Bromwich, though debased by industrial spoliation and philistine attitude, to be a mighty city, with an influence far exceeding its boundaries.

## **The Topography and Climate of North Bromwich**

Both Birmingham in fact and North Bromwich in fiction lie in the great Midland plateau,<sup>20</sup> the geological features of which are “the ridge of Silurian that bounded and commanded the coal measures,”<sup>21</sup> Bunter Pebble beds and Keuper sandstone.<sup>22</sup> At England’s main watershed Young contrasts “the cold, sodden lands drained by Trent’s tributaries and the warm brooklands of Severn,”<sup>23</sup> emphasizing North Bromwich’s uninviting harshness. Wise and

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<sup>18</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 237

<sup>19</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 237

<sup>20</sup> Warwick, G.T. (1950) “Relief and Physiographic Regions” in Kinvig, R.H. et al (eds) (1950) p3; Young, F.B. (1914) *The Iron Age*, p75

<sup>21</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 304-305

<sup>22</sup> Young, F.B. (1956) *Wistanslow*, p 51; (1942) *A Man about the House*, p 47; Warwick, G.T. (1950) in Kinvig, R.H. et al (eds) (1950) pp 5-10

<sup>23</sup> Young, F.B. (1940) *Mr Lucton’s Freedom*, p 64; see also Warwick, G.T. (1950) pp 9-13

Johnson<sup>24</sup> explain the transformation of the Birmingham Plateau as fields and commons disappeared beneath mine-workings, furnaces, pit-banks and canals. Young vivifies the landscape's industrial violation.

Approaching North Bromwich... no trees were visible... Stagnant lengths of canal appeared... Opaque sheets of water, lying in abandoned quarries or clay-pits shone surprisingly out of the blackness of the surrounding waste. The land was all dark.<sup>25</sup>

The imagery continues in weather patterns, where Birmingham's frequent summer storms<sup>26</sup> "broke on North Bromwich with a crash of thunder... neither beauty nor grandeur in that prospect."<sup>27</sup> The cold of North Bromwich is frequently noted,<sup>28</sup> though Birmingham's parallel mean temperatures were actually comparatively high.<sup>29</sup> Most vividly described, however, are winter fogs, when "sooty exhalations of smoke-stacks and furnaces spread between North Bromwich and the sky."<sup>30</sup> In Collins' Birchampton too, "the smoke of the great manufacturing town tinted the air for miles around," most evidently when "winter came and the town was smokier and dirtier and colder than ever."<sup>31</sup> Though undoubtedly fitted to Young's bias, Birmingham's fog frequency at a similar period did exceed other inland districts.<sup>32</sup> Likewise, Birmingham's strongest winds blew predominantly from the south west;<sup>33</sup> while "great winds swept the smoke of North Bromwich north-eastward."<sup>34</sup> Historians acclaim Birmingham a naturally healthy town. Hopkins describes it as "a healthier place to live than many other manufacturing towns," citing its good drainage and pure water supply. For Jones, Birmingham "ranks high amongst the healthiest of the large manufacturing

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<sup>24</sup> Wise, M.C. & Johnson, B.L. (1950) p 162

<sup>25</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 118

<sup>26</sup> Seward, B. (1950) "Climate" in Kinvig, R.H. et al (eds) (1950) p 51

<sup>27</sup> Young, F.B. (1936) *Far Forest*, pp 343-344

<sup>28</sup> E.g. Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 361; (1942) *A Man about the House*, p 106

<sup>29</sup> Seward, B. (1950) p 51

<sup>30</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 125

<sup>31</sup> Collins, M. (1896) pp 156, 209

<sup>32</sup> Seward, B. (1950) p 52

<sup>33</sup> Seward, B. (1950) p 47

<sup>34</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 319

cities.”<sup>35</sup> Though occasionally recognising a “sense of clearness in the air,”<sup>36</sup> Young’s commonest climatic references invoke “that dreadful atmosphere in the middle of North Bromwich”<sup>37</sup> from which Birmingham, frequently suffers in fiction. The reality is established by Tonna: “The clang of forges and hammers... the hot breath of an occasional furnace... steaming venom upon the dull, heavy, motionless air.”<sup>38</sup> It is developed by Gissing: “Fuming chimneys, a wide welter of squalid strife... blackened with ever-driving smoke,”<sup>39</sup> and by Collins: “the dampness of the atmosphere and the cloudy sky.”<sup>40</sup> Green pursues the theme: “There’s a factory where they make phosphor bronze... fumes come down when the winds is one way and the fumes is awful.”<sup>41</sup> Young’s reality enhances the tradition.

In the black heart of North Bromwich... the air was acrid and volcanic with the smell of fire; noisy with the whirring of lathes, the shriek of high-speed tool-cutting steel, the steady grating of saws, the thunder of sheet-iron, the sighs of furnaces, the thudding of hammers.<sup>42</sup>

In fact, Birmingham straddles the ridge running from Sutton Coldfield in the north east to the Lickey Hills in the south west.<sup>43</sup> In fiction, “the city of iron stands upon three hills, its valleys once watered by two rivers.”<sup>44</sup> Robert Rawlinson, who in 1849 reported on public health in Birmingham, anticipates Young’s description, identifying three sites as the town’s highest points, with the confluence of the rivers Rea and Tame 168’ below.<sup>45</sup> In early twentieth century North Bromwich, “the hills are only known as tramway gradients... and the

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<sup>35</sup> Hopkins, E. (2001) p 94; Jones, J.T. (1940) p 200; Hutton, W. (1819) p 6; Bunce, J.T. (1878) p 305; Dent, R.K. (1880) p 496 – the latter two citing Robert Rawlinson’s 1849 Government Enquiry.

<sup>36</sup> Young, F.B. (1914) *The Iron Age*, p75

<sup>37</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 338

<sup>38</sup> [Tonna], Charlotte Elizabeth (1843) p 419

<sup>39</sup> Gissing, G. (1895) p 82

<sup>40</sup> Collins, M. (1896) p 156

<sup>41</sup> Green, H. (1929) p 45

<sup>42</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, pp 451-452

<sup>43</sup> Elrington, C.R. & Tillott, P.M. (1964) p 4

<sup>44</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 235

<sup>45</sup> Quoted in Bunce, J.T. (1878) p 305. The high points named are St Philip’s Church, the junctions of Anne Street and Newhall Street, Regent Street and Frederick Street.

rivers, running in brick culverts, have been deprived of... the city's gigantic sewage.”<sup>46</sup> Similarly, Birmingham tramway routes via Camp Hill from the south east and Snow Hill from the north west, as these street names suggest, followed steep gradients.<sup>47</sup> Responding to the 1876 Rivers Pollution Act, Birmingham instigated new sewage works, intending that the town’s effluent would reach the rivers as pure water. By 1893 the River Rea between Lawley Street and Gooch Street was enclosed in a culvert.<sup>48</sup> Geographer, Leslie Jay’s attention to Young’s detailed accuracy concerning Birmingham region’s geology, relief and economic history<sup>49</sup> is entirely appropriate.

The growing importance of social environment in fiction since the Victorian novel is emphasized by Gay.<sup>50</sup> Young proclaims “the unaccountable influences of place”<sup>51</sup> via the detail accorded to North Bromwich topography with over forty named streets.<sup>52</sup> Some, like Steelhouse Lane and Bristol Road<sup>53</sup> (also featured by Murray, Gissing and Chamberlain<sup>54</sup>) retain original Birmingham names. Others are readily identifiable. Station Hill, into which Sackville Row’s tramlines turn,<sup>55</sup> is clearly Snow Hill. Lower Hutton Street, site of North Bromwich’s Grand Midland Hotel’s tradesmen’s entrance,<sup>56</sup> duplicates Barwick Street, location of Birmingham’s Grand Hotel’s rear entrance. As factual Varna Road and Alma Street recall the Crimean War, so do fictional Raglan Street and Sevastopol Street.<sup>57</sup> Parkes

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<sup>46</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 235

<sup>47</sup> Hardy, P.L. & Jacques, P. (1971) *A Short Review of Birmingham Corporation Tramways*, Reading, H.J. Publications, p 13; Coxon, R.T. (1979) *Roads and Rails of Birmingham 1900-1939*, London, Ian Allan, p 53

<sup>48</sup> Bunce, J.T. (1885) pp 152-167; Vince, C.A. (1902) p 83

<sup>49</sup> Jay, L. (1972) p 338

<sup>50</sup> Gay, J.M. (1996) p 68

<sup>51</sup> Young, F.B. (1932) *The House under the Water*, p 674

<sup>52</sup> See Appendix Two

<sup>53</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 306; (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 439

<sup>54</sup> Murray, D.C. (1894) vol 1, p 42; Gissing, G. (1895) p 108; Chamberlain, P. (1937) p 81

<sup>55</sup> Young, F.B. (1913) *Undergrowth*, p 83

<sup>56</sup> Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, p 82

<sup>57</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 249. At the outbreak of the Crimean War in 1853, allied troops mustered at Varna (ancient Odessos) in E. Bulgaria. A major Russian defeat occurred at Alma River (20.09.1854) where the British commander was Baron Raglan. The following year saw the Russian surrender of

and Allen adopt identical conventions.<sup>58</sup> Other North Bromwich streets have particular associations. Medical students lodge in Easy Row.<sup>59</sup> Replicating Young's own journeys from Hales Owen to Birmingham via Hagley Road, North Bromwich's most frequently travelled access-route is Halesby Road.<sup>60</sup> The metropolitan air, which Priestley<sup>61</sup> found in Birmingham's Victoria Square, Colmore Row, New Street and Corporation Street, is captured in the centre of North Bromwich.

“Fountain Square behind the Town Hall, where statues of bearded Victorian worthies of North Bromwich looked pompously down,”<sup>62</sup> interprets Chamberlain and Victoria Squares, site of statues of Birmingham's bearded worthies Wright, Dawson and Mason.<sup>63</sup> The memorial fountains of Chamberlain and Fountain Squares both flow into large basins.<sup>64</sup> Along with the Town Hall, central North Bromwich's dominant architecture includes the Council House's dome and the Art Gallery's clock-tower.<sup>65</sup> Birmingham's Queen's College occupies the same position relative to the Art Gallery as North Bromwich's Prince's College.<sup>66</sup> “Only the bulk of the Town Hall and the width of two streets separated the

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Sevastopol, which was returned under the Peace of Paris in 1856. - *Everyman's Encyclopaedia* (1967) London, J. M. Dent. Varna Road was adopted by Birmingham Corporation in 1866-67 & Alma Street in 1881. - Bunce, J.T. (1885) pp 79,81

<sup>58</sup> Balaclava Street in Mettingham - Parkes, W. K. (1914) p 104 and Inkerman Crescent in Bromford - Allen, W.E. (1939) p 211

<sup>59</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, pp 430-454; (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 351; (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 651-652

<sup>60</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 460; (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 204; (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 128; (1930) *Jim Redlake*, p 418; (1934) *This Little World*, p 315; (1935) *White Ladies*, p 620; (1936) *Far Forest*, p 271; (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 378; (1940) *Mr Lucton's Freedom*, p 86; (1942) *A Man about the House*, p 4

<sup>61</sup> Priestley, J.B. (1934) pp 81, 84

<sup>62</sup> Young, F.B. (1936) *Far Forest*, p 259

<sup>63</sup> Three statues by F.J. Williamson were erected in 1883-1885: John Skirrow Wright, in front of the Town Hall; George Dawson (replacing an earlier version by T. Woolner) in Chamberlain Square; Josiah Mason, to the west of the Chamberlain Memorial Fountain. - Dent, R.K. (1894) *The Making of Birmingham*, Birmingham, J.L. Allday, pp 559-560

<sup>64</sup> Dent, R.K. (1894) p 559; Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 372

<sup>65</sup> Young, F.B. (1936) *Far Forest*, p 241

<sup>66</sup> See plan in Appendix 2

campanile from Prince's College."<sup>67</sup> Across the Square the "new redbrick Gothic building of Astill's College,"<sup>68</sup> clearly replicates Cossin's redbrick Mason's College.<sup>69</sup> Equally accurately located is "the Post Office, opposite the Corinthian Town Hall."<sup>70</sup> North Bromwich's City Library<sup>71</sup> completes the transfer of central Birmingham's buildings.

The principal thoroughfare, extending from Great Western Railway Station to Town Hall<sup>72</sup> is "Sackville Row, the most elegant street in North Bromwich."<sup>73</sup> In the same location is Birmingham's Colmore Row, site of St Philip's Cathedral and prime location for solicitors', accountants' and stockbrokers' offices. Sackville Row accommodates St Clement's Cathedral<sup>74</sup> and offices including "Metalfolds Ltd.; The Great Mawne Colliery; Elphinstone Bros.; Wilburn, Wilburn and Wilburn."<sup>75</sup> Though fictional, each reflects topographical reality. Metalfolds and The Great Mawne Colliery suggest Colmore Row's Elliott's Metal Co and Rickett, Smith & Co, Coal Factors.<sup>76</sup> Elphinstones, North Bromwich waterworks engineers, whose offices in 1900 "towered to a height hardly less than that of the hotel upon their right, and far outsoared the bank on their left,"<sup>77</sup> could be any of five consulting engineers.<sup>78</sup> "Across the street ... another bank, with a dentist's chambers."<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 123

<sup>68</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 145

<sup>69</sup> Ives, E. et al (2000) *The First Civic University: Birmingham 1880-1980*, Birmingham, University Press, pp 17,22

<sup>70</sup> Young, F.B. (1940) *Mr Lucton's Freedom*, p 455

<sup>71</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 296

<sup>72</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 548; (1940) *Mr Lucton's Freedom*, p 455

<sup>73</sup> Young, F.B. (1940) *Mr Lucton's Freedom*, p 9

<sup>74</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 455

<sup>75</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 455

<sup>76</sup> Elliott's Metal Company, 83 Colmore Row, Rickett, Smith & Co, 115-117 Colmore Row – *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham* (1908)

<sup>77</sup> Young, F.B. (1913) *Undergrowth*, p 76

<sup>78</sup> Colmore Row's consulting engineers in 1900 were: Edwards & Shaw (105); Thomas Hall; E. Llewellyn Edwards (119); Percy Wigley (121) and Charles Ketley (128) – *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham* (1900)

<sup>79</sup> Young, F.B. (1913) *Undergrowth*, pp 77-78



Sackville Row's Grand Midland Hotel appears throughout the canon.<sup>80</sup> In Colmore Row were both Grand and Great Western hotels, Birmingham District and Counties Banking Co. Ltd., London and Northern Bank and Lloyd's Bank. Edwin Robberds had his dental practice in Colmore Row.<sup>81</sup> Present in Sackville Row from the late-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries, Wilburn's, "the most reputable solicitors of North Bromwich,"<sup>82</sup> represent both the ambience and tradition of Colmore Row's enduring legal presence.<sup>83</sup> Wilburn's unimpressive offices, approached by a steep stone stairway with iron banisters and mahogany rail, are ornamented with deed-boxes painted with names of influence in North Bromwich.<sup>84</sup> In the early 1930s when stockbrokers, Magnus, Levison & Co practise in Sackville Row,<sup>85</sup> they have eight Colmore Row equivalents, whilst accountant Owen Lucton represents twenty-six accountants practising in 1939.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*; (1919) *The Young Physician*; (1924) *Cold Harbour*; (1927) *Portrait of Clare*; (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*; (1928) *The Furnace*; (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*; (1932) *The House under the Water*; (1935) *White Ladies*; (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*; (1940) *Mr Lucton's Freedom*.

<sup>81</sup> Birmingham District & Counties Banking Co. Ltd (63, Colmore Row); London & Northern Bank (100); Lloyd's Bank (123); The Imperial Exporters' Guide & Directory Co (23); James Hewitt & Co, Shipping Agents (31A); Kemp's Mercantile Offices (84-86); Wainwright Bros, Ships' Agents (88); Edwin Robberds, Dentist (80) - *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham* (1900)

<sup>82</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 19; (1940) *Mr Lucton's Freedom*, pp 42-48

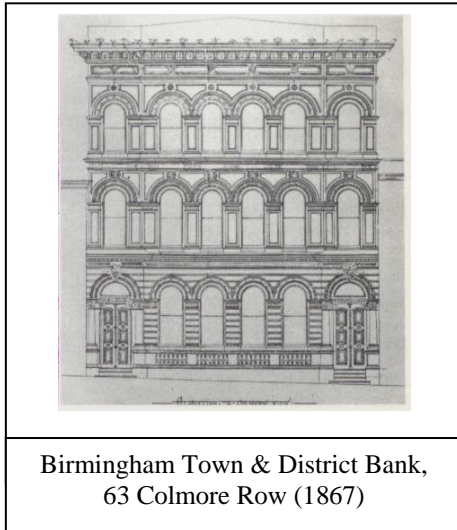
<sup>83</sup> In 1888 twenty-eight solicitors' practices were located in Colmore Row: Horton & Redfern (Whitehall Chambers); Sanders, Smith & Parish (67); Rowlands & Co (71); Coleman, Coleman, Springthorpe & Holcroft (77); Parr & Hasell (77); Reuben Taylor (82); Edwin & Ralph Docker (83); Bradley & Cuthbertson (83); William Shakespeare (83); Thomas Garland (84); Arthur Baines (88); Robert Clarke (88); Tyndall & Rogers (95); Alfred Green (102); Henry Hill (103); Powell & Browett (104); Mitchell & Willmott (112); Francis Pepper (118); Edwin Newey (118); J.C. Fowke (120); Francis Adams (121); Jacob Rowlands (121); Alfred Lyness (121); Joshua Howell (124); Frederick Perry (126); Arthur Colbeck (128); George Edwards 9128); Charles Edwards (128). By 1939 there were thirty-one: Redfern & Co (Whitehall Chambers); Frost & Co (57); George Pearson (57); Dora Rowe (57); Springthorpe, Holcroft & Bishop (75-77); Williams, Robins & Son (83); Rooke, Bradley & Sharman (83); Bradley & Cuthbertson (83); Shakespeare & Vernon (83); Leonard Gocher (83); Parr, Evans & Co (83); Perry, Son & Richards (84); Tyndall, Nichols & Hadfield (95); Shirley Smith & Co (95); Jeffrey Wild & Lovatt (95); S. Watson Perkins (102); Edwin Jacques & Son (102); D. Ward & Co (105); Lowe & Jolly (109); Arton & Clapham (109); Thomas Walker (109); Harold Roberts (109); Alfred & W.H. Green (109); P. Adie Evans (109); Alex Grove & Son (115-117); David Davis & Co (115-117); Hubert Rowlands (115-117); Tunbridge & Co (116); Eric Roberts & Co (118); E.C. Newey & Sons (118); Glaisyer, Porter & Mason (126). There are nine recurrent names – Redfern (Whitehall Chambers); Springthorpe & Holcroft (77); Bradley & Cuthbertson (83); Shakespeare (83); Tyndall (95); Rowlands (121/117); Newey (118) *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham* (1888; 1939)

<sup>84</sup> Young, F.B. (1934) *This Little World*, p 309; (1940) *Mr Lucton's Freedom*, pp 42-43

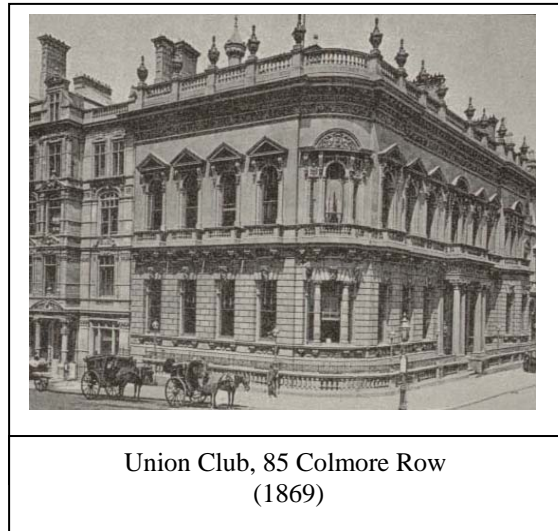
<sup>85</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 38

<sup>86</sup> Colmore Row's Stockbrokers in 1930 were: Cawley & Price (69); Margetts & Addenbroke (95); James Parker (109); Smith, Keen, Barnett & Son; Ryland Smith & Pritchett; Herbert Taylor (84); Griffiths & Lamb (104-106);

Sackville Row is a busy thoroughfare, crowded with people and traffic.<sup>87</sup> Its magnificent architecture: classic marble pillars, columns of Aberdeen granite, flights of steps, Corinthian capitals,<sup>88</sup> suggestive of such Colmore Row buildings as the Birmingham Town and District Bank and the Union Club,<sup>89</sup> original of Sackville Row's Constitutional Club, is largely ignored by passers-by, preoccupied with their grinding daily routine.<sup>90</sup>



Birmingham Town & District Bank,  
63 Colmore Row (1867)



Union Club, 85 Colmore Row  
(1869)

Thus Young draws attention to North Bromwich Philistinism. "Sackville Row... this central space of light and cleanliness,"<sup>91</sup> worthy of its professional occupants, is the focal point of North Bromwich's business world; but that is a world of which Young disapproves. Hence, despite their splendid architecture, the high office blocks have grey facades.<sup>92</sup> The whole atmosphere insinuates Young's underlying contrast of urban with rural. "Sackville Row was

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Albert E. Sharpe & Co. (126) Accountants in 1939 were Brittain, Thomas & Co.; Harcourt, Picken & Co. (23); Henstridge & Co. (57); Williams, Lathwood & Co. (75-77); Jacombs, Hill & Harvey (79); Preen, Harvey Moore & Co.; Newland & Co. (84); Bayfield & Bayfield; Buckle & Evans; Heaton, Howard & Bendall (95); Rawlins & Tennant; Francis Bromilow (102); Newby, Bowes & Hunt; Griffiths & Keeling; John McKenzie (109); Hawnt, Hilton & Wood (110); Taylor, Cranmore & Co.; Squiers & Co.; Edward Stokes & Co.; Bertram Ottey (115); Sharp, Parsons & Co. (120); Wallace Castle (121); F.W. Finnemore & Co.; Kent, Jethro & Sons (122); T. Harold Platts & Co.; Meredith, Turner & Co. (126) *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham* (1930; 1939)

<sup>87</sup> Young, F.B. (1915) *The Dark Tower*, p 31; (1916) *The Iron Age*, p 79; (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 344; (1940) *Mr Lucton's Freedom*, p 31

<sup>88</sup> Young, F.B. (1913) *Undergrowth*, p 76

<sup>89</sup> Both buildings were designed in the late 1860's by Birmingham architect H.R. Yeoville Thomason. - Hickman, D. (1970) *Birmingham*, London, Studio Vista Ltd, p 35

<sup>90</sup> Young, F.B. (1913) *Undergrowth*, p 78; (1915) *The Dark Tower*, p 31

<sup>91</sup> Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, p 75

<sup>92</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 455

at least four times as wide as the village street at Lesswardine,” but is bordered by “a line of massive railings like heavy spears.”<sup>93</sup> This, as Leclaire points out, is an ambivalent splendour.

“Cette réflexion est plus riche qu’il paraît d’abord: c’est l’un des multiples points de comparaison que l’auteur installe entre la ville et la campagne; l’émerveillement innocent du jeune campagnard... doit apprendre l’existence du mal et de la laideur.”<sup>94</sup>

Sackville Row, which Tiltman and Hampson feature as Colmore Row and Allen as Council Street,<sup>95</sup> is the most detailed and frequently portrayed thoroughfare in the whole North Bromwich canon.

Leclaire<sup>96</sup> identifies Queen Street, with its traffic and prostitutes,<sup>97</sup> as Birmingham’s New Street, to which he allocates four North Bromwich buildings. Though King Edward’s Grammar School and the Midland Railway Station were both in fact in New Street, neither have precise North Bromwich locations.<sup>98</sup> “Battie’s, the great confectioner’s in Queen Street,”<sup>99</sup> is Pattison’s, with branches in New Street, High Street and Corporation Street.<sup>100</sup> Inappropriately, Leclaire relates North Bromwich’s Queen’s Theatre to New Street’s Theatre Royal, when the canon’s internal evidence clearly identifies it as Broad Street’s Prince of Wales Theatre.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 122. [ Lesswardine = Leintwardine]

<sup>94</sup> Leclaire, J. (1970) p 93 [*This reflection is richer than it first appears: it is one of the author’s many points of comparison between town and country: the young countryman’s innocent amazement which must learn the existence of ill and ugliness.*]

<sup>95</sup> Tiltman, M.H. (1939) p 134; Hampson, J. (1936) p 105; Allen, W.E. (1940) p 165

<sup>96</sup> Leclaire, J. (1970) pp 110-112

<sup>97</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, pp 160, 204

<sup>98</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 472; (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, pp 31,535; (1930) *Jim Redlake*, p 417

<sup>99</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 249

<sup>100</sup> See pp 253-254

<sup>101</sup> See pp 246-247

Queen's Street's topography and history are equally clear. "They strolled down Sackville Row and, cutting through the Arcades came out into the wide thoroughfare of Queen Street that had been driven through an area of slums in honour of Victoria's first jubilee."<sup>102</sup> From Colmore Row, Birmingham's Arcades lead not to New Street but Corporation Street,<sup>103</sup> the central shopping boulevard, which replaced slums around Lichfield Street and Old Square.<sup>104</sup> Young's familiarity with the Arcades is illustrated by references to "Perkins, the North Bromwich florist" and "Parkinson's, the florist in the Arcade."<sup>105</sup> The shop, correctly named in one novel and correctly located in the other is Perkins & Sons,<sup>106</sup> trading in Birmingham's North Western Arcade simultaneously with its North Bromwich appearances. Drapers proliferated in Corporation Street;<sup>107</sup> however "the large drapery establishment in Queen Street," assistants attired in "black dresses on which their employers insisted,"<sup>108</sup> suggests the impressive Lewis's.<sup>109</sup> Though not built to commemorate the Golden Jubilee, Corporation Street was travelled by Queen Victoria in 1887 when she laid the foundation-stone of Birmingham's Law Courts.<sup>110</sup> Young replicates the scene with "a dumpy little woman in a widow's bonnet driving in a carriage with outriders to the shrilling of silver trumpets up the newly-cut swathe of Corporation Street to lay the foundation-stone of the North Bromwich Law Courts."<sup>111</sup> Fiction follows fact. Escorted by mounted police, the

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<sup>102</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 248

<sup>103</sup> Great Western Arcade, opened 1875-1876, ran from Colmore Row to Temple Row; North Western Arcade, opened 1883-1884, ran from Temple Row to Corporation Street. - Dent, R.K. (1894) p 572 ; Appendix 2, plan

<sup>104</sup> Dent, R.K. (1894) p 469

<sup>105</sup> Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, p 154; (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 468

<sup>106</sup> Perkins & Sons, Florists, 15-16 North Western Arcade - *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham* (1910)

<sup>107</sup> *Thomas Frost & Sons (corner Upper Priory Street)*; *Holliday Son & Co Ltd (14-20)*; *Edwin & F. Simpkin (52-54)*; *Sydney Polley (66-72)*; *Walter Austin (71-77)*; *Lewis's (105-113)* - *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham (1905)*

<sup>108</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 260

<sup>109</sup> Lewis's Department Store, designed by Yeoville Thomason, opened at 105-113, Corporation Street in 1885, is designated Lewis's Drapers in *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham*. See also McKenna, J. (1979) *Birmingham as it Was*, Birmingham, Public Libraries

<sup>110</sup> On 23.04.1887 – *Birmingham Daily Gazette* (24.04.1887) not as Vince, C. (1902) p 394 reports on 05.04.1887

<sup>111</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 276-277

Warwickshire Yeomanry and the First Hussars, with Colonel Carrington, Major Briggs and Birmingham's Chief Constable as her outriders, Queen Victoria's arrival for the stone-laying was announced by a flourish of heralds' trumpets.<sup>112</sup> Whilst there are no grounds for concluding that North Bromwich's Queen Street is Birmingham's New Street, there is firm evidence identifying it as Young's early label for Corporation Street which, later in the canon, appears under its own name.<sup>113</sup>

Young's notebooks record "the policeman standing on his artificial island at the junction of New Street, Corporation Street and Stephenson Place."<sup>114</sup> As the picture shows, this was a longstanding point-duty site. In the canon the "policeman on point duty waved his gloved hands on the wheel-shaved island outside the station entrance."<sup>115</sup> Other junctions are



Policeman on point duty at junction of Stephenson Place,  
New Street and Corporation Street

<sup>112</sup> *Birmingham Daily Gazette* (24.04.1887)

<sup>113</sup> Queen's Street appears in Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*; (1927) *Portrait of Clare*; (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*; Corporation Street appears in Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*.

<sup>114</sup> FBY 47 (n.d.(Notebook for *Mr & Mrs Pennington*)

<sup>115</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 39

similarly controlled.<sup>116</sup> Thus the ambience of 1920s-1930s Birmingham, where much of the city centre was under traffic-police control,<sup>117</sup> is transferred to North Bromwich. It is in the novel's creation of such ordinary scenes, Light maintains, that the most typical expressions of national character are discerned.<sup>118</sup>

Opened in 1865 in Stephenson Place, Birmingham Exchange,<sup>119</sup> described by Burritt as “a centre-piece of which the town may be justly proud,”<sup>120</sup> was the meeting place for agents, merchants, factors, engineers, manufacturers and the Chamber of Commerce. North Bromwich Exchange, nicknamed 'change; stood in Watt Square, which Young also calls Watt's Place.<sup>121</sup> In this choice of labels, North Bromwich's commemoration of the engineer who spent a quarter of a century in partnership with Matthew Boulton at Soho is an easy transposition from Birmingham's honouring of the engineers responsible for its principal railway links.<sup>122</sup> On the second Thursdays of January, April, July and October, iron masters held their quarterly meetings at Birmingham Exchange.<sup>123</sup> In North Bromwich, Thursdays were meeting days at the Exchange.”<sup>124</sup> In similar allusions, Parkes translates Stephenson Place to Steam Engine Place, and uses 'change as his nickname for Mettingham's Exchange, where Metalmasters' Quarter Days occur on Thursdays.<sup>125</sup> Though Young's reference to “the

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<sup>116</sup> Young, F.B. (1940) *Mr Lucton's Freedom*, pp 10, 456

<sup>117</sup> E.g. Hill Street/New Street, Corporation Street/Bull Street, Victoria Square, Colmore Row were all under traffic control –Cross, D. [Keeper of West Midlands Police Museum, Court Road, Sparkhill, Birmingham] (07.01.2005) Interview with M. Hall

<sup>118</sup> Light, A. (1991) p 208

<sup>119</sup> The imposing Gothic Exchange was designed by Edwards Homes and built by Branson & Murray. Its foundation stone was laid by Henry Van Wart, in whose Birmingham home his brother-in-law, Washington Irving, was reputed to have written Rip Van Winkle. The Exchange was opened in January 1865 by the Mayor, Henry Wiggin. - Dent, R.K. (1880) p 566

<sup>120</sup> Burritt, E. (1868) p 91

<sup>121</sup> Young, F.B. (1914) *The Iron Age*, pp 71,77; (1924) *Cold Harbour*, p 71; (1932) *The House under the Water*, p 627

<sup>122</sup> Upton, C. (1997) pp 73,94

<sup>123</sup> *Cornish's Birmingham Yearbook, 1914-1915*, (1914) Birmingham, Cornish Bros

<sup>124</sup> Young, F.B. (1914) *The Iron Age*, pp 71

<sup>125</sup> Parkes, W. K. (1914) pp 103,143,191

face of the Exchange clock”<sup>126</sup> clearly adds little to the plot of *The Iron Age*, in replicating the feature, the authenticity of the North Bromwich canon is further verified.



The “terra-cotta bricks of which the new North Bromwich law-courts were built”<sup>127</sup> replicates Birmingham’s Victoria Law Courts, opened in 1891. In addition to accommodating the Assizes, Birmingham’s complex included magistrates’ and coroner’s courts and ‘A’ Division’s Police Station.<sup>128</sup> Similarly, “North Bromwich Coroner’s Court was housed in the same building as the Stipendiary’s and the Police Headquarters.”<sup>129</sup> In 1894, Birmingham’s C.I.D. offices moved to Victoria Law Courts.<sup>130</sup> Young copies location and name, placing “the Criminal Investigation Department in the Victoria Law Courts at North Bromwich.”<sup>131</sup> In 1906 a public mortuary was added to the Birmingham site.<sup>132</sup> Young’s replica

<sup>126</sup> Young, F.B. (1914) *The Iron Age*, pp 77

<sup>127</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 314

<sup>128</sup> Victoria Law Courts, faced throughout in terracotta and brick, were designed by Aston Webb and Ingress Bell and opened by the Prince & Princess of Wales, 21.07.1891 - Vince, C.A. (1902) pp 207-210, 395

<sup>129</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 605

<sup>130</sup> Jones, J.T. (1940) p 355

<sup>131</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 523

<sup>132</sup> Vince, C.A. (1923) p 337

accommodation “was an oblong chamber with walls of bilious glazed brick and a concrete floor as clean as an operating theatre and as cold as ice. In the midst of it stood three narrow tables faced with the same glazing as the walls.”<sup>133</sup> This graphic description is confirmed by David Cross, Keeper of the West Midlands Police Museum, as absolutely accurate.<sup>134</sup> Identical accuracy is transferred from Birmingham’s Steelhouse Lane Lock-up to North Bromwich.

The cells... were arranged in three storeys about an oblong well. The middle storey was separated from the one above and below by thick wire-netting...The brick walls, painted buff above, were encircled below to a height of four feet by a skirting of tarry black varnish.”<sup>135</sup>

In Birmingham, female prisoners were accommodated on the top storey and male prisoners on levels one and two.<sup>136</sup> North Bromwich cells are “seven feet by ten, illuminated by an electric bulb in a stout iron cage.”<sup>137</sup> The room where prisoners meet visitors is “shaped like a corridor: on one side a blank whitewashed wall, on the other a series of alcoves, separated by partitions.”<sup>138</sup> Birmingham’s Lock-up connected with Victoria Law Courts via a tunnel beneath Coleridge Passage.<sup>139</sup> In North Bromwich, an identical connection is made by

a long subterranean passage made gloomy by a funereal skirting of black paint; a series of black-painted pipes of large calibre attached to the ceiling made it resemble an alleyway in the bowels of a ship; little cages containing a volatile disinfectant, failed to sweeten the air.<sup>140</sup>

Cross identifies Young’s description of police and court complex as faithful, as if resulting from his inspecting the site, notebook in hand, recording what he saw.<sup>141</sup> As, when preparing his account, Young received guidance from Birmingham’s Assistant Chief

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<sup>133</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 528

<sup>134</sup> Cross, D. (07.01.2005)

<sup>135</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 552

<sup>136</sup> Cross, D. (07.01.2005)

<sup>137</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, pp 552-553

<sup>138</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 590

<sup>139</sup> Cross, D. (07.01.2005)

<sup>140</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 568

<sup>141</sup> Cross, D. (07.01.2005)



Constable Moriarty and Chief Superintendent Burnett,<sup>142</sup> it is hardly surprising that his portrayal is accurate.

## The Commercial Life of North Bromwich

North Bromwich's commercial life begins on a rare note of confusion concerning Matthew Boulton, who

in partnership with James Watt, perfected the steam engine in a small factory whose position had been chosen on the strength of deposits of casting-sand and a small brook that provided water-power at the bottom of the hill below the Great Western Station. The works of Boulton and Watt had long since been transferred to an ampler site on the city's outskirts.<sup>143</sup>

In 1749 Boulton joined his father's toy-making workshop in Snow Hill,<sup>144</sup> where Birmingham's GWR station was later built. Until c1745 Snow Hill was called Sandy Lane, indicating local soil-type.<sup>145</sup> Water Street recalls the brook at the bottom of Snow Hill.<sup>146</sup> Dickinson suggests that the factory's location was Boulton senior's best available option on arriving in Birmingham.<sup>147</sup> In 1761 Matthew Boulton identified the larger site then needed across the Birmingham boundary at Hamstead Heath.<sup>148</sup> It was here, not at Snow Hill, that Boulton entered into partnership with Watt and developed the steam engine. Given Young's usual accuracy and the existence of his detailed notes on Boulton,<sup>149</sup> the confusion is doubly surprising. However, his subsequent depiction of

Matthew Boulton's foundry at Soho,  
Where sweltering puddlers tend the lava-flow  
Of molten ores, and clanging hammers beat

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<sup>142</sup> FBY 3157 (14.09.1931) Letter from James Burnett to Young

<sup>143</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 226

<sup>144</sup> Dent, R.K. (1894) p 141

<sup>145</sup> McKenna, J. (1986) *Birmingham Street Names*, Birmingham, Public Libraries, p 28

<sup>146</sup> OS *Warwickshire Sheets* 14.01 (1913); 14.05 (1911); Water Street runs from Ludgate Hill to Constitution Hill

<sup>147</sup> Dickinson, H.W. (1937) *Matthew Boulton*, Cambridge, University Press, p 25

<sup>148</sup> Dickinson, H.W. (1937) p 42

<sup>149</sup> FBY 88 (n.d.) Notebook for various works including *The Island*

On airs that faint and quaver with fierce heat,<sup>150</sup>

evokes the insalubrious reality which characterizes North Bromwich industry.

In her account of Birmingham's industry, Smith<sup>151</sup> surveys the city's multifarious early twentieth century metalworking trades. Though outworkers abounded, in 1910-1911 Birmingham reported 3,153 factories and 4,868 workshops<sup>152</sup> with 31.1% of the workforce employed in metal and machinery trades. A further 5.5% worked in the jewellery trade, where few firms employed more than 40. Conversely in metal smallwares<sup>153</sup> 50% of the 4,000 workforce was employed by Buttons Ltd. Other examples from Birmingham's metal industry show some galvanised hollowware firms reached 200 workers; edge tool factories averaged from 200-700; railway rolling-stock manufacturers from 800-3,000.

Without Smith's statistical canvas, but illustrating Bédarida's findings that small Birmingham workshops prospered alongside modern factories,<sup>154</sup> Young tells the same essential story in a reader-friendly snapshot.

Great engineering works and brass-foundries whose hot draught made the sky quiver above them, whose black mud grimed the streets and made the close air heavy with oily odours... the clinking domestic forges of nailers... the dim twelve-foot square chambers of working jewellers, where the flame of Bunsen gas-jets and purring pipes dried the throat... From dawn to sunset sounds of tense mechanical labour never ceased; pallid stunted men by thousands were cutting, filing, twisting, hammering, moulding, stamping, some stubborn matrix of metal into shapes minute or monstrous for the adornment, the fancy, or the use of half the world.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Young, F.B. (1944) "Birth of a Monster A.D. 1776" in *The Island*, p 311

<sup>151</sup> Smith, B. (1964) pp 140-208

<sup>152</sup> Smith defines a factory as having power and in excess of 50 workers, whilst a workshop has fewer employees working manually.

<sup>153</sup> Smallwares includes buttons, hooks and eyes, pins, buckles, pens etc. – Smith, B. (1964) p 149

<sup>154</sup> Bédarida, F. (1991) p 58

<sup>155</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, pp 451-452

Nearly eighty years earlier, *How to Get On in the World* briefly captured the same Birmingham atmosphere – “the noise of hammers in almost every house... a steam-engine factory not long built.”<sup>156</sup> Eighty years before that, Jago offered an alternative to Johnson’s “meanness naturally adhering to trade and manufacture,”<sup>157</sup> in his understanding that industrial pollution, anathema to others, is acceptable in Birmingham:

To the Sons  
Of languid Sense and Frame too delicate,  
Harsh Noise perchance, but Harmony to thine.<sup>158</sup>

Young not only captures the proliferation of North Bromwich’s metalworking trades, he also conveys their polluting atmosphere.

Though Birmingham during the North Bromwich era generally enjoyed peaceful working relations,<sup>159</sup> for which Chinn explores possible reasons,<sup>160</sup> *Undergrowth* cites “strikes and disputes in North Bromwich.”<sup>161</sup> *Hardware* presents similar discontent in Mettingham.<sup>162</sup> Immediately prior to publication of these novels, industrial disputes beginning at Avery’s, involving 12,000 Birmingham metalworkers,<sup>163</sup> continued the previous generation’s unrest. In 1887 building trade operatives, threatened with wage reduction went on strike. Two years later local involvement in nation-wide action supporting striking dockers prompted Birmingham Corporation’s agreement to gas workers’ demands for reduced hours.

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<sup>156</sup> “How to Get On in the World: The Story of Peter Lawley” (1848) pp 6, 85

<sup>157</sup> Johnson, S. (1779-1781) *Lives of the English Poets*, Dublin, Whitestone: edition cited: (1925) London, J.M. Dent & Sons, Vol II, p 318

<sup>158</sup> Jago, R. (1767) lines 520-522

<sup>159</sup> See p 23

<sup>160</sup> Chinn, C. (2001) pp 47-50

<sup>161</sup> Young, F.B. (1913) *Undergrowth*, p 175

<sup>162</sup> Parkes, W. K. (1914) p 168

<sup>163</sup> The “Soho Strikes” began at Avery’s in November 1912, spread to Tangye’s in February 1913, Birmingham Railway Carriage & Wagon Works in April 1913, producing later that year a minimum wage agreement of 23s per week for Birmingham’s unskilled workers. - Barnsby, G. (1989) *Birmingham Working People: A History of the Labour Movement in Birmingham 1650-1914*, Wolverhampton, Integrated Publishing Services, pp 485-493

In 1896 strikes brought increased wages for Birmingham's engineering employees.<sup>164</sup> When the TUC met in Birmingham in 1897, thirty-five local delegates represented nineteen unions and 90,000 workers. The struggle between new union representatives and old-guard Liberals, hitherto dominant in Birmingham Trades' Council, reached its climax with the formation of the Labour Representation Council in 1900,<sup>165</sup> the very year in which *Undergrowth* is set.

Though Young's pervading reality proclaims "war's a grand thing for iron,"<sup>166</sup> he suggests a dichotomy for North Bromwich. Its manufacturers "encouraged by fate's ironical largesse to imagine that they were 'doing their bit',"<sup>167</sup> accrue rich profits. Upon its soldier casualties rebound "the taste of their own iron, the scorching of their own fires."<sup>168</sup> Wartime's economic and social legacies outlined by Briggs<sup>169</sup> are faced in post-war North Bromwich by unemployable Captain Small,<sup>170</sup> maimed and shell-shocked, and straitened Colonel Ombersley,<sup>171</sup> disillusioned and reactionary. Nevertheless, metalworking North Bromwich repeatedly profits by war. "At the beginning of the nineteenth century North Bromwich had grown rich on wealth released by the Napoleonic wars."<sup>172</sup> Benefits continue through the Crimean, Franco-Prussian, Boer and First World Wars<sup>173</sup> when "business in North Bromwich became better than usual."<sup>174</sup> The success of Birmingham's gun-trade during the Napoleonic, Crimean and Boer Wars is confirmed by the studies of Skipp, Chinn and Hopkins.<sup>175</sup> Thorne

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<sup>164</sup> Corbett, J. (1966) *The Birmingham Trades Union Council 1866-1966*, London, Laurence & Wishart, pp 54, 60-61

<sup>165</sup> Barnsby, G. (1989) pp 266-306

<sup>166</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 240

<sup>167</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 622

<sup>168</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 640

<sup>169</sup> Briggs, A. (1952) p 225ff

<sup>170</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, passim

<sup>171</sup> Young, F.B. (1934) *This Little World*, passim

<sup>172</sup> Young, F.B. (1942) *A Man about the House*, p 2

<sup>173</sup> Young, F.B. (1944) "Fantastic Symphony, A.D. 1918-1939" in *The Island*, p 411; (1928) *The Furnace*, p 46; (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p516; (1934) *This Little World*, p 315

<sup>174</sup> Young, F.B. (1940) *Mr Lucton's Freedom*, p 28

<sup>175</sup> Skipp, V. (1980) *A History of Greater Birmingham down to 1830*, Published Privately, p 50; Chinn, C. (2001) p 7; Hopkins, E. (2001) p 37

provides personal experience of Birmingham's business expansion during the Franco-Prussian War<sup>176</sup> and Dayus during World War I.<sup>177</sup> Tiltman's Birmingham contains manufacturers enriched beyond their wildest dreams by war.<sup>178</sup> Burritt, highlighting worldwide slaughter inflicted by Birmingham armaments, refocuses the theme.<sup>179</sup> In North Bromwich, warfare's advancing technology sees "Whitehouse's, the maker of swords... put up its shutters."<sup>180</sup> Similarly in Birmingham sword manufacturers George Atkins, John Harvey and John Byworth & Sons, active in the nineteenth century's final decade, had ceased trading by 1905.<sup>181</sup> Though Birmingham's jewellery and sporting-gun trades suffered during World War I, harness-makers and bed-manufacturers prospered, whilst Cadbury's increased production, supplying food to troops. A prime indicator of wartime success was Austin's Longbridge works, expanded from 2,800 employees in 1914 to 20,000 in 1918.<sup>182</sup> In North Bromwich the Austin is mentioned once<sup>183</sup> and Cadbury's never.

However, in North Bromwich Cadbury's benevolent ethos<sup>184</sup> pervades Amalgamated Gunsmiths, equipped with "canteens, recreation-grounds, dispensaries, reading-rooms, baths and swimming pools."<sup>185</sup> Though initially there was no canteen at Cadbury's Bournville works, from 1879 a kitchen was available for workers to prepare meals. A reading room was also available. Later, recreation grounds, swimming pools and slipper baths were provided. In

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<sup>176</sup> Thorne, W. (1925) pp 21-22

<sup>177</sup> Dayus, K. (1985) p 124; (2000) p 169

<sup>178</sup> Tiltman, M.H. (1939) p 194

<sup>179</sup> Burritt, E. (1868) p 13

<sup>180</sup> Young, F.B. (1914) *The Iron Age*, p 192

<sup>181</sup> George Atkins, 11 Court, Staniforth Street; John Harvey, 113a Coleshill Street; John Byworth & Sons 127½ Constitution Hill - *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham* (1894; 1905)

<sup>182</sup> Briggs, A. (1952) p 218; Hopkins, E. (2001) pp 129-130; Upton, C. (1993) p 193

<sup>183</sup> Young, F.B. (1940) *Mr Lucton's Freedom*, p 392

<sup>184</sup> Chinn, C. (2001) p 71

<sup>185</sup> Young, F.B. (1934) *This Little World*, p 317

the early twentieth century a resident doctor and dentist were appointed.<sup>186</sup> Each employee of Amalgamated Gunsmiths

took a share, apart from his liberal wage, in the profits... a large number lived in dwellings maintained by a landlord who regarded their condition as a matter of personal pride... Wives and children enjoyed the benefits of a paternal solicitude in matters of health and education; at the end of it they themselves could look forward to a generous pension.<sup>187</sup>

Similarly, Cadbury's introduced employees' profit-sharing, paid wages in excess of the 1910 Trade Boards Act and offered a pension fund. Cadbury's Bournville housing and care of employees' dependents are renowned. From 1906 Cadbury's made it a condition of employment that 14-16 year olds attended evening school.<sup>188</sup> In pursuing the City of Iron's wartime profiteering image, it is ironic that Young so obviously bases Amalgamated Gunsmiths, enriched by over a century's wars,<sup>189</sup> on pacifist Quaker Cadbury's.

That Astill's, the North Bromwich brewing family,<sup>190</sup> are intended as historical resonance is suggested by the association of "Bass... Allsopp... Worthington... Astill's."<sup>191</sup> Joseph Astill conjures Joseph Ansell, patriarch of the Birmingham political and philanthropic family, maltster and brewer of Aston.<sup>192</sup> Astill houses extend beyond North Bromwich

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<sup>186</sup> Williams, I.A. (1931) *The Firm of Cadbury 1831-1931*, London, Constable & Co, pp 58, 64, 85, 185-186

<sup>187</sup> Young, F.B. (1934) *This Little World*, pp 317-318

<sup>188</sup> Williams, I.A. (1931) pp 111, 156-167, 219-224

<sup>189</sup> Young, F.B. (1934) *This Little World*, p 141

<sup>190</sup> Sir Joseph Astill appears throughout the canon: e.g. Young, F.B. (1913) *Undergrowth*, p 177; (1915) *The Dark Tower*, p 49; (1914) *The Iron Age*, p 80; (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 237; (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 556; (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 5; (1929) *Black Roses*, p 5; (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 224. Other members of the family appear at various points throughout the canon: e.g. Lady Astill: Young, F.B. (1942) *A Man about the House*, p 20; Walter Astill: Young, F.B. (1913) *Undergrowth*, p 94; Sir Joseph Astill II: Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 437; Reggie and Marjorie Astill: Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies*, p 158; Griffin – Sir Joseph's nephew: Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 286.

<sup>191</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies*, p 236; Bass, Allsopp and Worthington were established as Burton-upon-Trent brewers during the eighteenth century – Molyneux, W. (1869) "Burton-upon-Trent" in Lewis, R.A. (1977) *Burton Breweries: Local History Source Book L31*, Staffordshire Education Committee, p 9

<sup>192</sup> Ansell's began trading as maltsters and hop merchants in 1851 and commenced brewing in 1881. - Skipp, V. (1983) p 63. Joseph Ansell's sons were all involved in Birmingham public life. Joseph (died 1929), solicitor of Bennett's Hill, was a city alderman, Deputy City Coroner and Aston Town Clerk - *Birmingham Mail* (12.10.1923) obit of Joseph Ansell; William (died 1904), Brewery Chairman, was a city magistrate and alderman

through surrounding towns and counties into Wales.<sup>193</sup> A range of beers is produced, with two named brews: *Astill's XXXX* and *Astill's Celebrated Entire*.<sup>194</sup> Though *Astill's* beer, originally “honest malt and hops”<sup>195</sup> has evolved into “fermented glucose sharpened with quassia,”<sup>196</sup> it remains the means for those

made puny by the hardships of a slum childhood...driven to a labour for which they were unfitted, finding solace... in the poison that Messrs Astill, who knew the requirements of the market, provided for that purpose.<sup>197</sup>

Thus, through his *Astill's* portrait, libellous if historical resonance were strained, Young highlights both an evil feared by Birmingham's social reformers<sup>198</sup> and reinforces the profiteering insouciance of North Bromwich.

“Shop-windows of North Bromwich... gleaming through fog... proclaim the Iron City's wealth and magnificence.”<sup>199</sup> Cattle-dealers and seed merchants supply the Midlands; contemporaneously Birmingham advertises cattle-dealers and seed merchants.<sup>200</sup> A North Bromwich money-lender's advertisement suggests Birmingham's fifteen registered loan

– *Daily Mail* (04.04.1904) obit of William Ansell; Edward (died 1929), Brewery M.D. and Chairman, was a Warwickshire county alderman, magistrate and benefactor to many Birmingham projects – *Birmingham Post* (10.08.1929) obit of Edward Ansell.

<sup>193</sup> E.g. Young, F.B. *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 219; (1921) *The Black Diamond*, p 190; (1913) *Undergrowth*, p 177

<sup>194</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 412; (1921) *The Black Diamond*, p 374. The ‘X’ symbol was first used by seventeenth century excise men to denote strength; ‘Entire’ originated in the early eighteenth century as a form of porter. - Hodgkins, K. [Brewery History Society] (05.12.2004) Letter to M. Hall

<sup>195</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 439

<sup>196</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p181. The use of Quassia [a South American tree, the bitter root and bark of which were known for their tonic and medicinal properties – *Shorter Oxford Dictionary on Historical Principles* (1975) Oxford, Clarendon Press] implies an inferior brew.

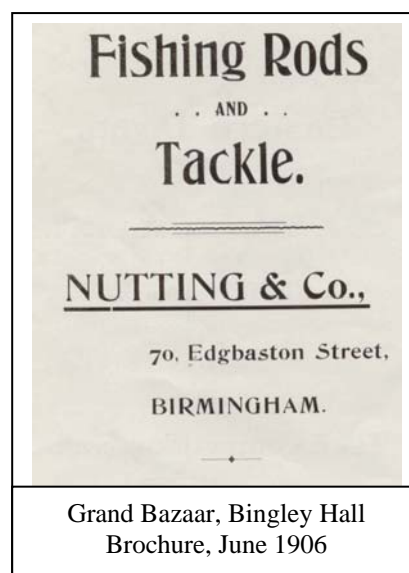
<sup>197</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 194

<sup>198</sup> Skipp, V. (1983) pp 148-152

<sup>199</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 454

<sup>200</sup> Young, F.B. (1921) *The Black Diamond*, p 336; (1934) *This Little World*, pp 455-456; Six cattle dealers (Batchelor & Southam, 107-108 Bordesley Street; Richard Boddington, 35 Essex Street; Charles Cheshire, 6 Pershore Road, King's Norton; Joseph Doolan & Sons, 33 Bradford Street; Daniel Foster, 321 Bradford Street; Horace Satchwell, Bell Lane, Northfield) are listed in *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham* (1910) and five seed merchants (Herbert Cox, 35 Newhall Street; Freer & Co., 28 Digbeth; John Manell & Sons, 120-122 Great Barr Street, 184 Bromsgrove Street, 27 Dean Street; Thompson & Co., 20 High Street; Yates & Sons, Old Square) in *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham* (1922) See Appendix One for chronology of the canon.

offices.<sup>201</sup> Hire purchase facilities appreciated by Birmingham residents in the 1930s<sup>202</sup> are available through Bromwich Furnishing Emporium,<sup>203</sup> a name reminiscent of Birmingham's Conybere Furnishing Company and Jay's Furnishing Stores.<sup>204</sup> Drawing upon personal Birmingham experience, Young recreates a variety of shops. As a keen angler,<sup>205</sup> his familiarity with fishing-tackle shops is unsurprising. Nutting & Co., established in Edgbaston Street when he was a medic, was still there, in company with eight similar establishments,<sup>206</sup> when North Bromwich featured a similar business "in a humble side-street that catered for the modest extravagances of local coarse fishermen."<sup>207</sup>



Whitecotes, North Bromwich photographers where,

in the late nineteenth century, John and Clare Bradley and their infant son pose, "heads fixed from behind in iron clamps"<sup>208</sup> evokes Whitlock's, Birmingham photographers where the infant Francis Brett Young was photographed during the identical period.<sup>209</sup> In the late nineteenth century beneath Birmingham's Christchurch were Arthur Moore's Oyster

<sup>201</sup> Young, F.B. (1934) *This Little World*, p 557; Samuel Birbeck, 28 Martineau Street; Birmingham Excelsior Money Society, 63 Temple Row; Birmingham Financial Co., 42 Temple Street; Birmingham industrial Loan Co., 21A Easy Row; Borough of Birmingham Loan Society, 16 Steelhouse Lane; British Finance Co., Victoria Buildings 5, Corporation Street; Samuel Dean, 265A Soho Road; Deritend Ward Libreal Club & Money Society, 218 Moseley Road; Erdington Money Society, 289 High Street Erdington; Emma Mason, 27 Langley Road Small Heath; National Loan & Advance Association, 49½ Stratford Street; South Birmingham Permanent Money Society, 39 Newhall Street; Phoenix Loan & Discount Co., Wellington Passage Bennetts Hill; United Loan & Discount Association, 47 Pershore Street; Unity Equity Money Society, 337 Summer Lane - *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham* (1922)

<sup>202</sup> Briggs, A. (1952) p 261

<sup>203</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, pp 233-242, 306, 451-453

<sup>204</sup> *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham* (1929)

<sup>205</sup> Young, J.B. (1962) pp 169, 174, 175, 182, 203, 239

<sup>206</sup> *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham* (1906;1929) Also listed (1929): Edward Bagnell 45 Northampton Street, Samuel Cobley 3 High Street Deritend, Alfred David 146 Great Lister Street, Sarah Kay 13 Hill Street, John Keeling 8 Digbeth, Frederick Kings & Co. 55-57 Worcester Street, George Kinman 62 Great Hampton Row, J.E. Morris & Son 87 Bromsgrove Street.

<sup>207</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 156

<sup>208</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 378

<sup>209</sup> H.J. Whitlock, 11 New Street - *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham* (1890)



Rooms.<sup>210</sup> North Bromwich's oyster shop was "tucked away in the basement of a little Georgian church that stood on the corner of the Central Square, facing the Corinthian Town Hall."<sup>211</sup>



Francis Brett Young  
photographed at Whitlock's  
Studio, 1886



Oyster Rooms (first shop beneath Christchurch at top of New Street)

North Bromwich hatters, Gunn's, obviously transpose Birmingham hatters, Dunn's.<sup>212</sup> Milton's the Mantle-Makers<sup>213</sup> offer North Bromwich elegance. During Young's student years, Birmingham city centre housed numerous mantle-makers, with three double-fronted examples in High Street, which could hardly have escaped his notice.<sup>214</sup> The ambience of

<sup>210</sup> Arthur Moore's Oyster Rooms, 79 New Street, - *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham* (1890)

<sup>211</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 240-241

<sup>212</sup> Young, F.B. (1914) *The Iron Age*, p 125; Dunn & Co, 21 Bull Street, 96 New Street, 15 & 92 Corporation Street - *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham* (1914)

<sup>213</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 23

<sup>214</sup> Alfred Goodman (59-60 High Street); Joseph Fordred (61-62); Frank Batchelor (63-64), with twelve other mantle-makers (Jane Adams 238 Great King Street, M. Brewer & Co. 92 Bull Street, Davies & Balmforth 15 Bull Street, Terry Holmes & Co. 28 High Street, H.A. Hopkins 28 Cannon Street, Robert Lomas 63,65,69 Corporation Street, Frederick Marsh 58 Bromsgrove Street, Mitchell Bros 133-137 Bristol Street, J. Page & Co. 81 Bull Street, Simpson, Pickburn & Co. 137 Suffolk Street, Stedall & Co. 69 High Street, Stockbridges 37 Smallbrook Street) in the city centre. - *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham* (1906)

Birmingham fashion is conveyed in North Bromwich's Kendrick's and Madame Allbright's Dress Shops.<sup>215</sup> There is a furrier in North Bromwich High Street just when Owen & Barnett and Marten & Co. practised the same trade in Birmingham High Street.<sup>216</sup> In the early twentieth century, "Mr Dakers, an ill-shaven little Hebrew named Greenberg in the Jewellers' Quarter at North Bromwich informed them, had been an agent for the Fit-U Corset Company."<sup>217</sup> Though fiction allows anti-Semitism, the commercial details are accurate. I.S. Greenberg & Co., of Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter, provides the name, whilst Fitu were reputable corsetiers.<sup>218</sup>



*Fitu Model, Chastleton House, Gloucestershire*

<sup>215</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 459; (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, pp 33-38

<sup>216</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 457; Furriers: Owen & Barnett, Thomas Passage, High Street, Marten & Co., 76, High Street - *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham* (1929)

<sup>217</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 157

<sup>218</sup> I. S. Greenberg & Co., Wholesale Jewellers, 125-126 Great Hampton Street - *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham* (1906); Fitu Corset Company, Chappell, Allen & Co., Fitu House, Well Street, Cripplegate, London EC1 & Patriotic Corset Works, Avondale Road, Redfield, Bristol. Chappell, Allen & Co., founded in 1896 for the manufacture of stays, was taken over by Celestion Industries in 1970. Advertisements for Fitu Corsets appeared in *The Daily Mail* (12.11.1918) and *The Times* (26.02.1923 & 09.04.1923) – *Kelly's Directory of Bristol* (1929); *The Times Business Diary* (19.05.1967) p 25

Despite their wide-ranging resources and cosmopolitan influence, North Bromwich shops are viewed by established county families as parvenu, their proprietors ignorant.

Though the North Bromwich shops were admittedly luxurious and convenient, no Abberley or Pomfret or D'Abitot would dream of dealing with them (preferring) Worcester, where the shop-keepers knew how to spell their names.<sup>219</sup>

The shops of Collins' Birchampton may appeal; their wares and patrons do not. "The dull, uninteresting crowd gazed into the windows of brilliantly-lit shops... cheap goods sold within."<sup>220</sup> What Gissing applies to one Birmingham shop, "its small windows lighted with one gas jet,"<sup>221</sup> Young multiplies in North Bromwich, where "ill-lighted shops... hid their wares jealously behind steam-bleared windows."<sup>222</sup> In the canon's antepenultimate work the reality of depressed and polluted North Bromwich is thus reclaimed.

North Bromwich's principal newspapers are the *Courier*, with its special editions, financial and sporting news,<sup>223</sup> and the *Mail* "last rampart of Midland hard-headedness, cynicism and common-sense."<sup>224</sup> Concurrently, Birmingham's principal newspapers were the morning *Post* and the evening *Mail*.<sup>225</sup> Read throughout a wide region,<sup>226</sup> North Bromwich newspapers provide, in Leclaire's view, "la voix la plus autorisée de la capitale du fer, et une bonne image de la grande presse provinciale (en) son rôle régional."<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> Young, F.B. (1934) *This Little World*, p 308

<sup>220</sup> Collins, M. (1896) p 243

<sup>221</sup> Gissing G. (1895) p 15

<sup>222</sup> Young, F.B. (1942) *A Man about the House* p 63

<sup>223</sup> E.g. Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies*, p 621; (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 424; (1956) *Wistanslow*, pp 141-142

<sup>224</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 401. Also mentioned are the *North Bromwich Post* in Young, F.B. (1914) *The Iron Age*, p 87 and the *North Bromwich Argus* in Young, F.B. (1921) *The Black Diamond*, p 5.

<sup>225</sup> *The Birmingham Daily Post* was founded in 1857 and *The Birmingham Daily Mail* in 1870. *Daily* was dropped from both titles in 1918. - Whates, H.R.G. (1957) *The Birmingham Post 1857:1957*, Birmingham, The Birmingham Post & Mail, pp 31, 44-45

<sup>226</sup> Young, F.B. (1914) *The Iron Age*, p 280; (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 594; (1940) *Mr Lucton's Freedom*, p 153

<sup>227</sup> Leclaire, J. (1970) p 103 [*The iron capital's authorized voice and a good image of the provincial press in its regional role.*]

“A provincial newspaper,” Whates, writing of the *Birmingham Post*, declares, “is closely integrated with the life of the community it serves.”<sup>228</sup> Like the *Birmingham Post* in Chamberlain’s and Hampson’s novels,<sup>229</sup> North Bromwich papers carry news relevant only within fiction.<sup>230</sup> They also include real items such as “Buller’s defeat at Colenso and the result of a cup-tie between North Bromwich Albion and Notts Forest.”<sup>231</sup> Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> December 1899’s *Birmingham Daily Mail* reported General Buller’s retreat from Colenso during the Second Boer War, whilst the previous Saturday’s edition featured Aston Villa’s 2-2 home draw against Nottingham Forest.<sup>232</sup> Young uses his fictional press to reinforce his North Bromwich realities in this city where the *Courier*’s typical reader “would turn first to the sporting page... the police-court news and reports of weekend motor-car smashes, but... was not much interested in politics.”<sup>233</sup> Certainly readers would not “associate the *Courier* with literature.”<sup>234</sup>

Among North Bromwich reporters is Oldham, who writes caustic critiques for the *Mail*.<sup>235</sup> Oldham is an evident play on the name of Ernest Newman, trenchant music critic of the early twentieth century *Birmingham Post*.<sup>236</sup> In acknowledging the importance of the North Bromwich canon, Whates recognizes Oldham as Newman, declaring “his impact on

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<sup>228</sup> Whates, H.R.G. (1957) p 4

<sup>229</sup> E.g. Chamberlain, P. (1937) p 34; Hampson, J. (1936) p 329

<sup>230</sup> E.g. Young, F.B. (1924) *Cold Harbour*, p 73; (1932) *The House under the Water*, p 579; (1935) *White Ladies*, pp 621-623

<sup>231</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 321

<sup>232</sup> *Birmingham Daily Mail* (09.12.1899) - For the link between North Bromwich Albion and Aston Villa football teams see pp 265-267

<sup>233</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 255

<sup>234</sup> Young, F.B. (1915) *The Dark Tower*, p 29

<sup>235</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 458

<sup>236</sup> Smith, J. S. (1945) *The Story of Music in Birmingham*, Birmingham, Cornish Bros., p 104

Birmingham is preserved for posterity by Francis Brett Young whose novels of Birmingham are a brilliant contribution to social history.”<sup>237</sup>

## **The Political and Civic Life of North Bromwich**

In addition to social and historical significance, Jameson asserts, novels may also carry political resonance.<sup>238</sup> As in Allen’s Bromford,<sup>239</sup> North Bromwich political life spans the Priestley Riots to Mosley’s Fascist rallies. Scientist and Unitarian minister Joseph Priestley’s radical political and religious views attracted considerable opprobrium in Birmingham, focused, in 1791, at a dinner at Dadley’s Hotel, Temple Row celebrating the French Revolution. Priestley was not present when rioters smashed hotel windows, burned the Unitarian meeting houses and sacked his home, but consequently fled Birmingham never to return.<sup>240</sup> Identical rioting occurs in North Bromwich where

a member of the New Meeting, a disciple of Joseph Priestley, took part in the Constitutional Society's famous dinner, commemorating the Fall of the Bastille, at Dadley's Hotel and... was concerned in Priestley's flight.<sup>241</sup>

Narrowly defeated by Neville Chamberlain at Ladywood in the 1924 General Election, Oswald Mosley went on to found the British Union of Fascists. Its largest ever gathering (estimated at 10,000) occurred in Bingley Hall, Birmingham in January 1934.<sup>242</sup> Emulating their Italian counterparts, rally stewards wore black and quickly gained reputations for violence. In fiction, Captain Grafton “dons a black shirt and a belt and sets off with a loaded cane in his hand to parade with the North Bromwich Fascists.”<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> Whates, H.R.G. (1957) p 205

<sup>238</sup> Jameson, F. (1981) p 17

<sup>239</sup> Allen, W.E. (1938) p147; (1939) p 105; (1940) pp97-98

<sup>240</sup> Dent, R.K. (1880) pp 226-247

<sup>241</sup> Young, F.B. (1942) *A Man about the House*, pp 4-5

<sup>242</sup> *Birmingham Post* (22.01.1934)

<sup>243</sup> Young, F.B. (1937) *Portrait of a Village*, pp 97-98

Historically exempt from the effects of the Five Mile Act<sup>244</sup> as an unincorporated town, Dent shows Birmingham welcoming dissenters.<sup>245</sup> Fictional nonconformists similarly arrived “in the days of the Five Mile Act... North Bromwich, of course, had no corporation then.”<sup>246</sup> Freedom of conscience continued in both Birmingham, where Dawson’s congregation<sup>247</sup> permitted no doctrinal tests,<sup>248</sup> and North Bromwich, where Liberal Nonconformist creeds contained nothing to offend principles.<sup>249</sup> During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, “many leading North Bromwich families were connected... with the ruling Quaker and Unitarian oligarchy.”<sup>250</sup> Concurrently in Birmingham Briggs identifies “the driving force of Unitarians and conscientious service of Quakers.”<sup>251</sup> Young was acquainted with the first of these traditions through his wife’s family, whose Unitarian roots were established in Wilmslow by the eighteenth century.<sup>252</sup> Briggs also emphasizes the prestige and wealth of intermarried Nonconformist families who retained civic, religious and social influence in Birmingham until the mid twentieth century.<sup>253</sup> Similarly North Bromwich’s Unitarian and Quaker elite “made fortunes in industry,” were a “local substitute for hereditary aristocracy” and “an intellectual enclave of civic life.”<sup>254</sup> Cannadine pictures Birmingham’s Liberal hierarchy promoting the arts and civic pride, most overtly through dignified public buildings.<sup>255</sup> North Bromwich Liberals display parallel aims – “eager and

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<sup>244</sup> The Five Mile Act (1665) prohibited clergymen refusing to conform to the 1662 Act of Uniformity (which required public assent to, and exclusive use of, the Book of Common Prayer) from coming within five miles of any city, town or parish where they had previously officiated, unless they took an oath not to interfere with the government of church or state. - Walker, W. (1959) *A History of the Christian Church*, Edinburgh, T & T Clark, p 416

<sup>245</sup> Dent, R.K. (1880) p 50

<sup>246</sup> Young, F.B. (1942) *A Man about the House*, p 4

<sup>247</sup> See p 25

<sup>248</sup> Briggs, A. (1971) *Victorian Cities*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, p 196

<sup>249</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies*, p 162

<sup>250</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies*, p 159

<sup>251</sup> Briggs, A. (1952) p 129

<sup>252</sup> Young, J.B. (1962) p 24; Briggs, H. (14.01.1970, 31.03.1970) Letters from Young’s sister-in-law to J. Hunt

<sup>253</sup> Briggs, A. (1971) p 204

<sup>254</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 154; (1942) *A Man about the House*, pp 14-15

<sup>255</sup> Cannadine, D. (2002) p 120

vital interest in the arts and sciences which they subsidized liberally”<sup>256</sup> and “feel it the duty of every citizen... to develop a civic consciousness.”<sup>257</sup> This latter tenet was expounded by Birmingham’s R.W. Dale,<sup>258</sup> to whose teachings Young was exposed via his landlady, Dale’s daughter Gertrude,<sup>259</sup> with whom he attended Carr’s Lane Chapel.<sup>260</sup>

In 1870 Birmingham invited designs for new council offices, from which local architect Yeoville Thomason’s neo-classical plan was selected. Dominating its surroundings, Birmingham Council House (the preferred alternative to Municipal Hall or Guildhall) was opened in Ann Street in 1879.<sup>261</sup> Young christens the equivalent North Bromwich offices both Municipal Buildings and Council House.<sup>262</sup> Birmingham’s development necessitated slum clearance. Parallel North Bromwich improvements initially fail to compensate for surrounding deprivation, earning Young’s typical castigation of his city. “The tremendous renaissance building of the Council House... did not greatly impress. He saw rather the squalid slums from which this pretentious building rose.”<sup>263</sup> Seventeen years later however, though depicting a similar period, Young’s portrait accords more with Gissing’s splendid Council House on Birmingham’s Acropolis,<sup>264</sup> “discovering unexpected grace... in the gold-ribbed cupola of the Municipal Buildings.”<sup>265</sup>

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<sup>256</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 154

<sup>257</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies*, p 163

<sup>258</sup> R.W. Dale (1829-1895) trained for the Congregational ministry at Spring Hill College, Birmingham and subsequently became minister of Carr’s Lane Chapel. Greatly influenced by George Dawson, Dale believed that “every citizen owes a debt to his city, and if he does not pay the debt he defrauds the city of its due.” Horne, C.S. (1909) “R.W. Dale” in Muirhead, J.H. (ed) (1909) p 271

<sup>259</sup> See p 10, footnote 52; Young, F.B. (1912) *Songs of Robert Bridges* is dedicated to Gertrude Dale.

<sup>260</sup> FBY 252 (30.06.06) Letter from Young to Jessie Hankinson

<sup>261</sup> Bunce, J.T. (1885) pp 548-550

<sup>262</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, pp 470, 864

<sup>263</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 239

<sup>264</sup> Gissing, G. (1895) p 99

<sup>265</sup> Young, F.B. (1936) *Far Forest*, p 260

North Bromwich's Liberal oligarchy is ambitious. "Though the state of North Bromwich was their first concern, it extended... into the wider sphere of domestic and international politics."<sup>266</sup> In this are reflected Birmingham originals, notably the Chamberlains, identified by Cannadine<sup>267</sup> as the most prominent middle-class dynasty in British politics in their day. Birmingham businessman, politician and Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain<sup>268</sup> reappears in fiction. "The Prime Minister was a North Bromwich businessman,"<sup>269</sup> whose "naïve platitudes"<sup>270</sup> Young allows. No such caveat, however, is necessary for Neville's father, Joseph. Though lacking Tiltman's domestic detail and affectionate regard,<sup>271</sup> North Bromwich's Joseph Chamberlain, like his original in Garratt's recollection,<sup>272</sup> enjoys a popular following. "If Joe Chamberlain says a thing, no matter what it is... Joe Chamberlain's right."<sup>273</sup>

In Birmingham and North Bromwich, Joseph Chamberlain experiences similar political fluctuations. In Gladstone's second cabinet, in fact and fiction, Chamberlain condemned Disraeli's annexation of the Transvaal.<sup>274</sup> Resigning from government over the Irish Home Rule Bill in 1886, Chamberlain remained out of office during Gladstone's final administration, to the satisfaction of North Bromwich's Liberal oligarchy.<sup>275</sup> Gladstone's

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<sup>266</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 154

<sup>267</sup> Cannadine, D. (2002), p 117

<sup>268</sup> After studying at Mason College, Birmingham, Neville Chamberlain entered an accountant's office and was subsequently involved with Elliott's Metal Co., B.S.A. and Messrs Hoskin & Son. Elected to the City Council in 1911 for All Saints Ward, he became chairman of the Town Planning Committee. Lord Mayor of Birmingham 1915-1917, Chamberlain was elected M.P. for Birmingham, Ladywood in 1918 and served as Prime Minister 1937-1940. - Petrie, C. (1938) *The Chamberlain Tradition*, London, The Right Book Club, pp 205-223

<sup>269</sup> Young, F.B. (1940) *Mr Lucton's Freedom*, p 423

<sup>270</sup> Young, F.B. (1944) "Fantastic Symphony, A.D. 1918-1939" in *The Island*, p 441

<sup>271</sup> Tiltman, M.H. (1939) *passim*

<sup>272</sup> Garratt, V.W. (1939) p 101

<sup>273</sup> Young, F.B. (1936) *Far Forest*, pp 374-375

<sup>274</sup> Garvin, J.L., (1932) *The Life of Joseph Chamberlain, Vol 1, 1836-1885*, London, Macmillan & Co, pp 440-444; Young, F.B. (1939) *The City of Gold*, p 389

<sup>275</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies*, p 167; Gladstone's final administration lasted from 1892-1894 – *The Concise Dictionary of National Biography* (1994) vol II, pp 1155-1156



championing Home Rule for Ireland split his party into Liberals, who supported him, and Liberal Unionists, who, like Chamberlain, opposed the Bill. Chamberlain received much support in Birmingham and the ensuing division between the factions caused confrontation in which Liberal Unionists emerged the stronger party.<sup>276</sup> Subsequently appointed Colonial Secretary by Lord Salisbury in 1895, Chamberlain's immediate task was to deal with President Kruger's closure of the Vaal River drifts. The identical crisis confronts "Joseph Chamberlain, the new Colonial Secretary" in Young's fiction.<sup>277</sup> In 1903, Chamberlain again resigned office in order to promote tariff reform, in which Birmingham, with the needs of its metal manufacturers and jewellers, was deeply interested.<sup>278</sup> For North Bromwich's businessmen the proposal is equally attractive. "If only we can get a tariff, like Joe Chamberlain says... we shall rake in the brass hand over fist."<sup>279</sup>

Though Birmingham Improvement Act transferred Street Commissioners' powers to the Town Council in 1851, it was Chamberlain who expedited the Civic Gospel through the municipalization of gas and water, and the Improvement Scheme.<sup>280</sup> These developments were followed by the Welsh Water Scheme and municipalization of electricity.<sup>281</sup> Street and town improvement and Welsh water all impinge upon North Bromwich.

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<sup>276</sup> The split is traced in detail in Briggs, A. (1952) pp 180-191

<sup>277</sup> Young, F.B. (1939) *The City of Gold*, p 781. In order to maximize rail taxes imposed on uitlanders, Kruger closed the river drifts over which road transport reached Johannesburg. Chamberlain took a strong line, and Kruger, not yet prepared for war, capitulated. - Petrie, C. (1938) p 101

<sup>278</sup> Briggs, A. (1952) pp 32-37

<sup>279</sup> Young, F.B. (1932) *The House under the Water*, p 655

<sup>280</sup> Gas supply was transferred to the Corporation in July, 1875, in the same month the Improvement Committee was appointed. The Corporation assumed responsibility for the Waterworks in January 1876, all during Chamberlain's mayoralty. - Bunce, J.T. (1885) pp 363, 414, 456

<sup>281</sup> The Welsh Water Scheme was first presented to the Council in April 1891; Birmingham Corporation Act, 1899 authorised the city's purchase of Birmingham Electric Supply Co. - Vince, C.A. (1902) pp 288, 298.

Young's references to the construction materials of North Bromwich streets illustrate engineering developments in Birmingham and evoke an atmosphere inapplicable to purely technical descriptions. Superseded in Birmingham from the late nineteenth century,<sup>282</sup> North Bromwich's "wide and glittering macadam"<sup>283</sup> may also be uninviting with "no light reflected from the greasy cobble-stones."<sup>284</sup> By 1879, Dent records, nearly all of Birmingham's principal roadways were wood-blocked, with lesser roads granite-blocked, whilst footways were paved with flags or blue bricks.<sup>285</sup> Bunce refines this to flags or asphalt for footways on leading thoroughfares, with blue bricks in secondary streets.<sup>286</sup> Minor North Bromwich streets are conjured as a "teeming warren of blue-brick,"<sup>287</sup> aggravated by weather. "On a stifling morning the blue brick pavements of North Bromwich reflected a torrid heat."<sup>288</sup> Asphalt, first used in Birmingham's New Street in 1871,<sup>289</sup> is even less inviting than blue brick in North Bromwich where "the grilling asphalt of the Bristol Road"<sup>290</sup> makes walking hard.

Footways' and roadways' differing surfaces are replicated in North Bromwich where Halesby Road (Birmingham's Hagley Road) has an asphalt footpath and wood pavement<sup>291</sup> In Birmingham various kinds of wood, principally Karri, Jarrah, American Red Gum and Deal, were used for paving.<sup>292</sup> Experiments began in Moor Street in the mid-nineteenth century, with authorization given for Hagley Road in 1898.<sup>293</sup> North Bromwich's evocative

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<sup>282</sup> Bunce, J.T. (1885) pp 60-70

<sup>283</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 439

<sup>284</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 280

<sup>285</sup> Dent, R.K. (1880) p 617

<sup>286</sup> Bunce, J.T. (1885) p 72

<sup>287</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 249

<sup>288</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 348

<sup>289</sup> Bunce, J.T. (1885) p 72

<sup>290</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 439

<sup>291</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 499, 470

<sup>292</sup> Price, J. (1902) *Presidential Address to Association of Birmingham Students of the Institute of Civil Engineers*, London, St Bride's Press

<sup>293</sup> Bunce, J.T. (1885) p 72; Vince, C.A. (1902) p 70

wood pavements react to weather. “A slight shower had spattered the wide convex of the wood pavement. The smell of warm dust was in the air.”<sup>294</sup> After winter drizzle “black slime covered the wood pavement.”<sup>295</sup> Regular watering of wood blocks, for cleansing and to counteract shrinkage was carried out in Birmingham by Bayley’s hydrostatic vans.<sup>296</sup> In North Bromwich “a corporation water-cart crawled by, washing the wood blocks of the street - quite needlessly.”<sup>297</sup> Maintaining bias, Young obscures purpose, suggesting a profligate North Bromwich Council.

Both Parkes and Tiltman<sup>298</sup> feature Improvement Schemes in their Birmingham novels and the atmosphere of development is captured in North Bromwich. “A half-demolished house... marked the limit of the Corporation's unfinished Improvement Scheme. All day and all night the noises of demolition and rebuilding went on.”<sup>299</sup> Designed to sweep away Birmingham’s slums, Chamberlain’s Improvement Scheme did not solve the town centre’s housing problems.<sup>300</sup> There is a similar lack of progress in North Bromwich, where the slums of Young’s own student experience are recreated.

A typical unit consisted of a row of six three- or four-roomed houses facing the street and duplicated by a similar row built back to back with them: a method of construction economical of bricks, mortar and ventilation, but prodigal of human life. The depth of each block of back-to-backs was pierced by a narrow passage leading into a courtyard... In the middle of this ‘court’ stood two communal conveniences: a shed that served as a privy, with an ashpit behind it, and a pump that drew water from a shallow well.<sup>301</sup>

That North Bromwich is Birmingham and Young’s description accurate is confirmed by Garratt’s matching account of his childhood experience.

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<sup>294</sup> Young, F.B. (1914) *The Iron Age*, p 75

<sup>295</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, pp 460-461

<sup>296</sup> Bunce, J.T. (1885) p 70

<sup>297</sup> Young, F.B. (1913) *Undergrowth*, p 78

<sup>298</sup> Parkes, W. K. (1914) pp 193,367-368; Tiltman, M.H. (1939) pp 19-20,107

<sup>299</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 133-134

<sup>300</sup> See pp 26-27

<sup>301</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 193-194

The working-class houses of Birmingham... crowded as many as was possible upon each acre, regardless of appearance, comfort or health. Many of them were built back-to-back, with entries that led into the courtyards of other houses... The court in which we lived was a typical example; a few yards from the house stood the communal water-tap, two wash-houses backed by a dust pit, and another string of houses hemmed in by the dividing wall of the next court.<sup>302</sup>

The Welsh Water scheme, focus of two novels,<sup>303</sup> appears in nine more<sup>304</sup> within Young's North Bromwich canon, accurately portraying the outline events of its factual original. In 1891, James Mansergh, a civil engineer engaged by Birmingham Corporation, reported that existing water supplies would be inadequate by 1900. He suggested that Rawlinson's earlier proposal for constructing reservoirs in Radnorshire be adopted.<sup>305</sup> Mansergh sent his pupil, Eustace Tickell, to survey the Elan and Claerwen valleys.<sup>306</sup> In North Bromwich Mansergh appears as Barradale and Tickell as Lingen, who "worked the whole thing out for himself – from the original conception to its final presentation on paper!"<sup>307</sup> Both fact and fiction chose the gathering grounds and confluence of the Elan and Claerwen rivers in recognition of their 70" annual rainfall.<sup>308</sup> The North Bromwich Corporation Water Act "conferred on the city the statutory right to acquire the gathering-ground of the upper Garon, the Claerwen, and its tributary the Afon Llwyd."<sup>309</sup> With Garon corrected to Elan, an identical act conferred identical powers upon Birmingham.<sup>310</sup> Though Birmingham's compensation estimates for compulsory land purchases proved woefully

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<sup>302</sup> Garratt, V.W. (1939) p 2

<sup>303</sup> Young, F.B. (1913) *Undergrowth*; (1932) *The House under the Water*

<sup>304</sup> Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*; (1919) *The Young Physician*; (1921) *The Black Diamond*; (1927) *Portrait of Clare*; (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*; (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*; (1940) *Mr Lucton's Freedom*; (1942) *A Man about the House*; (1956) *Wistanslow*

<sup>305</sup> Vince, C.A. (1902) pp 296-299,303

<sup>306</sup> Morton, R. (1996) pp 7,66

<sup>307</sup> Young, F.B. (1932) *The House under the Water*, p 487

<sup>308</sup> Morton, R. (1996) p 1; Young, F.B. (1932) *The House under the Water*, p 473

<sup>309</sup> Young, F.B. (1932) *The House under the Water*, pp 498-499

<sup>310</sup> Vince, C.A. (1902) pp 315-318

inadequate, only Dderw estate needed arbitration to gain an improved offer.<sup>311</sup> In fiction, similar negotiations between Nant Escob estate and North Bromwich occupy much of the plot of *The House under the Water*.

To accommodate Birmingham Corporation's workers, Elan village, built in 1894, included hospital and canteen.<sup>312</sup> Birmingham's hospital was intended principally for the treatment of accidents,<sup>313</sup> whilst North Bromwich's hospital "received, every day, its complement of crushed human bone and flesh and sinew."<sup>314</sup> North Bromwich brewers, Astill's, exert a remote and not universally welcome influence at the waterworks. "We have received a request from Messrs Astill of Sparkheath Brewery, for... a licensed canteen on this site of the works."<sup>315</sup> In fact all stock for the canteen was ordered by the Water Department, drawing on a range of suppliers rather than one single Birmingham brewery.<sup>316</sup> Although Vince records Radnorshire's Chief Constable's favourable report concerning village sobriety, Morton suggests that it was commonplace for drunken navvies to be ejected from the canteen.<sup>317</sup> In fiction Young transferred Birmingham's resident engineer G.N. Yourdi's attempted alcohol prohibitions<sup>318</sup> to North Bromwich's resident engineer, Forsyth, with an added attack upon the capitalism which encouraged such behaviour. "On the altar of property - represented by Astill - the efficiency of workers, which depended so largely on isolation from strong liquor, was to be sacrificed."<sup>319</sup> In naming Astill's as licensees, Young pursues his

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<sup>311</sup> Vince, C.A. (1902) pp 320-321

<sup>312</sup> Vince, C.A. (1902) p 322

<sup>313</sup> Morton, R. (1996) pp 40,43

<sup>314</sup> Young, F.B. (1932) *The House under the Water*, p 531

<sup>315</sup> Young, F.B. (1913) *Undergrowth*, p 88

<sup>316</sup> Morton, R. (1996) p 45

<sup>317</sup> Vince, C.A. (1902) p 323; Morton, R. (1996) p 45

<sup>318</sup> Morton, R. (1996) pp 44-46

<sup>319</sup> Young, F.B. (1913) *Undergrowth*, p 94

chosen agenda, focusing upon North Bromwich the moral and actual responsibility for drunkenness at the Waterworks.<sup>320</sup>

Three storage reservoirs, Craig Goch, Pen-y-Gareg and Caban Goch were constructed for Birmingham, and three, Cwm Gwilt, Afon Llwyd and Dol Escob for North Bromwich.<sup>321</sup> The cyclopean construction of Caban Goch, 122' high with foundations 25' below the river bed<sup>322</sup> is exceeded for dramatic effect at Dol Escob. "It must go down vertically to a depth that should equal the height of the dam above the earth's surface - a hundred and twenty feet."<sup>323</sup> The pipeline linking dams and city which, following a factual suggestion, Young estimates at eighty miles long,<sup>324</sup> terminates, in Birmingham at a specially constructed service reservoir at Frankley,<sup>325</sup> and in North Bromwich at "the quiet reservoir that had been built to hold the new Welsh water."<sup>326</sup> *Undergrowth* and *The House under the Water* graphically describe construction work. Twenty years after completion "the North Bromwich waterworks (is) a wide lake that laughed and sparkled in wind and sunshine... An arched stone viaduct spanned it."<sup>327</sup> Here is surely Young's vibrant description of Craig Goch not, as Leclaire suggests,<sup>328</sup> Caban Goch, which has no arches.

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<sup>320</sup> Young's attitude towards alcohol and Astill's culpability for the problems it generates in North Bromwich is explored on pp 257-259

<sup>321</sup> Vince, C.A. (1902) p 316; Young, F.B. (1932) *The House under the Water*, p 473

<sup>322</sup> Vince, C.A. (1902) p 443

<sup>323</sup> Young, F.B. (1932) *The House under the Water*, p 537

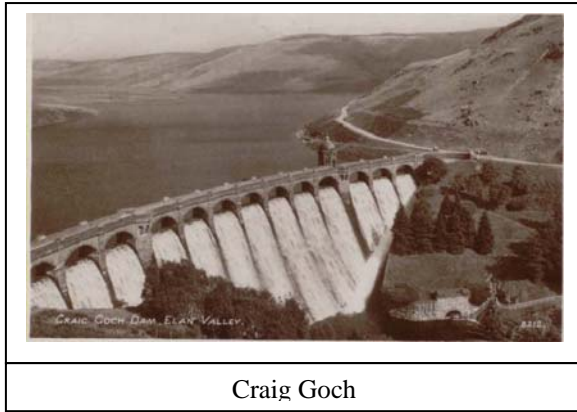
<sup>324</sup> Barclay, T. (1892) *The Future Water Supply of Birmingham*, Birmingham, Cornish Bros., p 15; Young, F.B. (1940) *Mr Lucton's Freedom*, p 129. The actual length was 73.37miles – Vince, C.A. (1923) p 437

<sup>325</sup> Vince, C.A. (1902) p 316

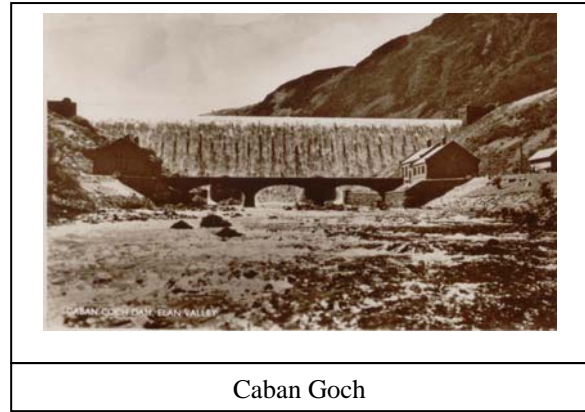
<sup>326</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 128

<sup>327</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 849

<sup>328</sup> Leclaire, J. (1970) p 177



Craig Goch



Caban Goch

As work progressed on North Bromwich's reservoir, it was decided that "a private inspection be arranged for the members of the Corporation."<sup>329</sup> This closely shadows Birmingham City Council's Elan visit in June 1900<sup>330</sup> where the Lord Mayor praised the excellent arrangements made by Alderman Parker, Chairman of the Water Committee. It is difficult to imagine that Young was not familiar with contemporary news reports when he described the North Bromwich visit and the corresponding mayoral speech. "Today, we have the opportunity of seeing the first-fruits of our labours... While we are thanking Providence we must not forget to mention... Alderman Marsland."<sup>331</sup> In his reply, Birmingham's Alderman Parker praised the ability and devotion of the Lord Mayor. North Bromwich's Alderman Marsland performed the identical office. "It didn't matter what their politics were, they must all respect the Mayor... A pillar of the Liberal party, and one of the most telling local preachers it had been his lot to hear."<sup>332</sup> The description suggests a Birmingham counterpart in Alderman Samuel Edwards, estate agent, auctioneer, Lord Mayor 1900-1901 and Congregational lay preacher, renowned for the seventy-five services he conducted in thirty-four cities during his mayoralty.<sup>333</sup> After the tour of inspection, tea was served before the Birmingham party caught the return train to Birmingham Snow Hill. The North Bromwich

<sup>329</sup> Young, F.B. (1913) *Undergrowth*, p 87

<sup>330</sup> Details of the visit on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> June 1900 are taken from *Birmingham Daily Mail* (19.06.1900, 20.06.1900) & *Birmingham Daily Gazette* (20.06.1900)

<sup>331</sup> Young, F.B. (1913) *Undergrowth*, p 171

<sup>332</sup> Young, F.B. (1913) *Undergrowth*, p 174

<sup>333</sup> *Birmingham Evening Despatch* (21.02.1920) Obit of Alderman Samuel Edwards

party followed a similar itinerary. “They had planned to partake of a meat tea, before they caught the train which was to whirl them back in to the smoke.”<sup>334</sup>

Submerged with the Elan Valley were its Baptist Chapel and graveyard. Sixty bodies were exhumed and re-interred at the new chapel built as a replacement.<sup>335</sup> North Bromwich performs the same office. “The chapel which they had built to replace the one that would be drowned was ready to be consecrated: they had arranged to combine this ceremony with the reburial of the mortal remains removed from the Nant Escob graveyard.”<sup>336</sup>

Birmingham’s Welsh Water scheme was inaugurated by King Edward VII in July 1904. The Lord Mayor, Alderman Hallewell Rogers, was knighted, and James Mansergh, the genius behind the whole project, presented to the King.<sup>337</sup> Though contemporary press reports noted no unfairness here, Morton comments that perhaps the wrong person was honoured.<sup>338</sup> In an unusual departure from historical fact, Young redresses any perceived injustice with his account of “the opening of the Garon Waterworks (and) the knighthood conferred on Barradale.”<sup>339</sup>

Nineteenth century Liberal domination of Birmingham politics, threatening opponents invading Chamberlain territory, is addressed in fiction in Tiltman’s account of Randolph

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<sup>334</sup> Young, F.B. (1913) *Undergrowth*, p 179

<sup>335</sup> Morton, R. (1996) p 90

<sup>336</sup> Young, F.B. (1932) *The House under the Water*, p 542

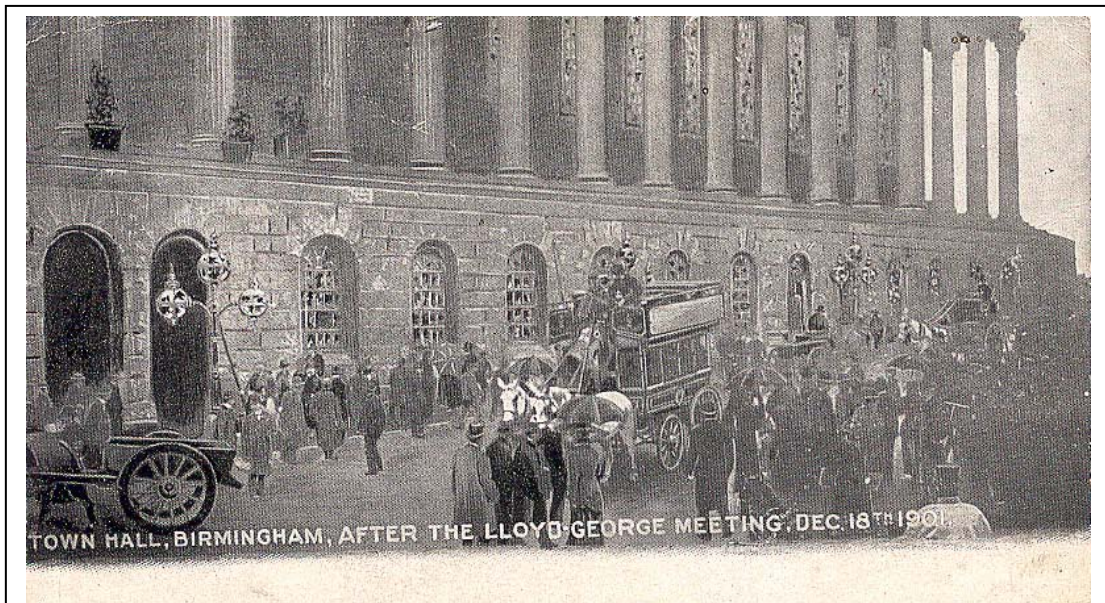
<sup>337</sup> Vince, C.A. (1902) pp 439-440

<sup>338</sup> *Birmingham Daily Post & Birmingham Daily Mail* (21-27.07.1904); Morton, R. (1996) p 82

<sup>339</sup> Young, F.B. (1932) *The House under the Water*, p 645



Churchill's 1884 campaign.<sup>340</sup> As in Birmingham, where Lloyd George<sup>341</sup> visited on December 18<sup>th</sup> 1901, so in North Bromwich, where he "come to speak agen' Joe... (in) the political heart of the city: the town hall."<sup>342</sup> The ensuing riot, commemorated by postcard and briefly addressed by Tiltman and Allen,<sup>343</sup> is replicated with detailed accuracy in North Bromwich "one December evening".<sup>344</sup>



Aftermath of Lloyd George Riot, Birmingham Town Hall, December 1901

<sup>340</sup> Lord Randolph Churchill, whose attacks on Chamberlain were famous, accepted an invitation to contest Central Birmingham in the forthcoming general election. In October 1884 he came to speak in Aston Hall. Liberal v Tory feelings ran high; rioters armed with battering rams, sticks and chair legs broke up the meeting. Churchill, who was carried to safety by a supporter, blamed Chamberlain for the disorder. In the election of November 1885, Churchill was defeated by John Bright by just 470 votes. – Churchill, W. S. (1906) *Lord Randolph Churchill*, London, Macmillan & Co., Vol 1, pp 346-372, 470. The event is recounted in Tiltman, M.H. (1939) pp 58-60

<sup>341</sup> David Lloyd George (1863-1945) was M.P. for Caernarfon Boroughs (1890-1945), Chancellor of the Exchequer 1908, Minister of Munitions 1915, Prime Minister 1916-1922 and became an Honorary Freeman of the City of Birmingham in 1921. In later years Young visited him at his Surrey home, Bron-y-de, and welcomed him to Craycombe. At Christmas 1935 Young joined Lloyd George's party at the Mamounia Hotel, Marrakech. Lloyd George presented Young for his bardic title at Wrexham Gorsedd in 1933 and accepted the dedication of *Dr Bradley Remembers* in 1938. Seventy years later Young's opinion [FBY 2970 (10.07.1940) Young's letter to Frances Stevenson] of Lloyd George's refusal to join Churchill's wartime government remains significant in Richard Toye's study of the two leaders. – Owen, F. (1954) *Tempestuous Journey: Lloyd George His Life and Times*, London, Hutchinson; Young, J.B. (1962) pp 195-198, 214-219; Harber, V. (15.01.1996); Toye, R. (2007) *Lloyd George and Churchill: Rivals for Greatness*, London, Macmillan, p 373

<sup>342</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 373

<sup>343</sup> Tiltman, M.H. (1939) p 164; Allen, W.E. (1940) pp 97-98

<sup>344</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 372

Both fact and fiction compare the “Lloyd George Riot” with historical events. Contemporary news reports recall 1884, questioning if anything “can stand as a parallel to last night’s émeute if one excepts... the Aston riots.”<sup>345</sup> Young cites 1791. “I suppose it was something like this a hundred years ago when they burned Priestley’s house.”<sup>346</sup>

A comparison of contemporary press reports with Young’s narrative establishes fiction’s dependence upon fact.

*Press:* This gentleman, by his pro-Boer views on the South African War and his personal attacks on Mr Chamberlain has made himself notorious both in and out of Parliament.<sup>347</sup>

*Young:* A Member of Parliament... come into notoriety during the debates on the South African War... had spent the last few years in vilifying the workmen of North Bromwich generally, and their political idol in particular.<sup>348</sup>

Lloyd George frequently alluded disparagingly to the Brummagem connections of Colonial Secretary Chamberlain who had, he opined, planned, provoked and pursued the South African War. He also accused Birmingham’s political idol of having a vested interest in munitions, the War Office being supplied with cordite by Kynoch’s, the Birmingham firm in which Chamberlain had been a considerable shareholder.<sup>349</sup>

Lloyd George’s invitation to Birmingham Town Hall, popularly viewed as an insult to every loyal citizen, provoked threats of violence. On December 18<sup>th</sup> every building in the main streets around Victoria Square was boarded up in anticipation of riot.<sup>350</sup> In North

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<sup>345</sup> *Birmingham Daily Mail* (19.12.1901)

<sup>346</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 375

<sup>347</sup> *Birmingham Daily Mail* (19.12.1901)

<sup>348</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 373

<sup>349</sup> Owen, F. (1954) pp 102-109

<sup>350</sup> Owen, F. (1954) p 115

Bromwich equally this was a “meeting which popular feeling had proscribed.”<sup>351</sup> Entry to the Birmingham meeting was by ticket only. Holders of thousands of forged ticket, denied the Town Hall, crowded outside.

*Press:* The people of Birmingham had assembled in their thousands in the comparatively narrow space between the Town Hall and the Library.<sup>352</sup>

Comparable crowds occupied North Bromwich’s comparable space.

*Young:* A constriction in the traffic grew more acute as it reached the narrows in front of the town hall... Almost immediately Edwin found himself upon the fringes of an immense crowd.<sup>353</sup>

Lloyd George’s mere presence was sufficient to incite the fictional crowd. “The just indignation of North Bromwich had determined that he should not escape with his life.”<sup>354</sup> Fiction again follows fact. Disguised as a policeman, Lloyd George escaped from Birmingham Town Hall at the insistence of Chief Constable Rafter who was convinced that this troublesome visitor’s safety could no longer be guaranteed.<sup>355</sup>

Pent-up violence was released in both Birmingham and North Bromwich.

*Press:* The attack was accompanied by wild shouts and the noise of smashing windows... A rush was made by a body of young men on the wasteland in Margaret Street from which they obtained a fresh supply of ammunition.<sup>356</sup>

*Young:* A yell of extraordinary savagery rose... Men, women and children were streaming towards an area of slum that was being dismantled, returning with caps and hands and aprons full of stones and broken brick.<sup>357</sup>

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<sup>351</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 373

<sup>352</sup> *Birmingham Daily Mail* (19.12.1901)

<sup>353</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 372

<sup>354</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 373

<sup>355</sup> Owen, F. (1954) p 117

<sup>356</sup> *Birmingham Daily Mail* (19.12.1901)

<sup>357</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 374

Deviating momentarily, Young re-establishes degenerate North Bromwich with a reference to its vainglorious aspirations. The slum is being cleared not for improved housing, but “to make room for some monument of municipal grandeur.”<sup>358</sup>

Both fact and fiction describe the rapid escalation of violence and police deployment.

*Press:* Stones now began to come through the windows in quick succession. Police detachments... began to arrive. At each door were placed three or four police officers.<sup>359</sup>

Missiles of various kinds were rapidly forthcoming.<sup>360</sup>

*Young:* Soon the air was full of flying missiles... ragged holes were torn in the frosted glass of the town-hall windows. A body of police... marched by and planted themselves in front of all the doors... The volleys of stones increased as the supplies of ammunition grew more plentiful.<sup>361</sup>

In Birmingham and North Bromwich community singing broke out.

*Press:* Students and their friends sang a new setting of Sankey’s hymn, “Shall I meet you at the fountain?” “We’ll throw Lloyd George in the fountain and he won’t come to Brum anymore.”<sup>362</sup>

*Young:* People began to sing the revivalist hymn: ‘Shall we gather at the river?’ with words adapted for the occasion; “We’ll drown Lloyd George in the fountain, And he won’t come here any more.”<sup>363</sup>

Fact and fiction’s violent climax is reached with the breaching of the Town Hall.

*Press:* A portion of scaffold pole was procured and a rush made for Door B using the weapon as a battering ram ...A large body of police was stowed away in the Council House: another solid phalanx of uniformed men. Rafter gave the order to charge.<sup>364</sup>

The police laid about them vigorously with their batons.<sup>365</sup>

*Young:* A phalanx of University students had dragged an immense beam of oak from the debris of the dismantled slum and were hurling it forwards as a battering

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<sup>358</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 374

<sup>359</sup> *Birmingham Daily Mail* (19.12.1901)

<sup>360</sup> *Birmingham Daily Post* (19.12.1901)

<sup>361</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 374

<sup>362</sup> *Birmingham Daily Post* (19.12.1901)

<sup>363</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 374

<sup>364</sup> *Birmingham Daily Mail* (19.12.1901)

<sup>365</sup> *Birmingham Daily Post* (19.12.1901)

ram against one of the principal doors... Then the police, who had been held in reserve, charged, hitting out right and left with their loaded batons.<sup>366</sup>

That Young had indeed consulted press reports in writing this dramatic scene is further suggested by such minor detail as his choice of “phalanx” (the very word used by the *Mail* reporter for the police contingent) to describe the student group.

In this, the most detailed transference of one discrete historical event in the entire canon, Young exploits historical reality for his North Bromwich portrait. The young men who in Birmingham rushed to Margaret Street for fresh ammunition, become men, women and children in North Bromwich, where all are tainted. The wild shouts of the Birmingham crowd on degenerate North Bromwich lips become a yell of extraordinary savagery. Exaggerating the means of violence, the Birmingham scaffold pole, used as a battering ram, becomes an immense beam of oak in North Bromwich where one man is “caught up and it seemed, trampled to death”<sup>367</sup> as indeed Harold Curtin was fatally injured during the Birmingham riot.<sup>368</sup> In this episode, with its indisputable factual basis, only blind loyalty to Joe Chamberlain dubiously redeems North Bromwich where mob violence rules.

Young lampoons North Bromwich through its political life. Liberal Nonconformist standards are insidiously imposed in “daily worship in which our whole household, family and domestics, are expected voluntarily to join.”<sup>369</sup> Representing North Bromwich’s

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<sup>366</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 375

<sup>367</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 374

<sup>368</sup> In the final charge on Victoria Square, 18-year-old Harold Curtin of Lozells was knocked down, hitting his head on a kerbstone in Colmore Row. He was taken to the General Hospital where he died shortly after arrival. - *Birmingham Daily Post* (19.12.1901 & 20.12.1901)

<sup>369</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies*, p 162

politicians across the canon,<sup>370</sup> Sir Joseph Astill is Council arts spokesman with unenlightened pretensions. “Sir Joseph Astill, the brewer, made a speech that is unique in the whole history of art criticism.”<sup>371</sup> In North Bromwich the void separating manufacture and art is unmistakable. Crassly vulgar, Astill’s pedestrian utterances are memorable only for their prodigious ignorance. In his eagerness to praise North Bromwich, Astill unwittingly admits its inhabitants’ susceptibility to their disease-ridden environment. “In this city there are actually more hospital beds per centum of inhabitants than in any other and I am glad to say that very few of them are ever empty.”<sup>372</sup> Young’s fiction follows Burritt’s finding that “few towns of equal population equal Birmingham in ample and varied provision for the sick.”<sup>373</sup> Around the time of Astill’s North Bromwich speech, Birmingham’s General and Queen’s hospitals’ 527 beds were occupied by 7,511 in-patients in one year.<sup>374</sup> Comparative statistics however indicate that Birmingham did not excel amongst provincial industrial cities in providing hospital beds.

*Beds per 100 population:*<sup>375</sup>

	<b>1895</b>	<b>1908-1911</b>
Birmingham	0.26	0.31
Liverpool	0.22	0.37*
Manchester	0.28	0.41*
Nottingham	0.14	0.21
Sheffield	0.14	0.40

\*Estimated based on admissions for zymotic diseases

Liberal Nonconformists’ role in North Bromwich’s social conscience is ambivalent, funding “research into industrial diseases (such as brass-founder’s ague, to the incidence of which

<sup>370</sup> See p 146, footnote 190

<sup>371</sup> Young, F.B. (1915) *The Dark Tower*, p 49

<sup>372</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 239

<sup>373</sup> Burritt, E. (1868) p 88

<sup>374</sup> Lloyd, J.H. (1911) “The Hospitals” in Muirhead, J.H. (ed) (1911) p 145; *Birmingham Daily Post* (26.04.1907)

<sup>375</sup> *A Collection of Leaflets, Manuscript Letters Relating to the Birmingham General and Other Hospitals 1882-1899*; Birmingham Central Library Local Studies; Lloyd, J.H. (1911) pp 145; Information supplied by Liverpool Record Office; Manchester City Library; City of Nottingham Local Studies Library; Sheffield City Local Studies Library

they had contributed).”<sup>376</sup> Many of Birmingham’s enlightened Liberals directed metalworking businesses,<sup>377</sup> source of their employees’ illnesses. Skipp reports “brass ague”, the fever from which most brass workers suffered,<sup>378</sup> whilst Birmingham physician Sir Robert Simon (Sir Arthur Weldon in North Bromwich) was a leading expert in brass workers’ diseases.<sup>379</sup>

Clearly intended as the political hierarchy’s avatar, Astill enables the lampooning of North Bromwich. He has a college named after him and “aroused public feeling on the question of the university.”<sup>380</sup> In him Young merges the roles of Birmingham’s Josiah Mason and Joseph Chamberlain. Whereas Chamberlain became Birmingham University’s first Chancellor, Astill becomes North Bromwich’s Vice Chancellor<sup>381</sup> and receives in his lifetime the recognition that commemorated Mason only in death. Williamson’s statue of frock-coated Mason holding his college’s foundation deeds<sup>382</sup> becomes the “statue of Sir Joseph Astill in a frock coat and carrying a rolled umbrella on which the sculptor had lavished all the feeling of his art.”<sup>383</sup> A subtle change in the statue’s accessories serves to make both its subject and the city which sanctioned it slightly ridiculous. “The progressive spirit of North Bromwich found its incarnation in this fleshy gentleman,” ironically depicted as “the altruistic baronet,”<sup>384</sup> whose actions, it is therefore to be inferred, are anything but selfless. The point is also made through the mayor who inspects North Bromwich waterworks and, like Astill, has difficulty

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<sup>376</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies*, p 159

<sup>377</sup> E.g. G.H. Muntz at Muntz’s Metal Co - metal sheathing manufacturers of French Walls, Smethwick & Joseph Chamberlain at Nettlefolds – screw manufacturers of 18, Broad Street, Birmingham. - Gill, C. (1952) pp 206, 299, 386; *Kelly’s Directory of Birmingham* (1900)

<sup>378</sup> Skipp, V. (1996) p 88; Vince’s statistics show that in 1899 the incidence of tubercular related diseases in Birmingham was 5.6 per thousand. -Vince, C.A. (1902) p 131

<sup>379</sup> See pp 362-363

<sup>380</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 238

<sup>381</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, pp 286,290

<sup>382</sup> Mason died in 1891; F.G. Williamson’s marble statue, funded by public subscription, was unveiled in Edmund Street in 1895. - Jones, B. (1995) *Josiah Mason 1795-1881 Birmingham’s Benevolent Benefactor*, Studley, Brewin Books, p 113

<sup>383</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 240

<sup>384</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 238

with his aspirates.<sup>385</sup> “The Mayor was immensely affable. That port, in particular, was excellent. As a grocer, he knew what port was. That wasn’t Tarragona at one and eight a bottle.”<sup>386</sup>

Cannadine<sup>387</sup> rightly states that neither Joseph Chamberlain, nor Charles Gabriel Beale (Mayor at the Elan Valley visit and University Vice Chancellor) fit the picture of vulgar business men. It is, however, inappropriate to conclude that Astill and his cohorts are creatures of complete fantasy. Their antecedents are clearly visible in such Birmingham politicians as Alderman James Brinsley, defeated by Chamberlain in 1873’s elections, and described by Skipp as “an uncouth local grocer whose influence was based on the good fellowship of the public house.”<sup>388</sup> Young’s politicians may be caricatures, but they reflect North Bromwich. Transposing the crudities of an earlier Birmingham political generation, which bore little resemblance to the dedication and finesse of its later Nonconformist elite, exposes Young’s North Bromwich agenda. A town capable of electing graceless and unenlightened representatives is unquestionably benighted and superficial itself. Though patently suiting his bias in highlighting utilitarian crassitude, Young’s portrait of North Bromwich’s political life, politicians and Civic Gospel unquestionably builds upon earlier Birmingham reality.

Chapter Three’s exploration of Young’s detailed and specific North Bromwich portraits reveals his effectiveness in evoking realistic and accurate scenes. Birmingham’s geography and typography are definitively transferred to North Bromwich via the grand scale

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<sup>385</sup> Young, F.B. (1913) *Undergrowth*, pp 170, 172; (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 556

<sup>386</sup> Young, F.B. (1913) *Undergrowth*, p 174

<sup>387</sup> Cannadine, D. (1982) p 34

<sup>388</sup> Skipp, Victor (1993) p 161



of geology and climatology – Keuper sandstone and summer storms – and the minutiae of streets and buildings – road construction and distinctive architecture. North Bromwich's evolution reflects Birmingham's history. Lloyd George's Town Hall visit provokes well-documented riots in fiction and fact. With the addition of Astill's to a list of well-known brewers, Birmingham fact is skilfully interwoven with North Bromwich fiction. Young draws upon personal experience of Birmingham life – his patients' back-to-back homes – and introduces contemporary Birmingham news items, such as the Soho Strikes, into his current writing.

The authenticity of Young's detailed and specific North Bromwich portrait is confirmed by written and pictorial sources. Newspaper reports, such as that of Birmingham Corporation's 1900 Elan Valley visit, illustrate his reliance upon contemporary documentation. Pictorial evidence, like that confirming point duty at Stephenson Place, authenticates hypotyposis. In such specific particularities as the design of North Bromwich street lighting, with which Parkes and Allen concur, North Bromwich continues to resonate with other fictional Birmingham portraits. As in the general, so in the specific, Young's bias continues in the urban versus rural conflict. North Bromwich civic leaders are lampooned for ignorance, hypocrisy and philistinism. Though obviously selectively written to reinforce Young's chosen North Bromwich reality, sufficient historical evidence exists for such portraits to preclude their summary dismissal. Occasional historical lapses, such as the knighting of the waterworks' engineer, make a deliberate point.

Despite such bias, North Bromwich, reflecting its Birmingham original, remains a mighty city. From inauspicious beginnings, North Bromwich's growth and development

replicates Birmingham's. Both are centres to which regional populations turn and migrate. Through his North Bromwich portrait, Young shows Birmingham's influence reaching beyond the Midlands to a world-wide map. He tells, in a reader-friendly manner, a parallel story to that of Birmingham's historians, which is both complementary and confirmatory. Thus, in its geographical location, commercial, civic and political activity Young portrays "the mighty heart of North Bromwich whose pulsations gave life."<sup>389</sup>

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<sup>389</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 343

**FRANCIS BRETT YOUNG'S BIRMINGHAM**

*North Bromwich – City of Iron*

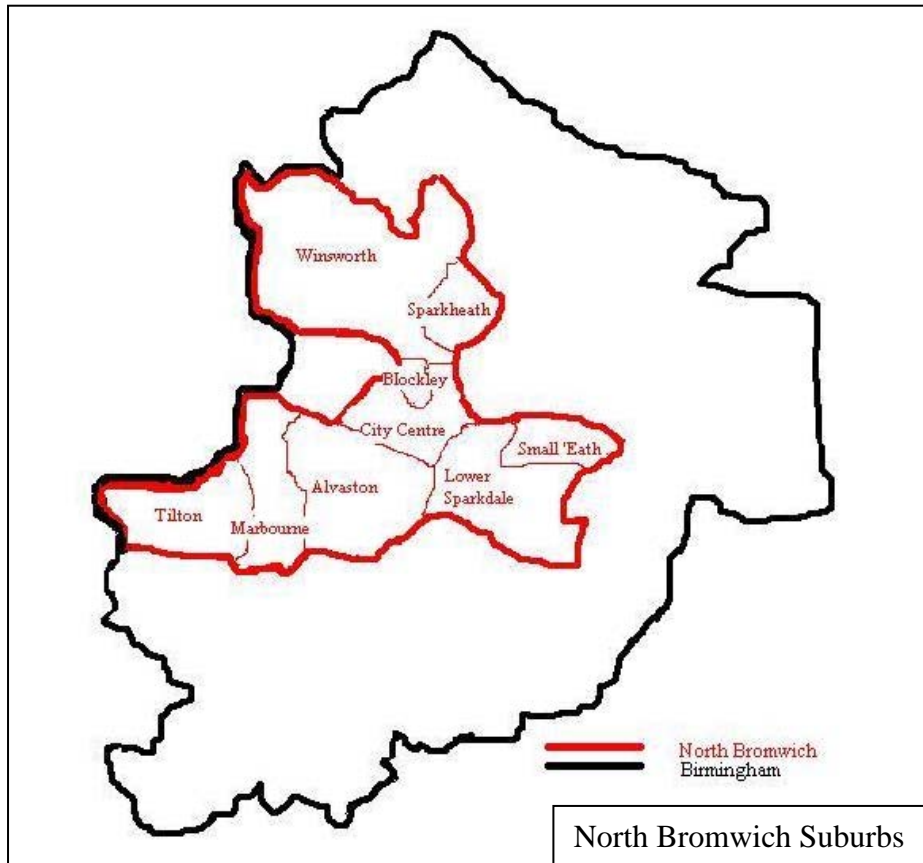
**CHAPTER FOUR**

**THE SUBURBS**

The inhabitants of North Bromwich... in the vindication of a Municipal Conscience... periodically extend the area over which their coat of arms is displayed.

Francis Brett Young - *The Young Physician*

Though North Bromwich city centre closely mirrors Birmingham, fact covers a wider area than fiction. In North Bromwich “on the south and north-east were several growing suburbs”<sup>1</sup> but these are never identified. Birmingham’s north, east and south districts (Perry Barr, Erdington, Stechford, Yardley, Hall Green, Selly Oak, Northfield) are all missing from North Bromwich which is largely confined to the western segment of Greater Birmingham. Of North Bromwich’s eight named suburbs<sup>2</sup> three (Small 'Eath, Marbourne and Sparkheath) have only passing references. Three more (Blockley, Winsworth and Lower Sparkdale) are described in some detail. The remaining two (Alvaston and Tilton) are extensively depicted with explicitly interpretive accuracy.



<sup>1</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 303

<sup>2</sup> Sutton Vesey, substituting the name of Sutton Coldfield’s principal benefactor, Bishop Vesey (John Harman c1465-1554) to confirm its intended identity is also briefly mentioned in Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 393. However Sutton Coldfield did not become a suburb in the same sense as the other eight considered here until merging with Birmingham Metropolitan District in 1974, long after the end of the North Bromwich era. - Jones, D.V. (1984) *The Royal Town of Sutton Coldfield*, Sutton Coldfield, Westwood Publications, pp 23-24, 176

Among Birmingham suburbs replicated in North Bromwich Small Heath uniquely retains its original name. Throughout the canon, North Bromwich speech is frequently unaspirated<sup>3</sup> and in its sole appearance Small 'Eath<sup>4</sup> is similarly modified by “that too dreadfully evident North Bromwich twang.”<sup>5</sup> Obviously homophonous with Harborne is Marbourne.<sup>6</sup> A railway link with North Bromwich centre via “the Marbourne branch line”<sup>7</sup> suggests the Harborne branch operating from LNWR’s Birmingham to Wolverhampton line.<sup>8</sup> Parkes highlights the identical feature in Mettingham where Harborne becomes Worburn.<sup>9</sup> The only named suburb in Young’s first novel, when the technique of relating fictional names to factual counterparts was undeveloped, is Sparkheath, mentioned only once more throughout the canon.<sup>10</sup> North Bromwich’s Sparkheath is not, as might be anticipated, Birmingham’s Sparkhill or Sparkbrook. Rather, as the location of Astill’s Brewery, Sparkheath represents Aston, during the North Bromwich era home of Birmingham’s Ansell’s Brewery, which Astill’s clearly replicates.<sup>11</sup>

That North Bromwich boundaries are confined to Birmingham’s westerly segment is indicative of the area of Greater Birmingham most familiar to Young. The suburbs he describes in detail are those which came within his personal experience. Fictional Tilton<sup>12</sup> is

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<sup>3</sup> E.g. Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 439; (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 190; (1935) *White Ladies*, p 236

<sup>4</sup> Young, F.B. (1940) *Mr Lucton’s Freedom*, p 98

<sup>5</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 738

<sup>6</sup> E.g. Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 302

<sup>7</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, 478

<sup>8</sup> Price, V. J. (1994) *Harborne Remembered*, Studley, Brewin Books, p 48

<sup>9</sup> Parkes, W. K. (1914) p 85

<sup>10</sup> Young, F.B. (1913) *Undergrowth*, p 88; (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 28

<sup>11</sup> See pp 146-147; Ansell & Sons Ltd, Brewers & Maltsters, 47, 49, 51, Park Road, Aston – see *Kelly’s Directory of Birmingham* (1900)

<sup>12</sup> The name suggests the Leicestershire village of Tilton-on-the-Hill, undoubtedly familiar to Young through visits to his maternal grandparents’ home in nearby Somerby. Though there are Birmingham links via the Digby family, whose family seat was at Tilton, and who acquired Small Heath land once owned by the Holte family, a much more likely reason for Young’s choice of the name for Quinton is explored on pp 200-201. Young’s grandparents, Dr & Mrs Jackson of Somerby, appear as Dr & Mrs Weston of Thorpe Folville in Young, F.B.

factual Quinton, straddling the Hales Owen to Birmingham road along which Young passed on his earliest journeys into the city. Most of Tilton's features were visible from that road. Lower Sparkdale, which includes Birmingham's Bordesley, Camp Hill, Sparkbrook and Sparkhill, is traversed by GWR's Birmingham to London line along which Young made regular schoolboy journeys en route for Epsom College.<sup>13</sup> Significantly, Lower Sparkdale is largely bounded by the view from public transport. Blockley (Hockley and the Jewellery Quarter) and Winsworth (Handsworth and Winson Green) came within Young's orbit in 1907 when he worked as locum to Dr William McCall who lived in Nursery Road and practised in Great Hampton Row, Hockley.<sup>14</sup> North Bromwich's Alvaston is Birmingham's Edgbaston, where Young lodged with Gertrude Dale in Harborne Road. It was at Hagley Road's Edgbaston Assembly Rooms that Francis met his future wife, Jessie Hankinson.<sup>15</sup> Five members of "The Octette", Young's closest university friends, had Edgbaston addresses.<sup>16</sup>

Expanding North Bromwich, with its road and rail infrastructure and wide residential spectrum, never approaches the size of expanding Birmingham. However, this chapter shows that Young's personal experience and observation guarantee that North Bromwich's suburbs, homes and public transport accurately and graphically portray their Birmingham originals.

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(1930) *Jim Redlake*. See Hall, M. (1997) p 25; Chinn, C. (2003) *The Streets of Brum* Part One, Studley, Brewin books, pp 112-114

<sup>13</sup> Young was a pupil at Epsom College from 1895 to 1901 – see pp 9-10

<sup>14</sup> Young acted as locum to William McCall [residence: 13 Nursery Road; practice: 26 Great Hampton Row – *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham* (1907)] in August 1907 – see p 10

<sup>15</sup> Young, J.B. (1962) p 25

<sup>16</sup> Laurence Ball, 17 Rotton Park Road; Lionel Chattock Hayes, 20 Carpenter Road; Humphrey Francis Humphreys, 26 Clarendon Road; Bertram Arthur Lloyd, 279 Hagley Road; Edward Selby Phipson, 13 Lyttleton Road – Dean's Register for Birmingham Medical School cited in Bridgewater, D. (1998) p 35

## Blockley, Jewellers' Quarter, Winsworth, Lower Sparkdale

Like Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter located within Hockley, North Bromwich's Jewellers' Quarter lies in Blockley. Precise detail and topographical congruity corroborate fiction. North Bromwich "jewellers' curved benches... where sheets were slung beneath their knees to catch the least falling fragment"<sup>17</sup> accurately replicate their Birmingham originals.



Jewellery-Maker's Workbench

Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter occupies Hockley's southern hemisphere, rising in a north-west direction from the bottom of Constitution Hill,<sup>18</sup> where the brook from which Water Street is named once powered Matthew Boulton's factory.<sup>19</sup> North Bromwich Jewellers' Quarter lies to the south of Blockley's bisecting main road covering "the slopes of the hillside above Boulton's Brook in a small-meshed network of streets."<sup>20</sup> Where Boulton's works once stood North Bromwich shops selling cowheels, wheelks and winkles reproduce, from Birmingham's identical location, shops which included a butcher and fishmonger.<sup>21</sup> Fiction's working-class houses in which "smoke with which the forest of neighbouring chimneys saddened the sky," include "congeries of courts"<sup>22</sup> reminiscent of Hockley's Kenyon Street with its back-to-back housing and neighbouring rolling mill.<sup>23</sup> In North Bromwich "the fried-fish shops of Blockley"<sup>24</sup> entirely resonate with Birmingham where, at a similar period,

<sup>17</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 250

<sup>18</sup> Cattell, J, Ely, S, & Jones, B. (2002) *The Birmingham Jewellery Quarter*, Swindon, English Heritage, pp 1-3

<sup>19</sup> See p 141

<sup>20</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 249-250

<sup>21</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 226-227 At Snow Hill's intersection with Water Street, a row of twelve shops from 72-86 included John Bell, butcher (75) & David Hurd, fishmonger (83) - *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham* (1884)

<sup>22</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 227, 249

<sup>23</sup> OS *Warwickshire Sheet XIV.1* (1917)

<sup>24</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 865

thirty-eight of the city's 376 fried-fish shops were located within twenty-three Hockley streets.<sup>25</sup> Birmingham's first General Hospital occupied a site in Summer Lane.<sup>26</sup> North Bromwich's first Infirmary "stood high on the farther slope overlooking this Tartarean valley."<sup>27</sup>

In North Bromwich's Jewellers' Quarter is "a little square, the existence of which one would never have suspected in this plague-stricken warren and in the middle of the square a small Georgian church."<sup>28</sup> Contrasting with the back-to-back homes and workshops of the immediate vicinity, St Paul's Square, laid out around the church in the 1770s, was designed for Birmingham's wealthy merchants and industrialists.<sup>29</sup> However, in the mid-nineteenth century many of its houses became workshops.<sup>30</sup> In the North Bromwich square "are only two shops, the pawnbroker's and the second-hand furniture place in the corner."<sup>31</sup> Again fiction follows fact. Amid the early twentieth century manufacturers of St Paul's Square, at the corner of Mary Ann Street, William Cruikshank had the only shop and though the square

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<sup>25</sup> Hockley's fried-fish shop proprietors were: Arthur Mason, 92 Albion St; John Titcombe, 173 Barr St; George Hope, 4 Branstons St; John Clarke, 67 Camden St; William Oakley, 8 Charlotte St; John Titcombe, 105 Constitution Hill; Kate Dudley, 21 Farm St; William Grady, 121 Farm St; George Cross, 233 Farm St; George Rushton, 252 Farm St; Ezekiel Clarke, 343 Farm St; William Blower, 150 Gt Hampton Row; Alfred Moseley, 239 Gt Russell St; John Smith, 58 Hampton St; Walter Phillips, 114 Hampton St; William Gregory, 80 Hockley Hill; William Wallis, 124 Hockley St; Albert Shipley, 232 Hospital St; Joseph Marshall, 141 Icknield St; John Longmore, 150 Icknield St; Samuel Fisher, 180 Icknield St; James Turney, 205 Icknield St; John Coe, 65 Kenyon St; George Hancock, 309 New John St W; Charles White, 192 Newhall St; John Longmore, 8 Parade; Henry Matthews, 31 Parade; Henry Mackenzie, 81 Park Rd; George Miles, 408 Park Rd; Charles Powell, 28 Summer Lane; Jane Watts, 64 Summer Lane; Frederick Edmunds, 127 Summer Lane; Albert Kench, 246 Summer Lane; Sarah Parker, 278 Summer Lane; Oliver Slaughter, 352 Summer Lane; George Plummer, 71 Villa St; George Graham, 102 Warstone Lane; Harry Bowers, 209 Well Street – *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham* (1913)

<sup>26</sup> Chinn, C. (2004) *The Streets of Brum*, Part Two, Studley, Brewin Books, pp 116-117

<sup>27</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 227

<sup>28</sup> Young, F.B. (1914) *The Dark Tower*, pp 40-41

<sup>29</sup> Cattell, J, et al. (2002) p 8

<sup>30</sup> Gledhill, A. (1988) *Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter*, Studley, Brewin Books, p 17

<sup>31</sup> Young, F.B. (1914) *The Dark Tower*, p 42



housed no pawnbroker, the Equitable Loan Company provided finance.<sup>32</sup> Many Birmingham jewellers had workshops in attics over communal wash-houses in the city's back-to-back courtyards.<sup>33</sup> In North Bromwich these become "grimy workshops approached by dim passages and rickety wooden stairways."<sup>34</sup> Unusually, in describing North Bromwich jewellers, Young avoids the negative imagery readily available in the maxim "Give a Birmingham maker a guinea and a copper kettle and he'll make £100 of jewellery,"<sup>35</sup> or Showell's disparaging view that "the most hideous conceits imaginable characterized the jewellery designs of Birmingham" in the Great Exhibition of 1851.<sup>36</sup> As has been shown,<sup>37</sup> Young readily transposed a deprecatory portrayal of earlier Birmingham into later North Bromwich in order to sustain bias. Here, however, in a rare expression of approbation for Birmingham, Young aligns himself with Cattell, Ely and Jones, who emphasize the jewellers' skill, and Gledhill, who shows the training needed for Birmingham's apprentice jewellers to acquire that skill.<sup>38</sup> Anticipating Briggs' picture of Hockley craftsmen, "delicate appliances and deft hands putting together works of art,"<sup>39</sup> in North Bromwich "bleached men ... achieved miracles of delicacy in the mounting of diamonds, rubies, sapphires and emeralds."<sup>40</sup> The jeweller's pallor underlines not only the workshops' dust-laden atmosphere, but also the workers' exposure to toxic fumes from mercury used in the gilding process.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> William Cruikshank, shop keeper (10) & Equitable Loan Company (42) are included amongst the fifteen small metalworkers and twenty-six jewellers of St Paul's Square in 1909 – *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham* (1909)

<sup>33</sup> Wright, J.S. "The Jewellery and Gilt-Toy Trades" in Timmins, S. (1866) *The Resources, Products and Industrial History of Birmingham and the Midland Hardware District: A Series of Reports*, London, Robert Hardwicke, p 454

<sup>34</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 250

<sup>35</sup> Chinn, C. (2001) p 44

<sup>36</sup> Showell, W. (1885) *Showell's Dictionary of Birmingham*, Birmingham, Cornish Bros, p 319

<sup>37</sup> See p 172

<sup>38</sup> Cattell, J., et al. (2002) pp 41-47; Gledhill, A. (1988) pp 38-43

<sup>39</sup> Briggs, A. (1952) p 40

<sup>40</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 250

<sup>41</sup> Heslop, T.P. (1866) "The Medical Aspects of Birmingham" in Timmins, S. (1866) p 693; Mason, S. (1998) *Jewellery Making in Birmingham 1750-1995*, Chichester, Phillimore, p 42

Opprobrium is never far away in the North Bromwich canon and though Young at first intimates that this Blockley square is a welcome contrast to its squalid surroundings, he soon reveals that “the Square was badly lighted, and all round it dull, squat houses crouched... people swarm in closed courts like blowflies on carrion.”<sup>42</sup> Actual residents’ memories add credence to the picture. Thorne (born: Hockley, 1857) recalls its “ugly houses and cobbly, neglected streets.”<sup>43</sup> Dayus (born: Hockley, 1903) repeatedly authenticates Young’s portrait. “No-one had a garden, not a blade of grass... the whole area was a warren... overcrowded back-to-back bug-infested hovels.”<sup>44</sup> Smith catalogues 1930s Hockley as “dirty little houses... cramped yards... never-ending smell of factories.”<sup>45</sup> Such memories reveal only part of the whole. Already cited,<sup>46</sup> Hockley community spirit appreciated by Dayus is acknowledged by Smith. He applauds courageous parental determination in maintaining decent life-styles for children and asserts, “One things most people of ’Ockley Brook had in common was a real helping hand in trouble.”<sup>47</sup> This reality has no role in North Bromwich. For Young with his rural proclivity, despite admiration of the jewellers’ skill, Blockley, as North Bromwich suburb, must remain unsavoury.

North-west of Birmingham city centre, beyond Hockley and the Jewellery Quarter, lie Winson Green and Handsworth. In North Bromwich “beyond the jewellers’ quarter and Blockley... through the wilderness of brick that stretched north-westward,”<sup>48</sup> conflating the names of Winson Green and Handsworth, lies Winsworth (once, presumably a slip of the pen,

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<sup>42</sup> Young, F.B. (1914) *The Dark Tower*, p 42

<sup>43</sup> Thorne, W. (1925) p 14

<sup>44</sup> Dayus, K. (1982) p 5; (1985) p 116; (2000) p 116

<sup>45</sup> Smith, R. (n.d.) *A Paddle in Hockley Brook*, Brierley Hill, Weldon Press, p 60

<sup>46</sup> See pp 114

<sup>47</sup> Smith, R. (n.d.) pp 39, 163

<sup>48</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 865; (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 216

called Winsford<sup>49</sup>). “The mid-Victorian suburb of Winsworth”<sup>50</sup> clearly replicates Handsworth, which grew from a population of 6,138 in 1841 to 55,269 in 1901.<sup>51</sup>

Fictional detail evokes fact. North Bromwich’s Sackville Row to Winsworth tramway begins its journey “downhill” before joining the North West Road.<sup>52</sup> Birmingham’s tramline from Colmore Row to Handsworth descends Snow Hill, eventually joining Holyhead Road,<sup>53</sup> part of Telford’s route from London via Birmingham to Anglesey in the North West.<sup>54</sup> Other Winsworth road names are equally suggestive of their originals. Whereas Handsworth commemorates its famous resident engineer with Watt Street, Winsworth makes the same acknowledgement with James Watt Street.<sup>55</sup> Lozells Road, linking Handsworth with neighbouring Aston, retains the same name in Winsworth.<sup>56</sup> As travellers joined North Bromwich trains at Winsworth station,<sup>57</sup> so Handsworth passengers travelled to Birmingham’s New Street from Soho Road or to Snow Hill from Booth Street.<sup>58</sup> When first opened in 1888, Birmingham-Handsworth cable tramway ran only as far as Hockley Brook, being extended to New Inns in 1889. When Birmingham Corporation took over the tramways in 1911, replacing cable trams with electric cars, the Handsworth service was extended to the

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<sup>49</sup> Young, F.B. (1936) *Far Forest*, p 262

<sup>50</sup> Young, F.B. (1934) *This Little World*, p 558

<sup>51</sup> Elrington, C.R. & Tillott, P.M. (1964) p 16

<sup>52</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, pp 865, 873

<sup>53</sup> Mayou, A., Barker, T., Stanford, J. (1982) *Birmingham Corporation Trams and Trolleybuses*, Glossop, The Transport Publishing Co., insert map

<sup>54</sup> Hackwood, F.W. (2001) *Handsworth Old and New*, Studley, Brewin Books, pp 3-4

<sup>55</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 865. James Watt lived in Handsworth from 1774 until his death in 1819 – Gill, C. (1952) p 107. Watt Street, Handsworth runs between Booth Street and Alexandra Road – OS *Staffordshire Sheet* 68.15 (1889).

<sup>56</sup> OS *Warwickshire Sheets* 7.16 & 8.13, (1917); Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, p 193

<sup>57</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 556; (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 679

<sup>58</sup> Booth Street GWR Station opened in 1854; Soho Road LNWR Station opened in 1889; both stations closed in 1940s. - Price, V.J. (1992) p 44

West Bromwich boundary at the Woodman Inn.<sup>59</sup> Similarly in early twentieth century North Bromwich, Winsworth passengers travel on “the extension of the municipal tramways.”<sup>60</sup> 1911 also brought Handsworth’s two-year old Oxhill Road Cemetery under Birmingham’s control,<sup>61</sup> whilst in North Bromwich a comparable facility existed in “the new cemetery at Winsworth Green.”<sup>62</sup> In Winson Green in 1849 Birmingham opened its borough gaol, its façade resembling a Tudor fortress, followed three years later by a new workhouse.<sup>63</sup> In Winsworth are to be found both the North Bromwich Workhouse<sup>64</sup> and City Gaol with its “unscaleable coping... high brick wall.”<sup>65</sup> Winsworth’s c1900 pawnshop into which “a few poorly-dressed people slunk furtively,”<sup>66</sup> represents Handsworth’s twenty-five contemporary establishments.<sup>67</sup>

In fiction, the pollution which Young considers endemic in North Bromwich extends to “unfashionable... ghastly... dreary” Winsworth’s “dingy streets” and “grimmed brick.”<sup>68</sup> “The narrow preoccupations of urban life” are compensated by “cheap lodgings in Winsworth,” where “streets once respectable now survived as a sump into which the less

<sup>59</sup> Hardy, P.L. & Jacques, P. (1971) pp 9, 39

<sup>60</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 865

<sup>61</sup> Vince, C. (1923) p 390; Price, V.J. (1992) p 81

<sup>62</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 216

<sup>63</sup> Elrington, C.R. (1964b) “Local Government and Public Services” in Stephens, W.B. (ed.) (1964) pp 322, 338

<sup>64</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 148

<sup>65</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 531

<sup>66</sup> Young, F.B. (1936) *Far Forest*, p 271

<sup>67</sup> Handsworth’s pawnbrokers were: Jane Lees, 45 Aberdeen St; Henry Pope, 46 Allen’s Rd; Thomas Robinson, 113-115 Booth St; Joseph Moody, 37 Brearley St; Francis Ellis, 79 Cuthbert Rd; Susannah Ward, 186 Dudley Rd; William Riley, 405 Dudley Rd; James Parsons, 462-464 Dudley Rd; Alfred Smith, 86 George St W; Edith Watson, 1-2 Harding St; Sarah Mence, 8 Heath St; George Pomfret, 164 Heath St; Charles Reader, 284 Heath St; George Devall, 145 Lodge Rd; John Comley, 50 New Spring St; Frank Robinson, 36 Nineveh Rd; Thomas Binns, 67 Payton Rd; Henry Stokes, 33 Peel St; Frederick Scott, 44 Perrot St; Mary Ross, 269 Soho Rd; Rosa Smith, 24 Spring Hill; Mary Shaw, 35 Spring Hill; Edith Dixon, 153 Watville Rd; Fanny Thompson, 56 Wellington St; Alfred Jeynes, 149 Winson Green Rd – *Kelly’s Directory of Birmingham* (1900)

<sup>68</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, pp 865, 868; (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, pp 82, 176

successful of the middle classes subsided helplessly as by gravitation.”<sup>69</sup> What may appear Young’s biased exaggeration actually occupies the middle ground between Parkes’ “vileness... wickedness... and discontent which seethed in the working population of Metlingham Heath”<sup>70</sup> and Dayus’s “Handsworth... a solidly middle-class district of quiet streets.”<sup>71</sup> Hackwood, allowing industrial surroundings, excepts Handsworth, “a residential oasis in the midst of a vast smoky wilderness.”<sup>72</sup> However, he admits that “its population, imported rather than native, attracted to the spot chiefly, if not solely by economic reasons... (is) moved by no common interest except... a comparative cheapness of living.”<sup>73</sup> Boulton’s evocative portrayal of life in a comfortable, middle-class Handsworth home, cultured and musical, presents an (untypical) alternative. Her father was Chairman of Handsworth UDC and Mildred (like Young<sup>74</sup>) and her siblings produced their own magazine in the nursery. Nevertheless, for her to be born in Birmingham, with its smoke, smog and factories is disadvantageous.<sup>75</sup> In a later generation, Smith recalls Winson Green’s stable population with strong community feeling: people born, married, employed and entertained in the locality where several generations of their family lived.<sup>76</sup> It remains Hackwood’s assessment with which Young’s Winsworth portrait coincides.

Lower Sparkdale is identified by the tram route connecting it with North Bromwich centre “through a succession of sordid streets, past the public abattoirs and the newly-opened

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<sup>69</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, pp 193, 82; (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 865

<sup>70</sup> Parkes, W. K. (1914) pp 182, 168; Metlingham Heath = Birmingham Heath (Handsworth)

<sup>71</sup> Dayus, K. (1985) p 198

<sup>72</sup> Hackwood, F.W. (2001) p 129

<sup>73</sup> Hackwood, F.W. (2001) p 161

<sup>74</sup> Hall, M. (1997) p 31

<sup>75</sup> Boulton, M. (1993) *As I Remember*, Private Publication, Introduction, pp 21, 39, 171-172

<sup>76</sup> Smith, G. (1997) p 51

Rowton House, to Lower Sparkdale.”<sup>77</sup> From Birmingham’s Station Street terminus the factual tramway followed Hurst Street, Bromsgrove Street and Moat Row before turning into Bradford Street and passing the city’s slaughterhouses between Sherlock Street East and Rea Street. The route crossed Alcester Street, where Princess Christian of Schleswig-Holstein laid the foundation stone of Rowton House in June 1903.<sup>78</sup> The tramway then veered right into Camp Hill, past Holy Trinity Church into Stratford Road, through Sparkbrook to Sparkhill.<sup>79</sup> In North Bromwich “at this point the slum ended, resolving itself into the edge of a growing suburb of red brick. Number 563 was a corner house.”<sup>80</sup> So in Birmingham where 563 Stratford Road occupied the corner of newly developed Ivor Road.<sup>81</sup>

Young’s limited references to Lower Sparkdale’s employment opportunities – barmaid, brass-founder, button-maker<sup>82</sup> – all have factual possibilities. On Stratford Road between Camp Hill and Sparkhill were four establishments selling beer.<sup>83</sup> Within half-a-mile were twenty brass foundries<sup>84</sup> and within a mile two button works.<sup>85</sup> Lower Sparkdale’s

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<sup>77</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 414

<sup>78</sup> Vince, C.A. (1923) p 493

<sup>79</sup> OS *Warwickshire Sheet* XIV.5 (1912); XIV.9 (1916); XIV.10 (1904)

<sup>80</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 414

<sup>81</sup> Ivor Road, unlisted in 1901 had 21 residents in unnumbered houses in 1903. By 1905 the road extended from Stratford Road to Stony Lane with houses numbered from 2-162 on the right and 1-143 on the left. Also by 1905, no 563 Stratford Road had been renumbered to 621. - *Kelly’s Directory of Birmingham* (1901,1903,1905)

<sup>82</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 439; (1936) *Far Forest*, p 239

<sup>83</sup> Alfred Mason, Beer Retailer, 56-58 Stratford Rd; Victoria Inn, 189-193 Stratford Rd; Angel Inn, 207-209 Stratford Rd; Mary Mervyn, Beer retailer, 343 Stratford Rd - *Kelly’s Directory of Birmingham* (1900)

<sup>84</sup> Millward & Co, 161 Alcester St; Crofts & Assinder, 138 Angelina St; Bolton Novelty Co, 176-178 Bolton Rd; Albert Partridge, 8 Charles Henry St; Smart & Parker Ltd, 209 Cheapside; Adam Clarke, 274 Cooksey Rd; Phillips & Rabone, 31 Darwin St; Henry Clews, 67 Darwin St; Charles Kibby, 16 Hollier St; Chinn & Co, 5-6 Leopold St; May & Padmore, 119-123 Leopold St; Samuel Heath & Sons Ltd, Leopold St; Sanders, Son & Payne Ltd, Leopold St; Henry Ellaway, 48-52 Lombard St; Burman & Co, 54 Lombard St; Tonks Ltd, 201 Moseley St; Harcourts Ltd, 223 Moseley St; John Bone, 14 Spark St; Alfred Spear, 58 Stanhope St; George Platt, 16 Vaughton St – *Kelly’s Directory of Birmingham* (1900)

<sup>85</sup> Joseph Ball, 26 Hawkes St; William Small, 119, Wright St - *Kelly’s Directory of Birmingham* (1900)

button factory's "ammoniacal fumes of burnt bone and horn"<sup>86</sup> suggest Young's recollections of Hales Owen's James Grove & Co<sup>87</sup> with its similar pervasive aroma.

Throughout the North Bromwich canon, Lower Sparkdale is generally unprepossessing: "pretty awful slum... cramped quarter... god-forsaken hole."<sup>88</sup> Nationally, Bédarida indicates the uniform appearance of urban houses, monotonously resembling each-another in design and size.<sup>89</sup> Similarly Birmingham's Sparkbrook/Sparkhill architectural development is unenthusiastically appraised by city historians. Wise and Thorpe identify monotonous rows of uniform houses;<sup>90</sup> Briggs recognises "rows and rows of anaemic looking houses, depressingly uniform;"<sup>91</sup> Chinn regrets soulless miles of tunnel-back houses in straight, tree-less roads.<sup>92</sup> The cartographer's view of successive, almost parallel roads extending northwards from St Paul's Road to Bradford Street confirms such interpretations.<sup>93</sup> Collins' Birchampton features in "the lower part of the smoky town a perfect forest of chimney-pots... dingy houses... broken windows and damp walls... unutterably dreary."<sup>94</sup> Young's portrait tells the same story, includes North Bromwich's perpetual wreath of industrial fog, and yet discovers poetry in the skyline.

Lower Sparkdale commanded, to northward, a series of parallel ridges crowned with slated roofs, fringes of chimney-pots and factory smoke-stacks: a wide

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<sup>86</sup> Young, F.B. (1936) *Far Forest*, p 239

<sup>87</sup> James Grove opened a button factory in Birmingham Street, Hales Owen in 1857, transferring to Stourbridge Road, Hales Owen in 1867 – Hunt, J. (2004) p 48

<sup>88</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 413; (1921) *The Black Diamond*, p 38; (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 190

<sup>89</sup> Bédarida, F. (1991) p 19

<sup>90</sup> Wise, M.J. & Thorpe, P. O'N. (1950) p 224

<sup>91</sup> Briggs, A. (1952) p 138

<sup>92</sup> Chinn, C. (1999) p 53

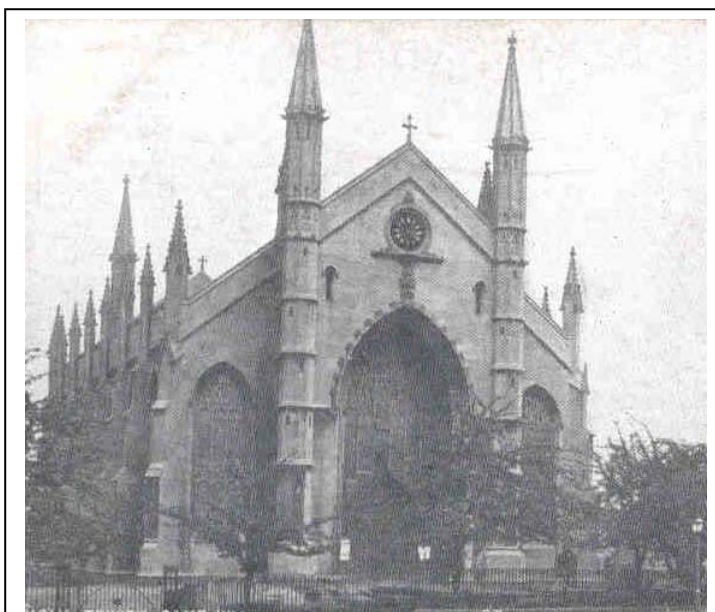
<sup>93</sup> To the west of Stratford Rd streets running east-west between St Paul's Rd and Bradford St are: Oldfield Rd, Ombersley Rd, Highgate Rd, Turner St, Larches St, Long St, Main St, Priestley Rd, Erasmus Rd, Auckland Rd, Stratford Pl and Ravenhurst St – OS *Warwickshire Sheet XIV.9* (1916)

<sup>94</sup> Collins, M. (1896) p 158

landscape (or brickscape) that, blurred by drifting vapours, attained in its culminations a grandeur like that of mountains magnified by mist.<sup>95</sup>

However, in “the forest of brick called Lower Sparkdale... all the parks lay miles away over the streets and the only green was the grass that grew within the railings of an ugly Georgian church once fashionable but now neglected and unkempt.”<sup>96</sup> Though Young might here be accused of manipulating truth to suit his portrait, from built-up Camp Hill/Stratford Road the neighbourhood’s long-established parks were effectively hidden. Highgate Park lay to the north west, Victoria Park to the east and the private parkland of “The Farm” in central Sparkbrook.<sup>97</sup> Consecrated in

1823, Holy Trinity Church Bordesley, its adjacent burial ground closed in 1862, occupied a square at the top of Camp Hill. Its surrounding railings are visible in this early twentieth century photograph. Fiction’s grimy brick of Lower Sparkdale<sup>98</sup> is suggested



Holy Trinity Church, Bordesley, c 1914

in fact by Holy Trinity’s curate-in-charge, C.H. Poynton, who described his parish as “grimy”.<sup>99</sup> By the 1880s, Chinn indicates, Sparkbrook’s houses mostly had their own

<sup>95</sup> Young, F.B. (1936) *Far Forest*, pp 240-241

<sup>96</sup> Young, F.B. (1936) *Far Forest*, p 239; (1921) *The Black Diamond*, p 38

<sup>97</sup> Birmingham acquired Highgate Park, located between Alcester Rd & Moseley Rd, to the south of Rowton House, in 1876. Small Heath Park, located between Coventry Rd & Waverley Rd, Wordsworth Rd & Tennyson Rd, renamed Victoria Park to commemorate the Queen’s Golden Jubilee visit to Birmingham, was acquired in 1879. “The Farm”, Sampson Rd home of banking family Lloyds, was gifted to the city council as Farm Park by Alderman & Mrs Lloyd in 1919. - Vince, C.A. (1902) p 156; Jones, J.T. (1940) p 432; OS *Warwickshire Sheet* XIV. 9 (1916) & XIV.10 (1904)

<sup>98</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 435

<sup>99</sup> Poynton, C.H. “Pastoral Letter” in *Holy Trinity Bordesley Church Magazine* (June 1914)



gardens.<sup>100</sup> However, identical facilities add little to the greenery of Lower Sparkdale where “a little garden plot given over to fowls made it an arid, gritty patch littered with shed feathers.”<sup>101</sup> Allen’s Bromford portrays tiny gardens behind working-class houses.<sup>102</sup> Rearing poultry as a dietary supplement was practised not just within the working-class, as Quinton residents recall,<sup>103</sup> but featured in Young’s middle-class childhood home.<sup>104</sup> In Lower Sparkdale such economic necessity contributes to North Bromwich aridity and “the squalid bondage of Lower Sparkdale”<sup>105</sup> remains the overriding impression of life in this suburb. An alternative viewpoint is offered by Leslie Maynell, who invites readers inside his home, “typical of those built in Sparkbrook.” Here warmth and care is obvious; family photographs abound; the fireplace is kept bright; the Sunday joint hangs from a rafter.<sup>106</sup> Cunningham’s reminder that authors’ intentions cannot limit interpretation<sup>107</sup> must apply to the North Bromwich canon, there clearly being dimensions to Sparkbrook/Sparkhill (if not to Lower Sparkdale) other than Young’s portrait allows.

## Alvaston

Edgbaston, Birmingham’s Belgravia,<sup>108</sup> according to Jago,

With hospitable Shade  
And rural pomp invest,<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Chinn, C. (1999) p 20

<sup>101</sup> Young, F.B. (1921) *The Black Diamond*, p 38

<sup>102</sup> Allen, W.E. (1938) p 15

<sup>103</sup> Johnson, H., Palser, B., Courier, W. in Taylor, B. (2004) *Memories of Quinton*, Stroud, Tempus, pp 22, 24, 75

<sup>104</sup> Young, M. B. (December 1979) “Reminiscences of ‘The Laurels’” in *Francis Brett Young Society Newsletter* 2, p 6

<sup>105</sup> Young, F.B. (1936) *Far Forest*, p 257

<sup>106</sup> Maynell, L. (1982) pp 56-59

<sup>107</sup> Cunningham, V. (2002) p 73

<sup>108</sup> Elrington, C.R. & Tillott, P.M. (1964) p 13

<sup>109</sup> Jago, R. (1767) lines 494-495

is well-represented in Birmingham novels. Murray, Gissing, Tiltman and Hampson<sup>110</sup> use its own name; Parkes rechristens it Osmaston and Allen Edgbourne.<sup>111</sup> The authenticity of Young's Alvaston as Edgbaston is attested by Cannadine who, in *Lords and Landlords*,<sup>112</sup> introduces Edgbaston with this evocative quotation from *White Ladies*:

Once Arden engreened this rolling country, and even today it has a woodland quietude, for forest trees still stand in the ample gardens of bow-windowed Early Victorian houses of stucco which the Hardware Princes built...<sup>113</sup>

Cannadine affirms that "this charming and inviting suburb was no figment of the author's imagination... but a thinly-disguised version of reality."<sup>114</sup> Indeed the similarities between fictional Alvaston and factual Edgbaston are too calculated to be co-incidental.

With its similar compound name structure, suggesting Anglo-Saxon settlement, Alva's tūn is an obvious echo of Ecgbald's tūn (farmstead), from which Edgbaston is named.<sup>115</sup> Edgbaston Hall, built in the early eighteenth century, possibly on the site of Ecgbald's original farmstead,<sup>116</sup> was occupied during the early twentieth century by Birmingham's first Lord Mayor, Sir James Smith,<sup>117</sup> concurrent with North Bromwich Mayor Sir Joseph Astill's occupancy of Old Alvaston Hall.<sup>118</sup> Within yards of Young's student lodgings in Edgbaston's Harborne Road were houses called "Chad Lodge" and "The Cedars". Two of Alvaston's houses are named "Chad Grange" and "The Cedars".<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Murray, D.C. (1894) vol 1, p 21; Gissing, G. (1895) p 6; Tiltman, M.H. (1939) p 111; Hampson, J. (1936) p 134

<sup>111</sup> Parkes, W. K. (1914) p 30; Allen, W.E. (1939) p 50

<sup>112</sup> Cannadine, D. (1980)

<sup>113</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies*, p 216

<sup>114</sup> Cannadine, D. (1980) p 81

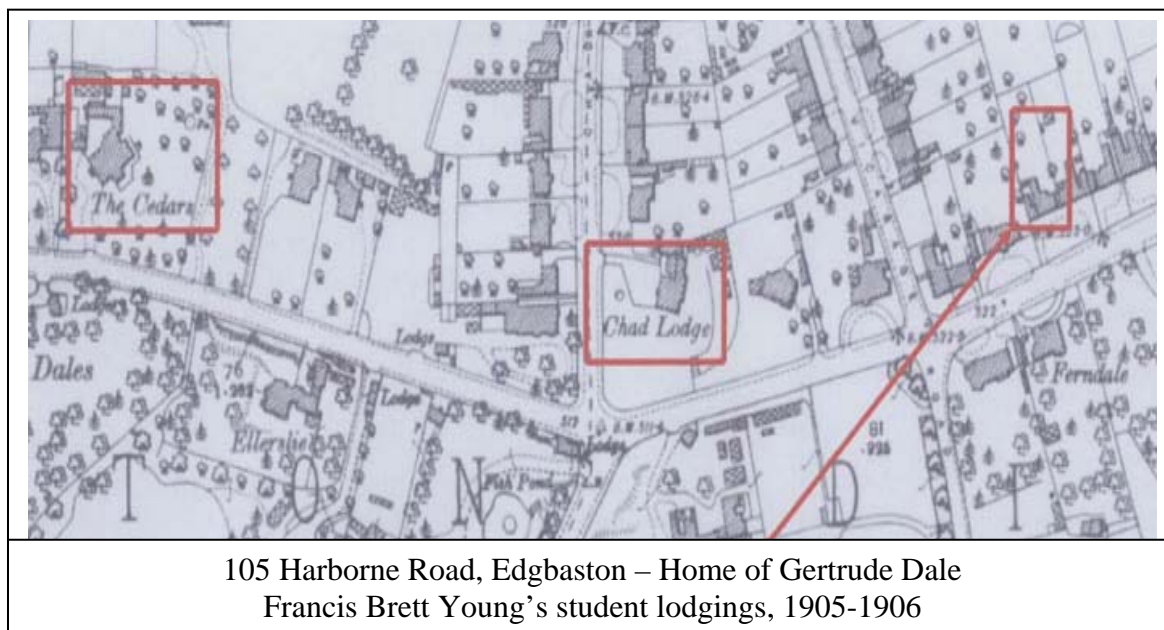
<sup>115</sup> Mills, A.D. (ed) (1991) *A Dictionary of English Place-Names*, Oxford, University Press

<sup>116</sup> Slater, T. (2002) *Edgbaston: A History*, Chichester, Phillimore, p 5

<sup>117</sup> Slater, T. (2002) p 120

<sup>118</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 438

<sup>119</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies*, p 160; (1942) *A Man about the House*, p 4



105 Harborne Road, Edgbaston – Home of Gertrude Dale  
Francis Brett Young's student lodgings, 1905-1906

Like Edgbaston Alvaston has its Reservoir and County Cricket Ground.<sup>120</sup> Telegrams may be sent from Alvaston Post Office, as Edgbaston was one of Birmingham's post offices transacting telegraph business.<sup>121</sup> Alvaston's "discreet pavements overshadowed with weeping laburnum and fans of horse-chestnut"<sup>122</sup> suggest Edgbaston's streets, "for the most part bordered with trees of luxuriant growth."<sup>123</sup> Edgbaston's proximity to the countryside<sup>124</sup> is replicated in Alvaston, "almost like being in the country."<sup>125</sup> Lest hyperbole overshadow Young's rural preferences, he makes clear that Alvaston is actually very different from real countryside. "The very dust of country roads smelt sweeter than these barren streets; the tarnished leaves of laburnums and horse-chestnuts had no life in them."<sup>126</sup>

<sup>120</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 488; (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 130; Edgbaston Reservoir was created when the ancient Roach Pool was enlarged in 1825 - Chatwin, P.B. (1914) *A History of Edgbaston*, Birmingham, Cornish Bros, p 11; Edgbaston's County Cricket ground was opened in 1886 – Briggs, A. (1964) "Social History Since 1815" in Stephens, W.B. (ed.) (1964) p 235

<sup>121</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies*, p 640; *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham* (1913)

<sup>122</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies*, p 216

<sup>123</sup> *Edgbaston Directory and Guide for 1853* (1853) p 2

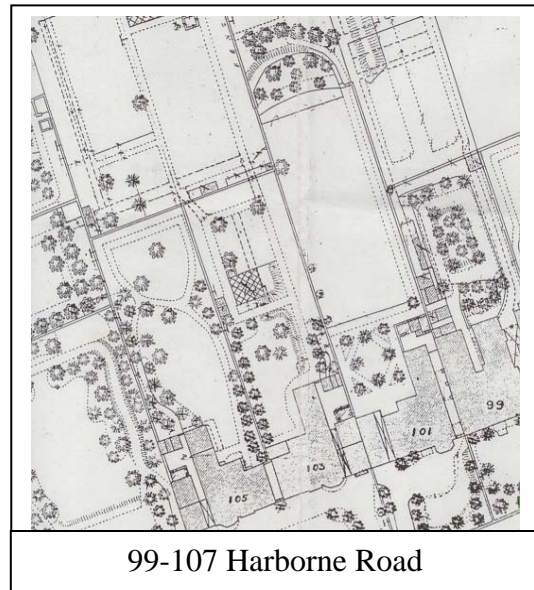
<sup>124</sup> Slater, T. (2002) p 25

<sup>125</sup> Young, F.B. (1940) *Mr Lucton's Freedom*, p 451

<sup>126</sup> Young, F.B. (1940) *Mr Lucton's Freedom*, pp 451-452

Edgbaston's verdant aspect largely results from trees planted by its early nineteenth century residents.<sup>127</sup> Parkes captures this ambience in "the leafy roads of Osmaston."<sup>128</sup> Young is more graphic, describing Alvaston's "horse-chestnuts, pink and white... cedars of Lebanon and splendid elms... black branches of plane-trees... lime with pallid fans,"<sup>129</sup> all of which could be found within walking distance of Edgbaston's Five Ways.<sup>130</sup> Alvaston's fruit trees (apples, pears, plums, cherries<sup>131</sup>) exactly replicate the intended stock of Edgbaston gardens following Birmingham Botanical & Horticultural Society's distribution of such varieties to share-holders in 1835.<sup>132</sup>

Edgbaston's gardens featured perimeter gravel paths, lawns, tennis lawns, shrubberies, orchards and conservatories.<sup>133</sup> In Alvaston Young moves beyond mere listing to conjure such Edgbaston originals as the plan shows surrounded his student lodging. A series of near-identical gardens collectively feature "long rectilinear patch... surrounded by gravel path... mown lawn outstretched like a striped ceremonial carpet... tennis-court in the



<sup>127</sup> Slater, T. (2002) p 33

<sup>128</sup> Parkes, W. K. (1914) p 208

<sup>129</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 318; (1935) *White Ladies*, pp 179,216; (1936) *Far Forest*, p 251

<sup>130</sup> Reeves, J. (1978) "The Trees as Beauteous are" in *The Egbastonian* (July-August 1978) Parish Magazine of Edgbaston Old Church, pp 29-31

<sup>131</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 393; (1935) *White Ladies*, pp 175,216; (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 593

<sup>132</sup> In spring 1835, 189 varieties of apples, pears, plums and cherries were to be distributed to BBHS share-holders – BBHS General Committee Minutes, Report of Professor G.B. Knowles to AGM (15.10.1834)

<sup>133</sup> Slater, T. (2002) pp 33-35

middle... thickets of rhododendron... old orchards of apple-trees... enormous conservatory shaped like a parrot-cage.”<sup>134</sup> Popular at Birmingham’s Botanical Gardens *dahlia pinnata* and *aster subcaeruleus*<sup>135</sup> find their place in Alvaston’s gardens where “dahlias sunned their velvet... and Michaelmas daisies made a mist of amethyst.”<sup>136</sup> Though, like Edgbaston located windward of industry’s fumes and grime<sup>137</sup> and therefore “gracious and green,”<sup>138</sup> Alvaston’s borders lie “within a few hundred yards of the noise and smoke of central North Bromwich.”<sup>139</sup> Like Parkes, who catalogues “the dusty elms, the attenuated beeches of Osmaston,”<sup>140</sup> Young portrays the Iron City’s pollution. Thus the “grim rectangle” of an Alvaston garden may contain “weedy privet hedges... bald lawns... stark trees... sooty laurel.”<sup>141</sup>

Alvaston roads suggest Edgbaston originals, whether Astill Road and King’s Road, which appear only once, or Halesby Road which recurs across the canon.<sup>142</sup> Parallel to Halesby Road is the “less fashionable thoroughfare of Astill Road,”<sup>143</sup> recalling North Bromwich worthy Joseph Astill. North of Hagley Road, abutting Ladywood’s boundary, recalling Birmingham worthy George Bellis is Bellis Street, which, as Chinn explains,

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<sup>134</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 449; (1930) *Jim Redlake*, p 9; (1935) *White Ladies*, pp 160,175, 216

<sup>135</sup> *Dahlia pinnata* – BBHS shareholders were invited to apply for surplus dahlias from Birmingham’s Botanical Gardens as early as 1834; *aster subcaeruleus* – additional Michaelmas daisies were added to the herbaceous borders in 1904. - Ballard, P. (2003) *An Oasis of Delight: The History of the Birmingham Botanical Gardens*, Studley, Brewin Books, pp 27, 75

<sup>136</sup> Young, F.B. (1940) *Mr Lucton’s Freedom*, p 25

<sup>137</sup> Skipp, V. (1996) p 79

<sup>138</sup> Young, F.B. (1942) *A Man about the House*, p 39

<sup>139</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 592

<sup>140</sup> Parkes, W. K. (1914) p 30

<sup>141</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, pp 420, 439; (1935) *White Ladies*, p 175; (1942) *A Man about the House*, p 1

<sup>142</sup> Astill Road appears only in Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, King’s Road only in Young, F.B. (1940) *Mr Lucton’s Freedom*. Halesby Road appears in Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*; (1927) *Portrait of Clare*; (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*; (1930) *Jim Redlake*; (1934) *This Little World*; (1935) *White Ladies*; (1936) *Far Forest*; (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*; (1940) *Mr Lucton’s Freedom*; (1942) *A Man about the House*.

<sup>143</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 421

remains one of Edgbaston's only two 'streets',<sup>144</sup> the term suggesting narrow, unpleasant places inappropriate to Edgbaston's image.<sup>145</sup> Edgbaston's Duchess Road<sup>146</sup> becomes Alvaston's King's Road, with fictional ambience reflecting factual counterpart. Some Alvaston residents suffer "the indignity of living in King's Road,"<sup>147</sup> whilst Cannadine shows that Duchess Road, though part of Edgbaston, lies in its unfashionable area.<sup>148</sup>

With its "kempt pavements" Halesby Road, "a wide, smooth highway,"<sup>149</sup> is, like its original Hagley Road, a busy thoroughfare.<sup>150</sup> A 1904 survey reported heavy traffic including eight to nine hundred omnibuses travelling Hagley Road each day.<sup>151</sup> In Alvaston, Halesby Road's traffic, "streaming" in the early twentieth century, remains "crowded" in 1939.<sup>152</sup> A fountain at the end of Halesby Road<sup>153</sup> suggests the original version of Joseph Sturge's statue at the Five Ways end of Hagley Road.<sup>154</sup> Halesby Road's northern side is unfashionable<sup>155</sup> just as Cannadine indicates that Birmingham's Hagley Road had a "right" side (Calthorpe estate to the south) and a "wrong" side (Gillott estate to the north).<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Bellis Street, adopted by Birmingham Council in 1867, connects Parker Street to Monument Road and is named for George Edward Bellis, boiler-maker of Bellis & Morcom, Ledsum Street, Ladywood. - Bunce, J. (1885) pp 79, 81; Chinn, C. (2003) p 47; OS *Warwickshire Sheet* 13.08 (1914)

<sup>145</sup> Chinn, C. (2003) pp 7

<sup>146</sup> Duchess Road, adopted by Birmingham Council in 1861, connects Beaufort Road to Francis Road. - Bunce, J. (1885) p 79; OS *Warwickshire Sheet* 13.08 (1914)

<sup>147</sup> Young, F.B. (1940) *Mr Lucton's Freedom*, p 53

<sup>148</sup> Cannadine, D. (1980) p 200

<sup>149</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, pp 204-205; (1934) *This Little World*, p 315

<sup>150</sup> Hagley Road followed an ancient trading route linking central England with Wales and, as Grindlestone Lane, had been turnpiked in 1753 – Slater, T. (2002) pp 1, 68

<sup>151</sup> Cannadine, D. (1980) p 107

<sup>152</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 456; (1940) *Mr Lucton's Freedom*, p 86

<sup>153</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 435

<sup>154</sup> The statue of Birmingham politician and reformer Joseph Sturge, designed by John Thomas, was unveiled in June 1862. "From the front and back of the pedestal project bold tazza-shaped basins, out of which, originally, pretty jets of water arose." Dent, R.K. (1880) p 564

<sup>155</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies*, p 216

<sup>156</sup> Cannadine, D. (1980) p 204

Alvaston's architectural styles, reflecting the nineteenth century's changing fashions, replicate those identified by Slater<sup>157</sup> in Edgbaston. Factual stuccoed semi-detached houses with classical decoration and porches are represented in fiction by "a small stucco house... with pillared porch and lightly-moulded cornice."<sup>158</sup> Larger ornamental villas of Edgbaston's Bristol Road appear in Alvaston's *Enville Road* as "a Regency villa... enriched with swags, urns and medallions,"<sup>159</sup> whilst the "massive portico supported by Corinthian pillars"<sup>160</sup> of Alvaston's "The Cedars" suggests the neo-Classical houses of Edgbaston's Wellington Road. Tall, polychrome brick, neo-Gothic houses built in Edgbaston in the late nineteenth century have their Alvaston counterpart in "a tall block of red-brick Gothic, ornamented with string-courses of freestone, and mullioned stained-glass windows."<sup>161</sup> The Elizabethan brickwork and timber framing of Edgbaston's early Art and Crafts period find their expression in the "elaborate Victorian Tudor of Alvaston Grange."<sup>162</sup>

Slater's consideration of Edgbaston's architecture is complemented by Cannadine's assessment of its social strata.<sup>163</sup> The three levels he identifies are clearly replicated in Alvaston. At the apex of Edgbaston's social hierarchy Cannadine describes the typical six-bedroom houses of the "hardware princes" (employing Young's own terminology<sup>164</sup>) with their stables, servants' quarters, ball room, billiard room and butler, gardeners, housekeeper and numerous domestics. North Bromwich's "Alvaston Grange", with its garaging for four cars, squash court, pool, library, six bathrooms and butler, with his own pantry and cottage,

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<sup>157</sup> Slater, T. (2002) p 27

<sup>158</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 593

<sup>159</sup> Young, F.B. (1942) *A Man about the House*, p 2

<sup>160</sup> Young, F.B. (1942) *A Man about the House*, p 2

<sup>161</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 205

<sup>162</sup> Young, F.B. (1940) *Mr Lucton's Freedom*, p 38

<sup>163</sup> Cannadine, D. (1980) p 201

<sup>164</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies*, p 216

cook, five gardeners and several housemaids,<sup>165</sup> is patently drawn from Edgbaston reality. The comfortable middle-middle class houses, which Cannadine identifies in Edgbaston's Hagley Road, typically belonging to successful doctors and lawyers, had large gardens and three or four servants. The Alvaston home of North Bromwich solicitor Dudley Wilburn, at 197 Halesby Road, had six bedrooms, a garden and paddock, and was maintained by a cook-housekeeper, maid and gardener.<sup>166</sup> Cannadine's third stratum, small houses on Edgbaston's periphery, accommodated small businessmen and clerks. "If they could afford a house in Duchess Road they might also boast one general domestic."<sup>167</sup> Whilst a junior clerk Owen Lucton, with his young family, occupies "a snug little house in King's Road, Alvaston" and employs one cook-housekeeper.<sup>168</sup> Domestics, like the "maid in black uniform with a long-streamered cap"<sup>169</sup> of Alvaston's smaller houses, also serve such Edgbaston homes as those of Balsall Heath Road,<sup>170</sup> whilst Alvaston's "smart nursemaids pushing perambulators" replicate Edgbaston's nannies accompanying their charges on daily excursions.<sup>171</sup>

Like Edgbaston, Alvaston is occupied mostly by "solid, respectable folk."<sup>172</sup> Here live "the North Bromwich plutocracy" and "rich manufacturers."<sup>173</sup> Similarly, Parkes' Osmaston is "a residential quarter for Metlingham manufacturers and professional men."<sup>174</sup> Fiction unites with fact. Briggs shows numerous Birmingham merchants and industrialists living in

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<sup>165</sup> Young, F.B. (1940) *Mr Lucton's Freedom*, pp 13,14,38,40,51,58,59,62,63,454

<sup>166</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, pp 427,430,445,449,479

<sup>167</sup> Cannadine, D. (1980) p 201

<sup>168</sup> Young, F.B. (1940) *Mr Lucton's Freedom*, pp 10, 23-25

<sup>169</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 593

<sup>170</sup> Slater, T. (2002) pp 50-51

<sup>171</sup> Ballard, P. (2003) p 88; Young, F.B. (1934) *This Little World*, p 315

<sup>172</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies*, p 217

<sup>173</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, pp 204-205; (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 290

<sup>174</sup> Parkes, W. K. (1914) p 99



Edgbaston,<sup>175</sup> whilst Burritt found many of Birmingham's prosperous business-men resident there.<sup>176</sup> Around the turn of the nineteenth century *Edgbastonians Past And Present*<sup>177</sup> featured politically-active manufacturers such as Thomas Avery and George Kenrick.<sup>178</sup> Equally "Martin Lacey's home in Alvaston had become a sort of local clearing-house for ideas. It was frequented by many distinguished men. John Bright, Richard Cobden and Gladstone were political friends of his father's."<sup>179</sup> The "culture and refinement"<sup>180</sup> of Alvaston residents suggest such Edgbaston luminaries as Oliver Lodge, Birmingham University's first principal and Charles Gore, the city's first bishop.<sup>181</sup> For Dent, Edgbaston is "the aristocratic suburb of Birmingham,"<sup>182</sup> whilst for North Bromwich's social aspirants "the only 'possible' people lived in Alvaston."<sup>183</sup> Young introduces an alternative viewpoint by including amongst Alvaston's population "a number of women dressed with more expense than refinement,"<sup>184</sup> and notes that within Alvaston's social hierarchy "a carpet knight was bound to shine."<sup>185</sup>

Both Cannadine and Slater<sup>186</sup> emphasize that Edgbaston's architectural and social success resulted from the stringent leases offered by the landowning Calthorpe Estate. In

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<sup>175</sup> Briggs, A. (1952) p 70

<sup>176</sup> Burritt, E. (1868) pp 97-98

<sup>177</sup> "Edgbastonians Past and Present" in *Edgbastonia* (1881)

<sup>178</sup> Scale-manufacturer Thomas Avery was Mayor of Birmingham in 1881 and awarded the freedom of the city in 1892; industrialist George Kenrick was Lord Mayor of Birmingham in 1908 and awarded the freedom of the city in 1923 –Briggs, A. (1952) pp 329, 331

<sup>179</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 161

<sup>180</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 377

<sup>181</sup> Sir Oliver Lodge (see pp 313-315) lived at Mariemont, Westbourne Road, Edgbaston and Rt Rev Charles Gore at High Croft, Somerset Road, Edgbaston – *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham* (1905)

<sup>182</sup> Dent, R.K. (1880) p 619

<sup>183</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 531

<sup>184</sup> Young, F.B. (1934) *This Little World*, p 315

<sup>185</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 274

<sup>186</sup> Cannadine, D. (1980) p 109; Slater, T. (2002) p 25

fiction's concern that Alvaston's 197 Halesby Road is built "so close to the road,"<sup>187</sup> Young faithfully replicates Calthorpe regulations expressed in the lease of Edgbaston's 105 Harborne Road that no building was to be nearer than five yards to the front of the land.<sup>188</sup> However, Edgbaston's nineteenth century growth brought its borders alongside the densely populated courtyards of Ladywood, Lee Bank and Balsall Heath.<sup>189</sup> Similarly, Alvaston's fringes were overlooked by "sooty windows of back-to-backs and surrounded by factory chimneys,"<sup>190</sup> whilst Parkes' Osmaston is "a district at one end of which are many squalid streets."<sup>191</sup>

Alvaston mirrors Edgbaston's decline. In the early twentieth century Alderman Beale identified as unlettable houses once considered Edgbaston's finest.<sup>192</sup> *Birmingham Daily Post* explained the reason. "They are not modern or suitable to present requirements... a continual source of expense in the way of repairs."<sup>193</sup> At the identical period, once fashionable areas of Alvaston deteriorated, with properties "rarely painted, unrepaired and, at last, uninhabited."<sup>194</sup> Hampson likewise places characters in a "large old-fashioned house in Hagley Road."<sup>195</sup> Edgbaston's coup-de-grâce falls with the arrival of "a fried-fish shop... within sniffing distance of some of its most palatial mansions."<sup>196</sup> This was actually located in Varna Road on the border of Edgbaston and Balsall Heath.<sup>197</sup> Young multiplies this single fried-fish shop,

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<sup>187</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait Of Clare*, p 205

<sup>188</sup> Calthorpe Estate Lease Book (22.07.1833) to James Marshall, plumber and glazier of Gt. Charles St., Birmingham

<sup>189</sup> Slater, T. (2002) p 27

<sup>190</sup> Young, F.B. (1942) *A Man about the House*, p 39

<sup>191</sup> Parkes, W. K. (1914) p 205

<sup>192</sup> Quoted in Cannadine, D. (1980) p 123

<sup>193</sup> *Birmingham Daily Post* (30.11.1911)

<sup>194</sup> Young, F.B. (1942) *A Man about the House*, p 2

<sup>195</sup> Hampson, J. (1936) p 133

<sup>196</sup> Unidentified news cutting (06.10.1892) quoted in Cannadine, D. (1980) p 120

<sup>197</sup> Varna Road ran from St Luke's Road to Speedwell Road – OS *Warwickshire Sheet* 14.09 (1913)

making the “odour of fried fish” permeate the “comely suburb of Alvaston... interspersed with fried-fish shops.”<sup>198</sup>

Despite deterioration Alvaston, like Edgbaston, remains essentially unchanged throughout its half-century’s existence.<sup>199</sup> From larger landmarks (County Cricket Ground, Reservoir) through distinctive architecture and social strata (with factual residents recreated in fiction) to minute details of garden design, Alvaston reflects Edgbaston. Thus Young’s interpretation and faithful portrait enables Birmingham’s Edgbaston to live again in the undoubted reality of North Bromwich’s Alvaston.

## Tilton

Tilton, the canon’s most thoroughly documented suburb, is curiously identified by Leclaire as Tipton,<sup>200</sup> to which it bears only homophonous resemblance. Following Eyles’ stylised map,<sup>201</sup> Leclaire and Cannadine relocate Tilton to the north west of its actual midpoint on the direct North Bromwich-Halesby axis.<sup>202</sup> Geographical descriptions in five novels<sup>203</sup> indisputably identify Tilton as the erstwhile Worcestershire village, later Birmingham suburb, of Quinton. In fact Quinton stands on high tableland, within the 600’ to 800’ contour bracket.<sup>204</sup> In fiction, leaving North Bromwich via Alvaston, the road “climbs upward to an

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<sup>198</sup> Young, F.B. (1942) *A Man about the House*, pp 2,63

<sup>199</sup> 1880s [Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*] to 1939 – [Young, F.B. (1940) *Mr Lucton’s Freedom*

<sup>200</sup> Leclaire, J. (1970) p 456]

<sup>201</sup> Geoffrey Eyles’ map, drawn 1932, was used as endpapers for the Severn Edition of Young’s novels, first published in 1934.

<sup>202</sup> Leclaire, J. (1970) facing p 448; Cannadine, D. (1982) p 4; *OS Landranger 139 Birmingham & Wolverhampton* (1998)

<sup>203</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*; (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*; (1934) *This Little World*; (1935) *White Ladies*; (1940) *Mr Lucton’s Freedom*

<sup>204</sup> *OS Physical Map of Great Britain*, Sheet SO 98 SE

escarpment... eight hundred feet above sea-level... reaches its highest point in Tilton.”<sup>205</sup> The Halesby to Tilton road, equally steep, is graphically identified.

They climbed the hill on whose slopes the beeches of Shenstone burned with a flame that the poet's verses have lost. They passed through the high hamlet of Tilton; where the chill air of the plateau made Clare shiver, and entered Alvaston.<sup>206</sup>

Tilton's chill air reflects established folklore of Quinton's cold climate. It was noted by John Wesley, founder of Methodism, in 1785<sup>207</sup> and Quinton historian A.N. Rosser records that twentieth century bus conductors referred to the area as 'Siberia'.<sup>208</sup>

Though 'Quinton' may well suggest the Old English 'Cwēningtūn' - farm or manor of the woman or queen,<sup>209</sup> another theory favours derivation from the Roman sport,<sup>210</sup> descended through medieval chivalric training, part of which involved tilting at the quintain (a cross beam on an upright pole).<sup>211</sup> From tilting, Tilton is an obvious transposition for Young whose place names conjure their originals. In this case his intention is clear. "Tilton... was always a sweet little village. Uncle George told me that when he was a boy his father showed him the field where they used to tilt at the quintain."<sup>212</sup> Again folklore colludes. At just the time when "Uncle George" and Francis Brett Young were boys, Quinton's *Bourne College Chronicle* reported, "We think it very possible that the military tournaments of the Romans

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<sup>205</sup> Young, F.B. (1940) *Mr Lucton's Freedom*, pp 64-65

<sup>206</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 204. The section of A458 called Mucklow Hill between Hales Owen and Quinton, passes 'The Leasowes', home of poet and landscape gardener William Shenstone (1714-1763)

<sup>207</sup> Curnock, N. (1938) *The Journal of the Rev John Wesley, A.M.*, Vol VII, London, Epworth Press, p 60

<sup>208</sup> Rosser, A.N. (1998) *The Quinton and Round About Vol 1*, Quinton History Society, p 36

<sup>209</sup> Mawer, A. & Stenton, F.M. (1969) *The Place Names of Worcestershire*, Cambridge, University Press, p 42; Smith, A. H. (1964) *The Place Names of Gloucestershire*, Cambridge, University Press, p 254

<sup>210</sup> Nash, T.R. (1781) *The History and Antiquities of Worcestershire: Collections for the History of Worcestershire*, Vol 1, London, John Nichols, p 509

<sup>211</sup> For an examination of the two theories see Rosser, A.N. (1998) pp 5-12

<sup>212</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 178

took place in the now College Park... The old Roman road... then ran alongside the College Park.”<sup>213</sup>

The canon’s main picture of Tilton depicts it as 1930s North Bromwich suburb, though its earlier existence as “a hamlet consisting of no more than a whitewashed, abandoned toll-house with Gothic windows, discreet little church and a score of red-brick cottages”<sup>214</sup> is also presented. Quinton’s toll-house still existed when *Mr & Mrs Pennington* was published; one of the three churches at which Quinton villagers worshipped when “Uncle George” was a boy, and some of the redbrick cottages remain today.



Quinton Parish Church



807-815 Hagley Road West, Quinton

It is, however, necessary to examine Young’s adjectives in this Tilton portrait.

Gothic windows were installed in Quinton's toll-house,<sup>215</sup> which was not abandoned, but the home of the Rose sisters, well-known for their home-baked bread.<sup>216</sup> The toll-house was not white-washed at the time recalled, though it does appear so in W.J. Pringle's painting.

<sup>213</sup> Dingley, H. (1892) “Recollections of Quinton and its Surroundings” in *Bourne College Chronicle Vol 4 1890-1892*, Birmingham, W.G. Proverbs, pp 132-133. Bourne College, a Primitive Methodist School, was located in Quinton from 1882 to 1928, when it became Quinton Hall, an old men's home, closing c1980.

<sup>214</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 178

<sup>215</sup> When the Toll-House was demolished in 1946, the windows were removed to Quinton’s Nailer’s Cottage (497 Ridgacre Road West) – Rosser, A.N. (1999) *The Quinton and Round About Vol 2*, Quinton History Society, p129

<sup>216</sup> Rosser, A.N. (1999) p129



Bearing in mind Young's usual research and observation, it would be satisfying to conclude that his description arose from recollections of Pringle's painting seen during student visits to Birmingham Art Gallery. This, however, cannot be, as Birmingham only acquired the painting in 1934.<sup>217</sup> Though obviously relative, "discreet" and "little" are not the most appropriate adjectives to describe Quinton's 1930s churches. Christchurch dominated the crossroads at the brow of the hill leading to Birmingham. Hagley Road Wesleyan Methodist Chapel stood adjacent to, and taller than, the toll-house. College Road Primitive Methodist Chapel was larger than either the Anglican or Wesleyan churches.<sup>218</sup>

<sup>217</sup> Pringle's *The Birmingham Post Passing Quinton Gate, 1842* was presented to Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery in 1934 by the trustees of the late Mrs Elizabeth Smith. - Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery catalogue of holdings

<sup>218</sup> Christchurch, The Quinton, consecrated 18.09.1840, is the only remaining of the three churches; Hagley Road Wesleyan Methodist Chapel opened 08.04.1878; ceased to be used for worship in July 1936; College Road Primitive Methodist Chapel opened 18.11.1888; demolished in 1967. See Hall, M. (1983) pp 33, 68, 131, 157; Bunting, T.W. (1990) *The Story of a Parish: The Quinton 1840-1990*, published privately, p 3; OS *Worcestershire Sheet V.10* (1904)



Quinton Toll House and Hagley Road  
Wesleyan Chapel



College Road Primitive Methodist Chapel,  
Quinton

Leclaire indicates that Young's adjectives always contribute very precisely to his intended meaning.<sup>219</sup> Such is evidently the case in this carefully-crafted imagery, highlighting the contrast between what was and what is. Four key words describe Tilton as it was: "sweet," "whitewashed," "abandoned" "discreet." 1930s Tilton appears in stark contrast. The sweet village has become "recently-debauched."<sup>220</sup> Buildings on which whitewash suggested purity give way to "jerry-built shops" and "shoddy brand-new little homes."<sup>221</sup> The abandoned state is replaced by hectic suburban life, "full of people."<sup>222</sup> A discreet air is no longer possible now "traffic gushed through this western faucet of North Bromwich in an almost continuous stream."<sup>223</sup>

Tilton's degeneration followed its annexation by North Bromwich: "Within a few years, the hated city had grown. Its western fringe had reached Tilton. There was no stopping the growth of a city like this."<sup>224</sup> Just as Tilton was subsumed by North Bromwich, so was Quinton by Birmingham. In 1908, alarmed by the cost of a sewerage scheme planned by

<sup>219</sup> Leclaire, J. (1970) p 377

<sup>220</sup> Young, F.B. (1940) *Mr Lucton's Freedom*, pp 64-65

<sup>221</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 179; (1940) *Mr Lucton's Freedom*, p 66

<sup>222</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 178

<sup>223</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 177-178

<sup>224</sup> Young, F.B. (1934) *This Little World*, p 308

Hales Owen, of which it was a part, Quinton Parish Council proposed incorporation with Birmingham.<sup>225</sup> In recommending the proposal, Birmingham's Town Clerk stressed links existing between city and village. 46% of Quinton's workforce was employed in Birmingham; Quinton villagers visited Birmingham for shopping and entertainment; Edgbaston's washing was sent to Quinton's laundresses.<sup>226</sup> Twenty years later, of the three named workers resident in Tilton's Ada Road, Inspector Frome is a North Bromwich policeman and Dick Pennington a North Bromwich clerk. Susan Pennington buys her clothes and furniture in North Bromwich where she also finds entertainment.<sup>227</sup> Ten years further on, North Bromwich accountant Owen Lucton recognises in Tilton residents "the kind of folk to whom men like himself paid a salary of two or three pounds a week."<sup>228</sup> Ironically, Edgbaston residents had hindered Quinton's development, opposing the extension of Birmingham's tramway through their suburb along Hagley Road towards Quinton.<sup>229</sup> Similar self-interest hindered Tilton's growth when "the expansion of North Bromwich on its western edge had been checked by the discouraging smugness of upper-middle class Alvaston."<sup>230</sup> At the time of Quinton's application for incorporation, Birmingham was seeking undeveloped areas for housing expansion, as its Medical Officer of Health explained. "This district lying to the west end of Birmingham would be naturally sought after for the building of dwelling houses."<sup>231</sup> Consequently, in 1909 Quinton became part of Birmingham.

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<sup>225</sup> Vince, C.A. (1923) pp 27-28

<sup>226</sup> Briggs, A. (1952) pp 144-145

<sup>227</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, pp 188, 340-342, 426-431, 457

<sup>228</sup> Young, F.B. (1940) *Mr Lucton's Freedom*, p 67

<sup>229</sup> *Birmingham Daily Gazette* (26.07.1909)

<sup>230</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, pp 178-179

<sup>231</sup> *Birmingham Daily Gazette* (26.07.1909)



Included with Quinton were adjacent undeveloped areas of Harborne and Edgbaston allowing Birmingham 2,320 new acres for development. A Town Planning Committee, chaired by Neville Chamberlain, proposed the construction of 23 roads, with housing limited to twelve or twenty per acre depending on location.<sup>232</sup> 115,000 houses were consequently built in Birmingham between 1919 and 1939.<sup>233</sup> In Tilton, this development becomes “a rectangular network of asphalt roads bordered by bungalows each equipped for the reception of the post-war social unit - a young married couple, a dog, a baby Austin.”<sup>234</sup> On account of its high altitude and bracing air, Quinton was considered a desirable place of residence.<sup>235</sup> In Young’s fiction “advertisement hoardings proclaimed the advantages of Tilton as a place of residence.”<sup>236</sup>

Rose makes the point that though modernist intelligentsia rarely made positive comments about suburbs, millions of Britons voted with their mortgages for suburban villas.<sup>237</sup> In 1930s Tilton everything is modern. “There's nothing old-fashioned... These 'ouses, they're every one different: not one like another... and, indeed, the houses had nothing in common but an extreme degree of ugliness.”<sup>238</sup> This shallow and soulless modernity extends beyond Tilton’s housing to its residents. “New dormitory suburbs such as Tilton... were inhabited by a shifting population, with nothing in common but the road in which they happened to live and... no deeper roots in the soil than the houses they occupied.”<sup>239</sup> The innate tenuity of similar suburbs is addressed by other Birmingham novelists. Green describes

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<sup>232</sup> Vince, C.A. (1923) pp 204-205

<sup>233</sup> Watts, D.G. (1964) p 346

<sup>234</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 183

<sup>235</sup> Vince, C.A. (1923) p 205

<sup>236</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 175

<sup>237</sup> Rose, J. (2001) p 413

<sup>238</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, pp 185-186

<sup>239</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 271

residents living “a kind of terrible respectability on too little money.”<sup>240</sup> Allen identifies housing “unfinished... monotonous and somehow impermanent.”<sup>241</sup> In a similar context Dayus repeatedly applauds the camaraderie in adversity of Birmingham’s back-to-back dwellings,<sup>242</sup> whilst Chinn identifies the lack of community focus in the city’s new housing estates.<sup>243</sup>

Tilton’s debauched landscape and jerry-buildings define its population. As Leclaire shows,<sup>244</sup> Young uses houses as indicators of their inhabitants’ qualities. Unsurprisingly, therefore, Tilton’s residents are mean, insensitive, naïve and blind to the stupendous views from their wind-swept plateau.<sup>245</sup> Fiction depicts the very naivety which Young disparaged and exploited in fact. “Oafs clamouring for high wages which they don't know how to use... workers in Birmingham paying me 3/- a piece for inferior peaches which I'm almost ashamed to send to market.”<sup>246</sup> Developed Tilton’s amenities are carefully catalogued.

A series of jerry-built shops and petrol stations... showroom exhibiting appliances for the use of municipal gas and electricity... Cinema Palace... newly-opened chain drug-store with a lending-library attached... new Tilton branch of the Midland Bank, (facility to) get something to eat in Tilton.<sup>247</sup>

Though this could be a fictionalised picture of many Birmingham suburbs, its imagery clearly suggests Quinton, and the picture, where not strictly historical proves prophetic.

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<sup>240</sup> Green, H. (1929) p 187

<sup>241</sup> Allen, W.E. (1939) p 22

<sup>242</sup> E.g. Dayus, K. (1982) p 2; (1988) p 2; (2000) p 56

<sup>243</sup> Chinn, C. (1999) pp 58.60

<sup>244</sup> Leclaire, J. (1984) “Francis Brett Young’s Character Creation” in *Francis Brett Young Society Journal* No 12, p 55

<sup>245</sup> Young, F.B. (1940) *Mr Lucton’s Freedom*, pp 66-67

<sup>246</sup> FBY 2733 (29.05.1944) Letter from Young to St John Ervine. [The peaches were grown on Young’s estate at Craycombe, Fladbury, Worcestershire.]

<sup>247</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, pp 179,234,243,380

Following the pattern already established when its Tithe Map was drawn a century earlier, most of Quinton's commercial development in 1930 lay along the main road from Birmingham to Hales Owen.<sup>248</sup> A variety of shops supplied daily needs. Quinton's equivalent of Tilton's "new little shops, so gay and venturous, with everything one can possibly want,"<sup>249</sup> included grocers, butchers, newsagents, confectioners, ironmongers, shoe-makers, drapers, beer-retailers, chemist, florist and general stores.<sup>250</sup> The Hawthornes Garage (selling Russian Oil Products petrol at 9d per gallon, Pratt's at 11d and National Benzyl at 1/1d) opened by my grandfather in 1924 was one of Quinton's several petrol-stations.<sup>251</sup> With its iron frame and corrugated roof, Young would no doubt have considered The Hawthornes Garage jerry-built! Quinton's gas and electricity showroom has, as Rosser affirms, only disappeared in the recent past.<sup>252</sup> Though a cinema in Tilton in 1930 anticipates Quinton's Danilo, opened in 1939,<sup>253</sup> the fictional drug-store's lending-library represents factual libraries at both Tinker's Stores and Phoebe Parkes' well-established draper's shop. In 1926

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<sup>248</sup> Cooke, G. W. (1844) *Plan of the Township of Ridgacre in the Parish of Hales Owen in the County of Salop*; now A456 from Birmingham to Quinton, A458 from Quinton to Hales Owen

<sup>249</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 178

<sup>250</sup> E.g. Grocers: T.P. Moyle & Co, 835 Hagley Road West, Nellie King, The Hawthornes; butchers: Henry Walters, 15 High Street, George Bridge, 831 Hagley Road West; newsagents: Albert Underhill, 492 The Hawthornes, Samuel Rose, Halesowen Road; confectioners: Edith Field, 37 High Street, William Woodward, Quinton Hill; ironmongers: Charles Cathro, Quinton Hill, James Parkes, 827 Hagley Road West; shoe-makers: William Bailey, 564 The Hawthornes, David Cutler, Halesowen Road; drapers: Phoebe Parkes, 833 Hagley Road West, John Pearson Quinton Hill; beer-retailers: Arthur Masters, 19 High Street, Arthur Mabbett, 427 Ridgacre Lane; chemist: J.R. Smith, Halesowen Road; florist: Stephen Harber, Ridgacre Lane; general stores: Tinker's Stores 734-736 Hagley Road West – *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham* (1925-1931); *West Midland District Annual Synod Handbook* (1929) Primitive Methodist Church, pp 30,48

<sup>251</sup> Thomas Hall & Bert Silver, motor engineers, 584 The Hawthornes, Quinton; other garages included James Parkes, 855 Hagley Road West, Mucklow Garage (Guest & Hill) Halesowen Road, West End Garage (E.G. Whitaker) – *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham* (1925-1931); *West Midland District Annual Synod Handbook* (1929) p 18; Hall, L.T. (25.09.1988) Interview with M. Hall

<sup>252</sup> Rosser, A.N. (1999) p 174

<sup>253</sup> The Danilo, was opened by Mortimer Dent of Edgbaston on 07.08.1939 on the site of boiler manufacturer Edwin Danks' Apsley House. Subsequently renamed Essoldo, Classic, Cannon, ABC, Odeon and Reel, the cinema still exists in the same building. - Hall, M. (1995) *Mr Danks' Gift: The Story of Quinton Manse*, Quinton Methodist Church, p 5

Midland Bank opened its Quinton branch.<sup>254</sup> Phoebe Parkes' tea room and White's Coffee House were amongst cafes supplying Quinton's needs for eating places.

**TINKER'S STORES**  
 734, 736 Hagley Road West  
 (Opposite Stoney Lane)  
**QUINTON**

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**TOBACCONISTS**  
 Fresh supplies of all leading brands of Cigarettes, Tobaccos and Cigars always in stock, or obtained to your order.

**NEWSAGENTS**  
 Newspapers and Periodicals delivered at your residence TWICE DAILY.

**CIRCULATING LIBRARY**  
 Latest works of popular writers.

**CONFECTIONERS**  
 High Class Chocolates & Sweets of all leading makes.

**FRUITERERS & GREENGROCERS**  
 First Class English and Foreign Fruit and Vegetables (in and out of season) received and supplied fresh daily.

Primitive Methodist West Midland District Synod Handbook, 1929



Phoebe Parkes' drapers & tea room  
 833 Hagley Road West, Quinton



White's Coffee Shop, Hales Owen Road, Quinton

<sup>254</sup> Rosser, A.N. (1999) p 174

In Young's town versus countryside debate, identified by Cannadine as "the country-lover's loathing of all things urban,"<sup>255</sup> Tilton stands at the frontier, the high point (hence the emphasis on altitude) from which arcadia may at least be viewed, if not entered. Here "the contrast between two worlds is magnificently revealed... the last straggling houses of Alvaston left behind... the city of iron vanished... in front an apparently endless vista of blue hills."<sup>256</sup> Here, as "it is one of the peculiar (and redeeming) features of North Bromwich that escape is easy,"<sup>257</sup> the industrial spoliation of North Bromwich is left behind. The prime beauty of Tilton, a suburb itself as debauched as the city upon which it depends, is the view seen from it. "Not a single trace of recent human activity (but) mile upon mile of a still, sweet-breathing countryside."<sup>258</sup>

Young's portrait of Quinton confirms Leclaire's opinion that "It is the proper merit of a real work of art, even when dealing with places you think you know well, to tell you something more about them, that you have not realised or that you have not realised so well."<sup>259</sup> Certainly the Tilton portrait concentrates on one interpretation of the way in which North Bromwich's expansion affects its surroundings. As always, Young focuses upon a detailed and accurate account of physical characteristics and resources. That which does not suit his purpose is ignored. Thus, his portrait offers glimpses of Tilton's shops: Quinton residents' memories supply names – Home's butchers, Thurban's grocers, Jordan's confectioners.<sup>260</sup> Both sources considered together enhance knowledge; neither in itself is complete; either removed depletes the picture. Though generally an uncomplimentary and

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<sup>255</sup> Cannadine, D. (1982) p 21

<sup>256</sup> Young, F.B. (1940) *Mr Lucton's Freedom*, p 65; (1935) *White Ladies*, p 267

<sup>257</sup> Young, F.B. (1940) *Mr Lucton's Freedom*, p 64

<sup>258</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 192

<sup>259</sup> Leclaire, J (1979) p 12

<sup>260</sup> Taylor, B.J. (2004) p 53

selective portrait, Tilton fiction, demonstrably founded upon Quinton fact, offers its own commentary upon 1930s Birmingham suburban life.

## **The Homes of North Bromwich**

Gissing establishes domestic hierarchy's parameters as "the gradation which, at Birmingham, begins with the numbered court and culminates in the mansions of Edgbaston."<sup>261</sup> Using the same boundaries Young explores further, admitting his readers both into courts and mansions, but also into the gradations in between: homes of skilled and white-collar workers, professionals, newly impoverished and newly rich; theatrical lodgings; modern suburbia. Greenslade<sup>262</sup> identifies this theme, reflective of social change within their own experience, as of particular interest to a new land- and property-owning middle class: the very readership for which Young wrote.<sup>263</sup>

North Bromwich's back-to-back houses replicate their Birmingham originals which Young visited when attending confinements during midwifery training. "We were called out to the most filthy, sordid house."<sup>264</sup> Tonna discovered that "these dwellings are squalid inside: they have very little furniture, and are in general extremely dirty,"<sup>265</sup> whilst in Peter Lawley's Birmingham, "in nearly every house it was easy to be seen that not much pains was taken to keep the interior clean and comfortable."<sup>266</sup> Half-a-century later North Bromwich's back-to-back houses remain downstairs "a meagre box... no more than ten feet square... no furniture

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<sup>261</sup> Gissing, G. (1895) p 6

<sup>262</sup> Greenslade, W. (1994) p 151

<sup>263</sup> See p 9

<sup>264</sup> FBY 224 (March 1906) Letter from Young to Jessie Hankinson

<sup>265</sup> [Tonna], Charlotte Elizabeth (1843) p 443

<sup>266</sup> "How to Get on in the World: The Story of Peter Lawley" (1848) p 7

but a table and a couple of rickety chairs” and upstairs “a room even smaller and barer... three-quarters of its space occupied by an iron double-bed.”<sup>267</sup> However, neither in fact nor fiction does poverty necessarily imply neglect. Garratt recalls his mother’s daily struggles to keep their Birmingham back-to-back home clean.<sup>268</sup> In North Bromwich’s courtyards “pink ribbon bows upon the curtains, a china ornament on the mantelpiece... attempt to introduce the amenities of Alvaston.”<sup>269</sup> Behind this attempt to make North Bromwich slums bearable lies the reality, championed by Chinn, of comparable Birmingham residents who “fought to survive with dignity a life of low pay, ill-health, under-nourishment and inadequate housing.”<sup>270</sup> Young’s North Bromwich encapsulates Birmingham’s legacy of insanitary, infested nineteenth century housing, which the Council made halting attempts to address. Corresponding with the era of *The Young Physician*, between 1901-1906 in central Birmingham 1,132 homes had been made fit for habitation and 552 demolished,<sup>271</sup> making little inroad into the enormity of the problem.<sup>272</sup> In one of the North Bromwich canon’s most overt expressions of social history Young writes “this sort of thing teaches you a bit about twentieth century housing.”<sup>273</sup>

The homes of better-off workers and less successful professionals in North Bromwich and Mettingham closely resonate with one-another. Narrow entrance halls lead to sitting-rooms from which industrial landscapes are overlooked.<sup>274</sup> Upstairs “a bare bedroom with

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<sup>267</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 195

<sup>268</sup> Garratt, V.W. (1939) p 11

<sup>269</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, pp 440-441

<sup>270</sup> Chinn, C. (1999) p 19

<sup>271</sup> Chinn, C. (1999) p 16

<sup>272</sup> See p 26

<sup>273</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 451

<sup>274</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 307; (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 866; (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 133-134; Parkes, W. K. (1914) pp 47, 56, 113

iron bedstead and dejected washhand stand” may be equipped as a study bedroom, “reasonably clean and comfortable... a refuge from an outer world.”<sup>275</sup> In North Bromwich such homes are “indistinguishable one from another save by the varying cleanliness of their strips of machine-made lace curtain.”<sup>276</sup> In Mettingham “when grotesque papers were loosely hung on the walls, the houses became just like any other.”<sup>277</sup> Absent are such cosily enriched clerk’s lodgings as Gissing creates in Birmingham’s Camp Hill: deep leather armchair by the fireside, array of books and engraving of the Parthenon.<sup>278</sup> The North Bromwich canon allows no role for the detailed home life and pretentious bonhomie of the London clerk imagined by Grossmith.<sup>279</sup> Such is not Young’s purpose: his selected imagery conveys its own focus. The novels of Young and Parkes convey a picture of drab and dreary homes. Young explains the dominant concern of their North Bromwich occupants: “lower middle-class life... attempting to preserve its precious little refinements amid surroundings that were always too strong for it.”<sup>280</sup> Jameson<sup>281</sup> recognizes a narrative genre in which middle-class fantasies impose their own interpretations upon working-class life. In the sharpness of their vision, Burnett<sup>282</sup> acknowledges the possibility that such interpretations may contribute to overall understanding.

Contrasting with Birmingham fiction’s other description of theatrical lodgings, is Young’s depiction of homes typical of those encountered during his stay in Bath Row.<sup>283</sup> The 1901 Census for Bath Row shows twenty-six music hall artistes, twenty-one actors/actresses,

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<sup>275</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 421; (1936) *Far Forest*, p 241; (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 133; Parkes, W. K. (1914) pp 163-164

<sup>276</sup> Young, F.B. (1936) *Far Forest*, p 238

<sup>277</sup> Parkes, W. K. (1914) p 34

<sup>278</sup> Gissing, G. (1895) p 87

<sup>279</sup> Grossmith, G. (1892) *Diary of a Nobody*, Bristol, J.W. Arrowsmith

<sup>280</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 298

<sup>281</sup> Jameson, F. (1981) p 186

<sup>282</sup> Burnett, J. (1982) p 217

<sup>283</sup> See p 10



nineteen dancers, fifteen acrobats/gymnasts, one comedian, one professional roller-skater, one animal impersonator and eight theatrical managers/carers living in twenty-three lodging houses.<sup>284</sup> Though a Bath Row theatrical lodging is a major location in *A Rising Star*, Murray's scant picture of its interior ("meagre little bandbox of a place... oil-clothed hall... four bare walls... uncarpeted floor"<sup>285</sup>) does not approach Young's vibrant portrayal of North Bromwich's similar dwellings. In Prince Albert's Place "armchairs covered with dirty chintz suggested a layer of dirt more ancient beneath."<sup>286</sup> In Easy Row

a tinkle of brass rings, a velveteen portière... a room with a red blind... so cluttered with furniture that there was hardly space to stand. Nor was there anywhere to sit, for the chairs and sofa were strewn with cardboard boxes, flowered hats, blouses, stockings and soiled female underwear. The room reeked with cheap scent.<sup>287</sup>

Not all of Bath Row's lodging-houses are equally sordid as Dayus makes clear in her description of the well-lit, well-furnished house where her husband once lodged.<sup>288</sup>

Suburban Tilton's 1930s housing reflects historical reality. Neville Chamberlain's 1923 Housing Act pioneered homes including such amenities as hall, bathroom, separate lavatory, larder, electric lighting and perhaps a mantelpiece over the living-room fireplace.<sup>289</sup>

The description of Tilton's new housing's identical features enlivens bare facts.

Entrance 'all. No space wasted. One width of lino will cover the lot... A miniature bath and washhand stand enamelled in the bluish-white hue of watered milk... a

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<sup>284</sup> See Appendix 3

<sup>285</sup> Murray, D.C. (1894) vol 1, pp 1, 19, 25

<sup>286</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 469

<sup>287</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 653

<sup>288</sup> Dayus, K. (2000) pp 236-237

<sup>289</sup> Chinn, C. (1999) p 56

minute dank dungeon of a water-closet, walled with olive-green cement ... As for larders, like an ice-'ouse this is... central light-bulb... mantelpiece.<sup>290</sup>

Post-Second World War developments in Birmingham housing introduced fitted kitchens with serving-hatches connected to the living-room,<sup>291</sup> features anticipated in Tilton. “Leg-saving kitchen... Everything to 'and... A butler's 'atch.”<sup>292</sup> Approximately 78% of Birmingham's post-1923 housing was non-parlour.<sup>293</sup> Debating the desirability of parlours (allowing space for children studying and sweethearts courting) in government-subsidized housing Chamberlain commented “I very much doubt whether the activities of sweethearts would be hindered in any way if no parlour were provided.”<sup>294</sup> Contributing to the debate, Young includes a parlour in Tilton's new housing, but introduces a developer who questions its necessity for the anticipated tenantry, as “you're not likely to set foot in it except of a Sunday afternoon.”<sup>295</sup>

Strikingly portrayed in North Bromwich, but absent from other Birmingham novels considered in this thesis, are the drawing-rooms of annuitants, elegant in reduced circumstances, and parvenus, inelegant despite wealth. The former appears in a Winsworth villa, “comfortable, restrained, in no way vulgar.”

Before the fire stood an armchair heavily upholstered in red rep, before which lay a footstool covered with bead embroidery. The hearth was guarded by a painted glass firescreen mounted in mahogany; on either side of the fireplace hung a series of silhouettes of early-Victorian ladies and gentlemen. In the middle of the mantelpiece a gilt Empire clock in front of a large gilt mirror.<sup>296</sup>

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<sup>290</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, pp 189, 190, 191, 192, 249

<sup>291</sup> Chinn, C. (1999) p 83

<sup>292</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 190

<sup>293</sup> Chinn, C. (1999) p 56

<sup>294</sup> Dilks, D. (1984) *Neville Chamberlain*, Cambridge, University Press, vol 1p 313

<sup>295</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 189

<sup>296</sup> Young, F.B. (1934) *This Little World*, pp 558-559

Nouveau riche vulgarity, representative of the crass philistinism that Young despised, is depicted in Alvaston in “precisely the sort of house one might have expected of *any* Astill: a model of expensive bad taste... a drawing room of purple and gold.”<sup>297</sup>

Birmingham professionals’ homes were familiar to Young through the drawing-rooms of his Edgbaston landlady and friends. North Bromwich professionals’ drawing-rooms with their “dim wreckage of late-Victorian furniture”<sup>298</sup> are monotonously congruent. The Nottingham lace curtains of 197 Halesby Road “matched... one hundred and ninety-six neighbours,”<sup>299</sup> whilst The Cedars’ drawing-room “might have been transported bodily from Tudor House... the same subaqueous gloom... green chenille tablecloth... asparagus fern... dead, upright piano ... trinkets and photograph frames.”<sup>300</sup> The formula is replicated in

Hampson’s Birmingham: “furniture heavy and shining, crimson curtains thick and stiff... mahogany table covered with velvet tasselled cloth... giant aspidistra... photograph in an old-fashioned gilt frame.”<sup>301</sup> Young’s childhood home’s drawing-room, illustrates similar features. Omitted from the photograph, the piano was a significant item.<sup>302</sup> In



“The Laurels” Hales Owen

<sup>297</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies*, p 246 [NB Astills, as already established, were a North Bromwich brewing family prominent in local politics. – See pp 146-147, 161-162, 170-172]

<sup>298</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 429

<sup>299</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, pp 419-420

<sup>300</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 437 [N.B. Tudor House and 197 Halesby Road are one and the same place.]

<sup>301</sup> Hampson, J. (1936) p 9

<sup>302</sup> Young, M.B. p 6

Mettingham music-making is a favourite recreation of young professionals.<sup>303</sup> Though Young was a keen musician encouraged to play his landlady's Bechstein,<sup>304</sup> in North Bromwich drawing-rooms "pianos are never played except by casual visitors."<sup>305</sup> The unimaginative similarity of North Bromwich's professional homes and musical philistinism of their occupants, contribute to Young's biased portrait.

The interior decoration of Birmingham mansions designed by J.H. Chamberlain<sup>306</sup> featured fabrics, wall-papers and furnishings from Morris & Co, walls hung with pre-Raphaelite pictures and book-lined libraries.<sup>307</sup> J.T. Bunce, who lived in a Chamberlain-designed mansion, applauded the architect's exquisite sense of colour.<sup>308</sup> Unsurprisingly, such homes hosted the artists as well as their art. Amongst the visitors to William Kenrick's Chamberlain-designed home were William Morris, Edward Burne-Jones and William Holman Hunt.<sup>309</sup> This Birmingham reality is transferred to a North Bromwich mansion, "its books, its pictures, its general air of intellectual aristocracy, enhanced by the names of the great Victorians who had breathed it."<sup>310</sup> Young faithfully recreates Chamberlain's decorative vision in this Alvaston home, "walls hung with pre-Raphaelite drawings and pictures...

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<sup>303</sup> Parkes, W. K. (1914) p 142

<sup>304</sup> Bridgewater, D. (December 1998) p 46

<sup>305</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 432

<sup>306</sup> John Henry Chamberlain (1831-1883) Professor of Architecture at Queen's College, friend and advisor of Joseph Chamberlain and his circle, played a significant part in the architectural transformation of Birmingham during the 1870s. - Foster, A. (2005) *Birmingham*, New Haven, Yale University Press, p 72

<sup>307</sup> Hartnell, R. (1996) *Pre-Raphaelite Birmingham*, Studley, Brewin Books, pp 60-64

<sup>308</sup> Editor of *Birmingham Daily Post* and author of Vols 1-2 of *History of the Corporation of Birmingham*, Bunce lived at "Longworth" Priory Road, Edgbaston – Hartnell, R. (1996) p 60

<sup>309</sup> Mayor of Birmingham (1877), Freeman (1911), brother-in-law of Joseph Chamberlain, William Kenrick lived at "The Grove" Harborne Park – Briggs, A. (1952) pp 329-33; Hartnell, R. (1996) pp 60-64

<sup>310</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 502

library which William Morris had furnished... walls lined from floor to ceiling with books.”<sup>311</sup>

In his comprehensive and vibrant portrait of North Bromwich homes, Young offers a unique overall picture of greater range and detail than that provided by all his contemporary Birmingham novelists put together.<sup>312</sup>

## **North Bromwich – Road and Rail**

Young’s account of North Bromwich public transport begins in the 1830s with a brief reference to the Brummagem-Bristol mail<sup>313</sup> which records confirm was travelling by 1790.<sup>314</sup> Between the late nineteenth- and mid-twentieth centuries tram and omnibus routes establish the links between the centre of North Bromwich and its suburbs. Cannadine cites the tram as a significant factor in making possible more distant suburbs.<sup>315</sup> Tilton’s convenient omnibus link with North Bromwich centre and the fact that Lower Sparkdale is almost entirely limited to the view from trams and trains illustrates the force of his assertion for North Bromwich. Public transport reinforces the precision of Young’s North Bromwich portrait. The south-easterly rail approach through Lower Sparkdale is painstakingly detailed whereas the north-westerly approach through the Black Country evokes a general ambience.

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<sup>311</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 162-163

<sup>312</sup> Whilst Tonna, Murray, Gissing, Collins, Parkes, Green, Tiltman, Chamberlain, Hampson and Allen variously provide snapshots of some Birmingham homes, none of them describe Birmingham mansions, the homes of the newly rich or of those living in reduced circumstances.

<sup>313</sup> Young, F.B. (1937) *They Seek A Country*, p 85

<sup>314</sup> Elrington, C.R. (1964a) “Communications” in Stephens, W.B. (ed.) (1964) p 28

<sup>315</sup> Cannadine, D. (1980) p 104

North Bromwich tramways utilized motive power (steam, cable, electricity) employed in Birmingham. For each Young captures their invasive presence. Other Birmingham novelists express similar disapprobation. Gissing describes “huge steam-driven vehicles whirling about;” Allen’s trams “ground and groaned along.”<sup>316</sup> Similarly North Bromwich’s early twentieth century passengers could “grind along in a steam-tram to Lower Sparkdale.”<sup>317</sup> Birmingham Central Tramways’ steam-powered Sparkbrook line opened in 1885 remaining operative until replaced by electric cars in 1907.<sup>318</sup> Steam trams were noisy and cumbersome.<sup>319</sup> North Bromwich “steam-trams, like antediluvian reptiles, went snorting fire and flying sparks toward the eastern suburbs.”<sup>320</sup>

Also in 1885 the Patent Cable Tramways Corporation received a lease on the Birmingham to Handsworth route, resulting in an extended service from Colmore Row to New Inns.<sup>321</sup> From Colmore Row trams employed the natural gradient into Snow Hill, where they engaged the cable.<sup>322</sup> Young accurately transfers the effort of the return journey’s final yards to North Bromwich’s Sackville Row. “A bell jangled from a cable-drawn tram rounding the corner of Station Hill at a creep.”<sup>323</sup> Cable trams operated on the Handsworth route until 1911 when this service, too, was electrified. Following fact, Young creates the recollection of a North Bromwich journey c1908 aboard “one of the cable trams (I believe they have

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<sup>316</sup> Gissing, G. (1895) p 6; Allen, W.E. (1939) p 210

<sup>317</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 430

<sup>318</sup> Vince, C.A. (1902) p 88; Hardy, P.L. & Jacques, P. (1971) pp 12-13

<sup>319</sup> Coxon, R.T. (1979) p 47

<sup>320</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 451

<sup>321</sup> Hardy, P.L. & Jacques, P. (1971) pp 8-9

<sup>322</sup> Coxon, R.T. (1979) p 53

<sup>323</sup> Young, F.B. (1913) *Undergrowth*, p 83 [NB Station Hill = Snow Hill – Appendix 2]

scrapped them now) that used to run more or less intermittently to the suburb of Winsworth.”<sup>324</sup>

By 1900 the tramways of Birmingham, the Black Country Companies, Wolverhampton and Walsall Corporation constituted, according to Coxon, who cites *Dr Bradley Remembers*, an extensive narrow-gauge network.<sup>325</sup> At a similar date, beyond North Bromwich “Black Country towns - Wednesford, Dulston, Wolverbury - lay like knots on the network of the steam- tramways.”<sup>326</sup> Birmingham and Midland Tramways opened a steam-powered system linking Birmingham with Dudley in 1885. Nineteen years later the route was electrified.<sup>327</sup> Along North Bromwich’s “main avenue of approach from Dulston... trams hissed on the rails whenever they quickened their pace; crackling sparks made momentary lightning as they jumped the junctions of overhead wires.”<sup>328</sup> On weekdays in Birmingham c1905 the first tram ran from Edmund Street to Dudley at 5.15am, with the first trams from Station Street to Sparkbrook and Colmore Row to New Inns at 5.30am.<sup>329</sup> In North Bromwich c1905 “although it was still dark, the workmen’s trams had begun to run.”<sup>330</sup>

In 1913 electric trams appeared on Hagley Road, following Birmingham’s annexation of Quinton and the increasing demands of suburban living.<sup>331</sup> Similarly in North Bromwich, “down the middle of the Halesby Road electric trams had taken the place of the old four-horse

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<sup>324</sup> Young, F.B. (1914) *The Dark Tower*, p 40

<sup>325</sup> Coxon, R.T. (1979) pp 46-47

<sup>326</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 304

<sup>327</sup> Hardy, P.L. & Jacques, P. (1971) p 8; Mayou, A., et al. (1982) p 9

<sup>328</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 530

<sup>329</sup> Collins, P. (1999) *Birmingham Corporation Transport 1904-1939*, Shepperton, Ian Allan, pp114-115

<sup>330</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, pp 450-451

<sup>331</sup> Vince, C.A. (1923) p122; Hardy, P.L. & Jacques, P. (1971) p 14

Tilton buses.”<sup>332</sup> Birmingham’s Hagley Road omnibus route was well established in the nineteenth century. Cannadine records three different companies operating half-hourly services by the early 1870s.<sup>333</sup> The route’s extension to Quinton was anticipated in the late 1880s. “Omnibuses and trams are likely to cover the whole distance not long hence. Already they visit the ‘King’s Head’ every half-hour on weekdays... on Saturdays all the way to Quinton.”<sup>334</sup> In North Bromwich this anticipated route is reality and “the Tilton ’bus went jingling up the Halesby Road right up to the edge of the escarpment that looked down on the Clents.”<sup>335</sup> As with trams, Young stresses the buses’ size. “Towering three- and four-horsed Tilton buses sailed superbly to and fro like illuminated galleons.”<sup>336</sup> At a later date Allen employs the identical simile for Bromford’s public transport - “great buses swayed like top-heavy galleons.”<sup>337</sup>

In 1912 Birmingham and Midland Motor Omnibus Company (better known as Midland Red) brought three double-deck motor-omnibuses into use on Hagley Road. By the following year this had become a half-hourly service.<sup>338</sup> At a similar time in North Bromwich “motor-buses began to displace the Tilton four-in-hand.”<sup>339</sup> Public preference meant that double-deck buses completely replaced Hagley Road trams in 1930.<sup>340</sup> Tilton buses ran with timetabled detail. “Twenty minutes to Sackville Row.”<sup>341</sup> Contemporary timetables give the travelling time for the Midland Red 130 service as twenty-six minutes from Quinton to the

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<sup>332</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies*, p 621

<sup>333</sup> Cannadine, D. (1980) p 102

<sup>334</sup> *Bourne College Chronicle Vol 1 1887-1888* (1888) Birmingham, W.G. Proverbs, p 73

<sup>335</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 128

<sup>336</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies*, p 218

<sup>337</sup> Allen, W.E. (1939) p 22

<sup>338</sup> Collins, P.(1999) pp 36-37

<sup>339</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 494

<sup>340</sup> Hardy, P.L. & Jacques, P. (1971) p 44

<sup>341</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 176



slightly further Station Street.<sup>342</sup> Their livery leaves no doubt as to the Midland Red link of “buses that threaded the weft of streets between North Bromwich and Halesby like flying vermilion shuttles.”<sup>343</sup> Further destinations are also served. In Malvern “a red two-decker motor-bus rolled up and emptied itself of passengers... from North Bromwich.”<sup>344</sup> In fact Midland Red had begun its Birmingham-Malvern service before World War One.<sup>345</sup>

In the early twentieth century, Great Western Railway’s approach to North Bromwich through Lower Sparkdale, accurately transcribes the same route into Birmingham. Carefully selected adjectives (desert, disused, forgotten, gloomy, mean, smoke-blackened) illuminate Young’s portrait of depressed and depressing North Bromwich, scarred by industrial detritus.

Prim small gardens told that they were touching the tentacles of a great town. A patch of desert country, scarred with forgotten workings in which water reflected the pale sky, scattered with heaps of slag... Blast furnaces towering above black factory sheds... Gloomy canal wharfs... smoke-blackened walls... A canal barge painted in garish colours, swimming in yellow water, foul with alkali refuse... A disused factory with a tall chimney... Another mile of black desert, pools and slag heaps, and ragged children flying kites... An asphalt schoolyard on a slope, with a tall, gothic school... endless mean streets.<sup>346</sup>

In fact houses each with their own gardens at Sparkbrook and Small Heath reached Oldknow Road, just two fields from the River Cole.<sup>347</sup> Ignoring this enhancement of working-class living conditions, Young focuses upon the image of encroaching, predatory North Bromwich. In the final margin of open land before built-up Birmingham, water was plentiful. GWR’s line crossed the mill stream serving steel rope manufacturers Webster and Horsefall, where the

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<sup>342</sup> *Andrews Pocket Diary and Alphabetical Time Table for Birmingham and District No 113* (September 1928) The Birmingham Printers Ltd., p 189

<sup>343</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 175

<sup>344</sup> Young, F.B. (1940) *Mr Lucton’s Freedom*, p 157

<sup>345</sup> Coxon, R.T. (1979) p 165

<sup>346</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, pp 117-118

<sup>347</sup> The fields belonged to Little Hay Farm – OS *Warwickshire Sheet XIV.10* (1904)

millpond remained clearly visible.<sup>348</sup> The Warwick and Birmingham Canal bordered Birmingham Small Arms factory.<sup>349</sup> Less than half a mile from the railway line, on the canal's south bank at Hay Mills, Edwin Whitfield and Son's iron foundry faced the north bank's brickworks and bedstead works.<sup>350</sup> Within half a mile of the line between Hay Mills and Snow Hill Station were thirteen more iron foundries.<sup>351</sup>

Beyond the Warwick and Birmingham Canal, the railway passed Kingston Wharf at Golden Hillock Road, before running parallel with the Corporation's Montgomery Street Wharf, site of rolling mills, Giles and Ward's Foundry and Birmingham Color Company,<sup>352</sup> an obvious candidate for North Bromwich's yellow alkali pollution. Barges would obviously have been moored along this stretch of the canal. Young's picture of ragged children at play is authenticated by Dayus's memory of "nearly naked young children playing in gutters of rainwater... and beyond, railway lines where trains could be heard coming and going from Snow Hill."<sup>353</sup> Less than two hundred yards from GWR's line the gothic building of Dixon Road Board School on a steep slope which exaggerates its height clearly suggests Young's North Bromwich school.<sup>354</sup>

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<sup>348</sup> *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham* (1900); OS *Warwickshire Sheet XIV.10* (1904)

<sup>349</sup> OS *Warwickshire Sheet XIV.10* (1904)

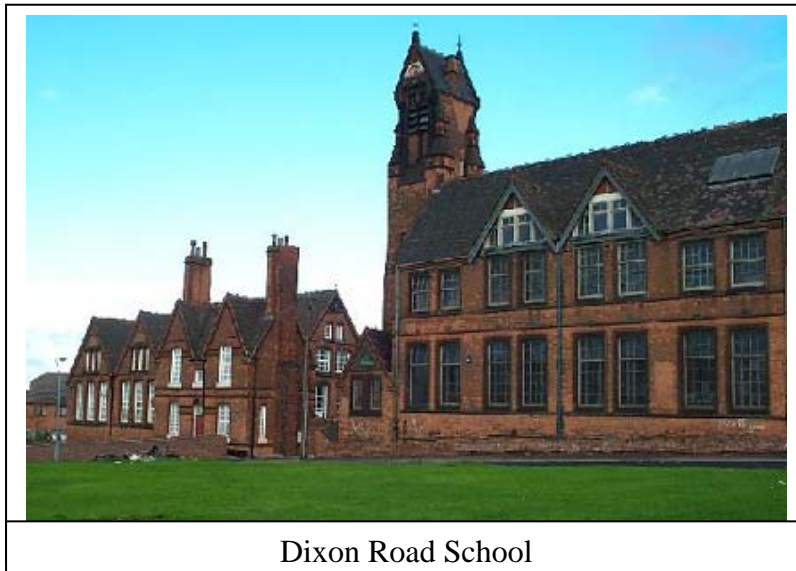
<sup>350</sup> *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham* (1900); OS *Warwickshire Sheet XIV.10* (1904)

<sup>351</sup> John Cartwright & Sons, New Bond St; J.C. Dalman & Sons, River St; G. Fowles & Sons, River Foundry, Green St; George Godfrey & Co, Watery Lane & Glover St; William Grice & Sons, Fazeley St; Hassell & Singleton Ltd, Phoenix Foundry, Freeman St; Percy Howson Hawkins, Coventry Rd; Ingall Parsons Clive & Co Ltd, Bradford St; Marshalls, Bradford St; Northwood & Sons, Milk St; Perry & Co, Fawdry St; George Rathbone, Grosvenor St & Coleshill St; T.J. Walford, Charles Henry St - *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham* (1900)

<sup>352</sup> *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham* (1900); OS *Warwickshire Sheet XIV.10* (1904)

<sup>353</sup> Dayus, K. (2000) p 235

<sup>354</sup> Dixon Road School, Cooksey Road, closed in 1977 - *Birmingham Post & Mail Yearbook & Who's Who* (1977) Birmingham, Post & Mail Ltd. At the time of the photograph (19.07.2001) the building was used as the Shahporan Islamic Education & Community Centre.



Dixon Road School

Back-to-back and tunnel-back housing covered much of Birmingham from Cooksey Road to the Moor Street Tunnel where GWR's line disappeared.<sup>355</sup>

At the identical point the North Bromwich track also disappears into “a thunderous tunnel” emerging in the station “under the gloom of the great glass roof.”<sup>356</sup> Allen similarly identifies the “glass roof” and “enormous cavern” of Bromford's Great Western Station.<sup>357</sup> With pedestrian access via steps from its main entrance in Sackville Row, parcels and vegetables transferred via Lower Hutton Street, and cab-ranks in both,<sup>358</sup> North Bromwich's Great Western Station mirrors Birmingham's Great Western Snow Hill Station, with its glazed central roof, passenger entrance via steps in Colmore Row, loading bays for perishables in Livery Street, and taxi-ranks in both.<sup>359</sup> In North Bromwich trains from the north “thundered in beneath the grimy arch.”<sup>360</sup> Young carefully selects the verb. The 1 in 50 gradient into Snow Hill from the north guaranteed a reverberating arrival at the platform.<sup>361</sup>

<sup>355</sup> OS *Warwickshire Sheet XIV.5* (1911)

<sup>356</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 118

<sup>357</sup> Allen, W.E.(1940) p 271

<sup>358</sup> Young, F.B. (1913) *Undergrowth*, p 86; (1916) *The Iron Age*, p 82; (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 353

<sup>359</sup> Mears, R.P. (August 1911) “Birmingham (Snow Hill) New Station” in *Great Western Railway Magazine* Vol XXIII, No 8; Harrison, D. (1978) *Salute to Snow Hill: The Rise and Fall of Birmingham's Snow Hill Railway Station 1852-1977*, Birmingham, Barbryn Press, pp 13, 24; Skipp, V. (1996) p 34

<sup>360</sup> Young, F.B. (1913) *Undergrowth*, p 86

<sup>361</sup> Coxon, R.T. (1979) pp 32-33

The noise of North Bromwich's Great Western Station is reiterated,<sup>362</sup> suggesting Birmingham's notoriously noisy Snow Hill, with its series of 60' locking bars which trains from Moor Street Tunnel sent crashing one after another with loud, dramatic effect.<sup>363</sup> Between 1906 and 1912 Snow Hill Station underwent major reconstruction producing four through-platforms and four bay lines.<sup>364</sup> In North Bromwich local trains start from the Great Western station's bay platform.<sup>365</sup> Redevelopment made Snow Hill a busy centre teeming with passengers, which Young translates to North Bromwich where "the bustling crowd thronged the noisy booking-hall... people jostled on the pavement."<sup>366</sup>

Birmingham's New Street Station, opened for Stour Valley Railway in 1852 and LNWR and Midland Railway in 1854, claimed the world's largest single-span iron and glass roof.<sup>367</sup> Platforms were accessed by staircases from the footbridge linking Stephenson Street with Station Street.<sup>368</sup> North Bromwich's Midland Station boasts two particular architectural features: "the great glass vault" and "the wooden bridge that spanned the station".<sup>369</sup> Identical features appear in other Birmingham novels. Parkes describes "the great glass and iron roof that stretched over the platforms of Old Street Station,"<sup>370</sup> whilst Gissing mentions "the bridge crossing the line"<sup>371</sup> at New Street Station. Built on an east-west axis in a natural bowl, Birmingham's New Street Station is approached from both directions via tunnels bringing

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<sup>362</sup> Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, p 83; (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 118; (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 121

<sup>363</sup> Coxon, R.T. (1979) p 32

<sup>364</sup> Harrison, D. (1978) p 24

<sup>365</sup> Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, pp 82-83

<sup>366</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 501

<sup>367</sup> Skipp, V. (1996) pp 32-33 – the roof was 1080' long with a 212' span.

<sup>368</sup> Coxon, R.T. (1979) p 15

<sup>369</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, pp 29, 473

<sup>370</sup> Parkes, W. K. (1914) pp 111-112 [Mettingham's Old Street interprets Birmingham's New Street.]

<sup>371</sup> Gissing, G. (1895) p 115

trains under the city centre.<sup>372</sup> North Bromwich's Midland Station has identical approaches,<sup>373</sup> the choking effects of which are evocatively depicted. "From end to end of the platform a fog that was coloured like sulphur and smelt of it, welled steadily out of the black tunnel-mouths."<sup>374</sup> Collins' portrayal is equally dispiriting. "Travellers... shabby and uninteresting," arrive at Birchampton's "ugly, crowded station... some dull, dark pool where the sun never shone."<sup>375</sup>

From New Street Stour Valley Railway traverses the Black Country, via Dudley Port, Tipton, Coseley and Wolverhampton.<sup>376</sup> From North Bromwich the Stourton branch-line<sup>377</sup> makes the same journey via "great black towns that cluster, like swollen knots, upon the North Bromwich system of railways."<sup>378</sup> Fictional travellers repeatedly discover that polluted North Bromwich is bordered by a polluted landscape.

A railway cut through the central desolation of the Black Country... sterile as a lunar landscape... black desert that fringes the iron city, dominated by high smoke-stacks ... the blighted margin of the black-country... huge spoil-heaps... hazed by eternal smoke.<sup>379</sup>

Literary References to the Black Country from Dickens' "brick towers never ceasing in their black vomit, blasting all things living and inanimate, shutting out the face of day"<sup>380</sup> to Chamberlain's "heaped mounds and hummocks... factories and more factories... ravaged and

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<sup>372</sup> Skipp, V. (1996) p 33; OS *Warwickshire Sheets* XIII.8 (1918); XIV.5 (1911)

<sup>373</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 474; (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 536

<sup>374</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 472

<sup>375</sup> Collins, M. (1896), pp 157, 165

<sup>376</sup> OS Landranger 139: *Birmingham & Wolverhampton* (1998); London & North Western Railway bought out Birmingham, Wolverhampton & Stour Valley Railway in 1847 – Skipp, V. (1996) p 32

<sup>377</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 175

<sup>378</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, pp 274-275

<sup>379</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 253; (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 547; (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 175

<sup>380</sup> Dickens, C. (1841) *The Old Curiosity Shop*, London, Chapman & Hall; edition cited (1970) Geneva, Heron Books, vol ii, p 73 – though the Black Country name is not mentioned, this section of the journey of Little Nell and her grandfather is generally taken to be from Birmingham to Wolverhampton – Hayward, A.L. (1995) *The Dickens Encyclopaedia*, Enderby, Bookmart, p 113

gloomy”<sup>381</sup> confirm Young’s resonance with other authors. Burritt’s impression of the Black Country as a “forest of chimneys smoking over large towns”<sup>382</sup> and the (possibly) apocryphal tale of Queen Victoria commanding that her carriage blinds be drawn on the industrial scenery as the royal train passed from Birmingham to Wolverhampton<sup>383</sup> illustrate reality in the North Bromwich portrait. Also apparent is Young’s undoubted success in depicting his intended landscape, depressed and depressing, against which the indomitable spirit evident in the memoirs of factual Birmingham residents, but not generally featured in North Bromwich, struggled and frequently prevailed.

Chapter Four’s investigation of the North Bromwich suburbs reveals Young’s authentic description of a reduced Birmingham in which fiction replicates fact through personal experience and carefully-crafted depiction. Attention to detail is diverse and meticulous, ranging through such aspects as botany, local history and politics, commerce, architecture, transport and sociology. The trees of fictional Alvaston are the same species as those growing in factual Edgbaston. Early twentieth century Winsworth and Handsworth both feature new cemeteries. Alvaston thwarts Tilton’s progress much as Edgbaston hindered Quinton’s. Fried-fish shops are plentiful in fictional Blockley and factual Hockley. The Midland Railway stations of North Bromwich and Birmingham share architectural features. North Bromwich’s trams and buses evolve identically with Birmingham’s and follow matching routes out to the suburbs. Not precluded by accuracy, on-going bias is modified in Young’s portrait of North Bromwich’s suburbs. Alvaston’s most attractive roads may be less

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<sup>381</sup> Chamberlain, P. (1937) pp 82-83

<sup>382</sup> Burritt, E. (1868) p 4

<sup>383</sup> Queen Victoria made the rail journey through the Black Country in 1866 when she unveiled a statue of Prince Albert in Wolverhampton - Parsons, H. (1986) *Portrait of the Black Country*, London, Robert Hale, p 67

appealing than dusty country lanes, but the industrial skyline has undoubted grandeur. North Bromwich's professional class may be greater musical philistines than their Birmingham originals, but Blockley's jewellers are more sympathetically treated than reality sometimes allowed.

Young's snapshots of North Bromwich's domestic interiors from mansion to courtyard recreate Birmingham's social hierarchy in greater detail than the aggregation of other contemporary Birmingham fiction. Though Young's contemporary Birmingham novelists introduce additional suburbs (Acocks Green, Digbeth/Deritend, Erdington, Ladywood, Tyseley and Yardley), no single writer approaches the North Bromwich canon's range.<sup>384</sup> Commonality, however, is apparent. Of North Bromwich's eight suburbs, five (Alvaston, Lower Sparkdale, Marbourne, Sparkheath and Winsworth) appear in various guises in other Birmingham novels.<sup>385</sup>

The location of North Bromwich's suburbs within Birmingham's western segment (i.e. the area in which Young lived and worked) authenticates the North Bromwich canon's derivation from Young's personal experience. The restriction to just eight suburbs inevitably means that Greater Birmingham's size and scope cannot be equalled. Though limited in size, North Bromwich reflects Birmingham's periodic expansion, which Seward noted over a century earlier.

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<sup>384</sup> Murray (1894) introduces Erdington, vol 1, p 42; Parkes (1914) refers to Ladywood as Ladydale, p 23; Green's (1929) Bridesley is Tyseley, p 1; Tiltman (1939) features Digbeth/Deritend, p 33; Hampson (1936) adds Acocks Green and Moseley, pp 20,134; Allen (1939) includes Yardley, p 50.

<sup>385</sup> Alvaston is featured as Edgbaston by Murray, Gissing, Tiltman and Hampson and as Osmaston by Parkes and Edgbourne by Allen (see p 190); Bordesley and Camp Hill, part of Young's Lower Sparkdale are mentioned by Gissing (1895) pp 12, 87); Aston (Young's Sparkheath) is named by Gissing (1895) p 6 and Tiltman (1939) p 38; Parkes (1914) translates Marbourne to Worburn and Winsworth to Herdsworth/Mettingham Heath pp 85, 99).

*Birmingham...*

Commands her aye-accumulating walls,  
 From month to month, to climb the adjacent hills...  
 Change the hedges, thickets, trees,  
 Upturn'd, disrooted, into mortar'd piles,  
 The streets elongate, and the statelier square.<sup>386</sup>

Fiction's Blockley, Small 'Eath, Alvaston and Lower Sparkdale depict fact's Hockley, Small Heath, Edgbaston and Camp Hill/Bordesley/ Sparkbrook/Sparkhill, largely part of Birmingham at its incorporation in 1838.<sup>387</sup> Marbourne replicates Harborne, annexed in 1891. Tilton recreates Quinton, added in 1909. Sparkheath and Winsworth depict Aston and Handsworth included under the Greater Birmingham Act of 1911.

Though Birmingham obviously saw opportunities for future development such as housing in this expansion, there were equally obvious advantages for in-coming districts. Harborne gained a free library; incorporation for Handsworth which already looked to Birmingham for gas and water, was obvious;<sup>388</sup> Quinton's request to benefit from the city's sewage disposal system came from within the village. Anderton, writing in 1900, takes a caustic view of this expansion. "Birmingham is swallowing up its immediate suburbs and the process of deglutition is still going on."<sup>389</sup> In North Bromwich none of the advantages suggested for Birmingham's new suburbs are mentioned. Rather, following Anderton, Young sees the absorption of outlying districts as the voracious appetite of a power-hungry city. "The inhabitants of North Bromwich...in the vindication of a Municipal Conscience... periodically

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<sup>386</sup> Seward, A.(1785)

<sup>387</sup> Sparkhill was not included until 1911 – Vince, C.A. (1923) p 30

<sup>388</sup> See pp 27, 204

<sup>389</sup> Anderton, T. (1900) *The Tale of One City: The New Birmingham*, Birmingham, Cornish Bros, p 119



extend the area over which their coat of arms is displayed.”<sup>390</sup>

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<sup>390</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p237

**FRANCIS BRETT YOUNG'S BIRMINGHAM**

*North Bromwich – City of Iron*

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

# **THE ARTS, LEISURE AND RELIGION**

Signs of a lively and cultured mind one would have met hardly  
ever in North Bromwich.

Francis Brett Young - *A Man about the House*

Nascent North Bromwich emerged alongside evolving working-class leisure opportunities. Bailey's and Walvins studies<sup>1</sup> show late nineteenth century workers enjoying increased wages and free time resulting from industrial legislation and trade unionism. By the century's end even the poor assumed a right to leisure, with Saturday increasingly its day. Early in this revolutionary period Eliot captured a sea-change in attitude as society hurried from rural to urban. "Idleness is eager for amusement, prone to excursion-trains, art-museums and exciting novels."<sup>2</sup> Such eagerness spawned a leisure industry. Walvin shows that sports, seaside resorts, music halls and travel (all of which are North Bromwich leisure-pursuits) were both products and creators of new wealth.<sup>3</sup> With North Bromwich-like sentiments, G.J. Romanes valued recreation "not for the pleasure it affords, but the profit it ensures."<sup>4</sup> Conversely, Birmingham's R.W. Dale pondered: "What amusements are lawful to persons who wish to live a religious life? The stricter habits of our fathers are everywhere relaxed."<sup>5</sup> Responding to such concerns, Cunningham demonstrates, new museums, public parks, libraries and musical activities answered middle-class convictions that leisure should be self-improving.<sup>6</sup> In new industrial cities, Bailey shows, "leisure was clearly marked off from work, to be pursued elsewhere than in the workplace, in company no longer comprised predominantly of workmates."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bailey, P. (1978) *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control 1830-1885*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul; Walvin, J. (1978b) *Leisure and Society 1839-1950*, London, Longman

<sup>2</sup> Eliot, G. (1859) *Adam Bede*, London, William Blackwood & Sons; edition cited: (1904) London, John Long, p 457

<sup>3</sup> Walvin, J. (1978b) p 62

<sup>4</sup> Writing in 1879, cited in Bailey, P. (1978) p 67

<sup>5</sup> Dale. R.W. (1867) *Weekday Sermons*, London, Alexander Strahan & Co, p 225

<sup>6</sup> Cunningham, H. (1980) *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution 1780-1880*, London, Croom Helm, p 90

<sup>7</sup> Bailey, P. (1978) p 4

Commentators view ambiguously Birmingham's leisure facilities during the North Bromwich era's early years. Joseph Sturge lamented the absence of "a green field on which a child can play."<sup>8</sup> Contemporary Birmingham fiction's "children played in muddy gutters that ran down the street."<sup>9</sup> Retrospectively, Walvin regretted the lack of recreational places available to Birmingham's working-men.<sup>10</sup> Thus the town reflected Dickens' representative industrial paradigm: "Nothing but what was severely workful."<sup>11</sup> Hutton, however, catalogues breadth in Birmingham's provision: "A regular concert ... dance... theatre... bowling greens... public gardens... fishing... excursions... skittles and ale."<sup>12</sup>

Birmingham leisure-time venues and pursuits are well represented in fiction. The Art Gallery features in Gissing's and Hampson's novels,<sup>13</sup> musical concerts in Parkes' and Green's.<sup>14</sup> Birmingham's Town Hall, venue for factual concerts, appears in the fiction of Gissing and Murray<sup>15</sup> who, like Hampson, introduces Birmingham's theatres.<sup>16</sup> Music Hall appears in Murray's and Tiltman's writing<sup>17</sup> and dance halls in that of Hampson and Allen<sup>18</sup> who also features the city's cinemas.<sup>19</sup> Cafés and restaurants appear in Collins' Birchampton, Parkes' Mettingham and Allen's Bromford.<sup>20</sup> Inns are used as settings by Tonna and Chamberlain,<sup>21</sup> clubs by Murray and Parkes,<sup>22</sup> hotels by Collins, Tiltman and Hampson.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Walvin, J. (1978b) p 4

<sup>9</sup> "How to Get On in the World: The Story of Peter Lawley" (1848) p 7

<sup>10</sup> Walvin, J. (1978b) p 3

<sup>11</sup> Dickens, C. (1854); edition cited:(1970) Geneva, Heron Books, p 25

<sup>12</sup> Hutton, W. (1819) pp 208-212

<sup>13</sup> Gissing, G. (1895) p 100; Hampson, J. (1936) p 105

<sup>14</sup> Parkes, W. K. (1914) p 180; Green, H. (1929) p 57

<sup>15</sup> Gissing, G. (1895) p 109; Murray, D.C. (1894) vol 1, p 156

<sup>16</sup> Murray, D.C. (1894) vol 1, p 18; Hampson, J. (1931) p 33

<sup>17</sup> Murray, D.C. (1894) vol 2, p 23; Tiltman, M.H. (1939) p 76

<sup>18</sup> Hampson, J. (1931) p 33; Allen, W.E. (1940) p 44

<sup>19</sup> Allen, W.E. (1939) p 19; (1940) p 122

<sup>20</sup> Collins, M. (1896) p 206; Parkes, W. K. (1914) p 97; Allen, W.E. (1939) p 133

<sup>21</sup> [Tonna] Charlotte Elizabeth (1843-44) p 428; Chamberlain, P. (1937) p 421

<sup>22</sup> Murray, D.C. (1894) vol 1, p 108; Parkes, W. K. (1914) p 197

<sup>23</sup> Collins, M. (1896) pp 243-257; Tiltman, M.H. (1939) p 271; Hampson, J. (1936) p143

Among the city's sporting activities cricket is mentioned by Allan and Chamberlain<sup>24</sup> who, with Green, opines about football and introduces Aston Villa.<sup>25</sup> Parkes identifies skating on the reservoir and gardening in the suburbs as Metlingham pastimes.<sup>26</sup> Day trips to Sutton Park and Clent offer respite from city-living for characters in Tiltman's and Allen's novels,<sup>27</sup> while countryside and seaside holidays are enjoyed in Gissing's and Chamberlain's writing.<sup>28</sup> Birmingham's religious life is less thoroughly explored. Tonna and Collins note its paucity;<sup>29</sup> Parkes considers its social niceties.<sup>30</sup> Various Birmingham churches are mentioned by Gissing and Tiltman<sup>31</sup> who like Allen refers to Sunday School activities.<sup>32</sup>

Unlike Hampson and Tiltman,<sup>33</sup> Young ignores Birmingham's parks and fairs. Aston Hall and Lickey Hills are not venues for North Bromwich day-trippers as in Gissing's and Green's novels.<sup>34</sup> North Bromwich sport omits the dog-racing and athletics of Allen's fiction and the golf and motor-cycle racing of Tiltman's and Chamberlain's.<sup>35</sup> However, of the eleven novelists of Birmingham considered in this thesis, Young alone addresses all of the topics mentioned above; he alone includes bare-knuckle fighting, cycling, rugby, tennis and fishing. Chapter Five shows that once again Young's North Bromwich canon paints in meticulous detail the broadest canvas of all Birmingham's fictional portraits.

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<sup>24</sup> Allen, W.E. (1938) p 140; Chamberlain, P. (1937) pp 429-430

<sup>25</sup> Chamberlain, P. (1937) pp 420; Green, H. (1929) p 257

<sup>26</sup> Parkes, W. K. (1914) pp 25, 147

<sup>27</sup> Tiltman, M.H. (1939) p 34; Allen, W.E. (1938) p 140

<sup>28</sup> Gissing, G. (1895) p 124; Chamberlain, P. (1937) pp 103-382

<sup>29</sup> [Tonna] Charlotte Elizabeth (1843-44) pp 452, 471; Collins, M. (1896) p 297

<sup>30</sup> Parkes, W. K. (1914) p 88

<sup>31</sup> Gissing, G. (1895) pp 103, 109; Tiltman, M.H. (1939) pp 29, 143

<sup>32</sup> Tiltman, M.H. (1939) p 39; Allen, W.E. (1939) p 65

<sup>33</sup> Hampson, J. (1936) p 178; Tiltman, M.H. (1939) pp 23ff

<sup>34</sup> Gissing, G. (1895) p 82; Green, H. (1929) p 45

<sup>35</sup> Allen, W.E. (1938) pp 76, 140; Tiltman, M.H. (1939) p 272; Chamberlain, P.(1939) pp 205-274

## The Arts

That the Arts feature prominently in North Bromwich is unsurprising considering Young's opinion: "Happiness consists of giving expression to the desire to create latent in all of us. This is the divine dispensation: that we are rewarded according to our capacity for creative achievement."<sup>36</sup> Throughout the nineteenth century public art collections became increasingly integral to civic amenities.<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, promoting the Arts was not always purely altruistic. Founders of Birmingham Society of Arts considered "the due cultivation of Fine Arts essential to the prosperity of manufacturers of this town."<sup>38</sup> Anticipating the founding of Birmingham's Art Gallery, Dale recalled how advocates would extol "the glories of Florence in the Middle Ages and suggest that Birmingham too might become the home of noble art."<sup>39</sup>

North Bromwich Art Gallery, with its clock-tower, the elegance of which Young cannot quite allow ("almost beautiful"<sup>40</sup>), features throughout the canon.<sup>41</sup> Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, with its distinctive campanile, was opened in 1885 with a collection started twenty years earlier. A fine selection of Roman pottery had been gifted in 1874; Flinders Petrie's collection of Egyptian pottery came in 1895; by 1914 Birmingham's collection of Pre-Raphaelite art was of national significance.<sup>42</sup> Unlike Gissing and Hampson, Young ventures inside North Bromwich's Museum and Art Gallery: into "dank, sepulchral

<sup>36</sup> FBY 64 (n.d.) *Sweet Content: A Lay Sermon*

<sup>37</sup> Flanders, J. (2006) *Consuming Passions: Leisure and Pleasure in Victorian Britain*, London, Harper Press, p 405

<sup>38</sup> Cited by Flanders, J. (2006) p 399

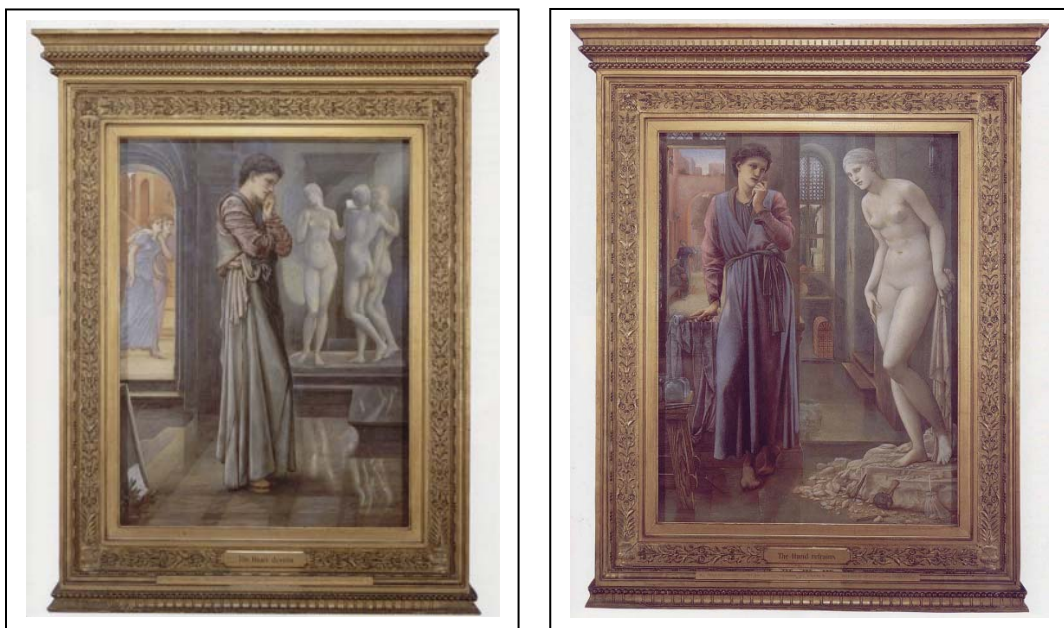
<sup>39</sup> Dale, A.W.W. (1899) *The Life of R.W. Dale of Birmingham*, London, Hodder & Stoughton, p 402

<sup>40</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 118

<sup>41</sup> Young, F.B. (1914) *The Dark Tower*, p 48; (1916) *The Iron Age*, p 76; (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 479; (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 861; (1928) *The Key of Life*, p 179; (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 47; (1929) *Black Roses*, p 5; (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 38; (1935) *White Ladies*, p 172; (1936) *Far Forest*, p 241; (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 123; (1940) *Mr Lucton's Freedom*, p 392

<sup>42</sup> Bunce, J.T. (1885) pp 237,239; Vince, C.A. (1902) p 173; Davies, S. (1985) *By the Gains of Industry: Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery 1885-1985*, Birmingham, City Museum & Art Gallery, pp 31-34

chambers that housed the Roman and Egyptian antiquities;” into “carbon-dioxide and Burne-Jones.”<sup>43</sup> North Bromwich’s sombrely suffocating atmosphere conveys an entirely opposite impression to Birmingham’s top-lit galleries, described by Vince as among Europe’s most comfortable.<sup>44</sup> In North Bromwich may be found such Birmingham exhibits as “pictures that presented the story of Pygmalion and Galatea, in which the marble of a nude statue gradually glowed with a warm and living loveliness.”<sup>45</sup> Burne-Jones’ *Pygmalion* paintings were donated to Birmingham in 1903.<sup>46</sup>



*I. The Heart Desires*  
*III. The Godhead Fires*

*II. The Hand Refrains*  
*IV. The Soul Attains*

*Pygmalion and the Image* by Edward Burne-Jones  
(Collection of Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery)

<sup>43</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *The Key of Life*, p 58; (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 296

<sup>44</sup> Vince, C.A. (1923) pp 259-260

<sup>45</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 177

<sup>46</sup> J.T. Middlemore (1844-1925) Birmingham City Councillor (1883-1892) M.P. (1899-1903) gave the Pygmalion series to mark his election as a Trustee of the Public Gallery Picture Fund – Wildman, S. (1995) *Visions of Love and Life: Pre-Raphaelite Art from the Birmingham Collection, England*, Alexandria, Art Services International, p 61



Chamberlain identifies donor-generosity as Birmingham's good fortune.<sup>47</sup> North Bromwich's collection benefited from the gifts of brewer and local politician Joseph Astill who "presented the municipal art gallery with their unrivalled collection of Madox-Jones cartoons" and solicitor Ernest Wilburn who presented "a whole series of Madox-Jones' cartoons."<sup>48</sup> Young fuses two artists and accurately records donations to Birmingham. Ford Madox Brown (1821-1893), a leading figure in Pre-Raphaelite development, was employed as a designer by Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co., where he was eventually replaced by Birmingham-born Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898), chief among the second generation of Pre-Raphaelite painters.<sup>49</sup>

Generous donors to Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery included brewer John Holder, local politician William Kenrick and solicitor J. R. Holliday.<sup>50</sup> In the early twentieth

<sup>47</sup> Chamberlain, A.B. (1928) *Hours in the Birmingham Art Gallery*, London, Duckworth, pp 13-14

<sup>48</sup> Young, F.B. (1914) *The Dark Tower*, p 48; (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 238

<sup>49</sup> Wildman, S. (1995) pp 336-337

<sup>50</sup> Holder was himself an avid collector, both of pictures and local committee chairmanships; Kenrick, Mayor of Birmingham (1877), M.P for North Birmingham (1885-1899) was chairman of the Museum & School of Art Committee (1884-1914); Holliday, a partner in the



century Birmingham Art Gallery acquired much of the collection of Charles Fairfax Murray (1849-1919) who, after working as Rossetti's studio assistant, had amassed more than eight hundred Pre-Raphaelite works. As the asking price of £10,000 was beyond the city's means, local benefactors were recruited. Thus in 1904-1906, a substantial number of cartoons, sketches and drawings by Madox Brown and Burne-Jones were presented to the Art Gallery by subscribers including Kenrick and Holliday.<sup>51</sup>

Referring to Birmingham Art Gallery, Gissing generalises "We don't really care for pictures."<sup>52</sup> North Bromwich Art Gallery is unfrequented.<sup>53</sup> In the first year of its opening Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery received over one million visitors.<sup>54</sup> A later keeper, however, identified North Bromwich-like neglect, chastising a 1931 audience: "Like all Birmingham people, you are, I suppose, very proud of the Museum and Art Gallery, and like all Birmingham citizens you never go inside."<sup>55</sup> Young's disparagement of North Bromwich's art collection is specific: "The drooping physical type which the Pre-Raphaelites had adopted as their standard."<sup>56</sup> Though certain pictures enrapture, Rossetti's do not;<sup>57</sup> Madox-Jones' cartoons seem "washy, sickly, lackadaisical;"<sup>58</sup> Burne-Jones paints "aureoled figures on the

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firm of Wragge, Evans, Holliday & Godlee of Bennett's Hill, became chairman of Birmingham Art Gallery's management committee in 1907. Their donations included Abbott's portrait of Matthew Boulton; (Holder); Millais's *The Blind Girl* (Kenrick); Burne-Jones's *The Tiburtine Sibyl* (Holliday) – *Birmingham Post* (23.07.1927) Obit of James Richardson Holliday; Wildman, S. (1995) pp 61, 288

<sup>51</sup> Other subscribers were Cregoe Colmore, John Feeney, C.A. Smith-Ryland, William Cadbury, Mrs Charles Dixon, G. Hookham, G.H. Kenrick, F.M.W. Mitchell, J. Palmer Phillips and R.A. Pinsent – Wildman, S. (1995) pp 67,69

<sup>52</sup> Gissing, G. (1895) p 100

<sup>53</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 861

<sup>54</sup> Vince, C. (1902) p 181

<sup>55</sup> Cited by Davies, S. (1985) p 58

<sup>56</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 127

<sup>57</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 47

<sup>58</sup> Young, F.B. (1914) *The Dark Tower*, p 48

verge of sea-sickness.”<sup>59</sup> Madox Brown’s painstaking work was generally eclipsed by other Pre-Raphaelite painters;<sup>60</sup> Burne-Jones’ androgynous figures were criticised as decadent.<sup>61</sup> In following this appraisal, Young maintains his chosen image of ill-favoured North Bromwich, necessarily representing the contents of its Art Gallery as unattractive. However, Young’s personal viewing of Holliday’s Pre-Raphaelite collection produced a different opinion.

Retreated into the house of one Holliday, a fossil who has lain hidden in the Pre-Raphaelite strata for many years. Oh his Rossettis! And oh his Burne-Jones! Some of the most gorgeous studies I have seen.<sup>62</sup>

Like the ambivalence evident in Dickens’s view and representation of Birmingham,<sup>63</sup> it is clear that Young’s literary intentions do not necessarily reflect private opinion.

Though Birmingham’s musical history is traceable to the fourteenth century,<sup>64</sup> North Bromwich music’s earliest mention in summer 1846 cites Mendelssohn “producing his *Elijah* at the North Bromwich Festival”<sup>65</sup> faithfully replicating the oratorio’s actual premiere in Birmingham Town Hall in August 1846 during the Triennial Musical Festival.<sup>66</sup> Parkes’ fiction similarly acknowledges Mettingham’s triennial music festivals.<sup>67</sup> In 1768 a benefit concert supported Birmingham’s General Hospital. Sixteen years later a second concert supported the hospital and St Paul’s Church and Birmingham’s Triennial Musical Festival was born. Cunningham<sup>68</sup> identifies the importance of creating a suitable milieu for music, the taste for which is not class-specific. That this continued to be true is underlined by Handford’s

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<sup>59</sup> Young, F.B. (1924) *Cold Harbour*, p 65

<sup>60</sup> Wildman, S. (1995) p 336

<sup>61</sup> Fitzgerald, P. (2003) *Edward Burne-Jones*, Stroud, Sutton Publishing Ltd, pp 122-124

<sup>62</sup> FBY 252 (30.06.1906) Letter from Young to Jessie Hankinson. In 1905-1906 Young lodged with Gertrude Dale at 105 Harborne Road; Holliday lived at 101 Harborne Road – *Kelly’s Directory of Birmingham* (1906)

<sup>63</sup> See p 48

<sup>64</sup> Handford, M. (2006) *Sounds Unlikely: Music in Birmingham*, Studley, Brewin Books, p 2

<sup>65</sup> Young, F.B. (1956) *Wistanslow*, p 91

<sup>66</sup> Duggan, A. (1998) *A Sense of Occasion: Mendelssohn in Birmingham 1846*, Studley, Brewin Books, p 10

<sup>67</sup> Parkes, W. K. (1914) p 180

<sup>68</sup> Cunningham, H. (1980) p 102

recognition that Birmingham's liberal ticket-pricing meant that not only wealthy patrons could hear great music.<sup>69</sup> Birmingham's need for a purpose-built concert hall necessitated a rate-payers' meeting, following which a Town Hall rate was levied, a site purchased and Hansom and Welch's design, based on Rome's Castor and Pollux Temple, selected. Faced with Anglesey marble, its pediment supported by immense columns, Birmingham's Town Hall was available for the 1834 Musical Festival.<sup>70</sup> In Burritt's view this "most symmetrical and classical building in England... has played a great part in forming the public spirit and character of Birmingham."<sup>71</sup> North Bromwich's Town Hall, also designed by Hansom,<sup>72</sup> receives no such plaudits, for "the Corinthian Town Hall did not greatly impress."<sup>73</sup> In Gissing's fictional Birmingham, the Town Hall "showed light through all its long windows."<sup>74</sup> In North Bromwich Town Hall, the grace of which, like that of the Art Gallery, Young grudgingly permits, "the windows blazed with light making the outlines of the Corinthian pillars that surrounded it almost beautiful."<sup>75</sup> Electric lights were installed in Birmingham's Town Hall in 1891.<sup>76</sup>

Lest fortnightly Town Hall concerts should promote North Bromwich as a cultured place, Young emphasizes that patrons are "subscribers to this unfashionable function."<sup>77</sup> Capitalist criteria, which esteem cost over value, are reinforced by "recitals by which the municipal organist convinced the citizens of North Bromwich that they were getting

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<sup>69</sup> Handford, M. (2006) p 237

<sup>70</sup> Dent, R.K. (1880) pp 470-471; Gill, C. (1952) pp 197-199, 324

<sup>71</sup> Burritt, E. (1868) pp 67-68

<sup>72</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 241

<sup>73</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 239

<sup>74</sup> Gissing, G., (1895) p 109

<sup>75</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 372

<sup>76</sup> Vince, C.A. (1902) pp 257-258

<sup>77</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, pp 379-380

something for their money, in debauches of sound that reminded them how much the organ had cost.”<sup>78</sup> Funded by public subscription, Birmingham Town Hall’s organ cost over £3,000<sup>79</sup> and public recitals were given by succeeding town organists.<sup>80</sup> That Young’s North Bromwich portrait is not divorced from reality is demonstrated by Birmingham organist C.W. Perkins,<sup>81</sup> who played “real organ music”<sup>82</sup> for which Young’s “debauches of sound” is an obvious synonym. Thistlethwaite makes the point clear. “There was nothing terribly sophisticated about the taste of the Birmingham audience; it was after sensation of one sort or another.”<sup>83</sup>

In 1844 Birmingham Town Hall launched a series of Monday concerts which were designed to raise appreciation of ‘good’ music rather than merely attract audiences.<sup>84</sup> Monday concerts by 1919 had transferred to Wednesdays.<sup>85</sup> Weekday concerts occurred on Tuesdays in North Bromwich<sup>86</sup> which “supported - or rather failed to support – a society for the performance of orchestral music.”<sup>87</sup> During the later nineteenth century Williams identifies a remarkable increase in audiences for serious music,<sup>88</sup> whilst Walvin shows how, in response to increasing working-class leisure-time, musical concerts became prominent aspects of city life.<sup>89</sup> This was certainly so in Birmingham. In 1871 Percy and Thomas Harrison launched

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<sup>78</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 432

<sup>79</sup> Dent, R.K. (1894) p 394

<sup>80</sup> Gill, C. (1952) p 400

<sup>81</sup> Perkins was city organist from 1888 to 1923 (unpaid until 1894) - Vince, C.A. (1902) p 259

<sup>82</sup> Snow, H. (1924) “Birmingham Town Hall and its Organists,” in *The Organ, Vol III*, p 148

<sup>83</sup> Thistlethwaite, N. (1984) *Birmingham Town Hall Organ*, Birmingham City Council, p 18

<sup>84</sup> Handford, M. (2006) pp 130-131

<sup>85</sup> Handford, M. (1992) *Sounds Unlikely: Six Hundred Years of Music in Birmingham, 1392-1992*, Birmingham, Birmingham & Midland Institute, p 132; King-Smith, B. (1995) *Crescendo! 75 Years Of The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra*, London, Methuen, p 23

<sup>86</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 469

<sup>87</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 379

<sup>88</sup> Williams, R. (1958) p 308

<sup>89</sup> Walvin, J. (1978b) pp 101-102

their subscription concerts, complementing those of the Festival Choral Society. Halford's Orchestral Concerts were presented from 1897-1907; Fred Beard, Chorus Master of Birmingham City Choral Society, introduced annual concerts in 1905. Birmingham Philharmonic Society operated from 1910-1913.<sup>90</sup>

During World War One, Ernest Newman,<sup>91</sup> who since 1913 had been campaigning for a professional, rate-supported orchestra, joined forces with Granville Bantock<sup>92</sup> and Neville Chamberlain in lobbying public opinion and civic money. In 1919 Birmingham City Council made a grant to a new City of Birmingham Orchestra.<sup>93</sup> A city orchestra is sufficiently significant to be noted in the Birmingham of Green's *Living*,<sup>94</sup> whilst Young recreates actual Birmingham experience in North Bromwich, which contemporaneously establishes a city orchestra after similar lobbying.

Oldham, the critic of the *Mail* is responsible. It's not that North Bromwich is musical; but Oldham has been pushing Leeds and Manchester down their throats, and North Bromwich people can't bear to think that anyone else is ahead of God's Own City, so they're buying a new orchestra, just as they'd buy a new sewage-farm or fire-brigade, to show what their money can do.<sup>95</sup>

Regretting similar philistinism in 1856, Birmingham-born composer Edward Bache remarked, "To come to the question of music in Birmingham... on the continent fine arts form part of

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<sup>90</sup> King-Smith, B. (1995) pp 5-6, 10-11, 13; *First Annual Concert of Mr Beard's Select Choir Programme* (28.01.1905)

<sup>91</sup> See pp 152-153. Newman, pseudonym of Liverpool bank clerk William Roberts served as the *Birmingham Post's* Music Critic from 1907-1919 - King-Smith, B. (1995) p 13

<sup>92</sup> Granville Bantock was appointed first stipendiary Principal of Birmingham School of Music in 1900 and succeeded Edward Elgar as Birmingham University's Professor of Music in 1908. - King-Smith, B. (1995) pp 5, 14

<sup>93</sup> King-Smith, B. (1970) *1920-1970 The First Fifty Years; A History of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra* Birmingham, CBSO, pp 4-5

<sup>94</sup> Green, H. (1929) p 57

<sup>95</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 465

the business of municipal bodies, whereas in England their functions are principally comprised in discussing water and gas rates, drainage and workhouse regulations.”<sup>96</sup>

North Bromwich’s approach to music typifies its rapacious appetites, especially where cost is concerned. “North Bromwich takes its music as a boa-constrictor takes food, in the triennial debauch of a festival and then goes to sleep again.”<sup>97</sup> Though entirely harmonious with Young’s usual North Bromwich portrait, this acerbic simile is unoriginal, repeating Sir Arthur Sullivan’s comment “When I first knew Birmingham it reminded me in musical matters of a huge boa constrictor that took an enormous gorge once in three years and fasted in the interim.”<sup>98</sup> Through North Bromwich newspapers Young satirises the city’s musical ignorance. “Somebody did the Pathetic Symphony for the first time in North Bromwich.”<sup>99</sup> In fact, the morning concert on the last day of the 1897 Triennial Musical Festival concluded with Birmingham’s premiere of Tchaikowsky’s Symphony No 6 (*Pathétique*), received, as the *Birmingham Post* recorded, with great acclaim.<sup>100</sup> North Bromwich’s version of the event is somewhat different.

*Our musical critic let off, airily damning the Pathétique as a promising work, saying that if the composer stuck to his Beethoven and cultivated a better appetite he might do better. Next day the Mail had a special on Tchaikowsky’s life.*<sup>101</sup>

In fact the *Birmingham Mail* briefly praised the performance: “A work that has created an impression wherever it has been heard.”<sup>102</sup> The next day, in an expansive article, the *Birmingham Post* appraised Tchaikowsky as “only second to Rubenstein as the representative

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<sup>96</sup> Bache, C. (1901) *Brother Musicians: Reminiscences of Edward and Walter Bache*, London, Methuen & Co, pp 122-123

<sup>97</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 379

<sup>98</sup> Sullivan’s Presidential Address to Birmingham’s Clef Club – Smith, J. S. (1945) p 103

<sup>99</sup> Young, F.B. (1914) *The Dark Tower*, p 30

<sup>100</sup> *Birmingham Post* (09.10.1897)

<sup>101</sup> Young, F.B. (1914) *The Dark Tower*, p 30

<sup>102</sup> *Birmingham Mail* (08.10.1897)

of the highest form of Russian music.”<sup>103</sup> Sufficient fictional accuracy authenticates events, the appreciation of which Young slants, re-establishing aesthetically unaware North Bromwich.

Like Mildred Boulton who, a decade later frequented Birmingham’s orchestral concerts and solo recitals,<sup>104</sup> in the early twentieth century Young, with fellow-members of the Octette, frequented Birmingham Town Hall concerts, encountering first-class performers and performances.<sup>105</sup> Similarly, North Bromwich presents a wide musical programme, all of which could have been heard in Birmingham during the identical period.

Debussy’s *Après-midi d’un Faun... Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin*, the two operas that Moody Manners company ventured to present to provincial audiences... the nine symphonies of Beethoven, the usual orchestral extracts from *The Ring*, *The Meistersingers Overture* and the *Siegfried Idyll*: the fourth, fifth and sixth symphonies of Tchaikovsky: the tone poems of Strauss, and a small sprinkling of modern French music.... Oldham’s new discovery: the incomparable songs of Hugo Wolf... The D’Oyly Carte Company put on a week of Gilbert and Sullivan.<sup>106</sup>

Birmingham Philharmonic Society included *L’après-midi d’un faune* in its inaugural season.<sup>107</sup> In the repertoire of Moody-Manners Opera Company,<sup>108</sup> was *Lohengrin*, which Garratt recalled hearing in Birmingham,<sup>109</sup> and *Tannhäuser*, performed at Birmingham’s Theatre Royal in 1906.<sup>110</sup> All of Beethoven’s nine symphonies were performed in Halford’s

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<sup>103</sup> *Birmingham Post* (09.10.1897)

<sup>104</sup> Boulton, M. (1993) pp 144-145

<sup>105</sup> Bridgewater, D. (1998) pp 34-49

<sup>106</sup> Young, F.B. (1914) *The Dark Tower*, p 34; (1919) *The Young Physician*, pp 378-379; (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 495; (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 29

<sup>107</sup> King-Smith, B. (1995) p 15

<sup>108</sup> Moody Manners Opera Company was founded in 1897 – Levy, E.L. (1920) *Some Birmingham Theatrical Reminiscences: Jubilee Recollections 1870-1920*, Birmingham, J.G. Hammond & Co, p 154

<sup>109</sup> Garratt, V.W. (1939) pp 24-25

<sup>110</sup> Rodway, P.P. & Slingsby, L.R. (1934) *Philip Rodway and a Tale of Two Theatres*, Birmingham, Cornish Bros, p 111

1904-1905 concerts in Birmingham Town Hall.<sup>111</sup> The *Ride of the Valkyries*, from Wagner's *Ring* cycle, featured twice in the Theatre Royal's 1906 Promenade Concerts.<sup>112</sup> *The Meistersingers Overture* and *Siegfried Idyll*, were regularly heard in the Town Hall in the early twentieth century.<sup>113</sup> In 1906 Tchaikowsky's *Fourth Symphony* was presented twice, the *Fifth Symphony* once and the *Sixth Symphony* twice.<sup>114</sup> Strauss's major tone poem,<sup>115</sup> *Don Juan* (along with his lesser-known *Ein Heldenleben*) was performed in the 1902-1903 Halford Concerts, whilst his *Hymnus* appeared in the City Choral Society's 1904 programme.<sup>116</sup>

An established feature of Birmingham's musical scene, modern French music was regularly performed in the Town Hall in the early twentieth century.<sup>117</sup> Recently deceased French composers were represented by Gounod (1818-1893), whose *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hymne à S. Cécile* and *Faust* all appeared in Birmingham City Choral Society's first season, and Cesar Franck (1822-1890), whose *Beatitudes* were proposed for the sixth season.<sup>118</sup> Living composers included Massenet (1842-1912), whose *Le Roi de Lahore* featured in Birmingham's 1903 Festival and Rousseau (1853-1904), whose *Messe Solennelle de Pâques*, received its English premiere in Birmingham Town Hall in 1901.<sup>119</sup> Most popular of all was Saint-Saens (1835-1921), whose *Oratorio de Noël*, was premiered during the City Choral

<sup>111</sup> Handford, M. (1992) p 184

<sup>112</sup> Theatre Royal Promenade Concert Programmes (15.05.1906; 02.06.1906)

<sup>113</sup> *Birmingham City Choral Society Programmes* (24.10.1901; 14.12.1901; 20.02.1902; 22.11.1902; 12.02.1903); *Birmingham Musical Festival Programme* (15.10.1903); *Theatre Royal Concert Programme* (22.05.1906)

<sup>114</sup> *Theatre Royal Promenade Concert Programmes* (15.05.1906; 17.05.1906; 24.05.1906; 31.05.1906; 02.06.1906)

<sup>115</sup> Around the beginning of the twentieth century Richard Strauss (1864-1949) was a principal exponent of tone or symphonic poems, employing a literary preface which directed the hearer's attention to the poetical ideas within a composition. – Scholes, P.A. (1978), *The Oxford Companion to Music*, Oxford, The University Press, p 998

<sup>116</sup> *Birmingham City Choral Society Programme* (04.02.1904); *Birmingham Post* (29.09.1902) – *Don Juan* was performed on 11.11.1902 and *Ein Heldenleben* on 24.03.1903.

<sup>117</sup> Stockley, W.C.(1913) *Fifty Years of Music in Birmingham*, Birmingham, Hudson & Son, pp 94, 95, 98

<sup>118</sup> *Birmingham City Choral Society Programmes* (17.10.1900; 28.02.1901; 22.11.1902)

<sup>119</sup> *Birmingham Musical Festival Programme* (14.10.1903); *Birmingham City Choral Society Programme* (28.02.1901)



Society's first season. Extracts from his *Samson and Delilah* featured in various concerts, with the complete opera receiving its Birmingham premiere in October 1901, whilst *Le Cygne* was included in the first annual concert of Mr Beard's Select Choir.<sup>120</sup> The songs of Hugo Wolf, introduced to North Bromwich by music critic, Oldham, were performed in Birmingham in Harrison's 1909 and 1911 concerts.<sup>121</sup> Oldham's original, Ernest Newman, was an acknowledged expert on Austrian song-writer Wolf (1860-1903).<sup>122</sup> The D'Oyly Carte Company appeared regularly at Birmingham's Prince of Wales Theatre and Theatre Royal from 1900,<sup>123</sup> a reality also present in Mettingham which "welcomed *Patience* rapturously when D'Oyly Carte's Company came with it for a week."<sup>124</sup>

Young's emphasis on North Bromwich music suggests that he shares Gissing's view of its civilizing effect: "Bring to bear on the new order of things the constant influence of music."<sup>125</sup> Birmingham's musical life of Young's preference is clearly replicated in North Bromwich. Unlike Europe's great musical cities (e.g. Prague, Vienna) Birmingham had little indigenous music<sup>126</sup> and needed, as a matter of civic pride, to import its concert programmes. In transferring this formula to North Bromwich, Young recreates in his fictional city, albeit

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<sup>120</sup> *Birmingham City Choral Society Programmes* (01.02.1900; 17.10.1900; 24.10.1901; 14.10.1902); *Birmingham Musical Festival Programme* (15.10.1903) *First Annual Concert of Mr Beard's Select Choir Programme* (28.01.1905)

<sup>121</sup> Handford, M. (1992) p 148

<sup>122</sup> Ernest Newman's study *Hugo Wolf* was published by Methuen & Co in 1907.

<sup>123</sup> Handford, M. (1992) p 230

<sup>124</sup> Parkes, W. K. (1914) p 98

<sup>125</sup> Gissing, G. (1889) p 109

<sup>126</sup> There were, of course, Birmingham composers. Francis Edward Bache (1833-1858) born and died in Birmingham, composed over sixty works, including his celebrated *D Minor Trio* for piano, violin and cello. His early death terminated a promising career. Edward Elgar (1857-1934) and Birmingham sat uneasily together. Elgar's tenure of the University's chair of music was reluctantly accepted (1905) and quickly resigned (1908). The premiere of *The Dream of Gerontius* in Birmingham Town Hall in 1900 was chaotic. Birmingham-born chamber and orchestral composer Albert Ketèlby (1875-1959) achieved world-wide success with his lighter music. - Bache, C. (1901) *passim*; Scholes, P.A. (1978), pp 64, 550; Riley, M. (2005) *Edward Elgar and Birmingham* [Notes to accompany an exhibition at the Barber Institute of Fine Arts], University of Birmingham.

with caveats regarding its appreciative faculties, the quality and diversity of the Birmingham original.

Theatrical entertainment is recorded in Birmingham in the early eighteenth century; the town's first theatre opened in Moor Street c1740.<sup>127</sup> In the late nineteenth century such influential Birmingham figures as Dale remained opposed to the theatre.<sup>128</sup> In the early twentieth century Barry Jackson, founder of Birmingham Repertory Theatre, declared that the majority of citizens regarded his art as “a freakish hobby with no purpose other than to find an outlet for superfluous time and money.”<sup>129</sup> Nevertheless, increased leisure-time meant that theatres flourished.<sup>130</sup> Against this background Young transposes three Birmingham theatres to fiction. Mentioned only once, North Bromwich's Gaiety Theatre replicates Birmingham's Gaiety Theatre of Varieties.<sup>131</sup> North Bromwich's Queen's Theatre relates to its Birmingham identity by geography not dramatics. “Prince Albert's Place at the back of the theatre” is the site of a “long row of lodging houses.”<sup>132</sup> This location is fixed by reference to traffic travelling along “Halesby Road, past the mouth of the Place.”<sup>133</sup> In North Bromwich “Professor Beagle advertised classes in dancing and deportment in the Queen's Assembly Rooms next door to the theatre of the same name.”<sup>134</sup> In Birmingham Thomas Maries,

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<sup>127</sup> Salberg, D. (1980) pp 12-13

<sup>128</sup> Bailey, P. (1978) p 70

<sup>129</sup> Jackson, B. (1948) Foreword to Kemp, T.C. (1948) *Birmingham Repertory Theatre: The Playhouse and the Man*, Birmingham, Cornish Bros, p vii

<sup>130</sup> Salberg, D. (1980) p 95

<sup>131</sup> Also mentioned in passing is North Bromwich's Alhambra Theatre - Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, p 130 – which has no obvious Birmingham equivalent. The Gaiety appears in Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 281. Opened in Coleshill Street in 1846 as Holders Hotel and Concert Hall, the Birmingham Gaiety Theatre of Varieties functioned under that name from 1897-1920 – Price, V. J. (1988) *Birmingham Theatres Concert & Music Halls*, Studley, Brewin Books, p 46

<sup>132</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, pp 455,479

<sup>133</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 483

<sup>134</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 327; Birmingham's Broad Street/Hagley Road is North Bromwich's Halesby Road – see pp 131, 194.

Professor of Dancing, gave lessons at the Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms located, like the theatre of the same name, at 27 Broad Street.<sup>135</sup> North Bromwich's Queen's Theatre is Birmingham's Prince of Wales Theatre, opened in 1856 as Birmingham Music Hall, renamed in 1863 to commemorate the marriage of Prince Albert Edward.<sup>136</sup> Young's name change retains a royal connection and establishes a geographical link: "Queen's Theatre;"<sup>137</sup> "Prince Albert's Place... under the black walls of warehouses."<sup>138</sup> Flanking Birmingham's Prince of Wales Theatre were the lodging houses of King Alfred's Place and King Edward's Place.<sup>139</sup> Both side streets backed onto the warehouse-like Bingley Hall exhibition centre,<sup>140</sup> transposed to North Bromwich under its original name and as Dingley Hall, venue, like its Birmingham original, for both circus and cattle-show.<sup>141</sup>

No geographical clues identify North Bromwich's Prince's Theatre, though its performances of *Florodora* and George Edwardes's latest musical comedy with comic star "every bit as good as Huntley Wright"<sup>142</sup> are mentioned. "Florodora. Leslie Stuart. Chirgwin, the white eyed Kaffir, used to sing his songs. And Eugene Stratton. At the Prince's Theatre in North Bromwich."<sup>143</sup> Leslie Stuart's 1899 musical comedy, *Florodora*, was revived at Birmingham's Theatre Royal in 1915. George Chirgwin (1854-1922), the "white-eyed

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<sup>135</sup> *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham* (1905 ); Thomas Maries lodged at 118 Bath Row – Appendix 3

<sup>136</sup> Salberg, D. (1980) p 55

<sup>137</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*; (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*

<sup>138</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 479

<sup>139</sup> Apartment houses in King Alfred's Place were kept by Arthur Daws (2), Marie Long (4), Frederick Gwyther (5) and Louisa Stone (11) and in King Edward's Place by Sarah Elmers (31). - *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham* (1905 )

<sup>140</sup> OS *Warwickshire Sheet XIII.08* (1918); Bingley Hall opened in 1860 in the grounds of banker Charles Lloyd's Bingley House - Upton, C. (1997) pp 33,179

<sup>141</sup> Ainsworth, B. (2005) "Chatwin's Exhibition Hall" in *Birmingham Historian* Issue 27, pp 20-26; Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 478; (1940) *Mr Lucton's Freedom*, p 120

<sup>142</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies*, pp 257-258

<sup>143</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 587

Kaffir,” played the Theatre Royal as early as 1874. Eugene Stratton (1861-1918) appeared there in 1896.<sup>144</sup>



Florodora Programme

Chirgwin – “the white-eved Kaffir”

Eugene Stratton in pantomime

However, if Young intended North Bromwich’s Prince’s Theatre to depict Birmingham’s Theatre Royal,<sup>145</sup> the case is unproved, as the Prince of Wales Theatre had been the Birmingham base of George Edwardes’ Gaiety Productions since 1876.<sup>146</sup>

This North Bromwich scenario depicts the very time when, Walvin shows, music halls were at their zenith, attracting millions with a bawdiness offensive to the respectable.<sup>147</sup> Rowntree and Lavers find the “popularity of the music hall astonishing... At its worst it is dull and stupid and sometimes vulgar.”<sup>148</sup> Bailey identifies the music hall as a target for

<sup>144</sup> Rodway, P.P. & Slingsby, L.R. (1934) pp 33,155,208

<sup>145</sup> Theatre Royal, New Street opened in 1774 as The New Theatre. It was rebuilt in 1904 and closed in 1956 - Price, V.J. (1988) p 2

<sup>146</sup> Rodway, P.P. & Slingsby, L.R. (1934) p 34

<sup>147</sup> Walvin, J. (1978b) pp 109-110

<sup>148</sup> Rowntree, B.S. & Lavers, G.R. (1951) *English Life and Leisure: A Social Study*, London, Longmans, Green & Co, p 260

reform groups anxious to censor or close them.<sup>149</sup> Though Young does not enter this particular debate, obviously familiar with Edwardes' musical productions and their London star Huntley Wright (who also appeared at Birmingham's Theatre Royal<sup>150</sup>) he makes clear his opinion.

A low comedian capered; a demi-virginal chorus leered and grimaced; a too-girlish heroine simpered and trilled; a tailor's dummy of a tenor threw back his head to drench the gallery with sentiment, and a gross female cracked jokes.<sup>151</sup>

Young thus follows Dent for whom music-hall is "a lower class entertainment."<sup>152</sup> In turn Young is followed by Tiltman's Birmingham's "music-hall's robust humour"<sup>153</sup> and Allen's Bromford audiences who "whistled and cat-called."<sup>154</sup> Hopkins establishes that music hall acts, often racy and suggestive, appealed to working-class taste, citing Henry Pelham, Bishop of Birmingham's domestic chaplain, who believed them to be "rotten to the very core".<sup>155</sup> At Birmingham's Gaiety Theatre it was not uncommon for members of the audience to spit on performers' boots.<sup>156</sup> Thorne, however, indicates that Birmingham's music-halls were not all thus. Some proprietors set stringent standards for audiences, even requiring decent dress before admission.<sup>157</sup>

Popular music performed in North Bromwich dance halls is part of the city's "highly coloured life".<sup>158</sup> In a sole specific incident, at Sparkheath's Palais de Danse in 1935, a band

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<sup>149</sup> Bailey, P. (1978) p 147

<sup>150</sup> Huntley Wright appeared at Birmingham's Theatre Royal in *Autumn Manoeuvres* in 1912 and in *The Lady of The Rose* in 1923 – Rodway, P.P. & Slingsby, L.R. (1934) pp 163,357

<sup>151</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies*, p257

<sup>152</sup> Dent, R.K. (1894) p 418

<sup>153</sup> Tiltman, M.H. (1939) p 76

<sup>154</sup> Allen, W.E. (1939) p 63

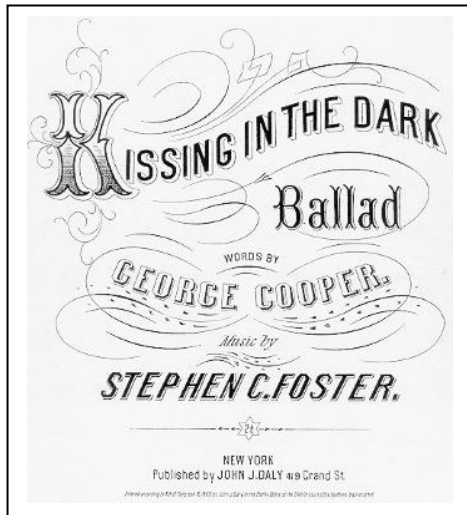
<sup>155</sup> Hopkins, E. (2001) p 125

<sup>156</sup> *Birmingham Evening Despatch* (15.12.1930)

<sup>157</sup> Thorne, W. (1925) pp 28-29

<sup>158</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 432; (1934) *This Little World*, pp 164, 239,

played *Kissing in the Dark*.<sup>159</sup> At the end of the North Bromwich period Kelly's *Directory of Birmingham* lists just five dance halls including Albert Hall and Lion Hall in Aston,<sup>160</sup> upon which Sparkheath is based. An early twentieth century North Bromwich pantomime stars



“Bertie Flood, Mirth-maker of Three Continents.”<sup>161</sup>

Birmingham’s early twentieth century pantomimes regularly featured ‘Prime Minister of Mirth’ George Robey,<sup>162</sup> whose stage presence was dominated by his bowler hat.<sup>163</sup> With his identical trademark bowler<sup>164</sup> and “mind degraded by the atmosphere of the music-hall,”<sup>165</sup> Flood is clearly intended as

Robey’s dissolute likeness, fitted to Young’s image of unsavoury entertainment and degenerate North Bromwich.

Between World Wars I and II theatres faced growing competition from cinema-going, increasingly a national pastime (which the Birmingham Film Society considered an art opportunity<sup>166</sup>) particularly attracting young women.<sup>167</sup> North Bromwich’s sole cinema visits

<sup>159</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 28-29; Cooper, G. & Foster, S. (1863) *Kissing in the Dark*, New York, John J. Daly

<sup>160</sup> Albert Dance Hall, Witton Road Aston; Lion Hall Ltd, 67 Aston Road North; Grand Casino, Corporation Street; Masque Ballroom Ltd, 9 Walford Road; Palais de Danse, Monument Road – *Kelly’s Directory of Birmingham* (1939)

<sup>161</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, pp 462-463

<sup>162</sup> George Robey, who had worked as a clerk in Birmingham, appeared at the Theatre Royal in *Dick Whittington* (1897-1898); *Babes in the Wood* (1899-1900); *Queen of Hearts* (1906-1907); *Jack and the Beanstalk* (1909-1910); *Goody Two-Shoes* (1912-1913); *Sinbad the Sailor* (1914-1915) and at the Prince of Wales in *Jack and the Beanstalk* (1903-1904) - Rodway, P.P. & Slingsby, L.R. (1934) pp58,113,130,134,169,199; *Concise Dictionary of National Biography* Vol III (1994) p 2554

<sup>163</sup> Hartnoll, P. (1983) *Oxford Companion to the Theatre*, Oxford, University Press, p 700

<sup>164</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 467

<sup>165</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 468

<sup>166</sup> Briggs, A. (1952) p 316

<sup>167</sup> Rowntree, B.S. & Lavers, G.R. (1951) pp 230-231; Walvin, J. (1978b) pp 134, 136; Salberg, D. (1980) p 95

occur during this period in company with nineteen-year old Susan Lorimer.<sup>168</sup> Though by the end of the North Bromwich era Birmingham allegedly had more cinemas in proportion to its population than any other provincial English city,<sup>169</sup> North Bromwich has only one named cinema – the Futurist.<sup>170</sup> With its mural-painted auditorium, Birmingham’s Futurist, considered one of the country’s finest cinemas, exemplifying design and comfort, opened in John Bright Street in 1919.<sup>171</sup> North Bromwich’s Futurist, despite plush-covered seats, insinuates “cigarette-smoke, atomised jasmine, and the Great Middle Class.”<sup>172</sup> In North Bromwich Birmingham’s luxury becomes a “tawdry setting of gilt and scarlet”.<sup>173</sup> To accompany films Birmingham’s Futurist employed an orchestra; the nearby West End Cinema installed a Wurlitzer organ.<sup>174</sup> Generally standing on moveable platforms allowing them to be raised or lowered as required, the consoles of these popular instruments often had glass sides revealing multi-coloured lights.<sup>175</sup> Young’s North Bromwich portrait, which transfers the Wurlitzer to the Futurist, is vivid and realistic. “When the Wurlitzer organ ascended from the pit, rainbow spotlights played... the bourdon groaned and the vox-humana quivered.”<sup>176</sup> Two of the Wurlitzer cinema organ’s commonest stops were the bourdon, providing a deep, dull sound and the vox-humana, generating a sibilant, piping note.<sup>177</sup> Rowntree and Laver found that cinema audiences “frequently develop a sort of protective mechanism which enables them to escape from their daily lives,”<sup>178</sup> a view which Young wholeheartedly propounds.

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<sup>168</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, pp 2; 413-420

<sup>169</sup> Briggs, A. (1952) p 315

<sup>170</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 2

<sup>171</sup> Clegg C & R (1983) *The Dream Palaces of Birmingham*, Private Publication, pp 51-52; Price, V.J. (1986) *Birmingham Cinemas: Their Films and Stars 1900-1960*, Studley, Brewin Books, p 6

<sup>172</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 413

<sup>173</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 7

<sup>174</sup> Clegg C & R (1983) p 16; (1984) *The Picture Palaces of Birmingham and Solihull*, Private Publication, p 14

<sup>175</sup> Landon, J. W (1983) *Behold the Mighty Wurlitzer: The History of the Theatre Pipe Organ*, Westpool, Greenwood Press, pp 7, 186

<sup>176</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, pp 413-414

<sup>177</sup> Stevens, I. (1962) *Dictionary of Pipe Organ Stops*, New York, G. Schirmer, pp 39-40, 232-233

<sup>178</sup> Rowntree, B.S. & Lavers, G.R. (1951) p 248

What of the sane, the sober Middle Class?  
 Small wonder that their starved emotions find  
 Vicarious Romance to fill the void  
 In visionary heavens of celluloid.<sup>179</sup>

The negligible role Young accords the cinema in North Bromwich needs no further explanation.

## Cafés, Inns, Clubs, Grand Midland Hotel

Amongst North Bromwich's cafés and teashops,<sup>180</sup> a popular venue is the Dousita Café,<sup>181</sup> "a subterranean privacy in which excellent coffee was served in most comfortable surroundings."<sup>182</sup> In the early twentieth century, Birmingham's Kardomah Café shared its New Street premises with the Liverpool, China and India Tea Co. Ltd,<sup>183</sup> perhaps suggesting the basement Dousita. Young certainly knew the Kardomah which he frequented during his student days<sup>184</sup> and Leclaire is emphatic, cataloguing the Dousita as "la transposition exacte du Kardomah Café."<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Young, F.B. (1944) "Fantastic Symphony A.D. 1918-1939 in *The Island*, pp 434-435

<sup>180</sup> E.g. Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, pp 250,282; (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, pp 430,446

<sup>181</sup> E.g. Young, F.B. (1913) *Undergrowth*, p 81; (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 356; (1928) *The Key of Life*, p 57

<sup>182</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 275

<sup>183</sup> The Kardomah was located at 42A New Street at the junction with Needless Alley – *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham* (1906)

<sup>184</sup> Young, J.B. (1962) p 25

<sup>185</sup> Leclaire, J. (1970) p 103 [*The exact transposition of the Kardomah Café*]



There is, however, no doubt concerning North Bromwich's Batties' (and its variants Battie's and Battye's<sup>186</sup>) with branches in High Street and Queen Street/Corporation Street,<sup>187</sup> replicating Pattison's, the Birmingham confectioners with branches in High Street, New Street and Corporation Street.<sup>188</sup> Though Birmingham's establishment was advertised as "a charming rendezvous where lady patrons may spend their leisure hours,"<sup>189</sup> Young's equivalent is less enthusiastically presented as "Battye's confectioner's ... the orbit of dowdy women who scrambled through lunch."<sup>190</sup>

The enticing and obviously biased descriptions of the Birmingham confectioners in its own publication, *The Pattison Announcer*, contrast with the stuffy atmosphere, crowded rooms and starchy foods of Young's equally biased fictional creation, maintaining his thesis that no North Bromwich facility may appear too agreeable. In fact located on the first floor of Pattison's Corporation Street branch was "the ladies retiring room, furnished in a light, artistic, modern style with plenty of excellent seating accommodation."<sup>191</sup> In fiction "Batties' upstairs room is crowded... uncomfortable... upholstered in red plush."<sup>192</sup> Pattison's ladies retiring room, where "high windows admit cooling breezes,"<sup>193</sup> translates into the oppressive ambience of Batties' with "the smell of cold meats and the presence of headachy shopping

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<sup>186</sup> The change is chronological: Batties' is used in Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age* and (1919) *The Young Physician*; Battie's in Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare* and (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*; Battye's in Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington* and (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*.

<sup>187</sup> E.g. High Street – Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, p 77; Queen Street – Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 249; Corporation Street – Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 378

<sup>188</sup> Pattison's Confectioners, opened in 1791, by 1914 had branches at 54-55 High Street; 7, 68, 74 New Street; 25-27 Corporation Street. - *The Pattison Announcer* (July, 1929); *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham* (1914)

<sup>189</sup> *The Pattison Announcer* (April 1928)

<sup>190</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 32

<sup>191</sup> *The Pattison Announcer* (July 1928)

<sup>192</sup> Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, pp 77-78

<sup>193</sup> *The Pattison Announcer* (July 1928)

women.”<sup>194</sup> The dubious promise that “Pattison’s cakes safeguard your health” applied to over four hundred varieties of cakes and pastries.<sup>195</sup> Batties’ similar delights – “orgies of cream horns... meringues stuffed with sugary cream”<sup>196</sup> - had deleterious but, to Young’s medical eyes, more realistic consequences. “Battie’s pastries were fatal.”<sup>197</sup>

The contrasting atmospheres of Pattison’s and Batties’ are presented with markedly different biases, with Birmingham fact advertising evident delights for lady patrons, whereas in North Bromwich fiction, ladies are “condemned to the farinaceous and unlicensed joys of Batties’.”<sup>198</sup> However, both fact and fiction ultimately concur. Pattison’s is “a favourite meeting place for ladies,”<sup>199</sup> whilst “at Batties’ every woman who goes ‘into town’ is bound to find her friends at lunch time.”<sup>200</sup>

In North Bromwich, “opposite the Town Hall stands an eating house that devotes itself to the selling of grosser dainties... the inner room of Joey’s.”<sup>201</sup> Similarly in Parkes’ Mettingham “at Joe’s many of the city fathers got their substantial midday meal.”<sup>202</sup> The original of these fictional delights, Joe Hillman’s Ale and Porter Stores, 44 Paradise Street, first established in neighbouring premises in 1862, was the meeting place of Birmingham’s Musical Society and Shakespeare Reading Club.<sup>203</sup> This, in addition to its affordable prices, endeared it to Young in his student days, by which time the establishment was renamed

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<sup>194</sup> Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, p 78

<sup>195</sup> *The Pattison Announcer* (April 1928; September 1930)

<sup>196</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 365; (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 32

<sup>197</sup> Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, p 78; (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 233

<sup>198</sup> Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, p 78

<sup>199</sup> *The Pattison Announcer* (July 1928)

<sup>200</sup> Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, p 77

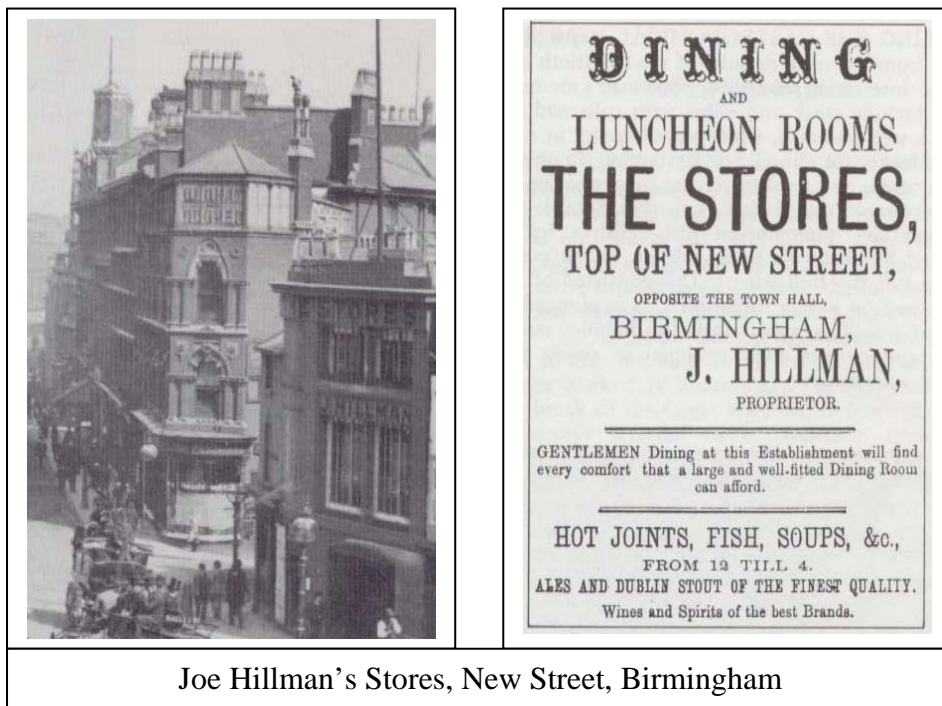
<sup>201</sup> Young, F.B. (1914) *The Dark Tower*, p 34; (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 379

<sup>202</sup> Parkes, W. K. (1914) pp 10-11

<sup>203</sup> “Joe Hillman’s Corner” in *Birmingham Faces and Places, Vol 1, No 1* (01.05.1888) pp 14-15

William Walker (late J. Hillman) Restaurant.<sup>204</sup> Hales Owen industrialist Frank Somers recalls how as Birmingham students he and Young frequently shared lunch, which usually consisted of half a pint of beer with cheese and new bread at Joe Hillman's Stores.<sup>205</sup> Young clearly transposes this identical memory to North Bromwich, preserving the ambience of the original.

Joey's was an institution of some antiquity. It was a long and noisy bar at which, for the sum of fourpence, one consumed a quarter of the top of a cottage loaf, a tangle of watercress, a hunk of Cheddar cheese, and a tankard of beer.<sup>206</sup>



Joe Hillman's Stores, New Street, Birmingham

Cunningham makes clear that drinking was the most pervasive working-class leisure-time pursuit and Walvin shows that the pub was the pre-eminent working-class institution in Victorian England.<sup>207</sup> Though in 1900 Birmingham had 652 public houses and 1,585 beer houses,<sup>208</sup> contemporary North Bromwich had only three named inns,<sup>209</sup> each with

<sup>204</sup> *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham* (1904)

<sup>205</sup> Somers, F. (03.04.1954)

<sup>206</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 274

<sup>207</sup> Cunningham, H. (1980) p186; Walvin, J. (1978b) p 40

<sup>208</sup> Vince, C.A. (1923) p 347 [NB Beer houses had no licence to serve spirits.]

appellations remembered from Young's student days. In fact, the *Cock and Magpie* was situated on the Hales Owen to Birmingham road; Hockley Hill's *Trees* was near to Dr McCall's surgery; a *White Horse* was just behind Queen's Hospital.<sup>210</sup> However, unlike Murray's portrayal of Birmingham's *Woodman*, or Tiltman's of Deritend's *Leather Bottle*,<sup>211</sup> North Bromwich inns are representative rather than specific, giving credence to Rowntree's and Lavers' opinion that "the atmosphere of a public house is principally determined by its location and the type of persons from among whom, in consequence, it draws its customers."<sup>212</sup>

The *Cock and Magpie*, "a low beer-house built in the seventeenth century cramped on the edge of incredible slums,"<sup>213</sup> typifies Birmingham's ancient taverns, characterized by low ceilings and small windows and frequently situated in disreputable neighbourhoods.<sup>214</sup> The *Cock and Magpie's* bar parlour was "dim at the best of times... only a faint reflected glimmer from polished brass and rows of bottles was visible."<sup>215</sup> Birmingham's *Sea Horse Tavern*, serving home-brewed beer in "a small dingy thoroughfare"<sup>216</sup> represents the genre. In North Bromwich "there would never be no beer so good"<sup>217</sup> as that brewed at the *Cock and Magpie*.

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<sup>209</sup> *White Horse, Cock and Magpie and Trees* – Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 239; (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 125, 652

<sup>210</sup> *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham* (1900) - Young would have passed the *Cock and Magpie* at Beech Lanes when travelling by road from Hales Owen to Birmingham; there was a *Trees* (no more than a name in the North Bromwich canon) at 9 Hockley Hill near to Dr McCall's surgery where Young served as locum in August 1907; one of Birmingham's numerous *White Horse* inns was located at 98 William Street, Islington Row, behind Queen's Hospital where part of Young's medical training took place.

<sup>211</sup> Murray, D.C. (1894) vol 1, p 111; Skipp, V. (1996) p 147; Tiltman, M.H. (1939) p 46; Upton, C. (1993) p 14

<sup>212</sup> Rowntree, B.S. & Lavers, G.R. (1951) p 176

<sup>213</sup> Young, F.B (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 125

<sup>214</sup> Edwards, E. (1879) *The Old Taverns of Birmingham: A Series of Familiar Sketches*, Birmingham, Buckler Bros, p 8

<sup>215</sup> Young, F.B (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 210

<sup>216</sup> Edwards, E. (1879) p 46

<sup>217</sup> Young, F.B (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 215

North Bromwich's *White Horse*, "modern, all mahogany and plate-glass,"<sup>218</sup> represents contemporary development in Birmingham pubs: walls like glass and interiors filled with mirrors and the cabinet-maker's art.<sup>219</sup> An unusual absence of specificity in Young's North Bromwich interpretation of Birmingham's inns suggests lack of detailed knowledge, substantiated by Young's own admission: "As an authority on pubs in Birmingham I am a failure, my experiences being limited to the purlieu of Bath Row."<sup>220</sup>

Emulating Dickens' view that the causes of drunkenness among the poor were widespread and embedded deep in human misery,<sup>221</sup> and Gill's acknowledgement that intolerable conditions drove Victorian Birmingham's workers to drink,<sup>222</sup> is Young's view that for impoverished workers "only in drink would life seem bearable."<sup>223</sup> Identical solutions address varied problems. "An occasional binge, especially when he went into North Bromwich,"<sup>224</sup> allows Captain Small temporary respite from shell-shock. To dull bankruptcy's stigma, George Cookson "rushed off to North Bromwich (returning) the worse for liquor."<sup>225</sup> Drink dulls, but also destroys. Manual workers under the influence become deceitful and violent.<sup>226</sup> Young's fiction resonates with Walvin's assessment of drink as "pain-killer, morale-booster, sleeping-draught, medicine"<sup>227</sup> and with other urban-industrial and Birmingham novels. In Dickens' Coketown, mill hand Stephen Blackpool's life is blighted by his drunken wife.<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, pp 239,294

<sup>219</sup> Crawford, A., Dunn, M., Thorne, R. (1986) *Birmingham Pubs 1880-1939*, Gloucester, Alan Sutton, pp 14, 32

<sup>220</sup> FBY 3213 (07.07.1942) Letter from Young to Leonard Parsons

<sup>221</sup> Quoted in Forster, J. (1872-1874) *The Life of Charles Dickens*, vol II, London, Chapman & Hall, p 32

<sup>222</sup> Gill, C. (1952) p 370

<sup>223</sup> Young, F.B. (1937) *They Seek a Country*, pp 51-52

<sup>224</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 195

<sup>225</sup> Young, F.B. (1934) *This Little World*, p 490

<sup>226</sup> E.g. Young, F.B. (1921) *The Black Diamond*, pp 72, 85-87; (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, pp 221-223

<sup>227</sup> Walvin, J. (1978b) p 34

<sup>228</sup> Dickens, C. (1854)

Through Walter Morel, hard-drinking Nottinghamshire miner, Lawrence depicts the breakdown of family relationships.<sup>229</sup> Tonna shows unemployment degrading labourer John Smith: “Silver taken from the diminished store, he sallies forth, to return drunk and savage.”<sup>230</sup> Similar scenarios are evident in Murray’s Birmingham, Collins’ Birchampton and Parkes’ Metlingham.<sup>231</sup> Statistics, however, show that around 1900 annual Birmingham convictions for drunkenness varied between just 0.57% and 0.72% of the population.<sup>232</sup>

Against this background, Nonconformity’s abstinence campaigns evolved. Birmingham’s Temperance Society was founded in 1830;<sup>233</sup> Richard Tangye prohibited alcohol at his Cornwall Works, despite the traditional provision of beer to heavy industry workers.<sup>234</sup> By 1902, now alcohol-free, Birmingham’s *Sea Horse Tavern* was used for Wesleyan mission.<sup>235</sup> In North Bromwich, temperance concerns are caricatured when, encountering “three bottles of Astill’s Entire,” Nonconformist Alice Fladburn “cried out with as much alarm as though they contained prussic acid.”<sup>236</sup> Emphasizing the culpability of North Bromwich brewers,<sup>237</sup> Young shows Astill’s prosperity deriving from customer-exploitation. “That beer of Astill’s must be poor stuff... Abner Fellows... Drinks like a fish...

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<sup>229</sup> Lawrence, D.H. (1913)

<sup>230</sup> [Tonna], Charlotte Elizabeth (1843) p 435

<sup>231</sup> Murray, D.C. (1894) vol 1, pp 51-52; Collins, M. (1896) passim; Parkes, W. K. (1914) pp 182-183

<sup>232</sup> In the ten years each side of 1900, the lowest incidence came in 1893 when the population of Birmingham was 487,897 and convictions for drunkenness 2,762; the highest incidence was 1898, when the population was 570,343 and drunkenness convictions 3,670. - Vince, C.A. (1902) pp 124, 235

<sup>233</sup> Skipp, V. (1996) p 150

<sup>234</sup> Tangye, R. (1889) *One and All: An Autobiography*, London, S.W. Partridge & Co, pp 114-116

<sup>235</sup> Coffee was served, temperance meetings held and work offered to the unemployed - H.J.S. (1902) *What I saw in the Birmingham Mission*, Birmingham, Buckler & Webb, pp 23-30

<sup>236</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies*, p 203

<sup>237</sup> See pp 147, 161-162

He'll be dead in ten year's time."<sup>238</sup> The exception to Young's portrayal of the necessity or evil of alcohol involves North Bromwich students, amongst whom drunkenness appears excusable. Having wantonly destroyed a cab, one drunken medic is protected by hospital porters, who pitch the abused cabman onto the road.<sup>239</sup> A second remains on good terms with the policeman "who had arrested him, drunk and disorderly, on the last students' pantomime night."<sup>240</sup>

Unlike Mettingham's Conservative and United clubs, where "serious debates and grave discourses were the order of the day,"<sup>241</sup> North Bromwich clubs (Constitutional, Union, Midland and Crotchet) are non-political. Though some Birmingham clubs included "Constitutional" in their title,<sup>242</sup> North Bromwich's Constitutional Club, "that temple of middle-class orthodoxy" in Sackville Row<sup>243</sup> is clearly a later name for the Union Club.<sup>244</sup> Birmingham's Union Club, "a social club, eminently respectable" opened in Colmore Row in 1869.<sup>245</sup> Owen Lucton's membership of North Bromwich's Constitutional Club and experiences of a village inn during his sojourn at Chapel Green enable Young to promulgate his unfavourable comparison of urban against rural.

Whereas at the Constitutional he had often seen prominent citizens in a state of mild alcoholic elation, he never saw any of the cronies of Chapel Green the worse

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<sup>238</sup> Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, p 140 - Though the canon does not record Abner Fellows' death, his story ends when he wakes from a drunken stupor to find himself in an army barracks with the 'King's Shilling' in his pocket. - Young, F.B. (1921) *The Black Diamond*

<sup>239</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, pp 301-302

<sup>240</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 67

<sup>241</sup> Parkes, W. K. (1914) p 197

<sup>242</sup> E.g. Working-Men's Conservative and Constitutional Club, Ledsam Street, Ladywood; East Birmingham Constitutional Club, 169 Vauxhall Road – *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham* (1888, 1915)

<sup>243</sup> Young, F.B. (1940) *Mr Lucton's Freedom*, p 20

<sup>244</sup> North Bromwich Union Club appears in Young, F.B. (1914) *The Dark Tower*, p 48; (1935) *White Ladies*, p 245; the Constitutional Club in Young, F.B. (1940) *Mr Lucton's Freedom*, pp 10-11, 20, 110, 401

<sup>245</sup> Birmingham's Union Club had been founded in Bennett's Hill in 1856, moving in 1869 to 83 Colmore Row, an elaborate Italianate building designed by Yeoville Thomason - Dent, R.K. (1894) p 563

for liquor... In North Bromwich, the hierarchy of age and position insisted on its prerogatives, in the bar of the 'Buffalo' all were equal.<sup>246</sup>

North Bromwich Midland Club, which kept an admirable table and cellar,<sup>247</sup> suggests Birmingham's Midland Club meeting "for social purposes"<sup>248</sup> in the Masonic Hall at the junction of New Street and Ethel Street.<sup>249</sup> Founded c1881 with premises in Paradise Street, Birmingham's Clef Club (North Bromwich's Crotchet Club) was a musical institution supporting orchestra, choir and concerts.<sup>250</sup> Continuing his biased portrait of North Bromwich, Young denigrates its musicians. At the Crochet Club, "one is swamped by professional musicians, the vainest and least cultured of artists."<sup>251</sup>

Designed by J.A. Chatwin, Birmingham's Grand Hotel opened in Colmore Row in 1875 and was remodelled by Martin & Chamberlain in 1891, when a portico entrance was added to the six-storey building.<sup>252</sup> The hotel's name was emblazoned at roof level and between the third and fourth storeys over the main entrance, as the postcard shows. In North Bromwich's Sackville Row Young creates "the six storeys of the Grand Midland Hotel... massive portico... along the line of the fourth storey the name."<sup>253</sup> Like its factual original this fictional hotel has its own picture postcards.<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>246</sup> Young, F.B. (1940) *Mr Lucton's Freedom*, p 401; Chapel Green is Young's fictionalized name for the tiny Shropshire village of Chapel Lawn.

<sup>247</sup> Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, p 77

<sup>248</sup> *Cornish's Birmingham Yearbook* (1914) p 277

<sup>249</sup> *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham* (1915)

<sup>250</sup> Programmes of The Clef Club 1882-1900; 1901

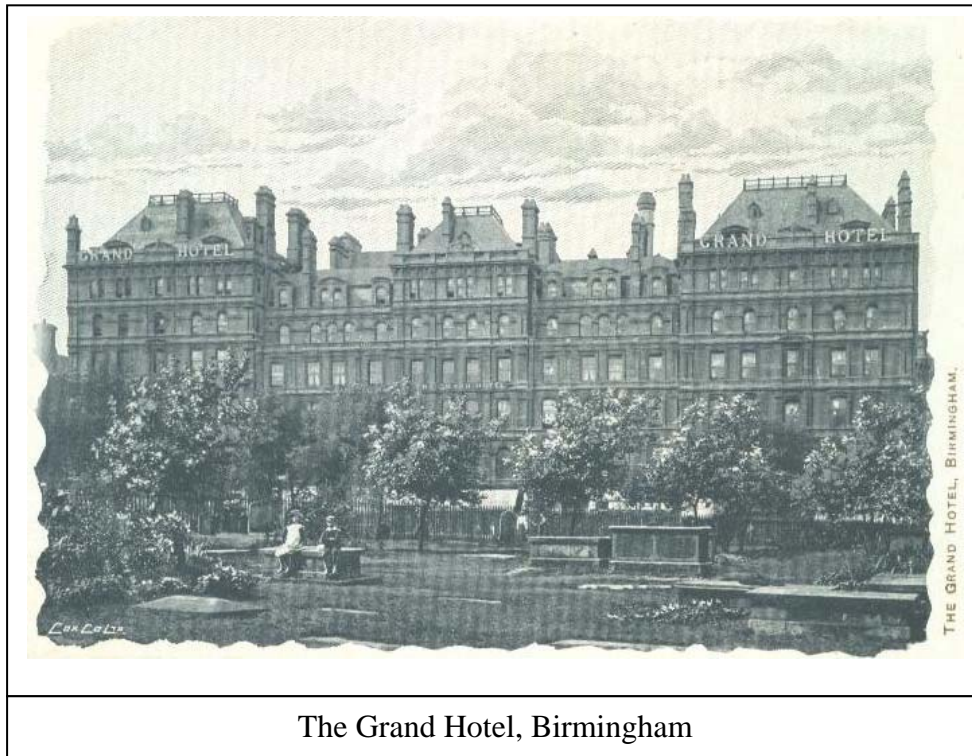
<sup>251</sup> Young, F.B. (1914) *The Dark Tower* p 34

<sup>252</sup> *The Grand Hotel Birmingham* (1891) Birmingham, The Herald Press, p 5

<sup>253</sup> Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, pp 75,78,79

<sup>254</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 64





The Grand Hotel, Birmingham

Contemporary refurbishment reports highlight identical features in the factual hotel and Young's fiction. Birmingham's Grand Hotel has "corridors covered with double velvet pile carpets so that all noise is avoided;"<sup>255</sup> North Bromwich's Grand Midland Hotel is noted for "the softness of the warm-toned Turkey carpets, the luxurious silence."<sup>256</sup> Visitors to Birmingham's Grand Hotel are served by "a well-appointed passenger lift;"<sup>257</sup> in North Bromwich's Grand Midland Hotel is a "discreet, plush-covered lift."<sup>258</sup> Public rooms in Birmingham's refurbished hotel are "illuminated by incandescent electric light;"<sup>259</sup> at the North Bromwich hotel "the brilliantly-lighted lounge"<sup>260</sup> is noteworthy. The porter's bureau at Birmingham's Grand Hotel is located just inside the main entrance;<sup>261</sup> similarly situated,

<sup>255</sup> *Midland Counties Herald* (18.06.1891)

<sup>256</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 464

<sup>257</sup> *The Grand Hotel Birmingham* (1891) p 7

<sup>258</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 570

<sup>259</sup> *The Grand Hotel Birmingham* (1891) p 6

<sup>260</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 459

<sup>261</sup> *Midland Counties Herald* (18.06.1891)

“the porter in his lodge”<sup>262</sup> greets visitors to North Bromwich’s Grand Midland Hotel. The Windsor Rooms accommodate Birmingham’s Grand Hotel’s ballroom;<sup>263</sup> the Grand Salon provides North Bromwich’s Grand Midland’s identical facility.<sup>264</sup>

Beyond the cigar smoke of the North Bromwich hotel’s entrance hall, where commercial gentlemen sit at tables drinking whisky,<sup>265</sup> a staircase leads to the Turkish Lounge. “Here were divans in trappings of the Orient.”<sup>266</sup> Beyond the Birmingham hotel’s entrance hall lay the Grand Staircase and smoking room, “an elaborate divan furnished in luxurious style.”<sup>267</sup> Where North Bromwich’s Grand Midland has its Turkish Lounge, Birmingham’s Grand had its billiards room.<sup>268</sup> Otherwise fiction coincides with fact. In addition to wine cellars and stock rooms, the Grand Hotel’s basement housed a hairdressing salon.<sup>269</sup> The same area in North Bromwich’s Grand Midland Hotel accommodates “stock rooms... the Gentleman’s Hairdressing Saloon.”<sup>270</sup>

In its assessment of Martin and Chamberlain’s refurbishment, the *Birmingham Daily Post* concluded that “the decoration and furnishing have been done with singular taste and on a scale of sumptuousness with which Birmingham is unfamiliar.”<sup>271</sup> Similarly, Collins’ Birchamptons’ Grand was “got up in the style of the large London and Paris hotels.”<sup>272</sup> Young partly concurs, declaring North Bromwich’s Grand Midland Hotel “the last thing in

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<sup>262</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 459

<sup>263</sup> *The Grand Hotel Birmingham* (1891) p 6

<sup>264</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, pp 437-438

<sup>265</sup> Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, p 80; (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 479

<sup>266</sup> Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, p 81

<sup>267</sup> *Midland Counties Herald* (18.06.1891)

<sup>268</sup> *Birmingham Daily Post* (15.06.1891)

<sup>269</sup> *The Grand Hotel Birmingham* (1891) p 7

<sup>270</sup> Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, p 82

<sup>271</sup> *Birmingham Daily Post* (15.07.1891)

<sup>272</sup> Collins, M. (1896) p 243

provincial smartness and daring.”<sup>273</sup> Here, however, a fine wine is “the last thing in the world” a visiting London barrister expects to find.<sup>274</sup> The Grand Midland is both “serene... token of an easier, more generous life” and the place where evidence of adultery may be fabricated.<sup>275</sup> The balance of this ambivalence is tipped by Young’s replacement of fact’s Grand Hotel’s billiards room with fiction’s Grand Midland Hotel’s Turkish Lounge which “had been the ‘last thing’ in North Bromwich; but now was growing shabby.”<sup>276</sup> Young thus takes the opportunity to emphasise the Grand Midland Hotel’s less attractive aspect. “In hidden alcoves shadowy forms and faces leaned to one-another.”<sup>277</sup> Respectable ladies enter “with a sense of overwhelming shame,”<sup>278</sup> having “not the least idea that such a place existed in North Bromwich.”<sup>279</sup> The very hotel where Young secretly met Jessie Hankinson for afternoon tea<sup>280</sup> is transposed to fiction as a venue for illicit liaisons and clandestine assignations.<sup>281</sup> The unsavoury nature of “that beastly Oriental place... like a novelette”<sup>282</sup> taints the hotel and, by imputation, North Bromwich, where a veneer of opulence and respectability conceals corruption at the core.

## Sports, Pastimes, Excursions

Organised sport flourished in the later nineteenth century. Muscular Christianity, Bailey<sup>283</sup> maintains, encouraged physical recreation promoting fitness, countering the debilities of city

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<sup>273</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies*, p 353

<sup>274</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, pp 437, 602

<sup>275</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 464; (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, pp 556-557

<sup>276</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies*, p 635

<sup>277</sup> Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, p 81

<sup>278</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 570

<sup>279</sup> Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, pp 80-81

<sup>280</sup> Young, J.B. (1962) p 25

<sup>281</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 477; (1924) *Cold Harbour*, p 262; (1928) *The Furnace*, pp 9-10

<sup>282</sup> Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, p 99

<sup>283</sup> Bailey, P. (1978) pp 72, 129

living and fostering team-spirit and self-discipline. Such outcomes, Beauchampé and Inglis<sup>284</sup> show, benefited community relations and trade. Consequently, both Birmingham's influential Liberal Nonconformists and small businessmen patronized codified sport, as Cadbury's emphasis on workers' recreational facilities and Aston Villa's Methodist origins and facilities donated by local tradesmen show.<sup>285</sup> Thorne reveals that workers were not unwilling participants. "No matter how hard men and boys worked, they were always anxious to take part in sports."<sup>286</sup> These factors, allied with increasingly available cheap transport, facilitated both spectator- and participator-sport, allowing Walvin's conclusion that by 1914 much leisure time was filled by a great variety of sports.<sup>287</sup>

North Bromwich sports, pastimes and excursions replicate Birmingham activities. Bare-knuckle fighting thrived in such Birmingham inns as "Oddfellow's Arms" and "General Elliott" in the mid-nineteenth century<sup>288</sup> and was contemporaneously practised at North Bromwich's "Jim Crow Tavern".<sup>289</sup> Cycling, though initially beyond the pocket of ordinary working people,<sup>290</sup> by the early twentieth century was a popular Birmingham pastime,<sup>291</sup> enthusiastically embraced by North Bromwich students.<sup>292</sup> Moseley Rugby Club, catering for middle-class players,<sup>293</sup> is mirrored in North Bromwich Rugby Club,<sup>294</sup> mentioned only once,

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<sup>284</sup> Beauchampé, S. & Inglis, S. (2006) *Played in Birmingham: Charting the Heritage of a City at Play*, Birmingham, English Heritage, pp 11-12

<sup>285</sup> See p 145; Cunningham, H. (1980) p 128

<sup>286</sup> Thorne, W. (1925) p 25

<sup>287</sup> Walvin, J. (1978b) pp 83, 90-91

<sup>288</sup> Brailsford, D. (1988) *Bareknuckles: A Social History of Prize-Fighting*, Cambridge, Lutterworth, p 126; "Oddfellows Arms" 33 Adam Street, "General Elliott" 79-80 New Inkleys - *Slater's General & Classified Directory of Birmingham & its Vicinities, 1852-1853*, Birmingham, Isaac Slater

<sup>289</sup> Young, F.B. (1936) *Far Forest*, p 11; at the time Birmingham's "Jim Crow" tavern was located at 103 Hill Street - *Slater's General & Classified Directory of Birmingham & its Vicinities, 1852-1853*,

<sup>290</sup> Walvin, J. (1978b) p77

<sup>291</sup> Hopkins, E. (2001) p 124

<sup>292</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, pp 395-396

<sup>293</sup> Hopkins, E. (2001) p 113

validating Sutcliffe and Smith's view of rugby as a relatively unpopular game played in few Birmingham schools.<sup>295</sup> Slater records the importance of Edgbaston's Rotton Park reservoir as a recreational resource:<sup>296</sup> North Bromwich children enjoy winter games on Alvaston's frozen reservoir.<sup>297</sup> In Chamberlain's Birmingham fiction Warwickshire county cricketers "were quite an attractive team,"<sup>298</sup> the North Bromwich canon mentions them without comment. During the early twentieth century "the Cambridge cricket team came down to play the County at Alvaston,"<sup>299</sup> just as Cambridge University played Warwickshire at Edgbaston in 1904 and 1905.<sup>300</sup> In early 1930s North Bromwich Dick Pennington "played tennis in the parks,"<sup>301</sup> as his Birmingham counterparts had ample opportunity to do on the 352 grass and 63 hard courts in the city's parks and recreation grounds.<sup>302</sup> For the more dedicated player Alvaston had its own tennis club,<sup>303</sup> replicating Edgbaston's plentiful provision of the same facility.<sup>304</sup> Tennis courts sited in the ground of Alvaston's mansions<sup>305</sup> support Bailey's premise that thus were suburban villas equipped with country house resources, "reconciling flights of social fancy with the measurements of the back garden."<sup>306</sup>

Hopkins identifies football's burgeoning popularity as a working-class spectator-sport in the late nineteenth century, resulting from the nascent Saturday half-day. Local leagues

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<sup>294</sup> Young, F.B. (1940) *Mr Lucton's Freedom*, p 109

<sup>295</sup> Sutcliffe, A. & Smith, R. (1974) *Birmingham 1939-1970*, Oxford, University Press, p 277

<sup>296</sup> Slater, T. (2002) p 73

<sup>297</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 488

<sup>298</sup> Chamberlain, P. (1937) p 430

<sup>299</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 130

<sup>300</sup> Three-day matches were played July 7-9 1904 and July 15-17 1905 – Pardon, S. (ed) *John Wisden's Cricketers' Almanac*, London, J. Wisden & Co (1905) p 294; (1906) p 371

<sup>301</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 334

<sup>302</sup> Jones, J.T. (1940) p 430

<sup>303</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 29

<sup>304</sup> E.g. Priory Lawn Tennis Club was formed in 1875, Edgbaston Lawn Tennis Club in 1878, Edgbaston Archery & Lawn Tennis Club in 1881 – Slater, T. (2002) p 118

<sup>305</sup> See pp 192-193

<sup>306</sup> Bailey, P. (1978) p 75

were formed.<sup>307</sup> In Birmingham, Aston Villa's new ground, opened in 1897, had a capacity of 50,000.<sup>308</sup> Similarly in Young's fiction "working-men flock in tens of thousands on Saturdays to see North Bromwich Albion play football."<sup>309</sup> Though this fictional name suggests West Bromwich Albion, a North Bromwich city team is clearly intended.<sup>310</sup> Its ground, a vast oval amphitheatre with high stands, sloping embankments and turf "incredibly smooth and level"<sup>311</sup> suggests Aston Villa's ground<sup>312</sup> rather than Birmingham City's Muntz Street ground with its uneven, rutted and sloping pitch.<sup>313</sup> North Bromwich League included Dulston, Wolverbury and Albion Reserves,<sup>314</sup> replicating Dudley, Wolverhampton Wanderers and Aston Villa Reserves of Birmingham and District League.<sup>315</sup> Football grounds' and spectators' imagery colours a broader canvas than sport. At the Villa ground of Green's Birmingham, "everything but grass is black with smoke...dark crowds... nothing but faces, lozenges, against black shoulders."<sup>316</sup> Young employs similar imagery to capture the dreary unwholesomeness of North Bromwich and its people. "Pale, restless masses represented on a horrible scale the grimy flatness of the city complexion."<sup>317</sup> Young's opinion of the game is unequivocal. "Although league football had not sunk to its present depths of unabashed commercialism, the result of a match was sometimes decided in accordance with the bookmaker's instructions."<sup>318</sup> In the sole match described in the canon to be played on North Bromwich Albion's ground, bribery is blatant.<sup>319</sup>

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<sup>307</sup> Hopkins, E. (2001) pp 123-124

<sup>308</sup> Inglis, S. (1997) *Villa Park One Hundred Years*, Smethwick, Sports Projects Ltd, p 71, 74

<sup>309</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 6

<sup>310</sup> Young, F.B. (1921) *The Black Diamond*, p 50; (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, pp 5-6; (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 565

<sup>311</sup> Young, F.B. (1921) *The Black Diamond*, p 56

<sup>312</sup> Inglis, S. (1997) pp 68-69, 71, 95, 99

<sup>313</sup> Matthews, T. (1995) *Birmingham City: A Complete Record*, Derby, Breedon Books, p 57

<sup>314</sup> Young, F.B. (1921) *The Black Diamond*, p 48

<sup>315</sup> *Birmingham Post* (25.04.1910)

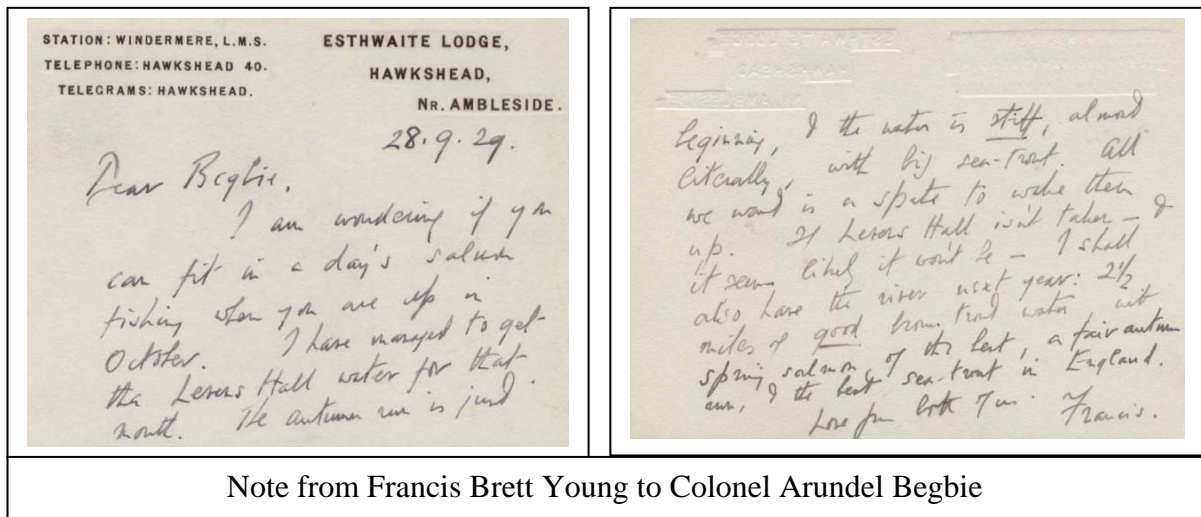
<sup>316</sup> Green, H. (1929) p 266

<sup>317</sup> Young, F.B. (1921) *The Black Diamond*, p 56

<sup>318</sup> Young, F.B. (1921) *The Black Diamond*, p 48

<sup>319</sup> Young, F.B. (1921) *The Black Diamond*, pp 50,55-60

Fishing the North Bromwich and Worcester Canal “patient fishermen from North Bromwich sit hunched... rapt in contemplation of motionless floats.”<sup>320</sup> Young’s inclusion of this pastime is unsurprising as he was an enthusiastic fisherman as the following note shows.



Note from Francis Brett Young to Colonel Arundel Begbie

Angling was encouraged by Birmingham Corporation Water Department which from 1886 augmented revenue by selling fishing tickets for reservoirs and streams.<sup>321</sup> Reality’s Moseley quartet’s fishing expedition to Bicton Reservoir during a thunderstorm is more successful (“all caught at least one, the general average was two”<sup>322</sup>) than Young’s Small ’Eath Piscatorial Society foursome’s River Avon visit in similar weather (“eight hours on the bank and not so much as a bite”<sup>323</sup>).

<sup>320</sup> Young, F.B. (1937) *Portrait of a Village*, p 171

<sup>321</sup> Vince, C.A. (1902) p 295

<sup>322</sup> Pearson, H.S. (1872) “Twixt Wind and Water” quoted by Tait, F. (March 2001) “Fishing In The Archives” in *Birmingham Historian Number 19*, Birmingham & District Local History Association, p 11

<sup>323</sup> Young, F.B. (1940) *Mr Lucton’s Freedom*, p 98

Early twentieth century Birmingham housing development included gardens suited to the working-man's leisure hours,<sup>324</sup> whilst gardening was positively encouraged amongst council estate tenants.<sup>325</sup> During the 1930s courtyards at the city's back-to-back houses were converted into gardens.<sup>326</sup> In North Bromwich suburban householders were "stung with the ambition to 'make a job' of the garden... a rockery... all the fashion. Every garden of Ada Road broke out into billows of arabis and purple aubrietia."<sup>327</sup> In a Mettingham rockery "formed of big lumps of slag from the iron works nothing ever grew for long,"<sup>328</sup> unusually revealing Young's Birmingham portrait as less grim than that of Parkes. Skipp's opinion that the Birmingham artisan's love of gardening resulted from nostalgia for the old rural life<sup>329</sup> and Young's own penchant for gardening,<sup>330</sup> explains the hidden agenda behind this North Bromwich pastime.

Day trips from North Bromwich are largely confined to open spaces familiar to Young: Sutton Park, near to his preparatory school; Southfield Beeches,<sup>331</sup> fictionalised version of Frankley Beeches, named from the trees on Egg Hill overlooking the city;<sup>332</sup> the Clent Hills within sight of which Young was born. Nicknamed "the playground of Birmingham,"<sup>333</sup> Clent, which features in the Birmingham fiction of Allen and Tiltman,<sup>334</sup> is, according to Leatherbarrow, "much appreciated by thousands of Birmingham excursionists

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<sup>324</sup> McKenna, J. (2005) *Birmingham: The Building of a City*, Stroud, Tempus, p 87

<sup>325</sup> Chinn, C. (1999) p 40

<sup>326</sup> Upton, C. (2005) *Living Back to Back*, Chichester, Phillimore, p 97

<sup>327</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, pp 273-274

<sup>328</sup> Parkes, W. K. (1914) p 25

<sup>329</sup> Skipp, V. (1996) p 139

<sup>330</sup> Young, F.B. (December 1938) "Our Garden" in *My Garden*, vol 15, no 60, pp 463-471

<sup>331</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 460

<sup>332</sup> West Midland Group (1948) *Conurbation: A Survey of Birmingham and the Black Country*, London, Architectural Press, p 212; OS Landranger 139 (1997) *Birmingham & Wolverhampton*

<sup>333</sup> Lloyd, D. (1993) *A History of Worcestershire*, Chichester, Phillimore, p 20

<sup>334</sup> Allen, W.E. (1938) p 140; Tiltman, M.H. (1939) p 34



who flock southwards for picnics.”<sup>335</sup> North Bromwich trippers “picnic on Uffdown Hill, the nearest of the Clents to Alvaston.”<sup>336</sup> In mid-nineteenth century Birmingham fiction, the Lawley family “walk to the fields beyond the smoky outskirts of the town, where they sat on a hedgerow bank, while the children played.”<sup>337</sup> Walvin reports large-scale outings to coast and country for which children from deprived urban streets were recruited, pointing out that Sunday Schools were the most likely organizers of such events.<sup>338</sup> Outings from Birmingham to Sutton Park, advertised as “the best place in the Midlands for school treats,”<sup>339</sup> are well-documented in fact and fiction.<sup>340</sup> Birmingham Labour Church’s Cinderella Club organised trips for poor children to Sutton Park.<sup>341</sup> A Sutton resident vividly recalls, just after World War One, annual visits by Aston children, nick-named “ragged robins”, to Sutton Park for a day of organised games.<sup>342</sup> Garratt recounts an early twentieth century Sunday School outing to Sutton Park.<sup>343</sup> Such trips remained popular in later generations.<sup>344</sup> North Bromwich children’s annual Sunday-school outing visits Sutton Park, its “slade of larches”<sup>345</sup> conjuring the actual parkland’s larch plantations.<sup>346</sup> It was intended, Cunningham suggests, that such excursions would divert participants from more insidious pastimes.<sup>347</sup> The fresh air of Bank

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<sup>335</sup> Leatherbarrow, J.S. (1974) *Worcestershire*, London, Batsford, p 191

<sup>336</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies*, p 192; Uffdown is Young’s name for Walton Hill and Penn Beacon is Clent

<sup>337</sup> “How to Get on in the World: The Story of Peter Lawley” (1848) p 50

<sup>338</sup> Walvin, J. (1978b) pp 50, 122

<sup>339</sup> Jones, D. V. (1984) p 111

<sup>340</sup> E.g. Walton, J. K. (1983) *The English Seaside Resort: A Social History 1750-1914*, Leicester, University Press, p 35; Upton, C. (1993) p 98; Skipp, V. (1996) p 141; Chamberlain, P. (1937) p 425; Allen, W.E. (1938) p 86

<sup>341</sup> Bartlam, N. (2002) *Broad Street Birmingham*, Stroud, Sutton Publishing, p 57

<sup>342</sup> Hall, F. (23.01.2006) Interview with M. Hall

<sup>343</sup> Garratt, V.W. (1939) pp 49-51

<sup>344</sup> Maynell, L. (1982) p 38; Tennant, R. (1984) *Yesterday’s Birmingham*, Sutton Coldfield, Westwood Press, pp 52-54; Haynes, G.L. (1995) *An Epoch’s Ending: Memories of a Bournville Child 1920-1940*, Birmingham, B.C.S., pp 22-23; Smith, G. (1997) p 33

<sup>345</sup> Young, F.B. (1921) *Black Diamond*, p 38

<sup>346</sup> Bates, S. (1997) *Sutton Coldfield: A Pictorial History*, Chichester, Phillimore, p 85

<sup>347</sup> Cunningham, H. (1980) p 100

Holiday excursions, however, is appreciated principally by North Bromwich proletariat for facilitating licence and indulgence.<sup>348</sup>

Walton suggests that Midlands' industrialists were slow to adopt seaside holidays, citing Birmingham's evolving local culture leaving little need for seaside pleasures.<sup>349</sup> However Dent makes clear before the nineteenth century's end that "there are few Birmingham artisans who have not paid more than one visit to the seaside or climbed the hills of Wales."<sup>350</sup> North Bromwich holidaymakers visit Brinton-le-Sands, clearly a Lancashire resort.<sup>351</sup> Its name suggests Poulton-le-Sands, original name of Morecambe,<sup>352</sup> its attributes suggest Blackpool. "Bracing Brinton" rehearses Blackpool's well-publicised reputation.<sup>353</sup> In the late eighteenth century Birmingham historian William Hutton holidayed with his family in Blackpool.<sup>354</sup> By the late nineteenth century coastal holidays were hugely popular amongst Birmingham's clerks and shopkeepers,<sup>355</sup> with Blackpool and Morecambe favourite destinations.<sup>356</sup> 1930s North Bromwich publicity elevated Brinton's vulgarity over that of southern seaside resorts.<sup>357</sup> In the same period Blackpool attracted more lower-class income-group visitors than Brighton, whilst Blackpool's Town Clerk commented that his resort specialised in "working-class visitors and lower-class weekenders."<sup>358</sup> Walton describes Blackpool's coloured picture-poster advertisements influencing Birmingham.<sup>359</sup> North Bromwich clerk Dick Pennington and student Susan Lorimer are attracted to Brinton by

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<sup>348</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 236

<sup>349</sup> Walton, J.K. (1983) p 15

<sup>350</sup> Dent, R.K. (1880) p 612

<sup>351</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, pp 91

<sup>352</sup> Hadfield, J. (1970) *The Shell Guide to England*, London, Michael Joseph, p 880

<sup>353</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 92; Walton, J.K. (1983) p 109

<sup>354</sup> Walvin, J. (1978a) *Beside the Seaside*, London, Allen Lane, p 34

<sup>355</sup> Walton, J.K. (1983) p 34

<sup>356</sup> Hopkins, E. (2001) p 124

<sup>357</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 72

<sup>358</sup> Walvin, J. (1978a) pp 118, 161

<sup>359</sup> Walton, J.K. (1983) p 150

“flaming posters that proclaimed the extraordinary fascinations of Brinton-le-Sands... North Bromwich-on-Sea.”<sup>360</sup>

In 1907 Young enjoyed his first walking holiday in the England-Wales borders.<sup>361</sup> Such was his attraction to this countryside that at the 1933 Wrexham Gorsedd when he received his bardic title, the presiding Archdruid described him as a borders’ novelist.<sup>362</sup> Here sensitive North Bromwich characters find regeneration. Facing unemployment and debt, Susan and Dick Pennington temporarily escape their North Bromwich suburb to seek refuge in the Welsh Marches. “As they crossed Severn... it was as though the passage of that boundary washed away all the heavy preoccupations of the last months.”<sup>363</sup> Disillusioned by North Bromwich business-life, Owen Lucton is drawn to the borderlands, as to “some lost paradise.”<sup>364</sup> Reflecting the North Bromwich canon, Tiltman expresses the same sentiment. “There was no relief until folk could escape the foetid confines of the town... strength would slowly ebb back.”<sup>365</sup> Young’s own rural preference guarantees the countryside’s restorative power for those battling North Bromwich’s relentless routine.

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<sup>360</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, pp 72-73, 94

<sup>361</sup> This was spent with Alfred Hayes Secretary of Birmingham & Midland Institute; subsequent Welsh borders holidays were spent with Jessie & Eric Brett Young and members of the Octette – Hall, M. (1997) pp 60,61,68

<sup>362</sup> Young, J.B. (1962) p 198

<sup>363</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 307

<sup>364</sup> Young, F.B. (1940) *Mr Lucton’s Freedom*, p 65

<sup>365</sup> Tiltman, M.H. (1939) pp 34-35

## Religion

Though the diversions based on church and chapel were less spectacular than others on offer, religion, Walvin maintains, was one of Victorian England's major leisure pursuits.<sup>366</sup> Consequent upon this was ecclesiastical sensitivity to diverse recreational expansion,<sup>367</sup> though this is not apparent in North Bromwich where religion is generally an uninviting aesthetic experience rather than a spiritual one, concentrating more on church buildings than the activities they house. North Bromwich's forlorn, desolate and ugly churches, surrounded by overgrown graveyards,<sup>368</sup> include Lower Sparkdale's "decayed Georgian church" and Tilton's "discreet little church."<sup>369</sup> Five further churches<sup>370</sup> are briefly mentioned and three more described in greater detail. Alvaston Parish Church and St George's Alvaston<sup>371</sup> replicate two Edgbaston churches.<sup>372</sup> In an area of "bricky slum" St Jude's Anglican chapel, North Bromwich, attracts a "less-distinguished congregation".<sup>373</sup> By the beginning of the twentieth century, Birmingham's St Jude's Church in Hill Street, consecrated in 1851, attracted "the poorest groups" in the parish.<sup>374</sup> North Bromwich's Unitarian family is associated with the New Meeting.<sup>375</sup> Birmingham's New Meeting opened in Moor Street in 1732, was destroyed in the 1791 Priestley Riots, rebuilt in 1802 and sold to Roman Catholics

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<sup>366</sup> Walvin, J. (1978b) pp 41, 47

<sup>367</sup> Bailey, P. (1978) p 68

<sup>368</sup> E.g. Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 451; (1936) *Far Forest*, p 238; (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 328

<sup>369</sup> Young, F.B. (1921) *The Black Diamond*, p 38; (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 178; see pp 201-203

<sup>370</sup> The identity of a sixth church is unclear. The church at the back of Boulton Crescent on the edge of North Bromwich Jeweller's Quarter [Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 295, 328] is most probably a picture of St Paul's, which also appears in Young, F.B. (1914) *The Dark Tower*, pp 41-42. However, its description could suggest St Mary's Whittall Street, an area with which the North Bromwich canon does not otherwise deal.

<sup>371</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, pp 27, 496

<sup>372</sup> The ancient St Bartholomew's Parish Church, rebuilt in the late seventeenth century after Civil War damage, was extended in the nineteenth century. St George's Church, Calthorpe Road, was built in 1838 and a parish assigned out of St Bartholomew's in 1857. - Elrington, C.R. (1964c) "Churches" in Stephens, W.B. (1964) pp 362-364, 388

<sup>373</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, pp 27; (1942) *A Man about the House*, p 44

<sup>374</sup> Elrington, C.R. (1964c) p 390; Slater, T. (2005) *A Century of Celebrating Christ: The Diocese of Birmingham 1905-2005*, Chichester, Phillimore & Co, p 48

<sup>375</sup> Young, F.B. (1942) *A Man About The House*, p 44

in 1861 when it was replaced by Broad Street's Church of the Messiah.<sup>376</sup> Birmingham's Oratory of St Philip Neri moved to Hagley Road in 1852, three years after it had been established by John Henry Newman in Alcester Street. Newman (1801-1890) converted to Roman Catholicism in 1845, became a cardinal in 1879 and spent the rest of his life in Birmingham.<sup>377</sup> Poignantly described in Tiltman's *Birmingham*,<sup>378</sup> Newman's presence is briefly transposed to North Bromwich to "the Oratory on Halesby Road, where the great English cardinal lived."<sup>379</sup>

Though the North Bromwich canon features numerous priests,<sup>380</sup> just two other than "the great English cardinal" serve the city. Father Shiplake is mentioned only briefly,<sup>381</sup> whilst Father Westinghouse, "pale... cold... excessively refined... charming"<sup>382</sup> is clearly a portrait of the renowned Father Cyril Martindale (1879-1963). A brilliant classical scholar, Martindale led retreats for working-class men in Birmingham and taught at Oxford before moving to Mayfair's fashionable Farm Street church in 1927.<sup>383</sup> North Bromwich's Father Westinghouse is introduced as he is about to leave the city and divide his time between Oxford and London.<sup>384</sup> Martindale brought into the church converts ranging from dukes to

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<sup>376</sup> Rose, R.B. (1964) "Protestant Nonconformity" in Stephens, W.B.(ed.) (1964) pp 474-475

<sup>377</sup> Reynolds, S. (1964) "Roman Catholicism" in Stephens, W.B. (ed.) (1964) p 400; Stanford, D. & Spark, M. (1957) *Letters of John Henry Newman*, London, Peter Owen, pp 133, 149

<sup>378</sup> Tiltman, M.H. (1939) pp 43-45

<sup>379</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies*, p 109

<sup>380</sup> E.g. Pomfret of Wychbury; Darnay of Wychbury and St Ibrox Mission, Mayfair - Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*; Jewell of Thorpe Folville, Holly of Rossington, Malthus of Cold Orton - Young, F.B. (1930) *Jim Redlake*; Pearson of Halesby - Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*; Winter of Chaddesbourne D'Abiot - Young, F.B. (1934) *This Little World*; Follows of Monk's Norton - Young, F.B. (1937) *Portrait of a Village*; Ombersley of Grafton Lovett - Young, F.B. (1937) *They Seek a Country*; Lingen of Temple Folliott - Young, F.B. (1956) *Wistanslow*

<sup>381</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 62

<sup>382</sup> Young, F.B. (1924) *Cold Harbour*, p 238

<sup>383</sup> Caraman, P. (1967) *C.C. Martindale*, London, Longmans, Green & Co, pp 144-145, 163

<sup>384</sup> Young, F.B. (1924) *Cold Harbour*, pp 151, 237

dustmen,<sup>385</sup> whilst Westinghouse was “responsible for more conversions in society than any other fashionable priest.”<sup>386</sup> Martindale’s works of Roman Catholic apologetic appeared as sentimental novels of working-class life,<sup>387</sup> with which he admitted scant intimate acquaintance.<sup>388</sup> Producing “extremely subtle propaganda,” Westinghouse was “a graceful writer of fiction... too graceful for robust taste.”<sup>389</sup> Interestingly, Martindale was familiar with Young’s portrayals of industrial life which he acknowledged more insightful than his own.<sup>390</sup>

In North Bromwich’s Jeweller’s Quarter, “in the middle of the square a small Georgian church rose up amid a graveyard packed with Georgian dead.”<sup>391</sup> In 1777, in Birmingham’s Jewellery Quarter, to meet the needs of a growing population, building work began on St Paul’s Church which was consecrated two years later. A survey of July 1895<sup>392</sup> found that the decaying churchyard contained over 1,600 graves. Many headstones had fallen; age and decay had rendered most inscriptions indecipherable. Though by the early twentieth century Birmingham Corporation had renovated the churchyard, St Paul’s no longer attracted the manufacturers and merchant classes who ensured its initial success.<sup>393</sup> Dayus offers her own perspective. “St Paul’s was really for the gentry who had money to buy a seat... when

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<sup>385</sup> Evans, I (1967) *New Catholic Encyclopaedia Vol 9*, New York, McGraw-Hill

<sup>386</sup> Young, F.B. (1924) *Cold Harbour*, p 236

<sup>387</sup> E.g. Martindale, C. (1921) *Jock, Jack and the Corporal*, London, Burns, Oates & Washburn; (1921) *Mr Francis Newnes*, London, Burns, Oates & Washburn; (1935) *Albert Alfred, P.C.*, London, Burns, Oates & Co;

<sup>388</sup> Caraman, P. (1967) p 145

<sup>389</sup> Young, F.B. (1924) *Cold Harbour*, p 236

<sup>390</sup> Caraman, P. (1967) p 145

<sup>391</sup> Young, F.B. (1914) *The Dark Tower*, p 41

<sup>392</sup> Westhurst, H. (1900) “Old Birmingham: The Historic Parish of St Paul’s,” Part VIII “St Paul’s Churchyard and Square,” *Birmingham Weekly Mercury* in *Birmingham Institutions* 1/1

<sup>393</sup> Westhurst, H. (1900) “Old Birmingham: The Historic Parish of St Paul’s,” Part I “A Scene that has Changed,” *Birmingham Weekly Mercury* in *Birmingham Institutions* 1/1

we had to attend church on Sundays we were pushed into the gallery.”<sup>394</sup> As the memorial of a neglected past, appropriate to Young’s imagery, St Paul’s is transferred to North Bromwich, not a place where vibrant worship is experienced, but where the spiritual dimension has fallen into decay. “I take very little notice of the church... I believe it’s generally empty.”<sup>395</sup> Similarly, Collins’ Birchampton is “not a very church-going town.”<sup>396</sup>

On the few occasions Young allows his readers inside a North Bromwich church, physical decay (“plaster flaked from the walls... box-pews vacant for years... stacks of dusty prayer-books, the property of forgotten worshippers”<sup>397</sup>), declining congregations (“she sat alone in the pew which members of the family had occupied for more than a century”<sup>398</sup>) and spiritual impoverishment (“thin wailing of chants, weak and dispirited, like the voices of children lost in the dark”<sup>399</sup>) are apparent. Though, as usual, slanted, the North Bromwich picture is not entirely divorced from Birmingham. In the nineteenth century’s final years Bishop Perowne identified the city’s spiritual destitution as the most serious problem facing his diocese. However, by the creation of the Birmingham diocese in 1905, Bishop Gore was impressed with an evident revival of church life at grass roots.<sup>400</sup>

Sackville Row’s St Clement’s Cathedral is unmistakably Colmore Row’s St Philip’s Cathedral.

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<sup>394</sup> Dayus, K. (2000) pp 159-160

<sup>395</sup> Young, F.B. (1914) *The Dark Tower*, pp 41-42

<sup>396</sup> Collins, M. (1896) p 297

<sup>397</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 328

<sup>398</sup> Young, F.B. (1942) *A Man about the House*, p 44

<sup>399</sup> Young, F.B. (1936) *Far Forest*, p 239

<sup>400</sup> Perowne was Bishop of Worcester, of which Birmingham remained a part until 1905 - Slater, T. (2005) pp 47, 50, 55

“An ancient graveyard thickset with carved urns and obelisks and other memorials of the Georgian dead, from the midst of which there rose the ornate sandstone cupola of the church, a shape of classical beauty dreamily poised above the dark city.”<sup>401</sup>

A gem of English Renaissance Baroque, surmounted by a cupola, St Philip’s was consecrated in 1715. Though the cathedral’s architectural grace is transferred to North Bromwich,<sup>402</sup> Young does not miss the opportunity to identify the industrial pollution which mars beauty. “The shapely, crumbling cupola of St Clement’s Church... badly served by smoke.”<sup>403</sup> Originally a parish church, St Philip’s was designated Birmingham’s cathedral at the creation of the diocese, a source of fictional disbelief: “the little Renaissance church that they have put right out of the picture by calling it a cathedral.”<sup>404</sup> Young’s objection to the diocesan role of St Philips where he unwillingly attended a confirmation interview<sup>405</sup> is manifest in his refusal to elevate St Clement’s to cathedral status in fiction even a decade after it was so dignified in fact.<sup>406</sup>

Sackville Row’s churchyard is a desolate place. “An enclosed churchyard lined with shivering plane-trees along... sad asphalt paths... as neglected as the graveyard of a deserted chapel.”<sup>407</sup> Radiating paths with a continuous footway between double rows of trees around the perimeter enclosed by railings<sup>408</sup> marked St Philip’s Churchyard. Gissing’s portrait validates Young’s. “St Philip’s Church amid a wide graveyard, enclosed with iron railings,

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<sup>401</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 122

<sup>402</sup> E.g. Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, p 78; (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, pp 462-463; (1940) *Mr Lucton’s Freedom*, p 9

<sup>403</sup> Young, F.B. (1914) *The Dark Tower*, p 32; (1916) *The Iron Age*, p 75

<sup>404</sup> Young, F.B. (1914) *The Dark Tower*, pp 31-32

<sup>405</sup> See p 21

<sup>406</sup> In the North Bromwich of 1914, Young refers to St Clement’s Church -Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, p 75

<sup>407</sup> Young, F.B. (1913) *Undergrowth*, pp 81-82

<sup>408</sup> Hickman, D. (1972) *A Walk: Birmingham Cathedral, Temple Row and Colmore Row*, Birmingham, The Victorian Society, pp 1-2



crossed by paved walks... rose black against the grey sky.”<sup>409</sup> Bromford Cathedral’s churchyard is similarly surrounded by railings and crossed by paths, whilst its gardens provide rare green space<sup>410</sup> such as Dayus, from her childhood Birmingham memories, identifies as the only place where flowers might be seen.<sup>411</sup> Reflecting their Birmingham significance, the “flagged paths of St Clement’s Churchyard”<sup>412</sup> are a main thoroughfare from North Bromwich High Street to Sackville Row and the railway station, whilst the importance of open space around the church is emphasized. “The wide flagged pavement of the churchyard seemed clean and wholesome after the clammy streets.”<sup>413</sup> North Bromwich gravestones, however, are in poor repair. “Stones mildewed and broken... he could hardly decipher the names upon them. Half a century, perhaps, from the building of the church had seen the graveyard overfull, packed with Georgian dead.”<sup>414</sup> To enhance the picture of neglect and decay Young massages the facts. A contemporary survey of St Philip’s Churchyard found numerous gravestones neglected and decaying with many inscriptions indecipherable. However legible epitaphs dated to 130 years after the building of the church was complete, with 59% of the tombstones commemorating Georgian dead, and the remainder from the reigns of William IV and Victoria.<sup>415</sup>

That North Bromwich had not been totally negligent in the treatment of its churchyard becomes a vehicle for Young’s image of a beggarly city.

It was one of the city’s ‘breathing-spaces’; the Corporation had fixed a seat here and there and paupers from the neighbouring workhouse smoked their pipes here,

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<sup>409</sup> Gissing, G. (1895) p 103

<sup>410</sup> Allen, W.E. (1939) p 185; (1940) pp 163, 165

<sup>411</sup> Dayus, K. (1982) p 5

<sup>412</sup> Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, p 78

<sup>413</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 455

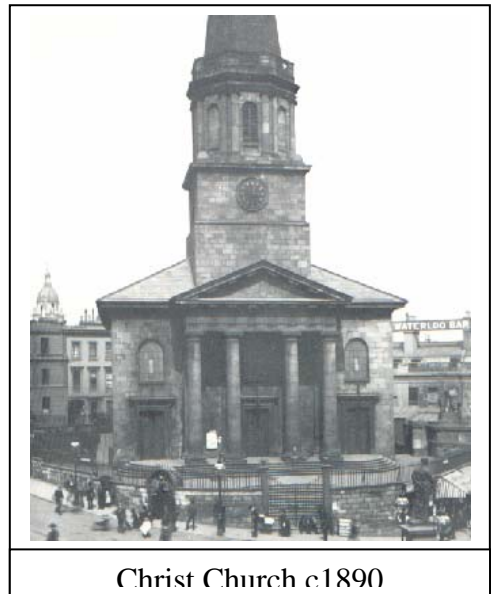
<sup>414</sup> Young, F.B. (1913) *Undergrowth* p 82

<sup>415</sup> *The Midland Antiquary Vol III, 9,10,1,2* (September, December 1884, July 1885) Birmingham, Cooper & Co

or forlorn out-of-works would pause to inspect their boots and doubt the reality of the world revealed by an empty stomach.<sup>416</sup>

To maintain his image of North Bromwich as an impoverished, neglected place, Young adapts fact to suit fiction. Though Birmingham's original workhouse<sup>417</sup> was indeed in the neighbourhood of St Philip's, this building was replaced in 1852 with the new workhouse at Birmingham Heath.<sup>418</sup> By retaining North Bromwich's workhouse close to Sackville Row rather than removing it to the periphery, Young creates a poignant picture of a city in which visible poverty infests the heart.

This determination to promote the image of an unsavoury city leads Young to contradict his own description. Having already depicted a tree-lined churchyard, he writes "there were few trees within the graveyard."<sup>419</sup> The dichotomy is resolved if not one but two locations are portrayed. In the middle of the churchyard "a little Georgian church, of exquisite poise, but crumbling and rather grimy,"<sup>420</sup> fits Young's chosen image of St Philip's. However there is a topographical problem for, unlike St Philip's, this church is at the end of Sackville Row.<sup>421</sup> Though by 1900 there was no church at the end of Colmore Row, Christchurch, consecrated in 1813, a chapel of St



Christ Church c1890

<sup>416</sup> Young, F.B. (1913) *Undergrowth*, p 82

<sup>417</sup> The Workhouse was built in Lichfield Street in 1733. - Gill, C. (1952) pp 68-69

<sup>418</sup> See p 184

<sup>419</sup> Young, F.B. (1913) *Undergrowth*, p 82

<sup>420</sup> Young, F.B. (1913) *Undergrowth*, p 81

<sup>421</sup> Young, F.B. (1913) *Undergrowth*, p 81

Philip's,<sup>422</sup> which could equally fit Young's description, had only recently been demolished, a milestone which both Parkes and Tiltman recognise.<sup>423</sup> Within Christchurch's railings were a small number of trees,<sup>424</sup> offering evidence that this could well have been Young's church at the end of Sackville Row. However, as there was no graveyard here, Young has clearly conflated St Philip's churchyard with Christchurch's building and location.



Colmore Row, showing Christ Church, St Philip's and Churchyard c1889

Approached by a wide flight of steps, Christchurch was constructed high above its New Street level over shops and catacombs.<sup>425</sup> The North Bromwich church also rises above its surroundings, exposed to hostile elements. "The church was on the hill-top... a bare place... windy precincts... the crumbled outline of lovely pagan curves against the sullen sky."<sup>426</sup>

<sup>422</sup> Slater, T. (2005) p 36

<sup>423</sup> Parkes, W. K. (1914) p 12; Tiltman, M.H. (1939) p 201

<sup>424</sup> OS *Warwickshire Sheet XIV.5.7* (1889)

<sup>425</sup> Taylor, W.H. (October 1897) "Early Recollections of Christ Church" in *The Central Literary Magazine Vol XIII No 4*, p 129

<sup>426</sup> Young, F.B. (1913) *Undergrowth*, pp 81-82

From “the western doorway... the organist’s postlude... dinned in his ears,”<sup>427</sup> easily possible at Christchurch where the organ loft was situated above the west door.<sup>428</sup> Dominating the neighbourhood’s squalid dwellings, Christchurch offered free, unreserved seats, not as a parish centre, but to meet the spiritual needs of Birmingham’s poor wherever they lived. As a consequence it was known as the ‘Free Church’,<sup>429</sup> a resonating image with Young’s picture of unemployed paupers congregating in Sackville Row’s churchyard. When local housing was demolished to make way for the Council House Christchurch became redundant.<sup>430</sup> Its spiritual role passed to St Philip’s, the merging of the two churches foretelling in fact the coalescence which Young created in fiction.

Though generally North Bromwich churches “of crumbling stucco and grass-grown graveyards mournfully perpetuated the spiritual aspirations of mid-Victorian dead,”<sup>431</sup> there is one notable exception. Identified by name and location, North Bromwich’s Roman Catholic St Chad’s is a diminished version of its Birmingham original. Designed by Pugin, St Chad’s was consecrated in 1838 and elevated to cathedral status in 1848, making it England’s first Roman Catholic cathedral since the Reformation.<sup>432</sup> Designating North Bromwich’s St Chad’s “a ritualistic church not very far from Alaric’s slum,”<sup>433</sup> Young ignores Birmingham’s importance as a major centre for the revival of Roman Catholicism.<sup>434</sup> The choice of the descriptor ‘ritualistic’, though capturing Young’s hostility to Anglo-Catholic worship,<sup>435</sup> is

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<sup>427</sup> Young, F.B. (1913) *Undergrowth* p 85

<sup>428</sup> Taylor, W.H. (1897) p 131

<sup>429</sup> Langford, J.A. (n.d.) *Shall Christ Church be Destroyed?* Birmingham, Midland Educational Co, Ltd., p 6

<sup>430</sup> *House of Lords Select Committee on Birmingham Churches Bill* (11.05.1897)

<sup>431</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 451

<sup>432</sup> Gill, C. (1952) p 375; Slater, T. (2005) p 28

<sup>433</sup> Young, F.B. (1914) *The Dark Tower*, p 49

<sup>434</sup> Slater, T. (2005) p 28

<sup>435</sup> E.g. Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 74; (1934) *This Little World*, p 30; (1956) *Wistanslow*, p 16

entirely consonant with religious practices in Birmingham at the time when Catholic revival rituals were increasingly adopted in Anglican churches.<sup>436</sup> “A subdued flavour of ritualistic Anglicanism”<sup>437</sup> was also evident in North Bromwich.

In St Paul’s Square little more than a quarter of a mile from St Chad’s, Alaric Grosmont lived surrounded by North Bromwich slums “which sin against beauty.”<sup>438</sup> Against this graphically depressing picture St Chad’s stands in marked relief. In surprising contrast to other North Bromwich churches, it is not architecture that enriches but liturgy. “The mysticism of the High Church is most appropriate in a sordid environment such as Alaric’s slum.”<sup>439</sup> Though its significance in Birmingham’s religious history is ignored, North Bromwich’s St Chad’s offers a dimension found in neither St Clement’s Cathedral nor the Jeweller’s Quarter church: spiritual solace amid the city’s depressing surroundings. “In North Bromwich he had found an amazing relief in the mysteries of religion. He had carried the cross in St Chad’s processions.”<sup>440</sup>

Though lacking personal spiritual cognition (“I have a profound distrust of all formal religion... my life has been devoid of religious experience...”<sup>441</sup>) the imagery of Young’s writing is steeped in the ancient canticles and liturgies of the church which he had absorbed at Hales Owen, where he occasionally acted as sidesman and his father was Church Warden.<sup>442</sup> Psalm 121 came to his aid as he agonized over the futility of war:

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<sup>436</sup> Slater, T. (2005) pp 60,62

<sup>437</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies*, p 109

<sup>438</sup> Young, F.B. (1914) *The Dark Tower*, p 40

<sup>439</sup> Young, F.B. (1914) *The Dark Tower*, p 50

<sup>440</sup> Young, F.B. (1914) *The Dark Tower*, p 229

<sup>441</sup> FBY 2594 (15.09.1939) Letter from Young to Walter Carey, Bishop of Bloemfontein

<sup>442</sup> Young, J.B. (1962) p 25; Hall, M (1997) p 23

Unto the hills, unto the hills I bring  
My soul for soothing of their solitude.<sup>443</sup>

On hearing of her niece's engagement to North Bromwich solicitor, Dudley Wilburn, bringing to fruition long-cherished ambitions, "Aunt Cathie's heart sang its 'Nunc Dimittis'."<sup>444</sup> When expressing his most deeply-held convictions, Young chose the vehicle of religious terminology. "Though I was once a doctor (*ubi tres medici, ibi duo athei*), I can say that every book I have written is, in a sense, an Act of Faith."<sup>445</sup> Despite this, the religion of North Bromwich is largely depicted as a palliative for impressionable girls, bigots and simple souls. At school in North Bromwich the teenage Clare Lydiatt underwent an intensely emotional religious experience of Anglo-Catholicism, characteristic of the late nineteenth century. "When she was at St Monica's, Clare got into the hands of some High Church woman who worried her into being confirmed. It's quite common with schoolgirls, that emotional religious phase."<sup>446</sup> The doctrinaire Fladburns "accorded with the accepted model of Nonconformity, discouraging, equally, ostentation, luxury and all such coloured graces as were not strictly utilitarian."<sup>447</sup> Dick Pennington, in North Bromwich lock-up, gains repose through prayer. "He knelt down on the concrete floor beside his bench and said the Lord's Prayer; and, being a simple soul, was greatly comforted."<sup>448</sup> In North Bromwich there is none of the religious optimism evident in Birmingham where, despite concern over sparse church attendance in 1892,<sup>449</sup> "respectable Dissent" encouraged "large active congregations"<sup>450</sup> and where, within

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<sup>443</sup> FBY 67 Ms of various poems; Psalm 121 begins: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills..." – *Book of Common Prayer*, Cambridge, University Press

<sup>444</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 415

<sup>445</sup> FBY 3465 (12.03.1940) Letter from Young to Edward Woods, Bishop of Lichfield, in which he cites the Latin proverb [*Where there are three doctors, there are two atheists.*].

<sup>446</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 162

<sup>447</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies*, p 160

<sup>448</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 557

<sup>449</sup> See p 25

<sup>450</sup> Briggs, J. (1996) "Elite and Proletariat in Nineteenth-Century Birmingham Nonconformity" in Sell, A. (1996) *Protestant Nonconformists and the West Midlands of England*, Keele, University Press, p 90

Anglicanism, was “vigour of parochial life” and “new self-confidence.”<sup>451</sup> Studdert Kennedy, commemorated alongside his contemporary Young in Worcester Cathedral, focuses the age’s religious indifference upon Birmingham.

“When Jesus came to Birmingham they simply passed him by...”<sup>452</sup>

Similarly, North Bromwich is a place of spiritual poverty, with the church merely a quiet refuge from city noise,<sup>453</sup> but otherwise a meaningless relic of the past: “A mausoleum of defunct aspirations rather than the shrine of a living faith, a perpetual reminder of death rather than the hope of salvation.”<sup>454</sup>

Chapter Five’s examination of North Bromwich arts, leisure and religion reveals the ambivalence of Young’s portrait. Through the selection of material, bias is implicit. It is explicit in counterbalancing positives with carefully-constructed negatives.

Despite generous benefactors and identifiable Birmingham treasures, North Bromwich Art Gallery, with its depressing and debilitating atmosphere, has few visitors. The city’s art is generally evaluated in monetary rather than aesthetic terms. North Bromwich’s wide-ranging musical concerts, catalogued with meticulous Birmingham detail, reflect Young’s own taste, but remain unpopular with North Bromwich audiences. Music hall and cinema, which do have mass appeal, are scathingly described, revealing Young as a cultural elitist who deplored vulgarity. Architectural grace and tranquillity amid the city’s turmoil do not prevent the neglect of North Bromwich churches. Healing and renewal, reflecting Young’s rural

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<sup>451</sup> Slater, T. (2005) pp 39,49

<sup>452</sup> G.A Studdert Kennedy (1883-1929) wrote *Indifference* as one of his “Songs of Faith and Doubt”. It was published in Studdert Kennedy, G.A. (1927) *The Unutterable Beauty*, London, Hodder & Stoughton, p 24

<sup>453</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 453

<sup>454</sup> Young, F.B. (1936) *Far Forest*, p 238

preference and religious scepticism, is available not through organised religion but through escape from city to countryside. For North Bromwich's masses, however, such renewal is both interpreted and experienced in unlicensed indulgence. With its modern ground, North Bromwich football provides mass spectator-sport through which Young depicts corruption, greed and municipal ugliness. Sophisticated North Bromwich has its downside. With its identifiable Birmingham façade, modern facilities and excellent cuisine, North Bromwich's Grand Midland Hotel is underestimated by the city's visitors and the venue for illicit assignations for locals. The behaviour of North Bromwich businessmen in their clubs is contrasted unfavourably with that of rustics in a village inn.

It is clear that, reinforced by Young's experience, details of North Bromwich's arts, leisure and religion accurately reflect selected aspects of Birmingham life. Their interpretation continues the unique contribution made to Birmingham's history by Young's North Bromwich canon. This particular aspect of North Bromwich life is portrayed as an encompassing oxymoron in which conflicting values, opportunities and experiences constantly collide. Despite scattered indications to the contrary, the unavoidable conclusion remains that "signs of a lively and cultured mind... one would have met hardly ever in North Bromwich."<sup>455</sup>

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<sup>455</sup> Young, F.B. (1942) *A Man about the House*, p 118



**FRANCIS BRETT YOUNG'S BIRMINGHAM**

*North Bromwich – City of Iron*

## **CHAPTER SIX**

# **EDUCATION**

The educational machinery, like a giant centrifugal machine in North Bromwich, a city which believes in paying by results...

Francis Brett Young – *The Iron Age*

Young's North Bromwich educational portrait concentrates upon higher education, in particular upon the evolution of the university with which he was personally acquainted. His brief portrayal of schools (with fleeting references to elementary schools<sup>1</sup>) focuses upon the nineteenth century's closing years. At a similar period Birmingham's educational provision underwent rapid expansion. There was much to address. In 1843 Tonna reported the case of "Henry Ward, near seventeen, from the workhouse at Birmingham, able to read a little in the Testament... Does not know who Jesus Christ was... thinks he was a king of some kind, of London, long ago."<sup>2</sup> Within parallel Birmingham fiction, Peter Lawley's father initially preferred to make his son work rather than send him to school. Peter eventually goes to school and having learned to read teaches his father and brother. Here, education confers additional benefits, making pupils "not rude and quarrelsome as many are who have not been taught better."<sup>3</sup> Of (fictional) Birmingham in the 1870s Tiltman wrote: "The educational attainments of the citizens of the greatest Power in the world were deplorable. It was the exception to find those who could read and write among the poor."<sup>4</sup> In 1891 Holyoake recorded a contemporary opinion: "neglected Birmingham children have a clear talent for turbulence and wilfulness, and would no doubt take prizes for their attainments that way were competitions with other towns invited."<sup>5</sup> Light's assertion that a given period's variety of literary forms usefully cross-comment<sup>6</sup> validates the comparison of Tonna's careful research, Tiltman's informed fiction and Holyoake's personal experience as groundwork for a discussion of Young's portrait of education in North Bromwich.

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<sup>1</sup> Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, p 193; (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 118

<sup>2</sup> [Tonna], Charlotte Elizabeth (1843-44) p 471

<sup>3</sup> "How to Get on in the World: The Story of Peter Lawley" (1848) pp 7, 8, 31, 50

<sup>4</sup> Tiltman, M.H. (1939) pp 38-39

<sup>5</sup> Holyoake, G. (1891) p 181

<sup>6</sup> Light, A. (1991) p ix

Holyoake exemplifies those Birmingham folk who practised self-improvement. Apprenticed aged nine to a whitesmith, Holyoake gained his education at Carr's Lane Sunday school and the Mechanic's Institute.<sup>7</sup> A generation later, W.J. Davis, born in 1848 in Birmingham's Bradford Street, experienced his first taste of education at a dame school, supplemented by Sunday school at George Dawson's Church of the Saviour, Temple Street YMCA and Barr Street Improvement Society.<sup>8</sup> Born in the next decade, Will Thorne received no formal education, being sent to work aged six. Still illiterate at twenty-two, Thorne eventually learned to read and write.<sup>9</sup> Despite their early disadvantages, Holyoake, Davis and Thorne all progressed to authorship and political influence.<sup>10</sup>

The 1870 Elementary Education Act, which laid foundations for compulsory school-attendance, curtailed parental freedom to decide the extent (if any) of their children's schooling. The aim was to bring into schools the nation's social and educational outcasts. Established state-aided voluntary schools managed by religious bodies largely failed to reach the poorest children.<sup>11</sup> The 3d or 4d per week charged by Birmingham's Ladypool Road National School meant, as Chinn has shown, a target group amongst the more prosperous working-class.<sup>12</sup> In Birmingham, as elsewhere, new schools built under the 1870 Act were

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<sup>7</sup> Holyoake, G. (1892) pp 19, 24

<sup>8</sup> Dalley, W. A. (1914) pp 12-15

<sup>9</sup> Hurt, J.S. (1979) *Elementary Schools and the Working Classes 1860-1918*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, p 63

<sup>10</sup> As a journalist and Chartist, Holyoake became associated with the co-operative society started by a group of Rochdale weavers and wrote *The History of Co-operation in England: Its Literature and its Advocates* (1875, 1879); Davis became Secretary of the National Association of Amalgamated Brass Workers, a Birmingham Town Councillor and H.M. Inspector of Factories and wrote *The Brassworkers and Metal Mechanics of Berlin, Their Social Status, Education and Customs of the People* (1905) Birmingham, National Society of Amalgamated Brassworkers and Metal Mechanics; Thorne became Labour M.P. for West Ham and wrote *My Life's Battles* (1925) – Shelley, C. (August 2003) "The Most Famous Brummie of Them All: George Jacob Holyoake (1817-1906)" in *Birmingham Historian* Issue 24, Birmingham and District Local History Association, pp 27-29

<sup>11</sup> Hurt, J.S. (1979) pp 25, 59

<sup>12</sup> Chinn, C. (1988b) Was Separate Schooling a Means of Class Segregation in Late Victorian and Edwardian Birmingham?" in *Midland History* Vol XIII, University of Birmingham, p 98

intended for the most deprived and poorest districts. Desired results were not necessarily produced by good intentions. Many lower working-class children did not possess suitable clothes or shoes and were consequently unable to take advantage of the new schools, becoming the system's failures.<sup>13</sup> New Board schools with superior resources attracted "select" pupils away from the voluntary sector<sup>14</sup> thus degrading its social status. Chinn's examination of schools in Birmingham's west Sparkbrook<sup>15</sup> reveals this scenario at Ladypool Road which, losing out to better-equipped Board schools, exclusively admitted its catchment area's poorest children. Spiralling resources-depletion, which Ladypool Road exemplifies, ensured poor children receiving a lesser education than their socially more-advantaged peers.<sup>16</sup> Such schools, lying beyond Young's experience, are absent from North Bromwich.

Established by the 1870 Act, Birmingham School Board, responsible for elementary education, discovered that voluntary schools provided only 37,442 of the 60,402 places required.<sup>17</sup> During the period of its existence,<sup>18</sup> Birmingham School Board opened 57 new schools offering some 60,342 new places.<sup>19</sup> These schools, as Bédarida makes clear, "aimed at teaching the rudiments needed for performing the basic tasks of an industrial society."<sup>20</sup> In addition to the new Board Schools, twenty new church schools were opened in Birmingham between 1869 and 1903.<sup>21</sup> Though no church schools are identified in North Bromwich, religious influence is paramount at St Monica's, "permeated by a subdued flavour of

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<sup>13</sup> Hurt, J.S. (1979), p 60; Chinn, C. (1988b) p 106

<sup>14</sup> *Schools Board Chronicle* (1876) cited by Chinn, C. (1988b) p103

<sup>15</sup> Chinn, C. (1988b) pp 95-112

<sup>16</sup> Chinn, C. (1988b) p 109

<sup>17</sup> Vince, C.A. (1923) p 279

<sup>18</sup> School Boards were abolished by the 1902 Education Act – Curtis, S.J. & Boultonwood, M.E.A. (1964) *An Introductory History of English Education since 1800*, London, University Tutorial Press, p 291

<sup>19</sup> Vince, C.A. (1923) p 280

<sup>20</sup> Bédarida, F. (1991) p 157

<sup>21</sup> Briggs, A. (1964c) "Public Education" in Stephens, W.B.(ed.) (1964) p 496 [14 Church of England schools and 6 Roman Catholic]

ritualistic Anglicanism.”<sup>22</sup> Birmingham first organized senior divisions in 1879, allowing suitable children to continue their education beyond the elementary stage,<sup>23</sup> though, as Chinn indicates, very few children from the poorest areas progressed to secondary education.<sup>24</sup> By the end of the century Birmingham had five grammar schools, four higher grade schools, 93 board schools, 84 religious foundation schools, 115 private schools and sixteen schools in other categories, making a total of 317.<sup>25</sup>

Birmingham’s most famous school is undoubtedly its ancient grammar school, attended by Francis’s younger brother Eric,<sup>26</sup> and founded during the reign of King Edward VI. “The said Towne of Brymyncham ys a very mete place, and yt is very mete and necessaryre that there be a Free Schoole erect theare.”<sup>27</sup> Thus, in 1552 the Hall of Holy Cross Gild (in what was to become New Street) was transformed into King Edward’s Free Grammar School. The buildings were replaced during the 1830s when, for benefit of boys destined for Birmingham commerce and industry, the curriculum added modern languages, mathematics and science as an alternative to classics.<sup>28</sup> Mettingham’s King Edward’s Grammar School in Old Street is described in considerable detail.<sup>29</sup> North Bromwich has its “Old Grammar School,”<sup>30</sup> also identified as “King Edward’s Grammar School,”<sup>31</sup> unrecognized by local

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<sup>22</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies*, p 109

<sup>23</sup> Briggs, A. (1964c) p 494

<sup>24</sup> Chinn, C. (1988b) p 108

<sup>25</sup> *Kelly’s Directory of Birmingham* (1899). The total quoted includes the School Boards of Aston, Handsworth, King’s Norton and Yardley. Other categories consisted of three high schools, five technical schools, three British Schools, The Blue Coat School, Edgbaston Preparatory School, Handsworth Commercial School, King’s Heath Institutional School and Birmingham Certified Industrial School.

<sup>26</sup> Wiseman, C. (n.d.) “Some Memories of Eric Brett Young” from *Old Edwardians’ Gazette*, reprinted in *Francis Brett Young Society Journal* No 31 (July 1994) pp 18-20

<sup>27</sup> Certificates of King Edward VI 57 cited by Hutton, T.W. (1952) *King Edward’s School Birmingham 1552-1952*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, p 6

<sup>28</sup> Hutton, T.W. (1952) pp 83, 111, 122

<sup>29</sup> Parkes, W. K. (1914) pp 4, 14-18

<sup>30</sup> Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, p 193

<sup>31</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 31

aristocracy and stigmatized by a pupil as “his own black Alma Mater.”<sup>32</sup> Gissing is even more scathing. His Birmingham Grammar School provides an education “sufficiently prolonged to unfit for the tasks of an underling, yet not thorough enough to qualify for professional life.”<sup>33</sup>

Along with the Free Grammar School and other endowed schools, nineteenth century Birmingham offered extensive private education.<sup>34</sup> Holyoake taught at a private school in Moor Street in 1840;<sup>35</sup> Parkes creates “private schools scattered here and there in Mettingham.”<sup>36</sup> In 1899 97 of Birmingham’s 115 private schools were run by women and 62 were exclusively for girls.<sup>37</sup> Many such schools were, according to Hopkins, very small and located in houses.<sup>38</sup> Very different from the privately-run dame schools accommodating poor children prior to the 1870 Act, these later private schools were aimed predominantly at the middle class who could afford the fees that guaranteed that their sons and daughters need not associate with the possibly verminous and unkempt children of the poor.<sup>39</sup> In North Bromwich, Cedars Private Academy is run by Agnes and Ellen Isit in their own home.

Its atmosphere would be that of a home life rich in the culture which was, alas, so rare in North Bromwich... its pupils would be able to learn music, ballroom dancing, deportment, embroidery, elocution and modern languages... Only children from the very nicest families in Alvaston would be accepted.<sup>40</sup>

Such aims and curriculum accord with Upton’s findings that better-off girls could be educated in music, deportment and the lifestyle to which they would become accustomed at Birmingham’s numerous small private academies.<sup>41</sup> Amongst such better establishments

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<sup>32</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 93

<sup>33</sup> Gissing, G. (1895) p 14

<sup>34</sup> Gill, C. (1952) p 62

<sup>35</sup> Holyoake, G. (1892) vol 1, p 132

<sup>36</sup> Parkes, W. K. (1914) p 15

<sup>37</sup> *Kelly’s Directory of Birmingham* (1899)

<sup>38</sup> Hopkins, E. (2001) p 112

<sup>39</sup> Hurt, J.S. (1979) p 12

<sup>40</sup> Young, F.B. (1942) *A Man about the House*, p 36

<sup>41</sup> Upton, C. (1993) p 159

Hopkins identifies Howells' ladies' school at Metchley Abbey, run by three highly-educated ladies.<sup>42</sup> With its principal educated at Rodean and Girton, Alvaston Manor, a similar institution in North Bromwich is "a genuine finishing school in a well-wooded park with ornamental waters, in which young ladies could learn to swim, and equipped with a riding-stable of docile saddle-horses on which they would actually ride to hounds."<sup>43</sup> With their emphasis on genteel accomplishments, Hopkins asserts the difficulty of finding any Birmingham girls' school of the period with high academic standards.<sup>44</sup> The same premise is maintained in North Bromwich where the principal of a large, expensive school on Halesby Road,<sup>45</sup> declares: "The world's full of useless women. In a town like North Bromwich, with more money than taste, they're not even ornamental. Three-quarters of the girls we turn out will be just like their mothers, poor things."<sup>46</sup>

Gill highlights the city libraries' contribution to adult learning.<sup>47</sup> Birmingham Central Library, opened in what became Chamberlain Square in 1865, destroyed by fire in 1879 and reopened in 1882,<sup>48</sup> features across the spectrum of Birmingham writing.<sup>49</sup> Garratt expresses appreciation of the facility. "If I am grateful to Birmingham for nothing else, I bless the municipality for that splendid library."<sup>50</sup> Burritt shows that "the working men of the town constitute the largest number of callers,"<sup>51</sup> complementing Rose's discovery that unemployed Welsh miners made regular use of their local libraries.<sup>52</sup> Such is also the case in North

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<sup>42</sup> Hopkins, E. (2001) p 112

<sup>43</sup> Young, F.B. (1942) *A Man about the House*, p 39

<sup>44</sup> Hopkins, E. (2001) p 112

<sup>45</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies*, pp 109, 134, 199

<sup>46</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies*, p 141

<sup>47</sup> Gill, C. (1952) p 62

<sup>48</sup> Shaw, A.C. (1911) "The Birmingham Free Libraries" in Muirhead, J.H. (ed.)(1911) pp 413, 423, 430

<sup>49</sup> E.g. Gissing, G. (1895) p 75; Parkes, W. K. (1914) p 8; Allen, W.E. (1939) p 49

<sup>50</sup> Garratt, V.W. (1939) p 93

<sup>51</sup> Burritt, E. (1868) p 82

<sup>52</sup> Rose, J. (2001) p 251

Bromwich where in “the Reading-room of the new Free Library, opposite the Corinthian Town Hall, there was quiet and the boon of gas-light to outweigh the disadvantage of an atmosphere burdened with the smell of not too clean humanity.”<sup>53</sup> Chief Librarian Shaw views the institution through a more utilitarian lens, asserting that although libraries “earn nothing which can be directly applied to the reduction of the rates, by raising the intellectual standard of the people they do indirectly contribute to the same result.”<sup>54</sup>

Education’s financial burdens impinge in North Bromwich where pupils receive little encouragement from home or city, both of which have more pressing priorities. “They couldn’t hope for a shilling’s-worth of support from their own homes, or for anything more than they won from the city treasury by showing how they had been a good investment.”<sup>55</sup> In this city which measures results by dividends paid on investments, for a working-class boy to gain an education proves a struggle “so intense that he hadn’t really time to think about anything but its arduousness.”<sup>56</sup> The North Bromwich experience resonates with Dayus’s Birmingham portrayal of people “who never had chance to learn”<sup>57</sup> and particularly of her mother, whose disparaging view of education results from her own lack of schooling.<sup>58</sup> In North Bromwich finance remains an issue for those fortunate enough to contemplate university. “The cost of education in North Bromwich was a big thing to face.”<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 134

<sup>54</sup> Shaw, A.C. (1911) p 402

<sup>55</sup> Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, p 193

<sup>56</sup> Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, p 193

<sup>57</sup> Dayus, K. (1982) p 1

<sup>58</sup> Dayus, K. (2000) p 25

<sup>59</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 289



## The Evolution of North Bromwich University

The genesis of higher education in North Bromwich recounts edited highlights of the identical process in Birmingham. North Bromwich University evolves from Prince's College and Astill's College: Birmingham University evolves from Queen's College and Mason College.

Queen's College resulted from William Sands Cox founding Birmingham School of Medicine and Surgery in 1828.<sup>60</sup> Royal patronage enhanced the opening of Queen's Hospital (under the presidency of Prince Albert) in 1843 when Sands Cox's school became Queen's College.<sup>61</sup> The parallel institution in North Bromwich, located like its original in Paradise Street,<sup>62</sup> is "Prince's College, called out of compliment to the dead Consort."<sup>63</sup> Queen's College constitution envisaged departments of theology, architecture, civil engineering, law and arts; finance determined otherwise. Architecture, civil engineering and law were dropped in 1867 and arts in 1872. Medicine was augmented in 1868 when Queen's absorbed Sydenham College, established in 1851 as the teaching branch of Birmingham's General Hospital.<sup>64</sup> So marked was the predominance of medicine that *The Birmingham Mercury* commented, "The School of Medicine has so overshadowed all other departments in Queen's that to many it will be news to hear that Queens contains a Theological Department."<sup>65</sup> The same ethos pervades North Bromwich where theology is never mentioned at "the Prince's

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<sup>60</sup> See p 10; Morrison, J.T. (1926) pp 25-31

<sup>61</sup> Ives, E., et al (2000) p 8

<sup>62</sup> See pp 131-132

<sup>63</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 113

<sup>64</sup> Vincent, E. & Hinton, P. (1947) *The University of Birmingham its History and Significance*, Birmingham, Cornish Bros, pp 52, 55-58

<sup>65</sup> *The Birmingham Mercury* (28.03.1891)

College of Medicine.”<sup>66</sup> It is, however, fundamental at North Bromwich Theological College where Wesleyan Methodist James Burwarnton studied immediately before World War I.<sup>67</sup>

In addition to Queen’s College, with its decidedly Anglican ethos in a nonconformist stronghold,<sup>68</sup> late nineteenth century Birmingham was home to three other theological colleges. Just outside the city boundary, Oscott’s St Mary’s College, seminary of Birmingham’s Roman Catholic archdiocese, prepared students (debarred on religious grounds from the older universities) for London University degrees.<sup>69</sup> Spring Hill College opened for training Congregational ministers in 1838, removed to Moseley in 1857 and, renamed Mansfield College, to Oxford in 1889.<sup>70</sup> Handsworth Wesleyan College opened in 1881. Originally training ministers solely for home work, from 1885 Handsworth admitted students for the mission field.<sup>71</sup> In North Bromwich Wesleyan Methodist James Burwarnton<sup>72</sup> prepared for disastrous service in East Africa, where the United Methodist Free Church had been active but generally unsuccessful since 1861.<sup>73</sup> Young portrays North Bromwich Theological College, with its restricted curriculum as a narrow-minded institution. “Theology means Hebrew and New Testament Greek, a timid glance at Higher Criticism, and a working acquaintance with the modern pillars of Nonconformity.”<sup>74</sup> At Handsworth, a broader curriculum included Old and New Testament language and literature, pastoral and systematic theology, church history and organisation, classics, philosophy and physiology.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 138

<sup>67</sup> Young, F.B. (1918) *The Crescent Moon*, p 21; (1921) *The Black Diamond*, p 171

<sup>68</sup> Ives, E., et al (2000) p 8

<sup>69</sup> Gill, C. (1952), p 398

<sup>70</sup> Gill, C. (1952) pp 398-399; Ives, E., et al (2000) p 8

<sup>71</sup> *Handsworth College Seventy-Five Years 1881-1956* (1956) Birmingham, Handsworth College, pp 9,13,25

<sup>72</sup> Young, F.B. (1921) *The Black Diamond*, p 171

<sup>73</sup> Birtwhistle, N. A. (1983) “Methodist Missions” in Davies, R., George, A.R. & Rupp, G., (eds) (1983) *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain* vol 3, London, Epworth Press, pp 78-79

<sup>74</sup> Young, F.B. (1918) *The Crescent Moon* p 21

<sup>75</sup> *Handsworth College Seventy-Five Years 1881-1956* (1956) pp 10, 25

Though Young's treatment of Methodism is less scathing here than in other novels,<sup>76</sup> the inappropriate North Bromwich curriculum is self-evident. "From the study of Theology James had issued ready to deal with any problem which human passion or savage tradition might put to him."<sup>77</sup> Patently far from true, this deception is maintained when not even in tribal Africa does "the accent which the training college had taught"<sup>78</sup> desert him. Such criticisms might well apply to theological colleges *per se*; North Bromwich's undoubted implication in the ignorance of the training programme has already been identified.<sup>79</sup> The irony is apparent, as is the prejudice of Young who made his personal opinion absolutely clear. "What a ridiculous thing Christianity is in the East with its own great religions... I would not waste a penny on Christian mission work."<sup>80</sup>

Birmingham's Mason College, which admitted its first students in 1880, was founded on the fortune of pen-manufacturer Sir Josiah Mason (1795-1881).<sup>81</sup> North Bromwich's Astill's College located, like its original, in Edmund Street,<sup>82</sup> was founded on the fortune of brewer Sir Joseph Astill. Statues in front of the colleges they endowed commemorated both men.<sup>83</sup> Similarly in Parkes' fiction "the new University College... was being built with money bequeathed by one of Metlingham's best-known manufacturers."<sup>84</sup> Mason is alleged never to have read a novel in his life: Astill is characterised by his ignorance of the arts.<sup>85</sup> Mason's philanthropic aims were clear: "providing enlarged means of scientific instruction on the scale required by the necessities of the town and easily accessible by persons of all

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<sup>76</sup> E.g. Young, F.B. (1914) *Deep Sea*, pp 286-288; (1937) *They Seek a Country*, pp 18,36

<sup>77</sup> Young, F.B. (1918) *The Crescent Moon*, p 21

<sup>78</sup> Young, F.B. (1918) *The Crescent Moon*, p 216

<sup>79</sup> See p 82

<sup>80</sup> FBY 417 (07.12.1908) Letter from Young to Jessie Hankinson

<sup>81</sup> Ives, E., et al (2000) p 7

<sup>82</sup> See p 132

<sup>83</sup> Jones, B. (1995) p 113; Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 470

<sup>84</sup> Parkes, W. K. (1914) p 77

<sup>85</sup> Vincent, E. & Hinton, P. (1947) p 59; Young, F.B. (1914) *The Dark Tower*, p 49

classes.”<sup>86</sup> His college opened with four professorial posts – mathematics, biology, physics and chemistry, to which were added geology, mineralogy, physiology, engineering, botany, mining and colliery management. Lectureships in English, Latin and Greek were upgraded to chairs and there were also lectureships in French and German.<sup>87</sup> Unsurprisingly, the college was known as Sir Josiah Mason’s Science College,<sup>88</sup> an emphasis reflected in North Bromwich where Astill’s College is designated “College of Science”.<sup>89</sup>

In his proposed benefaction to Birmingham higher education Mason originally contemplated enhancing an existing institution rather than creating a new one. Queen’s College was one possibility, Birmingham and Midland Institute another.<sup>90</sup> Conceived in 1853 with the encouragement of Charles Dickens who gave readings in Birmingham Town Hall in support of the venture,<sup>91</sup> BMI’s aims were far-reaching. It would offer lectures in different branches of science, literature and arts; classes in mathematics and natural philosophy. There would be a chemistry laboratory, a museum of geology, mineralogy and manufacturing, a mining archive and a library.<sup>92</sup> Birmingham Borough Council provided a site in Paradise Street, Prince Albert laid the foundation stone and the Institute opened in 1857, sharing premises with Birmingham’s School of Design, the Midlands’ largest art school.<sup>93</sup> With well-supported, financially viable courses and regular contributions by distinguished lecturers BMI was a major success,<sup>94</sup> enthusiastically appraised by Burritt.

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<sup>86</sup> Bunce, J.T. (1882) *Josiah Mason: A Biography*, Birmingham, The Journal Printing Works, p 98

<sup>87</sup> Ives, E., et al (2000) pp 24-28

<sup>88</sup> Ives, E., et al (2000) p 7

<sup>89</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 243

<sup>90</sup> Ives, E., et al (2000) pp 8-9

<sup>91</sup> Dickens read *The Cricket on the Hearth* on December 27<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> 1853 - Waterhouse, R. (1954) pp 18-19

<sup>92</sup> Waterhouse, R. (1954) p 4

<sup>93</sup> Gill, C. (1952) pp 395-396

<sup>94</sup> Ives, E., et al (2000) p 9

Birmingham and Midland Institute is an admirable institution that does credit to the public spirit of the town. Here artisans, miners and men of every mechanical business are taught the science and economy of their occupations, not as a theory merely, but applied practically and technically to their trades and profession.<sup>95</sup>

Fiction follows fact. Mettingham is home to a Midland Institute with a scientific society and art school;<sup>96</sup> North Bromwich houses similar establishments. Its Art School serves the Midlands.<sup>97</sup> “Matthew Arnold, Thomas Huxley and Charles Kingsley came to North Bromwich lecturing at the Institute,”<sup>98</sup> as indeed all three visited BMI,<sup>99</sup> from which Birmingham’s Technical College evolved.

Like Bromford,<sup>100</sup> North Bromwich has its “Technical College which furnished a kind of diploma.”<sup>101</sup> This disparaging reference reveals Young’s classical preference and North Bromwich’s utilitarianism elevating science’s and commerce’s potential profits over art and culture. The reference resonates with Birmingham’s education policy as part of a nation-wide initiative. In 1871 a commission was appointed to survey technical education at home and abroad. Its report four years later stimulated the London Livery Companies to formulate a national technical education scheme. This, in turn, led to the establishment of the City and Guilds of the London Institute which issued syllabuses, conducted examinations and awarded diplomas in technical subjects. A decade later the Technical Instruction Act (1889) empowered local councils to levy a rate to provide technical education applicable to manufactures.<sup>102</sup> The provision and premises of the Birmingham and Midland Institute, the curriculum of which had expanded to include technology and metallurgy, were taken over as

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<sup>95</sup> Burritt, E. (1868) p 77

<sup>96</sup> Parkes, W. K. (1914) pp 52-53, 75, 193

<sup>97</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies*, p 73

<sup>98</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 161

<sup>99</sup> Waterhouse, R. (1954) pp 39; 45, 81; 183

<sup>100</sup> Allen, W.E. (1939) p 32

<sup>101</sup> Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, p 193

<sup>102</sup> Curtis, S.J. & Boulton, M.E.A. (1964) pp 96, 284-285

the city's Municipal Technical School in 1891, transferring to new buildings in Suffolk Street in 1895.<sup>103</sup>

Though Mason turned away from links with BMI, it continued to prosper during the North Bromwich era and its secretary/principal appears in the North Bromwich canon. Alfred Hayes, enthusiastic musician and prolific minor poet,<sup>104</sup> served as secretary of the Birmingham and Midland Institute with responsibility for its educational programme from 1889 to 1912 when he became principal.<sup>105</sup> His North Bromwich counterpart is Arthur Boyce, "by way of being a poet... not appreciated, except by other poets."<sup>106</sup> The canon provides an example of Boyce's work:

Or search the brow of eve, to catch  
In opal depths the first faint beat  
Of Vega's fiery heart...<sup>107</sup>

In fact the lines are the opening of the twelfth stanza of Alfred Hayes' "Parva Domus, Magna Quies" from *The Cup of Quietness*, which was dedicated to Sir Robert Simon, transposed to North Bromwich as Sir Arthur Weldon.<sup>108</sup>

In 1914 Young dedicated his critical study *Robert Bridges*<sup>109</sup> to Alfred Hayes with

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<sup>103</sup> Waterhouse, R. (1954) pp 80-82

<sup>104</sup> Hayes, A. (1887) *The Last Crusade and Other Poems*, Birmingham, Cornish Brothers; (1888) *David Westren*, Birmingham, Cornish Brothers; (1891) *The March of Man and Other Poems*, London, Macmillan; (1895) *The Vale of Arden and Other Poems*, London, Bodley Head; (1911) *The Cup of Quietness*, London, Methuen; Hayes was involved in the evolution of the City of Birmingham Orchestra – see Young, J. B. (December 1992) "LCH" in *The Francis Brett Young Society Journal*, No 28, pp 27

<sup>105</sup> Young, J. B. (1992) p 27

<sup>106</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 316

<sup>107</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 318

<sup>108</sup> See pp 362-363

<sup>109</sup> Young, F. B. & E.B. (1914) *Robert Bridges*, London, Martin Secker – this was written in collaboration with Francis's brother, Eric

whom he was personally acquainted through Alfred's son Leo, to whom *The Iron Age* was dedicated in 1916. Leo Hayes, Young's contemporary at Birmingham Medical School and fellow-member of the Octette, was founding secretary of Birmingham University's Medical Literary Society.<sup>110</sup> At the second meeting of this group in February 1902 Young contributed his paper on Kingsley.<sup>111</sup> The factual friendship is replicated in fiction when Edwin Ingleby and Matthew Boyce share a Cotswold holiday<sup>112</sup> and lodge together in Easy Row during their midwifery training. There "Boyce's father, the poet often came to have tea with them and to share their music."<sup>113</sup> A conversation between Edwin Ingleby and his father has all the hallmarks of a conversation between Francis and Thomas Brett Young.

"I read a paper at the Literary Society and then went back to Alvaston with a man named Boyce. He's a son of Arthur Boyce."  
 "The auctioneer?" asked My Ingleby.  
 "No... the poet."<sup>114</sup>

Though contemporary Birmingham housed Alfred Hayes, poet, of 20 Carpenter Road, Edgbaston, and Alfred Hayes, auctioneer of Grosvenor Chambers, Corporation Street,<sup>115</sup> the North Bromwich canon contains no other reference to Boyce the auctioneer. Ingleby's question only makes sense if it refers to Young's recollection of a conversation with his father, who was less than sympathetic to his son's poetical inclinations.<sup>116</sup> Such personal insights are reminders of Young's intimate acquaintance with the Birmingham which he replicates as North Bromwich and underline the authenticity of his account, suggesting Cunningham's assertion of the difficulty of separating in literature what is invented from what is recalled.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Bridgewater, D. (1998) p 36

<sup>111</sup> See p 10

<sup>112</sup> Young, F.B. (1917) "Testament" in *Five Degrees South*, p 24; (1919) *The Young Physician*, pp 393-400

<sup>113</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 452

<sup>114</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 324

<sup>115</sup> *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham* (1901)

<sup>116</sup> See pp 10, 21

<sup>117</sup> Cunningham, V. (1988) p 2

Birmingham's higher education expansion reflected the pattern of other places. Merchant John Owens bequeathed to Manchester the college named after him; London druggist Thomas Holloway endowed Royal Holloway College.<sup>118</sup> The background against which philanthropy enabled higher education's development in the later nineteenth century was the peace, industrialization and economic growth of Victorian England.<sup>119</sup> What was true in Birmingham, Manchester and London was also true in North Bromwich where educational developments were "only made possible by the enormous outpouring of wealth and spiritual energy that flowed from the Industrial Revolution and the mid-Victorian peace."<sup>120</sup> Such opportunities generated polarizing debate. Birmingham's Cardinal Newman believed that higher education's aim was "raising the intellectual tone, cultivating the public mind, purifying the national taste, refining private life,"<sup>121</sup> views shared by Holloway in London and Owens in Manchester.<sup>122</sup> Conversely Joseph Chamberlain saw the purpose of higher education in Birmingham as "specifically concerned in science teaching and its practical application to local industry,"<sup>123</sup> a view shared by Mason, whose ambition was that his college should offer "the acquisition of sound, extensive and practical scientific knowledge."<sup>124</sup> Ives establishes that the disparity between arts and sciences at Mason College was significantly greater than at contemporary institutions.<sup>125</sup> In the opinion of his biographer

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<sup>118</sup> Owens College was founded in 1851 by the will of John Owens (1790-1846); Royal Holloway College, which became part of the University of London, was founded by the will of Thomas Holloway (1800-1883) in 1887 – Ives, E., et al (2000) pp 7,10

<sup>119</sup> Conditions described in Thomson, D. (1950) *England in the Nineteenth Century (1815-1914)*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, pp 221-222

<sup>120</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 160-161

<sup>121</sup> Newman, J.H. (1931) *The Idea of a University*, Cambridge, University Press, pp 100-101

<sup>122</sup> Ives, E., et al (2000) p 11

<sup>123</sup> Ives, E., et al (2000) p 92

<sup>124</sup> Ives, E., et al (2000) p 12

<sup>125</sup> Ives, E., et al (2000) p 92



Mason displayed singular contempt for attainments that were not strictly utilitarian.<sup>126</sup> E.J. Somerset, considering Mason College's 1898 budget, which indicated five times more allocated to science than arts, concluded, "The main attention had always been focused on the scientific and medical, the humanities being admitted if not on sufferance, at any rate without anything like equal encouragement."<sup>127</sup> In North Bromwich Young presents the same disparity. "It was clear that in North Bromwich the classics were regarded really as a polite accomplishment rather than as an integral part of a gentleman's equipment in life."<sup>128</sup>

The quest for a university in Birmingham was vigorously pursued by Mason and Queen's Colleges' professors, three of whom (Sonnenschein, Windle and Poynting) appear anonymously, but indisputably, in North Bromwich. Edward Sonnenschein (1851-1929) became Mason College's Professor of Latin and Greek in 1883, and was appointed Dean of the Arts Faculty at the creation of the University of Birmingham.<sup>129</sup> Soon after his arrival Sonnenschein, a key figure in the University's evolution, encouraged links between Mason and Queen's Colleges.<sup>130</sup> When an association to promote a Midlands University was formed in 1894, Sonnenschein was omitted from the committee which was dominated by medics and scientists.<sup>131</sup> Parallel marginalizing is evident in North Bromwich where "Arts was a sideshow that counted for nothing, and the professor's dignity, as Dean of a learned Faculty, was a precarious and unsubstantial thing."<sup>132</sup> In an address to Birmingham University Graduates' Club in 1898, Sonnenschein lamented this precarious and unsubstantial state.

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<sup>126</sup> Jones, B. (1995) p 88

<sup>127</sup> Somerset, E.J. (1934) *The Birth of a University: A Passage in the Life of E.A. Sonnenschein*, Oxford, Shakespeare Head Press, p 9

<sup>128</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 239

<sup>129</sup> Vincent, E. & Hinton, P. (1947) pp 24, 227

<sup>130</sup> Ives, E., et al (2000) pp 71, 77-78, 91-104

<sup>131</sup> Ives, E., et al (2000) p 73; the committee consisted of W. MacNeile Dixon (English); Hermann Fiedler (German); Robert Heath (Mathematics); William Hillhouse (Botany); J.H. Poynting (Physics) and Gilbert Barling, A.H. Carter; Robert Saundby; Bertram Windle (Medicine).

<sup>132</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 241

“Some persons in our midst treat the Faculty of Arts as a mere handmaid to the Faculty of Science, as though its *raison d’être* was to provide students of science with a little light recreation.”<sup>133</sup> Sonnenschein’s North Bromwich counterpart is aware of the same relegation. “In this university I am known as the Professor of Dead Languages.”<sup>134</sup> Two decades later E.M. Forster identified the same problem: “at Cambridge scarcely anyone takes classics – it’s all science.”<sup>135</sup>

Young engages further with this science versus arts debate via his portrait of North Bromwich Medical School’s Chief Demonstrator in Anatomy, Robert Moon, identified by Jessie Brett Young as Birmingham Medical School’s William Wright (1874-1937).<sup>136</sup> Lecturer in Osteology and Chief Demonstrator in Anatomy, Wright was born in Wigan.<sup>137</sup> Moon speaks in a “slow Lancashire voice.”<sup>138</sup> *The Institute Magazine* reported Wright’s antiquarian and anthropological researches, his excavated prehistoric tombs, his love of literature, art and music, declaring, “The masterpieces of poetry are his household gods.”<sup>21</sup> Fact is recreated in fiction. Moon’s “mind’s crammed with poetry and old music and a lot of ethnological lumber... He’s about the biggest authority in England on prehistoric man.”<sup>139</sup> In 1904 Wright became Chairman of the Literary Section of Birmingham University’s Union of Teachers and Students, to which he was a frequent lecturer.<sup>140</sup> A similar society exists in Mettingham,<sup>141</sup> whilst in North Bromwich “a small literary society held its meetings in the

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<sup>133</sup> Joseph Chamberlain Papers 35/2/4 p 9 cited by Ives, E., et al (2000) p 93

<sup>134</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 242

<sup>135</sup> Letter from E.M. Forster to G.H. Ludolf (16.10.1919) quoted by Rose, J. (2001) p 402

<sup>136</sup> FBY 115 ms notes for Young, J. B. (1962)

<sup>137</sup> *The Institute Magazine* Part CLXXXVII (November 1905) Union of Teachers & Students under sanction of the Council of the Midlands Institute [in Birmingham Biography Vol 6]

<sup>138</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 312

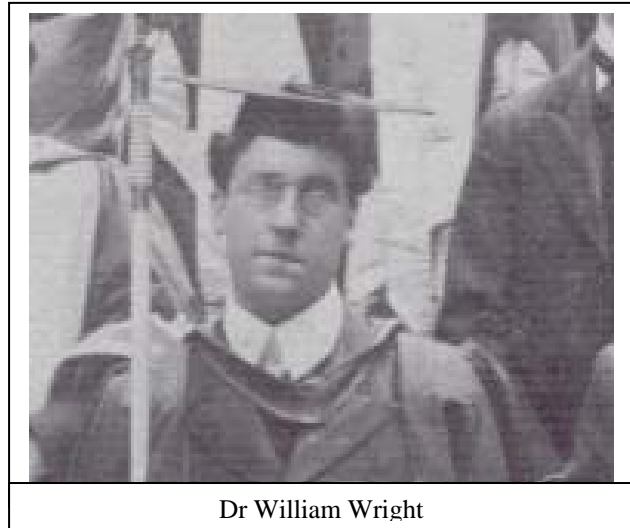
<sup>139</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 315

<sup>140</sup> *The Institute Magazine* Part CLXXXVII (November 1905)

<sup>141</sup> Parkes, W. K. (1914) p 78

room that adjoined Dr Moon's chamber of horrors."<sup>142</sup> Wearing a "moonlike pince-nez... Moon was tall and inclined to be fat... his serious face was of a size and pallor that his surname suggested."<sup>143</sup> Young's careful choice of the fictional name to reflect the factual appearance is confirmed by Wright's photograph.

So accurate is Young's description of Wright as Moon, that it is not unreasonable to assume that Moon's other characteristics are also drawn from Wright.



Dr William Wright

Bobby Moon was a creature of the most human tenderness, so sensitive to the appeals of beauty and humanity that he had been forced to adopt the impassive mask that was all his pupils knew of him from an instinct of self protection.<sup>144</sup>

Moon may be a scientist by training and profession, but the arts offer him solace and resource. In this he represents not only the transcendence of culture over utilitarianism, but evokes Young himself who rapidly exchanged his scientific training for an artistic career. As Moon reflects upon the anatomical specimens of his demonstrations – "the heart arras'd in purple like a house of kings"<sup>145</sup> – fact invades fiction as he cites a favourite poet. "Francis Thompson was a medical student at Manchester, several years senior to me."<sup>146</sup> Francis Thompson (1859-1907) spent six years at Owen's College, Manchester, where Wright was also

<sup>142</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 317

<sup>143</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, pp 310, 314

<sup>144</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 313

<sup>145</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 314; the quotation is paraphrased from *An Anthem of Earth* by Francis Thompson – Meynell, W.M. (ed.) (1937) *The Poems of Francis Thompson*, Oxford, University Press, p 264

<sup>146</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 314

educated.<sup>147</sup> As Young began writing *The Young Physician* just five years after leaving Birmingham University, it seems likely that this particular fact was imparted directly by Wright. In the North Bromwich canon Moon is presented as a fuller and more interesting portrait than Wright's terse biographical details in contemporary press reports allow.

Recognising Sonnenschein's proposed college links as an opportunity for enhanced facilities, Queen's medical faculty, led by Professor Windle, responded encouragingly.<sup>148</sup> Bertram Windle (1858-1929) spent his formative years in Ireland graduating from Dublin.<sup>149</sup>



Sir Bertram Windle

Appointed Professor of Anatomy at Birmingham's Queen's College in 1884, Windle became Medical Faculty Dean in the university in 1900,<sup>150</sup> with a widely recognised reputation as an anatomist.<sup>151</sup> In an accurate word-picture of Windle, North Bromwich Medical School's Irish Dean is "suave, clean-shaven with thin sandy hair and gold-rimmed spectacles,"<sup>152</sup> His reputation is recognised in "the polished course of lectures on anatomy

that the Dean delivered."<sup>153</sup> Monica Taylor, Windle's biographer, describes a remote and unapproachable figure. "When he sat in the office to see students the searching eyes of the Dean and the extreme brevity of his remarks made the dull comfort of the armchair by his

<sup>147</sup> Ousby, I. (1988) p 986; *The Institute Magazine* Part CLXXXVII (November 1905)

<sup>148</sup> Ives, E., et al (2000) pp 42-43

<sup>149</sup> *The Times* (15.02.1929) Obit of Sir Bertram Windle

<sup>150</sup> Vincent, E. & Hinton, P. (1947) p 8

<sup>151</sup> *Birmingham Post* (15.02.1929)

<sup>152</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, pp 246, 248

<sup>153</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 310

desk peculiarly unattractive.”<sup>154</sup> Likewise North Bromwich’s Dean confines himself to the briefest of student interviews.

The Dean sent a message to Edwin and Maskew, asking them to call at his office. They were received with his usual urbane politeness.  
‘Good morning, Mr Maskew ... Mr Ingleby ... You had better sit down.’<sup>155</sup>

In less than seventy words the Dean then informs his students of their examination successes, offers them prosector appointments, advises them of the wisdom of accepting and dismisses them. In both fact and fiction the Dean’s remoteness is noteworthy. Writing in the *British Medical Journal*, one of Windle’s students commented of him: “He rarely spoke to us and hardly ever had a word of encouragement or praise.”<sup>156</sup> Similar reserve is obvious in North Bromwich where “the Dean’s personality was too aristocratically remote ever to seem real.”<sup>157</sup> Aristocratic aptly describes Bertram Coghill Windle, knighted by both King George V and Pope Pius X,<sup>158</sup> and numbering amongst his forbears Elizabeth I’s chief minister William Cecil, poet Sir Philip Sidney, Ireland’s Lord Chief Justice Bushe and Admiral Sir Josiah Coghill.<sup>159</sup>

Resulting from Sonnenschein’s overtures and Windle’s response, in 1892 Queen’s medical faculty became part of Mason College, leaving Queen’s as a theological institution. This merger enabled Windle’s anticipated enhanced facilities. Though Queen’s College dissecting room had been enlarged to accommodate Sydenham medics,<sup>160</sup> it remained

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<sup>154</sup> “On The Resignation of Dr Windle” in *Queen’s Medical Magazine* (December 1904)

<sup>155</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 349

<sup>156</sup> Dr Allan Bennett quoted in Taylor, M. (1932) *Sir Bertram Windle: A Memoir*, London, Longmans, Green & Co, p 38

<sup>157</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 310

<sup>158</sup> Windle was knighted by King George V in 1912 and was created a Knight of St Gregory by Pope Pius X in 1928 – *The Times* (15.02.1929)

<sup>159</sup> Taylor, M. (1932) pp 2, 143; *Birmingham Evening Mail* (16.02.1929) Obit of Sir Bertram Windle

<sup>160</sup> Morrison, J.T.J (1926) p 155

accessible only via dark stone stairs and was, in a student's view, "prehistoric".<sup>161</sup> Windle expressed his opinion that increased accommodation for dissectors was a pressing issue.<sup>162</sup> The extension of Mason College's premises following the merger provided a 2,500 square-foot dissecting room on the top floor of a new L-shaped wing.<sup>163</sup> Similar advantages accrued in North Bromwich.

The dissecting-room... was placed at the top of new building at Astill's College (to which, since the recent fusion of this foundation with 'Prince's' the School of Anatomy had transferred), a low-ceilinged chamber, shaped like an elongated 'L'.<sup>164</sup>

It was the merger with Queen's Medical Faculty, in Ives' view, that sealed Mason College's claim to be a university in waiting.<sup>165</sup> The inevitable costs incurred, added to Mason College's existing deficit, provoked the decision to introduce entrance fees for all students in 1893.<sup>166</sup> This followed the medical faculty's established practice. At the opening of Queen's College in 1828 fees for a single course of lectures varied between £1.11.6d and three guineas, with three courses operating in each half year. In 1864 in Birmingham the composition fee for MRCS and LRCP inclusive was £60, usually paid in two instalments.<sup>167</sup> Twenty years later the rate in North Bromwich is unchanged. "Composition Fee... pay half of it now and half in two years' time. Thirty pounds to begin with."<sup>168</sup> Morrison records that Bennett May, student at Birmingham's Sydenham College in 1864 and later Professor of Surgery, earned money towards his fees "by attending half guinea midwifery cases, the odd sixpence going to the nurse."<sup>169</sup> Charles Borden, student at North Bromwich's Prince's

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<sup>161</sup> Taylor, M. (1932) p 37

<sup>162</sup> Windle, B.C. & Hillhouse, W. (1890)*The Birmingham School of Medicine*, Birmingham, Hall & English, p 9

<sup>163</sup> Ives, E., et al (2000) p 43

<sup>164</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 145

<sup>165</sup> Ives, E., et al (2000) p 43

<sup>166</sup> Ives, E., et al (2000) p 44

<sup>167</sup> Morrison, J.T.J (1926) pp 30-31, 145

<sup>168</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 143

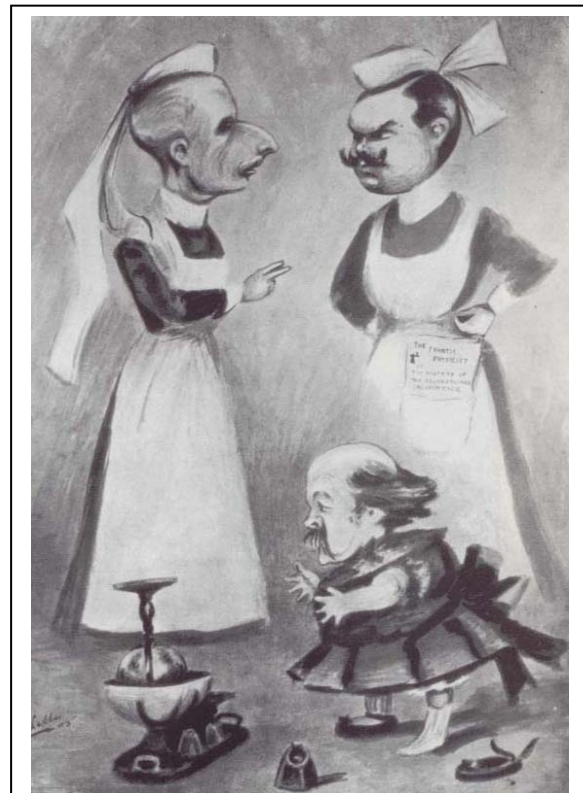
<sup>169</sup> Morrison, J.T.J (1926) p 145

College in 1852 and later Professor of Anatomy, earned money towards his fees “by attending midwifery cases at half a guinea a time - out of which the odd sixpence went to the nurse.”<sup>170</sup>

Surely Young had consulted Morrison’s book when he wrote *Dr Bradley Remembers*.

Despite its deficit the enlarged Mason College flourished.<sup>171</sup> In 1897 Royal Assent was given to the Mason University College Act, which incorporated the college, replaced its trustees with a Court of Governors and confirmed local hopes that university status would soon come to Birmingham, perhaps with Mason College leading a Midlands University in federation with Nottingham and Bristol.<sup>172</sup>

This policy was advocated by Professor Poynting, who identified three functions of a university: imparting learning, pursuing research and awarding degrees. Though the third of these could only be granted by the state, Poynting stressed that Mason College already fulfilled the first two.<sup>173</sup> His own contribution to research was significant, as was that of his North Bromwich counterpart. “The little fat professor of Physics was actually employing his leisure in the



Professor Poynting weighing the Earth

<sup>170</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 144

<sup>171</sup> Ives, E., et al (2000) p 45

<sup>172</sup> Burstall, F.W. & Burton, C.G. (1930) *Souvenir History of the Foundation and Development of the Mason Science College and of the University of Birmingham*, Birmingham, James Cond, p 21; Ives, E., et al (2000) pp 74-76

<sup>173</sup> Ives, E., et al (2000) p 76

tremendous adventure of weighing the terrestrial globe.”<sup>174</sup> Appointed to the chair of physics at Mason College in 1880,<sup>175</sup> John Henry Poynting (1852-1914), shown in a contemporary cartoon as matching the physique of his fictional parallel,<sup>176</sup> became Birmingham University’s first Physics Professor and Science Faculty Dean. Poynting’s experiments to determine the earth’s weight were conducted at Mason College where the Council authorised the construction of a balance in the basement beneath his study.<sup>177</sup> A telescope was installed in Poynting’s room and the beam’s tilt observed through a hole in the floor.<sup>178</sup> Poynting’s resulting paper *The Mean Density of the Earth* was awarded the Adams Prize in 1891.<sup>179</sup>

By the end of the nineteenth century Mason College was involved in teacher training. Nationally, in courses established fifty years earlier, at the age of eighteen, after a five-year elementary school apprenticeship, pupil-teachers took the Queen’s Scholarship examination proceeding, if successful, to a two-year college course leading to certification.<sup>180</sup> Young recreates the same route for those who follow North Bromwich’s two year course. “Most entered it by climbing within the frame of the elementary schools to the status of ‘pupil-teacher,’ and then winning a ‘Queen’s Scholarship’ that entitled them to further instruction.”<sup>181</sup> Curtis identifies parochialism as the scheme’s deficiency. Students had been taught in elementary schools where they became pupil-teachers. After Queen’s Scholarships they proceeded to training colleges where they studied with others of the same limited

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<sup>174</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 305

<sup>175</sup> Ives, E., et al (2000) p 24

<sup>176</sup> Cheesewright, M. (1975) *Mirror to a Mermaid*, Birmingham University, pp 30, 40

<sup>177</sup> Ives, E., et al (2000) p 25

<sup>178</sup> Cheesewright, M. (1975) p 20

<sup>179</sup> Cheesewright, M. (1975) p 40; the Adams Prize (commemorating John Couch Adams’ deduction of the existence of the planet Neptune) was awarded biannually for the best essay in pure mathematics, astronomy, or some other branch of natural philosophy – *The Times* (23.01.1892) obit of J.C. Adams, Lowdean Professor of Astronomy, University of Cambridge.

<sup>180</sup> Curtis, S.J. & Boulwood, M.E.A. (1964) pp 62, 372

<sup>181</sup> Young, F.B. (1936) *Far Forest*, pp 241, 346



experience.<sup>182</sup> Identical insularity marks North Bromwich Day Training College students. “Their existences had been confined and sheltered within the boundaries of a little, centripetal, scholastic world that smelt of ink and exercise-books and pencil-shavings.”<sup>183</sup>

In 1884 Sonnenschein proposed a Birmingham scheme encouraging certificated teachers to follow a two year course at Mason College leading to London University matriculation.<sup>184</sup> In North Bromwich “the most gifted or industrious actually succeeded in obtaining a B.A. degree.”<sup>185</sup> Six years after Sonnenschein’s initiative, following the Cross Commission’s recommendation, the Education Department established Day Training Colleges in association with universities and university colleges.<sup>186</sup> Responsibility for professional training rested with Day Training Colleges; academic studies would be pursued in university departments. Thus in 1890 Birmingham Day Training College opened with forty female students based at Birmingham and Midland Institute, fed at Queen’s College, studying at Mason College.<sup>187</sup> In 1896 Mason College education department opened its doors to men when its female students moved to Great Charles Street premises adjacent to Mason College. Similarly “the North Bromwich Normal School, at which the ‘day-trainers’ qualified as teachers was in the centre of the city under the shadow of the new University College.”<sup>188</sup>

The establishment of Day Training Colleges aimed at redressing poor academic standards often noted in trainee teachers. This, however, was not immediately achieved as

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<sup>182</sup> Curtis, S.J. (1968) *History of Education in Great Britain*, London, University Tutorial Press, pp 287-288

<sup>183</sup> Young, F.B. (1936) *Far Forest*, 242

<sup>184</sup> Ives, E., et al (2000) p 38

<sup>185</sup> Young, F.B. (1936) *Far Forest*, p 242

<sup>186</sup> Curtis, S.J. & Boultonwood, M.E.A. (1964) pp 78-79; in 1888 the Cross Commission reported on elementary education.

<sup>187</sup> Ives, E., et al (2000) p 38

<sup>188</sup> Young, F.B. (1936) *Far Forest*, p 241

many entrants were unsuited to academic study and there was a high examination failure rate.<sup>189</sup> In Birmingham, Mason College principal R.S. Heath complained that early recruits into the Day Training College were not up to Mason College standards.<sup>190</sup> In North Bromwich, where the University College regarded the Normal School “as a poor and not very creditable relation,”<sup>191</sup> the importance of examinations is stressed. Less able students are recommended for intensive coaching; the majority are preoccupied with “a single material aim - the passing of examinations - in which teachers, who should have known better, acquiesced and encouraged them.”<sup>192</sup> In Young’s emphasis of “the meanness, the littleness, the narrowness”<sup>193</sup> of such ideals, “things that are unimportant to anyone except the examiners of the Board of Education,”<sup>194</sup> and the view that Normal School students are “teaching machines in the making,”<sup>195</sup> is cast the shadow of Dickens’ M’Choakumchild who, if only he had learned a little less might infinitely better have taught much more.<sup>196</sup>

The Normal School is not North Bromwich’s only teacher-training establishment. “Marbourne on the city’s outskirts” provided “gymnastic training at some college for ladies.”<sup>197</sup> Though Swedish Drill had been introduced by the London School Board in 1879,<sup>198</sup> organised physical training remained uncommon in late nineteenth century English curricula, with Swedish gymnastics occasionally taught in private gymnasias and health

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<sup>189</sup> Curtis, S.J. & Boulton, M.E.A. (1964) pp 369,371

<sup>190</sup> Ives, E., et al (2000) p 39

<sup>191</sup> Young, F.B. (1936) *Far Forest*, p 241

<sup>192</sup> Young, F.B. (1936) *Far Forest*, pp 244, 257

<sup>193</sup> Young, F.B. (1936) *Far Forest*, p 257

<sup>194</sup> Young, F.B. (1936) *Far Forest*, p 244

<sup>195</sup> Young, F.B. (1936) *Far Forest*, p 257

<sup>196</sup> Dickens, C. (1854); edition cited (1970) Geneva, Heron Books, p 9

<sup>197</sup> Young, F.B. (1924) *Cold Harbour*, p 145; (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 125

<sup>198</sup> Curtis, S.J. (1968) p 298

clinics.<sup>199</sup> Remedies for this situation were pioneered by Madame Österberg, whose Swedish Physical Training College opened at Hampstead in 1885, and Rhoda Anstey, whose College for Physical Training and Hygiene for Women Teachers (Ling Swedish System) was launched at The Leasowes, Hales Owen in 1897, where it remained until its removal to Erdington in 1907.<sup>200</sup> In North Bromwich is “Marbourne Physical Training College: Ling System, Swedish Gymnastics: massage, remedial movements, games.”<sup>201</sup> Anstey College taught educational and medical gymnastics, anatomy, physiology, hygiene, dancing, swimming and games.<sup>202</sup> Such fee-paying colleges were beyond working-class means and consequently attracted middle-class girls.<sup>203</sup> One early Anstey student recalled that most girls of her class were happy to stay at home, living a social life, waiting for marriage.<sup>204</sup> Jessie Hankinson, through whom Young gained his insight into Anstey College, welcomed her admission there as escape from doing nothing in particular in her parents’ home.<sup>205</sup> Similar trail-blazing occurs in North Bromwich where seventeen year-old Edie Martyn enters Marbourne Physical Training College declaring, “I wanted to earn my living... a ghastly discredit in an unmarried Martyn... I only want enough to pay my college fees for three years.”<sup>206</sup> Though the normal entry-age to Anstey College’s two-year course was eighteen, seventeen year-olds were admitted to an additional year’s preparation course.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> Crunden, C. (1974) *A History of Anstey College of Physical Education 1897-1972*, Sutton Coldfield, Anstey College, p 2

<sup>200</sup> Crunden, C. (1974) pp 2, 4

<sup>201</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, pp 120-121

<sup>202</sup> Crunden, C. (1974) p 14

<sup>203</sup> Crunden, C. (1974) p 4

<sup>204</sup> Crunden, C. (1974) p 4

<sup>205</sup> Young, J.B. (1962) p 24

<sup>206</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 120

<sup>207</sup> Crunden, C. (1974) p 4

In North Bromwich “the Spartan discipline of Marbourne”<sup>208</sup> is noted. At Anstey College student behaviour was closely supervised, as Young discovered when Miss Anstey called at his home to complain about his friendship with Jessie Hankinson.<sup>209</sup> Anstey students wore a uniform of navy costume, white blouse and straw boater.<sup>210</sup> At Marbourne, with sartorial details no doubt expanded by Jessie Hankinson, the college uniform was “navy-blue serge, a blouse of ivory Jap silk and a broad-brimmed straw hat.”<sup>211</sup> Both colleges were strictly vegetarian.<sup>212</sup> Miss Anstey’s students were encouraged in her interests: physical culture, theosophy, food and dress reform, female emancipation, women’s suffrage.<sup>213</sup> At Marbourne, Young, not noted for his liberal views,<sup>214</sup> makes the students “anti-everything”.<sup>215</sup> Marbourne students “come into the University for a course in anatomy;”<sup>216</sup> early Anstey students recall travelling to Birmingham University for Tuesday afternoons’ anatomy lectures.<sup>217</sup> Though Young locates this North Bromwich college in Marbourne rather than Hales Owen/Erdington, the description of its curriculum, uniform and general ethos leaves no doubt that Marbourne Physical Training College replicates Anstey Physical Training College.

On May 25<sup>th</sup> 1900 the University of Birmingham Act received royal assent giving Mason College the sought-for status.<sup>218</sup> At a similar date “they turned the old College in

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<sup>208</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 129

<sup>209</sup> FBY 174 (31.10.1905) Letter from Young to Jessie Hankinson

<sup>210</sup> Crunden, C. (1974) p 6

<sup>211</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 134

<sup>212</sup> Crunden, C. (1974) p 6; Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 121

<sup>213</sup> Crunden, C. (1974) pp 8-9

<sup>214</sup> E.g. FBY 1521 (23.07.1934) Letter from Young to C.S. Evans; FBY 3478 (17.02.1950) Letter from Young to his step-brother Noel Brett Young

<sup>215</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 121

<sup>216</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 121

<sup>217</sup> Crunden, C.(1974) p 23

<sup>218</sup> Ives, E., et al (2000) p 103

North Bromwich into a University.”<sup>219</sup> The old mottoes of Mason College *Dum Spiro Spero* and *Progress through Knowledge* were considered inappropriate for Birmingham’s new educational age and the College of Arms consulted.<sup>220</sup> North Bromwich also adopts the resulting new motto: “*Per Ardua ad Alta* or per hardware ad alta as the less reverent had paraphrased it.”<sup>221</sup> Young’s jibe at North Bromwich’s dependence on iron as the foundation of educational provision is unoriginal having been earlier identified by *Punch* as a milestone along the road of Birmingham’s educational progress.

Of all the hardwares that e’er came  
From brain-pan ’neath a Brummagem brow,  
The greatest for profit and fame,  
If the hardest, is this they’re at now.  
To new mould the England to come!  
Heaven’s mint mark to bring out anew!  
The brain-blind, brain-deaf, and brain-dumb  
With new eyes, ears and tongues to endue!<sup>222</sup>

Chamberlain, whose influence had been vital in the charter process (as was that of his Mettingham counterpart<sup>223</sup>), was convinced that Birmingham’s new university needed to be led by an academic of great distinction, and persuaded Oliver Lodge (1851-1940), professor of physics at Liverpool to accept the appointment. Lodge had an established reputation for research into wireless telegraphy, for which he had received the Royal Society’s Rumford Medal.<sup>224</sup> In North Bromwich Joseph Astill attracts to the university “a principal whose name was a household word in the homes of the great middle classes.”<sup>225</sup> Unwilling at first to respond to Chamberlain’s invitation, Lodge eventually agreed on condition that his Liverpool

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<sup>219</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 228

<sup>220</sup> Ives, E., et al (2000) p 103 [*Dum Spiro Spero* = While I Breathe I Hope]

<sup>221</sup> Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, p 193 [*Per Ardua ad Alta* = Through Effort to The Heights]

<sup>222</sup> Quoted by Jones, J.E. (1911) *A Short History of Birmingham*, Birmingham, Cornish Bros, p 158

<sup>223</sup> Parkes, W. K. (1914) *Hardware*, London, T. Fisher Unwin, p 367

<sup>224</sup> Ives, E., et al (2000) p 102

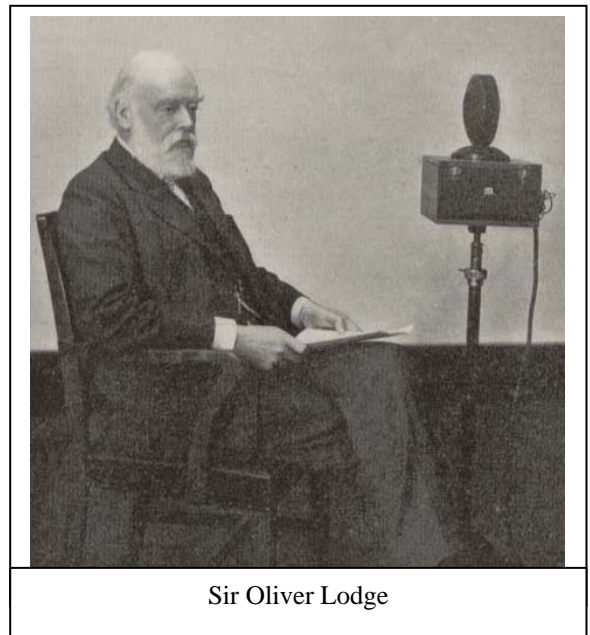
<sup>225</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 238

laboratory, its equipment and assistants were transferred to Birmingham with him.<sup>226</sup> In North Bromwich

slender aerials stretched from a mast at the top of the university buildings were actually receiving the first lisplings of wireless telegraphy, an achievement to which that bearded dreamer, the Principal, had devoted twenty years of his life.<sup>227</sup>

In addition to his work on telegraphy Lodge was famed for his psychical research, an interest which he shared with his friend and fellow-member of the Society for Psychical Research, William Crookes.<sup>228</sup> *The Birmingham Gazette* accepted this less orthodox interest, recognizing a dimension to Lodge's character which Young surely approved.

It is quite natural that a man who had much to do with the miracle of telegraphy should seek to probe deeper into mysteries beyond the material universe. If we cannot all follow Sir Oliver in his psychic conclusions we can at least discern the poet behind the scientist.<sup>229</sup>



Sir Oliver Lodge

In North Bromwich the Society for Psychological Research is endorsed by “such modern scientists as Lodge and Crookes.”<sup>230</sup> Amongst North Bromwich academics Lodge enjoys further distinction. As I have already shown, Robert Moon is indisputably William Wright and North Bromwich's three unnamed professors are undoubtedly Sonnenschein,

<sup>226</sup> Jolly, W.P. (1974) *Sir Oliver Lodge: Psychical Researcher and Scientist*, London, Constable & Co, p 132

<sup>227</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 305

<sup>228</sup> Jolly, W.P. (1974) p 102. William Crookes (1832-1919) FRS (1863); knighted (1897), OM (1910) separated uranium X from uranium and led the way for research into x-rays, radioactivity and the electron. *The Concise Dictionary of National Biography* (1994) vol 1, p 696

<sup>229</sup> *Birmingham Gazette* (02.02.1920); Lodge was knighted at the coronation of King Edward VII – *Birmingham Mail* (08.03.1913)

<sup>230</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 440

Windle and Poynting. Two other Birmingham academics are fleetingly transposed to North Bromwich. Birmingham geologist Professor Lapworth, renowned authority on Britain's natural water supply, is suggested by North Bromwich geologist Professor Kneeworth, whose opinion concerning Sedgebury's natural water supply is disastrously flawed.<sup>231</sup> Birmingham's Professor Hillhouse, whose chronic pulmonary illness necessitated his retirement to the Malvern Hills, is clearly replicated in North Bromwich's Professor Moorhouse, "forced to retire by the smoke, which didn't agree with his lungs, to a cottage between Pen Beacon and Uffdown."<sup>232</sup> Lodge, however, is the only Birmingham academic to retain his own name in the North Bromwich canon, endorsing Chamberlain's assessment of this national reputation and recognizable name.

Chamberlain's educational aspirations<sup>233</sup> were also adopted by the new university. "The result of this was an emphasis on applied science courses, which, along with its faculty of commerce, made Birmingham famous elevating subjects to degree status often for the first time."<sup>234</sup> Eighty years before Ives made this assessment, Young similarly described North Bromwich where that university's founder, Joseph Astill,

set the seal of modernity on his creation, by providing a degree in brewing. The faculty of Science was important, if only as an appendage to the brewing school; those of Engineering and Mining flattered the industries of the district; that of Commerce taught its graduates to write business letters; and that of Medicine supplied a necessary antidote to the activities of most of the others.<sup>235</sup>

Birmingham University was similarly stigmatised by *Pall Mall Gazette*, as "a bread and butter university, which would follow its founder's political example and produce graduates in the

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<sup>231</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, pp 241, 388-389

<sup>232</sup> Young, F.B. (1924) *Cold Harbour*, p 55

<sup>233</sup> See p 300

<sup>234</sup> Ives, E., et al (2000) p 142

<sup>235</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, pp 238-239

School of Tariff and Values.”<sup>236</sup>

The canon’s overall opinion of the new university, a clear replica of Young’s own “sooty Alma Mater,”<sup>237</sup> is expressed in the reaction of a potential student. “North Bromwich sounds horribly second-rate.”<sup>238</sup> Exceptions, however, are made for the medical school, “one of the best and most ancient in England,”<sup>239</sup> suggestive of the reputation of Collins’ Birchampton where young American surgeons enhance their skills.<sup>240</sup> A conversation between John and Matthew Bradley, in which the former persuades his son of North Bromwich’s possibilities, surely originated in a conversation between Young and his father. “It’s a first-rate Medical School. I was there myself, and so was your mother’s uncle.”<sup>241</sup> Thomas Brett Young, as has been shown, attended Queen’s College and Francis’s great uncle was at Sydenham College.<sup>242</sup> North Bromwich’s medical faculty may be first-rate, but through its graduates Young once again castigates Birmingham’s early promotion of science over arts. Dr Hemming is “neither cultured nor erudite; he does not pretend to understand or appreciate any beauty but that of Nature.”<sup>243</sup> Dr Bradley “realized his limitations... In the work of the great English poets, novelists and essayists - the whole province of imaginative literature - were tracts of territory of which he had not even heard.”<sup>244</sup>

Mason College’s mining department had failed through lack of student interest and industrial support. The new university, however, attracted mine-owners and the Practical

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<sup>236</sup> *Pall Mall Gazette* (19.11.1898)

<sup>237</sup> FBY 2597 (02.01.1948) Letter from Young to Walter Carey, Bishop of Bloemfontein

<sup>238</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 507

<sup>239</sup> Young, F.B. (1937) *Portrait of a Village*, pp 73-74

<sup>240</sup> Collins, M. (1896) p 132

<sup>241</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 507

<sup>242</sup> See p 9

<sup>243</sup> Young, F.B. (1937) *Portrait of a Village*, p 74

<sup>244</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 449



Mining School was set up in 1902-1903.<sup>245</sup> Brewing, one of the region's major industries, was introduced for the first time in an English university curriculum to Mason College in 1899 with a £28,000 grant from the Midland Association of Brewers.<sup>246</sup> Young sees such upstart faculties endorsing the city's parvenu values. Brewing is introduced in North Bromwich "less than twenty years before the total prohibition of alcohol became law in retrograde America."<sup>247</sup> The implication is obvious. City authorities fail to read the signs of the times. As representatives of North Bromwich's new disciplines, brewing students are work-shy. "Brewers who've never known the meaning of healthy sweat in their lives."<sup>248</sup> In satirizing the philistinism of North Bromwich in the goals of its new university Young was not alone. An Oxford broadsheet took a similar line.

He gets a degree in making jam  
At Liverpool and Birmingham.<sup>249</sup>

Prior to its elevation to university status, North Bromwich's Astill's College awarded its own diplomas just as Birmingham's Mason College awarded associateships.<sup>250</sup> In fact and fiction other qualifications were necessarily external. Most North Bromwich medics became Licentiates of the Society of Apothecaries, one of the standard awards for medical students at pre-university Birmingham.<sup>251</sup> Like their Birmingham counterparts more able North Bromwich students sat the examinations of the Royal College of Surgeons<sup>252</sup> or prepared for London University degrees.<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> Ives, E., et al (2000) p 143

<sup>246</sup> Vincent, E. & Hinton, P. (1947) pp 66-67

<sup>247</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 238

<sup>248</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 277

<sup>249</sup> "Why I Vote Non Placet" Oxford Broadsheet c 1914 – quoted in Ives, E., et al (2000) p 143

<sup>250</sup> Young, F.B. (1932) *The House under the Water*, p 86; Ives, E., et al (2000) p 41

<sup>251</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 116; Morrison, J.T. (1926) p 144

<sup>252</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 577; Windle, B.C. & Hillhouse, W. (1890) p 21

<sup>253</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 247; Windle, B.C. & Hillhouse, W. (1890) pp 19-24

Both factual and fictional universities award scholarships. There are “several endowments at the North Bromwich medical school”.<sup>254</sup> Birmingham’s Queen’s Scholarship, awarded to the student gaining the highest marks in chemistry and physics,<sup>255</sup> is replicated in North Bromwich. “Maskew was an easy first and carried off the Queen’s scholarship.”<sup>256</sup> The Astill Exhibition<sup>257</sup> parallels the Sands Cox Scholarship won by Young in 1901.<sup>258</sup> This award was made to the Medical School entrant gaining the highest marks in the matriculation examination (Greek, Latin, English, history, science and mathematics). Set for Birmingham’s 1901 entry were Caesar’s *De Bello Gallico* and Euripides’ *Hecuba*, whilst the prescribed mathematics syllabus included arithmetic, Euclidian geometry and algebra.<sup>259</sup> Mathematically challenged from his preparatory school days,<sup>260</sup> Young transfers his own Birmingham entrance examination to North Bromwich and again engages with the science versus arts conflict. “The first paper had been mathematical, and its intricacies kept his mind so busy that he had little time for reflection... Next day the classical papers were distributed and Edwin found them easy.”<sup>261</sup>

The university buildings, sombre landmarks in Hampson’s and Allen’s Birmingham (“the deep blackness of the University building”... “the great, grey buildings”...<sup>262</sup>) are demeaned in North Bromwich to the status of the city’s menial traders in

James Street, a sordid thoroughfare in which the pretentious buildings of the old College of Science hid its hinder quarters. The door was small and only

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<sup>254</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 229

<sup>255</sup> *University of Birmingham Calendar for Session 1900-1901*

<sup>256</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 306

<sup>257</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 239

<sup>258</sup> See p 10

<sup>259</sup> *University of Birmingham Calendar for Session 1900-1901*

<sup>260</sup> FBY 115 ms notes for Young, J.B. (1962)

<sup>261</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, pp 240-241

<sup>262</sup> Hampson, J. (1936) Allen, W.E. (1938) p 53

distinguished from its neighbours, a steam laundry and brassworker's office, by a plate that bore the inscription 'University of North Bromwich Medical School.'<sup>263</sup>

At its Edmund Street frontage, Mason College was sandwiched between Charles L. Stiff, Drainpipe Merchant and Schäffer, Hahn & Behrens, Merchants, whereas its only neighbour at its Great Charles Street entrance was the Cox Puncture Proof Pneumatic Tyre Company.<sup>264</sup> Though as usual adhering to the facts but also enhancing North Bromwich's insalubrity, Young's choice of neighbours for Astill's College is noteworthy. The nascent university, as yet unaware of its destiny, is the buffer between the world of the brass worker, on whose industry North Bromwich fortunes depend, and the steam laundry where the resultant and inevitable grime is cleansed.

## North Bromwich Students

Substantial numbers of late nineteenth century Mason College students came from inner Birmingham, with recruitment gradually extending into the Black Country and surrounding regions.<sup>265</sup> This pattern is replicated in North Bromwich where in Prince's College 1882 intake "the greater part came from the surrounding industrial region."<sup>266</sup> As the catchment area spread beyond the immediate suburbs convenient rail links with the city proved a significant factor in Birmingham's medical recruitment.<sup>267</sup> Young acknowledged the phenomenon in North Bromwich where two of the canon's three eponymous medics travel into the city each day by train.<sup>268</sup> Rarely Birmingham recruitment reached as far afield as

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<sup>263</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 243

<sup>264</sup> Charles L Stiff (18); Schäffer, Hahn & Behrens (38) Edmund Street - *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham* (1900)

<sup>265</sup> Ives, E., et al (2000) pp 61-62

<sup>266</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 115

<sup>267</sup> Ives, E., et al (2000) p 62

<sup>268</sup> Edwin Ingleby in Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, pp 256ff; Jonathan Dakers in Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 43. John Bradley in Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers* lodges in North Bromwich,

Australia,<sup>269</sup> whilst in North Bromwich one American student appears.<sup>270</sup> However, of Birmingham's 193 medical students at the end of the nineteenth century, 169 came from within twenty miles of the college where they studied, with just one from as far away as Dublin.<sup>271</sup> Similarly in North Bromwich a lone Irish medic is identified. Denis Martin clearly replicates Young's contemporary and fellow member of the Octette, Nevill Coghill Penrose of Waterford.<sup>272</sup> At a dance at Edgbaston Assembly Rooms in 1904 Young was introduced to Jessie Hankinson by Penrose, "a perfect dancer,"<sup>273</sup> whose North Bromwich counterpart shares the same aptitude: "Martin... an expert dancing man."<sup>274</sup> Denis Martin first appears in North Bromwich as he awaits interview by the Medical Faculty's Dean, to whom he is related. "I happen to be a sort of cousin of the old devil's... I'm Irish, and so is he; and in Ireland pretty nearly everybody who is anybody is related to everybody else."<sup>275</sup> Thus in North Bromwich, a thinly disguised Nevill Coghill Penrose explains his connection with a barely camouflaged Bertram Coghill Windle.

One of the aims of Mason College's university status was the recruitment of better qualified students preferably from a higher social class.<sup>276</sup> However, in common with other developing universities, Mason College lacked the support of prestigious public schools which fed Oxbridge and had to rely on grammar schools whose best pupils also had Oxbridge aspirations.<sup>277</sup> Young captures the situation in *My Brother Jonathan* where favourite son Harold is sent to Harrow and Cambridge, whilst the less attractive Jonathan (whom

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<sup>269</sup> Ives, E., et al (2000) p 62

<sup>270</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 279

<sup>271</sup> Ives, E., et al (2000) p 62

<sup>272</sup> Bridgewater, D. (1998) p 36

<sup>273</sup> Young, J.B. (1962) p 25

<sup>274</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 327

<sup>275</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, pp 246, 248

<sup>276</sup> Ives, E., et al (2000) p 246

<sup>277</sup> Ives, E., et al (2000) pp 249-250

Cannadine inappropriately stigmatizes “an uncouth oaf”<sup>278</sup>) must make do with King Edward’s Grammar School and North Bromwich Medical School.<sup>279</sup> This divide, allied with Young’s own thwarted Oxford ambitions,<sup>280</sup> patently underlie his assessment that

The upstart University of North Bromwich was exceedingly conscious of social distinctions. Early in the first term the men of their year divided themselves into groups. A sharp line separated the public-schoolboys from those who came from the city’s day-schools.<sup>281</sup>

Schwarz demonstrates that Birmingham industry provided only a limited supply of students, as manufacturers showed little enthusiasm for enrolling their sons at either Mason College or its university successor.<sup>282</sup> Their reservations are advanced in the North Bromwich canon when iron-master Walter Willis, considering a university education for his son, dismisses the option asking, “What will it do for him?”<sup>283</sup>

Of Birmingham’s late nineteenth century male students the largest group came from professional backgrounds.<sup>284</sup> The same is true in Young’s fiction, suggested in “Freddie St Aubyn, a slight and immaculate figure with the most carefully cultivated reputation for elegant dissipation in North Bromwich.”<sup>285</sup> St Aubyn is the fictional counterpart of Reginald St Johnston (1881–1950), son of a distinguished Birmingham medical family, who qualified as a doctor in 1905, and whose subsequent career culminated in the governorship of the

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<sup>278</sup> Cannadine, D. (1982) p 49. Jonathan is less attractive than his handsome brother only in a surface (physical) sense. It is Jonathan, not Harold, who reads with depth and passion from the bible, who stands enraptured in North Bromwich Art Gallery and who, impromptu, quotes at length from Milton’s *Comus*. Such are not the marks of an uncouth oaf, which is the whole point of Young’s contrast. See Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, pp 17, 38, 39, 47, 53-54, 59-61.

<sup>279</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, pp 31,41

<sup>280</sup> See p 10

<sup>281</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, pp 43-44

<sup>282</sup> Ives, E., et al (2000) p 248

<sup>283</sup> Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, p 30

<sup>284</sup> Ives, E., et al (2000) p 66

<sup>285</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 291

Leeward Islands.<sup>286</sup> St Johnston, who was fascinated by the stage, fell in love with and eventually married leading dancer Alice Lethbridge.<sup>287</sup> Similarly, St Aubyn “suffered the pangs of a long intrigue with the *première danseuse* in a musical comedy company.”<sup>288</sup> St Johnston’s published poems<sup>289</sup> provide the inspiration for St Aubyn’s “two volumes of verse that were so eclectic as to be out of print.”<sup>290</sup>

A significant proportion of Birmingham’s students from professional backgrounds came from established Edgbaston families, a pattern repeated in North Bromwich, where students Martin Lacey and Matthew Boyce continue to live in their Alvaston family homes.<sup>291</sup> At the other end of the social scale Ives shows that few sons of artisans or skilled workers entered higher education.<sup>292</sup> The achievement of those who did is sufficiently noteworthy in North Bromwich to be highlighted via David Wilden, son of a Black Country coalminer and John Bradley, son of a Herefordshire horse-breaker.<sup>293</sup> The case is reversed among Birmingham’s female students with less than 33% coming from industrial or commercial backgrounds and the professions virtually unrepresented.<sup>294</sup> That the greatest proportion of female students came from other backgrounds indicates that society was beginning to accept middle-class girls embarking upon professional training. Amongst North Bromwich’s female students this route is unenthusiastically followed by Edie Martyn who confesses, “This summer I shall have finished the course and got my diploma. Then, heaven knows what will

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<sup>286</sup> *The Times* (30.08.1950; 02.09.1950)

<sup>287</sup> St Johnston, M. (December 1984) “Some Recollections of FBY” in *Francis Brett Young Society Journal* Number 12 p 24

<sup>288</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 291

<sup>289</sup> St. Johnston, R. (1901) *The Dream Face and Other Poems*, Birmingham, Cornish Bros

<sup>290</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 292

<sup>291</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, pp 317-321; (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 162-164

<sup>292</sup> Ives, E., et al (2000) p 66

<sup>293</sup> Young, F.B. (1936) *Far Forest*, passim; (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, passim

<sup>294</sup> Ives, E., et al (2000) p 66

happen. Teaching, I suppose.”<sup>295</sup> Similarly, Susan Lorimer acknowledges “her tittering and self-conscious fellow-students, whose mean ambition was a pass degree in the Faculty of Arts and a teacher’s job in a Council School.”<sup>296</sup>

It is evident, then, that where North Bromwich students do not replicate factual originals they suggest types identified by Ives.<sup>297</sup> Medical students Joyce Wilburn and Arthur Martock have fathers in the professions of North Bromwich and its immediate environs;<sup>298</sup> Maskew comes from an established Black Country family.<sup>299</sup> George Perks represents the public school set; Diana Isaacs is the daughter of a Winsworth pawnbroker.<sup>300</sup> Factual Birmingham happenings recur in fictional North Bromwich. The Lloyd George riot, witnessed by medical students Ingleby and Boyce has already been recorded.<sup>301</sup> The unexpected death of brewing student Griffin at the Prince Albert Place lodgings of pantomime actress Rosie Beauclaire suggests the case of Birmingham medical student Adrian Berry, found dead at 20 Belgrave Road, having been picked up in Bull Street by Ethel Clay the previous night in January 1913.<sup>302</sup>

During Birmingham University’s early years frequent student complaints concerned inappropriate lecturing styles. The experience is recreated at Bromford University where “the professor spoke for fifty minutes into the recesses of his waistcoat... very remote.”<sup>303</sup> Birmingham’s physics department, particularly in its role in medical education, was singled

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<sup>295</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 303

<sup>296</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 9

<sup>297</sup> Ives, E., et al (2000) pp 61-66, 249-251

<sup>298</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 424; (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, pp 41-42

<sup>299</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, pp 274-275

<sup>300</sup> Young, F.B. (1936) *Far Forest*, p 253; (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 543-544

<sup>301</sup> See pp 164 -169

<sup>302</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, pp 460-483; *Birmingham Daily Post* (21.01.1913; 27.01.1913); *Birmingham Medical School Press Cutting* – University of Birmingham Library Special Collections

<sup>303</sup> Allen, W.E. (1938) p 152

out for criticism<sup>304</sup> as it was in North Bromwich where the physics professor “lectured so dryly on the elements of his science.”<sup>305</sup> Reflecting on the pressures of study one Birmingham student commented, “We have a life to live as well as a living to earn.”<sup>306</sup> Student social life is well represented in North Bromwich. There are sports clubs,<sup>307</sup> university societies,<sup>308</sup> theatre and concerts visits.<sup>309</sup> Students experiment with newly-discovered freedoms,<sup>310</sup> embark upon romantic assignations<sup>311</sup> and succumb to debt.<sup>312</sup> Though these may be features of any university life, some North Bromwich experiences depend upon Birmingham originals.

In 1883 a student club was established in disused workshops at the rear of Mason College’s Edmund Street premises. “The accommodation was of an extremely primitive kind, but it was much valued by the early students.”<sup>313</sup> Allen’s Bromford fiction suggests the popularity of the student club.<sup>314</sup> Young’s North Bromwich fiction replicates Birmingham’s ambience, adding a further dimension showing how the club was valued by students who “would congregate in their gowns in a dismal chamber at the very bottom of the cramped building that was called the Common Room, drinking tea and eating squashed-fly biscuits.”<sup>315</sup>

North Bromwich medics’ pantomime visits to the Queen’s and Prince’s theatres replicate similar excursions by Birmingham medics to the Prince of Wales Theatre and

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<sup>304</sup> Ives, E., et al (2000) pp 237, 238, 240

<sup>305</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 305

<sup>306</sup> *The Open Book* [Magazine of the Faculty of Arts] Issue 1 (01.12.1922) Birmingham, The University, p 16-cited in Ives, E., et al (2000) p 243

<sup>307</sup> E.g. Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 276; (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, pp 67-68

<sup>308</sup> E.g. Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 317; (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 2

<sup>309</sup> E.g. Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 282; (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 609

<sup>310</sup> E.g. Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, pp 301-303; (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 662-670

<sup>311</sup> E.g. Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, pp 82-84; (1936) *Far Forest*, pp 262-273

<sup>312</sup> E.g. Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, pp 381-382; (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 572-575

<sup>313</sup> Burstall, F.W. & Burton, C.G. (1930) pp 27, 51

<sup>314</sup> Allen, W.E. (1938) p110

<sup>315</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 276



Theatre Royal. “The new university had inherited from the old college of science and the still older medical school, the tradition of a pantomime night, a visit en masse to one of the North Bromwich theatres.”<sup>316</sup> Concerning such Birmingham excursions the national press reported: “Medical students are invariably leaders in the rowdyism which from time to time disgraces the city and university. Every pantomime season they take possession of the Theatre Royal for one night and behave like dissipated and mannerless hooligans.”<sup>317</sup> In North Bromwich, university pantomime night becomes “a sort of licensed Saturnalia, not infrequently degenerating into horse-play, in which the more spirited students of the Faculty of Medicine took a predominant part.”<sup>318</sup> Though Birmingham’s Theatre Royal was the normal venue, its reconstruction during 1902-1904<sup>319</sup> involved transfer to the Prince of Wales Theatre, a necessity reproduced in North Bromwich when the pantomime was performed “at the Queen’s Theatre this year.”<sup>320</sup>

During the stay at the Prince of Wales Theatre *Aladdin* was produced in 1901-1902, *Jack and the Beanstalk* in 1902-1903 and *Robinson Crusoe* in 1903-1904. In 1904-1905 at the reopened Theatre Royal, *Babes in the Wood* was performed.<sup>321</sup> At exactly the same time, student pantomime night returned to North Bromwich’s Prince’s Theatre for a production of *Babes in the Wood*.<sup>322</sup> In advance of the performance, and on the day itself, local papers carried clear announcements of the annual visit of Birmingham medical students,<sup>323</sup> a precaution also taken in North Bromwich when “announcements in the papers warned any

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<sup>316</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 290

<sup>317</sup> *London Daily Mail* (22.02.1912)

<sup>318</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 608

<sup>319</sup> Rhodes, R. C. (1924) *Theatre Royal, Birmingham 1774-1924*, Birmingham, Moody Bros, p 45

<sup>320</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 295

<sup>321</sup> Rodway, P.P. & Slingsby, L.R. (1934) pp 90, 96, 97

<sup>322</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 608-609

<sup>323</sup> *Student pantomime nights were Friday 14<sup>th</sup> February 1902; Friday 20<sup>th</sup> February 1903; Friday 12<sup>th</sup> February 1904. Birmingham Daily Mail (13.02.1902; 14.02.1902; 19.02.1903; 20.02.1903; 11.02.1904; 12.02.1904)*

patrons that on this particular night they could not hope to see a normal performance.”<sup>324</sup> For these occasions Rodway and Slingsby recall that “medicals arrayed themselves in the most outlandish fancy costumes.”<sup>325</sup> North Bromwich medics follow suit. “Maskew, a Restoration cavalier; Edwin in the guise of Pierrot; Martin, clothed in six feet of baby linen; Griffin, a fleshy Mephistopheles and Freddie St Aubyn in a wig of black curls for his presentation of Byron.”<sup>326</sup> Fancy dress was only part of the ritual, both in Birmingham, where students invaded the stage and showered gifts on the performers,<sup>327</sup> and in North Bromwich where “the stage suffered as much as the auditorium and the unfortunate players were propitiated for the ruin of their performance by a series of presentations.”<sup>328</sup>

Young’s description of North Bromwich university life, based on his own first-hand knowledge of students - in their homes, at their studies, in their leisure time, budgeting their allowance and experimenting with new-found freedoms, provides a valuable insight into early twentieth century Birmingham University life. Beyond the normal parameters of historical and statistical studies, the canon is hugely informative, supplementing Ives’ investigation and offering an additional source of information.

Chapter Six’s discussion of North Bromwich education reveals the extent to which Young wrote about things he knew. Little space is allocated to the city’s elementary and secondary education with which Young had little first-hand acquaintance. References to North Bromwich’s private schools capture the ethos of similar establishments in Birmingham and suggest Young’s own preparatory education at Sutton Coldfield’s Iona Cottage High

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<sup>324</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 294

<sup>325</sup> Rodway, P.P. & Slingsby, L.R. (1934) p 97

<sup>326</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, pp 296-297

<sup>327</sup> Rodway, P.P. & Slingsby, L.R. (1934) p 97

<sup>328</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 290

School.<sup>329</sup> The context of Birmingham's educational development during the late nineteenth century, set during the era of national peace and stability which enabled concern for, and benefaction of, higher education, becomes the recognisable context of similar progress in North Bromwich. In fact and fiction the church continues to exert its influence in education. Birmingham educational institutions - King Edward's Grammar School, art, technical, theological and teacher-training colleges, Central Library, Birmingham and Midland Institute, Queen's and Mason Colleges, a modern university - have exact counterparts in North Bromwich.

Within Birmingham portraits in fiction, Peter Lawley profits by the briefest of schooling. Tonna and Tiltman report the deplorable state of local education. Gissing denigrates Birmingham's Grammar School. Parkes transfers Birmingham's Library, King Edward's Grammar School and University to Mettingham. Hampson refers to the university and Collins to medical education. In Bromford, Allen takes his readers into Marl Hill Secondary School, King James' Grammar School, the Library and University. Young's exploration of Birmingham's higher education is, however, by far the most detailed and informed. The evolution and life of North Bromwich/Birmingham University, which he knew intimately during the twentieth century's opening years, is graphically described, flavoured with personal recollections. Members of staff, even when unnamed, are readily identifiable. Students from Young's own cohort are recognisably transferred to the fictional setting. Their backgrounds, the societies they join and problems they encounter exemplify student life in general. Such specifics as student pantomime night proclaim North Bromwich in particular.

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<sup>329</sup> See p 9

In Leclaire's view, "Astill's College incarne l'esprit d'entreprise de cette cité agressivement moderne... c'est un avenir de culture dans un présent d'argent."<sup>330</sup> Certainly Birmingham's new facilities, enabled by college mergers and the university charter, also accrue in North Bromwich. Fees charged to North Bromwich medics correspond exactly with those in Birmingham. Rival claims of science and arts, which exercised Birmingham's nascent university, impinge in North Bromwich and reveal Young's own preferences. Middle-class prejudices which hampered new universities' development are endemic in North Bromwich as are working-class concerns over higher education's cost. New subjects, designed to open the purses of the factual industrial city are replicated in fiction. In short, the utilitarian philosophy applied to its other enterprises and activities equally tips the balance in its "educational machinery, like a giant centrifugal machine in North Bromwich, a city which believes in paying by results."<sup>331</sup>

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<sup>330</sup> Leclaire, J. (1970) pp 107-108. [*Astill's College embodies the spirit of enterprise of this aggressively modern city... it is a future of culture in a present of money.*]

<sup>331</sup> Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, p 193

**FRANCIS BRETT YOUNG'S BIRMINGHAM**

*North Bromwich – City of Iron*

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

# **MEDICINE**

North Bromwich, where all suffering humanity was welcome to  
receive the highest medical and surgical skill...

Francis Brett Young *-My Brother Jonathan*

“I find that the doctor in literature,” Young declared, “has rarely been adequately treated.”<sup>1</sup> Certainly with the exception of *The Star Sapphire* references to medicine in the Birmingham fiction considered in this thesis are limited to such minor appearances as Hampson’s St Dorothy’s Nursing Home, Allen’s Princess Royal Maternity Hospital and Tiltman’s smallpox epidemic.<sup>2</sup> Though the practice of medicine occupied only a short period of Young’s life, its ethos permeates his writing. At least one doctor, from eponymous hero to unnamed minor character, appears in every North Bromwich novel.<sup>3</sup> Young’s doctors stand within established literary tradition. Sterne’s Dr Slop, “a little, squat uncourtly figure”<sup>4</sup> who, in Young’s assessment set the pattern for nearly all doctors in eighteenth century literature,<sup>5</sup> lives again in Dr Altrincham-Harris, “a mean little figure.”<sup>6</sup> North Bromwich’s Dr Medhurst, who embraced general practice “as a money-making concern,”<sup>7</sup> is as fee-driven as Trollope’s Dr Thorne.<sup>8</sup> “The deep-rooted distrust of the lower middle-classes for medical students,”<sup>9</sup> evident in North Bromwich, had been experienced before for Dickens’ Bob Sawyer and Benjamin Allen, “cutters and carvers of live peoples’ bodies.”<sup>10</sup> Eliot’s Dr Lydgate, amongst

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<sup>1</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) “The Doctor in Literature” in Walpole, H. (ed) *Essays By Divers Hands*, Oxford, University Press, p 28

<sup>2</sup> Hampson, J. (1936) p 35; Allen, W.E. (1940) p 35; Tiltman, M.H. (1939) pp 35-37

<sup>3</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*; (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*; (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers* have eponymous heroes; Named doctors include: Mason - *Undergrowth* (1913) p 235; Meredith – *The Dark Tower* (1914) p 9; Moorhouse – *The Iron Age* (1916) p 88; Davies – *The Black Diamond* (1921) p 262; Wake – *Cold Harbour* (1924) p 2; Weir – *Portrait of Clare* (1927) p 11; Hendrie – *The Key of Life* (1928) p 29; Viva – *Black Roses* (1929) p 260; Weston – *Jim Redlake* (1930) p 27; Altrincham-Harris – *Mr & Mrs Pennington* (1931) p 250; Weldon – *The House under the Water* (1932) p 582; Selby – *This Little World* (1934) p 109; Martock – *White Ladies* (1935) p 352; Hemming – *Portrait of a Village* (1937) p 73; Mehliiss – *The City of Gold* (1939) p 836; Dench – *A Man about the House* (1942) p 254; Verdon – *Wistanslow* (1956) p 148. In *Pilgrim’s Rest* (1922) p 105 the unnamed doctor is an Austrian Jew; in *Mr Lucton’s Freedom* (1940) p 183 there is an unnamed club doctor. Unnamed doctors also practise in *The Crescent Moon* (1918) p 338; *Far Forest* (1936) p 412 and *They Seek a Country* (1937) p 33.

<sup>4</sup> Sterne, L. (1760-1762) *Tristram Shandy*, London, R. & J. Dodsley; edition cited: (1970) London, The Folio Society, p 89

<sup>5</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) “The Doctor in Literature” p 29

<sup>6</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 520

<sup>7</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 299

<sup>8</sup> Trollope, A. (1858) *Doctor Thorne*; edition cited: (1981) Oxford, University Press, pp 32-33

<sup>9</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 130

<sup>10</sup> Dickens, C. (1836) *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club*, vol II, p 39

the first of a new medical genre in English Literature,<sup>11</sup> “who cared not only for cases but for John and Elizabeth”<sup>12</sup> is a prototype for North Bromwich’s Drs Ingleby, Dakers and Bradley.<sup>13</sup>

The regular sprinkling of medical terminology throughout the novels (e.g. cachectic, empyema, duck-billed speculum, aortic stenosis, transient diplopia, ankle-clonus reflex<sup>14</sup>) suggests that the North Bromwich canon focuses from the doctors’ rather than the patients’ viewpoint. Clearly some awareness of the doctor’s technical vocabulary was assumed in Young’s readership, expected to cope with such medical symptoms as “a focus of suppuration in the tendon sheath... poison tracking up the lymphatics towards the glands of the axilla.”<sup>15</sup> Young’s doctors survey humanity with the heightened perception of medical training. From his limited hospital experience, John Bradley recognizes “a typical case of chlorotic anaemia.”<sup>16</sup> The newly-qualified Jonathan Dakers notes “yellow skin suggested the coloration of a drug-addict.”<sup>17</sup> Medical textbooks are introduced with the same familiarity that popular novels or poets are mentioned. Susan Pennington has on her shelves novels by Ella Wheeler Wilcox and H.G. Wells; Diana Powys reads *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*.<sup>18</sup> John Bradley and Martin Lacey discuss “Erichsen, *Hospitalism, and the Causes of Death after Operations*.”<sup>19</sup> Matthew Boyce and Edwin Ingleby consider Robert Bridges’ poetry.<sup>20</sup> Jonathan Dakers

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<sup>11</sup> Harvey, W.J. (1965) Introduction to Eliot, G. (1871) p 19

<sup>12</sup> Eliot, G. (1871) p 174

<sup>13</sup> E.g. Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, pp 438-446; (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, pp 321-323; (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 194-196

<sup>14</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 606; (1928) *The Key of Life*, p 30; (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 245; (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 617; (1932) *The House under the Water*, p 580; (1942) *A Man about the House*, p 257

<sup>15</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 358

<sup>16</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 127-128

<sup>17</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 271

<sup>18</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 251; (1940) *Mr Lucton’s Freedom*, p 288

<sup>19</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 166-167; Erichsen, J.E. (1874) *Hospitalism, and the Causes of Death after Operations*, London, Longmans, Green & Co.

<sup>20</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 321

quotes at length from Milton's *Comus* and scribbles verses on the fly-leaf of Osler's *System of Medicine*.<sup>21</sup> Again Young follows accepted literary tradition. Both Hardy and Conrad, for example, as Greenslade establishes, were acutely aware of contemporary scientific debate and controversy.<sup>22</sup>

A series of medical references helps date the North Bromwich canon. The earliest descriptor predates the canon's main corpus, conjuring the resurrection-men who exhumed bodies and sold them to anatomists. Diggle, the porter at Prince's College "had not been above a bit of resurrecting in his time, though the Edinburgh scandal and the Anatomy Act of 1832 had straitened the law and legitimized the supply of unclaimed corpses from hospitals and Poor Law Institutions."<sup>23</sup> The Edinburgh scandal clearly cites the notorious Burke and Hare case. In January 1829 Burke was hanged (on the evidence of fellow-criminal Hare) for murdering sixteen Edinburgh vagrants and selling their bodies to the city's medics.<sup>24</sup> The 1832 Anatomy Act permitted hospitals' unclaimed corpses to be used for demonstration and dissection in medical schools.<sup>25</sup> Young's notebook for *Dr Bradley Remembers* contains the prompts "Anatomy Act 1832" and "Wakley 1829".<sup>26</sup> Thomas Wakley founded *Lancet*,<sup>27</sup> which, in an 1829 editorial, addressed the Burke and Hare case.<sup>28</sup> Clearly, Young checked facts rather than relying on memory or hearsay.

Medicine's legal framework further fixes North Bromwich parameters. "That same Act of Parliament which abolished the system of apprenticeship decreed that a medical

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<sup>21</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, pp 53-54, 60, 113; Osler, W. (1892) *The Principles and Practice of Medicine Designed for the Use of Practitioners and Students of Medicine*, Edinburgh, J. Pentland

<sup>22</sup> Greenslade, W. (1994) pp 6,7

<sup>23</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 148

<sup>24</sup> Head, H. (1992) *Chronicle of Britain and Ireland*, Farnborough, Chronicle Communications Ltd, pp 842, 844

<sup>25</sup> Digby, A. (2002) *Making a Medical Living*, Cambridge, University Press, pp 92, 237

<sup>26</sup> FBY 89 (n.d.) Notebook for *Dr Bradley Remembers*

<sup>27</sup> *The Concise Dictionary of National Biography* (1994) vol III, p 3095

<sup>28</sup> Wakley, T. (ed.) (28.03.1829) *Lancet* 1828-1829 (i) pp 818-821



student, before registration, must first pass an examination in General Knowledge.”<sup>29</sup> The Medical Act (1858) abolished apprenticeships.<sup>30</sup> Subsequently, prior to commencing medical studies, candidates were required to pass general knowledge examinations in English Language, Latin, Mathematics and either Greek or a modern language.<sup>31</sup> Following the 1858 Act the gradual tightening of rules regulating unqualified assistants was noted in North Bromwich. “Before the General Medical Council did away with unqualified assistants, I used to keep three of them.”<sup>32</sup> This restriction was introduced in 1883.<sup>33</sup>

The “dire scarlet-fever epidemic of eighteen-forty”<sup>34</sup> impinges in the North Bromwich canon in the very year a vigorous outbreak of the disease began in England.<sup>35</sup> A purely regional medical footprint appears as the “epidemic of diphtheria and scarlet fever which broke out in North Bromwich about that time.”<sup>36</sup> The period indicated is the beginning of the twentieth century. Though Birmingham’s rapid increase in diphtheria-related mortality during the mid-1890s declined in the new century, 1902 marked the city’s highest diphtheria death-toll between 1896 and 1914.<sup>37</sup> Scarlet fever also became epidemic in Birmingham in 1902, with 4,534 cases admitted to hospital, by far the highest figure since Birmingham Corporation acquired the Borough Hospital in 1874.<sup>38</sup>

Of Lloyd George’s 1911 Invalidation and Unemployment Insurance Bill Young wrote, “I have always regarded this great social measure as the most signal contribution ever made to

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<sup>29</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 123-124

<sup>30</sup> Digby, A. (2002) p 53

<sup>31</sup> “Medical Education” (1911) in *Encyclopaedia Britannica* Vol XVIII, Cambridge, University Press

<sup>32</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 417

<sup>33</sup> Digby, A. (2002) p 131

<sup>34</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies*, p 11

<sup>35</sup> Mc Grew, R.E. (1985) *Encyclopaedia of Medical History*, London, Macmillan Press, p 310

<sup>36</sup> Young, F.B. (1942) *A Man about the House*, p 40

<sup>37</sup> Vince, C.A. (1902) p 130; (1923) p 156

<sup>38</sup> Bunce, J.T. (1885) pp 102, 104; Vince, C.A. (1902) p 109; (1923) pp 129, 131 – The hospital in Western Road became known as the Borough Hospital after it was acquired by Birmingham Corporation.

the security and dignity of the General Practitioner.”<sup>39</sup> Contributions from employee, employer and government initially brought sickness benefits to certain workers earning less than £3 per week. Workmen would draw sickness and unemployment benefits through organizations such as Friendly Societies and participating doctors would receive an annual payment for each patient. The widespread opposition that accompanied the Bill’s progress<sup>40</sup> is apparent in the North Bromwich canon. “The Bill seemed a good Bill... But first Parliament, and then the country took fright at it... Lloyd George was not climbing down... He announced that the Government intended to go through with the Act.”<sup>41</sup>

A few years later Lloyd George was confined to bed<sup>42</sup> by another of the medical phenomena which fixes the North Bromwich canon. “The direst pestilence since the Black Death, the influenza of nineteen-eighteen swept Europe... victims undermined by the stresses of war.”<sup>43</sup> Originating in the Near East this pandemic decimated central Europe. In October 1918 it reached England, claiming some 150,000 lives<sup>44</sup> and escalating Birmingham’s death rate to 15.2 per 1,000.<sup>45</sup> Young’s identification of the vital contributory factor in the influenza’s rampant advance is acknowledged by Taylor in the possibility that the outbreak “found easy victims among people worn down by the hardships of war.”<sup>46</sup> This alignment of the North Bromwich canon with respected historical opinion underlines the validity of Young’s fiction as commentary upon contemporary events.

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<sup>39</sup> Preface to Severn Edition of Young, F.B. (1940) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p ix

<sup>40</sup> Hill, C.P.(1961) *British Economic and Social History 1700-1939*, London, Edward Arnold, pp 300-301; Owen, F. (1954) pp 206-209; Thompson, D. (1950) p 200

<sup>41</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 703, 714

<sup>42</sup> Owen, F. (1954) pp 491-492

<sup>43</sup> Young, F.B. (1934) *This Little World*, p 109

<sup>44</sup> Taylor, A.J.P. (1965) p 112

<sup>45</sup> Jones, J.T. (1940) p 201

<sup>46</sup> Taylor, A.J.P. (1965) p 113

Late nineteenth century medical reform followed Lister's antiseptic initiatives, graphically depicted by Young, drawing upon by his Birmingham-trained grandfather, great-uncle and father, who practised during the "Listerian revolution".<sup>47</sup>

Joseph Lister... in one lightning flash  
Of heaven-sent insight, suddenly remembers  
Pasteur's description of those living spores  
That turn sick wine to vinegar... At last,  
Out of the chemist's armoury, he discovers  
The weapon of his choice: Carbolic Acid...<sup>48</sup>

Focusing upon Lister's pioneering the North Bromwich canon relates Birmingham's medical evolution via identifiable hospitals, physicians and surgeons.

## Hospitals

As in early twentieth century Birmingham with its General Hospital in Steelhouse Lane and Queen's Hospital in Bath Row, "two general hospitals supplied the clinical needs of North Bromwich Medical School. The older, from which the school originated, was a small institution, Prince's."<sup>49</sup> The translation from fact to fiction blurs some historical detail. Birmingham's General Hospital, opened in Summer Lane in 1779, moved to new premises in Steelhouse Lane in 1897.<sup>50</sup> Though then the older building, Queen's Hospital was the younger institution, founded to support clinical work at Birmingham's Medical School,<sup>51</sup> which had its origins in the anatomical lectures first given by William Sands Cox in 1825.<sup>52</sup> Queen's Hospital, named for its patrons Queens Adelaide and Victoria, opened in 1841.<sup>53</sup> It was, therefore, the school from which the hospital originated rather than Young's alternative

<sup>47</sup> Preface to (1940) *Dr Bradley Remembers* (Severn Edition) p viii

<sup>48</sup> Young, F.B. (1944) "Victorian Reverie, A.D. 1819-1901" in *The Island*, pp 415-416

<sup>49</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 352

<sup>50</sup> Lloyd, J.H. (1911) pp 155, 156

<sup>51</sup> Gill, C. (1952), p 397

<sup>52</sup> See p 10

<sup>53</sup> Morrison, J.T.J. (1926) pp 83, 91

proposition. Birmingham's Queen's Hospital consisted of two four-storey wings, entered via an imposing stone portico.<sup>54</sup> Similarly North Bromwich's Prince's Hospital is "a solid building of early Victorian red brick, with a stone portico."<sup>55</sup> Birmingham hospital's location was "the most elevated, open and salubrious, westward of the town,"<sup>56</sup> whilst North Bromwich hospital "stood in the upper and healthier part of the city... upon the fringe of the fashionable suburb of Alvaston."<sup>57</sup> Prince's Hospital is carefully and accurately located to replicate its Birmingham original.



Queen's Hospital, Bath Row, Birmingham

Within a short time of the opening of Queen's Hospital, the area to the west of Bath Row, previously open ground, was densely developed. Still one of Birmingham's wider thoroughfares at the time of the North Bromwich canon, Bath Row<sup>58</sup> is replicated in North Bromwich as "the wide street that led towards Prince's Hospital."<sup>59</sup> Debouching from this

<sup>54</sup> Morrison, J.T.J. (1926) p 91

<sup>55</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 352

<sup>56</sup> Morrison, J.T.J. (1926) p 83

<sup>57</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 352

<sup>58</sup> OS *Warwickshire Sheet XIV.5* (1912)

<sup>59</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 301

main road “meaner streets surrounded the hospital: miserable streets with low houses and courts clustered on either side.”<sup>60</sup> In fiction Bath Row is renamed Easy Row, adopting, oxymoron-like, an authentic Birmingham name.<sup>61</sup> Here North Bromwich medics, like their creator,<sup>62</sup> lodge during their midwifery training, undergoing “the unusual strain of the fortnight in Easy Row.”<sup>63</sup> When Young walked Queen’s Hospital wards, a cab rank stood in front of the building in the centre of Bath Row, just west of its junction with Wheeley’s Lane.<sup>64</sup> Similarly in North Bromwich “opposite the portico of the hospital was a cab rank.”<sup>65</sup> Like Birmingham’s Bath Row, North Bromwich’s Easy Row is “a thoroughfare of older houses... degenerated into lodging-houses.”<sup>66</sup> In 1906 the Georgian buildings of Bath Row opposite to Queen’s Hospital included no less than twenty-three apartment houses.<sup>67</sup>

Designed originally to accommodate just 130 beds, various extensions to Queen’s Hospital increased its 1908 capacity to 178 beds (60 medical and 118 surgical).<sup>68</sup> At a similar time Prince’s Hospital (which also included surgical wards<sup>69</sup>) remained “small enough to be homely.”<sup>70</sup> An 1873 extension to Queen’s Hospital added a new outpatients’ hall, consulting

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<sup>60</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 301

<sup>61</sup> Easy Row, Birmingham ran from Paradise Street to Cambridge Street to the west of the university buildings - OS *Warwickshire* Sheet XIV.5 (1912)

<sup>62</sup> See p 10

<sup>63</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 436

<sup>64</sup> OS *Warwickshire, Birmingham & Its Environs* Sheet XIII.8.25 (1889)

<sup>65</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 301

<sup>66</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 352

<sup>67</sup> In 1905 lodging houses in Bath Row were kept by the following landlords and landladies: James Gardner (10); Mrs Martha Osborne (16); Mrs Harriet Wright (18); Mrs Selina Deugard (20); Mrs Jessie Jackson (22); Miss Alice Bird (38); Mrs Agnes Holt (44); Mrs Elizabeth Else (46); Harry Hixon (60); Harry Haynes (62); Mrs Elizabeth Leask (64); Richard White (72); Mrs Emily Moor (74); Mrs Mary Drinkwater (78); Mrs Florence Ford (84); Frederick Braine (86); Mrs Connie Braine (88); Miss Elizabeth Hurley (94); Mrs Rose Downing (102); Mrs Annie Powell (118); Mrs Charlotte Shimshank (120); Mrs Margaret Kemp (122); Mrs Mary Roberts (136) - *Kelly’s Directory of Birmingham* (1905)

<sup>68</sup> Morrison, J.T.J. (1926) p 176

<sup>69</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 66

<sup>70</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 352

rooms, dispensary and corridor connecting the new block to the old.<sup>71</sup> In a similar corridor in Prince's Hospital, "members of the consulting staff would pass through swinging doors to their wards or consulting rooms."<sup>72</sup> In Birmingham the daily routine of Queen's Hospital began at 9am with various clinics and theatres, such as those of Jordan Lloyd on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and Priestley Smith on Tuesdays and Fridays.<sup>73</sup> In North Bromwich "the clock would strike nine and the porter, who had been marshalling the queue of out-patients, would release them to the benches opposite the door of the department from which they were seeking relief."<sup>74</sup>

The 1908 extensions to Birmingham's Queen's Hospital included provision of a second operating theatre and refurbishment of the existing one. At a similar time, North Bromwich's Prince's Hospital also gained a new operating theatre,<sup>75</sup> whilst its old one is re-equipped. Describing the changes to Queen's Hospital's original operating theatre, Morrison comments that particular attention was paid to flooring and sterilising equipment.<sup>76</sup> Addressing the same developments in North Bromwich, Young's fiction illuminates Morrison's fact with vivid descriptions of Prince's evolving operating theatre.

There was only one theatre at Prince's: a small room, with a wooden floor sprinkled with sawdust... The surgeon and dressers could wash their hands or their instruments in tin basins of lukewarm water faintly purpled with Condy's fluid. A long side-table carried an assortment of dressings, spools of silk and catgut, sutures, and a wide-mouthed jar full of sponges to be used as swabs.<sup>77</sup>

In the refurbished version of the same theatre,

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<sup>71</sup> Morrison, J.T.J. (1926) p 162

<sup>72</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 353

<sup>73</sup> Morrison, J.T.J. (1926) pp 171, 173

<sup>74</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 353

<sup>75</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 517

<sup>76</sup> Morrison, J.T.J. (1926) 177-178

<sup>77</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 182-183

The rough boarded floor, uncarpeted once save by a strip of ragged linoleum, was covered now with an unbroken surface of rubber composition... Electric sterilizers and drums of dressings, tables of white enamel... each instrument had its place, the very floors were aseptic.<sup>78</sup>

Though Lister's antiseptic revolution may have been regarded as mere technical modification,<sup>79</sup> its effects eventually brought surgical instruments and clothing within the carbolic regime. Operating styles changed from rapid dexterity to systematic deliberation.<sup>80</sup> In pre-Lister North Bromwich "the first essentials of a surgeon's craft were swiftness of hand and rapid decision."<sup>81</sup> Then a North Bromwich surgeon's operating-coat was

stiffened by ten years' accumulations of pus and coagulated blood... Dressers passed from one case to the next without dreaming of washing their hands... The same instruments were used for every patient, the same sponges to clean their wounds.<sup>82</sup>

In 1872 carbolic sprays were purchased for Birmingham surgical operations,<sup>83</sup> their use effectively demonstrated in North Bromwich. "A hand-spray... bedewing the air of the theatre, its occupants' clothes and eyes, and all that was exposed of the unconscious patient, with carbolic mist."<sup>84</sup> As Lister's influence increased, a North Bromwich surgeon "washed his hands with soap and water... though the germ-theory was rubbish."<sup>85</sup> Eventually, in "perfect conditions... almost intimidating cleanliness," North Bromwich operating-theatre staff are "white-masked, white-shrouded."<sup>86</sup> The Listerian journey is not unhindered when Florence Nightingale's influence "had not yet leavened the nursing profession in North Bromwich," and medical students were not encouraged to study unidentified pathogenic

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<sup>78</sup> Young, F.B. (1937) *Portrait of a Village*, p 75; (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 518-519

<sup>79</sup> Lawrence, C. (1994) *Medicine in the Making of Modern Britain 1700-1920*, London, Routledge, p 66

<sup>80</sup> Digby, A. (1994) p 95

<sup>81</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 180-181

<sup>82</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 183, 185

<sup>83</sup> Waterhouse, R. (1962) *Children in Hospital: A Hundred Years of Childcare in Birmingham*, London, Hutchinson, p 79

<sup>84</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 180

<sup>85</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 183

<sup>86</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 518-519

bacteria.<sup>87</sup> In his notebook for *Dr Bradley Remembers* Young lists some signs of progress: autoclave, gown, apron, mask, gloves.<sup>88</sup> The opinion of one progressive North Bromwich surgeon “we live in an atmosphere of devastating asepsis, I’m not sure we don’t overdo it a little,”<sup>89</sup> reflects Shaw’s questioning view of the antiseptic panacea: “Suddenly the whole art of healing could be summed up in the formula: Find the microbe and kill it.”<sup>90</sup>

In October 1914 the War Office requested Birmingham’s Queen’s Hospital to receive wounded Belgian soldiers.<sup>91</sup> With the outbreak of World War I, North Bromwich’s “Prince’s Hospital had been placed on a military basis.”<sup>92</sup> Birmingham’s Belgian convoys were eventually replaced by British casualties,<sup>93</sup> represented in Young’s fiction by “a sergeant of the Worcesters shell-shocked, wounded and in hospital at North Bromwich.”<sup>94</sup> By October 1916 Queen’s Hospital’s entire medical block was assigned to the military, its normal complement of beds more than doubled.<sup>95</sup> In like manner Prince’s Hospital “wards had been expanded to receive convoys of wounded.”<sup>96</sup> Under military organization Birmingham’s Queen’s Hospital became a constituent of the vast First Southern Hospital, its satellites scattered throughout the West Midlands,<sup>97</sup> just as all North Bromwich’s hospitals were placed on a military footing, the Central Hospital having auxiliaries and convalescent homes beyond the city.<sup>98</sup> Ambulance trains arrived at Birmingham’s New Street Station and Winson Green

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<sup>87</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 172, 185

<sup>88</sup> FBY 89 (n.d.) Notebook for *Dr Bradley Remembers*

<sup>89</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 520

<sup>90</sup> Shaw, G.B. (1934) *Prefaces* [X “The Doctor’s Dilemma” - 1906] London, Constable & Co, p 247

<sup>91</sup> Morrison, J.T.J. (1926) pp 182-183

<sup>92</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 424

<sup>93</sup> Morrison, J.T.J. (1926) p 183

<sup>94</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 504

<sup>95</sup> Morrison, J.T.J. (1926) p 183

<sup>96</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 424

<sup>97</sup> Hearn, G.W. (1987) *Dudley Road Hospital 1887-1987*, Birmingham, DRH Postgraduate Centre, p 38

<sup>98</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, pp 434, 500



Goods Station, the wounded being transferred by ambulance, van, lorry and car.<sup>99</sup> Similarly, to North Bromwich come “maimed and shattered casualties which ambulance-trains discharged in hundreds at the hospital gates.”<sup>100</sup>

In Birmingham it was required that students attend six months alternately at Queen’s Hospital and the General Hospital.<sup>101</sup> Prince’s Hospital and the Infirmary fulfilled similar functions in North Bromwich where it was “decreed that students who had learnt their surgery at one hospital should study medicine at the other.”<sup>102</sup> In the early twentieth century North Bromwich Infirmary was nearly twice the size of Prince’s Hospital,<sup>103</sup> an accurate portrayal of their Birmingham originals where, in 1906, the General Hospital treated 5,204 in-patients to Queen’s Hospital’s 2,307, and 65,247 out-patients to Queen’s 34,213.<sup>104</sup>

The Summer Lane location of Birmingham’s General Hospital was identified by Hutton as the “narrow dirty lane” in which this “plain but noble edifice” was situated.<sup>105</sup> A century later, the district had become densely crowded and, in Dent’s view, “unsuited in every way as the locale of a hospital”.<sup>106</sup> Similarly, “the sombre block of the North Bromwich Infirmary... on the edge of the jewellers’ quarter,” stands “isolated like rocks in a stagnant, unsavoury pool.”<sup>107</sup> The factual General Hospital opened with forty beds and four physicians who gave their services free as do their fictional North Bromwich counterparts.<sup>108</sup> The

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<sup>99</sup> Hopkins, E. (2001) p 136; Hearn, G.W. (1987) p 40

<sup>100</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 433

<sup>101</sup> Morrison, J.T.J. (1926) p 172

<sup>102</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 384

<sup>103</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 385

<sup>104</sup> *Birmingham Daily Post* (26.04.1907)

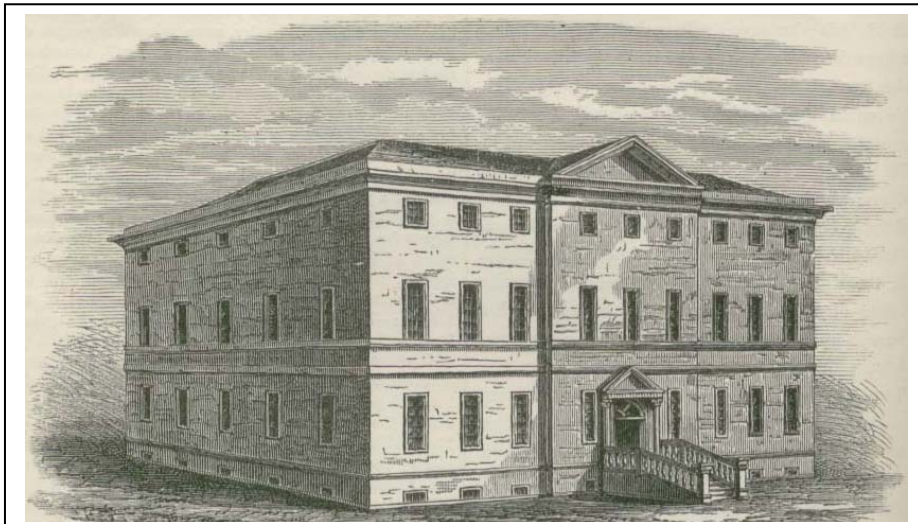
<sup>105</sup> Hutton, W. (1819) p 365

<sup>106</sup> Dent, R.K. (1894) p 551

<sup>107</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 225, 249

<sup>108</sup> Bunce, J.T. (1858) *The Birmingham General Hospital and Triennial Music Festivals*, Birmingham, Benjamin Hall, p 17; Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 397

demands of the growing town soon necessitated extensions and improvements to the original building which, in 1897, inadequate, out-dated and insanitary, transferred to new premises in Steelhouse Lane.<sup>109</sup> In the same vicinity, “in the lower and less healthy part of the city,” North Bromwich’s new Infirmary, “so vast as to be microcosmic,”<sup>110</sup> is replicated.



General Hospital, Summer Lane, Birmingham



General Hospital, Steelhouse Lane, Birmingham

Built of red brick and terracotta, the new General Hospital was, according to the local press, “architecturally an ornament to Birmingham and sanitarily worthy to rank among the

<sup>109</sup> Lloyd, J.H. (1911) p 156

<sup>110</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, pp 385, 392

best hospitals in the country.”<sup>111</sup> Though North Bromwich’s version is a similar exemplar of scientific principle and modernity, these very qualities infer caveats. “The Infirmary, in its terracotta arrogance, had been set down in the heart of unreclaimed slums, in such a way that its very magnificence and efficiency were depressing by contrast.”<sup>112</sup> Though the slums bordered by Whittall Street and Weaman Street immediately to the west of Birmingham’s General Hospital and those to the north between Summer Lane and Newtown Row had not been cleared,<sup>113</sup> on the other side of Steelhouse Lane were Victoria Law Courts (of which the hospital was a similar though less elaborate version<sup>114</sup>) and the Corporation Street development cleared under Chamberlain’s improvement scheme.<sup>115</sup> It would, therefore, be more true to its Birmingham original, though less aligned with Young’s chosen bias, to place North Bromwich’s Infirmary at the south east of unreclaimed slum rather than at its heart.

Gilbert Barling, Professor of Surgery at Birmingham, recalling the planning of the new hospital, emphasized that “some of us took a great deal of interest in heating and ventilation. Eventually what was known as the Plenum System was adopted.”<sup>116</sup> Of this showpiece hospital Birmingham’s *Daily Mail* commented that “the wards are light, warm and airy, though not one of the windows will open, but the ventilation is of a new and costly plan.”<sup>117</sup> In 1904 Wesley Deaconess Thirza Masters, undergoing in Birmingham’s General Hospital massage and electrical treatment also available in North Bromwich,<sup>118</sup> recorded her

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<sup>111</sup> *Birmingham Daily Mail* (04.01.1897)

<sup>112</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 385

<sup>113</sup> OS *Warwickshire Sheet* 14.05 (1912)

<sup>114</sup> *Birmingham Weekly Post* (25.08.1894)

<sup>115</sup> See pp 157-160

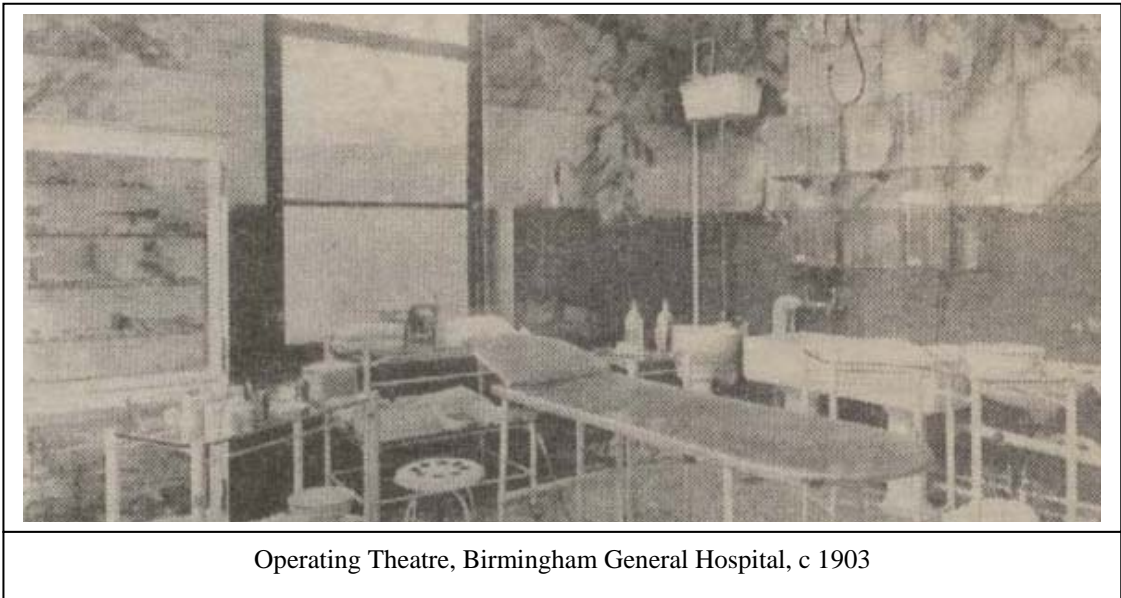
<sup>116</sup> Barling, G. (1929) *The General Hospital, Birmingham: Commemoration of the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary: 10.12.1929: A Retrospect*, Birmingham, Silk & Terry. In the Plenum System air propelled into a building is maintained at higher than atmospheric pressure. - *Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary* (1972) Edinburgh, W & R Chambers

<sup>117</sup> *Birmingham Daily Mail* (13.10.1897)

<sup>118</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 354; (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 731

experience of the hospital ventilation. “My windows were continually closed. Artificial ventilation by machinery continuously at work giving a buzzing sound as though one was on board a ship.”<sup>119</sup> At North Bromwich Infirmary the ventilation system “made a melancholy groaning”.<sup>120</sup> However, far from enhancing patient welfare this system degrades, suggesting an unhealthy atmosphere.

Its shining wards, for all their roominess, were full of an air that suffocated; the windows were never opened and the atmosphere that the patients breathed had been sucked into the place by an immense system of forced ventilation and filtered until it seemed to have lost all its nature.<sup>121</sup>



Operating Theatre, Birmingham General Hospital, c 1903

Birmingham’s modern operating theatre, the press enthused, had walls of “marble and alabaster; glistening tiles where no microbe can burrow.”<sup>122</sup> Echoing this description, North Bromwich’s modern operating theatre is a “glistening shrine of sterility, with shining encaustic walls.”<sup>123</sup> Writing of Birmingham’s new General Hospital, Morrison records that “every detail in connexion with the treatment of patients and the training of students was the

<sup>119</sup> Masters, T. (11.07.1904) Ms Diary cited by Graham, E.D. (Autumn 2004) “Work of the Early Wesley Deaconesses in Birmingham and the West Midlands” in *Wesley Historical Society West Midlands Branch Bulletin*, Vol 8 No 4, p 61

<sup>120</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 385

<sup>121</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 385

<sup>122</sup> *Birmingham Daily Mail* (13.10.1897)

<sup>123</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 519

last word on the subject up to that time.”<sup>124</sup> North Bromwich’s new Infirmary similarly provides superior medical training.<sup>125</sup>

Despite the caveats which he enters regarding North Bromwich exemplars, Young retains a high view of hospitals, no doubt engendered by his own experience. “Among the filth, horror and corruption, the luridness of human nature as a hospital displays it, you will see fortitude, generosity, patience, self-sacrifice, courage.”<sup>126</sup> These qualities, in what is undoubtedly the most positive image of North Bromwich in the entire canon, are displayed in both patients and doctors.

## Patients

Birmingham’s General Hospital, the press reported, treated “poor people suffering from all forms of disease and accidents of every description... the wounded, the sick, the grown man crippled for years, the child whose unaccustomed finger was but an hour ago chopped off by a machine.”<sup>127</sup> Sands Cox envisaged Queen’s Hospital receiving patients “employed amidst pestilential effluvia of manufactures, exposed to various accidents from powerful machinery.”<sup>128</sup> That the pestilential effluvia continued into twentieth century Birmingham is affirmed by Garratt’s description of the hazards confronting a brass-polisher. “Revolving brushes threw into his face a poisonous cloud... while he brightened the brasses, he blackened his lungs.”<sup>129</sup> Accidents caused by powerful machinery are endemic in the screw-manufactory described by Tonna, where “a slight degree even of tremor will bring fingers into contact with

<sup>124</sup> Morrison, J.T.J. (1926) pp 178-179

<sup>125</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 385

<sup>126</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) “The Doctor In Literature” p 22

<sup>127</sup> Scrutator (1863) *The Medical Charities of Birmingham Being Letters on Hospital Management and Administration* (Re-printed from *Birmingham Daily Gazette*), Birmingham, Walter J. Sackett, p 25

<sup>128</sup> Morrison, J.T.J. (1926) p 77

<sup>129</sup> Garratt, V.W. (1939) p 79

whirling steel.”<sup>130</sup> Martineau, who also preached social reform via fiction, cites a boy who “in charge of machinery was careless... receiving a blow on the head which killed him.”<sup>131</sup> Thorne’s exposure to acid at a Birmingham rolling mill left his hands permanently scarred.<sup>132</sup> In North Bromwich a brass-worker “was rotted by industrial diseases, peculiar to his trade, which clogged the lungs and inflamed the stomach.”<sup>133</sup> Prince’s Hospital treats “mechanics who had been victims of some unavoidable accident.”<sup>134</sup> If, in failing to write “avoidable accident,” Young neglected an opportunity of castigating North Bromwich, he recaptured the initiative when illustrating that not only metalworkers are prone to industrial injury. To Prince’s Hospital comes “a tailoress who laboured in some sweater’s den... She had stabbed her forefinger with an infected needle.”<sup>135</sup> The infection is excised and the patient prescribed iron “to try to get her well so that she might travel back around the vicious circle to the conditions responsible for her illness.”<sup>136</sup>

At the very time when most North Bromwich patients “were suffering from the evils of poor housing”<sup>137</sup> a Birmingham street survey indicated that out of 105,000 houses 42,000 lacked through-ventilation, revealing a worst-case death-rate of over thirty-five in certain streets in St Bartholomew’s, St Stephen’s and St Mary’s wards.<sup>138</sup> A generation later John Dayus’s illness is attributed to the unwholesome air of his home.<sup>139</sup> Similar areas of North

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<sup>130</sup> [Tonna], Charlotte Elizabeth (1843-1844) p 425

<sup>131</sup> Martineau, H. (1832) “The Hill and the Valley” in *Illustrations of Political Economy Taxation, Poor Laws and Paupers*, Vol 1, London, Charles Fox, p 92

<sup>132</sup> Thorne, W. (1925) p 21

<sup>133</sup> Young, F.B. (1936) *Far Forest*, p 239

<sup>134</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 354

<sup>135</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 357

<sup>136</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 359

<sup>137</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 420

<sup>138</sup> Vince, C.A. (1902) pp 128-129

<sup>139</sup> Dayus, K. (1991) p 56

Bromwich are “a sump for the collection of foul air.”<sup>140</sup> Attending his first confinement, medical student John Bradley reflects, “When this baby was born... what sort of life awaited it in this wilderness of grimy brick?”<sup>141</sup> The sombre answer is revisited a generation later when to a North Bromwich hospital came “a woman from the slums, carrying in her shawl a child that was obviously dying from broncho-pneumonia.”<sup>142</sup> At just the time Bradley attended his fictional case it was recorded that 47.7% of all Birmingham deaths were of children under five.<sup>143</sup> In 1891 the infant mortality rate was 119/1000 in Edgbaston and Harborne, rising to 244/1000 in Market Hall ward.<sup>144</sup> Half a century earlier Tonna recorded in her Birmingham portrait that “in some great manufacturing towns one half of all the children born among the working population die in their first year.”<sup>145</sup> Of Birmingham’s 1891 deaths investigated 20% resulted from bronchitis or pneumonia and 41% from inadequate care and diet. The consequent recommendation was of a need for “greater personal attention on the part of mothers for their offspring,”<sup>146</sup> reflected in North Bromwich as “children, the idols of maternal care, the victims of maternal ignorance.”<sup>147</sup> The extent of sacrificial maternal care is established in Chinn’s urban poor studies,<sup>148</sup> leading him to the conclusion that in denying themselves and struggling to earn the pittance by which their children were fed, “mothers were vital to the survival of poor families.”<sup>149</sup>

In 1899 Birmingham appointed four Health Visitors to work in the city’s poorest and dirtiest areas promoting personal and domestic cleanliness. This experiment was strengthened

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<sup>140</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 194

<sup>141</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 202

<sup>142</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 361

<sup>143</sup> Bunce, J.T. (1885) pp 113-114

<sup>144</sup> Vince, C.A. (1902) p 131

<sup>145</sup> [Tonna], Charlotte Elizabeth (1843) p 427

<sup>146</sup> Vince, C.A. (1902) pp 132, 133

<sup>147</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 354

<sup>148</sup> Chinn, C. (1988a); (1995)

<sup>149</sup> Chinn, C. (1995) p 144

by the Children's Act 1908, empowering LEAs to cleanse the bodies and clothing of verminous children of whom, Vince adds, the Birmingham number was very large.<sup>150</sup> Chinn indicates the initial reluctance of early twentieth century mothers to attend a welfare centre in Birmingham's Floodgate Street, as they did not like doctors commenting on their babies' clothing and feeding.<sup>151</sup> Similarly, a North Bromwich scenario illustrates how in the poorest and dirtiest quarters official intervention may be regarded with suspicion and resentment.

A woman had the ear of the company, talking loudly over a pasty child whose neck was covered with the pin-points that fleas make on an insensitive skin. 'So I says to the inspector... you can take your summonses to 'ell. I *love* my children... And I caught 'er up and carried 'er straight along to the doctor... It's time these inspectors was done away with.'<sup>152</sup>

The very fact that the child visits a doctor is encouraging, as Waterhouse points out that in overcrowded back streets prohibitive costs militated against sick children visiting doctors.<sup>153</sup>

In Birmingham, Bunce reports, "it is evident that mortality during infancy is attributable, not to any condition attending growth or development, but to want of the care necessary for the protection of infant life."<sup>154</sup> The effects of such want of care are seen in Tonna's description of children "stunted in growth, bony, pallid, most wretchedly unhealthy in their looks; filthy beyond expression in their persons."<sup>155</sup> The North Bromwich effects are more widespread: "old men, skins foul with the ravages of eczema and dirt... women, exhausted in middle age by child-bearing... ragged children."<sup>156</sup> The needs of wife and children are frequently subordinated to the meagre comforts of husband and father. Upton notes that in Birmingham's back-to-back houses, whilst the heroic care of mothers is

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<sup>150</sup> Vince, C.A (1902) p 117; (1923) pp 143, 158

<sup>151</sup> Chinn, C. (1995) p 108

<sup>152</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, pp 414-415

<sup>153</sup> Waterhouse, R. (1962) p 19

<sup>154</sup> Bunce, J.T. (1885) p 114

<sup>155</sup> [Tonna], Charlotte Elizabeth (1843-1844) p 450

<sup>156</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 354; (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 452



frequently lauded, “fathers emerge with less credit... heavy drinking and squandering of household resources being common,”<sup>157</sup> a scenario recreated in the Birmingham fiction of Tonna and Murray.<sup>158</sup> In the same way to a North Bromwich casualty department comes “an old woman who had fractured her wrist slipping on an icy pavement when she was fetching her husband’s supper beer.”<sup>159</sup>

Digby’s conclusion that the pain and uncertainty of surgery alienated patients from medical processes and practitioners<sup>160</sup> is replicated in North Bromwich. “Do you wonder that the poor devils we see in out-patients turn white and sick with terror when we tell them they ought to come into hospital?”<sup>161</sup> The working class’s deep-seated prejudice against hospitals, derived from fear and ignorance, is reflected in other Birmingham fiction and in fact. A patient admitted to hospital in Birchampton suffers a “paroxysm of terror,”<sup>162</sup> whilst Dayus recalls her mother’s refusal to call a doctor when miscarrying and her dying husband resisting hospital admission.<sup>163</sup> In similar extremis, North Bromwich hospitals strive to persuade “a wild-eyed woman, who swore that if her baby was going to die it wasn’t going to do so in any bloody hospital,”<sup>164</sup> that the consequences of inadequate diet, slum housing and community ignorance are not inevitable. Other factors hinder a mother from bringing her baby for treatment. “How could I get away? There’s seven of them, and the house looking like a pigsty, and the master’s dinner to cook. I haven’t got no time to spare for hospitals.”<sup>165</sup>

Maternal self-denial, Chinn shows, was invariably associated with family care, especially of

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<sup>157</sup> Upton, C. (2005) p 78

<sup>158</sup> [Tonna], Charlotte Elizabeth (1843-1844) p 428; Murray, D.C. (1894) vol 1, p 51

<sup>159</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 30

<sup>160</sup> Digby A. (1997) “The Patient’s View” in Loudon, I. (1997) *Western Medicine*, Oxford, University Press, pp 298-299

<sup>161</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 167

<sup>162</sup> Collins, M. (1896) p 193

<sup>163</sup> Dayus, K. (1991) p 51; (2000) p 73

<sup>164</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 362

<sup>165</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 361

children.<sup>166</sup> Digby concludes that patient reluctance to enter hospital may reflect fear of loss of autonomy, and that patients resisted hospital's institutional rules.<sup>167</sup> In North Bromwich, however, though John Fellows is the worst grumbler the Infirmary has ever treated,<sup>168</sup> other patients, once admitted, readily accommodate to hospital regime. "Removed from the ordinary responsibilities of wage-earning, fed and housed and tended, the patients lived together obedient to the unquestioned authority of the sister in charge."<sup>169</sup>

Amongst the various surgical interventions for which patients attend North Bromwich hospitals,<sup>170</sup> one in particular is noteworthy. "In the great general hospitals of North Bromwich, diphtheric tracheotomies were regarded as surgical emergencies."<sup>171</sup> The reference recalls Young's own experience when in 1912 in Brixham he successfully performed an emergency tracheotomy on two-year old Elsie Salsbury who was suffering from double pneumonia and diphtheria,<sup>172</sup> lending credence to Cunningham's assertion that a writer's life-story deserves serious consideration as a factor in the resultant writing.<sup>173</sup> The North Bromwich exemplar illustrates over 5,000 diphtheria cases admitted to Birmingham hospitals in the decade prior to World War I.<sup>174</sup>

Cases treated at North Bromwich hospitals reflect Birmingham illnesses and injuries arising from prevalent living-conditions.<sup>175</sup> Two truths are apparent. "In North Bromwich he

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<sup>166</sup> Chinn, C. (1988a) p 51

<sup>167</sup> Digby, A. (1994) pp 239-240, 301

<sup>168</sup> Young, F.B. (1921) *The Black Diamond*, p 69

<sup>169</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 370

<sup>170</sup> E.g. Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, pp 366-367; (1924) *Cold Harbour*, p153; (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 322

<sup>171</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 385

<sup>172</sup> Stabb, E. [nee Salsbury] (13.03.1980) Letter to A. Rankin

<sup>173</sup> Cunningham, V. (2002) pp 31-32

<sup>174</sup> Vince, C.A. (1923) p 129

<sup>175</sup> Dent, R.K. (1880) p 600; Lloyd, J.H. (1911) p 158; Morrison, J.T.J. (1926) *passim*; Hearn, G.W. (1987) *passim*

was able from the first to see disease at close quarters and get to grips with it.”<sup>176</sup> More than this the fictional medic recreates Young’s own hospital experience and “begins to learn not so much about bodies as about lives.”<sup>177</sup> It is when addressing medicine that Young’s fiction most closely approaches autobiography, sharing, as Burnett suggests, experiences often missed by the historian: occurrences which have shaped the autobiographer’s life; private recollections rather than public events.<sup>178</sup> Not only does Young’s portrait recreate verifiable realities, he expands and interprets, revealing the patients behind otherwise colourless statistics. “Gradually from the mass of evil-smelling humanity, personalities began to emerge... They were grouped under conventional generics: Daddy, Granny, Tommy, Polly and the like.”<sup>179</sup> Incorporal cases become sentient beings, sometimes named and with known injuries. “The patient who lay fighting for his life was a bricklayer’s labourer with a wife and six children.”<sup>180</sup> Following an industrial accident, coalminer “John Fellows, whose alcoholic history made him a bad subject for a fractured thigh-bone, lay in hospital.”<sup>181</sup> A family visit provides a glimpse into contemporary hospital conditions beyond the scope of annual reports.

They went to visit John Fellows in North Bromwich Infirmary. They found him lying in a long, clean ward festooned with Christmas decorations. The ominous erection of an apparatus of weights and pulleys at the foot of his bed emphasized his helplessness.<sup>182</sup>

When Fellows is eventually allowed home, aftercare is provided. “He came back with a Thomas’s splint on his thigh and instructions to attend the Infirmary as an out-patient in another month’s time.”<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 115

<sup>177</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) “The Doctor in Literature” p 30

<sup>178</sup> Burnett, J. (1982) p 11

<sup>179</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 355

<sup>180</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 392

<sup>181</sup> Young, F.B. (1921) *The Black Diamond*, p 66

<sup>182</sup> Young, F.B. (1921) *The Black Diamond*, p 68

<sup>183</sup> Young, F.B. (1921) *The Black Diamond*, pp 71-72

Fellow's industrial injury is covered by the 1897 Workmen's Compensation Act, which made certain employers liable in cases of accidents at work.<sup>184</sup> In North Bromwich hospitals, "apart from claimants under the new Workmen's Compensation Act... the professional exploiter of Sickness Societies had rarely appeared."<sup>185</sup> Established to assist the sick and elderly, friendly societies, to which members paid a few pence each week, proliferated in mid-nineteenth century Birmingham. Rawlinson identified 30,000 members in 213 societies, 159 of which met in public houses and beer shops.<sup>186</sup> Amongst the friendly societies, the Ancient Order of Free Gardeners, founded in eighteenth century Scotland, had arrived in England.<sup>187</sup> In the North Bromwich canon, having "paid into the Loyal United Free Gardeners for more than thirty years,"<sup>188</sup> Fellows, an indolent drunkard, determines to profit by the Workmen's Compensation Act and to plunder the Free Gardeners whilst spending his sick-pay at the pub rather than feeding his family.<sup>189</sup> An undoubted exploiter of sickness societies, Fellows perhaps represents an aspect of Young's own experience of Birmingham hospital patients, but certainly reinforces misgivings expressed by Rawlinson and Timmins<sup>190</sup> concerning money squandered on "conviviality" by many friendly society members. Indeed, parliamentary debate discouraged friendly societies from meeting in public houses "where a great portion of the money which might be dedicated to useful purposes was expended for liquor."<sup>191</sup> Fiction accomplishes what is difficult for statistical abstracts and the authority for translating data into portrait lies in the certainty that Young's North Bromwich is drawn not from imagination, but from faithful recording of his own experience.

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<sup>184</sup> Hill, C.P. (1961) p 299

<sup>185</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, pp 220-221

<sup>186</sup> Rawlinson's Report to the General Board of Health (1849) cited by Hopkins, E. (2001) p 83

<sup>187</sup> Cordery, S. (2003) *British Friendly Societies 1750-1914*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, pp 20, 130

<sup>188</sup> Young, F.B. (1921) *The Black Diamond*, p 72

<sup>189</sup> Young, F.B. (1921) *The Black Diamond*, pp 72-73

<sup>190</sup> Rawlinson's Report to the General Board of Health (1849) cited by Skipp, V. (1996) p 147; Hopkins, E. (2001) p 83; Timmins, S. (1866) p 687

<sup>191</sup> Cordery, S. (2003) p 82

## Midwives, Doctors and Druggists

The absence of an obstetrics ward at Birmingham's Queen's Hospital was redressed by "a Midwifery Department for the benefit of poor lying-in married women, who shall be attended in their own homes."<sup>192</sup> In North Bromwich, the lack of in-patient midwifery was compensated by similar provision. "The authorities of Prince's Hospital, lacking obstetrical wards, established an Out-Patient Department."<sup>193</sup> Responsibility for accouchements largely devolved upon medical students assisted by midwives.<sup>194</sup> Recalling the Birmingham of her childhood Dayus reports "if you couldn't afford a midwife one of the neighbours would oblige, which resulted in many a baby dying before it had even opened its eyes and many a young mother as well."<sup>195</sup> Young's fiction paints a similar picture. "The women who acted as professional midwives in the North Bromwich slums were usually widows who adopted this profession with no other qualification than a certain wealth of subjective experience."<sup>196</sup>

Concern regarding the effects of poor nursing produced the 1902 Midwives Act establishing central regulation, examination and registration. From 1905 unregistered women were forbidden to call themselves midwives, but allowed five year's grace to continue in paid practice.<sup>197</sup> Fear of legislation did not hinder the practice of the North Bromwich midwife "with a hazy conviction that if anything went wrong, she, the unregistered, would probably be committed for manslaughter."<sup>198</sup> Such comments further authenticate Young's North Bromwich canon when the historical background against which they are written is

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<sup>192</sup> Queen's Hospital: Fundamental Regulations XLIV cited by Morrison, J.T.J. (1926) p 224

<sup>193</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 436

<sup>194</sup> E.g. Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, pp 439-442; (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 195-207

<sup>195</sup> Dayus, K. (1982) p 2

<sup>196</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 440

<sup>197</sup> Vince, C.A. (1923) p 142

<sup>198</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 440

understood. In December 1904 221 Birmingham women, of whom only twenty-one were qualified, notified their intention to practice. Many of the rest were found to be extremely ignorant,<sup>199</sup> as indeed were their North Bromwich counterparts whose claim “‘I’ve had eight myself so I ought to know,’ did not atone for the fact that they didn’t actually know anything.”<sup>200</sup> By 1906 out of 208 Birmingham women who gave their profession as midwife just twenty-four were certificated.<sup>201</sup>

The effect of the Midwives Act was aptly described as to “throw more work into the hands of those who were cleaner and more competent.”<sup>202</sup> Nursing hygiene was a valid concern. The midwife’s fictional epitome is, of course, Dickens’ snuff-taking, gin-swilling Sarah Gamp and her crony Betsy Prig,<sup>203</sup> the value of whose appearance in literature Young affirms. “As far as gin-drinking nurses were concerned, there is no doubt that Dickens, by his ridicule, was the conscious reformer of scandalous abuses.”<sup>204</sup> In his own portrait of North Bromwich midwife Mrs Hipkiss, written from a medical background and, therefore, more clinically insightful and alarming, Young pursues the same agenda.

Her fingers were filthy and curved like the talons of a bird. He remembered the figures of mortality from puerperal fever... and saw that foul old woman crawling from case to case with the blind spores of death on her fingers.<sup>205</sup>

Chinn records an early twentieth century reference to the dirty hands and finger-nails of many midwives with slum practices.<sup>206</sup> In Birmingham it was reported that doctors generally refused to attend cases of puerperal fever because of the risk of spreading infection and that

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<sup>199</sup> Vince, C.A. (1923) p 142

<sup>200</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 440

<sup>201</sup> *Kelly’s Directory of Birmingham* (1906)

<sup>202</sup> Vince, C.A. (1923) p 143

<sup>203</sup> Dickens, C. (1844) *The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit*, London, Chapman & Hall, passim

<sup>204</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) “The Doctor in Literature” p 30

<sup>205</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 200-201

<sup>206</sup> Chinn, C. (1988a) p 140

60% of reported cases died.<sup>207</sup> Seventy years after Dickens wrote and thirty years after Mrs Hipkiss's North Bromwich service, Dayus records the Birmingham practice of midwife Sarah Bullivant "a small round woman... her face flushed red... rolling from side to side and smelling of drink."<sup>208</sup> In addition to addressing the hazards of childbirth, the social distinctions of early twentieth century confinements are also attested by the North Bromwich canon: "the working classes take ten days... ladies *always* a fortnight."<sup>209</sup> Dayus confirms the presence of neighbours at confinements in Birmingham's back streets<sup>210</sup> whilst in North Bromwich "a birth, in Red Barn Road, was a recognized public spectacle and social occasion."<sup>211</sup>

At the lower end of the medical social scale general practitioners with lock-up surgeries drew patients largely from subscribers to working-men's clubs and friendly societies.<sup>212</sup> In such practices where fees were clearly stated, practitioners were labelled sixpenny or shilling doctors.<sup>213</sup> In 1907 the *British Medical Journal* castigated these practitioners for underselling in an attempt to attract patients who could not be gained by merit.<sup>214</sup> Similar opprobrium is attached in North Bromwich where "these sixpenny chaps sometimes sail pretty close to the wind."<sup>215</sup> The stratum appears in Young's fiction as "sixpenny doctors running lock-up surgeries in North Bromwich slums,"<sup>216</sup> represented by Dr Altrincham-Harris's practices in Lower Sparkdale and "the squalid streets clustered within a stone's throw of North Bromwich

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<sup>207</sup> Vince, C.A. (1923) p 146

<sup>208</sup> Dayus, K. (1985) p 105

<sup>209</sup> Young, F.B. (1927) *Portrait of Clare*, p 315

<sup>210</sup> Dayus, K. (200) p 72

<sup>211</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 196

<sup>212</sup> Lawrence, C. (1994) p 68

<sup>213</sup> Digby, A. (1997) p 301

<sup>214</sup> Digby, A. (1994) p 51

<sup>215</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 526

<sup>216</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 537

town-hall.”<sup>217</sup> Here, supporting Waterhouse’s contention that in Birmingham’s back streets doctors were grossly overworked,<sup>218</sup> as many as a hundred patients are seen every day.<sup>219</sup> The authenticity of Young’s description of the premises:

a blue lamp with the word “Surgery” attached to what looked like an ordinary shop-window made opaque to the height of six feet from the pavement ... A partition of varnished deal divided the single room... wooden benches in the outer compartment...<sup>220</sup>

is corroborated by recollections of similar premises in Balsall Heath:

“the doctor’s surgery looked like it had been a shop... the window boarded to within a foot of the top... There were wooden benches on three sides. The fourth side was where the dispenser had a little trap-door”<sup>221</sup>

Young’s portrayal of Altrincham-Harris’s practice penetrates beyond the trap-door into the dispensary “disclosing a set of shelves and a counter stained with the rings of bottles and measuring glasses... a sink into which a tap dripped dismally,”<sup>222</sup> and gives detailed insight into the workings of the shilling doctor. “It was one of those lock-up surgeries, the medical equivalents of Woolworth’s Stores, that do a thriving, if undignified, trade among the poor at sixpence a consultation and sixpence extra for medicine.”<sup>223</sup>

Consultations with this doctor with “no time for refinements in this sort of practice,”<sup>224</sup> are perfunctory; diagnosis and prescription immediate. All patients (except the

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<sup>217</sup> These are actually two different practices. Charles Altrincham-Harris claims thirty year’s experience in the early twentieth century; thirty years later James Altrincham-Harris has been a medical practioner for thirty-five years. There is also a Dr Altrincham-Harris in practice at Mawne Heath. Young’s use of the same name for a similarly mean and unsavoury character effectively represents the species through a generic figure. - Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, pp 413, 418, 424; (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 519, 615, 616; (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 392

<sup>218</sup> Waterhouse, R. (1962) p 19

<sup>219</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 616

<sup>220</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 520

<sup>221</sup> Mahar, A. (1991) p 15

<sup>222</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 418

<sup>223</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 520

<sup>224</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 419



better-dressed who merit longer consultations and larger remedies) receive the same treatment, each leaving the surgery “after an interview that lasted perhaps two minutes, carrying a bottle of medicine.”<sup>225</sup> The shilling doctor’s world is one in which “academic methods of diagnosis and prescription were not followed.”<sup>226</sup> Altrincham-Harris dispenses solely from stock mixtures.

Number One: White Mixture. Number Two: Soda and Rhubarb. Number Three: Bismuth. You have to go easy with Number Three: Bismuth's expensive. Number Four: Febrifuge... Liquor Ammond Acet. Number Five: Iron and Mag.: Sulph. And so on... Number Nine: Mercury and Pot: Iod... Antifebrin- it's cheaper than phenacetin and caffen. And calomel for children.<sup>227</sup>

Young’s medical background guarantees the accuracy of the stock and explains some of its uses. For anaemia a “nauseous mixture of iron and sulphate of magnesia was the staple remedy in Prince's Pharmacopoeia.”<sup>228</sup> Febrifuge was used to relieve fevers; soda and rhubarb, bismuth and calomel to treat gastric disorders; mercury and potassium iodide in cases of venereal diseases.<sup>229</sup> The caveat concerning bismuth rings true. Whereas sodium bicarbonate and ammonium acetate cost 2d per ounce and magnesium sulphide 1d, salts of bismuth ranged between 9d and 2/6d.<sup>230</sup> Altrincham-Harris’s recommendation of antifebrin raises the possibility that though economy-led, North Bromwich shilling doctors were aware of the latest remedies. Antifebrin compound, used in the relief of migraine, was advertised by Buroughs, Wellcome & Co as a new drug in 1905.<sup>231</sup> At just this time distinguished North Bromwich physician Sir Arthur Weldon treats migraine with phenacetin and caffen.<sup>232</sup>

<sup>225</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 415

<sup>226</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 415

<sup>227</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, pp 419-420

<sup>228</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 176

<sup>229</sup> *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historic Principles* (1973)

<sup>230</sup> *Price List of Chemicals, Reagents & Co.* (1910) London, Philip Harris & Co Ltd

<sup>231</sup> *The Birmingham Medical Review* (1905) Birmingham, Percival Jones Ltd, p 249

<sup>232</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 604

Ailments treated by Dr Altrincham-Harris suggest the inadequate diet and unhealthy housing that frequently caused gastric problems and anaemia. “All the men were judged to be in need of White Mixture or Rhubarb: all the women demanded Iron and Mag: Sulph: all the children were treated with a treacly cough mixture or calomel powders.”<sup>233</sup> Childhood coughs and gastric complaints were regarded with particular alarm in Birmingham as their extreme forms of whooping cough and diarrhoea were virulent back street killers.<sup>234</sup> Chinn makes clear that “ill health and bad housing were twin evils which blighted the lives of the poor... The link between the two was inextricable.”<sup>235</sup>

Though the gulf between doctors and chemists yawns as wide in North Bromwich as in Trollope’s *Barsetshire*,<sup>236</sup> pharmaceutical suppliers perform a valuable service. “Edmondson’s the firm of wholesale druggists in North Bromwich,”<sup>237</sup> with its representative Mr Longmead,<sup>238</sup> is Young’s version of Philip Harris & Co, wholesale chemists of Birmingham,<sup>239</sup> with its representative, Mr Shorthouse. Both Jonathan Dakers and John Bradley are assisted in their search for general practices by Edmondson’s “who conducted an agency for the sale of medical practices”<sup>240</sup> and whose “travellers call on all the general practioners in the district.”<sup>241</sup> In this fiction is replicated Young’s own quest for a general practice. “Today I went into Philip Harris and saw Shorthouse. He is going down to Devonshire for the BMA conference and is sure that he’ll have something in which I can start

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<sup>233</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 421

<sup>234</sup> Upton, C. (2005) pp 32-33

<sup>235</sup> Chinn, C. (1999) p 7

<sup>236</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 383; Trollope, A. (1858) p 35

<sup>237</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 409

<sup>238</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 167

<sup>239</sup> Philip Harris & Co Ltd, Wholesale Chemists 144-146 Edmund Street and 128 Great Charles Street, *Kelly’s Directory of Birmingham* (1906)

<sup>240</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 296

<sup>241</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 167

in September.”<sup>242</sup> As a result of Shorthouse's efforts, Young settled in Brixham, where four hundred pounds (the exact purchase price of John Bradley’s practice<sup>243</sup>) bought a partnership with Dr Quicke of Cleveland House, New Road.<sup>244</sup>

Not every sixpenny or shilling doctor in North Bromwich ran such a lock-up practice as Young finds wanting in care and professionalism. A little farther up the medical social scale are practices which are also the doctor’s home. Dayus recalls one such example from early twentieth century Birmingham.

Dr MacKay lived in a bow-windowed shabby old house... He did all his consulting in his front room, and his back room was the dispensary... His visits were as low as sixpence, but even that was a lot for people to pay.<sup>245</sup>

Similar premises are vividly described in North Bromwich.

In every square mile stood at least one doctor's house, usually distinguished from the rest by its corner site... a brass plate bearing a name and string of qualifications... The visitor made his choice between two bell-pulls marked “day” and “night,” and the “speaking-tube”... on the right, a living-room, on the left the surgery, which had another entrance for patients opening on the street.<sup>246</sup>

Digby includes amongst the resources necessary for a successful practice a corner or double-fronted house with a separate surgery entrance.<sup>247</sup> That doctors frequently did reside at corner sites is substantiated by Birmingham evidence where, in 1898, 40% of the city’s physicians had their premises in such locations.<sup>248</sup>

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<sup>242</sup> FBY 333 (19.06.1907) Letter from Young to Jessie Hankinson

<sup>243</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 318

<sup>244</sup> FBY 336 (04.07.1907) Letter from Young to Jessie Hankinson

<sup>245</sup> Dayus, K. (1988) pp 3-4

<sup>246</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 296-297

<sup>247</sup> Digby, A. (1994) p 38

<sup>248</sup> Of the 89 doctors listed, 36 practised in houses at the following street junctions: G. Adamson: New Town Row/Pritchett St; R. Adamson: Watery Lane/Lower Dartmouth St; G. Allcock: Stratford Rd/Avondale Rd; O.W. Barratt: Holloway Head/Exeter St; J.G. Black: Harborne Rd/Highfield Rd; E.M. Boddy: Ashted Row/Vauxhall Rd; A. Bottle: Easy Row/Edmund St; C. Bradford: Warwick Rd/Broad Rd; G. Graves: Dudley Rd/Algernon Rd; C. Griffiths: Lozells Rd/Church St; T. Haddow: Lower Hurst St/Sherlock St; F. Hall: Coventry Rd/Gladys Rd; G.H. Hart: Albany Rd/Regent Rd; A. Irvine: High St/Coventry Rd; C. Johnson: Alcester Rd/All Saints’ Rd; J. Kneale: Stratford Rd/Fernely Rd; A. Lee: Birchfield Rd/Salisbury Rd; T. Lloyd: Leamington Rd/Bridge St; J. Lumby: Stanley Rd/Nechells Park Rd; R. Mackenzie: Vauxhall Grove/Vauxhall Rd; F. Maberley: Church

Young's loyalty to his erstwhile colleagues as a genre overrides his anti-Birmingham bias and though there may be rogues in the midst, the humblest of North Bromwich's doctors is honourable.

There was hardly a charlatan among them, and hardly, by modern standards, one well-qualified man... They did not pretend to be anything they were not; they admitted their professional "rustiness"; and yet these street-corner doctors who ministered to the medical needs of perhaps two-thirds of the industrial workers of North Bromwich were, with few exceptions, honest, hard-working men."<sup>249</sup>

Young was not alone in this approbation. Mettingham's Dr Thornhill is noted for "the firm, warm handshake that gave all those with whom he came in contact so much confidence."<sup>250</sup>

In an otherwise acerbic evaluation of Birmingham's medical profession, a correspondent to the *Daily Gazette* allowed, "The family doctor is deservedly esteemed. I know when the father is stricken, or the mother is in danger, or the child is dying... what consolation there is in his kindly assurance, what comfort in his smile."<sup>251</sup> Though acknowledging that summoning professional medical aid was a last resort for Birmingham's less well-off, Garratt appreciated the calming influence of the doctor who attended his mother's death.<sup>252</sup>

In the suburbs, Lawrence suggests, middle-class patients chose suitably genteel doctors.<sup>253</sup> Though too hedonistic to be considered genteel, Jacob Medhurst's

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Hill/Hampstead Rd; E. Malins: Newhall St/Cornwall St; T. McLauchlan: Booth St/Soho Rd; J. Melson: Newhall St/Lionel St; A. Prosser: Brearley St/Hockley St; S. Roberts: Havelock Rd/Washwood Heath Rd; H. Rogers: Bloomsbury St/Fowler St; C. Suckling: Newhall St/Lionel St; L. Tait: Newhall St/Brook St; J. Tighe: A.B. Row/Howe St; Dr Treston: Stratford Rd/Durham Rd; J. Trout: Monument Rd/Ingleby St; H. Ware: High St/Alcester Rd; J. Wingfield: Alcester Rd/Trafalgar Rd; G. Young: Camp Hill/Coventry Rd; J.M. Young: Edmund St/Church St. - *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham* (1898)

<sup>249</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 299-300

<sup>250</sup> Parkes, W. K. (1914) p 49

<sup>251</sup> *Scrutator* (1863) p 36

<sup>252</sup> Garratt, V.W. (1939) p 81

<sup>253</sup> Lawrence, C. (1994) p 67

recommendation as “a man of substance”<sup>254</sup> better suits Young’s North Bromwich. Representing the city’s prosperous middle-class doctors, Medhurst has a thriving practice in the Jewellers’ Quarter. His impressive, early-Victorian house (though Young cannot resist also cataloguing its “smoke-grimed brick, with pretensions to shabby dignity<sup>255</sup>) supports Loudon’s assertion that nineteenth century doctors’ residences place medicine on a par with other professions.<sup>256</sup> Medhurst’s “practice covered all classes of society, from industrial millionaires to small shop-keepers and wage-earners.”<sup>257</sup> A willing adherent to the shilling doctor’s limited vision, Medhurst also prescribes from stock remedies, but includes “cinchona-bark for malaria – which you’ll probably never see.”<sup>258</sup> The presence in a North Bromwich surgery of this unlikely drug again underlines Young’s penchant for building upon personal experience. Quinine (processed from cinchona-bark) was a vital constituent of his East African army medicine chest in 1916.<sup>259</sup> Medhurst makes higher charges than his shilling colleagues. “Half-a-crown was the fee for visit and medicine... Consultations (with medicine) in the surgery cost one-and-sixpence.”<sup>260</sup> A generation later Balsall Heath surgery charges equalled Medhurst’s fees for house-calls.<sup>261</sup> With the arrival of John Bradley as Medhurst’s newly-qualified assistant, Young highlights the tensions of medical evolution in North Bromwich. Whereas Medhurst “did not believe in germs and was opposed to the new ‘antiseptic nonsense’,”<sup>262</sup> Bradley “wanted to make an effort to practise scientific medicine.”<sup>263</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 227

<sup>255</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 227

<sup>256</sup> Loudon, I. (1986) *Medical Care and the General Practitioner 1750-1850*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, p 200

<sup>257</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 239

<sup>258</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 242-243

<sup>259</sup> Young, F.B. (1917) *Marching on Tanga*, p 71

<sup>260</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 247

<sup>261</sup> Mahar, A. (1991) p 14

<sup>262</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 242

<sup>263</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 296

By 1900 knighthoods were scattered throughout the Medical Directory and in cities like Birmingham, Lawrence finds, medical respectability was fostered by appointments to university medical faculties of doctors who practised within the community.<sup>264</sup> A North Bromwich paradigm is Sir Arthur Weldon, physician at North Bromwich Infirmary, with city-centre consulting rooms:<sup>265</sup> “an inspiring figure.”<sup>266</sup> This is no fictional exaggeration as Sir Robert Simon (with consulting rooms in Newhall Street<sup>267</sup>) upon whom Weldon is based,<sup>268</sup> was also inspiring. Appointed Assistant Physician at Birmingham General Hospital in 1879, Simon became Professor of Medical Jurisprudence at Mason College, then Professor of Therapeutics and Pharmacology in the University. Elected FRCP in 1895,<sup>269</sup> he held consultancies at various Midland hospitals,<sup>270</sup> was President of the British Medical Association’s Birmingham branch and an expert on brass-workers’ diseases.<sup>271</sup> In similar vein, Weldon was a “particularly sound physician with a reputation that was more than provincial... his speciality diseases affecting the heart or lungs.”<sup>272</sup> Young’s description of Weldon as a “stickler for the traditions and dignity of his profession”<sup>273</sup> suggests that he employs this portrait to continue engaging with North Bromwich’s hesitant medical evolution by presenting a reactionary who resists progress. Fiction, however, does not belie fact as Simon’s obituary declared “he never allowed his judgement to be disturbed by the eccentricities of medicine.”<sup>274</sup> Simon was “a very able teacher and his clinical lectures and

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<sup>264</sup> Lawrence, C. (1994) p 69

<sup>265</sup> Young, F.B. (1932) *The House under the Water*, p 582

<sup>266</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 386

<sup>267</sup> Robert Simon, 44 Newhall Street - *Kelly’s Directory of Birmingham* (1900)

<sup>268</sup> FBY 115 - ms notes for Young, J.B. (1962)

<sup>269</sup> *Birmingham Daily Post* (15.10.1914)

<sup>270</sup> Birmingham Dental Hospital; Lichfield; Nuneaton; Sutton Coldfield; Tewkesbury - *Birmingham Daily Post* (23.12.1914)

<sup>271</sup> *Birmingham Daily Post* (15.10.1914; 23.12.1914)

<sup>272</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, pp 386-387

<sup>273</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 386

<sup>274</sup> *Birmingham Daily Post* (23.12.1914)

classes found a great attraction to students of the medical school.”<sup>275</sup> Similarly, Weldon’s “tutorials were models of academic dignity and much frequented by students.”<sup>276</sup> Like his original Arthur Weldon is “a gentleman and a man of culture.”<sup>277</sup> Knighted in 1910, Robert Simon (who listed his leisure activities as golf, chess, whist and bridge) was related by marriage to Prime Minister Herbert Asquith, whom he frequently entertained.<sup>278</sup> That “Sir Arthur Weldon had an admirable manner with women patients or nurses,”<sup>279</sup> further accurately interprets the character of Sir Robert Simon who had “the gift of obtaining the confidence of his patients whom he always treated with the greatest consideration, while to nursing staff he was always most courteous.”<sup>280</sup>

A series of five short portraits in the North Bromwich canon depict identifiable originals from parallel Birmingham history. Like Birmingham, North Bromwich was home to a medical pioneer who became a martyr to his profession.

The first radiologist at North Bromwich Infirmary, who, handling x-rays before their malignant properties came to be realised, had lost first a hand and then a forearm and now the whole arm to the shoulder, yet still carried on with his deadly work.<sup>281</sup>

This graphic account depicts John Hall-Edwards, consultant to the General and Queen’s hospitals and Birmingham’s first radiologist. As a result of exposure to X-rays Hall-Edwards’ left hand and fingers of his right hand were amputated in 1908. This did not prevent him from continuing to work, as the General Hospital’s 1912 Report, which shows 2,000 patients X-

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<sup>275</sup> *Birmingham Daily Post* (23.12.1914)

<sup>276</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 386

<sup>277</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 386

<sup>278</sup> *Birmingham Daily Post* (23.12.1914)

<sup>279</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 386

<sup>280</sup> *Birmingham Daily Post* (23.12.1914)

<sup>281</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 528

rayed by Hall-Edwards, makes clear.<sup>282</sup> In its early Birmingham days radiology became an umbrella department for all medical electrical equipment.<sup>283</sup> Similarly North Bromwich has “a radiological specialist and master of all the new electrical gadgets whose use had become such a fashionable department of medicine.”<sup>284</sup>

According to Jessie Brett Young,<sup>285</sup> Prince’s Hospital’s “Beaton, professor of surgery, with his long, grey beard,”<sup>286</sup> depicts Queen’s Hospital’s professor of surgery Bennett May with his long grey beard. The choice of Beaton as the name of May’s fictional counterpart further suggests George Heaton, surgeon at Birmingham’s General Hospital and examiner in surgery at Young’s viva in 1906.<sup>287</sup> Prince’s Hospital is also served by North Bromwich’s



Left – Bennett May (1845-1937)

equivalent of Birmingham’s Joseph Priestley Smith,<sup>288</sup> “Hartley, the ophthalmologist, whose reputation was European.”<sup>289</sup> When Young reintroduces the same ophthalmologist into the canon, it is with an unmistakable name, appearance and location. “Mr Priestley... our most prominent specialist... a gentle-mannered creature with a greying beard.”<sup>290</sup> Like Smith, with

<sup>282</sup> Upton, C. (2001) “Ray of Hope for the Future of Medicine” and Banerjee, A (2001) “Tribute to a Forgotten Hospital Hero” in *The Birmingham Post* (19.05.2001)

<sup>283</sup> Waterhouse, R. (1962) p 107

<sup>284</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 731

<sup>285</sup> FBY 115 - ms notes for Young, J.B. (1962); Cheesewright, M. (1975) pp 30-31

<sup>286</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 353

<sup>287</sup> FBY 285 (06.11.1906) Letter from Young to Jessie Hankinson

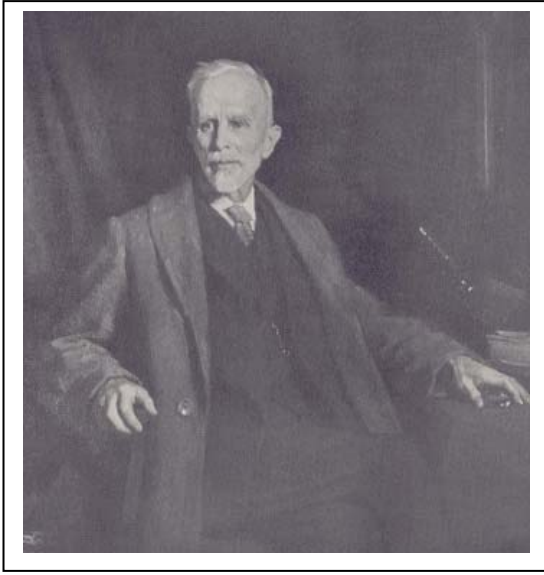
<sup>288</sup> FBY 115 - ms notes for Young, J.B. (1962);

<sup>289</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 353

<sup>290</sup> Young, F.B. (1932) *The House under the Water*, p 5

Joseph Priestly Smith (1845-19





rooms in Birmingham's Paradise Street, Priestley has rooms in central North Bromwich.<sup>291</sup> Appointed ophthalmic surgeon at Queen's Hospital in 1875, Smith, winner of his profession's glittering prizes,<sup>292</sup> was a leading European authority on glaucoma, holding fellowships of the Royal Colleges of England and Ireland, and membership of the Royal and Imperial Medical Society of Vienna.<sup>293</sup> In late nineteenth and early twentieth century Birmingham a homecare service by which women could be attended by trained doctors rather than untrained midwives was organised by Queen's Hospital obstetrics officer C.E. Purslow,<sup>294</sup> whose North Bromwich counterpart was the similarly named Jimmy Purswell.<sup>295</sup>

Professor of Anatomy at North Bromwich Charles Borden is clearly intended as a homophonous parallel with Professor of Anatomy at Birmingham Thomas Furneaux Jordan. Both were Midlanders born in the 1830s.<sup>296</sup> Jordan studied at Birmingham's Queen's College, becoming the town's first hospital surgeon to hold a consultancy without a general practice.<sup>297</sup> Borden studied at North Bromwich's Prince's College, becoming "the only 'honorary' set up as a pure consultant without dabbling in general practice."<sup>298</sup> Morrison presents Jordan as an "artist, whose ambidextrous draughtsmanship assisted him greatly as a teacher;"<sup>299</sup> Borden

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<sup>291</sup> *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham* (1900); Young, F.B. (1932) *The House under the Water*, p 580

<sup>292</sup> Jacksonian Prize (1879); Middlemore Prize (1890); Nettleship Gold Medal (1904); Lucian Howe Medal of American Ophthalmological Association (1927); Gullstrand Gold Medal of Swedish Medical Society (1932) – Morrison, J.T.J. (1926) p 153; *Birmingham Post* (01.05.1933); *Birmingham Evening Despatch* (01.05.1933)

<sup>293</sup> Morrison, J.T.J. (1926) p 153

<sup>294</sup> *Birmingham Post* (06.03.1940); Morrison, J.T.J. (1926) p 217

<sup>295</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 524

<sup>296</sup> Morrison, J.T.J. (1926) p 149; Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 140, 179

<sup>297</sup> Morrison, J.T.J. (1926) pp 149-150

<sup>298</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 179

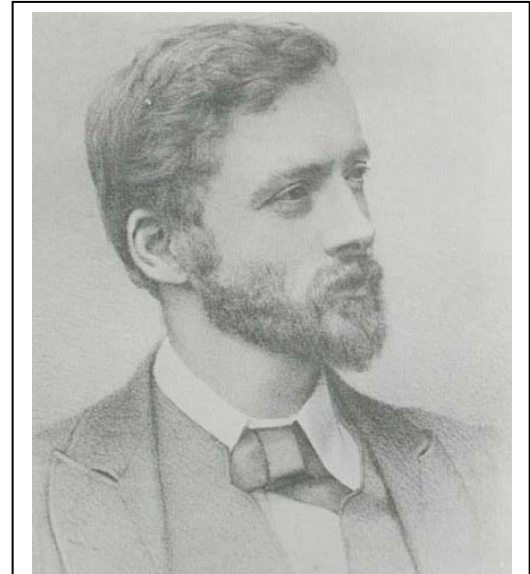
<sup>299</sup> Morrison, J.T.J. (1926) p 149

was “a brilliant draughtsman, never happier than when, in the middle of a circle of students, he could display his virtuosity by dashing off sketches on a blackboard.”<sup>300</sup>

Longer portraits give valuable insight into the characters, reputations and working practices of two famous personalities from Birmingham’s medical history.

Casualty Surgeon at Queen’s Hospital and Professor of Surgery in the University during Young’s student-days, Birmingham-born George Jordan Lloyd was the son of John Lloyd, Professor of Anatomy at Queen’s College.<sup>301</sup>

Jordan Lloyd was Young’s inspiration for Lloyd Moore, “a North Bromwich fellow... son of the old professor of Anatomy,”<sup>302</sup> who appears across



George Jordan Lloyd (1854-1913)

the North Bromwich canon.<sup>303</sup> As a Queen’s College student Jordan Lloyd took all the honours,<sup>304</sup> an achievement equalled by Lloyd Moore an “unquestionable genius in North Bromwich Medical School.”<sup>305</sup> Morrison extols Jordan Lloyd’s skills: “a brilliant surgeon... endowed with more than a spark of genius.”<sup>306</sup> His fictional counterpart is similarly praised: “brilliant... outstanding surgical genius.”<sup>307</sup> Jordan Lloyd was famed for his operative

<sup>300</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 156

<sup>301</sup> Morrison, J.T.J. (1926) p 181

<sup>302</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 188

<sup>303</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*; (1924) *Cold Harbour*; (1927) *Portrait of Clare*; (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*; (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*

<sup>304</sup> *Birmingham Daily Post* (05.04.1913)

<sup>305</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 363

<sup>306</sup> Morrison, J.T.J. (1926) p 181

<sup>307</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 353; (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 125

dexterity,<sup>308</sup> as is Lloyd Moore whose “scalpel was a part of him in the same way as a perfect rider is part of his horse.”<sup>309</sup> Similarly the factual surgeon’s famed magnetic personality<sup>310</sup> is replicated in his fictional counterpart. “Not only in North Bromwich but among all the towns and villages of the Mercian Plain... the presence of the surgeon’s frail, boyish figure... its red beard framing a face whose pallor resembled that of an agonized Christ, was an inspiration in itself.”<sup>311</sup> H.W. Pooler, who as a student knew Jordan Lloyd, confirms both the factual basis of these messianic qualities and Young’s bias in creating the portrait. “On one occasion I met Brett Young ... I said to him, ‘I think you must have loved Jordan Lloyd.’ His answer was a simple, ‘I did.’”<sup>312</sup> In North Bromwich, however, Young creates no plaster saint. “Lloyd Moore was no respecter of persons; his wit was ruthless; his language was unvarnished and foul... L.M. was a man of the people.”<sup>313</sup> Pooler admits that in his recollection Jordan Lloyd’s language was not as “impressive” as Young depicts,<sup>314</sup> whilst Young’s fictional summary is less kind than was the contemporary press to Jordan Lloyd who “was always natural and unaffected, irrespective of the social position of the persons in whose company he happened to be.”<sup>315</sup>

In his depiction of Jordan Lloyd Young employs his fictional portrait to engage with evolving conditions in North Bromwich hospitals. “In the theatre at Lloyd Moore’s operations... everything was clean and bright from the frosted glass of the roof and the porcelain walls to the shining instruments newly sterilised in trays on glass-topped tables.”<sup>316</sup>

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<sup>308</sup> Morrison, J.T.J. (1926) p 181

<sup>309</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 367

<sup>310</sup> Morrison, J.T.J. (1926) p 181

<sup>311</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, pp 125-126

<sup>312</sup> Pooler, H.W. (1948) pp 46-47

<sup>313</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, pp 363-364

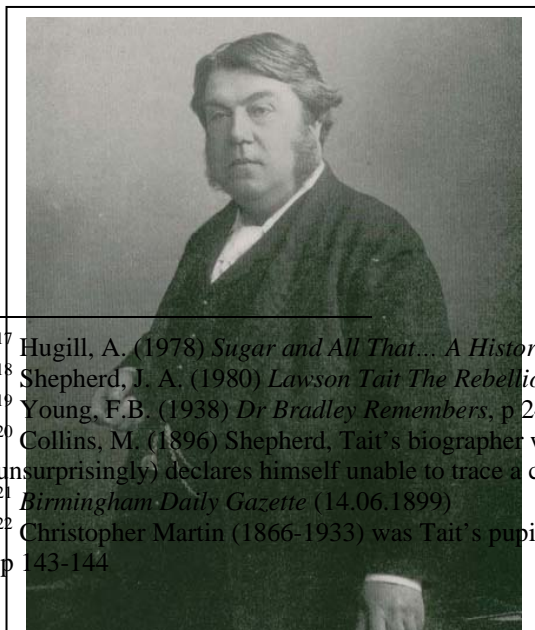
<sup>314</sup> Pooler, H.W. (1948) p 47

<sup>315</sup> *Birmingham Daily Post* (20.03.1914)

<sup>316</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p 365

It is not surprising that Young should use an undoubted hero from his own experience as an exemplar of good practice.

Though present only in *Dr Bradley Remembers*, North Bromwich surgeon Simpson-Lyle, a thinly-disguised portrait of Birmingham surgeon Robert Lawson Tait, is meticulously described. As usual Young links his fictional name with fact. The association of Tait with Lyle would have been appreciated when *Dr Bradley Remembers* was published, the company resulting from the merger of Henry Tate's and Abram Lyle's rival sugar refineries being established since 1921.<sup>317</sup> Simpson is not merely Lawson's homophonous equivalent, but a reminder of the unproven rumour, encouraged by Tait, that he was the illegitimate son of chloroform pioneer James Young Simpson.<sup>318</sup> The enigma is transferred to North Bromwich where "Lyle's origins were wrapped in a mystery which he exploited as part of his theatrical make-up."<sup>319</sup> Simpson-Lyle was not Lawson Tait's first fictional appearance. That came as Culverton Brand in Collins' *Birchampton*,<sup>320</sup> a portrayal which, Tait's obituary declared, "formed a more accurate estimate than his colleagues and friends have been able to accomplish... the portrait truthful and the facts consistent with those known."<sup>321</sup>



Robert Lawson Tait (1845-1899)

Lawson Tait was "a short stout man with a magnificent head, corpulent body, podgy legs, small hands and feet" wrote an assistant.<sup>322</sup> "A

<sup>317</sup> Hugill, A. (1978) *Sugar and All That... A History of Tate and Lyle*, London, Gentry Books, p 76

<sup>318</sup> Shepherd, J. A. (1980) *Lawson Tait The Rebellious Surgeon (1845-1899)*, Lawrence, Colorado Press, pp 7-8

<sup>319</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 245

<sup>320</sup> Collins, M. (1896) Shepherd, Tait's biographer wrongly attributes the novel to Mabel Wilkins and (unsurprisingly) declares himself unable to trace a copy - Shepherd, J. A. (1980) pp 146, 212

<sup>321</sup> *Birmingham Daily Gazette* (14.06.1899)

<sup>322</sup> Christopher Martin (1866-1933) was Tait's pupil and then his assistant from 1899. - Shepherd, J. A. (1980) pp 143-144

frank epicurean,” declared his obituary, Tait was “a connoisseur of wines... the most hardy of diners.”<sup>323</sup> According to the *British Medical Journal* “he showed a want of respect for age and authority remarkable even for Birmingham.”<sup>324</sup> His obituary declared him “blunt-spoken and masterful to the point of rudeness... more candid than courteous,”<sup>325</sup> whilst to Jordan Lloyd “as a surgeon he was a genius.”<sup>326</sup> In North Bromwich Simpson-Lyle who “on Saturdays always supped on oysters... a good deal of champagne accompanied this orgy,” becomes “that great bloated insolent, foul-mouthed, foul-minded genius.”<sup>327</sup> Shepherd declares this “a cruel picture which exaggerates darker shades of Tait’s character.”<sup>328</sup> There is, however, nothing in this description of Simpson-Lyle not founded in fact or previously asserted by Collins whose Culverton Brand is “very short, very broad with extremely short arms... very ugly... eats with his elbows on the table... a brute to work under... swears horribly at operations... a marvellous genius.”<sup>329</sup>

Robert Lawson Tait was born and educated in Edinburgh, qualifying LRCS, LRCP in 1866.<sup>330</sup> Simpson-Lyle is likewise “an Edinburgh man.”<sup>331</sup> Both Tait in fact and Lyle in fiction were acquainted with Joseph Lister<sup>332</sup> and antagonistic toward his antiseptic use of carbolic acid. Tait, according to Shepherd became “a most vehement and persistent critic of Lister,” numbering himself amongst those “opposed to antiseptic doctrines and practices.”<sup>333</sup> In North Bromwich “Simpson-Lyle fights antiseptic surgery tooth and nail... denying that

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<sup>323</sup> *Llandudno Advertiser* (22.06.1899)

<sup>324</sup> *British Medical Journal* (1899) vol 2, p1561

<sup>325</sup> *The Birmingham Daily Gazette* (14.06.1899)

<sup>326</sup> *British Medical Journal* (1911) vol 2, p 206

<sup>327</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 171-172, 240-241

<sup>328</sup> Shepherd, J. A. (1980) p 146

<sup>329</sup> Collins, M. (1896) pp 133, 145, 152, 153

<sup>330</sup> Shepherd, J. A. (1980) pp 1, 3, 13

<sup>331</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 165

<sup>332</sup> Shepherd, J. A. (1980) p 20; Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 165

<sup>333</sup> Shepherd, J. A. (1980) pp 77, 107

germs have anything whatever to do with disease!”<sup>334</sup> Eschewing Lister’s antiseptic techniques, Tait, Shepherd stresses, “prepared his hands by careful toilet with soap and hot water and a nail brush,” reporting 97% success in one hundred consecutive operations performed “without any of the Listerian details.”<sup>335</sup> At Brand’s Birchampton hospital, patients’ rooms are not cleaned for six weeks, whilst visiting doctors are amazed that surgical instruments lay only in water.<sup>336</sup> Simpson-Lyle’s North Bromwich success rate is attributed to “the devil’s own luck and soap-and-water.”<sup>337</sup>

Lawson Tait’s obituary emphasizes his world-wide reputation.<sup>338</sup> A pioneer of intra-peritoneal surgery and an authority on obstetrics,<sup>339</sup> Tait was appointed consultant at numerous hospitals.<sup>340</sup> Winner of BMA’s Hastings Gold Medal in 1874, he became a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons (Edinburgh) in 1870, of the Obstetrical Society in 1871 and of the American Gynaecological Society in 1883.<sup>341</sup> Five years later he was appointed Professor of Gynaecology at Birmingham’s Queen’s College.<sup>342</sup> A member of the Surgical Society of Ireland and a contributor to the *Dublin Quarterly Journal of Medicine*, Tait attended Dublin conferences,<sup>343</sup> as did his North Bromwich equivalent.<sup>344</sup> During his thirty-two year career, Tait published ten books and monographs and over three hundred medical papers.<sup>345</sup> It was his name which ensured the world-wide reputation of Birmingham Women’s

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<sup>334</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 165, 172

<sup>335</sup> Shepherd, J. A. (1980) pp 103, 106

<sup>336</sup> Collins, M. (1896) pp 171, 196

<sup>337</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 520

<sup>338</sup> *Llandudno Advertiser* (15.06.1899)

<sup>339</sup> Morrison, J.T.J. (1926) p 151

<sup>340</sup> West Bromwich, Skelton Private Asylum, Liverpool Women’s Hospital, Nottingham Samaritan Hospital for Women, Wolverhampton Dispensary for Women and Brooklyn Hospital for Women – Shepherd, J. A. (1980) p 33

<sup>341</sup> Shepherd, J. A. (1980) pp 29, 35, 38, 156

<sup>342</sup> Morrison, J.T.J. (1926) p 151

<sup>343</sup> Shepherd, J. A. (1980) pp 14, 22, 80, 90, 132, 143

<sup>344</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 429

<sup>345</sup> Shepherd, J. A. (1980) pp 216, 239

Hospital.<sup>346</sup> When success came Tait, like his fictional counterparts, was fond of large fees.<sup>347</sup> “Brand’s a man of business and loves money;” Lyle “never lifted a scalpel for less than fifty guineas.”<sup>348</sup> Collins does not exaggerate in declaring “there’s no operator in the world to equal Culverton Brand,”<sup>349</sup> any more than Young exaggerates in describing Simpson-Lyle as “a great surgeon with a world reputation; far and away the biggest name we have in North Bromwich.”<sup>350</sup>

Both Lawson Tait in fact and Simpson-Lyle in fiction declined the baronetcy which Prime Minister Gladstone offered.<sup>351</sup> In the mid 1890s occurred what Shepherd describes as “a regrettable episode which had more to do with Tait’s downfall than any other factor.”<sup>352</sup> Caroline Burnell, a nurse who worked with Tait, accused him of fathering her child. Tait denied the charge and sought support from the BMA which, declaring this a private matter, declined to intervene. The case never came to court and Tait abandoned attempts to clear his name. The accusation was widely believed and Tait’s reputation and practice declined.<sup>353</sup> In North Bromwich, “Simpson-Lyle knew a good deal about women ... as was proved by the scandal that broke him,” presenting “showy knick-knacks to the pretty ladies with whom he diverted himself in the green-room of the Queen’s Theatre.”<sup>354</sup> Tait’s obituary pronounced him “a regular first-nighter on every visit of leading companies to Birmingham.”<sup>355</sup> Shepherd

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<sup>346</sup> Shepherd, J. A. (1980) p 32

<sup>347</sup> *Birmingham Daily Gazette* (14.06.1899)

<sup>348</sup> Collins, M. (1896) p 147; Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 248

<sup>349</sup> Collins, M. (1896) p 131

<sup>350</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 165

<sup>351</sup> Shepherd, J. A. (1980) p 183; Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 239

<sup>352</sup> Shepherd, J. A. (1980) p 180

<sup>353</sup> Shepherd, J. A. (1980) pp 174-180

<sup>354</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 245, 251

<sup>355</sup> *Llandudno Advertiser* (22.06.1899)

is more explicit declaring “the allegations against Tait’s morals – his pleasure in associating with the theatrical world – accentuated criticism and suspicion.”<sup>356</sup>

Retiring to Llandudno, Lawson Tait continued attending his Birmingham consulting rooms twice weekly. Shortly before his death, aged 54, he purchased a Llandudno farm intending opening a sanatorium and chaired a planning meeting for the erection of a new theatre in the town.<sup>357</sup> His estate, valued at just £9,571 was, in Shepherd’s view, “a meagre total for a consultant of his time.”<sup>358</sup> Similarly Simpson-Lyle died without reaching his allotted span, without wealth and in harness.<sup>359</sup>

North Bromwich doctors, whether interpreting identifiable historical characters or genre portraits, present a real-life picture of Birmingham’s late nineteenth and early twentieth century medicine built on Young’s own experience. Where doctors’ names do not thinly disguise their originals, he chose names carefully as his reminder “Medical Directory to eliminate libellous names”<sup>360</sup> confirms. Thus Young makes no recourse to such parodies as Trollope’s *Dr Fillgrave* or Dickens’ *Dr Fee*.<sup>361</sup>

Chapter Seven’s analysis of medicine in North Bromwich reveals Young describing a subject of which he has intimate, professional first-hand knowledge shaped in and by the city about which he writes. His portrayal stands within the medical literary tradition of Sterne,

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<sup>356</sup> Shepherd, J. A. (1980) p 195

<sup>357</sup> *Birmingham Daily Gazette* (14.06.1899); *Llandudno Advertiser* (15.06.1899)

<sup>358</sup> Shepherd, J. A. (1980) p 190

<sup>359</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 528

<sup>360</sup> FBY 89 (n.d.) Notebook for *Dr Bradley Remembers*. Such painstaking care did not guarantee immunity. The serialization of *Dr Bradley Remembers* brought a litigious letter over the use of the eponymous hero’s name from M. Bradley, whose father was a well-known Isle-of-Wight doctor. There is no evidence that the case was ever prosecuted. - FBY 2568 (08.08.1938) Letter from M. Bradley to Young

<sup>361</sup> Trollope, A. (1858) p 314; Dickens, C. (October 1837) “Full Report of the First Meeting of the Mudfog Association” in *Bentley’s Miscellany*; edition cited (1970) Geneva, Heron Books, *Sketches by Boz*, vol II, p 353



Trollope, Dickens and Eliot, and accords with contemporary accounts of Birmingham residents Thorne, Garratt and Dayus. Within this framework Young brings his own understanding and insight to bear demonstrating that Shaw's condemnatory "the medical profession has an infamous character,"<sup>362</sup> is not the whole truth. North Bromwich's medical life is recounted from a doctor's rather than a patient's stance. More than layman's familiarity with medical terminology is frequently assumed; epidemics and medical legislative milestones help determine chronology; patients, though encumbered by the prejudices of their class and era, are generally grateful for their treatment and quiescently subservient to hospital regimes.

Personal experience of Birmingham's Queen's and General Hospitals shapes Young's Prince's Hospital and Infirmary. Demonstrably specific to the institutions on which they are based, North Bromwich hospitals also reflect medical development's wider late nineteenth and early twentieth century framework. The importance of Lister's antiseptic revolution, for which the North Bromwich canon is unashamed apologetics, is particularly stressed. Though Birmingham's working-class was well served by dispensaries providing medical attention and trained nurses, these have no North Bromwich counterpart.<sup>363</sup> Consistent with Young's practice of writing only about what he knows, Birmingham hospitals<sup>364</sup> of which he did not have first-hand experience do not appear.

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<sup>362</sup> Shaw, G.B. (1934) p 237

<sup>363</sup> A General Dispensary was established in Temple Row in 1793, moving to Union Street in 1808. In his will (1875) Sands Cox left £12,000 for the establishment and endowment of three dispensaries (Farm Street, Hockley; Sherbourne Road, Balsall Heath; Rocky Lane Nechells) "for the industrious classes who cannot pay the usual professional charges." In 1908 Birmingham dispensaries dealt with 74,695 patients. - Lloyd, J.H. (1911) pp 166-167; Morrison, J.T.J. (1926) pp 201, 236-237

<sup>364</sup> See p 29

Young emphasizes change within North Bromwich general practice where traditionalists employ avant-garde assistants who advance medical progress. Unlike North Bromwich's usual utilitarian ethos, with its commercial concerns, though there are exceptions, particularly amongst sixpenny doctors whom, with the contemporary medical establishment, Young particularly denigrates, most North Bromwich practitioners are less concerned with making money than serving patients.

With the exception of Collins' detailed account of Culverton Brand's Birchampton hospital, other Birmingham fiction contemporary with Young's remains almost entirely silent on the subject of medical life. The paramount importance accorded to medicine in North Bromwich reflects Young's unique status as the sole representative of the eleven Birmingham authors considered in this thesis to have entered the medical profession. His years of training in Birmingham Medical School and hospitals, his time assisting Dr Bryce in Aston and Dr McCall in Hockley,<sup>365</sup> lend authentic life and substance to the North Bromwich canon. Surgeons under whom he trained unmistakably appear; patient genres are recreated; unforgettable encounters from home visits move from fact to fiction. In his portrait of North Bromwich's medical life Young propounds his most overt message: reform within the city's hospitals and general practices. Consequently, it is in this aspect of its life that North Bromwich enjoys its most positive image. Despite resistance to change and individual recalcitrance, at "North Bromwich all suffering humanity was welcome to receive the highest medical and surgical skill."<sup>366</sup>

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<sup>365</sup> See p 10

<sup>366</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 316

**FRANCIS BRETT YOUNG'S BIRMINGHAM**

*North Bromwich – City of Iron*

**CHAPTER EIGHT**

**CONCLUSIONS**

North Bromwich – a familiar face which, though age may change its features, remains always essentially the same.

Francis Brett Young – *Dr Bradley Remembers*

The purpose of this thesis has been neither to evaluate the literary merits of Francis Brett Young's works, nor to claim him as a great writer (though he was certainly an insightful one) but rather to investigate his Birmingham portrait. Young personally knew and carefully studied Birmingham, exposing it to a wide audience, expressing through a creative voice the painstaking observation which medical training encouraged and developed. My investigation concludes that, in its convincingly realistic evocation of Birmingham, the North Bromwich canon merits serious consideration as a valid record of Birmingham's history and topography between the Franco-Prussian and Second World Wars.

Though it is obvious that Young's Birmingham must be examined principally from its primary source - the text of the North Bromwich canon, the validity of that text beyond its original integrity as fiction needs to be measured within a wider context. The potential probity of the novel as more than narrative has been established by numerous studies.<sup>1</sup> Cazamian shows the novelists' capacity for adapting existing ideas rather than creating new ones as offering insights more palatable than the mere rehearsal of fact. Fiction, as both Kovačević and Cunningham have demonstrated, has the capacity to alter perception of facts and takes its place within the context of contemporary historical relevance. The importance of telling things how they are: contemporary social conditions, real life, real people, real places, as fiction's legitimate backdrop is clarified in investigations such as those of Swinnerton, Dyos and Reeder, Smith, Keating and Dentith. That the novel may become biased, judgemental caricature despite its adherence to reality is addressed in the studies of Kettle, Howard and Tosh. A balanced conclusion, allowing novels the same recognition and accountability as

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<sup>1</sup> See pp 33-37

other texts as valid historical source, is reached in the works of Jameson, Light and Gay. Their arguments' validity may be illustrated from the domestic nail-trade.

Industrial and topographical surveys by Johnson and Wise<sup>2</sup> and (amplified by charts) the West Midland Group<sup>3</sup> reveal domestic nail-making as the most widely-distributed light manufacture employing coal and iron in the Birmingham area. Nail-makers, poorly-paid and poorly-housed, rank low in the social scale. Both studies acknowledge the industry's demise. Censuses identify individual cases such as Quinton's Thomas Haycock, active as a nail-maker in 1841 but "pauper, formerly nailer" by 1851.<sup>4</sup> Such comparatively bald statements are enhanced by Young's vivid and painstakingly-researched account of the hardship of nailers' lives and the industry's decline accelerated by competition from cheap Belgian imports.<sup>5</sup>

The complementarity of diverse sources is exploited in such works as Chinn's *Poverty amidst Prosperity*<sup>6</sup> which cites a range of evidence including reports, socio-political studies, novels and photographs.<sup>7</sup> The importance of art as social history, whether it be life in sixteenth century Netherlands captured by Bruegel's *Peasant Wedding*<sup>8</sup> or pedestrians in Southall's *Corporation Street, Birmingham in March 1914*,<sup>9</sup> is self-evident: not only informing, but entertaining. This resource was greatly extended by the development of the

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<sup>2</sup> Johnson, B.L.C. & Wise, M.J. (1950) "The Black Country 1800-1950" in Kinvig, R.H. et al (eds) (1950), p 238

<sup>3</sup> West Midland Group, The (1948) pp 29,36,38, 118,119,122-123;148

<sup>4</sup> Cited in Hall, M. (2000) *Dark and Wicked Place: Quinton in the mid 1800s*, Hales Owen, Quinton Methodist Church Council, p 65

<sup>5</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies*, pp 94-98, 115; (1937) *They Seek a Country*, pp 26-28; FBY 90 (n.d.) Notebook for *Far Forest* contains detailed notes on nail-making – see p 17, footnote 97; Gregory, K.R. (n.d.) *The Nailers*, Dudley, Teachers' Centre, p 6

<sup>6</sup> Chinn, C. (1995)

<sup>7</sup> E.g. City of Birmingham Health Department (1910) *Report on the Industrial Employment of Married Women and Infantile Mortality*; Engels, F. (1845) *The Condition of the Working Class in England*; Kingsley, C. (1850); photograph of *Cromwell Street, Nechells, Birmingham* (c1905) pp 159-161, 163-164, 174

<sup>8</sup> Bruegel, P., *Peasant Wedding* (c1567) in Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

<sup>9</sup> Southall, J. (1915) *Corporation Street, Birmingham in March 1914* in Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery

camera, generating such archives as Frith's record of daily life throughout Britain since 1860.<sup>10</sup> Contemporary popular history series such as *Britain in Old Photographs* and *Images of England*,<sup>11</sup> containing minimal textual interpretation, are a development of Dent's nineteenth century Birmingham histories<sup>12</sup> which employed pictures to confirm text. Clearly there is a strong argument for historical study to engage analytically with disparate sources among which novels claim validity.

Of particular relevance in further establishing the North Bromwich context are the studies of Twitchett, Leclaire, Jay, Cavaleiro, Cannadine and McDonald<sup>13</sup> who, in varying depths, focus specifically upon Young, highlighting various aspects of his life and works according to their own interests and intentions. Readily identifiable are a number of common themes: medicine, social conditions, urban versus rural, a regional perspective - the Black Country and its green borderlands. Young's writings are shown to convey powerfully and convincingly the sense of place which was personally important. This characteristic, particularly potent when describing the English Midlands, justifies critics writing from a Black Country stance in locating Young on their map. Authenticity of detail in Young's writing, honed through personal experience and careful observation is noted, as is the bias from which he writes: rural tranquillity as escape from industrialism's despoliation of person and place. Though not uncritically acclaimed, Young's novels are recognized as a valuable complement to demographic and economic study and as essential source material for further study of West Midlands social history. More than works of contemporary fiction, Young's novels have themselves become indispensable historical evidence.

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<sup>10</sup> Hardy, C. (2000) *Francis Frith's West Midlands*, Salisbury, Frith Book Co, pp 8, 10

<sup>11</sup> Published by Sutton Publishing Ltd & Tempus Publishing Ltd respectively

<sup>12</sup> Dent, R.K. (1880); (1894)

<sup>13</sup> See pp 3-5; 14-15; 16; 20; 22; 34; 35; 37; 50; 54; 78; 75; 89; 115; 122; 130; 135; 151; 154; 156; 162; 172; 190; 194; 195; 196; 197; 198; 199; 203; 206; 209; 217; 220; 252

Encouraged by the above findings, this thesis accepts the general probity of Young's writings as valid source material for detailed historical and topographical investigation and proceeds to focus upon one specific aspect which has not previously been thoroughly explored: the North Bromwich canon. If as Young maintains, "with every good novel we embark upon a voyage of adventure in which, even though the course be familiar, our own senses, dulled by custom, are reinforced by the acuteness of the novelist's,"<sup>14</sup> the voyage will lead to new insights. Young's North Bromwich canon makes available a wealth of information about Birmingham, presented not in the more usual format of committee reports, historical surveys and tables of statistics, but via the more friendly and accessible vehicle of the novel. This fact alone makes the North Bromwich canon a uniquely important source of local history, yielding a rich vein of invaluable historical record and contributing significantly to knowledge of Birmingham during the closing decades of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries.

Reflecting condition-of-England, urban-industrial and regional novels, North Bromwich's literary context is clearly discernable. Within Young's grandparents' lifetimes<sup>15</sup> novelists turned their attention to the condition of England: society's widening divide; miseries consequent upon inadequate infrastructures for increased urban dwelling. Young's familiarity with the writings of Kingsley and Dickens<sup>16</sup> suggests sympathy with the genre. The North Bromwich canon continues to address urban deprivation and pollution for which, unlike earlier novelists, Young rarely offers cures, leaving readers to their own conclusions.

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<sup>14</sup> Young, F. B. (March 1929) "Confessions of a Novelist" pp 536-537

<sup>15</sup> His paternal grandparents, Caroline Brett and Thomas Young were born, respectively in 1819 and 1820. His maternal grandparents, John Jackson and Sarah Beazeley were born in 1833 and 1835. See – Hall, M. (July 2002) "Family Trees Associated with Francis Brett Young; 5. The Direct Line" in *Francis Brett Young Society Journal* 47, pp 10-11

<sup>16</sup> See pp 9-10, 48-49

Equally familiar through Edgeworth and Scott<sup>17</sup> with the regional genre, Young as definitively locates North Bromwich to Birmingham as Hardy located Casterbridge to Dorchester,<sup>18</sup> similarly adopting new names for recognisable settings. The shift from Edgeworth's rural Ireland to Young's industrial Midlands exemplifies a new orientation. Early urban-industrial novels largely addressed life in London and the industrial North.<sup>19</sup> Though rural settings remained popular,<sup>20</sup> by the time of the North Bromwich canon the industrial focus had widened, embracing Bennett's Potteries, Lawrence's Nottinghamshire and Holtby's Yorkshire.<sup>21</sup> Young was not the first novelist to write about Birmingham. Passing (and scathing) references are noted in novels by Austen, Dickens, Disraeli, Gaskell, Brontë and Hardy,<sup>22</sup> each anticipating North Bromwich. From its earliest fictional appearances Birmingham insinuates Young's despoiled City of Iron.

By 1913 when *Undergrowth*, Young's first North Bromwich novel, was published, Tonna, Murray, Gissing and Collins<sup>23</sup> had already used Birmingham as fictional locations. Before 1956, when *Wistanslow*, the last North Bromwich novel appeared, Parkes, Green, Hampson, Chamberlain, Tiltman and Allen<sup>24</sup> had added to the oeuvre. These further Birmingham novels resonate closely with Young's North Bromwich. Common themes are clearly apparent: topography; transport; political figures and events; industrial pollution; cultural poverty undermining civic development. Fictional Birmingham is an unsavoury place: artistically philistine, grimy, dirty, dark, bleak and ugly, with an inhospitable climate

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<sup>17</sup> See pp 9, 37-38

<sup>18</sup> See p 38

<sup>19</sup> See pp 51-52

<sup>20</sup> See pp 39-40

<sup>21</sup> See pp 52, 55-56

<sup>22</sup> See pp 38-39, 46-49

<sup>23</sup> See pp 43-44; 50; 51-52; 54-55

<sup>24</sup> See pp 40-43; 45-46; 53; 56



and stunted vegetation.<sup>25</sup> Surrounding countryside<sup>26</sup> provides relief from labyrinthine streets, dilapidated buildings, squalid factories and smoking chimneys.<sup>27</sup> Other novelists describe with congruent detail North Bromwich locations: New Street and Snow Hill stations,<sup>28</sup> Town Hall and Central Library,<sup>29</sup> Bristol Road and Corporation Street.<sup>30</sup> As in North Bromwich historical events give credence to other novels, real characters appear and political situations are discussed.<sup>31</sup> Other novelists' adopted place-names either suggest the original or imply characteristics.<sup>32</sup> The evidence thus clearly demonstrates that North Bromwich accords both with Birmingham's fictional portraits already in existence and those contemporary with Young's writings.

Scope exists for further investigation into Birmingham's fictional portrayal prior to and contemporary with Young's North Bromwich canon. The examples considered here are not claimed as exhaustive. As material such as *The Star Sapphire* and *How to Get on in the World: the Story of Peter Lawley*<sup>33</sup> came to light during research it would be impercipient to assume that no further works exist. Space allows this thesis to consider the writings of only two Birmingham visitors: Elihu Burritt's from the early North Bromwich period and J.B. Priestley's from the later period.<sup>34</sup> Many other visitors have commented upon the town. Biographer, poet and lexicographer Samuel Johnson was familiar with Birmingham from an

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<sup>25</sup> [Tonna] Charlotte Elizabeth (1843-44) p 419; Gissing, G. (1895) p 100; Collins, M. (1896) p 157; Green, H. (1929) p 35; Allen, W.E. (1938) p 54

<sup>26</sup> Green, H. (1929) p 45; Chamberlain, P. (1937) p 425

<sup>27</sup> [Tonna] Charlotte Elizabeth (1843-44) p 419, 449; Gissing, G. (1895) p 6; Tiltman, M.H. (1939) 241

<sup>28</sup> Hampson, J. (1936) p 30; Chamberlain, P. (1937) pp 77-78

<sup>29</sup> Murray, D.C. (1894) vol 1, p 156; Gissing, G. (1895) p 99; Parkes, W. K. (1914) p 8; Tiltman, M.H. (1939) p 75

<sup>30</sup> Murray, D.C. (1894) vol 1, p 42; Parkes, W. K. (1914) p 11

<sup>31</sup> Collins, M. (1896) passim; Allen, W.E. (1938) pp 156-158; Tiltman, M.H. (1939) pp 49-60

<sup>32</sup> E.g. Collins and Birchampton, Parkes and Metlingham - pp 50, 53, 70

<sup>33</sup> See pp 44-45; 50

<sup>34</sup> See pp 32-33

early age<sup>35</sup> and lived there briefly, contributing essays to the *Birmingham Journal*.<sup>36</sup> Amongst numerous epistolary references Johnson unfavourably compares “the boobies of Birmingham”<sup>37</sup> with the citizens of his native Lichfield. John Wesley, Methodism’s much-travelled founder<sup>38</sup> visited Birmingham over forty times during 1738-1790. His *Journal* frequently records inclement weather in the town,<sup>39</sup> which he considered “a barren, dry, uncomfortable place... increasing on every side.”<sup>40</sup> A comparison of the opinions of Birmingham’s visitors with the town’s fictional representations offers rich ground for further detailed study.

Lack of space also determines that poetic interpretation of Birmingham is only briefly cited here.<sup>41</sup> Embracing, for example, poets from Woodhouse, with his Birmingham industrial view:

Here clanking engines vomit scalding streams,  
And belch vast volumes of attendant steams –  
These thundering forges, with pulsations loud  
Alternate striking, pierce the pendant cloud...<sup>42</sup>

through MacNeice, whose Birmingham sojourn is captured in his *Autumn Journal*:

I came to live in this hazy city  
To work in a building caked with grime...<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Johnson Trail Group (n.d.) *The Johnson Trail*, Lichfield, Tourist Information Centre

<sup>36</sup> Drabble, M. (1995) p 520

<sup>37</sup> Hill, G.B. (ed.) (1934) *Boswell’s Life of Johnson, Vol II The Life 1766-1776*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, p 464

<sup>38</sup> By March 1770, Wesley estimated that he travelled above 100,000 miles on horseback – Curnock, N. (ed.) (1938) 21.03.1770

<sup>39</sup> E.g. Curnock, N. (ed.) (1938) 15.03.1738, 29.07.1748, 19.03.1766, 19.03.1774, 25.03.1787

<sup>40</sup> Curnock, N. (ed.) (1938) 04.04.1755, 20.03.1789

<sup>41</sup> E.g. Jago, R. (1767); Seward (1785); Studdert Kennedy (1927); Auden (1937); see pp 39, 66, 109, 283

<sup>42</sup> Woodhouse, J. “The Life and Lucubrations of Crispinus Scriblerus (i)” in Lonsdale, R. ed. (1984) *The New Oxford Book of Eighteenth Century Verse*, Oxford, University Press. James Woodhouse (1735-1820) was born in Rowley Regis, near Birmingham. His 28,000 line poem was not published in full until 1896, edited by his grandson – Woodhouse, R.I. (1896) *The Life and Poetical Works of James Woodhouse*, London, Leadenhall Press Ltd

<sup>43</sup> MacNeice, L. (1939) *Autumn Journal* (viii), London, Faber & Faber. Louis MacNeice (1907-1963) taught classics at Birmingham University from 1930-1936 – *The Concise Dictionary of National Biography* (1994) vol II, p 1908

to Hart, whose 2006 collection<sup>44</sup> includes poetic celebrations of Birmingham's Spaghetti Junction and the redevelopment of the Bull Ring, the potential for further analysis in this genre is apparent.

The twenty-seven works of Young's North Bromwich canon, with three levels of intensity, from ambient influence, through pivotal topography, to dominant setting,<sup>45</sup> reveal the breadth and depth of his portrait and set boundaries. Topographically, North Bromwich is described with detailed particularity not sustained in any other Young location. Historical parameters embrace the late eighteenth century and the outbreak of World War II, focused from 1870 but particularly on 1900-1920 when the author knew Birmingham best. Such specificity of time and place reflects Young's belief in the validity of his own experience as source material.

During the North Bromwich era, Birmingham, historians show,<sup>46</sup> already established as a great manufacturing base, was a leading centre of technological development, reactive to a changing world's varying demands, particularly in the fluctuations between peace and war. Focusing upon metal-finishing trades, Birmingham accommodated both large-scale employers and workers operating from their own homes. Concentration of industrial processes and high-density dwellings both contributed to depredation, pollution and disease. A civic gospel attempted counteraction effected through such programmes as Chamberlain's Improvement Scheme. Already the hub of the Black Country and the wider Midlands, Birmingham expanded rapidly in both population and area during the North Bromwich period. This thesis

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<sup>44</sup> Hart, D. (2006) *Running Out*, Hereford, Five Seasons Press. David Hart, ex-Birmingham University chaplain and drama critic of *The Birmingham Post*, lives in King's Heath, Birmingham – Grimley, T. (2007) "Hearing the True Voice of Poetry" in *The Birmingham Post* (17.02.2007)

<sup>45</sup> See p 76

<sup>46</sup> See pp 22-33

demonstrates that Young's North Bromwich portrait is faithful to the tenets of Birmingham history as recorded by its professional historians. Particular attention has been paid to studies by Hutton, Dent, Bunce, Vince and Muirhead, all of which were accessible to Young; to standard Birmingham histories by Gill, Briggs and Stephens; and to more recent studies by Chinn, Hopkins and Upton. It is apparent that, resonating with more traditional historical evocations, Young's complementary Birmingham portrait meticulously brings to life an era and city that no longer exist.

Not the first (or the last) novelist to write about Birmingham, Young in his North Bromwich canon undoubtedly presents the most comprehensive literary portrait of the city yet attempted. Embracing a historical span wider than any other Birmingham novelist, Young also addresses a wide-ranging tranche of topics. North Bromwich, encompassing eight suburbs<sup>47</sup> in addition to the city centre, realistically replicates Birmingham's climate and topography.<sup>48</sup> Transport and housing<sup>49</sup> are described; the facilities for leisure pursuits and Birmingham attitudes toward them considered.<sup>50</sup> There is a detailed examination of the educational system, particularly focusing upon the evolution of the university,<sup>51</sup> with portraits of staff and students.<sup>52</sup> The city's main hospitals are visited and medical progress evaluated.<sup>53</sup> As revealed in North Bromwich, Birmingham's commercial,<sup>54</sup> civic, political<sup>55</sup> and religious<sup>56</sup> life is scrutinized. From the twenty-five novels, one play and one collection of poetry which make up Young's North Bromwich canon, this thesis cites over 1,400 discrete

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<sup>47</sup> See pp 176-210

<sup>48</sup> See pp 127-141

<sup>49</sup> See pp 210-226

<sup>50</sup> See pp 231-271

<sup>51</sup> See pp 293-319

<sup>52</sup> See pp 301-308; 313-315; 319-326

<sup>53</sup> See pp 329-375

<sup>54</sup> See pp 141-153

<sup>55</sup> See pp 153-172

<sup>56</sup> See pp 272-283

references addressing the above topics. Appendix 4 lists over 800 additional references further illustrating these same themes. It is from this wealth of Young's Birmingham portrait that the primary source material for this thesis is drawn.

In his portrait, Young promotes North Bromwich as “a sort of conscious ugliness, mile after mile of regular smoky brick... Lives devoted to the relentless extinction of beauty,”<sup>57</sup> much the sentiment with which Gissing regarded Birmingham.<sup>58</sup> Nor does Young's portrait contradict such articulate Birmingham autobiographers as Garratt and Dayus,<sup>59</sup> who experienced similar conscious ugliness and extinction of beauty. However, in their inclusion of community spirit and personal resilience despite degraded surroundings, Garratt and Dayus<sup>60</sup> celebrate Birmingham with positivism not within Young's purpose to capture. Not inaccurate in its detail, Young's North Bromwich portrait stands as one amongst many Birmingham realities. Born and brought up within the shadow of Birmingham, where his father and grandfather had been medics,<sup>61</sup> where his brother attended the grammar school<sup>62</sup> and where he studied at the new university and walked the major hospitals' wards,<sup>63</sup> Young was well qualified to select Birmingham as the principal locus for his writings. The antithesis of this advantage of personal experience is that in concentrating upon aspects of Birmingham with which he was most familiar, Young largely ignored those which did not directly impinge upon his own life.

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<sup>57</sup> Young, F.B. (1915) *The Dark Tower*, p 40

<sup>58</sup> See p 52

<sup>59</sup> See pp 31-32

<sup>60</sup> See (e.g.) pp 114; 211

<sup>61</sup> See p 9

<sup>62</sup> See p 289

<sup>63</sup> See pp 10-11

Geographically, topographically and demographically North Bromwich is a portrait of Birmingham; North Bromwich, however, is less than Birmingham. The limitation of North Bromwich's suburbs to eight with which Young was personally acquainted<sup>64</sup> guarantees this. North Bromwich's expansion as its inhabitants "in vindication of a Municipal Conscience... periodically extend the area over which their coat of arms is displayed,"<sup>65</sup> accurately reproduces (within the stated parameter) that of Birmingham.<sup>66</sup> North Bromwich transport plays the same vital role in enabling suburban spread as it does in Birmingham;<sup>67</sup> North Bromwich's coat of arms, an edited version of Birmingham's, illustrates Young's determination to depict philistine utilitarianism.<sup>68</sup> Like Birmingham, North Bromwich impinges upon far more than its own suburbs.<sup>69</sup> Indeed it is "the mighty heart of North Bromwich whose pulsations gave life"<sup>70</sup> to the whole Midlands. North Bromwich commerce and politics retell, via edited highlights, Birmingham equivalents. Fictional politicians are lampooned as philistine and ignorant suggesting earlier generations of their factual counterparts.<sup>71</sup> Like Birmingham, North Bromwich has its improvement scheme, launched under the umbrella of a civic gospel which, admitting Young's bias, hardly brightens the city's industrial despoliation.<sup>72</sup> Though Young infrequently allows the beauty of North Bromwich's architecture and skyline,<sup>73</sup> the sheer size and power of the city, degraded by the ravages of industrial grime, confirm his frequently reiterated opinion that urban quality of life comes a very poor second to rural.

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<sup>64</sup> See pp 176-178

<sup>65</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*, p237

<sup>66</sup> See pp 27; 176-210

<sup>67</sup> See pp 217-226

<sup>68</sup> See pp 126-127

<sup>69</sup> See pp 65-66

<sup>70</sup> Young, F.B. (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 343

<sup>71</sup> See pp 169-172

<sup>72</sup> See pp 25-27; 157-160

<sup>73</sup> See (e.g.) pp 188; 234; 239

North Bromwich's housing spectrum (unique in Birmingham fiction) - Alvaston mansions, as in the vicinity of Young's Harborne Road student lodgings, through theatrical boarding houses amongst which his midwifery practice was spent, to back-to-back courts visited as a trainee medic – reveal personal experience.<sup>74</sup> The skill with which Young ensures that names chosen for his suburbs suggest the originals they delineate (sometimes achieved by simple letter substitution as in Harborne/Marbourne, sometimes, as with Quinton/Tilton,<sup>75</sup> executed with a subtlety not evident in Parkes' Mettingham name changes) reflects painstaking creativity. Attention to accuracy in recreating in Alvaston Edgbaston's varied flora<sup>76</sup> reveals Young's observational prowess. The minutiae of Birmingham's Lloyd George riot, verifiably replicated in North Bromwich,<sup>77</sup> illustrate careful research and ability seamlessly to integrate fact into fiction, a quality which Young shares with Tiltman. Where lapses from known historical data occur, such as the knighting of North Bromwich's waterworks engineer,<sup>78</sup> Young is far more likely to be making a point than confusing a fact.

North Bromwich leisure-time focuses particularly upon the middle-class, as a product of which Young wrote. His statement that “signs of a lively and cultured mind... one would have met hardly ever in North Bromwich,”<sup>79</sup> confirms bias. Contradictory evidence may be advanced, but must not override. Lively and cultured minds undoubtedly exist in North Bromwich. Collectors donate to its Art Gallery; students attend concerts in its Town Hall.<sup>80</sup> Countering this, Young asserts, is that the Art Gallery is generally deserted and musical

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<sup>74</sup> See pp 210-217

<sup>75</sup> See pp 200-201

<sup>76</sup> See pp 191-193

<sup>77</sup> See pp 165-169

<sup>78</sup> See Chapter Three p 164

<sup>79</sup> Young, F.B. (1942) *A Man about the House*, p 118

<sup>80</sup> See pp 236-237; 244

concerts unpopular, statements not without foundation in Birmingham.<sup>81</sup> That Young writes of what he knows avoiding what he does not, is clear. Of Birmingham's excursion-sites, the Clent Hills (on Young's side of the city) are frequently mentioned;<sup>82</sup> the Lickey Hills (more distant from Hales Owen) never. Personal admiration for Pre-Raphaelite art bows to North Bromwich disapprobation.<sup>83</sup> Private preferences impinge but do not hinder bias. Though set within the context of the historical leisure industry, Young's meticulously detailed descriptions of concerts<sup>84</sup> demonstrate personal cultural elitism. In condemning music hall vulgarity, an opinion shared by many church leaders,<sup>85</sup> Young clearly displays preference. Similarly he takes the traditional Nonconformist view of alcohol as the working-class's degrading scourge.<sup>86</sup> Otherwise, his relationship with religion is unsympathetic. Unlike Tonna, for whom Christianity was salvific,<sup>87</sup> Young depicts a moribund church with decaying buildings symbolising atrophy within.<sup>88</sup>

The most manifest example of synergy between fact and fiction, historicity and creativity in the North Bromwich canon appears in Young's exploration of Birmingham's educational and medical scenes. This is unsurprising as these are areas integral to the author's own experience, development and mindset. Here, in engaging with contemporary historical debate, Young's personal preferences and prejudices are translated into undisguised apologetics. In tracing and assessing the evolution of Birmingham's university, with its perceived subordination of the arts, Young's own predilection for arts over science is

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<sup>81</sup> See pp 237; 239-243

<sup>82</sup> See pp 268-269

<sup>83</sup> See pp 237-238

<sup>84</sup> See pp 242-245

<sup>85</sup> See pp 231; 249

<sup>86</sup> See pp 257-259

<sup>87</sup> See p 44

<sup>88</sup> See pp 272-283



continually apparent.<sup>89</sup> In charting antiseptic medicine's chequered progress in Birmingham, Young's sympathy is unmistakably pro-Listerian.<sup>90</sup> Predicated upon personal experience and perception of reality, Young's educational and medical portraits generate differing conclusions. Though an undoubted overall benefit, North Bromwich University demonstrates overt philistinism in its emphasis on science at the expense of arts, promoting Young's frequently-rehearsed opinion of the utilitarian values of North Bromwich with its "educational machinery, like a giant centrifugal machine in a city which believes in paying by results."<sup>91</sup>

Medicine, on the other hand, in the canon's most approbatory appraisal, receives the accolade of a Birmingham-trained doctor praising overall merit despite continuing pockets of resistance. Unusually, Young acclaims North Bromwich, where "all suffering humanity was welcome to receive the highest medical and surgical skill."<sup>92</sup> Fact visibly and intricately coheres with fiction in the canon's detailed portraits of such significant figures from Birmingham history as surgeons Lawson Tait and Jordan Lloyd<sup>93</sup> and educationalists Bertram Windle and William Wright,<sup>94</sup> and in such cameos as those of Robert Simon and Oliver Lodge.<sup>95</sup> Each is carefully used to expound in the North Bromwich setting Young's engagement with Birmingham's medical and educational progress. Though North Bromwich's medical and educational portraits of Birmingham life undoubtedly resonate with other novels employing Birmingham settings, for example Collins' earlier depiction of Culverton Brand's Birchampton hospital<sup>96</sup> and Allen's later sketches of Birmingham

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<sup>89</sup> See pp 301-304

<sup>90</sup> See pp 339-340

<sup>91</sup> Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, p 193

<sup>92</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*, p 316

<sup>93</sup> See pp 366-372

<sup>94</sup> See pp 302-305

<sup>95</sup> See pp 313-315; 362-363

<sup>96</sup> Collins, M. (1896) *passim*

University and its students,<sup>97</sup> it is particularly evident that these two areas definitively illustrate that Young's exploration achieves a depth and breadth unique in Birmingham fiction.

Though his description of no other town or city approaches the sustained and detailed specificity of North Bromwich, the criteria by which I have examined the authenticity of Young's North Bromwich/Birmingham could equally be applied to his lesser portraits. Socio-topographical maps could be enhanced by investigating, for example, Young's portrayal of the city of Dublin,<sup>98</sup> the fishing port of Brixham<sup>99</sup> or the Black Country towns of Dulston/Dudley,<sup>100</sup> Halesby/Hales Owen,<sup>101</sup> Sedgebury/Sedgley<sup>102</sup> and Wednesford/Wednesbury.<sup>103</sup>

That Young's Birmingham portrait is created from a biased stance is undeniable as he makes no attempt to disguise personal prejudice. Rural is healing: urban (with Birmingham most blameworthy because best-known) is corrosive. Where opportunity exists to present North Bromwich in either a laudatory or defamatory light, Young almost always (with notable medical exceptions) chooses the latter. Inevitably, therefore, North Bromwich is Birmingham viewed through Young's particular lens. However, when measured against depictions seen through the lenses of biographers, historians, residents, visitors and other novelists, Young's North Bromwich portrait is sufficiently similar and undistorted Birmingham to be a recognisable reality which may not be ignored.

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<sup>97</sup> Allen, W.E. (1938) *passim*

<sup>98</sup> Young, F.B. (1920) *The Tragic Bride*

<sup>99</sup> Young, F.B. (1914) *Deep Sea*

<sup>100</sup> Young, F.B. (1921) *The Black Diamond*; (1930) *Jim Redlake*; (1937) *They Seek a Country*

<sup>101</sup> Young, F.B. (1919) *The Young Physician*; (1921) *The Black Diamond*; (1931) *Mr & Mrs Pennington*; (1936) *Far Forest*; (1956) *Wistanslow*

<sup>102</sup> Young, F.B. (1938) *Dr Bradley Remembers*

<sup>103</sup> Young, F.B. (1928) *My Brother Jonathan*

Birmingham fictional representations have proliferated since Young's North Bromwich canon. In 1959 Allen's Birmingham portrait reappeared.<sup>104</sup> In the mid-1970s Lodge (like Young adopting a character-invoking name) began his novels set in Rummidge,<sup>105</sup> "which occupies the space where Birmingham is to be found on maps of the so-called real world,"<sup>106</sup> locating it with almost exactly the words Young used to locate North Bromwich.<sup>107</sup> Hackett's "future history" of a third world war where Birmingham is the target for a Soviet nuclear attack, was published in 1979.<sup>108</sup> Wilson's story based around an employee of Birmingham architects Chamberlain and Martin appeared in 1981.<sup>109</sup> Armstrong's *Night's Black Agents*<sup>110</sup> features Birmingham canals, rarely seen in North Bromwich. Like earlier North Bromwich novels<sup>111</sup> Coe's *The Rotters' Club* was serialized on BBC television in 2005.<sup>112</sup> Making prolific contributions to Birmingham's fictional portrait are the formularistic novels<sup>113</sup> of Annie Murray,<sup>114</sup> Anne Bennett<sup>115</sup> and Judith Cutler.<sup>116</sup>

<sup>104</sup> Allen, W.E. (1959) *All in a Lifetime*, London, Michael Joseph

<sup>105</sup> Lodge, D. (1975) *Changing Places*, London, Martin Secker & Warburg; edition cited: (1993) London, Penguin Books; (1984) *Small World*, London, Martin Secker & Warburg; (1988) *Nice Work*, London, Martin Secker & Warburg; edition cited: (1993) London, Penguin Books; (1991) *Paradise News*, London, Martin Secker & Warburg; (1995) *Therapy*, London, Martin Secker & Warburg

<sup>106</sup> Lodge, D. (1989) Reverse Title Page

<sup>107</sup> See p 65

<sup>108</sup> Hackett, J. & others (1979) *The Third World War*, London, Sphere Books

<sup>109</sup> Wilson, A.N. (1981) *Who was Oswald Fish?* Harmondsworth, Penguin Books

<sup>110</sup> Armstrong, D. (1993) *Night's Black Agents*, London, Harper Collins

<sup>111</sup> See p 14

<sup>112</sup> Coe, J. (2002) *The Rotters' Club*, London, Penguin Books, dramatized by D. Clement and I. La Frenais, broadcast BBC 2, 26.01.2005 – 09.02.2005. See also Coe, J. (1989) *A Touch of Love*, London, Penguin Books; (2004) *The Closed Circle*, London, Viking

<sup>113</sup> Murray's heroines' harsh lives in Birmingham's back streets are exacerbated by abusive relatives or employers; genuine happiness occurs only at the dénouement. Bennett's heroines are summarily removed from rural Ireland to industrial Birmingham, where difficult family conditions receive little sympathy from an authoritarian Roman Catholic Church. Cutler's heroine, Sophie Rivers, teacher at Birmingham's William Murdoch College, is an amateur detective who becomes a target and victim of crime.

<sup>114</sup> Murray, A. (1995) *Birmingham Rose*, London, Pan Books; (1996) *Birmingham Friends*, London, Pan Books; (1998) *Birmingham Blitz*, London, Pan Books; (1999) *Orphan of Angel Street*, London, Pan Books; (2000) *Poppy Day*, London, Pan Books; (2001) *Narrowboat Girl*, London, Pan Books; (2003) *Chocolate Girls*, London, Pan Books; (2004) *Water Gypsies*, London, Pan Books; (2005) *Miss Purdy's Class*, London, Pan Books; (2006) *Family of Women*, London, Pan Books

<sup>115</sup> Bennett, A. (1998) *A Little Learning*, London, Headline Book Publishing; (1999) *A Strong Hand to Hold*, London, Headline Book Publishing; (1999) *Love Me Tender*, London, Headline Book Publishing; (2000) *Pack Up Your Troubles*, London, Headline Book Publishing; (2002) *Walking Back to Happiness*, London, Harper Collins; (2003a) *Daughter of Mine*, London, Harper Collins; (2003b) *Till the Sun Shines Through*, London,

Other twenty-first century novelists using Birmingham settings include Jackie Gay,<sup>117</sup> David Conroy,<sup>118</sup> John Dalton,<sup>119</sup> Joel Lane,<sup>120</sup> Alan Mahar,<sup>121</sup> Clare Morrall,<sup>122</sup> Julian Barnes,<sup>123</sup> Susan Fletcher<sup>124</sup> and Eve Isherwood.<sup>125</sup>

Though a detailed examination of Birmingham in contemporary fiction remains beyond the scope of this thesis, it is important to raise the question of how Young's literary successors have portrayed Birmingham. The negative image, established in passing references by Austen and Hardy<sup>126</sup> is renewed in such contemporary fictional asides as those of Read,<sup>127</sup> for whom Birmingham is an impenetrable barrier between the Cotswolds and Derbyshire and Pilcher who locates a missing character in "Birmingham, or somewhere gruesome".<sup>128</sup>

Later Birmingham novelists stand in the tradition of seminal North Bromwich. Like Young many contemporary writers base their fiction on personal experience. Armstrong, Bennett and Coe were born in Birmingham; Lane, Lodge and Mahar lived and worked there. As Young carefully researched background so successive novelists acknowledge reliance on

Harper Collins; (2005a) *Danny Boy*, London, Harper Collins; (2005b) *Mother's Only Child*, London, Harper Collins; (2006) *To Have and to Hold*, London, Harper Collins

<sup>116</sup> Cutler, J. (1995) *Dying Fall*, London, Piatkus; (1996a) *Dying on Principle*, London, Piatkus; (1996b) *Dying to Write*, London, Piatkus; (1997) *Dying for Millions*, London, Piatkus; (1998) *Dying for Power*, London, Piatkus; (1998) *Power on Her Own*, London, Hodder & Stoughton; (1999a) *Dying to Score*, London, Headline Book Publishing; (1999b) *Dying by Degrees*, London, Headline Book Publishing; (1999c) *Staying Power*, London, Hodder & Stoughton; (2000) *Power Games*, London, Hodder & Stoughton; (2001) *Dying by the Book*, London, Headline Book Publishing; (2001) *Will Power*, London, Hodder & Stoughton; (2002) *Dying in Discord*, London, Headline Book Publishing; (2002) *Hidden Power*, London, Hodder & Stoughton; (2003) *Dying to Deceive*, London, Headline Book Publishing; (2003) *Power Shift*, London, Hodder & Stoughton

<sup>117</sup> Gay, J. (2000) *Scapegrace*, Birmingham, Tindal Street Press

<sup>118</sup> Conroy, D. (2001) *Archway of Tears*, Studley, Brewin Books

<sup>119</sup> Dalton, J. (2002) *The City Trap*, Birmingham, Tindal Street Press

<sup>120</sup> Lane, J. (2000) *From Blue to Black*, London, Serpent's Tail; (2003) *The Blue Mask*, London, Serpent's Tail

<sup>121</sup> Mahar, A. (2003) *After the Man Before*, London Methuen

<sup>122</sup> Morrall, C. (2003) *Astonishing Flashes of Colour*, Birmingham, Tindal Street Press

<sup>123</sup> Barnes, J. (2005) *Arthur and George*, London, Jonathan Cape

<sup>124</sup> Fletcher, S. (2005) *Eve Green*, London, Harper Collins

<sup>125</sup> Isherwood, E. (2007) *Absent Light*, Bedlinog, Accent Press

<sup>126</sup> See pp 38-39

<sup>127</sup> Read, Miss (pseudonym of D. J. Saint) (1990) *Friends at Thrush Green*, London, Michael Joseph, p 68

<sup>128</sup> Pilcher, R. (1995) *Coming Home*, London, Hodder & Stoughton, p 290

contemporary expertise.<sup>129</sup> Believing that his experiences and environment had validity, Young located his North Bromwich canon specifically in time and place using such historical data as Chamberlain's Improvement Scheme and the Lloyd George riot.<sup>130</sup> Similarly, Lodge cites Formula One racing around Birmingham's Inner Ring Road<sup>131</sup> and Coe the IRA attack on Birmingham's *The Tavern in the Town*.<sup>132</sup> For Lane "Birmingham is a valid location for literature and the lives of people in the region are interesting enough and significant enough to be the subject of stories."<sup>133</sup> Contemporary Birmingham fiction confirms and expands North Bromwich locations. Though no individual novelist replicates all North Bromwich suburbs, all reappear across the spectrum of contemporary fiction.<sup>134</sup> From Acock's Green to Yardley other Birmingham suburbs named in contemporary fiction range through the alphabet.<sup>135</sup>

However much new writing may introduce new dimensions into Birmingham fiction, the bedrock of Young's portrait remains intact, for degraded and polluted North Bromwich

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<sup>129</sup> E.g. Cutler, J.(1999b) Acknowledgements; Murray, A. (2000) Acknowledgements; Bennett, A. (2005a) pp v-viii;

<sup>130</sup> See pp 157-160; 165-169

<sup>131</sup> Lodge, D. (1975) p 134 – Between 1986 and 1990 Halford's Superprix, involving Formula 3 cars raced on a 2.5 mile circuit on Birmingham's Inner ring Road. - Beauchampé, S. & Inglis, S. (2006) p 14

<sup>132</sup> Coe, J. (2002) pp 101-104 - On the evening of 21.11.1974 two IRA bombs exploded in Birmingham city centre public houses – *The Mulberry Bush* and *The Tavern in the Town*, killing twenty-one people and injuring a further 168. - Upton, C. (1993) p 212

<sup>133</sup> Lane, J. in Grimley, T. (22.01.2003) "The write road to a city's heart" in *The Birmingham Post*

<sup>134</sup> Aston (North Bromwich's Sparkheath) is featured by Isherwood. Bordesley, Camp Hill, Sparkbrook and Sparkhill (collectively North Bromwich's Lower Sparkdale) appear in Murray's novels. Edgbaston (Alvaston) is visited by Wilson; Quinton (Tilton) by Cutler; Harborne (Marbourne) by Coe; Small Heath (unaspirated in North Bromwich) by Dalton. Handsworth and Winson Green (conflated to Winsworth in North Bromwich) are settings in Lane's writing; Hockley and the Jewellery Quarter (North Bromwich's Blockley and Jewellers' Quarter) appear in Armstrong's fiction. Sutton Coldfield (not an official Birmingham suburb at its North Bromwich appearance as Sutton Vesey) is mentioned in Hackett's novel. See pp 176-178; Hackett, J. & others (1979) p 375; Wilson, A.N. (1981) p 31; Armstrong, D. (1993) pp 11, 70; Murray, A. (1995) pp 18, 297; (1996) p 215; Cutler, J. (1996b) p 82; Dalton, J. (2002) p 58; Lane, J. (2003) pp 7, 54; Coe, J. (2004) p 359; Isherwood, E (2007) p 115

<sup>135</sup> For example: Acock's Green in Lane, J. (2002) p 19; Balsall Heath in Armstrong, D. (1993) p 19; Castle Bromwich in Bennett, A. (2003b) p 389; Digbeth in Gay, J. (2000) p 60; Erdington in Murray, A. (1995) p 126; Greet in Cutler, J. (1999a) p 57; Hall Green in Fletcher, S. (2005) p 71; King's Norton in Morrall, C. (2003) p 17; Longbridge in Wilson, A.N. (1981) p 51; Moseley in Mahar, A. (2003) p 62; Northfield in Isherwood, E. (2007) p 141; Pype Hayes in Bennett, A. (1998) p 6; Selly Oak in Coe, J. (2002) p27; Tyseley in Lane, J. (2002) p 98; Witton in Murray, A. (2006) p 133; and Yardley in Hackett, J. & others (1979) p 379.

still lives. “Birmingham looked drab and cheerless... chimneys smoking... buildings grimy... houses mean and depressing. Everything seemed to be coated in black.”<sup>136</sup> “Birmingham... seemed unashamedly and soullessly ugly.”<sup>137</sup> The contrast between urban and rural, vitiating in North Bromwich, continues. “How depressing the place was... the greyness, the drabness, the absence of green meadows and mountains and streams.”<sup>138</sup> Not only the city’s physical attributes remain repellent: the arid soul of North Bromwich lingers. “Birmingham wasn’t the kindest of cities,”<sup>139</sup> “its resistant lack of glamour”<sup>140</sup> “a cultural no-man’s land like Birmingham.”<sup>141</sup> Rare plaudits are modified. “The great sweep of Birmingham conurbation... even looked impressive in the morning sun.”<sup>142</sup> In the closest to dispassionate statement Hackett stresses just those conditions that created Young’s City of Iron. “Birmingham... a great industrial concentration and centre of the armaments industry.”<sup>143</sup>

Contemporary fiction offers a wealth of source material suitable to carry forward beyond the parameters of this thesis further investigation into Birmingham’s literary portraits. Of particular importance would be the question of whether Birmingham is incidental background decorating plot or, as with Young’s North Bromwich, if the city remains essential setting upon which plot depends.

Young makes clear that his books, produced as an act of faith, are intended to be taken seriously.<sup>144</sup> Within the literary and historical context in which it is set, the North Bromwich

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<sup>136</sup> Murray, A. (2005) p 20

<sup>137</sup> Wilson, A.N. (1981) p 94

<sup>138</sup> Bennett, A. (2002) p 42

<sup>139</sup> Lane, J. (2003) p 83

<sup>140</sup> Mahar, A. (2003) p 237

<sup>141</sup> Coe, J. (2002) p 180

<sup>142</sup> Cutler, J. (1996b) p 190

<sup>143</sup> Hackett, J. & others (1979) p 365

<sup>144</sup> See p 282

canon, drawn from life both in large detail and in the minutiae of the portrait, asserts its own validity. Both created as fiction and reported from fact the canon offers vital evidence, adding a distinct and significant dimension to the resources of Birmingham history, first at a secondary level in creatively replicating part of Birmingham's story. However, the canon itself, as a collection of original documents created during the first half of the twentieth century, reveals a unique insight and bias. Critical studies of Young's writings, even when questioning literary merit, acknowledge the value of his novels as topographical and social history studies.<sup>145</sup> As one reality among many depictions – biographical, historical, literary – of Birmingham, Young's North Bromwich canon offers not an alternative but a complementary portrait.

The chronological survey of the North Bromwich canon in chapter two reveals that, throughout its twenty-seven works, Young's Birmingham portrait remains largely unchanged. This is evident from "all those people huddled together in the slums of North Bromwich"<sup>146</sup> in *Undergrowth*, the first North Bromwich novel written, via the benign ("the warmth and light of North Bromwich"<sup>147</sup>) and the malign ("the hated city... spreading like an angry red rash: the raised edge of a brick erysipelas"<sup>148</sup>) to "those grim congeries of brick and mortar called North Bromwich"<sup>149</sup> in *Wistanslow*, Young's final North Bromwich novel. It is also apparent from "the black heart of the city"<sup>150</sup> in *White Ladies*, chronologically the earliest North Bromwich novel, to "these shoddy brand-new little homes"<sup>151</sup> of *Mr Lucton's Freedom* in the final year of North Bromwich's history. Furthermore, what is true of North Bromwich

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<sup>145</sup> See (e.g.) p 22

<sup>146</sup> Young, F.B. (1913) *Undergrowth*, pp 232-233

<sup>147</sup> See p 81; Young, F.B. (1916) *The Iron Age*, pp 94

<sup>148</sup> See p 98; Young, F.B. (1934) *This Little World*, p 308

<sup>149</sup> Young, F.B. (1956) *Wistanslow*, p 46

<sup>150</sup> Young, F.B. (1935) *White Ladies*, p 177

<sup>151</sup> Young, F.B. (1940) *Mr Lucton's Freedom*, p 66

is also true of Birmingham's wider fictional portrait. From 1816 and Austen's Birmingham, "not a place to promise much"<sup>152</sup> via the benign ("Birmingham's friendly untidiness and bustle"<sup>153</sup>) and the malign ("an unspeakable excrescence of a city... buildings so ugly as to induce a state of actual nausea in the hapless onlooker"<sup>154</sup>) to 2007 and Isherwood's "sounds of a city working at full throttle... decay... boarded-up houses alongside run-down neighbours,"<sup>155</sup> Birmingham's typical fictional portrait, created from personal experience, careful research, or both, is of an unsavoury place of industrial grime, utilitarian ideals and perceived absence of culture. Thus Young occupies a seminal place in Birmingham's literary history, focusing the essence of two hundred years of Birmingham's fictional portraits across the spectrum of his own writing in "North Bromwich... a familiar face which, though age may change its features, remains always essentially the same."<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Austen, J. (1816) p 730

<sup>153</sup> Hampson, J. (1931) p 42

<sup>154</sup> Coe, J. (2004) p 176

<sup>155</sup> Isherwood, E. (2007) pp 167-168, 191

<sup>156</sup> Young, F.B. (1938)*Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 121



**FRANCIS BRETT YOUNG'S BIRMINGHAM**

*North Bromwich – City of Iron*

**APPENDICES**

## Appendix 1: North Bromwich Chronology

Date Set	Book & Publication Date	Given Dates or Defining Events
1775-1938	<i>*The Island</i> (1944)	Partnership of Boulton & Watt, 1775; Munich Declaration, 1938
Early C19 - 1920	<i>White Ladies</i> (1935)	Opens during Napoleonic Wars, 1803-1815; Concludes 2 years after 1918 Armistice
1836-c1839	<i>They Seek a Country</i> (1937)	Opens 01.10.1836 Battle of Blood River, 16.12.1838
c1871-1895	<i>The City of Gold</i> (1939)	Opens 32 years after <i>They Seek a Country</i> ends; Jameson Raid, December 1895
c1879-1903	<i>Far Forest</i> (1936)	c20 years before to 4 years after defeat of Gatacre at Stormburg & Buller at Tugela River, December 1899
1880-1935	<i>Dr Bradley Remembers</i> (1938)	North Bromwich episode opens autumn 1880, ends 55 years later
1887-1904	<i>The House under the Water</i> (1932)	Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee, 1887 Opening of Birmingham's Welsh Water Scheme, 1904
1890-1919	<i>My Brother Jonathan</i> (1928)	Influenza Epidemic (Asiatic Flu), 1889-1890; Pershing's victory at St Mihiel, September 1918
1891-1911	<i>Jim Redlake</i> (1930)	Birmingham Pantomime Season, 1891 Death of Illusionist Lafayette at Edinburgh, 1911
c1895-1905	<i>A Man about the House</i> (1942)	Ross discovers malaria parasite in anopheles mosquito, 1897; Birmingham's Welsh Water Scheme operative, 1904
1896-1921	<i>Portrait of Clare</i> (1927)	Opens 40 years after Crimean War, 1853-1856; Concludes 3 years after 1918 Armistice
1897-1900	<i>Wistanslow</i> (1956)	Opens 1897, Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee year; Concludes 3 years later
1900	<i>Undergrowth</i> (1913)	Visit of Birmingham Corporation to Elan Valley, June 1900
1900-1906	<i>The Young Physician</i> (1919)	Birmingham University Charter, 1900; Termination of Birmingham's steam tram service, 1906
c1906-1911	<i>The Black Diamond</i> (1921)	14 years after Birmingham waterworks scheme began in 1894; New coinage for George V, 1911
c1908	<i>The Dark Tower</i> (1915)	Consecration of Birmingham Cathedral, 1905; Termination of cable tram service, 1911
c1910-1924	<i>Cold Harbour</i> (1924)	Peace following World War I, 1918
1911-1914	<i>The Crescent Moon</i> (1918)	Outbreak of World War I, 1914
1913	<i>Pilgrim's Rest</i> (1922)	South African miners' strike, 1913
1914	<i>The Iron Age</i> (1916)	Declaration of war, August 1914
1914	<i>**The Furnace</i> (1928)	Declaration of war, August 1914
Early 1920's	<i>The Key of Life</i> (1928)	After World War I; Opening of Tomb of Hatiaiy (cf <i>Henhenet</i> ) at Thebes, 1925

1922	<i>This Little World</i> (1934)	Return to prominence of Ramsay MacDonald, 1922
c1927	<i>Black Roses</i> (1929)	50 years after the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878
1929-1930	<i>Mr &amp; Mrs Pennington</i> (1931)	Opens 13 years after Battle of Somme, 1916; Wall Street Crash, October 1929
c1935	<i>Portrait of a Village</i> (1937)	17 years after end of World War I, 1918
June-August 1939	<i>Mr Lucton's Freedom</i> (1940)	Opens late June 1939, concludes 2 months later; preparations for imminent war

[N.B. The total span of a work's plot may be greater than the period during which it features North Bromwich.]

\* Poetry

\*\* Drama

## **Appendix 2: North Bromwich Suburbs, Streets, Buildings, Shops, Businesses and Other Facilities**

### **1. Suburbs:**

Alvaston (*Edgbaston*): *YP, POC, MBJ, JR, MMP, TLW, WL, DBR, MLF, MAH*  
 Blockley (*Hockley*): *POC*  
 Jewellery Quarter: *DT, POC, MMP, DBR*  
 Lower Sparkdale (*Bordesley/Sparkbrook/Sparkhill*): *YP, BD, POC, FF, DBR*  
 Marbourne (*Harborne*): *MBJ*  
 Small 'Eath: *MLF*  
 Sparkheath (*Aston*): *U, DBR*  
 Sutton Vesey (*Sutton Coldfield*): *DBR*  
 Tilton (*Quinton*): *POC, MBJ, JR, MMP, TLW, WL, MLF*  
 Winsworth/Winsford (*Handsworth*): *DT, POC, MMP, TLW, WL, FF, DBR*

### **2. Streets:**

Ada Road: *MMP*  
 Alma Street: *DBR*  
 Arcades: *YP*  
 Astill Road: *POC*  
 Boulton Crescent: *DBR*  
 Bristol Road: *MBJ*  
 City Road: *POC*  
 Cobden Street (*John Bright Street*): *YP, FF, DBR*  
 Crabbs Lane: *DBR*  
 Craven Street: *YP*  
 Corporation Street: *DBR* – see also Queen Street  
 Dulston Road (*Dudley Road*): *MMP*  
 Easy Row: *YP, MBJ, DBR*  
 Elm Road: *MMP*  
 Enville Lane: *MAH*  
 Fountain Square (*Chamberlain Square*): *FF*  
 Granby Street: *YP*  
 Greville Street: *YP, DBR*  
 Halesby Road (*Hagley Road*): *YP, POC, MBJ, JR, TLW, WL, FF, DBR, MLF, MAH*  
 High Street: *IA, MMP*  
 Inkerman Street: *DBR*  
 James Street: *YP*  
 James Watt Street: *POC*  
 King's Road: *MLF*  
 Lower Hutton Street (*Barwick Street*): *IA*  
 Lozells Road: *IA*  
 Ludgate Hill: *IA*  
 Meadows Lane: *DBR*  
 North West Road: *POC*  
 Prince Albert's Terrace: *YP*  
 Queen Street (*Corporation Street*): *YP, MBJ*

Raglan Street: *DBR*  
 Rea Barn Lane: *YP*  
 Red Barn Row: *DBR*  
 Sackville Row (*Colmore Row*): *U, DT, IA, YP, POC, MBJ, MMP, TLW, WL, FF, DBR, MLF, F*  
 Sackville Street: (*Colmore Street*) *TLW*  
 Station Hill: (*Snow Hill*) *U*  
 Sevastopol Street: *DBR*  
 Steelhouse Lane: *DBR*  
 Summer Lane: *DBR*  
 Watt Square/Watt Place (*Stephenson Place*): *IA, CH, HUW*  
 Winsworth Road: *DBR*  
 Wolverbury By-pass: *MMP*

### 3. Buildings:

#### i. Civic & Public

Art Gallery: *DT, IA, YP, POC, BR, MBJ, MMP, WL, FF, DBR, MLF*  
 Bingley Hall: *MLF* – see also Dingley Hall  
 Central Police Station: *MMP*  
 Churches:

Alvaston Parish Church: *POC*  
 Cathedral (St Clement's): *U, DT, IA, POC, DBR, MLF*  
 Lower Sparkdale: *BD*  
 Oratory: *CH, WL*  
 New Meeting: *MAH*  
 St George's: *POC*  
 St Jude's: *POC, MAH*  
 St Paul's: *DT, DBR*  
 Tilton: *MMP*  
 Unnamed (*St Chad's*): *DT*

Coroner's Court: *MMP*  
 Council House/Municipal Building: *YP, POC, HUW, FF, DBR*  
 Dingley Hall: *POC* – see also Bingley Hall  
 Gaol: *MMP*  
 Library: *IA, YP, MBJ, JR, MMP, DBR*  
 Mortuary: *MMP, WL*  
 Museum: *KL, MBJ*  
 Post Offices:  
     Alvaston: *WL*  
     Central: *MLF*  
 Slaughter House: *FF*  
 Stipendiary's Court: *MMP, TLW*  
 Tanneries: *FF*  
 Theatres & Cinemas:  
     Alhambra: *IA*

Coliseum: *YP*  
 Daley's: *DBR*  
 Futurist: *MMP*

Gaiety: *YP, DBR*  
 Palais de Dance: *DBR*  
 Prince's: *MBJ, WL*  
 Queen's (*Prince of Wales's*): *YP, DBR*  
 Tilton Cinema: *MMP*

Tilton Toll House: *MMP*  
 Town Hall: *DT, YP, POC, FF, DBR*  
 City Orchestra: *WL*  
 Symphony Orchestra: *DT, POC*  
 North Bromwich Music Festival: *W*  
 (Victoria) Law Courts: *POC, MMP, DBR*  
 Winsworth Workhouse: *DBR*

**ii. Educational:**

Art School: *WL*  
 Astill's College (*Mason College*): *POC, HUW, DBR*  
 Institute: *DBR*  
 Ladies College: *CH*  
 Marbourne Physical Training College: *MBJ*  
 Medical School: *YP, CH, MBJ, MMP, POV, DBR*  
 Normal School: *FF*  
 Old Grammar School (*King Edward's*): *IA, MBJ*  
 Prince's College (*Queen's College*): *DBR*  
 St Monica's School: *POC, WL*  
 Sutton Vesey Preparatory School (*Iona Cottage High School*): *DBR*  
 Teacher Training College: *TLW*  
 Technical College: *IA*  
 Theological College: *CM*  
 University: *YP, CH, POC, KL, MBJ, MMP, FF, POV, DBR*

**iii. Hospitals:**

Infirmery (*General*): *YP, BD, MBJ, MMP, DBR*  
 Prince's (*Queen's*): *YP, MBJ, MMP, POV, DBR*

**iv. Restaurants, Hotels, Clubs:**

Batties'/Battie's/Battye's (*Pattison's*): *IA, YP, POC, MBJ, MMP, DBR*  
 Cock & Magpie: *DBR*  
 Constitutional Club: *MLF* – see also Union Club  
 Crotchet Club (*Clef Club*): *DT*  
 Dudley's Hotel: *MAH*  
 Dousita (*Kardomah*): *U, YP, KL*  
 Grand Midland Hotel (*Grand Hotel*): *IA, YP, CH, POC, MBJ, MMP, HUW, WL, DBR, MLF, F*  
 Jim Crow Tavern: *FF*

Joey's (*Joe Hillman's*): *DT, YP*  
 Midland Club: *IA*  
 Queen's Assembly Rooms: *YP*  
 Union Club: *DT, WL* – see also Constitutional Club  
 The Trees: *DBR*  
 White Horse Inn: *YP*

**v. Shops & Businesses:**

Amalgamated Gunsmiths Ltd: *TLW*  
 Astill's Brewery: *MBJ, JR, WL, POV*  
 Austin of Longbridge: *MLF*  
 Boulton & Watt's Works: *WL, DBR, I*  
 Bromwich Furnishing Emporium: *MMP*  
 David Isaac Furriers: *FF*  
 Edmondson's Wholesale Druggists (*Philip Harris & Co*): *YP, MBJ, DBR*  
 Elphinstones Engineering Consultants: *IA*  
 Fit-U-Corset Company: *MBJ*  
 Great Mawne Colliery Offices: *POC*  
 Gunn's Hatters (*Dunn's Hatters*): *IA*  
 Iron Exchange: *IA, POC, HUW*  
 Jones & Co Architects: *POC*  
 Kendrick's Dress Shop: *POC*  
 Lucton's Accountants: *MLF*  
 Madame Allbright's Dress Shop: *MMP*  
 Magnus, Levison & Co, Stock Brokers: *MMP, WL*  
 Market Hall: *MBJ, FF*  
 Metalfolds Ltd (*Nettlefolds*): *POC*  
 Milton the Mantle-Makers: *POC*  
 Newspapers:  
     *North Bromwich Argus: BD*  
     *North Bromwich Courier: DT, BD, CH, POC, MMP, HUW, WL, POV, DBR, MLF, W*  
     *North Bromwich Mail: DT, POC, F*  
     *North Bromwich Post: IA*  
     *Weekly Post: PR*  
 Oyster Shop (*Arthur Moore's Oyster Rooms*): *DBR*  
 Parkinson's/ Perkins - Florists (*Perkins & Sons*): *IA, YP*  
 Rosenthal's Furrier: *MMP*  
 Smithfield Market: *MLF*  
 Stevens's Ltd Seed Merchants: *TLW*  
 Tilton Drug Store: *MMP*  
 Tilton Estate Office: *MMP*  
 Tilton Gas & Electricity Show Room: *MMP*  
 Tilton Branch Midland Bank: *MMP*  
 Whitecote's Photographers (*H.J. Whitlock's Studio*): *DBR*  
 Whitehouse Sword Makers: *IA*  
 Wilburn & Wilburn Solicitors: *DT, POC, MJB, MMP, HUW, TLW, MLF*

4. **North Bromwich Waterworks:** *U, BD, POC, MMP, HUW, MLF, MAH*

5. **Parks, Recreation & Sports Grounds, Sports Clubs:**

Alvaston Reservoir: *POC*

Alvaston Tennis Club: *MMP*

County Cricket Ground: *MBJ*

North Bromwich Albion (*Aston Villa*): *BD, PR, MBJ, MMP, W*

North Bromwich Rugby Football Club: *MLF*

North Bromwich United Football Team: *IA*

Southfield Beeches (*Frankley Beeches*): *MBJ*

**Sparkheath United Football Team:** *PR*

Sutton Park: *BD*

United Hospitals Football Team: *MBJ*

Villa Football Team: *PR*

6. **Transport:**

Midland "Red" Buses: *MMP, MLF*

North Bromwich-Worcester Canal: *WL, POV*

Railway Stations:

GWR Station (*Snow Hill*): *U, IA, POC, JR, MMP, DBR*

(Grand) Midland Station (*New Street*): *POC, MBJ, JR, DBR*

North Bromwich Station: *MAH*

Trams:

Cable: *U, DT, FF*

Electric: *MMP, WL, MAH*

Steam: *YP, POC, FF, DBR*

**Key:**

*BD The Black Diamond*

*BR Black Roses*

*CH Cold Harbour*

*CM The Crescent Moon*

*DBR Dr Bradley Remembers*

*DT The Dark Tower*

*F The Furnace*

*FF Far Forest*

*HUW The House under the Water*

*I The Island*

*IA The Iron Age*

*JR Jim Redlake*

*KL The Key of Life*

*MAH A Man about the House*

*MBJ My Brother Jonathan*

*MLF Mr Lucton's Freedom*

*MMP Mr & Mrs Pennington*

*POC Portrait of a Village*

*POV Portrait of Clare*

*PR Pilgrim's Rest*

*TLW This Little World*

*U Undergrowth*

*W Wistanslow*

*WL White Ladies*

*YP The Young Physician*



The Centre of North Bromwich/Birmingham  
 From OS Map: Warwickshire Sheet XIV.5 (1912)



- |                                                      |                                                                  |
|------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 Astill College/University ( <i>Mason College</i> ) | 12 Lower Hutton Street ( <i>Barwick Street</i> )                 |
| 2 City Library ( <i>Central Library</i> )            | 13 Grand Midland Hotel ( <i>Grand Hotel</i> )                    |
| 3 Fountain Square ( <i>Chamberlain Square</i> )      | 14 St Clement's Cathedral ( <i>St Philip's Cathedral</i> )       |
| 4 Town Hall                                          | 15 Great Western Station ( <i>Snow Hill Station</i> )            |
| 5 Art Gallery/Museum                                 | 16 Station Hill ( <i>Snow Hill</i> )                             |
| 6 Prince's College ( <i>Queen's College</i> )        | 17 Arcades                                                       |
| 7 Council House/Municipal Building                   | 18 Queen Street/Corporation Street ( <i>Corporation Street</i> ) |
| 8 Site of Christchurch                               | 19 Watt Square/Place ( <i>Stephenson Place</i> )                 |
| 9 Post Office                                        | 20 Exchange                                                      |
| 10 Sackville Row ( <i>Colmore Row</i> )              | 21 Midland Station ( <i>New Street Station</i> )                 |
| 11 Constitutional Club ( <i>Union Club</i> )         |                                                                  |

### Appendix 3: Bath Row's Theatrical Lodgings, 1901 Census

House Number	Name	Relation to Head of Family	Marital Status	Age	Occupation	Where Born
18	Jessie Templeton	Boarder	Single	19	Music Hall Artist	Liverpool
	Emily Appleton	Boarder	Single	20	Music Hall Artist	Liverpool
	Alice Maydue	Boarder	Widow	32	Music Hall Artist	Northumberland
20	Arthur Collard	Head	Married	49	Professional Roller Skater	Derby
	Walter Purvis	Boarder	Married	32	Comedian/Actor	Cardiff
	Emily Owen	Boarder	Married	21	Dancer	London
	Emmie Baker	Boarder	Single	22	Dancer	London
22	Augustus Cramer	Boarder	Married	32	Actor	London
	Mary Cramer	Boarder	Married	30	Actress	London
	John Hoy	Boarder	Married	26	Gymnast Exhibitor	Rochdale
	Dolly Hoy	Boarder	Married	21	Music Hall Artist	Sheffield
	Ted Hoy	Boarder	Single	16	Gymnast Exhibitor	Halifax
26	Charles Abad	Boarder	Married	48	Manager (Theatrical)	Birmingham
	Ethel Christian	Boarder	Married	35	Music Hall Artist	Birmingham
	Albert Christian	Boarder	Single	40	Music Hall Artist	Birmingham
34	Augusta Hardie	Boarder	Married	48	Actor	London
44	Frances Higgins	Boarder	Married	28	Music Hall Artist	Monkswearmouth
	Joshua Higgins	Boarder	Married	29	Music Hall Artist	London
	Tilly Kent	Boarder	Single	18	Music Hall Artist	London
	Ellen Kent	Boarder	Widow	40	Music Hall Artist	London
46	William Dacey	Boarder	Single	21	Acrobat Actor	USA
	William Smith	Boarder	Single	16	Acrobat	USA
51	Lizzie Sydney	Visitor	Single	21	Musical Artiste	Germany
	Gracie Grahame	Visitor	Married	24	Actress	Surbiton
52	Howard Garrett	Boarder	Married	40	Theatrical Agent	Bristol
	Caroline Garrett	Boarder	Married	26	Music Hall Artist	Ireland
	Pattie Garrett	Boarder	Single	19	Music Hall Artist	Ireland
55	Rebecca Richardson	Boarder	Single	18	Member Troupe of Dancers	Scotland
	Annie Harrison	Boarder	Single	17	Member Troupe of Dancers	Newcastle-on-Tyne
	Helene Wilkie	Boarder	Single	19	Member Troupe of Dancers	Scotland

	Marion Kirke	Boarder	Single	17	Member Troupe of Dancers	London
55	Sigmund Lichtblau	Head	Married	40	Manager of Troupe of Acrobats	Austria
	Bertha Lichtblau	Wife	Married	37	Member of Troupe	Bohemia
	Franck Lichtblau	Son		12	Member of Troupe	Germany
	Augustus Guischalks	Member of Troupe	Single	34	Member of Troupe	Austria
	Max Kitlow	Member of Troupe	Single	24	Member of Troupe	Germany
	Simon Benedict	Member of Troupe	Single	24	Member of Troupe	Austria
	Carmiel Schneider	Member of Troupe		11	Member of Troupe	Bohemia
	Johan Meister	Member of Troupe		14	Member of Troupe	Austria
57	Marie Millward	Boarder	Single	22	Music Hall Artiste	London
	Gladys Cort	Boarder	Single	22	Music Hall Artiste	Manchester
	Lizzie Holmes	Boarder	Single	16	Music Hall Artiste	London
	Millie Holmes	Boarder	Single	15	Music Hall Artiste	London
	Ada Dickie	Boarder	Single	18	Music Hall Artiste	Scotland
	Elsie Missin	Boarder	Single	19	Music Hall Artiste	Liverpool
60	Ada Elleston	Visitor		23	Actress	London
	Nora Berenger	Visitor		22	Actress	London
	Bessie Ray	Visitor		17	Actress	Stockport
	James Dubois	Visitor	Married	31	Animal Exhibitor/ Impersonator	Kingston-on-Thames
62	Emma Parrett	Head	Widow	48	Matron to Troupe of Dancers	Bristol
	Edith Costin	Boarder	Single	15	Member of Troupe of Dancers	Manchester
	Rosy Connolly	Boarder	Single	15	Member of Troupe of Dancers	Manchester
	Mary Palmer	Boarder	Single	15	Member of Troupe of Dancers	Newcastle-on-Tyne
	Edith Scott	Boarder	Single	14	Member of Troupe of Dancers	Manchester
	Cissie Wolstenholme	Boarder	Single	14	Member of Troupe of Dancers	Manchester
62	Katie Hurley	Boarder	Single	14	Member of Troupe of Dancers	London
	Emily Wilson	Boarder	Single	14	Member of Troupe of Dancers	Manchester
	Florrie Wade	Boarder	Single	13	Member of Troupe of Dancers	Wakefield
	Nellie Wood	Boarder	Single	13	Member of Troupe of Dancers	Manchester
	Ethel Moyle	Boarder	Single	13	Member of Troupe of Dancers	London

	Teresa Spirit	Boarder	Single	12	Member of Troupe of Dancers	Manchester
	Lizzie Cort	Boarder	Single	12	Member of Troupe of Dancers	Manchester
	Beatrice Brown	Boarder	Single	12	Member of Troupe of Dancers	Manchester
72	Frank Hobb	Boarder	Widower	40	Music Hall Artiste	USA
74	Hugo Hugoston	Boarder	Married	32	Acrobat Exhibitor	Germany
	Marguerite Hugoston	Boarder	Married	21	Acrobat Exhibitor	Germany
	Hans Hugoston	Boarder		8	Acrobat Exhibitor	Germany
	Karl Hugoston	Boarder		6	Acrobat Exhibitor	Germany
	William Ball	Boarder	Married	32	Music Hall Artist	Leicester
	Effie Ball	Boarder	Married	22	Music Hall Artist	Leicester
	Violet Carrington	Boarder	Single	19	Music Hall Artist	Manchester
76	Eva Bonhen	Boarder	Married	23	Actress	Bognor
	Harold Wardroper	Boarder	Married	22	Actor	London
	Edith Hord	Boarder	Married	20	Actress	London
78	Edith Humphreys	Boarder	Single	22	Music Hall Artist	London
	Madge Kitson	Boarder	Single	23	Music Hall Artist	London
88	Felix Larder	Head	Married	29	Actor	London
102	Cora Duncan	Boarder	Single	18	Actress	Kent
	Carrie Solomon	Boarder	Single	25	Actress	London
	Florrie Solomon	Boarder	Single	18	Actress	London
	Rubert Mario	Boarder	Married	32	Actor	London
	Edgar Kent	Boarder	Single	29	Actor	London
102	Tom Brasque	Boarder	Single	31	Actor	Dover
	Otto Manns	Boarder	Single	27	Actor	Germany
107	Arthur Alderson	Boarder	Single	40	Actor Manager	Stockton
	Thomas Sidney	Boarder	Married	46	Theatrical Manager	Jersey
	Josephine Sidney	Boarder	Married	42	Actress	London
114	Matthew Smith	Boarder	Married	24	Music Hall Artist	Wolverhampton
118	Thomas Maries	Boarder	Married	59	Dancing School Master	Alcester
	Joseph Rogers	Boarder	Single	25	Musical Director	Newcastle
122	Reginald Weighill	Boarder	Married	22	Actor	Whitby
	Elizabeth Weighill	Boarder	Married	30	Actress	Hanley

## **Appendix 4: Unused Extracts from the North Bromwich Canon**

The following 811 references list further quotations (not used in this thesis) illustrating aspects of North Bromwich addressed in the various sections of chapters two to seven.

### **CHAPTER TWO – NORTH BROMWICH: AN OVERVIEW**

*The Young Physician*, p 235  
*Portrait of Clare*, pp 450-451  
*My Brother Jonathan*, p 361  
*Jim Redlake*, pp 3; 427  
*Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 19  
*The House under the Water*, pp 58; 193; 199; 342; 523; 533; 547  
*This Little World*, pp 227; 374  
*White Ladies*, pp 8; 484; 544; 665; 686  
*Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 288; 369; 405; 717  
*City of Gold*, p 364  
*Mr Lucton's Freedom*, p 421  
*A Man about the House*, p 143  
*Wistanslow*, p 22

### **North Bromwich and its Sobriquets:**

*Undergrowth*, p 253  
*The Black Diamond*, pp 98; 252; 374  
*My Brother Jonathan*, p 93  
*City of Gold*, p 405

### **Chronological Survey of the North Bromwich Canon:**

*The Young Physician*, pp 194-195; 236-237  
*The Black Diamond*, p 124  
*Cold Harbour*, pp 79; 246  
*Portrait of Clare*, pp 167; 282; 439; 737; 788; 790-791  
*The Key of Life*, pp 20-21; 28; 55; 104; 132; 141; 147; 154; 173; 176; 199; 203; 244; 246  
*My Brother Jonathan*, pp 288; 428; 441; 557  
*Jim Redlake*, p 19  
*Mr & Mrs Pennington*, pp 53; 114; 200; 333; 343-344; 353; 414  
*The House under the Water*, pp 75; 573; 601; 608;  
*This Little World*, pp 128; 143; 148-149; 227; 357; 468; 470; 517; 519; 556  
*White Ladies*, pp 114; 193; 255; 310; 489; 535; 578-579; 602; 619; 629; 632; 638  
*Far Forest*, pp 141; 166; 235-236; 249-250; 251; 260; 264; 347; 466-467; 532  
*Portrait of a Village*, pp 26; 99; 134  
*Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 136-137; 137; 178; 189; 190; 222; 272; 275; 278-279; 307; 311; 319-320; 420; 535; 544; 563; 678; 692  
*Mr Lucton's Freedom*, pp 10; 81; 85; 207; 438; 448; 456  
*A Man about the House*, pp 3; 11; 22; 51; 94; 108; 150; 153; 155; 166; 174; 240

### CHAPTER THREE – A MIGHTY CITY

*Cold Harbour*, p 92  
*Portrait of Clare*, p 452  
*This Little World*, pp 250; 307  
*White Ladies*, p 217  
*Far Forest*, pp 235, 237-238  
*Dr Bradley Remembers*, p 331

#### **The Topography and Climate of North Bromwich**

*The Young Physician*, pp 330; 456; 458  
*My Brother Jonathan*, pp 47, 361  
*Jim Redlake*, pp 20; 418  
*Mr & Mrs Pennington*, pp 5; 7; 156; 530-531  
*This Little World*, p 321  
*White Ladies*, pp 74; 351  
*Far Forest*, pp 245-246; 260  
*Portrait of a Village*, p 12  
*Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 216; 252; 367; 516; 650; 652  
*Mr Lucton's Freedom*, pp 52; 54; 190; 406; 455  
*A Man about the House*, pp 55; 80  
*Wistanslow*, pp 145-145

#### **The Commercial Life of North Bromwich**

*Undergrowth*, pp 84-85; 171; 177; 223  
*The Iron Age*, pp 88; 168-169; 209; 296  
*The Young Physician*, pp 237-238; 286; 326  
*Portrait of Clare*, pp 121; 190; 203; 209; 242; 253; 292; 337; 376; 390; 404; 593; 620; 622; 821  
*My Brother Jonathan*, pp 113; 146; 158; 179; 183; 236; 420  
*Jim Redlake*, p 422  
*Mr & Mrs Pennington*, pp 14; 16; 27; 33-38; 43; 77; 79-80; 151; 153-154; 156; 161; 269; 379; 413; 479; 527-528  
*The House under the Water*, pp 39; 47; 53; 58; 238; 301; 636  
*This Little World*, pp 18; 139; 141; 248-249; 296; 309; 367; 541; 600  
*White Ladies*, pp 5-6; 15; 49; 52; 66-67; 204; 217; 236; 240; 262; 280; 304; 343; 398; 456; 550; 577; 621  
*Far Forest*, pp 263  
*Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 133; 224; 313; 327; 382; 494; 532; 562; 564; 676  
*Mr Lucton's Freedom*, pp 3; 28; 49-50; 120; 135  
*A Man about the House*, pp 27; 37  
*The Island*, p 311

#### **The Political and Civic Life of North Bromwich**

*The Black Diamond*, p 195  
*Portrait of Clare*, pp 451; 849; 850; 873  
*My Brother Jonathan*, pp 139-140

*Mr & Mrs Pennington*, pp 312; 547; 549; 566; 568  
*The House under the Water*, pp 465; 476; 486; 497; 500; 503; 504; 507; 509; 511; 514; 515; 516; 519; 523; 524; 525; 526; 531; 543; 544; 546-547; 561  
*This Little World*, pp 370; 372; 378  
*White Ladies*, pp 159-168; 174; 177; 217-218; 625; 637  
*Far Forest*, pp 238; 260-261  
*They Seek a Country*, p 39  
*Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 154; 173; 251; 252; 670  
*Mr Lucton's Freedom*, pp 10-11; 237; 256-257; 451  
*A Man about the House*, pp 5; 66  
*The Island*, p 406

#### **CHAPTER FOUR – THE SUBURBS**

##### **Blockley, Jewellery Quarter, Winsworth, Lower Sparkdale:**

*The Dark Tower*, p 40  
*The Black Diamond*, p 38  
*Portrait of Clare*, p 865  
*Mr & Mrs Pennington*, pp 30; 84; 96  
*White Ladies*, p 195;  
*Far Forest*, pp 262-263; 271; 286; 534  
*Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 226; 250; 280; 299; 301; 308

##### **Alvaston:**

*Portrait of Clare*, pp 28; 52; 205; 419; 420-421; 422-423; 434; 435; 445; 556  
*Jim Redlake*, p 418  
*This Little World*, pp 315; 558  
*White Ladies*, pp 121; 160; 175-176; 180; 216-217; 235; 236; 263; 274; 620; 647  
*Far Forest*, pp 251; 264; 268; 271; 286  
*Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 502; 570; 592-593  
*Mr Lucton's Freedom*, pp 24; 24-25; 27; 45; 56; 60-61; 79; 137; 452  
*A Man about the House*, pp 1-3; 4; 39; 82

##### **Tilton:**

*Portrait of Clare*, p 596  
*Mr & Mrs Pennington*, pp 178; 179; 184; 185; 205; 209; 254; 353; 416; 448; 456  
*Mr Lucton's Freedom*, p 66

##### **The Homes of North Bromwich:**

*The Dark Tower*, p 42  
*The Young Physician*, pp 438; 440; 448; 451  
*Portrait of Clare*, pp 429; 866; 868  
*Jim Redlake*, pp 6-7  
*This Little World*, p 558  
*White Ladies*, pp 160-161; 178  
*Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 164; 173; 448; 593-594  
*A Man about the House*, pp 109; 233

**North Bromwich – Road and Rail:**

*Undergrowth*, p 86  
*The Dark Tower*, p 40  
*The Iron Age*, pp 71; 75; 297  
*The Young Physician*, p 294; 394  
*Cold Harbour*, pp 247-248  
*Portrait of Clare*, pp 21; 28-29; 233; 420; 426-427; 435; 472-473; 474-475; 548; 574; 623; 749; 860; 873  
*The Key of Life*, p 57  
*My Brother Jonathan*, pp 161; 276; 294-295; 303; 361; 495; 535-536; 539  
*Jim Redlake*, pp 6; 21; 417; 422  
*Mr & Mrs Pennington*, pp 7; 20; 30; 31; 62; 85; 156; 157-158; 284-285; 387; 431; 457; 459; 498; 501; 599  
*The House under the Water*, pp 57; 588  
*This Little World*, pp 250; 579  
*White Ladies*, pp 122; 131; 223; 353; 487; 661  
*Far Forest*, pp 236; 262  
*Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 121; 279; 280; 329; 378; 436; 530; 634  
*Mr Lucton's Freedom*, p 455  
*A Man about the House*, pp 1; 48; 51  
*The Furnace*, pp 8; 98

**CHAPTER FIVE – THE ARTS, LEISURE AND RELIGION**

*The Dark Tower*, pp 30; 43-44; 49  
*The Iron Age*, pp 7; 82  
*The Young Physician*, pp 238; 240; 241; 287; 379-380; 393  
*Portrait of Clare*, pp 495; 585; 864  
*The Key of Life*, pp 118; 179  
*My Brother Jonathan*, pp 9; 47  
*Mr & Mrs Pennington*, pp 6; 32; 342; 379; 517  
*This Little World*, pp 117; 435  
*White Ladies*, pp 168; 178; 636  
*Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 123; 177; 448; 611; 650; 657-658  
*Mr Lucton's Freedom*, pp 392; 394  
*A Man about the House*, pp 20-21

**Cafes, Inns, Clubs, Grand Midland Hotel:**

*The Young Physician*, pp 293; 349; 403; 423; 433  
*Cold Harbour*, pp 11; 18  
*Portrait of Clare*, pp 205; 372; 457; 462; 463-464; 464; 470; 548; 860; 861  
*My Brother Jonathan*, p 290  
*Mr & Mrs Pennington*, pp 32; 40; 85; 337; 413; 419-420; 425; 426; 434; 459; 460  
*The House under the Water*, pp 572; 621-622; 624; 626  
*White Ladies*, pp 634-635  
*Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 125; 126; 133; 378; 609



*Mr Lucton's Freedom*, pp 9; 11; 20; 190-191  
*The Furnace*, p 34

**Sports, Pastimes, Excursions:**

*The Black Diamond*, pp 31; 55; 66; 234  
*Pilgrim's Rest*, p 160  
*My Brother Jonathan*, pp 5-6  
*Mr & Mrs Pennington*, pp 73; 76; 85; 88; 98; 425  
*This Little World*, pp 250; 262  
*White Ladies*, p 145  
*Mr Lucton's Freedom*, p 229

**Religion:**

*The Dark Tower*, p 187  
*Cold Harbour*, pp 238; 247  
*Portrait of Clare*, p 700  
*The House under the Water*, p 606  
*A Man about the House*, p 24

**CHAPTER SIX – EDUCATION**

*Portrait of Clare*, p 95  
*My Brother Jonathan*, p 162  
*Jim Redlake*, p 7  
*White Ladies*, pp 109; 110; 238  
*Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 254; 445-446  
*A Man about the House*, p 32

**The Evolution of North Bromwich University**

*The Young Physician*, pp 243; 264-265; 273-274; 310; 313; 315; 476  
*Cold Harbour*, p 70  
*My Brother Jonathan*, pp 250; 277; 354  
*Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 37  
*The House under the Water*, pp 291-292  
*This Little World*, p 588  
*Far Forest*, pp 72-73; 232; 244-245; 246-247; 254-255; 261; 265; 348; 455-456; 461  
*Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 124-125; 139-140; 144; 144-147; 152; 159-160; 487-488; 510; 511; 512-513; 563; 630; 639  
*The Island*, p 415

**North Bromwich Students:**

*The Young Physician*, pp 239; 280; 281; 314; 317  
*Portrait of Clare*, p 424  
*My Brother Jonathan*, pp 45; 83; 508-509  
*Mr & Mrs Pennington*, p 18  
*Far Forest*, pp 242-245  
*Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 138; 149; 150-151; 160; 174; 407; 511-512; 607

**CHAPTER SEVEN - MEDICINE**

*The Iron Age*, p 85

*My Brother Jonathan*, pp 232; 354; 365; 427; 453; 459; 470; 594

*Mr & Mrs Pennington*, pp 17; 61

*The House under the Water*, p 597

*Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 598; 708

**Hospitals**

*The Young Physician*, pp 282; 352; 435; 436; 443

*The Black Diamond*, p 70

*My Brother Jonathan*, pp 82 118; 146-147; 230; 284; 391; 411; 425

*Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 165; 167; 183; 184; 193; 275; 516-517; 518; 551-552; 564; 651-652; 664; 670

**Patients**

*The Young Physician*, pp 354; 359; 387-388; 416

*Portrait of Clare*, p 452;

*Far Forest*, p 239

*Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 193; 195; 303

**Midwives, Druggists, Doctors**

*The Young Physician*, pp 365; 386; 413; 414; 415; 419-420; 421; 424; 426

*The Black Diamond*, p 36

*Cold Harbour*, p 153

*Portrait of Clare*, pp 13; 16; 161; 233

*The Key of Life*, pp 52; 54

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*Dr Bradley Remembers*, pp 30; 33; 114-115; 129-130; 142; 158; 164-165; 171; 179-180; 181-182; 183-185; 193; 197; 200; 224; 227; 230; 232; 238-239; 241; 247; 271; 298-300; 326; 392; 428; 429; 435; 520; 526; 735

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*North Bromwich – City of Iron*

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<sup>5</sup> For another work by this writer see 1.5.i

<sup>6</sup> For another work by this writer see 1.2.iv

<sup>7</sup> For another work by this writer see 1.5.ii

<sup>8</sup> For other works by this writer see 1.5.i

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