

*H. E. Bates, regionalism and late modernism**Dominic Head*

The word order of my title signifies the speculative aspect of this chapter, from which the connection between H. E. Bates and late modernism may emerge as no more than tangential. Yet there is certainly a drive to revitalise regional fiction in Bates's writing, which is the form for which he is best known as a novelist, a drive that reveals important overlaps with the sophisticated development of regional writing that is coming to be recognised as a significant adjunct to late modernist expression.¹ This chapter is a query in the margins of that debate.

H. E. Bates presents a genuine conundrum to the literary historian. For much of the twentieth century (he died in 1974) he loomed large in the literary culture; yet he is notable by his near absence on the academic radar (which occasionally registers his shorter fiction). The absence of Bates in the history of the twentieth-century novel can partly be explained by his cultivation of popularity after the Second World War, and also by his phenomenal productivity and range: he published over a hundred titles between 1926 and his death. He turned his hand to many genres and literary modes, including novels, plays, short stories, novellas, autobiographies, children's books, nature books and books about the English countryside. He also wrote a critical work about the short story, and it is for this form that he is probably best known as a creative writer. His fiction ranged from late-colonial novels set in India and Burma, to wartime stories (which were commissioned by the Armed Forces), to the expressly populist comic novels featuring the Larkin family.

Yet he also wrote rural or regional novels, in a more studiously serious vein, and it is this element of his output that presents the greatest challenge to the critic seeking to place him in the literary history of the twentieth century. He is acknowledged as a key exponent of the regional fiction that, in modern times, had its heyday in the 1920s and 1930s; but this mode of writing can seem antiquated in a decade grappling with the stylistic implications of modernist experimentation and the rapid

urbanisation and vertiginous technological progress of modernity. The challenge to resuscitate Bates's reputation seems even more difficult when we turn – as I intend to do in what follows – to the resurgence of regional writing in his novels in the 1950s. If the genre of regional fiction was already being perceived as outmoded in the 1930s – and, in one version, thoroughly ridiculed by Stella Gibbons in *Cold Comfort Farm* (1932) even before its renaissance had fully taken root – what claims can be made for the importance of Bates's comparable novels of the 1950s, other than to identify them as a notable instance of literary nostalgia?

A lot hinges on how one understands *nostalgia*, as I shall show; but there is also the problem of the normative codes of literary history, which tend to squeeze Bates out of the headline accounts of the 1950s. This is a decade in which (quite properly) critics have placed emphasis on the new social energies embodied in the gritty Northern realists, or in the writers emerging from the 'Windrush' generation, together recording the shake-up of the British social fabric. The Movement writers, with their deliberate reaction against modernist obfuscation, are also prominent in the 1950s story.

The perennial problem with literary history is that it emphasises change, drawing chronological lines in the sand that may be preliminary signposts, merely, requiring complication and enrichment, so that the way the history is manufactured is constantly under review. Where there are literary movements that seem to generate their own contemporaneous mythology of newness this cautionary principle is especially apposite. But Bates presents the obverse problem: he is a writer who, especially in his regional fiction, seeks to cling to tradition, and to distance himself from the literary mainstream. What should one make of this deliberate refusal of the 'new'?

By upbringing and inclination, Bates, who was born in 1906, had one eye on the rural existence of earlier generations. It was his maternal grandfather, George William Lucas, who produced this consciousness in Bates, filling his mind with local folklore and with an understanding of, and empathy for, country ways. In Dean Baldwin's account, Grandfather Lucas 'turned H. E. into the natural child of the dying century'.² With his working-class background and his literary self-tutelage, Bates remained unaffected by the major modernist voices of writers like Joyce, Eliot and Pound; but this was not a conscious decision about which camp to join in the realism versus experimentalism stand-off that is sometimes seen to characterise the literary world of the 1920s (when Bates started out as a writer), with Wells, Bennett and Galsworthy stacked on one side against

the wind of avant-garde change epitomised by Joyce, Woolf and Lawrence. It was simply an indication of his status outside the literary mainstream by upbringing and opportunity as well as inclination. It was not so much that he chose to dismiss the debates about form which were prevalent at the time he emerged as a writer, as that they were not of his world.³

The paradox, however, is that he entered the literary scene in a way that contradicted this apparent intellectual marginalisation, for he was one of the late discoveries of Edward Garnett. This put him in the company of Conrad, Lawrence and W. H. Hudson, and was to generate a burden of expectation that would dog Bates throughout his career. Inevitably, the influence of Garnett helped Bates to hone his style and craft; but the 'apprenticeship' with Garnett, as Baldwin terms it, did not take Bates away from his deepest impulses as a writer.⁴ Indeed, the artistry that Garnett detected in Bates had its locus in the kind of melancholic regional outlook for which Bates was already well prepared.

There is a further problem concerning Bates's apparent lack of development in the 1950s. If Bates the novelist is usually associated with rural regional writing, what are we to make of his return to this form, given that he had established himself as a leading figure in this mode of novel-writing in the 1930s, at the culmination of its major twentieth-century phase? Given that the greatest critical acclaim accorded to his writing had been bestowed upon those earlier regional novels with a Midlands setting, it is easy to assume that his return to that same form and setting in the 1950s signified a desire to shore up his literary reputation, which was diminishing in the wake of his more sensationalist trilogy of Far Eastern novels (1947–50).⁵ Such a desire was clearly one motivation; but the more interesting question is why this mode and setting should continue to be a rich inspiration for Bates, and whether or not the return to tried-and-tested forms can be seen to embody more than a literary throwback.

It is true that that *form* of regional fiction associated with rural experience or with provincial towns in rural settings has tailed off since the Second World War: regions are less self-contained than they were and a new form of regionalism – embracing urbanisation – comes into existence.⁶ Bates's desire to resuscitate an older form of Hardy-esque regionalism looks to be, on the face of it, increasingly anachronistic. Yet this literary chronology already contains misleading signposts, because that sense of apparent anachronism is evident in Bates's regional writing of the 1930s just as much as it is in his return to this mode in later works.⁷ There is, in fact, a persisting sense of historical dislocation. If this can partly be explained by Bates's own disposition and the mindset inherited

from his Grandfather Lucas there is also an aspect to the nostalgia that is cultivated in such works that has significance well beyond the personal.

In a suggestive essay – and an arresting contribution to the New Modernist Studies – David James presents another way of thinking of regional writing in the 1930s, concerning the way it develops the codes of its Victorian literary antecedents and its relationship to modernism. With detailed reference to Rosamond Lehmann, Sylvia Townsend Warner and Storm Jameson, James reclaims the significance of these women writers (in a larger grouping that includes Winifred Holtby, Nancy Mitford and Elizabeth Taylor). Specifically, he explores ways in which these writers ‘recalibrated rather than restricted the purpose and poetics of spatial description in interwar writing’, thus challenging the critical habit ‘of assessing fiction from that time by recourse to high modernism as the sole source from which everything flows’.⁸

The ‘regional late modernism’ that James characterises in select 1930s and 1940s novels by Warner, Lehmann and Jameson has a number of features that are worth measuring Bates against. First, there is the way that literary Impressionism (in Warner’s *Summer Will Show* (1936)) conditions rural descriptions, so that ‘setting is at the mercy of intensive focalization’. (There is a similar technical principle at work in Bates’s *Love for Lydia* (1952), as I shall demonstrate). In the development of this discussion James draws on Raymond Williams’s seminal work *The Country and the City* (1973) and his account of a ‘dynamics of observation and subjective positioning’ in ‘a longstanding rural tradition’ to show that the same dynamic ‘became part of modernism’s narratological repertoire, notably in the wake of its iconoclastic preoccupation with free indirect discourse’. Bates partakes in this reclamation of the ‘heritage of Victorian regionalism’ to an extent.⁹

The second key element that James locates in Warner and Lehmann, and then extends in his discussion of Jameson, is how the regional ‘micro novel’ can point intelligently beyond itself, so that ‘the term *region* ... stands for both part and whole’. This blurs the notional distinction between metropolitan modernism and the continuing legacy of Victorian provincial realism. Jameson’s *A Day Off* (1933), with its juxtaposition of the urban present and memories of the regional past, is an apt demonstration of this connection. It also illustrates nicely the final point I wish to extract from James’s essay: if Jameson’s *A Day Off* enacts ‘the impulse to provincialize the metropolis from within’, it does so by ‘alerting us to what it means to be attuned to the ontology of local spaces, in full awareness too of the consequences of relinquishing that attunement’.¹⁰

I am not necessarily claiming a place for Bates in this tradition of regional late modernism since his work is not always technically sophisticated enough to warrant such a claim. Yet the consciousness that James identifies – concerning the awareness of the consequences of losing a sense of attunement to local spaces – has an immediate relevance to the cultivation of nostalgia in Bates, and the consciousness that can be read off from his novels, and which is also demanded of his readers.

Nostalgia, however, is the problematic (and interesting) issue, since the nostalgic impulse sits unhappily with the normative model of literary history, in which development is invariably determined by the demarcation between the old and the new. The notable literary movement is then perceived to embody a reaction against (if not a progression beyond) the forms, habits, styles or preoccupations of the preceding generation. This may be one way of explaining why regional fiction, which always betrays some form of nostalgia, has only a marginal status in the history of the English novel, if it has any status at all.

The central difficulty here is not (or not just) that the expression of nostalgia in the treatment of rural themes in the twentieth century can be seen as a form of lament for a way of life that has now passed. The real (and associated) stumbling block for the literary historian is that such nostalgia might also embody a lament for the loss of creative possibilities for this literary form: such perceived difficulties can lead the critic to dismiss the rural topic as socially irrelevant, and the regional novel as artistically redundant.

Another problem in the assessment of Bates is that his portrayal of rural existence is never unequivocally positive. His work was certainly marketed to evoke the appeal of a rural way of life now passed: the bucolic and pastoral dust-jackets that adorned many of his books are testament to the nostalgia cultivated in his readership over several decades. One of the paradoxes of the nostalgic impulse, however, is that it is often fed by 'sanitised' memories, which smooth over the harsher aspects of the past. That this sanitising process also applies to literary reception is proved by the enduring popular appeal of Bates. His work is certainly infused with an appreciation of, and sensitivity to, nature – and by an implicit lament for a 'vanished world'.¹¹ Yet the rural societies he evokes are invariably harsh and riven by conflict. Indeed, social historian Keith Snell maintains, in an authoritative overview of Bates's career, that he never presents 'a closely interactive community in his rural writing'; for Snell, his work focuses instead on the inhospitable and isolating aspects of rural life.

There may then be no pastoral idyll to be found that could be the logical basis for the nostalgic lament in Bates's work.¹²

Of Bates's three regional novels of the 1950s, it is the last, *The Sleepless Moon* (1956), that perhaps gives the clearest illustration of some of the paradoxes that complicate the perception of his work. As I indicated earlier, one motivation for Bates in returning to his favoured Midlands setting seems to have been to buttress his waning literary reputation by returning to that mode which had previously won him the greatest critical acclaim. It was ironic therefore that this novel should have been poorly received – indeed the negative reception hurt Bates and made him vow never to write another novel, though this was not a vow he kept.¹³ (This turning of the literary tide has wider implications for placing Bates, as I shall discuss at the end of this chapter.)

The Sleepless Moon is instructive because it plays upon the nostalgic impulse in a way that is typically Batesian. What Bates does is to treat nostalgia ambivalently, making us realise that it is a contradictory, and yet unavoidable aspect of experience. The unsettling effect of reading Bates has its source in this ambivalence: the reader is enticed to engage with the temptations of nostalgia even while recognising its destructive (and even self-destructive) consequences. Reading these works of Bates therefore requires that the reader adopt a form of double-consciousness, as I have suggested elsewhere.¹⁴

Bates's regional novels, like Hardy's, are backward-looking. Thus *The Sleepless Moon* is set back a generation to the 1920s, so that the social experience of its country town, Orlingford (a fictionalised Higham Ferrers), has a disguised, rather than an immediate bearing on contemporaneous experience.¹⁵ On the face of it, the backward look seems to pinpoint a prior moment of social change set in clear relief with the benefit of hindsight. Orlingford a generation back thus emerges as having been on the cusp of dramatic but now confirmed historical change: the 'end of horses' is heralded by the arrival of cars in the town;¹⁶ destabilising geographical mobility is registered by Londoners relocating (the brassy publican, Mrs Corcoran, and her daughter Phoebe, who is central to the tragic love plot); and, for one character (the former soldier, Hyde, who comes to this conclusion after a spell in an asylum), the old rural lore of the poacher is definitely separated from the present by Passchendaele (pp. 295–6). This is one of those familiar fictional tropes that characterise the fiction of modernity. What is undetermined is whether or not Bates is deploying a familiar literary marker where, for example, the psychological effects of the First World War are an index of the vertiginous changes

of modernity. To an extent, one has to see this as an instance of reliance on a recognised modernist theme, transplanted into a less challenging mode of expression; yet at the same time, the book relies on the reader's recognition of the parallel with the more recent Second World War, inviting a comparison and a longer historical view. This is unsettling, because the yoking together of the past and present is fundamentally at odds with the dominant mood of this historical novel.

The element of disjunction applies also to the novel's action. The emotional engine of the novel is the unconsummated marriage of Melford and Constance Turner. Both have affairs, which generate gossip and social intrigue in this insular provincial town, and which in turn produce the novel's human drama that leads to the deaths of both Phoebe (Melford's amour) and Constance, who throws herself from the church roof at the novel's conclusion. The ending is bathetic, since Melford is checking the time on the church clock with disapproval, oblivious to his wife's actions: noting the clock to be three-and-a-half minutes slow, Melford grumbles: 'I fail to understand it . . . it was never like this in my father's time' (p. 384).

Melford is the grocer-mayor, who, in his failure to understand, epitomises a world that is overtaken by change. Yet his nostalgia for an earlier era is partly emulated in Bates's own literary imagination in the very conception of this book, and this lends the novel a slightly claustrophobic air in that it is unable to resist the uncritical affiliations it is able to diagnose in its central character. Insofar as this relates to the novel's form it reveals an interesting and self-conscious paradox. The novel has been leading to the kind of human tragedy discernible in Hardy's major novels, and Bates is plainly relying on that association. Yet when bathos displaces tragedy there is an implicit reaction against the literary model, and the regional tradition that follows it is revealed as anachronistic in itself.

This is not, however, simply an instance of an ill-conceived novel, because the self-consciousness about nostalgia demands this kind of unsettling ending. As in most of Bates's regional novels, we perceive an exaggerated dissonance between the celebration of place (and time) – the straightforward nostalgic impulse – and the unhappy events of the novels, often generated by a nostalgic impulse in the characters. The novel, that is to say, performs the double-consciousness about nostalgia that it also demands of the reader. Put another way, the effect of Bates's writing in such a novel is to place faith in a literary genre that is also simultaneously undermined. The invitation to the reader is to conduct an evaluation of the relevance and limitations of the genre.

The other regional novels of this decade make similar demands of self-conscious reflection on their readers, oriented slightly differently in each case. Working backwards, *The Feast of July* (1954) is easy to dismiss for its apparent reliance on the established codes of rural regional fiction. Dennis Vannatta points out that 'the girl made pregnant by the slick villain, the rural setting and seasonal rhythms, the inevitable violence, the flight with the lover and his eventual capture' – the key elements of the novel's plot – are 'variations on *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*'. The imitation may be less problematic than might be assumed, however, if Vannatta is right that the novel's achievement lies not in 'plot, characterization, or theme', but rather in 'the richly textured cultural and historical milieu'.¹⁷ Even so, Bates's borrowing establishes narrative interest in the tradition of the folk ballad, a fact that makes 'borrowing' seem necessary rather than dubious. Bella Ford, made pregnant by Arch Wilson, loses her baby (and nearly dies) on an unsuccessful quest to find him. When she arrives in Nenweald she is taken in by the Wainwright family and becomes the object of attention for each of the three sons. The resulting love entanglement may be predictable in some ways but it provides the engine for Bates's intriguing treatment of place.

The novel is set at the end of the nineteenth century, in the familiar locale of a shoe-making town (Nenweald) where the effects of industrialisation are shown to have an increasingly destructive bearing on the rhythms of rural life. The focus of rural tradition is the feast that gives the novel its title, which is held on the first Sunday in July in celebration of the first peas and new potatoes of the year; the feast day is also the climax of Bates's tragedy. On the Saturday before the feast, the eldest Wainwright son, Con, has taken Bella to Bedford (the 'big town' that symbolises progress) to buy an ostentatious new hat to wear with the green dress he has already bought her.¹⁸ On this excursion she finally runs across Arch Wilson playing billiards, and he, ever the seducer, proposes an assignation the next day, which is feast day at Nenweald (pp. 165–6). The meeting occurs, but not as Wilson had anticipated: Con and Bella, out boating, chance upon him fishing on the riverbank. Con, having provoked a fight in his jealousy, kills Wilson with an oar (pp. 179–80).

At one level there is an uncomplicated nostalgia for a simpler life in this narrative, in the tradition of the folk ballad: even the local superstition that a green dress is unlucky seems to be confirmed by the events of feast Sunday – another warning against change or the flouting of tradition (pp. 149, 175). Yet Bates offers no signpost as to what this 'simpler life' might be. It is true that, in contrast to the fripperies of

Bedford (billiards, hats with feathers), Nenweald preserves rural lore and farming in coexistence with the effects of industrialisation (the shoemakers are also involved in gathering the harvest, for example). Yet the novel also exposes the hardship of life in Nenweald, a one-trade town at the mercy of harsh winters but more especially of economic recession. There is, then, no hankering for the way of life two generations before the time of writing.

Bates does, however, celebrate aspects of a life that is passing, and these relate particularly to the persistence of rural lore at the fringes of modernity. Bates's admiration for the craft of the shoemaker is just as evident as his descriptive evocation of the natural world. Indeed, Bates insists on the connection between the two in a time of social transition: 'like all the shoemakers [Con] loved the river. He loved the valley and the open country that was an escape from the low shabby defiles of the town' (p. 42). It is this fragile connection that is symbolically broken when Con kills the emissary of the big town beside his beloved river. The importance of *The Feast of July* hinges on how it portrays in microcosm the effects on rural England of modernity, where modernity is understood as the social development that follows the effects of industrialisation and mechanisation from the middle of the nineteenth century. As a central device in the fictionalising of this experience, *The Feast of July* rehearses (and invites the reader to encounter) the impulse to nostalgia that this history can sometimes provoke, without providing a rationale for that emotion.

Bates's earliest regional novel of the decade is also his best-known novel: *Love for Lydia* (1952). This is the most technically interesting of the novels considered here because its technique is associated with its double-consciousness more clearly than in the other works. *Love for Lydia* is one of Bates's novels set in Evensford (his fictional version of Rushden), a town governed by the single industry of boot- and shoemaking. There is a strong sense of authorial investment in the narratorial stance, which betrays a nostalgic lament not for the town, but for the countryside that is being eaten away by the expansion of Evensford. Unequivocally, urbanisation is conceived as despoliation: 'new roofs spawned along clay hillsides, encrusting new land, settling down on the landscape in a year or two with the greyness of old ash-heaps under rain'.¹⁹ This creates an interesting contradiction in the book's cultivation of nostalgia, since the prosperity of life in Evensford becomes a source of regret as success brings urban expansion. For narrator Richardson an idyllic rural scene is characterised as 'the kind of land that Evensford had taken away from us' (p. 139).

There is plainly a strong autobiographical element in Richardson; but to the extent that this is a self-portrait, it is also a highly self-critical one, so that we can trust Bates's own account of his motivation in creating Richardson, where he characterises the novel as a vehicle for examining the 'ecstasies and uncertainties' of his own youth, and in particular his 'impatient disposition to judge people ... by prejudice, before giving them a chance'.²⁰

The nature of Richardson's unreliability is particularly intriguing and unusual, because it infects the nostalgic worldview of the novel, adding an additional layer to the ambivalent nostalgia that I have described in the other Bates novels discussed here. The extent to which we are wrong-footed has partly to do with Richardson's acquisition of self-knowledge. Indeed, this is a process that he often articulates overtly, and this invites trust in his authority despite the localised unreliability and impetuosity. Even so, the gathering data about this unreliability in successive episodes does colour the reception of his retrospective account, producing a sense of distrust that grows incrementally.

The evocation of nostalgia for the Northamptonshire countryside is also affected by this dynamic, becoming partly an anthropomorphic reflection of Richardson's moods and development through the novel. The volatility of this anthropomorphism can be dramatic in a love story that is both tempestuous and inscrutable, yet this does not entirely negate the invitation to indulge in nostalgia for a simpler rural life. Indeed, the love story can conspire to reinforce this nostalgia, as when Richardson is heart-broken by Lydia's rejection of his proposal of marriage and, in an episode of healing and repair, turns to hard toil on the farm owned by his friend Tom Holland (p. 189).

In *Love for Lydia*, then, the characteristic Batesian nostalgia for rural experience is linked to the career of the narrator, and is an aspect of the narrative stance. Yet this does not mean that the enticement of nostalgia does not work on another level simultaneously, supplying the kind of appeal that readers of Bates associate with his novels. The resulting ambiguity about rural nostalgia supplies another connection, therefore, predicated on the dissonance between past and present: this connection obliges us to see a parallel between the evolution of Richardson's love for Lydia and any hankering for rural experience that we may feel if we are sympathetic to Bates's work.

In the novel's remarkable conclusion, Richardson has a revelation when he is able to discover in himself a new kind of love for Lydia, just as he is on the point of rejecting her out of pure self-interest. In other words,

Richardson has to achieve a more complex acceptance of an emotion that has been self-destructive hitherto, but which he cannot finally relinquish. In a precise analogy for Richardson's love for the mercurial Lydia, the reader of Bates's novel, attuned to its backward-looking appeal, may recognise that the nostalgic pull for the rural may be irresistible, despite its inherent antagonism towards social progress, and that a complex – and perhaps less personal – understanding of nostalgia's function may be required.²¹

The contradiction built into the novel's narrative stance and its evocation of mood has a direct bearing on the social history it reveals. This is chiefly because the presentations of social life in Evensford are invariably the barbed views of the arrogant Richardson. They also express the impatience of youth, and a character dissatisfied by the provincial limitations of a one-industry town. Hence the brutal typification of Evensford society:

Evensford was full of Sandersons. Like leather, they were everywhere, branching out, making money, dedicating chapel foundation stones, strong in Rotarian and golfing and Masonic and bridge-playing circles, living in red gabled villas having conservatories filled with scarlet geranium and drawing rooms with Tudor radio sets.

The vilification of social advantage in Evensford is economically achieved in this articulation of allied social, class and religious interests. In this passage one might wonder if the implied authorial view coincides with the narratorial stance. Something richer emerges, however, in the continuation of the passage:

Their wives began by being sleek and good looking and ended up, in a few years, wadded with corsets that revealed pimpled suspender buttons, frothy with fox furs whose bony skulls were chained under chins of mauve-powdered flesh, healthy and puffed and in a rubbery way voluptuous. (p. 74)

The caricature of the face of class interests remains incisive and damning; yet it has plainly now become a jaundiced male point of view that contributes to our understanding of Richardson's limitations as much as it contributes to the developing picture of Evensford. This technical problem pervades the novel and is a chief element in its unsettling effect. The portrayal of society in a historical novel inevitably implies authority and encourages acceptance, yet the uneven development of the character-narrator also provokes a dynamic of resistance. This double movement makes the social history contingent upon the unravelling of individual personal experience.

Love for Lydia reproduces some of the features that have been seen – for example, by David James – as key features in the regional

reworking of modernism in the two previous decades, especially that challenging combination of (in Raymond Williams's phrase) 'observation and subjective positioning' that allows for a general social perspective to be inferred from work that steadily evokes the intensity of individual experience. In this sense, the 'micro' world of the regional novel brings with it a version of the social vision of the great nineteenth-century rural regionalists.

That Bates continues, in the 1950s, to write in a vein that he had already begun to master in the 1930s inevitably raises questions about the continuing significance of his work. Yet there is an intensification of the paradoxes when one compares the regional work of the two eras, and the locus of this intensification is a developing self-consciousness about nostalgia for regional experience, and an associated anxiety about the relevance of regional writing. If this is a version of that awareness of the consequences that flow from the gradual loss of identification with a rural locale – the fundamental spaces of food production and human subsistence – it may have a particular importance to Bates's evolving vision after the Second World War, and his concerns about the ugliness of popular cultural expression. In 1954 he wrote: 'our age is an anxious one . . . We have been prone to make a fetish of plays with buried spiritual meanings, and have been fed – I now suggest to the teeth – with films and literature in which no act or word, however gross, is spared.'²² It may be that literary history will see H. E. Bates as ploughing his own furrow in developments that occur in parallel to the serious literary mainstream. Yet the process of intensifying the self-conscious perception of nostalgia in (and nostalgia for) regional fiction bespeaks the kind of double-consciousness one associates with self-reflexive modernist thought, as well as with modernism's acute understanding of the relationship between the micro and the macro, the local and the international.

ENDNOTES

- 1 See, for example, David James, 'Localizing Late Modernism: Interwar Regionalism and the Genesis of the "Micro Novel"', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 32:4 (Summer 2009), pp. 43–64.
- 2 Dean R. Baldwin, *H. E. Bates: a Literary Life* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1987), p. 24.
- 3 On this see Baldwin, *H. E. Bates*, pp. 50–8.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 58.
- 5 These were *The Purple Plain* (London: Michael Joseph, 1947), *The Jacaranda Tree* (London: Michael Joseph, 1949), and *The Scarlet Sword* (London:

Michael Joseph, 1950). *The Purple Plain* was adapted for the screen in 1954, with Gregory Peck in the starring role.

- 6 In this broader definition, a case can be made for the expansion, rather than the demise, of regional writing. Keith Snell, for example, has argued that the regional novel in Britain and Ireland (but especially England) has been on the increase since the 1980s. See K. D. M. Snell, 'The regional novel: themes for interdisciplinary research', in K. D. M. Snell (ed.), *The Regional Novel in Britain and Ireland, 1880–1990* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 1–53.
- 7 H. E. Bates, *The Poacher* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1953), with its action spanning the period between the 1880s and the 1920s, is a good example of the backward look. First published in 1935, it is also one of Bates's best novels.
- 8 James, 'Localizing late modernism', p. 44.
- 9 *Ibid.*, pp. 49, 53.
- 10 *Ibid.*, pp. 57, 61.
- 11 The title of the first volume of Bates's autobiography was *The Vanished World* (London: Michael Joseph, 1969).
- 12 I am drawing on a recent essay by Keith Snell, provisionally entitled 'H. E. Bates and the rural community: from cobbled gloom to *The Darling Buds of May*', which is not yet published.
- 13 H. E. Bates, *The World in Ripeness* (London: Michael Joseph, 1972), p. 150.
- 14 See my 'Writing against the nostalgic grain: H. E. Bates in the 1950s', *Literature and History* 19:1 (2010): pp. 4–15.
- 15 *The Sleepless Moon* offers a more substantial treatment of the theme at the heart of Bates's earlier novel *Catherine Foster* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1929), concerning the infidelity of a woman trapped in a stifling marriage in a rural-provincial setting.
- 16 H. E. Bates, *The Sleepless Moon* (London: Michael Joseph, 1956), p. 255. Subsequent page references are given in the body of the chapter.
- 17 Dennis P. Vannatta, *H. E. Bates* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1983), p. 96.
- 18 Bates, *The Feast of July* (London: Michael Joseph, 1954), p. 71. Subsequent page references appear parenthetically.
- 19 Bates, *Love for Lydia* (London: Michael Joseph, 1952), p. 21. Subsequent page references appear parenthetically.
- 20 Bates, *The World in Ripeness*, p. 126.
- 21 I am grateful to my colleague Neal Alexander for drawing my attention to the connection between my modest attempt to rehabilitate nostalgia and the more thoroughgoing efforts of Svetlana Boym in *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001). In particular, Boym's account of 'restorative nostalgia' may signpost a fruitful way of situating Bates in the broader zeitgeist of regional nostalgia in a more wide-ranging survey.
- 22 'Introduction', in Raymond Paynet, *The Lovers' Pocketbook* (London: Perpetua, 1954), p. 1.