

REGION, CLASS, CULTURE:
Lancashire Dialect Literature 1746-1935
2 vols

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Region, Class, Culture: Lancashire Dialect Literature 1746-1935

Paul Salveson

Summary of Thesis for Ph.D.

The thesis looks at the origin and development of Lancashire dialect literature between the publication of John Collier's ('Tim Bobbin') A View of the Lancashire Dialect in 1746, and the death of Allen Clarke ('Teddy Ashton') in 1935.

The thesis is partly chronological, paying particular attention to the largely unexplored period of dialect writing between the 1890s and the 1930s, which suggests that earlier assessments of dialect literature need revision. The period before the First World War witnessed the development of a dialect literature closely linked to the labour movement in Lancashire, and contributed to the development of a distinctive socialist culture. For a time at least, dialect literature escaped from the middle class patronage which characterised it in the 1850s and 1860s, aided by the existence of an independent, Lancashire-based, press.

Dialect literature was never a pure, unadulterated 'voice of the people', and it was used both by middle and working class social forces to support rival value systems. An argument in dialect suggested a practical, common sense, wisdom, regardless of the actual message. Dialect poetry was used by different writers to support imperialist adventures, Irish home rule, left-wing socialism, and to oppose strikes, women's suffrage, and restrictions on access to the countryside. The literature represented divisions within the working class, as well as attempts from the middle class to influence it. Differing class and political standpoints were, on occasions, transcended by a wider regional consciousness in which dialect had a prominent place.

Particular themes within dialect literature are explored, contributing to current debates on class, identity, and gender. The treatment of women, war and imperialism, work, and the 'Cotton Famine' of 1861-4 are examined in separate chapters. Self-criticism, and defences of dialect writing, are looked at in Chapter 6 on "Defending Dialect".

Chapter 1: Introduction

The Lancashire Dialect Tradition of Working Class Literature

The dialect literature of Lancashire is one of the most remarkable examples of a specifically regional, and largely working class, body of English writing. Despite its large readership, and the number of writers producing verse and prose, a full-length study of Lancashire dialect literature has never been attempted before. Historians have begun to look beyond traditional sources of nineteenth century working class history, and pay much greater attention to regional differences: the large body of dialect writing provides a fruitful source of primary material. Dialect literature was never a pure 'voice of the people' but at times it did reflect and promote particular elements of a regional, working class, culture.

This thesis aims to examine the growth, consolidation, and ultimate decline of Lancashire dialect literature in the period marked, at one end, by the publication of John Collier's ('Tim Bobbin') A View of the Lancashire Dialect in 1746, and the death of Allen Clarke ('Teddy Ashton') in 1935 at the other. The objective of the study is to explore a number of themes and debates within contemporary social history, centring on class and class consciousness, and regional identity. The study of dialect literature ought to be a useful way of looking at regional influences on the social history of England, which traditionally were neglected. A central theme running through the thesis is the relationship between region and class, expressed through dialect. What does dialect tell us about working class life which other writing does not?

The thesis is the first attempt at a history of Lancashire dialect literature. Dialect literature has not been the subject of a detailed examination, although some substantial historical works have used dialect literature as key sources. Brian Hollingworth's Songs

of the People (1), a collection of dialect verse and song, contains a valuable commentary on dialect literature in its early, 'classic' period but it is not without faults. Like Vicinus in The Industrial Muse (2 - see below) he focusses almost exclusively on the period between 1850 and 1885 and neglects later developments. This leads him to make a claim for the late nineteenth century which is much more apposite for the 1920s:

We witness in the later nineteenth century, I believe, a divorce between author, subject matter, and audience, which was both inevitable and disastrous. The writer grows more self-conscious, begins to play with a language which he himself does not use and which a steadily diminishing number of his audience are still using. The audience turns to the poetry not for an expression of its present feeling but for a journey into nostalgia. So the dialect form becomes less of an expression of living speech and more a literary exercise. (3)

Hollingworth's comments suggest that Edwin Waugh, perhaps Lancashire's most famous dialect poet, and his circle in the mid-nineteenth century were writing an 'authentic' literature which he counterposes to the work of later nineteenth century writers. However, this does not square with an examination of either their text or their own lives; Waugh was very clearly setting out to develop a popular form of literature which had its own stylistic conventions, permissible areas of subject matter, and it certainly did represent an excursion into nostalgia. If anything, the later writers could be said to be writing a more authentic literature since many of them did address contemporary issues, such as factory conditions, and everyday events in working class life.

Martha Vicinus was the first historian to make serious use of Lancashire dialect literature. The Industrial Muse recognises the importance of dialect literature in the north of England in shaping a regional class identity but fails to adequately recognise the complexity, and development, of dialect literature. In fact, she has a static view of dialect, commenting that:

Dialect writing did not develop or regress during the period 1850-1914, but it probably declined in terms of the sheer quantity of verse written after about 1885.(4)

More detailed research suggests that both comments are incorrect. Dialect writing certainly did develop constantly during this period, and if anything more was written after 1885 than before. These points are examined in detail in later chapters but here we can simply note that Allen Clarke's Tum Fowt Sketches alone sold over a million copies, and were published between 1890 and 1930.

More recently, Brian Maidment's work, both as contributor and editor, in The Poorhouse Fugitives: Self-Taught Poets and Poetry in Victorian Britain considerably expands the earlier work of Vicinus and deepens the analysis of regional working class poetry which she pioneered, although the important contribution of later writers remains unacknowledged. Patrick Joyce's Visions of the People: Industrial England and the Question of Class 1848-1914 is the most detailed and sophisticated analysis of the role of dialect literature achieved so far. The work of Joyce in particular raises crucial issues of historical debate about the nature of nineteenth century society, and the ways in which identities are created. Joyce's work is part of a debate over the extent of the significance of 'class' in historical analysis. His stress on the importance of a regional, as well as a class, identity is a major theme of this thesis, although I take issue with some of Joyce's particular interpretations in the course of this work. Margaret Beetham's essay "Healthy Reading: The Periodical Press in Late Victorian Manchester" in City Class and Culture is helpful for the light it casts on dialect journalism and also on dialect writers' relationship with literature generally (5). What is important to note here, however, is that many of the most important developments in the Lancashire periodical press took place outside Manchester: Clarke's Northern Weekly and Andrews' Cotton Factory Times were published in Bolton and Ashton-under-Lyne respectively.

A central argument of this thesis is that 'class', on its own, is an inadequate tool for describing the development of nineteenth century England. Lancashire was the

cradle of the industrial revolution, and the location for the emergence of a modern factory proletariat, as Engels observed in The Condition of the Working Class. Identities were constructed around a combination of class and region, locality, and to an extent ethnicity/religion. Dialect was never a purely 'working class' voice, and frequently represented part of what Joyce calls a "higher-class regional consciousness" (6) which encompassed traditions of civic pride, enthusiasm for local history, and a high-quality magazine culture in places such as Manchester, Leeds, Warrington, and other major northern towns. Dialect literature, as will be argued repeatedly in this thesis, was never a 'natural', or spontaneous written expression of working class speech. To both write and read dialect it was necessary to be comfortable with standard English. Identification of dialect with a particular class (working class) only really became fully established in the twentieth century. Throughout the nineteenth century many members of the northern middle class, in both commercial and professional occupations, would speak dialect, and be proud of it. It was a stamp of northern pride and distinctiveness. However, dialect was pre-eminently plebeian, and some of its middle class speakers would have risen socially from a more modest social background.

The strength of dialect in Lancashire, and in West Yorkshire, lay in the hegemony of cotton (and wool in Yorkshire) and the culture which evolved around the dominance of the industry and its permeation into all areas of life, particularly in the family. Dialect was the warp of the industrial weft, linked inextricably into the all-pervading way of life which was that of the nineteenth century cotton towns. The child piecer of the 1850s spoke the same dialect as his father in the spinning room, mother or sister in the weaving shed, the tacklers, managers, and often owners. The middle class outsiders in the professions could only defer to the strength of this culture, and recognise the literary possibilities of it. The early popularity of dialect literature owed much to middle class sponsorship, although it evolved later into a more direct voice of working class aspirations, by the end of the nineteenth century. It remained, in day-to-day speech, an expression of regional pride in the face of encroaching attack by

metropolitan life and the influence of London. It was able to cross class boundaries.

Joyce is right to emphasise this point:

The association of the north and its regions with work and productive enterprise represents that realisation of class through region and locale.(7)

A question arises as to what extent dialect literature reflected people's perception of reality, or actually moulded it. I would argue that dialect helped to shape people's perceptions of everyday life; dialect literature helped to bond together a distinctive 'cotton-belt culture', which had local variations based on individual cotton towns, but formed a larger, regional, unity. Both the 'classic generation' writers, such as Waugh and Brierley, and the new generation of the 1890s, saw themselves as helping to 'elevate' working class people. In the earlier period, this was elevation into the world of respectability, thrift, co-operation, and Liberalism. By the late 1890s, Socialism was challenging Liberalism for the allegiance of the non-Tory sections of the working class (and, of course, for working class Tories). Dialect speech was part of the fabric of everyday life: dialect literature was used to try and mould popular culture in a particular direction. What is very clear though, is that dialect could be something of a 'wild card' to play: it could blunt the cutting edge of radical socialism by placing 'region' above 'class', and acting as a means of bridging class divides through a 'shared heritage'. Certainly, conservative writers were able to use dialect in the 1920s to put across what they saw as the 'common sense' view of life.

An important theme within this thesis is that dialect literature in Lancashire went through a number of distinct phases, although there is an inevitable overlap in dates. The first period represents the origins of dialect literature, from the mid-eighteenth through to the mid-nineteenth century. Its typical products comprise a combination of broadsheet songs, satirical verse, and humorous occasional pieces. The most well-known figure of this period is John Collier ('Tim Bobbin'). The second period begins in the early 1850s and lasts until the end of the century. It is represented in the work of Edwin Waugh, Ben Brierley, J.T. Staton, and slightly later Samuel Laycock. The third

period extends roughly from 1890 to 1914. Although this new generation of dialect writer, such as Allen Clarke, writes very consciously within a tradition developed by Waugh and his contemporaries, the writing contains significant differences which are outlined below. The final phase is from the end of the First World War to the death of Allen Clarke in 1935. In a sense, a new phase has begun with the marketing of dialect as part of Lancashire's heritage industry. Inevitably, this is a backward looking form of dialect which does not relate to contemporary reality in the declining cotton towns.

John Collier, or 'Tim Bobbin', is known as called the "Father of Lancashire Dialect Literature". His View of the Lancashire Dialect published in 1746 marks the beginnings of the tradition, but little else. The work is virtually unreadable, and I would suggest always has been. I doubt whether it was any more decipherable to a Lancashire readership in the 1740s than it is today. His famous work is in the form of a husband-wife dialogue, between 'Tummas an' Meary'. The following extract indicates the difficulties of the text:

Mary: Well, on heaw went'n ye on ith' Mourning when eh wackn't?
Tummas: Whau, as I'r donning meh thwooanish Clooas, I thowt I'll know heaw meh shot stons ofore I'll wear moor o meh brass o meh brekfast: so I cawd on th'londleday coom, on kestit Throttenpence: So; thowt I t' meh sein, o weawnded Deeol! (8)

The point was not that Collier produced a great work of literature - he did not. What he achieved was to get dialect into print, and encourage other writers to do the same. He had the same status to dialect literature as Marx had to English socialism: everyone deferred to his greatness, but no-one ever read him.

The period from 1746 up to the 1850s saw several attempts at dialect writing in pamphlets, short books, newspapers, and broadsides. In Lancashire, 'broadsheet' is used rather than 'broadside' and is the term used in this thesis. The period is very uneven, with no obvious progression taking place in the form. Dialect was being

published in the 1790s, and in the early 1820s and 1830s, but not in large quantities. There is no doubt that much of it was ephemeral and has not survived - particularly the poems and songs published as local broadsheet songs. Yet of all the broadsheets which have survived, and Manchester Central Library has a large collection, only a minority are in dialect. It seems a reasonable assumption that there was never a large body of dialect broadsheets which have disappeared.

Dialect came out of the doldrums in the 1850s. The period the mid-1850s, when Waugh wrote his famous "Come Whoam To Thi Childer An' Me" poem, up to the late 1890s marks the "Classic Period" of dialect literature. This period saw the publication of Laycock's Cotton Famine poetry, Ben Brierley's 'Daisy Nook' sketches, and Waugh's poetry and sketches. All of these went into several editions and established a canon of Lancashire dialect literature which was aped, more or less successfully, by dozens of other writers.

It did not emerge from a vacuum. The crucial difference from the early period is that from the 1850s dialect literature took off as a mass form, with substantial middle-class support, and - subject to slight local variations - an accepted orthography. It was softened, made more accessible, and became less of an act of endurance to actually read. It established stylistic conventions, and boundaries of acceptable subject-matter from which it became difficult to escape. The stress on home life, nostalgia for the pre-factory age, the countryside, and harmless humour left out the hardships of factory work, ill-health, class conflict (when it occurred), and other grievances of the northern working class. That it did exclude them should not be too surprising: working class readers read dialect as a form of escape, for pleasure. Neither did middle class readers wish to be reminded of the realities of working class life in the 1850s. It was not in the commercial interests of dialect writers to write about uncomfortable subjects which no-one wished to read about. The exception comes with the Cotton Famine, between 1861 and 1864. Here, the hardships were perceived as having an external

cause. People were starving through no fault of their own, or of their employers. Appeals in dialect were seen as the authentic voice of the Lancashire worker.

The first popular writers of dialect, Waugh, Brierley, Staton, and Laycock, were from working class backgrounds. They wrote for two different audiences; the mass working class readership who could afford the 'Penny Readings' and broadsheets, and the provincial middle class, who would pay for the guinea editions of Waugh's Poems and Songs, with gilt-edging and leather bindings. The perspectives of what I have termed "the classic generation" of dialect writers, active between 1850 and 1890, shared a common advanced liberalism, and an attachment to the countryside. The virtues of 'homely life' were stressed, coupled with a nostalgia for the old days, when handloom-weavers were the aristocrats of the cotton trade. 'Humourous sketches' were popular, and Staton and Brierley in particular developed the popular form of 'laughable Lancashire readings', often giving personal readings of their works at social occasions.

Dialect literature took off at about the same time - the 1850s - in other parts of the industrial North. The dialect literature of West Yorkshire shared many similar features with its Lancashire counterpart, though distinct strains also developed on Tyneside, and in the industrial areas of West Cumberland. It was very much a product of the revolution in peoples' culture brought about by industrialisation. It is noteworthy that it emerged after the high-point of Chartism, when working class radicalism, at least in its more extreme and independent form, was on the wane. The substantial literature of Chartism was almost exclusively written in standard English - I have yet to find a 'Chartist' Lancashire dialect poem or sketch. Dialect literature is much more at home with the co-op, the mechanics' institutes, burial clubs, trades unionism, and the chapel or church. Initially, its subject matter is regressive, and extols the virtues of the lost way of life of the hand-loom weavers. Waugh's characters are drawn from what was a bygone age - the besom maker, handloom weaver, distaff spinner, village blacksmith; yet it was an age that had passed recently, and passed with seeming rapidity.

Change in the subject matter of dialect literature becomes evident in the 1880s and a new period of dialect literature becomes discernible from the early 1890s. Both Laycock and Brierley begin to use dialect as a political weapon. Laycock in particular wrote a number of powerful poems advancing the Liberal cause on Ireland, or against the aristocracy. This paved the way for the overtly socialist writing of Allen Clarke, and his circle of writers around Teddy Ashton's Northern Weekly. A new period of dialect literature opens up, spanning the years between 1890 and 1914, and going into decline after the war.

Probably the crucial factor in the rise of the new generation was the growth of independent labour politics, coupled with the opportunities for an independent working class press. The Cotton Factory Times and Clarke's own papers were vital in providing an outlet for the writings of labour-inclined dialect poets. Factory life becomes much more central in their writings, in the period between 1890 and 1914. This tended to be a 'balanced' representation, based on everyday life in the factory rather than the exceptional event such as a strike. The dialect sketches, and serialised stories in the Factory Times and Northern Weekly were the equivalent of today's TV 'soaps', in which ordinary people could identify with fictionalised characters who worked in the mill, lived in the same streets and houses as they did, and shared the same problems, tragedies, and joys.

After the First World War dialect literature undergoes a significant shift: it becomes much more artificial, less rooted in ordinary life. It starts the reversion to nostalgia and sentimentality which had characterised it in the 1850s. As radio and then TV develop, its market shrinks. It becomes a quaint curiosity consigned to the occasional poem in the local newspaper. It once again becomes primarily the preserve of the antiquary, rather than a vehicle for expressing contemporary working class life and its values. However, I am aware that from the time of John Collier onwards,

people have been forecasting the 'death' of dialect. It remains popular, and perhaps increasingly so as northern towns try to market dialect writing as part of a tourist strategy which emphasises local and regional culture. However, there is yet to emerge any writer, using Lancashire dialect, who can express the realities of daily life in the 1990s. It has become almost inextricably tied to the past - the imagery of smoking mills, cobbled streets, clogs and shawls. Even the re-introduction of trams to Manchester is unlikely to lead to a more relevant form of dialect writing!

This sketch of the development of dialect literature should be set alongside the comments of Vicinus and Hollingworth that the 1860s period represented the 'high-water mark' of dialect literature. This view, in the light of the more detailed research which has made up this thesis, seems wide of the mark. The 1850s and 1860s represent the first bloom of dialect literature, and if there was a high-water mark, it would have been somewhere between 1890 and 1914 - before the death of Waugh, Brierley, and Laycock, but when younger writers like Allen Clarke were making their mark.

Patrick Joyce in Visions of the People recognises the importance of Allen Clarke and his new generation of dialect writers but does not fully grasp the qualitative differences between their work and that of Waugh and his contemporaries. As will be argued later, Joyce in practice suggests that regional identities were stronger than those of class. He sees the writing of Clarke and his circle as reproducing, with perhaps some 'labourist' add-ons, the same themes as the earlier generation used.

The Hand-Loom Weavers: A Cultural Elite?

The hand-loom weavers occupy a special place in both the production of dialect literature, and in its subject matter. For many Lancastrians they were the personification of the pre-industrial society which had disappeared with the onset of the factory system. The 'myth' of the hand-loom weavers, as a highly skilled, intellectual,

and radical elite is a powerful one, and as we shall see it was fuelled by dialect writers including both Waugh and Clarke.

Clarke's argument is that the weavers were of a different stamp to the factory proletariat of his day, the 1890s. In Effects of the Factory System he counterposes the broad, democratic aims of what he saw as the Chartist-inclined weavers, with the narrow trade union objectives of modern-day spinners:

For the Chartists, the old hand-loom weavers, were men of some ideal; they loved nature, poetry, philosophy; and had visions of a whole world happy in the beauty of brotherhood. They were broad where the factory operatives are narrow, and had lovelier and loftier conceptions of the purpose of existence and the destiny of the human race. (9)

The contribution of the weavers to culture, including elements of a specifically working-class culture, was considerable. E. P. Thompson among others (10) has commented on the high level of intellectual attainment of the weavers, and the numbers of botanists, poets, musicians, painters which came from their ranks. Their combination of no-nonsense down-to-earth lifestyle with high intellectual attainment naturally made them attractive as subject matter and in a sense almost as 'role models', to plebeian intellectuals like Waugh, Laycock, Brierley, and later writers like John Trafford Clegg of Rochdale, who used the pseudonym of 'Th'Owd Weighvur'. The cultural achievement of the hand-loom weavers has yet to be fully written, but there is little doubt that their way of life, with its stress on independence and creativity, was passed on to successive generations of Lancastrians through the mediation of Waugh and his contemporaries.

The question needs to be asked: how accurate is the myth? Duncan Bythell's The Hand-Loom Weavers covers predominantly economic issues, which were accessible through the various Select Committees on the weavers as the trade began to decline. He notes the paucity of primary material on the weavers' way of life. (11)

It is important to recognise that the hand-loom weavers were not a single, homogeneous occupational group. As Munby has shown, there were major skill differences within hand-loom weaving which became more pronounced in the early years of the nineteenth century. Muslin weavers were among the most highly skilled. Basing her argument on material from surviving notebooks of three muslin weavers, she says:

The hand-loom weavers' personal pattern notebooks suggest a greater involvement in pattern making than the mere execution of a set of instructions... (the notebooks) suggest lively and cultured men, whose range of interests was extensive and varied. (12)

The notebooks included mathematical rules, astrological material, and other notes and drawings not directly related to weaving. The will of one of the weavers, Edward Hobson, mentions "all my specimens of plants, insects, minerals, together with my cabinet and books." (13)

A Rossendale weaver, Moses Heap, records in his autobiography the highly developed musical culture which existed in his village of Dean, in the late eighteenth century. The weaver-musicians were known as 'The Larks of Dean' or 'Th'Deighn Layrocks'.(14) Many of the pieces performed by the Larks were sacred works such as Handel's oratorios. However, Heap notes that many 'occasional' pieces about local events were written, and performed on home-made musical instruments. (15)

Roger Elbourne's Music and Tradition in Early Industrial Lancashire 1780-1840 is the most detailed study of the cultural life of the weavers yet made. The book covers the 'golden age' of hand-loom weaving and the cultural products of that period. Elbourne identifies four different types of weaver, from the independent 'customer' weaver, through the 'artisan' weaver who worked for a choice of master, to the 'journeyman' or 'shop' weaver who worked in a small factory, and finally the part-time weaver, who may have woven to supplement farm earnings. (15)

He makes a useful summary of the most common form of weaving process in the 1790s, based on a domestically-based labour process, which was nonetheless part of often quite large-scale capitalist enterprise:

The bulk of weavers were organised on the domestic or putting-out system. The father wove and apprenticed his sons into weaving, whilst the mother was responsible for the preparatory processes. She spun, and taught her daughters to spin, and allocated subsidiary tasks like picking, cleaning, drying and carding amongst the younger children. The central figure of the industry was the manufacturer, who employed putters-out to distribute warp and raw cotton, either direct to the scattered weavers, or to country manufacturers who put out in their own areas. The master received back the finished cloth and paid the weaver for the weaving and spinning. The domestic outworker was a piece-working wage earner in a highly capitalistic system. (16)

The hand-loom weaving process, with considerable autonomy for the home-based weaver, lent itself to opportunities for musical or literary creativity. Equally, it lent itself to less elevated pastimes. As Bythell comments:

The old hand-loom weavers were not always noted for independent mindedness, self-improvement, and self-respect. Depending entirely on personal temperament and inclination, the 'freedom' to work as one pleased, and the relatively high wages of the early days, could just as likely lead to idleness and general demoralisation. (17)

The weaver had a given amount of work to do within the week. It was up to him when he did it, and work patterns were often highly irregular. The Select Committee on Hand-Loom Weavers' Petitions in 1834 heard William Sedgwick testify that he had known weavers "when the wages have been great, play Monday and Tuesday, then work Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, during half the night, take home their work on Saturday, receive their money, and then go to drink again." (18)

Clearly, the work process allowed for both high cultural attainment, and drunken depravity. Even so, Elbourne comments that "these weaving communities seem to have provided a cultural setting which encouraged the blossoming of individual

talents." (19) The writing of Samuel Bamford certainly paints the hand-loom weavers as a quite exceptional group. Here, he describes the "working class" of south-east Lancashire in the 1840s, of which the hand-loom weavers are viewed as the main component:

They are the greatest readers; can show the greatest number of good writers, the greatest number of sensible and considerate public speakers. They can show a greater number of botanists; a greater number of horticulturalists; a greater number who are acquainted with the abstruse sciences; the greatest number of poets, and greater number of good musicians, whether choral or instrumental. (20)

While the condition of the weavers, and their numbers, began to decline during the 1830s and 1840s, a small number continued to find well-paid work as highly specialised weavers, on Dobbie and Jacquard looms. The quality of their work was difficult to match by the relatively clumsy new power-looms. (21) As shown in Chapter 7 a small number of such skilled weavers survived throughout most of the nineteenth century, and helped to support the 'myth' of all hand-loom weavers being cultural and intellectual giants. A lovely description of a group of the last hand-loom weavers is found in James Swinglehurst's ('J.S.') Summer Evenings With Old Weavers, published around 1880. It describes the author's talks with a group of surviving counterpane weavers, in Great Lever, Bolton. The group includes an Owenite, a Chartist, and an expert on Burns and Shakespeare. Swindlehurst concludes his account thus:

The weavers professed to have opinions of their own; and certainly they were intellectually in advance of other branches of our working population. But the last of them will soon be no more. (22)

Sim Schofield, in Short Stories About Failsworth Folk recalls Fred Kenyon, an old weaver from Woodhouses who visited him in the 1890s. Kenyon was multi-lingual and highly articulate. "I could not have believed," says Schofield, "that a poor hand-loom weaver could have been so informed in the works of so many authors, especially seeing he had never earned more than a mere labourer. I am told Kenyon is also a linguist of no mean order, having mastered a language or two whilst weaving at his loom." (23)

It seems unquestionable that within the hand-loom weaving community there did exist a group of highly articulate men, mostly self-taught, who formed a cultural elite. This group formed the basis for the development of the 'hand-loom weavers' myth, so eagerly promulgated by Allen Clarke, who made perhaps exaggerated, but not totally mistaken claims for their intellectual prowess. Characters like 'Radical Grimshaw', the old weaver in The Cotton Panic helped to maintain the myth, but so also did the few surviving weavers of Bolton, Rossendale, and Woodhouses who kept their shuttles in play until the end of the last century.(24)

The Question of Literacy

The emergence of dialect literature in the 1850s as a form of popular literature raises questions over literacy, and why dialect was used in preference to standard English. There is no doubt that the culture of the Lancashire handloom weavers laid considerable stress on literacy, and several accounts have survived of weavers' cottages displaying the works of Milton, Shakespeare, with the family bible occupying an honoured place. Hollingworth suggests that increasing literacy in the 1850s and 1860s gave Waugh and his contemporaries the basis for a mass audience, but it may well be that a high level of readership existed before then, and literacy levels actually declined with the onset of the factory system (25). E. P. Thompson estimates that two out of every three working men could read in the early part of the century, and this was bolstered by Sunday School education, and working class self-improvement activities. R. K. Webb (26) suggests that literacy among handloom weavers in 1840 compared favourably with other groups of workers. Thompson quotes an example from a child speaking to Sadler's committee on child labour , in 1832:

My work was at the loom-side, and when not winding my father taught me reading, writing, and arithmetic. (27)

Both Stephens, in Regional Variations in Education During the Industrial Revolution), and Sanderson's article Literacy and Social Mobility in the Industrial Revolution have pointed out that literacy levels declined in industrial Lancashire between 1770 and 1815. Factory towns such as Rochdale and Wigan had literacy levels which fell as low as 19%, while rural areas of Lancashire had literacy levels of up to and over 70%. This is not incompatible with the argument that a handloom-weaving elite did possess high relatively high levels of education, much of which was a result of being taught by parents. Stephens fails to recognise the self-taught tradition; the fact that no employers of handloom weavers set up schools for the weavers' children misses the point.(28)

Michael Sanderson comments that power-loom weaving required lower levels of literacy, though this misses the point. The transition from hand-loom weaving to power weaving was not a smooth, orderly process but a highly complicated series of events which ruptured the previous, home-based weaving system. (29) Many of the male weavers stayed at their looms until they were too old to continue, or went into other occupations, including spinning. Most of the power-loom weavers were female, so there were limited openings for male hand weavers in the new weaving sheds. (30) A number, however, became designers for weaving companies, having the necessary skill level to take on such work. (31) T. Laquer has questioned some of Sanderson's findings, and suggests that the decline in literacy levels started some time before the beginning of the Industrial revolution. Laquer also notes the development of working class self-help institutions in the 1840s which encouraged literacy and 'the pursuit of knowledge' suggesting that the growth of schools for working class children was not the only reason for the growth of literacy levels from the 1850s. (32) However, whatever the reasons for the revival of literacy among working class people by the 1850s, there is little doubt that this spurred on the expansion of dialect literature, and in turn may have marginally contributed to the growth of literacy itself, by providing a form of 'phonetic' English, though this must be said with major qualifications. As

argued elsewhere in this thesis, dialect was not an alternative to standard English, it was predicated on a pre-existing grasp of it.

The Start of the Dialect Literary Movement

Dialect literature 'takes off' as a popular form well after the decline of hand-loom weaving as a major occupation in Lancashire but many of the incomers to the large manufacturing towns were Lancashire country-dwellers who brought there cultural traditions with them. Martha Vicinus has suggested that dialect literature was a response to mass migration from neighbouring villages into the larger towns:

The large numbers of country people who came pouring into the industrial cities provided a link with the country, and in turn they found their old customs still living in the works of writers such as Waugh, Brierley, and Hartley. (33)

Vicinus also stresses the importance of middle class patronage in helping dialect writers get published, though suggesting that the price of this sponsorship was a watering-down of critical subject matter. She goes on to suggest that dialect writing reflected "the increased acceptance of values and customs favoured by the middle class", (34) with its stress on respectability, thrift, and the home. John Foster (35) suggested a similar process, in which the bourgeoisie attempted to 'buy off' a section of the working class through liberalisation, in a sophisticated response to the threat posed by Chartism. Patrick Joyce's Work, Society and Politics (36) places particular emphasis on the role of the factory master, through the labour process, who used a form of cultural domination to secure a docile workforce. This has been challenged from a number of directions, including John Walton's Lancashire: A Social History 1558-1939 (37) who argues that the relationship between employer and workforce was far more complex: local political affiliations based on workplace ties could have emerged voluntarily: Tory workers would have gravitated to a 'Tory shop' and likewise for Liberal workers.

The approach of T. R. Tholfsen (38) allows for a greater degree of working

class cultural autonomy, locating the roots of working class progressive politics in eighteenth century radicalism. This heritage was shared by sections of the middle class and the two political traditions tended to run in parallel, with periods of greater or lesser contact between the two. The argument does have a validity in helping to understand the political formation of the Lancashire working class. The hand-loom weavers were steeped in the political radicalism of the 1780s and 1790s, and names like Tom Paine were venerated in many Lancashire households. In the 1850s and 1860s the example of dialect writing, and the emergence of working class institutions for educational and financial purposes, suggest that middle class and some of the working class' values had become similar. However, there is an important distinction in that working class values tended to be expressed collectively - through bodies like the trades unions, educational bodies, co-operative movement, burial clubs, and friendly societies; whereas middle class values which espoused similar objectives of thrift, education, and advancement were located more on an individualistic level. In dialect writing, an ambivalent message emerges which has led some commentators like Vicinus to assume an adoption of 'middle class' values by a section of the working class. Waugh's poem, "Come Whoam To Thi Childer An' Me" expresses the feelings of a husband who is perhaps too fond of a drink, and is persuaded by his wife to come home to a clean hearth stone and "a quart o'ale posset". The husband responds:

God bless tho' less, aw'll go whoam,
An' aw'll kiss thee an' th'childer o'round
Tha knows that wheerever aw roam
Aw'm fain to get back to th'owd ground;
Aw can do wi' a crack o'er a glass;
Aw can do wi a bit of a spree;
But aw've no gradely comfort, my lass,
Except wi' yon childer an' thee. (39)

The poem is not expressing a temperance message; it is accepted that the husband likes "a bit of a spree" and he is tempted home not just by wife and children, but by the

quart of ale. While the poem sits comfortably with middle class notions of respectability, it is equally fair to say that it exemplifies a working class notion of 'respectability' which owes little to cultural domination by anyone. As with later dialect writers, Waugh was a clever writer who knew what would be popular; the fact that the poem was picked up by middle class philanthropists and extensively circulated does not make Waugh an agent of the middle class and its values. The notion of 'respectability' was largely developed internally, by sections of the working class. It was, however, encouraged by sections of the middle class. As Walton has argued:

...this culture of working class 'respectability' had autonomous roots within the working class itself, and it permeated the trade unions; but aspects of it were encouraged by sections of employer and wider middle class opinion. (40)

There was another side to the success of Waugh's poem. A number of writers, including Brierley, satirised the poem for its sentimentality and over-romanticised view of working class life. Brierley knew Waugh well enough to know that at the time he wrote it, Waugh's wife and children were lodged in the workhouse. (41)

Tholfsen's arguments do then help us understand the framework in which working class culture and politics developed in the first half of the nineteenth century, and support Joyce's view that political democracy, rather than class, was the most important mobilising force in working class politics, which allowed for inter-class co-operation in the 1830s, and later during parts of the Chartist campaign. He, like Tholfsen, suggests that the words meant something different in working class heads from what they meant to the middle class. However, it would be inadequate to leave the argument purely on the level of ideas which permeated the working class from the 1790s to the 1850s. To take root, the values of self-improvement, democracy, and independence needed to relate to actual, lived, experience. Geoffrey Crossick (42), basing his work on a study of London artisans, has suggested that a working class culture which lauded such values grew out of the material conditions in which they

lived and worked. In the case of London artisans, their contact with the middle class would have been quite different from that of a Lancashire cotton worker: there was none of the dependency that the 'aristocratic' cotton spinner had on the factory master and a tradition of independence could develop with little threat from anyone. However, the cotton spinners of Lancashire had their own form of independence, based on a recognised hierarchy within the work process which was protected by well-organised trades unions for the high-status occupations. It would be exceptional, rather than the norm, for the owner or manager to interfere with the day-to-day running of the spinning room, which was in the hands of the 'minder' or spinner. The lower status workers in the spinning room - side piecer and little piecer - were responsible to the minder who paid them out of his total earnings. Although the minder was in a waged relationship to the owners, and hence ultimately dependent on them, in practical reality he had a large degree of independence, enjoying a relatively high standard of living, who could both sack and take on his assistants. Working class independence was then every bit as much a feature of life in the Lancashire cotton towns as it was in artisan London, except that the basis of the independence differed enormously, based on quite separate relationships within the work process. It should also be said that in weaving, the overlooker enjoyed a similar status of independence as the minder in spinning. Power relations had as much to do with gender as with class. There were limits to the extent of differences within cotton. There was a sense in which the work process was 'vertically integrated' with members of the same family involved in various aspects of the process. The men would work as minders, or in a more junior capacity as side-piecers, and also as tacklers and overlookers; the women would work as carders and beamers, or as weavers.

The institutions of an independent, 'respectable' working class in Lancashire were not revolutionary, but they did meet the needs of a sizeable section of the working class of the second half of the nineteenth century. The working class of the cotton towns, while stratified by occupation and by gender and to some extent by ethnic

composition (the Irish being the most significant ethnic minority), nonetheless had a homogeneity which was striking. The family unit was central to this, and it would not be too crude to suggest that an average family in towns like Bolton or Oldham could well have seen the father employed as a minder, the mother actually or previously having worked as a weaver or warper, sons working as piecers, and daughters as weavers. Walton has identified the importance of the 'respectable working class' as an analytic group, but rejects the suggestion that it is synonymous with a workplace-based 'aristocracy':

The importance of a 'respectable' stratum of thrifty, religious, earnest, self-improvers within the Lancashire working class cannot be denied; but it is impossible to identify it with any specific occupational grouping. The great divide between 'rough' and 'respectable' ran vertically rather than horizontally across cotton town society; and if the growing influence of the latter was conducive to the new political stability, it arose from the role of particular institutions rather than the mass conversion and isolation of a 'labour aristocracy'.(43)

This 'respectable' working class formed the natural audience for Waugh and Brierley: they were brought up within it, and expressed its values. These were, of course, evolving gradually away from the Chartist politics of the 1840s, towards a political accommodation with middle-class Liberalism in the 1850s. The worlds of these two tendencies were increasingly beginning to coalesce.

The voluntary institutions which sprang up within the working class of the 1850s and 1860s, whose importance is noted above by Walton, provided a fertile base for dialect writers, and continued to provide outlets for writers like Sam Fitton well into the twentieth century (see Appendix 28). These institutions include the co-operative societies, friendly societies, trades unions, and a wide range of local bodies. Dialect literature throughout the nineteenth century was written to be performed; the popular "penny readings" were sold in the same way as a modern rock band sells CDs of their music at concerts. Tea-parties, soirees, smoking concerts and parties provided a means of useful employment for writers like Waugh, Brierley, Laycock, and later on Clarke

and his circle. Clarke was particularly successful in shaping a distinctive 'alternative culture' in which dialect played an important role. The means of achieving this was through the press; his Teddy Ashton's Northern Weekly had a wide circulation in Lancashire and sponsored a range of concerts, rambling and cycling clubs, parties, and political campaigns.

It was through the columns of his newspapers that Clarke was able to develop a remarkably strong bond with his readers: the letters page of Northern Weekly were full of comment on the previous week's articles, serialised novels, and editorial. Clarke often responded to readers' letters with his own comments and the dialogue continued for several weeks. Of equal importance to Clarke's newspapers was the Cotton Factory Times, whose significance as a medium for Lancashire working class culture has never been seriously studied. Here again, working class writers were given a platform, as well as workers with other skills, such as Sam Fitton, the gifted dialect poet who was also a brilliant cartoonist.

Structure of the Thesis

In the following chapter, on the origins of dialect literature, I look at the emergence of dialect from the oral tradition of the handloom weavers, to the writing of John Collier and his contemporaries. Dialect was used as a form of lampoon, though some broadside ballads see dialect being used to express the views of the "common man" of the day on issues like war, poverty, and the factory system.

Chapter 3 looks at the 'take off' of dialect literature in the 1850s, and who it appealed to. The importance of middle class patronage in this period is stressed, though, as suggested earlier, the actual message was open to several meanings. The importance of less well-documented writers like J. T. Staton, who catered for a narrower, local working class readership, is evaluated.

Developments in dialect literature towards the end of the nineteenth century are discussed in Chapter 4. Middle class sponsorship becomes less significant, and the emergence of independent working class newspapers provides a platform for new talent. For a brief period, dialect literature expresses, to a significant degree, the ideals of the emerging labour movement. Dialect writing becomes more based in contemporary reality, and socially critical. I ask why socialists used dialect as a means of expression, and to what extent they helped create a regional socialist culture in Lancashire.

The decline of the radicalism in dialect literature after the First World War is studied in Chapter 5. Reasons for this within the Lancashire literary movement itself, and within the labour movement, are considered. Middle class patronage is reasserted through organisations such as the Lancashire Authors' Association, and dialect writing declines into a minority interest with content becoming increasingly nostalgic.

From Chapter 6 we move away from a narrative account of the development of dialect literature to a series of more specialised themes within dialect writing. Each theme has been chosen to highlight particular major themes within dialect writing, and also to contribute towards current debates within historical research, for example over work and the labour process, women, war and imperialism. Debates between dialect writers, and attacks and defence of dialect are looked at in Chapter 6. Dialect literature throughout the two centuries from 'Tim Bobbin' in 1746 to Allen Clarke in the 1930s had to defend itself against critics from several quarters: that it was dying and should be left to die a peaceful death; that it was coarse and vulgar; that it could only express a very limited range of feeling.

The treatment of work and factory life by dialect writers is considered in Chapter 7, looking at how dialect writers responded to industrialisation, and to what

extent this could be seen to be representative of working class views of the new factory system.

The Lancashire Cotton Famine of 1861-1864 stimulated the writing of some of the most powerful, and popular, dialect poetry. This is examined in Chapter 8. The work of Laycock, Billington, Staton, Ramsbottom and others help to illustrate the different responses to the Famine, and to the issues related to the American civil war.

The influence of 'imperialist' ideas within the working class, and the suggested strength of loyalism and xenophobia are looked at, through dialect writing, in Chapter 9. Arguments about the use of racism to divide the working class are considered, as are attitudes to major political questions like slavery, Irish home rule, the Boer War, and the First World War.

Women play an important role as subjects in dialect writing, but the number of women dialect writers grew only very slowly in the last century. This issue is looked at in Chapter 10, and the contribution of women writers like Margaret Lahee, and later writers such as Hannah Mitchell, is outlined. Male dialect writers views on women are discussed.

Finally, Chapter 11 looks at the question of whether a regional working class culture began to emerge in Lancashire in the 1890s, and to what extent dialect helped to shape this. Progenitors of this culture in the 1850s and 1860s are looked at, and the particular role of the regional press in the 1880s and 1890s is considered. There are a total of 33 appendices: quite a lot, but the intention is to give the reader a clear impression of the range of dialect writing, in its originally printed form.

Notes

1. Brian Hollingworth Songs of the People - Lancashire Dialect Poetry of the Industrial Revolution Manchester 1977.
2. Martha Vicinus The Industrial Muse - A Study of Nineteenth Century British Working Class Literature London 1974.
3. Hollingworth op.cit. p.6.
4. Vicinus op.cit. p.228.
5. Brian Maidment (ed.) The Poorhouse Fugitives: Self-Taught Poets and Poetry in Victorian Britain Manchester 1987, and Patrick Joyce Visions of the People - Industrial England and the Question of Class Cambridge 1991, Margaret Beetham "Healthy Reading: The Periodical Press in Late Victorian England" in A.J. Kidd and K.W. Roberts (ed.) City, Class and Culture: Studies of Cultural Production and Social Policy in Victorian Manchester Manchester 1985.
6. Joyce op.cit p.273.
7. ibid p.294.
8. This is one of the more popular extracts, and is taken from the translation of Elijah Ridings published in 1862 and re-produced in G.H. Whittaker (ed.) A Lancashire Garland of Dialect Prose and Verse Salybridge 1936, p.112.
9. Allen Clarke The Effects of the Factory System London 1899 p. 148.
10. E. P. Thompson The Making of the English Working Class London 1963. References are from the revised Pelican edition, 1968, esp. p.322.
11. Duncan Bythell The Handloom Weavers Cambridge 1969.
12. J.Z. Munby unpublished Ph.D thesis Woven Lancashire Cottons: studies in the role of the designer in the production process Manchester Polytechnic 1986 p.13.
13. ibid p.14.
14. The Diary of Moses Heap Manchester Central Library.
15. Roger Elbourne Music and Tradition in Early Industrial Lancashire Woodbridge 1980.
16. ibid p.5.
17. Bythell op.cit p.147.
18. Select Committee on Hand-loom Weavers' Petitions 1834.
19. Elbourne op.cit p.25.
20. Samuel Bamford Walks in South Lancashire Blackley 1844 pp 13-4.
21. see Munby op.cit. and J.G. Timmins The Last Shift Manchester 1993.
22. 'J.S.' (James Swinglehurst) Summer Evenings With Old Weavers Manchester

n.d. circa 1880-1.

23. Sim Schofield Short Stories About Failsworth Folk Blackpool 1905 pp 178-9.
24. Clarke's novel The Cotton Panic was serialised in his newspaper Teddy Ashton's Northern Weekly during 1899. See Chapter 7.
25. Hollingworth op.cit p.4. See W.B. Stephens Regional Variations in Education During the Industrial Revolution Leeds 1973 and M. Sanderson "Literacy and Social Mobility in the Industrial Revolution in England" in Past and Present Vol. 56 1972 pp 75-104.
26. R. K. Webb The British Working Class Reader 1790-1848 London 1955.
27. quoted in Thompson op.cit p.321.
28. Stephens appears to rely on Bythell's work which does not take much account of the hand-loom weavers' self-taught tradition.
29. Sanderson op.cit and "Literacy and Social Mobility in Industrial Lancashire: a Rejoinder" Past and Present Vol.64 August 1974.
30. Women tended to be employed on mainly 'plain' weaving, with men undertaking more specialised 'fancy' weaving on jacquard and dobbie looms, which were introduced several decades after the initial application of power to weaving. See D.S.A. Farnie The English Cotton Industry and the World Market 1815-1896 Oxford 1979.
31. see Munby op.cit for an account of the transition which some hand-loom weavers made in the second half of the nineteenth century, from working at the loom, to becoming industrial designers.
32. T.Laqueur note in Past and Present 64, August 1974. See also M. Sanderson "Social Change and Elementary Education in Industrial Lancashire 1780-1840" in Northern History iii 1968.
33. Vicinus op.cit p. 190.
34. ibid p.191.
35. John Foster Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution London 1974.
36. Patrick Joyce Work, Society, and Politics: The Culture of the Factory in Late Victorian England Brighton 1980 and John Walton Lancashire: A Social History 1558-1939 Manchester 1987.
37. John K. Walton Lancashire: A Social History 1558-1939 Manchester 1987
38. T.R. Tholfsen Working Class Radicalism in Mid-Victorian England London 1976.
39. Edwin Waugh Poems and Lancashire Songs London 1870 p.129. First published as a sheet poem in 1856 and reprinted on numerous occasions in editions of Waugh's work.
40. Walton op.cit p.245.
41. The circumstances surrounding the poem are referred to in Martha Vicinus

Edwin Waugh: The Ambiguities of Self-Help Littleborough 1984.

42. Geoffrey Crossick An Artisan Elite in Mid-Victorian London London 1977
43. Walton op.cit p.251.

Chapter 2: The Origins of Dialect Literature 1746-1850

The broad contours of the hand-loom weavers' culture were discussed in the previous introductory chapter. This culture included a strong emphasis on literacy, and a wide range of artistic and scientific inquiry, including music, botany, mathematics, herbalism, and astronomy. While I am not suggesting that every handloom weaver was an accomplished poet or mathematician, a substantial body of evidence does suggest that an exceptionally high degree of cultural attainment existed within the weaving communities (1). Here, I want to examine the different influences which went into the formation of the Lancashire dialect literary movement in the second half of the nineteenth century. I begin by an outline of the oral tradition of the handloom-weavers, with excerpts from some of the songs which were set down, often by later generations of local historians. This oral tradition was far from being an isolated, phenomenon separated from other forms of culture. Classical music impinged on it, and also we see the emergence of distinctive figures, community poets in a sense, whom local people relied on to celebrate popular events in song and verse.

Ironically, dialect writing was not the automatic form of expression used by plebeian song writers and poets in these rural communities. The earliest popular dialect writer - John Collier, or 'Tim Bobbin', was the son of a poor, but respectable, curate rather than a weaver. Many of the genuine weaver poets wrote in the standard English form of poetry which they regarded as being the only vehicle for 'serious literature'. Most of the anonymously written broadside ballads of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century were in standard English. The exceptions which emerge were ballads depicting a rural character - the archetypal handloom-weaver such as 'Jone o' Grinfilt' or 'Johnny Green'. However, these were written in an urban context and exported, via the weavers taking their warps back to the village, from urban

Manchester, Bolton or Preston. Although 'Tim Bobbin' was far from being a 'working class intellectual', his parents were lower middle class, his impact on the future development of working class writing is considerable; all the classic generation of dialect writers paid homage to his role as 'father of Lancashire dialect literature'. Whilst there is a noticeable gap between the death of Tim Bobbin and the emergence of a popular dialect literature in the 1850s, nonetheless some writers were prepared to use dialect to some degree - particularly the Wilson family of Manchester, and also, to a lesser extent, Sam Bamford. What is remarkable though, is the sparseness of dialect writing between 1790 and 1850.

This period saw the production of a substantial amount of working class literature, particularly in the Chartist years between roughly 1839 and 1848. However, this invariably was written in a highly romanticised standard English form. The most successful working class poet to use this form was John Critchley Prince, who played a major role in the 'Poets' Corner' group at the Sun Inn, Manchester. This social-cum-literary group was of major importance for the future of working class literature in Lancashire, and helped shape a distinctive regional working class culture. As well as writers in standard English like Prince, some of the members did use dialect to a limited degree. Prince however was the most influential; for the content, rather than the form, of his writings. Finally, I take a brief look at some of the literary influences outside Lancashire which helped shape dialect literature, the work of Robert Burns standing out.

From Oral Tradition to Broadsheet Songs

I have already emphasised in the introductory chapter the importance of music and literature in the handloom-weaver's culture. Handel and Mozart rubbed shoulders with Shakespeare, Burns, Milton and Bunyan in the homes of many weavers, even in remote areas such as the Rossendale Valley. Writers like Edwin Waugh and Thomas

Newbigging (2) drew attention to the extensive library collection of many weavers' homes. The group of weaver-musicians known as 'Th'Deighn Layrocks' ('Larks of Dean' - see previous chapter) exemplified the mixing of classical tradition with indigenous, semi oral tradition. Samuel Compston, a Rossendale local historian at the turn of the century, wrote of their blending of classical music with a folk tradition:

What a nomenclature was employed by these Deighn Layrocks!
If the compositions came to be printed in a modern tune book their names would certainly be changed. For though mostly meant for scored works some of them have titles which seem utterly incongruous. Yet they are doubtless redolent of the men, their times, and their common mode of expression. "Bocking Warp" suggestive of handloom woollen weaving is mixed up with "Solemnity", "Lark" and "Linnet" with "Robin Hood" and "Whirlwind", "Mount Sion" with "Nab"; "Plover" with "Whineing Tune".(3)

Inevitably, this was primarily an oral tradition, with songs passed on from generation to generation. Few of the hand-loom weaver's songs have survived, at least from their period of prosperity in the eighteenth century. Those which have are often about local customs such as Wakes, Rush-Bearing and May-Day. The "Droylsden Wakes Song", or "Dreighlsdin Wakes" was written around the year 1814, but adapted from a similar song from nearby Woodhouses which was written, according to Higson's history of Droylsden, over thirty years previously. Higson describes the manner in which it was sung:

The ceremonial issued from Greenside, a hamlet in Droylsden, and consisted of two male equestrians grotesquely habited. One, John, son of Robert Hulme of Greenside, personified a man; the other, James, son of Aaron Etchells of Edge Lane, a woman. They were engaged in spinning wheels, spinning flax in the old style, and conducting a dialogue in limping verse, after which they collected contributions from spectators.(4)

The first two verses will suffice to give the flavour of the song:

HE

It's Dreighlsdin wakes, un' wey're comin' to teawn,
To tell yo' o' somethin' o' greet reneawn'
Un' if this owd jade ulllem'mi begin,
Aw'l show yo heaw hard un how fast au con spin.

Chorus : So it's threedywheel, threedywheel, dan, don dill, doe.

SHE

Theaw brags o' thisel'; bur aw dunno' think it's true,
For aw will uphowd the, thy faults arn't a few;
For when theaw hast done, un spun very hard,
Oi this aw'm weel sure, thi work is ill marr'd.

Chorus: So it's threedwheel, etc.(5)

Higson himself commented that the song as it had survived was a collation of numerous versions still extant in the Droylsden area when he was writing. In their commentary, Harland and Wilkinson conclude:

Altogether, the ballad, as it reaches us, seems but the debris of an ancient dialogue song in which man and wife quarrel over the domestic manufacture of linen yarn.(6)

The orthography of the song, that is, the form in which it was set down on paper, is that of the 1860s. For instance the spelling of 'thou' given as 'theaw' and 'now' as 'neaw'. The assumption must be that Higson wrote the songs down from the many locally surviving oral versions, using the dialect orthography developed by Waugh in the 1850s and 1860s. "Dreighlsdin Wakes" remains probably the oldest known ballad of the hand-loom weaving communities of South-East Lancashire, on the likely assumption that it is based on an earlier song, which in turn may be founded on even older oral sources. This apparent vagueness of sources is inevitable in studying a primarily oral tradition based on rural communities with no access to printing presses - although this is not to say that they had no access to the printed word. As Bamford and other contemporary observers noted, they were avid readers of 'the classics'. It was only at the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, that the oral tradition of the handloom weavers began to be transformed into print, and this was very much a phenomenon of the new industrial towns, rather than the weaving villages.

From the start of the nineteenth century a crucial new period opens up in Lancashire working class writing. Firstly, the song-writer/poet emerges as a

recognisable figure in the community. One such was Grimshaw, the hand-loom weaver of Gorton who often used the pseudonym of 'Common'. The Wilson family of Manchester produced a large amount of material, little of which survived in print, despite many of their songs having been published as broadsides.

The transition from an amorphous oral song tradition to the individual song-writer producing work in printed form occurs in the period between 1800 and 1840. One of the most popular series of ballads were the 'Jone O'Grinfilt' songs, which commence at the time of the Napoleonic Wars and continue to the 1840s. Bamford relates the story of how they came to be first written; Joseph Lees, a weaver, and Joseph Coupe, a spinner and general handy-man, were returning to Oldham from a night out in Manchester:

....in order to raise the wind, they agreed to compose a song to be sung at certain public houses on the road, there they supposed it would be likely to take, and procure them what they wanted, the means for prolonging their dissipation. A storm came on and they sheltered under a hedge, and the first verse of the song was composed by him (Coupe) in that situation. Lees, composed the next verse, and they continued composing verse after verse until the song was finished and afterwards printed; but it took them three days to complete it. Hey then "put it ith press", and, he said, "we met habin worth mony a hunhert peawnd iv widdin had sense to ta'care o'th brass".
(7)

In this story, two distinct developments are combined; the off-the-cuff production of occasional broadsheet songs to be sung to raise a bit of extra cash for drinking sprees, and the more formalised production of ballads for printing and publishing as broadsheets. In Bamford's description of Coupe, among his many other talents he is described as a 'rhymester', (8) presumably known around the pubs of Oldham as someone who could rattle off a piece of doggerel at a few moment's notice. An important feature in the history of early nineteenth century working class song-writing was the transition from this form of production to the printed word. This implied both access to printing technology, and a market for printed works. Neither pre-condition could have been met in a small weaving village. However, in the large towns both

printers and a large working class market were available. Whilst the publication of broadsheet ballads and songs was not peculiar only to Lancashire, I would suggest that they were primarily a product of improved technology in printing, being able to meet the demands of the newly urbanised industrial working class of south-east Lancashire. Catnach of London, John Marshall of Newcastle as well as Swindells and Jacques of Manchester, and Harkness of Preston promoted a new and vigorous form of working class expression during the years of the industrial revolution in the first half of the nineteenth century. (9) Some of these songs had a general, country-wide appeal, evidenced by the re-printing of many of the London-based Catnach ballads, by Harkness of Preston. These were frequently love songs, celebrations of war-time heroism or tragedies. However, there were an increasing number of locally-specific broadsides being produced, often in dialect, in Lancashire and the North-East during the early years of the nineteenth century. In Lancashire, these were often related to weaving, just as many of the North-East broadsides feature mining. These early Lancashire weavers' songs are of considerable importance for the later development of Lancashire dialect literature, and reflect the major changes which were overtaking the handloom-weaver's culture at the turn of the century.

One of the earliest known weavers' broadsheet song was "The Bury New Loom", printed by Swindells of Manchester in 1804. The period in which it was written was one of prosperity in the weaving trade, and the increasing technical sophistication of looms. The 'fettling' of a young woman's loom by a young man on tramp from Bolton to Bury was a highly popular piece of erotic imagery combined with a pride in the weavers craft. According to A. L. Lloyd it was reprinted many times by Shelmerdine of Manchester:

As I walked between Bolton and Bury, 'twas on a moonshiny night,
I met with a buxom young weaver whose company gave me delight.
She says "Young fellow come tell me if your level and rule are in tune.
Come give me an answer correct, can you get up and square my new loom?" (10)

On one level, the song is a continuation of male fantasies of the eager, over-sexed maidens found in traditional rural folk songs. The hay-loft or cow-shed are exchanged for the loom-shop and the technology of hand-loom weaving at its advanced stage. Unfortunately, the author of the song is not known, though the detailed knowledge of the weaving process would suggest someone from a weaving background. The song is a celebration of the weaver's trade as much as male sexuality at a time when weavers were still the elite of the working class of Lancashire.

Their status was, however, short-lived. From the second decade of the century, the condition of the weavers worsened rapidly. By the 1840s their situation had become desperate. Several later broadsides reflect this change, including "Handloom v. Power-Loom", written by Grimshaw ('Common') of Gorton. The date is only approximate, circa 1825-6:

Come all you cotton-weavers, your looms you may pull down;
You must get employ'd in factories, in country or in town,
For our cotton masters have found out a wonderful new scheme,
These calico goods now wove by hand they're going to weave by steam.

The consequences for the traditional way of life of the weavers is brought out clearly. No longer will the weaver be able to work at his own pace and work late into the night to make up for time spent carousing during the day:

So, come all you cotton weavers,
you must rise up very soon,
For you must work in factories from morning until noon:
You mustn't walk in your garden for two or three hours a day.
For you must stand at their command, and keep your shuttles in play. (11)

Grimshaw also wrote "The Handloom Weaver's Lament", (12) about the plight of the weavers and 'the tyrants of England' who have brought about their ruin. Like "Handloom v. Powerloom" it is written mostly in standard English. The Jone O'Grinfilt ballads were, however, written in dialect by various authors, many of whom

were anonymous. The first version by Lees and Coupe is set at the time of the French Wars, as a dialogue between a weaver and his wife. The full version is printed as Appendix 4. These are the opening lines:

Says Jone to his wife on a hot summer's day,
"Aw'm resolt i' Grinfilt no longer to stay;
For aw'll goo to Owdham os fast os aw can,
So fare thee weel Grinfilt an' fare thee weel Nan;
For a sodger aw'll be, an' brave Owdham aw'll see,
An' aw'll ha'e a battle wi' th' French.

"Dear Jone," said eawr Nan, un hoo bitterly cried,
"Wilt be one o'th foote, or theaw meons for t'ride?"
"Ods eawns! wench, aw'llride oather as or a mule,
Ere aw'll ceawer i' Grinilt os black as th'owd dule,
Booath clemmin', un' starvin', un'never a fardin',
It ud welly drive ony mon mad."(13)

Harland and Wilkinson comment that the song probably sold more copies than any other song known amongst the rural population of Lancashire. It was eagerly picked up and adapted. The original is clearly loyalist in tone though the poverty of the weavers of Greenfield is not disguised. Later versions emphasise the poverty and become increasingly radical politically. "Jone o'Grinfilt Junior" was collected by Higson of Droylsden from an old hand-loom weaver, and Harland and Wilkinson note that it was written just after the Battle of Waterloo when wages had dropped dramatically.

Aw'm a poor cotton-wayver as mony a one knaws,
Aw've nowt t'ate i'th'heause, un' aw've worn eawt my cloas,
Yo'd hardly gie sixpence fur o' aw've got on,
Meh clogs ur booath baws'n, un stockings aw've none;
Yo'd think it wur hard, to e ent into th'ward
To clem un do best 'ot yo' con.

The weaver and his wife have become desperate, and the final verse points to violent remedies:

Our Margit declared if hoo'd close to put on,
Hoo'd go up to Lundun an see the big mon
An if things didn't alter when hoo had been
Hoo says hoo'd begin, un' feight blood up to th'e'en,
Hoo's nout agen th'king, bur hoo likes a fair thing,

Un' hoo says hoo con tell when hoo's hurt. (14)

Of course, the message is qualified. Margit will never get to see 'the big mon' by dint of her lack of clothes. As Vicinus notes, the song reflects a common theme in much working class writing of the time that the real evil-doers are the local masters, parsons and merchants and somewhere in London there is 'a big mon' - the monarch - who is the font of justice. If only he knew what was happening, it would get put right. Vicinus continues:

A dominant characteristic of this poem is its insistence on the rights and personal dignity of the individual; the weaver knows his position in the world and has no desire to overturn its hierarchic order, but oppression he will not tolerate. The poem combines a highly specific attack on those in power - the church parson, the putter-out, the shopkeeper and the landlord- with a general acceptance of economic instability as an uncontrollable factor in economic life. (15)

There were many other versions; "Jone o'Grinfilt's Visit to Mr. Fielden" is yet another attempt to appeal to sympathetic members of the upper-classes ('Bob' was probably Peel) to do something for the weaver's plight:

Aw'll say aw'm so clemm'd 'ot aw connot abide,
Un' meh guts are as bare as a jackass's hide,
Aw'll tell Bob and Nosey these toimes are so hard,
They're o' empty heawses welly in eawr yard;
Now money's so scant, theymun drop o' their rent,
Or th'landlords 'ull very soon break. (16)

The 'Jone o'Grinfilt' ballads began an important tradition in Lancashire literature and song: that of the archetypal Lancashire man: from 'Jone', we get 'Johnny Green' in the songs of Alexander Wilson in the 1840's, 'Bobby Shuttle' in the works of Staton in the 1850s and 60s, and 'Bill Spriggs' in the writings of Allen Clarke (as 'Teddy Ashton') from the 1890s onwards. Jone and his successors are the cheerful, often ill-treated, stereotypical male workers of Lancashire; invariably the wife is the stronger figure. In "Jone o'Grinfilt Junior" it is the wife, not the husband, who talks of going to London to seek justice. In Clarke's 'Spriggs' sketches it is Bet Spriggs who ruthlessly dominates the household, complete with rolling-pin.

The ballad tradition did not disappear with the advent of cheap dialect pamphlets like Waugh's "Penny Readings". Many writers including Waugh and Laycock published their more popular poems as broadsheets throughout the nineteenth century. The classic broadsheet song remained popular until the 1850s. It was an important phase in the evolution of Lancashire literature, linking the oral traditions of the hand-loom weavers, and the written dialect literature.

The dialect used varied considerably from one writer to the next, reflecting the lack of a standard orthography which, as we shall see, Edwin Waugh did much to alter. However, broadside ballads were not the only influence on later nineteenth century dialect literature. John Collier ('Tim Bobbin') was recognised by dialect writers as "the father of Lancashire dialect", and later writers such as Bamford and the Wilson family sometimes wrote in dialect without publishing in broadside form.

Tim Bobbin and the Growth of Lancashire Literature

John Collier, better known as 'Tim Bobbin', is an extremely difficult writer to assess. He stands on his own as a writer in Lancashire dialect in the mid-eighteenth century. After his death in 1786 there is a long gap before dialect writing takes off substantially, even in broadside ballad form. His use of dialect is also somewhat individual; he has been criticised by later dialect writers for making up words as he went along and a modern commentator referred to him as "The James Joyce of Lancashire Dialect"!(17) Collier was born in Urmston in 1708 and at the age of thirteen was apprenticed to a dutch-loom weaver in Mottram. His father was a curate who hoped his son would follow him into the ministry. However, at the age of forty he went completely blind, and John was forced to get work immediately to keep himself. He did not stay long as an apprentice weaver, and in 1720 he became a schoolmaster in the small weaving village of Milnrow, near Rochdale, having spent the previous three years as an itinerant school teacher. His most well known work is A

View of the Lancashire Dialect, published in 1746.(18) This took the form of a dialogue between husband Tummus, and wife Meary. The story is about Tummus' ill-fated adventures between Rochdale and Littleborough, told in a near-opaque dialect. Thankfully, the book carried a glossary and later editions, such as that edited by Elijah Ridings,(19) included a complete translation. Bamford, in his edition of 1850, included an enlarged glossary with numerous amendments to Collier's original. In his introduction Bamford criticises Collier's interpretation of Lancashire dialect, suggesting much of it reflects his upbringing in Urmston on the Cheshire border, rather than a correct Lancashire form of speech. He goes on to say:

My chief object in undertaking this revision and correction, has been the production of a true and consistent illustration of the dialect of this Eastern part of South Lancashire, such as it has been spoken during the last eighty years. By this Eastern part I mean the country extending from Blakeley to Littleborough easterly; and from Bury, to Bolton, to Oldham, south-westerly, including all those places and their vicinities. Manchester could not be included, inasmuch as its inhabitants having always been a more mixed people, have never spoken the dialect of the country folks around them.

I have adopted Collier's dialogue betwixt "Tummus and Meary", and his Glossary, as the framework where on to exhibit my amendment, deeming it not only right, but most expedient also, that, as that production has been accepted during many years the true and only exposition of our mode of speech, it should also be made the vehicle for exhibiting the errors which it had so long been the means for propagating, and of substituting a real, and consequently, an improved version of our dialect in its stead.(20)

The importance of Collier's work does emerge in Bamford's criticisms. The content of his dialect writing was ephemeral and, even in his own time, difficult to read. Herbert Kirtlan's comparison of Joyce and Collier is not as far-fetched as it seems; the beginning of 'A View' consists of a conversation between the author and his book, with the reader instructed to "Hear a spon-new Cank between th'Eawther and his Buk". (!) However, his importance rests on his being the first writer to set down, however inaccurately, the dialect of South Lancashire. The "Jone o'Grinfilt" ballads could well have been influenced by the dialogue style of Tim Bobbin, though

the dialect is much less difficult. The tradition of relating exciting, hair-raising or other unusual experiences from husband to wife was continued by, amongst others, Alexander Wilson, J.T. Staton and Allen Clarke. Collier himself became a key reference point for later generations of dialect writers. 'Tim Bobbin' for many dialect writers was a talismanic figure, whose combination of Lancashire wit with his pioneering role as dialect writer, helped to give authenticity and a sense of enduring tradition to successive generations of writer. (21) In 1986, his bi-centenary was celebrated in Rochdale. Bamford was probably the first to write a poem about Tim Bobbin's grave in Rochdale churchyard:

TIM BOBBIN' GRAVE

I stoode beside Tim Bobbin' grave
 'At looks o'er Ratchda' teawn,
 An'th' owd lad 'woke within his yearth,
 An' sed "wheer arto' beawn?"

"Awm gooin' into th' Packer street,
 As far as th' Gowden Bell,
 To taste o'Daniel's Kesmus ale."
 Tim - "I cud like o saup mysel."

"An' by this hont o' my reet arm,
 If fro' that hole theaw'll reawk
 Theaw'st have o saup o' th' best breawn ale
 'At ever lips did seawk."

The greawnd it sturr'd beneath my feet,
 An' then I yerd o groan,
 He shook the dust fro' off his skull,
 An' rowlt away the stone.

I brought him op o deep breawn jug,
 'At o gallon did contain,
 An' he took it at one blessed draught,
 An' laid him deawn again! (22)

Ben Brierley used this poem as a basis for "Sam Bamford's Grave", written in the 1880s.(23) In the same period, Margaret Lahee used 'Tim Bobbin' as a defence against the attacks on dialect by the School Board. At the time of his centenary, 1886, she wrote a poem recording a ghostly conversation between her and 'Tim Bobbin':

I've been a century undergreawnd

It's toime I start bewailin'
To see my grave, yon shabby mound
Beawt e'en a bit o'pailin'.
An' literature is so select,
At th' schoo' board's undertakkin'
To overhaul mi dialect,
An gi mi speech a wackin.

Neaw that mi fiddle string's unstrung,
And cord o'loife is brokken,
Folk sen me 'rude, illiterate tongue'
Should never moore be spokken.
But drot 'em whol mi wark's i'print
I'st live i'history's pages;
If nowt but for mi comic tint
O'th doin's i' past ages. (24)

Edwin Waugh made a pilgrimage to Tim Bobbin's cottage in Milnrow, described in his Lancashire Sketches, Volume 1. (25) In the sketch describing his visit to the birthplace of Tim Bobbin, Waugh acknowledges his debt to Collier, and defends him against his critics. Whilst readily admitting that Tim Bobbin is unreadable to the Southerner, the language in which he writes, argues Waugh, is little different from the language of Chaucer which was once the common form of speech in London:

But great changes have come round since the time of Chaucer, and though an Englishman is an Englishman in general character the world over, there is as much difference now in the tone of manners and language in the North and South as there is between the tones of an organ and those of a piano. I have hardly ever met with a Southern man able to comprehend the quaint dramatic gem which flashes and sparkles with living fire and country humour, under the equally quaint garb of old language in which Tim clothes his story of "Tummus and Meary." (26)

Waugh also notes Tim Bobbin's political radicalism, which emerges in his standard English prose work and letters. In the dialogue between the author and the book, Tim quotes the lines:

Robbing's a trade that's practis'd by the great,
Our ruling men are only th---es of state

to which the book responds, worriedly;

Howd, howd, howd, the dickons tak o'!

I see what's top-most; yoan be hong'd or some mischief -
on then aw'll be whooup with e'o'feeath! (27)

Translated: "you'll be hanged or some mischief - and then I'll be finished, i'faith!", clearly, a warning to Tim himself against letting his political opinions venture too far into his writing! Perhaps Waugh took the warning to heart.

In 1909 a large number of Lancashire dialect writers met to honour the 200th anniversary of Tim Bobbin's birth. From that meeting in Rochdale, the Lancashire Authors' Association was formed, at the suggestion of Allen Clarke. Clarke also used 'Tim Bobbin' themes in his dialect sketches, such as "Tummus Deawn A Coal Pit" and "Tim Bobbin Resurrected".(28) It is difficult to assess Tim Bobbin's immediate influence, though there may well have been a link with broadsheet song writers. However, it is impossible to over-estimate his symbolic importance for the dialect tradition which took off in the 1850s. In this sense he can truly be seen as the "father of the Lancashire dialect", albeit a somewhat wayward parent.

Other 'Bobbins'

An interesting immediate influence was on the writings of a handloom-weaver from Little Moss, between Ashton and Droylsden. Robert Walker used the pen-name 'Tim Bobbin the 2nd' and indeed some of his writing was accidentally bound with the Collected Works of Tim Bobbin in the edition of 1808. Walker was a Jacobin, Paineite radical. His short work Plebeian Politics - The Principles and Practices of Certain Mole-Eyed Maniacs Vulgarly Called Warrites By Way of dialogue Between Two Lancashire Clowns, (29) is clearly based on the dialogues of Tummus and Meary, but it injects a fervent attack on the war against revolutionary France. The work takes its cue from Burke's reference to the 'swinish multitude'. Walker's response was "Theaw Kon ekspekt no mooar eawt of a pig than a grunt". The dedication is to "The Tenants of the Sty in General, and to the Swine of Lancashire in Particular." It is a

major piece of political satire, and the introduction marks an important politicisation of the use of dialect:

I have thought proper to give you this in the Lancashire idiom, exactly in the manner I heard it expressed by Whistle-Pig and Tum Grunt: and however either the language or the characters here introduced may have been despised by the aristocratic and literary pride of Burke, I do assure you, that the opening of this address is done more out of derision to that pensioned apostate, than any contempt for your understanding; for I am perfectly convinced, not only that the provincial dialect of Lancashire contains a rich vein of forcible expression, the venerable and valuable reliques of the ancient Anglo-Saxon and Gallic languages, but that the county of Lancaster, as well as every other county may yet contain,

Some village Hampden, who with dauntless breast
Can bay the little tyrant of his cot;
Tho' when he sees his country's wrongs redress'd,
Can rest contented with his humble lot. (30)

Although the work of Robert Walker was probably unknown to him, Solomon Partington uses the same quote from Shelley over a century later, and similar arguments regarding the validity of Lancashire dialect, in his Romance of the Dialect and The Future of Old English Words.⁽³¹⁾ However, Robert Walker/Tim Bobbin 2nd was never widely known and his writing seems to have stopped after Plebeian Politics was issued in 1801 ⁽³²⁾. It should be remembered that the whole period from 1792 onwards to the time of the Luddites was one of severe repression and Walker would inevitably have incurred the wrath of the authorities through such outspoken writing.

'Tim Bobbin 2nd's' work must be ranked as an important piece of working class political satire; it was written as a response to the war hysteria which had overtaken the country in the years following the French Revolution and the onset of the war between revolutionary France and conservative England. Its significance lies in being one of the few surviving 'occasional' pieces of dialect expressing a radical politics. His use of dialect was intended to underscore the 'common man' credentials of the characters, rather than as a literary form.

The spirit of Tim Bobbin is conjured up again, in the 1850s, through publication of the Lancashire Fly-bi-Neet, or Ratchda Oldermon, Bury Simblin, and Owdham Bells, edited by none other than 'Tim Bobbin's Ghost'! The publication lived up to its title, and had a very short existence during August and September 1856.

Samuel Bamford: Serious - and Satirical

Samuel Bamford, writing in a slightly later period when working class radicalism was re-emerging as a major threat to the state, from around 1815 onwards, attempted to produce 'serious literature' out of the aspirations of working people. This attempt is an interesting illustration of a contradiction which continues throughout dialect writing in the nineteenth century: working class writers who were writing both in dialect and standard English would invariably opt for the latter form when writing on 'lofty' subjects, and the former when dealing with light, or comic matters. Bamford, of course, played a major role in the events surrounding the Peterloo Massacre, and his activities in the Lancashire radical movement are well described in his autobiography, Passages in the Life of A Radical. Bamford has been the subject of renewed interest recently, with the publication of a biography by Morris Garratt and a detailed analysis of Bamford's politics by Martin Hewitt. (33) Bamford's poetry celebrated the democratic movement of the years between 1817 and the mid-1820s. His "Lancashire Hymn" carried the instruction "For Public Meetings" appended to it, and is a good example of Bamford's use of standard English and the poetic form of the upper classes to express a working class sentiment:

Great God! who did of old inspire
The patriot's ardent heart,
And fil'd him with a warm desire
To die, or do his part.
O let our shouts be heard by thee,
Great genius of liberty.

After a further seven verses in a similar vein, he ends:

Souls of our mighty sires, behod,
This band of brothers join,
O never, never, be it told,
That we disgrace your line -
If England wills the glorious deed,
We'll have another Runnimeade. (34)

I have already quoted from Bamford's "Tim Bobbin's Grave" which was written in dialect. The subject is a humorous fantasy celebrating the 'father of Dialect literature'. In the 1864 edition of his poems, out of 107 pieces, only five are in dialect and all of these are light, or satirical, works. In "The Bard's Reformation" Bamford's split personality emerges clearly:

Adieu to the Alehouse, where pounds I have spent
For drinkin' and smokin' bring little content,
Where laughin' and grinnin'
An' bettin' an' winnin'
Cause sorrowful sinnin'
The roar and the rant,
A better beginnin' is now my intent.

After singing of the delights of the fiddle, beautiful lasses, and fun-loving friends he finally vows:

So now to my own little nook I'll retire,
I'll bar out the storm, an' I'll trim up the fire,
This witchery breakin',
All folly forsakin',
To study betakin'
My mind to improve;
My muse ever wakin' to freedom an' love. (35)

Bamford does not convince anyone of his sober intentions, and the song reflects his own uproarious youth, when he was a notorious figure around the pubs of Manchester and Middleton. Though he settled down with his beloved 'Mima' the longing for a spree is still evident, though he thinks he should have his mind on higher matters! It should be pointed out that the song is hardly in dialect at all and the missing of the 'g' at the end of "laughing" and "grinning" is perhaps merely a device to give an

impression of rakishness on the part of the writer. His attack on O'Connor, the Chartist leader, was written in response to O'Connor's boast that soon the Charter would be passed and all would have 'Michaelmas Goose' to celebrate:

Sed goose unto gondor,
Whot felley comes yonder?
'Tis Feargus O'Connor,
I' search of a gonnor,
He wants to bestride one,
And o'er Inglun ride one,
Collecting foo's pennies,
Fro' gawsterin ninnies.... (36)

Bamford uses the metaphor of a gander (given above as 'gondor' and below as 'gonnor') to attack authority. His Song - "The Gonnor" - is based on the reaction of the authorities of Middleton, following a Luddite attack in 1812, towards a group of neighbouring revellers who just come into town for a quiet drink. Suspicion immediately falls on them, as the 'gonnor' spies the 'ducks' 'bent o'merriment'; in this case swimming in a 'bruck':

He chanc't to look into a nook,
An' theer espy'd wi' pleasure,
Some duckys bent o'merriment,
Just tipplin' at their leisure;
Then swell'd his breast, an' he his crest
Tow'rd heaven he distended;
An' deep he swore, by flood an' shore,
There manners shud be mended.

The gonnor produces 'a thing', presumably some official document, from 'the cormorant' in London notifying the ducks that they are persona non grata after certain hours:

Beneath his wing he had a thing,
An' quickly eawt he pood it,
'Twur painted blue, an' yallo' too,
An' to these ducks he show'd it;
He sed 'twur sent by th'Cormorant,
At up at Lunnon keawers,
To banish ducks fro' dams an brucks,
At after sartin heawers.

The ducks insist on staying until there was no water left to paddle in, so the

gonnor reports the case to a superior - a seagull. The seagull doesn't seem too interested and the gonnor becomes a laughing stock:

An' the goose wi'th'bell has provet itsel,
An addle-yeaded gonthur. (37)

This is quite a clever use of dialect as a form of political satire on small town tyrants, who used the Luddite outbreaks to crack down on all and sundry, armed with 'special powers' to harass people after hours of darkness. It is difficult to date when the poem was written. It was not included in the first, 1843 edition, of Bamford's poems. This is not to say it may not have been written much earlier. Bamford himself, in a note to the poem in the 1864 edition, says that the song was "was suggested by an occurrence which took place shortly after the Luddite raid upon Middleton, in 1812". (38) Its obvious topicality makes it seem unlikely that the poem was written retrospectively; political satire like that would quickly lose its appeal. However, we have no evidence other than supposition that Bamford wrote "The Gonner" in 1812. In his "Reminiscences" which preface the 1864 edition of his Poems, Bamford comments that he began writing poems in the period between 1812 and 1819. His first poem which appeared in printed form, "The Snowdrop", was published in 1815 in the Manchester Volunteer. Hewitt also suggests that many of the poems not published in the 1821 edition of his poems, but appearing in the 1864 edition, were almost certainly written in about 1819. (39)

The final piece of Bamford's dialect work is entitled A Dialogue, subtitled Between Peter Spinthreed, A Cotton Manufacturer, and Zekil Lithewetur, a Hand Loom Weaver. Written on the Coming in of the Canning Administration. The dialogue, seemingly written at the time of Canning's administration if the title is anything to go by, is a fascinating piece of political dialect writing. The manufacturer is enthusiastic about the new regime, reflecting a move towards greater freedom for capital. The weaver is less enthusiastic - he realises it will not make his position any

better:

Peter: Well, Zekil, hasto' yerd o'th'reawt,
'At's takken place at Lundun?
King George has turn't hissel' obeawt,
An; Ministers are undun;
Sin' Liverpool laid by his shoon,
O'nailt wi' gowden clinkers,
The growl has to a battle groon,
An' Cannin's bitten th'blinkers.

Zekil: An' what by that? he're nere a friend
To my poor hungry belly;
An' though he shift, unless he mend,
He's still a nowty felly.
"No honest mon" sad Billy Pit,
"Con ston i' sitch a station;
An he who creeps ot flies to it,
Mun sacrifice the nation."

The dialogue continues with Peter enthusing about Canning's imperial plans, to make the Americans buy Lancashire cotton goods and abolish the Corn Laws. Zekil remains unimpressed; at the end, the master in a gush of generosity says he will treat Zekil, who is told to wait by the kitchen door. Presently, the master's daughter appears 'all don'd i' silk', with Zekil's treat:

Hoo gav poor Zeke some buttermilk
An' a plate o' cowl potatoes! (40)

In A Dialogue, Bamford's capacity for satirising the middle class comes across extremely well, and reflects the gap which was opening up between middle class and working class radicalism following Peterloo. Interestingly, the master speaks the same dialect as Zekil; yet the class difference is clearly apparent. While Bamford felt confident in using dialect for satire and humour, he felt hesitant of using it for 'serious' political purposes, such as the Peterloo Massacre, or in mass rallying songs like his "Union Hymn". Already, the circumscribed use of dialect for 'light' subject matter was emerging. Working class literature, as increasingly exemplified by Bamford, was to write about worker's oppression and grievances in the literary form of the middle class. This treatment reached its high point in the poetry of the Chartist

movement, which continued Bamford's use of flowery, and somewhat strained and artificial, verse to put across the Chartists' demands.

The Wilson Family

The next group of writers who require attention are the Wilson family of Manchester. Michael Wilson was from a family of Scots handloom weavers who moved to Manchester at the beginning of the eighteenth century. He was apprenticed as a block printer, but in 1806 set up in business as a furniture broker at Red Bank, Manchester. He appears to have written songs throughout the first part of the century, up to his death in 1840. Few of these survived; those which did were rescued by John Harland, who wrote a series for the Manchester Guardian entitled "Local Descriptive Songs".(41) Later, he edited several editions of Songs of the Wilsons. In Harland's introduction to the songs, he comments that Michael Wilson never set his songs down on paper, and was content to have them sung from memory in local pubs. Despite this, many of his songs continued to be sung throughout the nineteenth century. Much of his recorded work is in dialect, and the content covers a wide range of subject matter: the family theme of extraordinary sights appears in "Jone's Ramble Fro Owdham to Karsy Moor Races":

Come Dick, an' Nan, an' Davy,
An' sit yo' deawn be me awhoile;
An' Sal, an' Mal, an Lavy,
Aw'll tell yo' a tale 'll mak yo smoile;
For aw've just come fro' Karsy Moor,
Wi' uncle Dan and mony moore,
'T wure cover't o'er wi' rich an' poor;
Aw never seed sich seets afoore.

The theme of 'the races' as an extraordinary spectacle, especially for the country dweller, is common in both English and Irish ballads. The Irish song "Galway Races" is almost identical in tone. At the races, people of all classes, denominations and occupations meet. After Jone has told his tale to 'the folks back

home', his 'gronnam' (grandmother) resolves:

"By th'maskins, Jone, theaw'st pleos't meh well,
Ecod, aw'll goo next yeear meh-sel." (42)

His song "Salford Fair" is similar in subject matter to the above, also written in dialect. Harland reproduces an interesting comment on the work of Michael Wilson by his son, Alexander whose work is considered below. His son wrote:

My father's forte, in my opinion, lay more in comic satire on the politics of the day than in subjects such as "Salford fair" such being generally inferior in humour to his political ballads; almost all of which, I deeply lament to say, are no longer in being.(43)

The most well-known political ballad to survive from Michael Wilson's pen is "The Peterloo Massacre". The Stalybridge dialect poet Sam Hill commented in 1906 that he had "often heard this song sung by old folks", (44) giving an indication of the continuing strength of the oral song tradition in late nineteenth century Lancashire. John Harland noted that Michael Wilson wrote the song on the occasion of the Massacre, but only four verses were recovered, from the recollections of one of his sons, William:

Come, Robin, sit deawn, an' aw'll tell thee a tale,
Boh first, prithe, fill me a dobbin o'ale;
Aw'm as drey, mon, as soot, an' aw'm hurt i'mi crop,
Havin' left Sam o'Dick's wheer aw fear he mun stop.

Chorus:
For the gentlemen cavalry,
Cut 'em down cleverly;
Real Royal yeomanry!
Cavalry brave!

Mr. Hunt neaw coom forrad an' spoke a few words,
When the Peterloo cut-my-throats shaken'd ther swords,
Aw thowt sure en of they were runnin' ther rigs,
Till aw seed moor nor twenty lay bleedin' like pigs.

Boh let's ta'e a peep o' these Peterloo chaps,
'At ma'es sich a neyse abeawt cullers an' caps,
See what they'n composed on, an' then we may judge,
For it runs i'mi' moind 'ot ther loyalty's fudge.

Theer's the taxman, exciseman, the lawyer an' 'bum,
The pensioner, placeman, an' preycher, that hum:

The fat-gutted landlord, o'licence in fear,
Cuts the throats o'his neybour's who buy his bad beer. (45)

Peterloo was a popular subject for the ballad-writers, and some other 'Peterloo' songs have survived in collections in Manchester and Preston. The above seems to be the only surviving piece written in dialect. The suggestion would appear to be that the narrator is from one of the surrounding country districts, perhaps one of the handloom weavers who made up the bulk of the meeting. This is based on the use of the name 'Sam O'Dicks' - a Lancashire form of identification which would be unlikely to be found in any urban area such as Manchester, even in 1819. The song attacks the sham loyalty of the yeomanry - the petty-bourgeoisie of Manchester who have made their money by exploiting others. It is notable, however, that the criticism does not extend to employers, reflecting their absence from either side of the Peterloo episode. Class antagonism was not perceived as being expressed primarily at work, but through community conflicts - with landlords, lawyers, bailiffs, taxmen and other 'placemen': in other words, local representatives of what Cobbett termed 'The Thing', the ruling class before industrial capitalism had any significant political power in Lancashire. Indeed, "the idle classes" remained the prime target of dialect political criticism well into the 1870s, through the work of Edwin Waugh, and Samuel Laycock. This theme is explored in more detail in the conclusion to this thesis, Chapter 11, and its relevance to the work of other historians such as Patrick Joyce and Gareth Stedman-Jones.

The work of Michael Wilson's sons is less directly political in content. Many of the dialect pieces relate to the country-dweller's impressions of urbanisation and industrialisation, such as Thomas Wilson's "The Countryman's Description of the Collegiate Church", which describes a rustic's reaction to the formality of religious worship in Manchester:

Aw went to th'owd church, twurn Sunday i'th'morn,
Don'd eawt i' mea best, an' mea beart wur new shorn;
Sich seets aw theer seed as aw ne'er seed afore,
Boh aw'll steart a'th' beginnink an' tellum yo o'er. (46)

Other songs in dialect, from a similarly rustic perspective, include "The Country Wedding", "Salford Fair" and "Rough Joe In Search Of A Wife". All of these involve an expedition into the town. In "The Country Wedding" the couple and guests travel into Manchester for the ceremony before returning to the country for the festivities. "Salford Fair" is written from the point of view of a visiting country-dweller (like the similar song by his father, reproduced earlier). In "Rough Joe", the hero is tired of country life and resolves to go into Manchester to find a wife:

Aw'r'n tier't o' a dull country life, an'determin'd to goo into th'teawn,
An' theer to seek out a noice wife, an' no moor be a country cleawn.

Rough Joe soon finds out that town-life has its drawbacks. He innocently gets caught up with a prostitute, gets robbed and finally resolves to go home and 'forever aw will be content with a country girl for my woife'.(47)

Thomas Wilson's songs were not widely published, according to Harland's first edition of Songs of the Wilsons. The songs of Alexander Wilson appear to have been far more popular. He utilised the popular style of the "Jone o'Grinfilt" ballads, using 'Johnny Green' as the hero of many songs. Hill recorded that his songs were "sold in sheet form all over the district and may be purchased today from the vendors of street ballads at our local wakes and fairs." (48)

'Johnny Green' is a hand-loom weaver, and a country dweller from the Oldham district. "Johnny Green's Trip fro' Owdham To See A Balloon Ascent" is in the familiar style of countryman-sees-awesome-sight-in-town:

Today at noon fro' th'loom aw went,
On Measter Green's balloon intent '
They loosen't th' curds, an' up he went,
It really wurn delightink. (49)

"Johnny Green's Description of Tinker's Gardens" uses the same format, with the narrator describing his visit to the popular Manchester resort known as "Tinker's Gardens", in fact a nickname for Vauxhall Gardens at Collyhurst. Interestingly Waugh refers to the song in his sketch "The Cottage of Tim Bobbin". Waugh is describing his ramble from Rochdale towards Milnrow:

The vale of Roch lay smiling before me, and the wide-stretching circle of dark hills closed in the landscape on all sides except the south-west. Two weavers were lounging on the bridge, bare-headed and in their working gear, with stockin-legs drawn on their arms. They had come out of the looms to spend their 'beggin-time' in the open-air, and were humming one of Alexander Wilson's songs:-

Hey, Hal o' Nabs, an Sam an Sue,
Hey Jonathan, art thea theer too?
We're o'alike, there's nought to do,
So bring a quart afore us!
Aw're at Tinker's Gardens yester noon,
An' what aw seed aw'll tell yo soon,
In a bran new song; it's to th'owd tune -
Yo's ha't if yo'n join chorus.
Fal, lal, de ral. (50)

The comments of Sam Hill and the above quote from Edwin Waugh suggest that Alexander Wilson's songs must have been remarkably popular, and for many years after they were written.

At this stage, we must ask - who were the songs actually written for? Why did so many follow the pattern of a country hand-loom weaver visiting a town, describing his adventures in dialect? An added difficulty is the fact that all the Wilsons were urban dwellers and the 'Johnny Green' figure bears little resemblance to any of the writers themselves. The first point I would make is that there was a considerable amount of communication between the country weaving districts, and towns like Manchester and Oldham. This was rooted in the nature of the work. The weavers would bring their finished cloth into the town, and then spend an afternoon in the pub before taking home their spun cotton ready for the loom. The process is recorded in many dialect sketches and poems, such as Thomas Brierley's "Th'Silk-Weyver's Fust Bearin-

Whoam".(51) In it, the adventures of two drink-besodden weavers trying to find their way home to Middleton are recorded. Sam Bamford in his Early Days describes the visits into Manchester and the social nature of the occasion:

It would sometimes happen that warp or weft would not be ready until after dinner, and on such, occasions my uncle having left his wallet in the care of the putter-out, would go downstairs and get paid in the counting-house, and from thence go to the public house where we lunched on bread and cheese, or cold meat and bread, with ale, to which my uncle added his ever-favourite pipe of tobacco.

Once the materials had been obtained and collected in the weaver's wallet preparations would be made for the journey home. Bamford continues:

Before leaving the town my uncle would probably call at "The Queen Anne" on Long Millgate, to see if there were any suitable company going our way; if there were we took a glass till all were ready, and then we walked on together. Another calling house was Schofield's at Scotland bridge, and the last in the town was "The Flower Pot" on Red Bank. (52)

Clearly, the hand-loom weavers were no strangers to the town and had a probably unrivalled knowledge of the local pubs and market-stalls. However, this knowledge of town life by the country-based weavers did not extend to other members of the family, the women and the young. No doubt the weavers would regale their wives and children with exaggerated tales of city life, perhaps to explain the state of intoxication many of them seemed to return in!

I would further argue that songs like "Johnny Green" would fit in with the romantic image of town life, with all manner of excitement and fantastic events taking place, which weavers might have liked to foster back home. The carnival-like nature of their weekly 'bearing-home' clearly involved the spending of a lot of money - this was the day they got paid, so they could go on a spree.

As well as spending money on ale, Bamford mentions buying groceries, fruit and

tobacco in the town. Thus it is highly probable that many weavers would buy the cheap broadside ballads which were widely available in Manchester in the first half of the nineteenth century, as a sort of festive 'souvenir'. Thus the urban-based ballads of Wilsons and obviously other writers, found its way into the country districts. Thus can Waugh find a couple of hand-loom weavers at Belfield, then a rural district of Rochdale, humming one of Wilson's songs, and thus can Sam Hill, well into the twentieth century, recall old people in Stalybridge singing "Johnny Green". This is not to say that town dwellers themselves didn't buy the ballads - perhaps they did but for different reasons. The 'Johnny Green' character to them may have come across as a figure of ridicule and helped them to affirm their self-image as urban sophisticates.

A further confirmation of who Alexander Wilson was writing for is in "Johnny Green's Trip Fro' Owdham To See the Liverpool Railway":

Aw yeard me uncle Nathan say,
They're goink to mak a new railway,
Fro' Manchester to Owdham eh!
Aw wish it warn boh gaited;
For weavers then to th' wareheause soon,
Will ta'e their cuts by twelve at noon,
Besoide th'saveation o'their shoon,
They'll noan so oft get bated (53)

The introduction of rail travel is part of the process of decline of the hand-loom weavers' life. The ritual element of 'bearing home', where the weavers call in at various pubs on their way home, is lost. Instead, a journey to the warehouse in Manchester takes a fraction of the time. There are compensations though: the weavers will avoid fines ('bating') for lateness - and they will save their shoe leather! ('saveation o'their shoon').

For the Wilsons, dialect was a rural form of speech. Other songs by the Wilsons which have a town-based theme are all in standard English. This relates to the comment of Bamford's, quoted earlier, that the geographical area in which the

Lancashire dialect was spoken definitely excludes Manchester itself. It is notable that of all the 'classic generation' of Lancashire dialect writers, and those who followed them, not one came from Manchester. The closest we get is with Ben Brierley, who lived in Harpurhey for much of his life, yet was born in Failsworth - which though only a few miles from Manchester was culturally quite different.

The Wilsons represent a phase of dialect writing which could flourish because of the organic relationship between town and country arising from the nature of handloom-weaving. The collapse of handloom-weaving, which involved a regular visit to the commercial centre, Manchester, broke this connection in dialect literature, and later dialect writers have little to say about city life (as opposed to town life in Rochdale, Bolton, Oldham etc). The pattern of working class life in the textile communities became much more localised, with life revolving around home, mill, and town; excursions to 'the city' (Manchester) were no longer a part of the fabric of life.

However, Manchester continued to be important in one respect - as a literary and publishing centre. Alexander Wilson forms an important link with mainstream regional literature in the first half of the nineteenth century, as part of a closely knit literary group known as 'Poets' Corner'.

The Poets' Corner at The Sun Inn

Dialect writing has never been a literature isolated from other forms of writing. The three main writers' associations which included dialect work, also had writers of standard English. These are the Poets' Corner, at the Sun Inn, Long Millgate, Manchester, which was the most informal of the groups, running from 1830s through to the late 1840s; the Manchester Literary Club founded in 1862 which still exists today, and the Lancashire Authors' Association (L.A.A.) formed in 1909 and also still extant. The history of the L.A.A. is covered in detail for the years between 1909 and

The main figures in the 'Poets' Corner' group were John Critchley Prince, Alexander Wilson, Samuel Bamford, John Bolton Rogerson, Richard Wright Procter, Elijah Ridings, Charles Swain, George Falkner and John Scholes. Many of these writers were from working class backgrounds who made more or less successful attempts to become professional writers. Bamford, Ridings and Prince were all from weaving backgrounds, though Prince was a reed-maker rather than an actual weaver. (54). Scholes was a journeyman felt-hatter, and Procter was a barber. Others were from more literary backgrounds: Swain was a lithographer, Rogerson and Falkner were editors and publishers. Falkner edited Bradshaw's Journal in Manchester between 1841 and 1843, and encouraged worker-writers like Prince to submit material.

The social composition of the group is important. There were too many working class members for them to be looked on as curiosities by the middle class members, in that way that Waugh came to be regarded as the 'stage Lancastrian' by the Manchester Literary Club. There is some evidence that the initiative to set up a writers' group came from one of the working class members, the silk weaver Elijah Ridings. In his preface to the 1844 edition of The Village Muse he says:

It may not be amiss to remark, in consequence of the interest which the Poets of Lancashire have created, that their two first meetings were held at my house; and that I, by circular, invited them to spend a comfortable evening together, which they did, in a manner highly creditable to both host and his congenial company. (55)

Attempts were made in 1841 to turn the group into a more formal organisation. A prospectus for a "Lancashire Literary Association" was issued in July 1841 with the signatures of Prince, Rogerson and Charles Richardson. It was partly an attempt to rebut charges that Lancashire was devoid of any literary talent, and also an effort to

support and help publish less well-known writers:

Many authors, though possessed of much latent talent, have perished in obscurity, or their powers have only been known in their own immediate locality, through the want of facilities which a society such as the one now established will afford; and as the various trades and professions unite for the furtherance of their interests, so may those of literary pursuits meet for the purpose of advancing the interests and adding to the welfare of each other.

... One main object of the association is to show that our county possesses in itself resources which will enable it to stand comparison with any other.
(56)

The subscription was high: two shillings per month, or ten shillings and six pence per annum, for ordinary members. The required finance was not forthcoming; it is difficult to imagine Prince himself being able to afford the cost of membership. Lithgow, in his biography of Prince, refers to the 'miserable circumstances' in which he was living at this time. Indeed, in the following year, 1842, Prince moved to Blackburn to try to improve his income.

The appeal quoted above is in itself important. The allusion to trade union organization in the first paragraph is notable, bearing in mind it was written just a year before the Chartist General Strike in Lancashire. This would not have endeared the project to middle class writers, who could probably find their own publishing outlets without too much difficulty in any case. The emphasis is clearly on supporting unknown local writers both in practical terms and also by providing a congenial meeting place where work could be discussed in a friendly and informal way. As such, the project has much in common with present-day worker writer groups. Another important aspect of the appeal is its regional perspective: Lancashire, rather than Manchester, was the catchment area, and the aim was to project a definitely regional, Lancashire literature. Clearly, dialect writing would have a respected part to play in this.

The fact that the Association did not get off the ground seems unimportant; the Poets' Corner appears to have continued to function informally. 'Poetic festivals' were held, quarterly meetings took place with an elected chairman, but the great strength of Poet's corner continued to be the informal get-togethers. Lithgow quotes Falkner's description of the group's activities:

In addition to the quarterly soirees already alluded to, frequent irregular social meetings took place at "The Sun Inn", at which assembled a circle of authors, rhymesters, literary-amateurs, press-men, theatricals and critics, who often kept up the round of talk, recitation and song, to the small hours. (57)

At one of the formal 'soirees' on 24th March 1842, specially-commissioned poems were recited and later published as The Festive Wreath which contains the essence of the Poets' Corner writings. (58)

Alexander Wilson contributed a song on the group itself, to the tune of "Paddy Whack". It is a humorous description of individual members of the group:

The Sun is a school where the wit or the fool
May improve him by rule, both by night and by morn;
Lit up by a Bamford, the radical gaslight,
Whose flame will shed lustre on ages unborn.
There's Elija the Bellman, who self-taught and well, man,
I'm happy to tell, man, hath courted the muse;
He'll quote and recite, for a day and a night, man,
From "Tim Bobbin", or Shakespeare, at "Owd Willy Booth's"

Chorus:

Then fill up a thumper, a classical bumper,
To tragedy, a comedy, Byron and Burns;
To Milton and Moore, to their genius and lore,
To the ever-green laurels entwining their urns! (59)

Other contributions were more serious in tone, though Elijah Ridings contributed one of his very few dialect pieces, which is anything but serious. "Ale Versus Physic", about the healing properties of 'Willy Booth's ale'. (60) This is the same Booth mentioned in Wilson's song, and refers to the landlord of The Three

Crowns Tavern, Newton Heath, where Ridings was a regular customer. Other contributions to the book came from Swain, Rogerson, Robert Rose (a creole, known as "The Bard of Colour"), Prince, George Richardson, Scholes, Procter (using the pseudonym of "Sylvan"), Isabella Varley (otherwise known as "Mrs G. Linnaeus Banks"), Isabella Caulton and others.

John Critchley Prince

The central figure in Poets' Corner was John Critchley Prince. In an editorial in Teddy Ashton's Northern Weekly many years after Prince's death, Allen Clarke expressed surprise that he never wrote anything in dialect and certainly he was not alone among dialect writers in regarding him as one of Lancashire's greatest writers. Sam Hill called him "this sweetest of all Lancashire singers", (61) and helped raise interest in Prince which led to a memorial portrait being commissioned in 1902 which was donated to Hyde Free Library. Prince clearly had an important place in the Lancashire working class literature tradition, although he never wrote in dialect. Brian Maidment and Stewart Crehan (62) have made a useful recent study of Prince which goes some way towards assessing his importance in this tradition. At the centre of the argument is Prince's political stance; he was writing at the high point of Chartism and could not avoid taking sides. Though he numbered some Chartists among his friends, including the weaver-poet Charles Davlin of Bolton, he was opposed to O'Connor's incendiary style. Crehan quotes part of a letter from Prince to Davlin which he condemns both Socialism (of the Owenite variety) and Chartism as "low things", and "false doctrines and theories". (63) The upholders of these doctrines are described as "restless and desperate banditti", and "ignorant, intolerant and ungenerous". However, Crehan fails to add that Prince qualified the latter description by drawing a distinction between Chartists and Socialists: following the 'banditti' comment he adds:

This remark will apply better to the Chartists than the Socialists; the latter being an intelligent and knowledge - seeking body of men, while the former are ignorant, intolerant, and ungenerous, and in no way disposed to be different in mind and action.

Far from Prince being opposed to reform as such, he sees the tactics employed by O'Connor as being counter-productive. In the same letter he adds:

I must confess that Mr. Fergus O'Connor and others of the same stamp have retarded the cause of reform fifty years at least; they are the very worst enemies of the people. When I write in this way of the Chartists I do not mean individually, but as a body. I have met with many of a very superior character amongst them, yourself amongst the number. You will never rise as you deserve till you take a broader and less exclusive political creed.(64)

I would suggest that Prince is attacking Chartism from within a radical frame of reference with which he identified. His own social circle included several Chartists like Charles Davlin, Elijah Ridings (who had been at Peterloo and adopted the mantle of being an old radical campaigner), as well as middle class Tory radicals like Richard Oastler and Christian Socialists like J. Minter Morgan. Prince's own class position was uncertain. In his job as a reed-maker he was distanced from factory workers and relatively isolated; his main contacts would be with hand-loom weavers, purchasing reeds for their looms. However, it is Prince's social milieu which is crucial for an understanding of his politics, and this, based on the 'Poets' Corner' group, was that of a radical literary coterie, with a significantly large working class element. Most of the workers had, admittedly, left their trades to attempt a precarious living as writers. They did so in many cases though as writers 'serving the people'. Brian Maidment makes the point in discussing the fourth (cheap) edition of Prince's Hours With the Muses, published in 1847. Maidment identifies a move away from the middle-class patronage of earlier editions towards reaching out to a working class readership:

Nearly all the poems contained in the volume were written for, and addressed to, the humble and industrious classes: but the price of the former impressions being beyond their means of purchase, a neat edition for the people has been projected and ventured upon at a large cost, and at the smallest remunerative price.(65)

This is a problem which many working class writers today will be familiar with: the contradictions of writing for a readership who cannot afford or have access to what you are writing. Prince established his literary standing through a middle class patronage whilst attempting to 'elevate' the working class; one section of Hours With the Muses is entitled "Lyrics For The People". He addresses one of his early patrons, J.P. Westhead, MP for York, in the following terms:

A kind advisor thou has been to me,
Leaving me still in thought and action free;
Oh! let me thank thee for such just regard
For I believe that thy superior aim
Is but to raise to comfort and to fame
A long distressed, but now aspiring bard.(66)

Martha Vicinus, describing this piece and Prince's situation as a writer, generalises the problems faced by a working class writer with middle class patronage:

Elevated by a wealthy sponsor, the poet usually felt he had to represent himself and his beliefs in the best possible light both to those above and below him. (67)

However, this balancing act, particularly at a time of acute political conflict, can only last so long. Prince was forced, in his early work, to re-write "some passages... in which the forms of expression adopted might warrant an interpretation far different from that which intended".(68) As Maidment comments, the essential position of working class writers like Prince is one of uncertainty. (69) Eventually, as indicated in the preface to the fourth edition given above, Prince opts for a more engaged relationship with his working class readership, selling his works on the doorstep and factory gate. He died in poverty, needless to say.

I have focussed on Prince's social and political position, in an attempt to situate his work within this study. It may be possible now to understand why he wrote in standard English and avoided dialect. Describing Prince's poem "Death of A Factory

Child", Brian Maidment pin-points a key weakness of much working class poetry in the 1840s:

Dislocated from the language and popular literary forms of his own class by his literary aspirations, the working class poet finds that the available conventional literary modes of established poets only rob his work of its distinctive voice and its individual way of seeing. (70)

There are problems here, though, and the form is not reducible to the immediate practical need of pleasing middle class sponsors. Much Chartist poetry is written in a similar, romantic form. Chartist working class poets could not be accused of trying to please a middle class literary establishment? I would argue that the process by which Prince and others like him adopt the forms of romantic dissent are more unconscious; to have written in any other form would have been difficult for a working class writer wanting to produce 'serious' literature, whether for a middle class patron or The Northern Star. Though Prince was familiar with dialect writing, through his friendship with the Wilsons, Bamford and Ridings, his likely attitude towards dialect writing would be that, however pleasing, it was not 'real' literature. The achievement of Edwin Waugh in the next decade was to elevate dialect literature to such a 'higher' level.

Despite his adoption of middle class literary forms, Prince was immensely popular in Lancashire during his lifetime, and after. What did working class people find attractive in his writing? For all his criticisms of Chartism, he was a great democratic poet, and poems like "Song of Freedom" demonstrate this:

Oh, Isle of my Fathers, fair Queen of the Sea!
Men call thee the land of the fearless and free;
They say thou art first on the records of fame,
They speak of thy glory, not of thy shame!
Despair not my country! for truth is revealed -
Her hands have the fountains of knowledge unsealed!
Thy children shall gather new life from the stream,
Til the pains of the past are forgot as a dream.(71)

Arguably, Prince's use of conventional literary forms brought him greater acceptance amongst the more well read workers than if he had attempted to use dialect - still associated with a more 'coarse' tradition of earthy broadside than 'real' poetry. The very titles of poems, too numerous anyway to quote from, are indicative: "Who Are the Free?", "A Vision of the Future", "A Call to the People", "To the Poles, After Their Subjugation", "The Poor Man's Appeal" and so on. Alongside this democratic content, runs a very strong love of the countryside, echoed in later generations of working class writers, particularly the countryside themes merge:

No more shall haughty Stanedge, bleak and bold,
Clasp him in cloud-robcs, as the steep he scales;
No more Win Hill to his rapt gaze unfold
The quiet beauty of his subject ales;
No more shall Don and Rother, as they flow,
Nor Rivlin, reflecting all that's fair,
Murmur responsive to his joy or woe;
Yet there he reigns! and many a Child of Care,
From Sheffield's crowded glooms, shall seek his spirit there! (72)

The contrast between town and country, so important a theme in dialect literature, is prefigured in Prince. In "Buckton Castle", a historic beauty spot near Stalybridge, he writes:

Ye who in crowded town, o'er toiled, o'er spent,
For bread's sake cling to desk, forge, wheel, and loom,
Come, when the law allows, and let the bent
Of your imprisoned minds have health and room;
So you may gaze upon the free and fair,
Receive fresh vigour from the mountain sod;
So ye may doff the chrysalis of care
In the pure element of mountain air,
And on the wings of thought draw nearer unto God! (73)

The poem is particularly interesting for the phrase "when the law allows", suggesting that both the factory workers, and Prince himself, are aware of the new discipline of factory life. Such a qualification would not have occurred in Waugh or Trafford Clegg writing a generation later; by then the factory system has settled down and industrial discipline was both rigourously enforced and acquiesced to. At the time Prince was

writing the tradition of 'Saint Monday' was still alive, with many factory workers following the traditional domestic workers' pursuit of taking the first day of the working week. Prince is careful to guard himself against middle class accusation that he was encouraging lax discipline, whilst trying to 'uplift' his working class readers to appreciate the joys of the countryside.

Recollections of 'the good old days', so prominent in Waugh, are also found in Prince's writings such as "My Father's Farm": After recalling aspects of his father's farm "each savage glen, each silver nook", we return to present day reality:

Alas! that dear departed time
Of irksome toil but pleasant play,
Of gladsome song, romantic rhyme,
Of dawning thought, of dream sublime-
Has softly slid away!

And now, amid the human waves
Heaving and chasing everywhere, -
I strive with trade's untiring slaves,
Whose spirit gives and craves,
And ask and give my share.

Man must not lie on sunny leas,
Counting the daisies on the sward;
Duties well done must purchase ease!
Love-Labour-Virtue-Truth, tis these
Must bring life's best reward. (74)

Unlike the writer of "Handloom v Powerloom" which we looked at earlier, there is an air of acceptance of the new life, however reluctant. Yet if the values of work, and by implication thrift and self-help, are accepted, the poet still returns to his old surroundings:

But still some intermittent hours
May come, apart from cares and schemes,
When I may thread my native bowers,
Walk 'mong my native heather-flowers,
Drink at my native streams. (75)

In "The Workman's Evening Song", first published in Eliza Cook's Journal in

August 1850, Prince combines a love of the countryside with the pleasures of home - a very early reference to the themes of working class "respectability", and the two main joys of a respectable working man. The setting is an evening, and the sun is going down. Tomorrow morning he will go to work "with willing heart" to perform his "needful share of honest toil". In the meantime, he will enjoy his homely pleasures:

But now I seek that quiet nest,
Shut from the outward world's annoy,
My home, where I am ever blest,
The sanctuary of my joy;
There will my gentle wife with me
Partake the cheerful evening meal, -
Talk with confiding speech and free,
Sweetly and calmly, til I feel
The peace, the bliss her presence brings,
Whilst the bright kettle blithely sings.

After his meal, this somewhat idealised workman will sit down and read 'in some enchanting page', tales, annals and above all poetry. However, on the Sabbath, he shall return to the countryside:

I'll fly to Nature's tranquil breast,
With the same feelings as of old,
And lay me down for thought and rest
In fields of fluctuating gold; (76)

As in the writings of Waugh, there was always a contradiction between the espoused ideals and the personal reality. Prince's home life was never happy, nor did he enjoy the sort of income to even place him in the bracket of working class respectability. He was certainly fond of drinking, at the Sun Inn and elsewhere. This did not stop him from writing "The Happy Change", subtitled "A Temperance Rhyme". It was published in 1856, the same year Waugh had published "Come Whoam To Thi Childer An' Me". The temperance 'movement' was taking off at the time, and there was middle class patronage available for 'suitable' verses aimed at working men. However, I think in both Waugh and Prince's case, there was an

element of guilt in their 'drink' poems - both wanting to reach a higher moral level, through the medium of their writing. The similarities are striking, though the tone of Prince's poem is more didactic: the good wife anxiously awaits the husband asking:

"Oh! will he come?" said Alice Wray,
"He did not once deceive,
And for the dear sake of the past
I will again believe."
So faithful Alice trimmed the hearth,
And made the kettle sing,
Responsive to the cricket's voice
That made the cottage ring.

She waited with a throbbing heart
Until the middle chime,
When William o'er the threshold stepped,
Hours ere his wonted time.
Sober, erect and thoughtful too,
He clasped his joyful wife,
Who deemed that sombre winter eve
The happiest of her life.

The husband has 'seen the light' and forsworn "the cup of deadly ill". They sit down with zest to eat the 'frugal meal' his wife has prepared, and then:

With reverent hands he opened the page
He had not touched for years,
And read and wept, but found at last
Hope, comfort, in his tears. (77)

The themes are remarkably similar to Waugh's famous dialect poem. For all Waugh's sentimentality, his poem succeeds as being more true to life, and less contrived, by its use of dialect. Prince's version has an overt 'conversion' scene, whereas in Waugh the husband's reformation is more implicit. Use of the dialect renders the scene more imaginable, particularly as it is rendered in the first person, rather than from the viewpoint of a narrator in Prince's case, using standard English.

In this section I am more concerned to bring out Prince's influence on future dialect literature than to summarise his work as a whole. Clearly there are important similarities of subject matter and handling of that material with the writings of Waugh.

However, Waugh's generation laid less emphasis on democratic themes (though they are present) and laid more stress on the home, the countryside, and nostalgia for the past. It is important to establish what Prince's connections were with the 'classic generation' of dialect poets on a personal level, if Prince's precise role as a forerunner of the Lancashire dialect literature is to be established.

Lithgow records that at Prince's funeral, amongst the mourners were Edwin Waugh, Ben Brierley, Elijah Ridings, Richard Rome Bealey (the Bury dialect poet), Charles Hardwick (publisher of Country Words, which included much dialect material) and Samuel Laycock.(78) As we shall see later, Waugh, Brierley and Laycock were the corner stones of dialect literature. The fact that they and several other dialect writers were present at his funeral is suggestive of his influence.

It is less easy to identify the personal connections between Prince and the above dialect writers when he was living. Sam Hill records the friendship between Waugh and Prince, and Lithgow notes that they both contributed to The City Muse, published in 1852. (79) He also records a letter Prince sent to Bealey on 10th May 1864 asking for money in return for some poems which he would send on. Lithgow describes Waugh as "Prince's appreciative friend" and quotes a short letter from Waugh to the author where Prince's tragic life is described, and suggests a fairly close relationship between the two writers.(80)

Ben Brierley met Prince on only two or three occasions: in Stalybridge, at a supper-reading in aid of local poet Thomas Kenworthy, and at a dinner in honour of Prince at Lower Broughton. On the latter occasion, which was shortly before Prince's death, Brierley recited Prince's well-known and popular poem "To A Brother Bard". Brierley records that, when he had finished, Prince asked him, in all seriousness, who had written it!(81)

Although Samuel Laycock lived near to Prince, in the Stalybridge-Hyde district, I have not been able to trace any direct links other than his attendance at the funeral, and this piece which he composed for the event:

Farewell, thou gifted singer! thy sweet songs
Have charmed the ears of thousands in our land:
Now thou art gone, we feel we have lost
One of the greatest of gifted band (etc.) (82)

Prince remained popular amongst dialect writers well after his death. I have quoted Allen Clarke and Sam Hill's admiring comments. Further tributes from twentieth century writers include those of James Leigh, the Hyde poet. Leigh campaigned, successfully, to win greater recognition for Prince in his home town. His "Critchley Prince" was part of that campaign:

Aw seed those lines o'thine owd friend,
On poor John Critchley Prince;
An' as aw read 'em, line bi line,
They fairly made me wince
To think that i'mi native teawn,
Weer Prince ran eaut his race,
No fittin' tribute has been raised
To mark his restin' place.(83)

The person to whom the poem is addressed is almost certainly Hill, who wrote "Lines Written At the Foot of the Grave of John Critchley Prince" (May 2nd 1896), part of which reads:

It's thirty year next Tuesday, John,
Sin' theau were claim'd by th'greawnd,
Un' th'mon 'ut's fit to wear thi shoon
To me remains unfeawnd
For tho' thy earthly tenement
Lies 'neath the wilent clay,
Theau's laft a name behind thee, John,
'Ut winna fade away. (84)

In his editorial, recording the unveiling of the memorial portrait of Prince in Hyde Library, Clarke describes him as "a poet of the whom the North may be proud". (75)

Yet there is a further side of Prince, apart from his standard English, which cuts him off from the mainstream of Lancashire working class literature. Though he lived in Lancashire and Cheshire all of his life (apart from brief episodes abroad), he is less recognisably regional in his subject matter than either Waugh or Laycock. Whereas Waugh, in his 'nature poems', is at great pains to bring in local names and places, this is much less common in Prince. Although Prince clearly shared the aspirations of the still-born 'Lancashire Literary Association' to put the county's literature on the map, this was based on producing writing which would have a national appeal. In his efforts to be acceptable to the literary establishment, not only did he avoid use of working class forms of speech, but also seems to have been at pains to avoid accusations of 'provincialism'.

Despite these two qualifications, Prince's central importance to the Lancashire Dialect Tradition should now be clearer. He wrote as a working man, covering themes which had wide appeal for working class readers: the struggle for freedom and democracy, love of the home life, countryside and nature. Through work that appeared in popular magazines, as well as the late cheap editions of his books of poetry, he reached a wide working class audience, at least in Lancashire. His influence on younger working class writers is of major importance, both in showing that a working class poet can 'make it' as a writer, despite all the qualifications and contradictions that went with it and in setting out a range of themes for working class writers to take up and develop. Though he perhaps did not set out to be a 'Lancashire working class writer', this was how he was interpreted by later generations.

In the next chapter I shall argue that the work of Waugh, Laycock, Brierley and others using dialect, was based on a mastery of standard English form and a confidence in being able to progress from there to experiment in using dialect in 'serious' literature. In a sense, Prince marks the culmination of the tradition of self-educated working class poets who tried to make good on the terms set by the middle

class literary establishment. At the same time, working class radicalism in the period up to at least 1850, had a 'universalist' message which dialect could only conflict with. With the demise of Chartism, working class radicalism becomes more diffuse, and more localised. Locality and region become much more important, and eventually a concern over municipal politics overtakes interest in wider international questions. This does need qualification though: throughout the century British politics included major conflicts over international questions, and in the 1880s this was reflected in the writings of dialect poets like Laycock. Writers following after Prince were able to start from where Prince left off, and develop a literature which spoke to a working class readership in their own form of speech, instead of carrying a message in a less familiar form. Not only was this speech to an extent more 'natural', it helped to bolster a growing regional consciousness and pride. The question of middle class patronage remained a difficulty for writers like Waugh, however. We shall, bearing in mind the uncertainties in Prince's life and writing as a result of patronage, consider the effects of patronage on Waugh and Brierley in the next chapter.

Literary Influences Outside Lancashire

The influence of Robert Burns, and also Robert Tannahill, is significant in the development of Lancashire dialect literature. Waugh himself liked to be regarded as 'The Lancashire Burns', and Vicinus highlights the influence of Burns on Waugh and others like him:

Dialect might have remained limited to the comic dialogue and popular song in England but for Robert Burns (1759-96). Combining realism and romanticism he became the single most important influence on nineteenth century English dialect writers. In his public life and works he represented all a self-educated poet might become. The handsome ex-ploughboy's literary and social success was also handy evidence for the well-to-do that the talented poor would be recognised.(85)

Towards the end of Waugh's creative period, Spencer J. Hall, a middle-class

philanthropist and antiquarian from Burnley, wrote to him:

You and your confreres (have) done for Lancashire what Burns and Hogg (have) done for the Lowlands of Scotland - you (have) immortalised a dialect and made it classical.(86)

In Milner's introduction to Waugh's Lancashire Sketches, he compares Waugh with other dialect writers including Tannahill, Burns and William Barnes, the Dorset poet:

In speaking of Waugh it is natural to think of Burns and ask in what relation they stand to each other... Burns, by his fiery passion and wide sympathies both with man and the brute creatures, compelled, not Scotland only, but all English-speaking people to accept his Doric verses as their own. Waugh, of course, has neither accomplished nor attempted anything so ambitious; but he has made himself the poet of Lancashire, and, consequently, of no small or unimportant section of England.(87)

Waugh left little evidence of his early literary tastes. Milner quotes from a reminiscence of Waugh called "An Old Man's Memories" in which he mentions some of the books his father bequeathed him - Bunyan, Wesley, Foxe's Book of Martyrs and several other religious works, but no mention of Burns. Milner adds that Anderson's Cumberland Ballads were a further major influence, and also that he "knew well his Shakespeare and his Milton, the Border Ballads, and Robert Burns".

Ben Brierley records his early debt to Burns in his Home Memories:

I had begun to take solitary walks on summer evenings in company with Burns, and Lord Byron. I could recite all the choice passages in "Childe Harold" and repeat all the more popular songs of the gifted ploughman.(88)

However, the most revealing testimony of Burns' influence on Lancashire working class culture, particularly in the first half of the nineteenth century, is in Bamford's writing. In Early Days he records his first encounter with Burns, as a young warehouseman working in Manchester:

Well now, the poems, and an account of the manner in which this gifted man wore out his life, were before me. And did I not sit down, beside my quiet desk, under the skylight, and read, or rather compress to my very soul, every word of that precious book?

Bamford felt a spiritual comradeship with the Scots poet, who had expressed in poetry what Bamford had been feeling, and urged him on to write:

If these expressed sensations of the noble poet peasant constituted his imperishable wreath, what could these next pressed but somewhat identical feelings of mine be, save poetry without form - a spirit without the body. What then, methought, if I tried to throw them into form? What if I dared an essay to give them utterance in verse? Burns theet looked kindly - or so I dreamed - and with a sweet strong voice said encouragingly, "Try mon, and fear not.". (89)

Not only did Bamford attempt to emulate Burns' poetry, he also took on his life style as well, later remarking that he made 'a too faint distinction between his genius and his failings'!

Some of Bamford's first attempts at poetry were written in dialect, and he describes the reception meted out to one of his early productions, describing a trip to Oldham. The last stanza clearly shows the influence of Burns:

An' neaw yon meawntune hee and far,
Curtain'd the god o' day;
Gone to the west his feyery car,
As sunk his blazin ray,
Wi evening mild, we tripp'd the plain,
An' merrily hied us whom again.(90)

It was presented to the editor of The Manchester Gazette, who was less than enthusiastic. Bamford pleads with the editor for at least a hint of encouragement, an opinion 'as to its merits'. The only reply was that it had not merits, and at that, the interview terminated. The young poet returned home disconsolate, blaming the editor for being "no Solomon after all" and for being "testy and out of humour". Further justification he gives for his rejection was that the poem was "written in a rude

dialect". From then on, as we have seen, little of Bamford's poetry is written in dialect. A reaction to this early chastisement?

Clearly Burns is an important figure in the origins of dialect literature - for his use of dialect in a 'serious' way, and also because of his class background. However, Bamford's qualified use of dialect under Burns' influence apart, there is a very long gap between Burns' death and the emergence of Lancashire dialect literature. As such the influence of Burns and others like him, including Tannahill and Hogg, and Barnes to a lesser degree, should not be underestimated. Equally important, if not more so, was the indigenous tradition of broadsheet songs, the dialect work of John Collier and the standard English poetry of John Critchley Prince. The subject of the next chapter will be how these influences combined at a specific period - the 1850s - to produce a popular Lancashire dialect literature.

Conclusion

This period in which Lancashire dialect literature originated, between 1746 and 1850, was a time of enormous social, industrial, and political change. Dialect was used as a representation of a rural form of speech in danger, at least so it was perceived, of disappearing. It is used to represent the opinions of the 'ordinary' Lancashire man, represented usually in the shape of the hand-loom weaver. It is used in occasional pamphlets, humorous poetry (or doggerel), and in broadside ballads. It lacks acceptance as a suitable form for literature, despite growing interest in the work of Burns. The universalist, democratic message of radical political movements such as Chartism hasd little room for the usually less-than-serious, localised dialect poetry which was current at the time. It is notable that Samuel Bamford, one of the leading radical figures in early nineteenth century Lancashire radicalism, used standard English for his 'serious', political, poetry, but resorted to dialect for his more flippant, or satirical pieces. John Critchley Prince, perhaps Lancashire's most acclaimed working class poet in this

period, avoided use of dialect altogether - reflecting his desire for acceptance as a 'serious' poet. This highly qualified use of dialect, in which its writers saw it as inappropriate for 'serious' subjects, remained a feature throughout much of the century, as we shall see in later chapters.

The role of John Collier in this period is important for the future development of dialect: the fact he was 'first' being crucial. He provided a bench-mark for future writers, many of whom rejected both his form of dialect, which was largely unreadable, and also his 'vulgar' use of dialect. For all that, it was 'Tim Bobbin' who inspired the creation of the Lancashire Authors' Association in 1909, when all the major figures in dialect literature met in Rochdale to honour his bi-centenary. He is constantly referred in dialect literature throughout the nineteenth century.

The ballad tradition was at its height during this period, and some dialect ballads were produced, and have survived in collections in Lancashire and further afield. However, it should be said that dialect was not the most common form used: standard English was the norm. There were still no established conventions of dialect orthography, and a dialect ballad from Oldham may well have been unreadable to people in neighbouring towns, as well as among some local inhabitants. It should be remembered throughout this work that people wrote to be read, and usually to make some form of living out of it. It follows that ballad-writers and poets would not have deliberately gone out of their way to restrict their audience. A mass audience for dialect writing only really takes off in the 1850s, and an important outlet for the dialect writer was through 'penny broadsheets'.

If we should be careful about making too big a claim for the importance of dialect in this period, it is important to note the number of imitators of Tim Bobbin, and the often very radical nature of their work. Writers like 'Tim Bobbin 2nd' were already using dialect in a political way: as representing the 'authentic' voice of the

Lancashire working man. In this case, the politics were Jacobin; in later years dialect would be used to support politics from right-wing conservatism to left-wing socialism, and feminism. What they all had in common was an attempt to give local legitimacy to the expressed views, in contrast to the 'outsider' speaking standard English.

This early period saw the development of informal networks of writers, notably the 'Poets' Corner' group at Manchester's Sun Inn. These networks helped to give working class writers confidence in their ability, and provided mutual support. However, we already see the beginnings of middle class patronage emerging through the Manchester group, with a substantial number of 'literary gentlemen' in its membership. At this stage, the subject matter of dialect remained very loose, with a range of subject themes addressed. As the dialect movement developed in the 1850s these themes narrowed considerably, and a more precise dialect orthography emerged, based on the work of Edwin Waugh, Ben Brierley, and Samuel Laycock. The next chapter considers their work in some detail, and addresses the issues raised by middle class sponsorship.

Notes

1. See Chapter 1 pp 10-15.
2. Edwin Waugh Collected Works, 11 volumes, Manchester 1881; Thomas Newbigging Sketches and Tales, chapter on "The Larks of Dean" London 1883 pp 88-98.
3. Samuel Compston "The Deighn Layrocks" Rossendale Free Press and quoted in Roger Elbourne Music and Tradition in Early Nineteenth Century Lancashire Woodbridge 1980.
4. James Higson Historical and Descriptive Notes of Droylsden, Droylsden 1859. pp.65-6.
5. J. Harland and T. T. Wilkinson Ballads and Songs of Lancashire London 1875 p.148.
6. Harland and Wilkinson, op.cit. p.147 The earliest recorded piece of dialect writing is the anonymous "Warikin Fair" written in the late sixteenth century.
7. Samuel Bamford Walks in South Lancashire, Blackley 1844 p.13.
8. Bamford op. cit p.169.
9. There is a considerable literature on ballads - see Martha Vincinus The Industrial Muse London 1974; A. L. Lloyd Folk Song in England London 1967. For a late nineteenth century view, W. Tomlinson's "A Bunch of Street Ballads" in Manchester Quarterly Vol V 1886 is of interest. Patrick Joyce Visions of the People, Cambridge 1991, also has a useful chapter on ballads, although he tends to over-estimate of amount of dialect ballads produced.
10. Lloyd op.cit., Panther edition, 1969, pp.41-2.
11. Re-published many times, eg Harland and Wilkinson op. cit p.188
12. Harland and Wilkinson op.cit p.193. Sung by Harry Boardman on Deep Lancashire Topic Records, London 1968.
13. ibid p.162.
14. ibid pp.169.
15. Martha Vicinus The Industrial Muse London 1974 p.51.
16. Harland and Wilkinson op. cit. p.174.
17. Herbert Kirtlan "Literary Gleanings" in The Record September 1953 p.7.
18. John Collier ('Tim Bobbin') View of the Lancashire Dialect. References are to the 1818 (London) edition of The Miscellaneous Works of Tim Bobbin edited by Richard Townley. For recent biographical information on John Collier, see Jean and Peter Bond, Tim Bobbin Lives!, Milnrow, 1986, and catalogue to exhibition of Collier's paintings and cartoons, Rochdale 1980.
19. Elijah Ridings The Works of Tim Bobbin Manchester 1862.

20. Samuel Bamford Bamford's Tim Bobbin Manchester 1850 p. xvii. Solomon Partington, who spent many years in Middleton as a journalist on the Middleton Guardian, adds supportive comments to Bamford's views in Romance of the Dialect Middleton 1920.
21. See the anonymous "Tim Bobbin's Grave" in May Yates (ed.) A Lancashire Anthology Liverpool 1923 p.10. Yates quotes the poem from Samuel Hill's Old Lancashire Songs and their Singers Stalybridge 1906.
22. In G. H. Whittaker A Lancashire Garland of Dialect Prose and Verse Stalybridge 1936 p.14.
23. Ben Brierley Spring Blossoms and Autumn Leaves Manchester 1893 p.118.
24. In Whittaker op.cit pp.193-4.
25. Edwin Waugh Lancashire Sketches Vol. 1 no date - c.1892 Manchester First published in 1857.
26. Waugh op. cit. pp.44-5.
27. This version is taken from Bamford's Tim Bobbin op.cit. p.v.
28. Respectively published in Teddy Ashton's Lancashire Annual 1911 and as a pamphlet, Blackpool 1911.
29. Robert Walker ('Tim Bobbin 2nd') Plebeian Politics Chester 1801.
30. Walker, op.cit. preface.
31. Solomon Partington published Romance of the Dialect in 1920 and The Future of Old English Words in 1917, both in Middleton.
32. Another 'Bobbin' was 'Paul Bobbin', James Butterworth, writing slightly later in the 1820s.
33. Samuel Bamford Passages in the Life of a Radical was first published in weekly instalments between 1839 and 1841. His Early Days was published later, in 1849; later the two works were published together, including the Dunkley edition (London 1893). For recent biographical information see Morris Garratt Samuel Bamford: Portrait of a Radical Littleborough 1992, and Martin Hewitt "Radicalism and the Victorian Working Class: The Case of Samuel Bamford" in Historical Journal Volume 34 No.4 1991.
34. Samuel Bamford Homely Rhymes, Poems and Reminiscences Manchester 1864 pp.195-6.
35. ibid p.181. Sung by Harry Boardman on Owdham Edge Topic Records, London 1970.
36. ibid p.147.
37. ibid p.216.
38. ibid p.241.

39. Garratt op.cit p.37.
40. in Yates (ed.) op.cit pp.34-6.
41. John Harland "Local Descriptive Songs", in Manchester Guardian January 25 1840. Later published in in Harland (ed.) Songs the Wilsons London 1866.
42. In Harland (ed) 1866 op.cit p.12.
43. ibid p.21.
44. Samuel Hill Old Lancashire Songs and Their Singers Stalybridge 1906 p.10.
45. Harland ed. op.cit p.26.
46. ibid. p.35.
47. ibid. p.43.
48. Hill op. cit. p.13.
49. Harland ed. op.cit p.50.
50. Waugh op.cit. pp.63-4.
51. Thomas Brierley The Countrified Pieces of Thomas Brierley Oldham 1894.
52. Samuel Bamford Early Days in 1893 edition p. 108. Volume 1.
53. Harland (ed.) op.cit p.61. Sung by Harry Boardman on Steam Ballads, Broadside Records, Wolverhampton 1977.
54. See R.A.D. Lithgow The Life of John Critchley Prince Manchester 1880, and Edmund Frow Elijah Ridings: Weaver, Radical and Poet Eccles 1976.
55. Elijah Ridings The Village Muse; the 1844 Preface was reprinted in the 1850 edition, from which the quote is taken, p.9.
56. Quoted in R.W. Procter Memorials of Bygone Manchester Manchester 1880 pp.179-180.
57. Lithgow op.cit p.125.
58. The Festive Wreath W. Reid (ed), Manchester 1842.
59. ibid, reproduced in Harland (ed.) op.cit p.68.
60. Elijah Ridings The Village Muse 3rd ed. Macclesfield 1850 p.414; Sung by Mike Harding on Deep Lancashire op.cit.
61. Teddy Ashton's Northern Weekly May 23 1901 and Hill op.cit. p.39.
62. Brian Maidment and Stewart Crehan John Critchley Prince and the Death of the Factory Child Manchester 1981.
63. ibid. p.7.
64. Lithgow op.cit p.114.

65. Maidment and Crehan op.cit. p.8.
66. Quoted in Vicinus op.cit p.172.
67. ibid. p.132.
68. ibid. p.8.
69. Maidment and Crehan op.cit p.9.
70. ibid p.9.
71. R.A.D. Lithgow The Poems of John Critchley Prince Manchester 1880 Volume 1 p.58.
72. ibid p.19.
73. ibid p.16.
74. ibid p.47.
75. ibid p.49.
76. ibid p.60.
77. ibid p.61
78. Lithgow (Biography) op.cit p.271.
79. Hill op.cit p.39.
80. Lithgow (Biography) op.cit p. 271
81. Ben Brierley Home Memories and Recollections of a Life Manchester no date, c 1886, p.72.
82. Samuel Laycock Warblins' Fro' An' Owd Songster, Oldham 1893 p.271
83. James Leigh Gleams of Sunshine Hyde 1904 p.167.
84. Samuel Hill Foirewood - Splinters An' Shavins' Fro' a Carpenter's Bench Salybridge 1902 p.236.
85. Vicinus op.cit p.189.
86. In Edwin Waugh's Commonplace Book, Manchester Reference Library.
87. George Milner "Introduction" to Waugh's Lancashire Sketches op.cit Vol. 1, p. xvii-xviii.
88. Brierley op. cit. p.31.
89. Bamford Early Days 1893 edition op. cit p.236.
90. ibid. p.244.

Chapter 3: The Classic Generation of Dialect Writers

The period between the mid-1850s and the 1890s saw the emergence of a group of dialect writers which established the 'classic tradition' to which later generations looked back on with varying degrees of reverence. The 'Big Three' writers of this period were Edwin Waugh, Ben Brierley, and Samuel Laycock. The work of each will be examined in some detail, together with other writers from the same period.

The 1850s mark a watershed in the history of dialect literature, when several key developments take place. Firstly, dialect writing became immensely popular: the 1850s were the years when dialect writing really 'took off' as a popular form. From the mid-1850s several publishers in Manchester and the surrounding cotton towns were producing dialect sketches and poetry, and several newspapers and journals of radically differing character were including dialect. The second point is that this 'take off' was only possible through energetic middle class sponsorship, which had been absent from earlier writers. The only possible exception among early writers was John Critchley Prince, though the patronage he received was half-hearted at best. The third observation to be made is the marked change of subject matter. Dialect writers became much more concerned with 'Victorian values' such as the virtues of family life, temperance, thrift, and love of nature and the countryside. Contentious issues such as poverty, bad housing and poor working conditions seldom appear in the work of 'popular' dialect poets, though some writers less acclaimed by the middle class did take up such 'difficult' issues. The fourth point is that the orthography of dialect becomes standardised, largely through Waugh's work. In regard to both subject matter and form, Waugh built up a dialect literary tradition between the early 1850s and the late 1880s. While this thesis is not primarily concerned with linguistic matters, Waugh's standardisation of dialect literary form was an important development and should be contrasted with previous 'phonetic' renderings of dialect speech. This was an important precondition for using dialect in literary form, although it should be said that there was

never a total acceptance of the relative standardisation Waugh and his friends introduced; differences tended to reflect the genuine variations in dialect within different parts of Lancashire.

In this chapter I will look at these aspects of dialect literature during the period from the 1850s to approximately 1890. The work of key writers in this period, such as Waugh, Brierley, Laycock, Ramsbottom and Staton will be examined to bring out the central themes of dialect literature at the time of its early popularity, and aspects of middle class support will be examined. Some of the questions posed in the chapter include: Why did dialect literature find a mass readership from the mid-1850s, and who was it appealing to? What were the consequences of middle class patronage? What light does the work of these writers shed on debates over mid- Victorian reformism and working class 'respectability'?

The Take-Off Period of Dialect Literature

Edwin Waugh stands out as the central figure in this period, and his success as a dialect writer marks the beginning of the whole dialect literary movement of the 1850s and 1860s. Waugh had written dialect poetry back in the 1840s but it attracted little attention from middle class readers and publishers. Brian Hollingworth has argued⁽¹⁾ that this was largely because of the political content of the poems which would have offended the political and moral sensibilities of the bourgeois reader. The poem which established him as a 'safe' dialect poet was his "Come Whoam To Thi Childer An' Me", published in the Spectator on 17th June 1856. The poem is examined later in this chapter, but essentially it is an invocation by 'the good wife' to her husband to get himself out of the pub and back home, where the joys of domesticity await him. According to Vicinus ⁽²⁾ a publisher produced the poem as a penny card and sold over 20,000 copies within a few days. An undated advertisement makes the telling point: "Every employer in Lancashire should give his work-people the poem "Come Whoam

To Thi Childer An' Me".(3) The following year Edwin Slater made Waugh an offer to publish his Poems and Lancashire Songs, which appeared in 1859; by then he had established himself as 'the laureate of Lancashire'. Miss Angela Burdett-Coutts, the mid-nineteenth century philanthropist, ordered 'some ten or twenty thousand for gratuitous distribution' according to George Milner(4). It was also produced as a broadsheet.

The previous indifference of publishers towards dialect literature changed to eagerness for anything they could get their hands on, and gave other aspiring working class writers like Ben Brierley the opportunity they wanted. Brierley records(5) writing his first successful work - A Day Out; Or A Summer Ramble in Daisy Nook in 1856, during the holiday celebrations over the fall of Sebastopol marking the end of the Crimean War. It was published in Abel Heywood's Manchester Examiner and then reprinted by David Kelly the enterprising Manchester publisher who had previously brought out Waugh's "Come Whoam" on a penny card. Brierley began writing regular sketches for the Manchester Weekly Times(6), and Waugh contributed to the Manchester Examiner.(7) From the early success of Waugh and Brierley in the late 1850s, they were published at frequent intervals in the next three decades.(8) In addition to hard-bound volumes, both writers had their work published in cheap, easily accessible pamphlets by publishers such as John Heywood, and Abel Heywood.(9)

The third central figure in Lancashire dialect writing for this period is Samuel Laycock. He began writing during the Cotton Famine (1861-5) and his first collection, Lancashire Rhymes was published in 1864. Lancashire Songs appeared two years later in 1866, reflecting the success of the previous publication. These were re-issued in 1875 and 1880.

Other writers found that the crisis during the Lancashire Cotton Famine created a market in 'suitable' verse by working class writers. Joseph Ramsbottom brought out

his Phases of Distress: Lancashire Rhymes in 1864 published by John Heywood. His only other published poetry would seem to be the pieces which appeared in the short-lived journal Country Words in 1866/7. William Billington published several broadsheets about the sufferings of cotton workers during the Famine, which were only published in book form in 1883,(10) though they were immensely popular in sheet form in the 1860s. These are examined in detail in Chapter 8.

Richard Rome Bealey brought out his After-Business Jottings in 1865, and became an important, though secondary, member of the literary circle of Lancashire dialect writers which we will examine later.

There is one writer during this period of Lancashire dialect literature who does not fit into the mould of Waugh, Brierley and Laycock. This is James Taylor Staton of Bolton. Staton had been editing and publishing his Bowtun Luminary since 1852. It was a weekly light-hearted review of local events and politics, written entirely in a heavy Bolton dialect. The paper ran until 1862 when it folded due to the effects of the Cotton Famine; he attempted to carry it on as the Lankishire Loominary, published by John Heywood, but this proved a failure within little more than a year. However, many of the dialect sketches which Staton first published in the Bowtun Luminary were re-published as penny sketches by John Heywood.(11) Similar to Staton's Bowtun Luminary was the Rochda Kronikul un Wurkin Man's Lanterun which enjoyed a brief existence during 1852. (See Appendices 5 and 6)

Middle Class Sponsorship

It should be clear from the above that it was a certain type of dialect writing which succeeded. The homely moralizing of Waugh, Brierley and Laycock was acceptable - and even welcomed - by a middle class anxious to 'improve' the working class, or at

least a part of it. Staton's much more radical dialect work was never published on a large scale, though John Heywood was sufficiently attuned to the working class market to publish cheap editions of Staton's work. Similarly, Billington conspicuously failed in his attempts to become a professional writer during the Cotton Famine and again, as we shall see later, his work is much sharper politically than, let us say, Laycock's at this time.

Waugh was adopted, and lionized, by a section of the literary middle class of Manchester, such as the members of the Milton Club and the Shandeans⁽¹²⁾ who later re-formed as the Manchester Literary Club in 1861. George Milner was probably Waugh's most useful ally and he quotes the following account of Waugh's social circle in Manchester in his introduction to Waugh's Collected Writings, written by John H. Nodal, another middle class member of the group:

The Shandeans never numbered more than twelve, among whom were Francis Espinasse, then editor of the Manchester Weekly Advertiser; Edwin Waugh, 'our aboriginal genius'; as Espinasse used to call him; John Stores Smith, author of *Mirabeau and Social Aspects*; James Cannan, Frank Jesbury, brother of Mrs. Fletcher and Miss Geraldine E. Jewsbury, the novelist; John H. Nodal.. Theophilus Pattison, secretary of the Cobden Testimonial Fund; and Thomas, always called Tom, Henderson... an artist....⁽¹³⁾

The Manchester Literary Club included figures such as Nodal and Espinasse, but broadened out to include some working class writers like Brierley and the ageing Bamford. Unlike the Lancashire Literary Association and the denizens of the Sun Inn of a previous generation, the balance was overwhelmingly middle class. Participants included antiquaries such as Charles Hardwick (editor of Country Words), John Harland and T.T. Wilkinson (joint editors of Ballads and Songs of Lancashire), Charles Swain the poet, and professional writers including Joseph Chatwood and John Page. Dialect writer Richard Rome Bealey was a member, as was W.E.A. Axon who wrote occasionally in dialect. From these beginnings, the club attracted a number of business people who were not themselves writers but liked to be seen 'supporting the arts'.

Dues were 10s a year and membership averaged between fifty and seventy five over the next thirty years.(14) The club's objectives were:

1. To encourage the pursuit of Literature and Art; to promote research in the several departments of intellectual work; to protect the interests of the authors of Lancashire.
2. To publish from time to time works illustrating or elucidating the literature and history of the county.
3. To provide a place for meeting where persons interested in the furtherance of these objects can associate together.(15)

Some of the members, such as John Nodal, were active members of the English Dialect Society and Waugh was later invited to join its ruling Board. However, Waugh remained 'the aboriginal genius' playing up to an idealised self-image of the home-spun working class countryman, wearing his thick tweeds and carrying a heavy, gnarled walking stick.(16)

Waugh became Vice President of the Club in 1876. In the same year a committee of the Club took over the copyright of his writings and effectively made Waugh an employee, on a fixed annual income.(17) At his seventieth birthday celebration on 29th January 1887, most of the notables of Manchester attended the dinner in his honour, marking, in Vicinus' words, the culmination of his career. Certainly, it was the culmination of his acceptance as a 'safe' representative figure of an idealised working class. As George Milner wrote:

Through all his passages of boisterous humour there is never found either immoral taint or sinister suggestion. His books, like his bodily presence and his better self, are conspicuously clean and healthy. (18)

The reference to Waugh's 'better self' suggests that Milner knew a good bit of Waugh's personal failings, which would not have endeared him to some of his admirers! Ben Brierley was a less prominent member of the club, but at a testimonial dinner in 1884, he was eulogised in the following terms:

The poor for whom he has written and striven have received from his life and his writings many a lesson of honesty and frugality and unaffected simplicity which only come with force from Mr. Brierley and such as he... (20)

The social circle in which Waugh and Brierley moved gave them access to publishers, ready to cash in on 'the dialect boom' of the 1860s and 1870s. John Heywood of Manchester was probably the largest publisher of dialect literature in the nineteenth century; Abel Heywood also published a good deal throughout the century including Brierley's works. Alexander Ireland figured to a lesser extent as a publisher of Manchester Literary Club material.

Later in the nineteenth century publishers in the larger Lancashire towns began to bring out dialect works, including W. E. Clegg of Oldham, the Aldine Press in Rochdale, Whittaker in Stalybridge, Pendlebury's in Bolton and Toulmin's in Blackburn. However, for this early period dialect publishing was very largely the monopoly of Manchester.

Manchester thus occupied a distinct position within dialect literature, providing the original base for printing and publishing, as well as a meeting-point for writers. However, Manchester's role is very much that of 'the metropolis'. Very few dialect writers at any time in the nineteenth century actually came from Manchester, or that matter wrote very much about it. When it is written about, it is usually from the perspective of a countryman visiting the big city. It was the 'liberal' middle class of Manchester which helped dialect to 'take off' as a popular form, by giving writers artistic support, and access to publishers. Later, the city's role becomes less crucial, as local publishers in towns like Oldham and Rochdale (above), start to promote dialect. The role of the middle class patrons also becomes less pronounced by the 1890s, although it remains present to a greater or lesser extent well into the twentieth century.

The Subject Matter of the 'Classic' Dialect Writers

Edwin Waugh

Martha Vicinus, in her biography of Waugh, makes the point that Waugh's greatest accomplishment was in:

...widening the range of acceptable subject matter for dialect writing...largely through the influence of Edwin Waugh and Ben Brierley dialect literature was expanded to include almost every common occurrence and event. (21)

Vicinus notes that most dialect writing before Waugh was limited to comedy or satire, which was largely true - though the contribution of the Wilson family, outlined in the previous chapter, should not be ignored. I would certainly agree that dialect writing after Waugh was taken more seriously, and became 'acceptable' to the middle class whereas it had not been previously. Waugh could write 'serious' pieces, such as "Come Whoam To Thi Childer An' Me" using dialect in a non-ironical manner, although he was satirised by other dialect writers for it! (eg Brierley's "Go Tak' Thi Ragged Childer An' Flit" as a take-off of "Come Whoam"). The claim that Waugh and Brierley 'expanded' the range of subject matter has to be treated very carefully though. As far as dialect writing goes this is true; as far as working class writing as a whole is concerned, definitely not. In fact they considerably narrowed the subject matter of working class writing, if one thinks of the range of Prince's work, the Wilsons, Bamford and even the anonymous balladeers. Arguably, they could have been 'responding to the market', though again the question should be asked, which market? Most likely, the price of middle class sponsorship was to take out any elements deemed 'coarse'. Issues such as working conditions, political radicalism, and sex other than the most harmless and innocent allusions, were rigorously excluded from their writing. It should be emphasised that Waugh and Brierley were establishing conventions of both style and subject matter in their writings in the 1860s and the message to other aspiring writers was to tread the same narrow furrow as the big names had. This would lead to middle class support and patronage, providing the writer's message was suitably

moralistic and uncontroversial. Writers who did not follow this course, notably Staton and Billington, never got recognition from the middle class literati despite the literary quality of their work, and their local popularity in Bolton and Blackburn respectively.

Waugh's 'literary world' was that of an artificial rural utopia, set on the moors above Rochdale, populated by independent farmers and handloom-weavers, some time just before the industrial revolution. Vicinus' comment that he portrayed "the Lancashire working man, albeit idealised"(22) seems wide of the mark. He portrayed an idealised figure from the past; the Lancashire industrial worker of the 1860s almost never appears in Waugh's writing. Brian Hollingworth has noted that some of the dialect poetry written by Waugh in the 1840s does deal with factory conditions in a critical way. This is one verse of a poem from Waugh's diary:

Fro' weekend to weekend, fro' mornin to net,
Aw bin rivin un' tearin for clooas an wheyt,
From th'factory to bed, un fro' bed back to work,
My yed's gettin' addle't, my limbs are ur stark
 Ur a poker; bi'th'mon,
 Thea my shap ur to con,
But aw mun hae a bit of a spree (23)

Waugh retreated from this attempt at dealing with contemporary working class life, where the harshness of factory work is only compensated by the occasional 'spree', to an idyllic existence in which factories did not yet exist. Waugh *did* write of one serious contemporary problem, as we shall see: the Lancashire Cotton Famine. However, the the Famine was seen as a temporary aberration, life would get back to normal when the American war was over. The poverty is seen to be caused by an outside agency and it raises no awkward political problems within Lancashire itself.

Vicinus herself identifies one of the central figures in Waugh's writings, who is hardly typical of 'the Lancashire working man' of the 1860s:

Waugh's greatest success was "Besom Ben", a series of stories about a besom

(broom) maker making living on the moors of north Lancashire. Ben's simple life is recounted with loving detail. His one weakness is the ale-house, but a love of "Our Betty", his wife, keeps him out of the way of temptation.(24)

In "Besom Ben And His Donkey", Waugh describes Ben as a typical countryman of Lancashire, working for no master, but making and selling his besoms for the weavers and farmers of the moorland communities. He describes him driving his cart away from a local ale-house with a cheerful expression upon his tanned face that told a pleasant tale of good health and a contented mind.(25)

The other characters in the "Besom Ben Sketches" are ale-house keepers, hand-loom weavers, (who, admittedly, work in a small mill on the moors weaving woollens) and small farmers. Waugh hated the city life of Manchester - "a complete hell of soot and stench" and "the most infernal cluster of inhuman habitations on earth." In a letter dated 10th September 1847 he wrote:

My heart saddened as I saw the moors and fells of Blackstone edge recede and the clangour and corruption of this great sooty city advance upon us. (26)

This sentiment found frequent poetic expression, particularly in "I've Worn My Bits o'Shoon Away":

It's what care I for cities grand -
We never shall agree;
I'd rayther live where th'layrock sings -
A country teawn for me!
A country teawn, where one can meet
Wi friends an' neighbours known;
Where one can lounge i'th'market place,
An' see the meadows mown.

The poem ends with the writer looking out towards the countryside from the edge of the city, resolving to return to his native home :

Last neet I laft the city thrung,
An' climbed yon hillock green;
An' turned my face to th'moorlan' hills,
Wi th'wayter wellin' i' mi e'en;
I'll bundle up an' go,

An' I'll live an' dee i' mi own countrie,
Where the moorlan' breezes blow! (27)

In the Poems and Songs the characters are similar to those found in "Besom Ben": the country joiner, 'Dody o'Joseph's' in "The Grindlestone", the hand-loom weaver in "Tommy Pobs" and in "Jamie's Frolic", the milk-maid of "Yesterneet" and farmer of "My Grondfaither Willie". Only two of the poems have any direct bearing on the modern-day Lancashire in which Waugh was living - "The Little Doffer" and "Hard Weather". "Hard Weather" is a comment on the Winter of 1878-79 the time of the big cotton strike. It is written from the standpoint of someone who stands outside major class conflicts and sees ruin coming from the activities of both trade unions and capitalism:

Sich strikes an' rows an' breakages,
There never wur yet known;
Sich frettin' an' sich chettin', an'
Sich bitter starvin' moan;
These knavish pranks i'trusted banks
Are spreadin' ruin round;
An' every hour, the tradin' ranks
Are crashin' to the ground. (28)

His poem "The Little Doffer" is a much more light-hearted piece which became very popular as a song. It is the story of a factory lad going to another mill to get a job after being sacked from his last one. The overlooker questions him about character references before taking him on:

Thou's brought thi character, I guess?"
Says th'lad "Yo're wrang, I doubt:"
Says th'overlooker to th'lad "How's this?"
Says th'lad, "I'm better bowt!"

Said th'overlooker, "I never see
Sich a whelp sin I wur born!
But I'll try what I can to make o'thee;
Come to thi wark to-morn!" (29)

A pleasant, humorous song which showed one aspect of child labour in the mills. Yet Waugh never spoke of the other side - bullying, injuries and deaths, and exploitation. This poem is considered in further detail in Chapter 7, on "Work and Factory Life", in the section on 'child labour'.

Alongside his character sketches of moorland hill-folk are several love poems, none of which would be out of place at a Sunday-School soiree. Poems like "The Dule's I' This Bonnet o'Mine" suggest a pure, innocent sexuality, acceptable to middle class literary tastes; the young girl is trying to get 'dressed up' before meeting 'Jamie' but cannot get her bonnet straight. She speaks to her brother, Mally:

When he took my two honds into his,
Good lord, heaw they trembled between;
An' aw durstn't look up in his face,
Becose on him seein' my e'en;
My cheek went as red as a rose;
There's never a mortal can tell
Heaw happy aw felt; for, tha knows,
Aw couldn't ha' axed him mysel'. (30)

Waugh succeeded in establishing dialect as a 'respectable' form of literature in Lancashire. The middle class saw it as 'morally instructive' and a safe nostalgic form of antiquarianism. Working class people may well have found different messages in his work: an affirmation of regional pride expressed through the characters, however stereotyped and at times anachronistic. It was part of the world of working class 'respectability' alongside the co-op, trade union, friendly society, and burial club. Waugh's writing also provided a sense of continuity from the pre-industrial days of hand-loom weavers to present day life in the factories. A few years after his death, James Haslam, writing in Allen Clarke's Northern Weekly, observed the irony of Waugh's literary work, in a comparative study of Brierley and Waugh:

There is one feature, or lack of feature rather, in these two champions of song and humour. Neither of them did much - Waugh did a little - to help

redress the industrial wrongs which so thickly surrounded them in their day and generation. And neither Waugh nor Brierley is much known beyond the factory walls of Lancashire. (31)

Ben Brierley

Brierley followed directly in the wake of Waugh's success as we have seen, though he is a different writer in a number of respects. He is much more town-based in his subject matter, though his artificial world of 'Treadlepin fold' is a very insular, almost semi-rural world which had not changed for decades. Brierley describes it:

Treadlepin Fold belongs more to the past than the present. Its glories were of the era preceding gas lamps and steam looms; when men groped their way to a livelihood through the smoke of a halfpenny dip; when stories were told round the turf fire; when 'hush' was brewed and whisky distilled in the same cellar... (32)

Many of his tales are light and humorous, possessing little of Waugh's pastoral longings. Haslam noted that 'he was to be found in the gossip taproom of the alehouse, the weaver's kitchen or public street' and would 'pass by rural haunts' in his pursuit of 'Manchester mobs, London crowds and Yankee masses'.

Brierley served for several years as councillor for Harpurhey ward on Manchester City Council, so he had a direct experience of day-to-day politics. He was a classic working class Liberal.

Much of his early writings are based around his youthful experiences in the Failsworth area - then a small handloom weaving village, but the scene of considerable Chartist activity. His father was an active Chartist, and Ben Brierley spent many of his youthful hours on the blacksmith's grind-stone, sharpening the pikes of local Chartists. By his own account, he played a leading role in the 'Big Strike' of 1842 though managing to keep out of the hands of the constabulary.(33) Brierley uses this experience in several stories - "The Battle of Langley Heights", "Race For Liberty" and

"A Strike Adventure", subtitled "Or, the Revolution of Daisy Nook".(34) In each case Chartism is treated as a movement led by demagogues, and supported by well-intentioned but deluded simpletons. In "A Strike Adventure" the local weavers band together and put on a show of mock bravery as they march to meet their comrades:

Scribbit swore "He shouldn't be surprised if Ash'n wur brokken out i'oppen rebellion, as Stephens wur at th'yead of a new Gover'ment." Owd Siah waved his 'holly twig' as he termed a thick, knotty, 'meet-me-by-moonlight' sort of cudgel that served as a walking stick, or anything else when it was needed; and wondered "what thoose white livert foo's at Rauf Green ud say when they yerd th'news." Dick Samson was full of 'green flags waving o'er us' marchings of armed processions in victory, and bands playing 'See the Conquering Feargus Comes'. (35)

As in "The Battle of Langley Heights" the insurrection ends in a shambles, and the weavers are soon back at their looms pondering on more peaceable methods of reform. (36)

Although Chartism had been dead less than twenty years when Brierley was writing these stories, there is a feeling that these events all took place long ago and that things had changed and times were much different - and of course, he was correct. By the late 1860s hand-loom weaving had disappeared apart from a few isolated, specialist pockets. Chartism had been replaced by working class Toryism and a Liberalism which occasionally attempted to don the mantle of Chartism, though at pains to disassociate itself from 'physical force'. In his Home Memories, written in the mid-1880s when he was a Liberal councillor, Brierley was at pains to point out that his Chartist father "did not encourage these 'physical forcist' ideas". (37)

In Brierley's work many of the major themes of working class respectability emerge with particular force. In his poem "A Cot O'Yo'r Own" it's an invocation to work hard and save up so that you will have the freedom and independence of owning your own home:

Come lads, lend yo'r ears, an I'll sing you a song
That isno' o'battle an' strife,
But peace an' goodwill between mon an' his kind -
A bond between husband an' wife.
It's be yo'r own mester an' landlord beside,
Feight shy o'bum bailiff an' dun;
Plant yo' vine an' yo'r figtree afore it's too late,
An' live in a cot o' yo'r own. (38)

Brierley's poem should not be taken as an example of 'embourgeoisement' of the working class: the values of "A Cot of Yo'r Own" are very much those of the working class itself, anxious to avoid grasping landlords and money-lenders, and, in the days before old-age pensions, to have money 'put by' for retirement:

Then here's to a mon ut'll strive for the best,
And lay up for owd age while he con,
An' ut ne'er shuts his dur on a shelterless friend,
While he lives in a cot of his own. (39)

Even while the respectable working man is striving to build up a decent home for his family, the suggestion at the end of the poem is that these achievements should have an element of communality about them - "An' ne'er shuts his dur on a shelterless friend"; the suggestion here is not one of 'charity' helping an unknown mass, but supporting friends within the community.

Probably his best known poem was "The Weaver of Welbrook" - a poem which describes a hand-loom weaver but expresses more of Brierley's respectable working class values of the third quarter of the last century:

Yo gentlemen o' wi' yo'r hounds an' yo'r parks,
Yo may gamble an' sport tillyo' dee;
But a quiet heause hook, a good wife, an' a book,
Are more to the likin's o'me. (40)

A distaste for aristocratic pretension combines with a celebration of home, family, hard work and intellectual stimulation. Use of the dialect gives the sentiments an added down-to-earth feeling and pride in a simple working class way of life:

I care no' for titles, nor heauses, nor land,
Owd Jone's a name fittin' for me; (41)

Brierley's paper - Ben Brierley's Journal - ran from 1869 to 1891, and was aimed at a Lancashire working class audience. The paper was sub-titled "A Journal of Literature and Art" and sought to combine dialect writing with 'high culture' to improve the working class. Brierley was elected as councillor for Harpurhey Ward in 1875 and attempted to make the public library service more accessible to working class readers. He succeeded in winning the sort of middle-class recognition which Waugh had achieved earlier. The values Brierley had espoused naturally found favour with a middle class intent on 'educating' the working classes, and at a testimonial dinner held in Manchester, in 1884, he was congratulated in the following terms:

The poor for whom he has written and striven have received from his life and his writings many a lesson in honesty and frugality and unaffected simplicity which only come with force from Mr. Brierley and such as he... (42)

A dialect writer of the following generation, James Haslam, writing in Allen Clarke's Teddy Ashton's Northern Weekly, poured scorn on the Manchester middle class at the unveiling of the monument to Brierley in Queen's Park, in 1898:

There were many graceful apologies made for having this trophy erected in praise of the name and the work of lowly Ben. Had he been a self-made manufacturer of fickle fabrics and deluded the people by endless bumptious prate and prattle they would perhaps have graced his great conscientious memory with a sumptuous marble monument.

Haslam suggests that Brierley wrote for working class people, and never found the financial reward that other, less popular, writers had got. Whilst the middle class could laud the moralistic sentiment they were not prepared to support Brierley in his attempts at making a living. On the other hand, the people for whom and of whom he wrote, were not in a financial position to buy expensive gilt-edged editions, but had to make do with penny pamphlets:

Perhaps it is because Brierley devoted his abilities to the comforting of the poor that the big people of the north accompany their praises of him with excuses. But then it is not their place to glorify him. They have no right to claim him. Ben Brierley lived for the poor people, laboured for the poor people, and it's the poor people who should crown his career with the diadem of renown.

Haslam criticised Brierley for only focussing on one side of working class experience, and ignoring bad working conditions, poverty and hunger:

Whilst Brierley and his contemporaries were soothing the people with dialect, song and wit manufacturers were making them into slaves. And we cannot now sing them out of slavery into which they have so carelessly slipped.(43)

This interesting article by Haslam suggests a strong awareness by a section of dialect writers in the 1890s that the 'classic' generation had their faults, and a new breed of Lancashire writer was required who could show both sides of working class experience and help in the fight for socialism. This will be examined in the following chapter. Here, it is useful to note that Brierley did serve as a lesson for later writers both in terms of subject matter and in the dangers of middle class patronage. (44)

Samuel Laycock

Laycock wrote less than either Brierley or Waugh, but it is common to take the three together as the 'classic triumvirate' of Lancashire dialect writing. Legend has it that he wrote his first poetry at the age of eleven, whilst working in Leech's mill, Stalybridge. The poems were written down on a cop ticket. Like Brierley, he had been deeply influenced by Waugh's "Come Whoam" and expressed his appreciation in an appropriate form:

Well, for mitch 'at aw've done, Waugh, aw have to thank thee;
When aw first saw "Come Whoam To Thi Childer An' Me",
Id worked on mi mind like a charm or a spell,
Th'result wor, aw started scribblin' misel. (45)

His Lancashire Rhymes were published in 1864 towards the end of the Cotton

Famine.(46) Some of the 'Cotton Famine' poems such as "Welcome Bonny Brid" were published as broadsheets during the Famine period. Samuel Hill commented that many of his poems appeared in the local newspapers around Stalybridge:

The poems were also printed in sheet form, and sold well. Thousands upon thousands of these sheets were disposed of, and the poet ultimately decided to publish them in book form. (47)

Laycock's poetry of the Cotton Famine is examined in detail in Chapter 8. However, his work during this period has marked similarities to that of Waugh and Brierley. Despite the starvation during the famine, there is little anger in his poems and nothing which would frighten off any potential middle class patron. One such admirer was William Trevor, a member of Manchester's Liberal middle class and a city councillor, who wrote:

It is however, as a teacher of sound morals, and the delineator of homely Lancashire folks and ways, that Laycock will be remembered. He appeals to us in 'our own tongue' and he reaches the heart(48)

Clearly, for Trevor, "our tongue" crosses class lines and unites Lancastrians within a bond of respectability and 'sound morals'.

He continues:

...in his own way he has taught us the value of human sympathy and the power of humble goodness, and through his many a blessing has fallen upon Lancashire hearthstones, and wholesome laughter has brightened many a fireside. (49)

Like Waugh and Brierley, Laycock was elected an honorary member of the Manchester Literary Club, as well as the similarly middle-class Burnley Literary and Philosophical Society. Unlike his two contemporaries though, Laycock's poetry is virtually all set in contemporary Lancashire, and not in some more-or-less romanticised past.

Leaving to one side the Cotton Famine poems, it is worth looking at some of his most popular poems to get an indication of their appeal. His "Bowtun's Yard" is one of the most frequently quoted of all his writings, and is a poetic description of a typical working class street in a Lancashire town. It has little of the starry-eyed nostalgia found in dialect verse from Laycock's time to the present day. It describes in a real, though light-hearted way, some of the hardships of working people's lives:

At number four Jack Blunderick lives; he goes to th'mill an' wayves;
An' then, at th'weekend, when he's time he pows a bit an' shaves;
He's badly off, is Jack, poor lad, he's rayther lawm, they sen,
An' his childer keep him deawn a bit - aw think they'n nine or ten.

The narrator himself is not a 'respectable' outside observer, indeed far from it:

An number five aw live mysel', wi' owd Susannah Grimes,
But dunno loike so very weel - hoo turns me eawt sometimes;
An' when aw'm in there's ne'er no leet, aw have to ceawer i'th'dar;
Aw conno pay mi lodgin' brass, becose awm eawt o'wark. (49)

The appeal of the poem is very much within the working class of Lancashire who can identify with many of the characters in the poem. There is no 'moral lesson' in the poem, other than the narrator's comment that he is the only one in the street not to drink 'Joe Stuggins' ale' on account of it having already 'ruined mony a bard'! Elsewhere, he writes strongly on the evils of drink, the title of one poem - "Teetotal? Of Course Awm Teetotal!" being indicative. His "Homely Advice to th'Unemployed" may have been written with the Stalybridge Riots, during the Cotton famine, in mind. However, it is not a specifically 'famine' poem. It is a warning from someone within the working class against the dangers of political extremism:

While th'wealthy are feastin' we're starvin',
An' for this lads, there must be a cause;
Aw know pratin' Tom will put this deawn
To injustice an' th'badness o'th' laws.
Well, there may be some truth i'what Tom says,
But aw know what real cause is aw think,
For while Tom's wife an' childer are starvin'
He's spendin' his earnings o'drink.

Yo may prate o'er yore wrongs until doomsday,
An' blame what are called th'upper class;

But ole yore complaints will be useless,
Will yo'n th' sense to tak' care o'yore brass.
Turn o'er a new leaf, fellow toilers,
An' let common sense be yore guide;
If there's one happy spot under heaven,
Let that spot be yore own fireside. (50)

Figures like 'Pratin' Tom' were of course common in middle class literature of industrial life; the stereotype is less common in working class writing and would clearly have met with the full approval of the Liberal middle class members of the Manchester Literary Club. The combination of political moderation, temperance, thrift and family life come together with unusual directness in the above poem. It could be asked whether it is almost too direct. Is Laycock indulging in satire? Certainly, he was an accomplished satirist in his later writings, discussed in Chapter 9 on War and Imperialism, and below. Yet Laycock took temperance seriously, and his criticism of Tom spending his earnings on drink ring straight. However, it would be wrong to dismiss Laycock as a political reactionary. He sympathised with aspects of Chartism and wrote an elegy, in standard English, on the death of Ernest Jones. His poetry became increasingly radical in a political, as opposed to industrial, sense during his lifetime. His "Th'Peers An' Th' People" was written in the 1880s when radical Liberalism was attempting to curb the power of the House of Lords:

Must these preawd peers tak' possession o'th'helm,
An' quietly say whoa's to govern this realm?
Are th'Bees to eat th'lean, an' th'drones to eat th'fat
For ever an' ever? we'll see abeawt that!

Comrades an' friends, shall we give up for nowt
That freedom for which eawr brave fore-fathers fowt?
Nay, never, so lung as these feet are well shod,
We'll oather win th'battle, or dee upo' th'clod! (51)

Laycock was a convinced anti-imperialist, and two of his poems, "Ireland's Vice-Royalty Underpaid" and "Cheer Up, Poor Irish Brothers" were a condemnation of British policy in Ireland. "John Bull An' His Tricks" is one of the strongest attacks on British imperialism written before the socialist period:

Oh, forshame on thee, John! forshame on thee, John!
The murderin' owd thief 'at theaw art:
Tha'art a burnin' disgrace to humanity, mon,
Tho' that thinks thisel' clever an' smart.
Tha'rt a beggar for sendin' eawt Bibles an' beer,
An' caaling it 'Civilization',
While thee an' thi dear Christian countrymen here,
Are chettin' an' lyin' like station. (52)

His song "John Bull" was written in a similar vein.(53) This radical poetry should be taken alongside effusive tributes to Hugh Mason, the Liberal cotton baron of Ashton, and John Bright. "Jubilee Song" is a tribute by Laycock to "England's Queen and India's Empress"(54) Despite Laycock's own experience as a cotton worker, there is nothing in any of his published writings about mill conditions. He is prepared to support popular Liberal causes - such as the postmen's campaign in the 1880s in "Eawr Postman"(55) for better pay. However, he cannot accept workers taking strike action. In "Th'Stricken Stokers"(56) he bewails 'this settin' o' class against class' and although he suggests there is wrong on both sides, clearly he thinks there should be some sort of compromise which avoids strikes. For all his political radicalism, Laycock was firmly within the Liberal orbit. The central conflicts within society are not between workers and capitalists, but between 'the peers and the people', or, the landed aristocracy, versus the 'productive classes' which include the working class and the bourgeoisie. It was to be left to his son, Arthur, to develop his father's dialect writing along socialist rather than liberal lines.

Secondary Writers of the Classic Generation

William Billington

The success of Waugh, Brierley and Laycock inspired many other working men to write dialect poetry. Joseph Ramsbottom, above all a poet of the Cotton Famine, is treated in detail in Chapter 8 on the Cotton Famine. William Billington won some fame, though little money, from his dialect poetry of the Cotton Famine but also wrote

on a wider range of themes, both in dialect and standard English. His first published collection of poems, Sheen and Shade, consists entirely of poems in standard English, and the titles are suggestive of earlier Chartist writing, for instance: "The Cottage of Discontent" "They Crush Because We Cringe" and "The Golden God", an indictment of greed and commercialism.(58) Billington's literary influences were noted by his biographer, William Abram.(59) They included Shelley, Byron, Keats and Burns; all of whom he could quote at length; he was also well-versed in the works of Milton, Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Dryden, Pope, Coleridge and Wordsworth. More locally, Billington was personally encouraged by Richard Dugdale, "The Bard of Ribblesdale" who shared his love of Burns. Billington's indebtedness to Dugdale is remarked in his "Eulogistic Verses on Richard Dugdale, Poet".(60) It is not known when he began to write in dialect, though some of his most popular work was written during the Cotton Famine. The expensively produced Sheen and Shade found few buyers in Lancashire, but his "Th'Surat Weyver's Song" sold fourteen thousand copies as a broadsheet in Blackburn alone.(61) Billington's Cotton Famine poems are more critical and radical than Laycock's or Ramsbottom's as we discuss elsewhere. Other dialect poems are equally pointed attacking the rich and municipal corruption. Unlike most of the songs of Waugh and Laycock, his "Goo In To Win" would be an unlikely choice for middle class sponsors to print copies in thousands for their mill workers:

We're spinnin sooa fast, an' sooa mich opo' t'spec
Till one's frettened ut t'world ull be breighkin id neck,
An' we's o go to smash at some unlucky strooak
Iv t'Mon up aboon doesn't put in a spooak;
Wi't'rich geddin richer an' t'poor grooin poorer,
Wal th'army ov idlers keeps still grooin moor,
Goo in for a win, sell yo'r soul for a place,
Oather do or be done, it's a neck an'neck race. (62)

Billington never received support from local philanthropists - he sided with local trades unionists in disputes with the mill owners, and made clear his dislike of the middle classes in songs and poems such as "Goo In To Win". He never won the recognition of other contemporary dialect poets, who attempted to appeal to middle

class philanthropic sentiment.

His poem, "Bad Times" published in Lancashire Songs shortly before his death, but dated 1879, is an attack on industrial capitalism and the two established political parties. It suggests that working people should seize the land, which would then provide food and work for all -

Iv t'poor fooak want owt doin' it's
Thersels ull ha' to do't!
Owd England neaw no longer con
Depend on t'Cotton Trade,
Eawr land's lockt up, an' we're forbid
To ply booath Plough an' Spade,
Whal Russia, Prussia, Flanders, France,
Boast '*freedom of the soil*',
England's an' ARISTOCRACY -
Id mecks one's marrow boil!

Yet his hatred of 'tories an' rads', and the English aristocracy did not stop him being an imperialist, and "Tel-El-Kebir" celebrates the British army's victory over the arabs in 1882 and attacks the liberal pacifism of Bright:

Fooak thowt us nobud foos an' fops,
Ut Peeos an'Plenty'd stuffed eawr crops,
Tell Bright hed torned us to milksops,
An'Time hed ta'en away eawr props -
Bud look at Tel-elKebir! (63)

This attitude marks him off from Laycock who opposed imperialist adventures, as we have seen, and reflects the important cultural differences between the two. Although both were 'radical' this radicalism had quite different directions. Whereas Laycock was teetotal, Billington ran a pub in a poor part of Blackburn. Laycock was anti-imperialist, whilst Billington could cheerfully applaud British army victories over the 'foreign foe'. Laycock's social villains were the landed aristocracy - the peers; whereas Billington mistrusted the factory masters as much as the landed aristocracy. Billington looked to the working class winning the vote, and gaining parliamentary

seats:

The workman legislator,
Is next upon the cards (64)

It would be a simplification to say that Billington was part of a 'Tory radical' tradition with Laycock representing Radical Liberalism, yet Blackburn always had a particularly strong streak of populist Toryism which may have rubbed off on Billington. He died at the moment socialism became a living force in Blackburn in 1884, with the formation of a branch of the Social Democratic Federation (S.D.F.). For many members of the S.D.F., at both local and national level, a Marxist outlook was not incompatible with a belief in empire.

Richard Rome Bealey

Bealey is best known for his clever poem "My Piece Is O Bu'Woven Eawt" - the reflections of a hand-loom weaver coming to the end of his days. As a weaver would take his 'piece' to the merchant at the end of the week and be told whether the work is up to scratch, so shall we all have to answer to 'th' Mester' for our work on this earth. It was immensely popular during the 1860s, and made Bealey's reputation as a dialect writer. He was not, however, a hand-loom weaver. He was a draper, running his own business, and played a leading role amongst middle class dialect enthusiasts as secretary of the Manchester Literary Club when it was formed in 1862. He wrote considerably in standard English: love poems, travel writing, and moralistic works. He was politically radical, in a Liberal sense. His "Lines to Mr. Samuel Bamford", written in standard English, relates how recognition of Bamford will come when all the world is free - Hungary and Poland, the blacks of America, the Russian serfs. His dialect poetry is mostly conventional, though "Eawr Bessy", about the death of a young child, is notable in its use of dialect for serious subject matter, at least at the time it was written in the mid-1860s. His "Warch While Yo' Con" is a fairly standard attempt at

moralising on the themes of working class respectability:

There's nowt like to doin' full duty,
An' honestly payin' one's way; (66)

A couple of his poems stand out as strongly political, but utilising many of the themes of dialect nostalgia - old age, lost traditions and folk-lore, and memories of loved ones. In "Owd David At Major's", reprinted in full in Appendix 15, Bealey describes an old man looking back on his youth. He conjures up images of pace-egging, courting with his sweetheart down a country lane, while he gazes into the fire. The nub of the poem comes when he reflects that the country lane, from 'Hugh's i'th'Wood' has been closed by the landowner:

Noan ever tried to stop us then,
That path wur allus free,
An' every single inch of it
Is sacred greawnd to me. (67)

Bealey is writing a propagandistic piece about a real event - the Pilkington footpath dispute of 1866. The landowner was the Earl of Derby, probably the most powerful man in Lancashire, who closed the path which Bealey and many other Radcliffe and Bury people used. A major struggle ensued which resulted in a much publicised court case, and Bealey was directly involved as a defendant. The case went in favour of the footpath campaigners. "Owd David" was produced as a broadsheet at the time of the dispute. Bealey threw out a threat to the Earl:

An', Derby, let me tell yo this,
That path aw co my own;
Aw've made it mine, so stond aside,
An' let my path alone;
Aw've gotten th'Writin's i'my heart,
Love's finger wrote 'em there;
You've got o'th'fields, so be content,
An' dunnot touch my share. (68)

The poem succeeds in using human pathos - the old man looking back on his youth,

thinking of his now-deceased sweetheart - to appeal to the inalienable rights of the common working man. The poem is doubly interesting for being used as a weapon in a specific struggle, as Allen Clarke was to do with "Will Yo' Come O' Sunday Mornin'?" in a rights-of-way battle thirty years later. Bealey's "John and Meg" is written in a similar vein. An old couple reflect on the thousands of acres of land possessed by the rich, and their attempts to steal yet more from the poor. The poet suggests they should live the lives of the oppressed for a while:

Shawm on sich mean an' shabby folk:
Aw wish their greed theresels ud choke,
Of if they tuthree months wur sent
To worch i'th'mill, awd rest content,
An when they went to walk abroad
They fun at th'owd footpaths "No road"
Aw'll bet just fifty bob ter one
Ut when they'd back to th'mansion gone,
Afore they'd bin there mony days
They'd oppen out o'th'narrow ways,
An advertise i'th'pappers too
Ut they intended t'make some new. (69)

Richard Rome Bealey, the respectable draper of Manchester, succeeded well in his attempt to don the persona of an elderly working man, and speak up on his behalf. Unlike some dialect poets of his period Bealey avoided the worst excesses of sentimentalism by linking nostalgia about the past with the realities of present day contemporary life.

James Taylor Staton

Staton was born in Bolton in 1817. He was an orphan, and was educated at Chetham's College, Manchester. He is a particularly interesting figure in this early period of dialect literature. He does not fit into any of the conventions of the genre, indeed he sticks out like a sore thumb. He wrote no poetry, at least that I can trace. He sought no sponsorship from the middle class, and spent much of his time attacking them. He edited, single-handedly a radical local paper written almost entirely in dialect

and combining satire with local news and stories. He was not 'respectable' in the manner of Laycock and Waugh. He would write about beer-shops, music halls and many of the 'seamier' things that the well-known dialect writers wouldn't touch. Although he was never one of the better known dialect writers, socialists like Allen Clarke and R.H. Brodie drew attention to his writings in the period of radical dialect literature. Brodie, writing under his pseudonym 'Billy Button' wrote of him in Teddy Ashton's Lancashire Annual in 1923 thus:

My object i'writin' is to draw attention to th'fact that there's nowt to remind folk that there were once a champion dialect writer cawd Jim Staton, an' that fro his printin' place i'Exchange Street, issued "Th' Bowton Loominary".

Allen Clarke also wrote about him in a series of articles for the Liverpool Weekly Post, on "Lancashire Literature".(70) Clarke describes the popularity of his paper, which became the Lankishire Loominary before it died in 1864. Staton made 'Tum Fowt' famous as the archetypal Lancashire village, the home of his comic heroes 'Billy Bobbin' and his wife 'Sayroh'. Clarke carried on Staton's work in his spectacularly successful Tum Fowt Sketches which sold well over a million copies. Though Clarke did not know Staton personally, some of his earliest recollections were of his father reading "Paddy An Th'Colliers" by Staton, and he also used to play billiards with Staton's son in Bolton's Coffee Tavern.(71) These details are of interest in that they help us to establish a sense of tradition and continuity in dialect literature.

Staton's background was that of a strongly political Bolton family; his father having been active in the Bolton Political Union. Staton was well aware of the struggles of the local handloom weavers, and wrote a lengthy serial article, "Luddites un Blackfaces" describing the events in Westhoughton of 1826, when a mill was burnt down and six local people were executed. During the election of 1853 Staton wrote a poem in the Bowtun Luminary attacking the Tories for their role in 1826 -

Remember now Westhoughton mill

How many there you stooped to kill
Think of that infant voice so shrill
That at Lancaster you hung. (72)

He also drew attention to bad conditions in the Bolton bleach works and supported the bleachers' fight against tommy-shops and low pay. His earliest piece of writing that is known, was published by the Bolton Tract Society in 1839 and is entitled What Must We Do To Be Saved? Staton, then 22 years old, was arguing a materialist case for how people's characters are formed:

Let your foundation stone be the fact that: "The character of every man, woman, and child is formed by the peculiarity of their original organization, and the action and reaction of external circumstances upon it." (73)

This seems surprisingly philosophical stuff for the editor of the Bowtun Luminary but Staton had two sides to his character - the rationalist and philosophical side which involved itself in the burial-club movement and educational provision for working class people, and the lighter, humorous side which produced "Paddy an th'Colliers", "Owd Shunt" and "A Wonderful Pig", amongst many others. As important contributions to Lancashire dialect literature, it is the latter side which needs some examination.

All of Staton's prose sketches were first published in his Luminary (later Loominary), and some of the most popular ones were re-published in Rays Fro' Th'Loominary, sub-titled, "A Selection of Comic Lancashire Tales, Adapted for Public Reading and Recitation".(74) Staton's stories are in a heavier dialect than that used by his contemporaries, Waugh, Laycock and Brierley. Many of the stories would tend to appeal to a more local readership; there are numerous references to parts of Bolton, particular streets and shops, and local landmarks. Staton's tales are set in the present, though he occasionally uses historical references to create a background, such as the following in "Sally Briggs Un Hur Pigs"; when he describes Chorley in 1790:

I'thooose days th'generality o foak didn't set mich value up uv a weel furnisht knowledge box. They thowt mooar abeawt church, king an stummack. They war aw good Tories welly i'thooose days, un Radikals wur a poor, despoised, persecuted lot. If a lad wur tow't to honour th'King, an weel as his fayther un mother, to obey aw his commandments, to reverence th'church un aw th'church peawsons, to place confidence i'aw his superiors (that is, men wi mooarmetail than him insoide their breeches pocket)... he wur considert to ha eddikashun grand un large enoof to make him a good Christian, a loyal subject, un a worthy member o society. (75)

Staton's gift for political satire was also used to good effect in his attacks on the bleach-works owners during the union's campaign in 1853 for better conditions (which Dickens also wrote about). However in his stories politics is incidental to the tale, and Staton never moralises about life in the way Waugh was frequently given to. They are humorous stories of working class life with a subversive thrust. They do not romanticise working class life. Staton was developing the strand of dialect satire which Clarke took over in his Tum Fowt Sketches. Staton's stories are written by someone from within the working class, for a working class readership. There is no nostalgia for the past; the characters are all situated in the present day, and do such jobs as coal-miner, spinner, weaver, farmer and a few hand-loom weavers. The hand-loom weaving characters are not historical figures, set in the past, but are based on the remaining weavers who worked on fine goods, well into the 1880s in the Bolton area. In "Th'Cherms o'Music" Staton describes Sam, "a lad ut lived at Ringley Brow" as:

...one ut wur browt up to sniggin timber, or in plain English, wot used to be cawd a poverty knocker, or hond loom weighvur. (76)

Even in the 1870s Staton was using a surviving hand-loom weaver as his main character, 'Bobby Shuttle'. In Bobby Shuttle Wi' Th'Demonstrationists, a story of "Th'Lond-Tillers Lock-Eawt" Staton describes the huge trade union procession supporting the agricultural workers, in Manchester on June 20th 1874. Bobby Shuttle travels into Manchester and arrives at the union offices which are organising the event, and enquires if any other handloom weavers are taking part:

A chap ut seemed to be th'cheearmon informt me that th'hondloom wayvers wur not takkin any part ith procession; un another sed he thowt hond-loom wayving had bin snuft eawt sometime sin. I assured him that he wur mistaen, for he'd a specimen oth craft before him. (77)

Staton's own position as a writer was put in jeopardy by the Cotton Famine, which drastically reduced the readership of his Loominary. A rescue operation was mounted by the publisher John Heywood, who revived the paper in 1863 with Staton remaining as editor, but broadening the circulation to all Lancashire, and hence re-naming it The Lankashire Loominary Un Wickly Lookin Glass. The specifically local flavour of the old paper suffered on account of trying to reach a more general geographical area, and it ended its life the following year. Heywood continued to publish Staton's stories as cheap pamphlets, and Staton himself found work as sub-editor on the Bolton Evening News, and as editor of the Farnworth Observer.

The Bowtun Luminary was a considerable achievement, running for almost twelve years. It established a form of dialect literature which did not pander to its betters, focused on local events and characters rather than playing on nostalgia for a partly mythical past, and provided a platform for local aspiring writers. Its importance in influencing the work of later writers such as Allen Clarke should not be underestimated.

Other Writers of the 'Classic Period'

The success of the 'Big Three', Waugh, Laycock, Brierley, produced dozens of working class writers in the dialect. Some were taken up by publishers such as John Heywood, Abel Heywood, Clegg and others. Many more had the occasional piece published in their local paper and it would be a long job to list even a fraction of these. George Hull in his Poets and Poetry of Blackburn published in 1902, lists fifty-six poets, many of whom wrote in dialect, and the reader is reminded in Joseph Baron's introduction "how very many of them were, or are, factory hands".(78) Samuel Hill in

Old Lancashire Songs and Their Singers records dialect poets from the Ashton Under Lyne area, many of whom wrote of local places and characters.

Margaret Rebecca Lahee, the Rochdale poet whose work was much admired by Waugh, is important for this period and is studied in detail in Chapter 10 on Women. She is the earliest female dialect writer I have been able to trace and her sketch Neddy Fitton's Visit To Th' Earl o'Derby was highly popular in the Bury/Rochdale area. It was first published in the Bury Times in 1859, and reproduced many times in pamphlet form. As we shall see, her novels, particularly Sybil West and her biography of Tom Livsey, give her an important place in the history of Lancashire working class literature.

Conclusion

Waugh, Laycock and Brierley dominate this period of dialect literature, both in their choice of subject matter and in their forms of dialect expression. Their writings were widely available in both very cheap, and expensive editions as well as being printed in local newspapers. Their success inspired many other working class people to attempt to write in dialect, and publishers seem to have become increasingly keen to take on dialect material in the 1860s. The common themes of these writings were the home and its pleasures, the countryside, an idealisation of the 'respectable' working man, frequent use of nostalgia, a sanitised treatment of sex and an emphasis on temperance. Martha Vicinus was led to comment:

Dialect writing did not develop or regress during the period 1850-1914, but it probably declined in terms of the sheer quantity of verse written after about 1885. The same themes were written over and over, following the paths laid out by Thomas Wilson, Waugh and Brierley. In many ways dialect writers became victims of the popularity they so desired. Money and respectability could be gained by writing a great deal about uncontroversial commonplaces; most writers found the temptation of a mass readership irresistible. (79)

This statement is only partly true. As we shall see in the following chapter,

dialect writing made important developments after 1885, in the work of Allen Clarke and his circle. Clarke does not get a mention in Vicinus' book at all, a surprising omission considering his vast contribution both in terms of quantity and quality. She refers in a note to 'Teddy Ashton, a local dialect writer' forming the Lancashire Author's Association in 1909, obviously under the impression that 'Teddy Ashton' is a real person, and not Clarke's pseudonym. The statement that dialect writing declined 'in terms of sheer quantity' needs some sort of quantification. This was the period in which Waugh and Brierley were having their 'Collected Works' re-printed, when most local papers in Lancashire carried some dialect writing, and when younger writers like Trafford Clegg, Joseph Burgess, William Baron and Samuel Hill were beginning to get published widely. On the other hand, her remarks about the prevailing subject matter, and the almost irresistible temptation to stick to 'safe' issues is true to a great extent. In all likelihood, it was what the readers - both the members of 'respectable' working class families, and sections of the Lancashire middle class - wanted.

There were exceptions to this rule, and Staton is the most notable. He avoided both the form and content of the mainstream of dialect writing, using prose rather than poetry and dealing with specific, localised characters and incidents. William Billington is another popularly-read exception to the above. Billington stands more in the tradition of the self-educated working class intellectual who moralised to his fellow workers about ideals of freedom and justice, but made clear his resentment at not achieving the commercial success of Waugh et al.

Even within the mainstream, there were rivulets of political radicalism: above all, Laycock's anti-imperialism, albeit in a form which would not have offended the sensibilities of radical Liberals such as John Bright. Waugh, Laycock and Brierley were all politically aware and what united them was a Liberalism which saw 'the peers' as the enemy and 'the people' as the force for progress. This 'people' could include everyone from the factory worker to the factory owner, and in none of any of their

writings will be found criticism of factory conditions.

Why did dialect literature 'take-off' in such a big way during this period? A number of different explanations have been offered. Brian Hollingworth suggests that the growth of working class literacy played a major part, with dialect writers 'cashing in' on the transition from an oral to a written dialect tradition:

Poets like Waugh and Laycock inherited the long-established oral tradition at just the time when increasing literacy among ordinary people was making popular written poetry a more feasible proposition. (80)

Hollingworth goes on to suggest that the poets' combination of language and subject matter related to the sentiments of the Lancashire working class, but "increasingly, higher standards of education threatened this harmony".(81) Yet his argument is based on a suggestion of a short-lived popularity of dialect literature, which is factually incorrect. It is perhaps true that the three main poets had burnt themselves out by the 1880s, but dialect writing went on to enjoy a renewed burst of popularity in the 1890s, which lasted through to the First World War and after. Furthermore, his suggestion that the earlier dialect poets like Waugh expressed in literary terms the life of Lancashire workers is incorrect. Waugh and Brierley were nostalgic sentimentalists who wrote of a bygone age of 'fowts', hand-loom weavers and independent artisans. It was only the later works of Allen Clarke, Joseph Burgess, Sam Fitton and others of their generation which related dialect to day-to-day Lancashire working class life.

Martha Vicinus adopts a more sophisticated position in her chapter on dialect, "An Appropriate Voice", in The Industrial Muse. She suggests that dialect literature succeeded when it did due partly to changing geographical and cultural patterns :

Writers fashioned a language that grafted the new vocabulary of the city streets, factories and mines to the older rural vernacular. The large numbers of country people who came pouring into the industrial cities formed a link with the country, and in turn they found their customers still living in the works of such writers as Waugh, Brierley and Hartley. (82)

The subject matter of dialect - set in the home or the 'friendly' village pub formed a welcome alternative to the reality of life in the mill and weaving shed, "partially because working people did not relish the monotonous and regimented life of the factory." She goes on to argue that a more important reason was "the increased acceptance of values and customs favoured by the middle class". As bourgeois values became codified into a canon of mid-Victorian taste and respectability, a literature appeared to confirm and reinforce these values. This was true of writers like Eliza Cook and Mrs Hemans, as much as dialect writers. The latter however were "saved from the worst excesses because regionalism gave point and purpose to their commonplaces". (83)

Vicinus' argument that a combination of major social upheaval in the transition from a rural to an urban society, the consequent need for a nostalgic reassuring literature, combined with "the increased acceptance of values and customs favoured by the middle class" in a dialect literature which was strongly regional, has the value of bringing the debate onto a higher level of analysis in which social and cultural elements are introduced. It still begs a number of questions, and she clearly accepts the conventional argument that the middle class imposed their values onto an increasingly receptive working class, or at any rate the more skilled sections of it. Vicinus does not draw any clear distinctions between labour aristocracy and the 'mass' of workers, though she refers, confusingly, to "a popular indigenous literature that spoke to and for the prosperous working class of the industrial north." (84) Since large sections of the working class were anything but prosperous, I assume she is referring to the skilled, better-off sections of the working class, rather than a generally affluent working class. This, presumably, is that section of the working class which accepted 'the values and customs of the middle class'.

There were racial divisions within the working class, with Irish people seen as

the 'outsiders'. Occasionally, such as during the Preston Strike of 1853/4, Irish strike-breakers were shipped in by the employers. Anti-Irish feeling was used to divide working class political campaigns, including Chartism, and became particularly pronounced during the 1860s. (85) Other divisions were based around gender, and attitudes towards women working in the mills were often contradictory. The male spinners fought hard to keep women out of the spinning rooms when the less physically arduous self-actor mules were introduced in the 1840s and 1850s, but women formed the majority of weavers, carders, warpers, and winders. (86)

It is my view that the themes of 'respectability' expressed in the writings of Waugh, Laycock, Brierley and others were largely generated from within the working class experience of mid-nineteenth century Lancashire. As has been argued by Tholfsen, Gray, Walton, Crossick, and Kirk the meanings of terms such as 'respectability' had differing interpretations between middle class and working class ideologues. The ideals expressed by the earlier dialect writers were very much those of a working class struggling to 'better itself', though not necessarily to aspire to middle class, or even 'aristocratic' status. Foster's image of a 'mass' of workers which were indisciplined, lazy drunkards who spoke an impenetrable dialect to ward off suspected labour aristocrats strikes seems patronising. Most of the organisations which Foster cites as 'buying off' the labour aristocrat into bourgeois ways, were in fact collectivist in nature - co-ops, skilled unions, religious organisations, mechanics institutes and so on. Crossick, in his study of Kentish London artisans brings out the strong themes of indigenous working class respectability which owed little to middle class ideas of individualism: rather it reflected a sense of collective pride in craft and community. I would argue a similar case for the Lancashire hand-loom weavers in the period 1780 to 1810, when they were at the height of their influence. Some of that culture was passed on, modified and re-worked, to their sons in the spinning and weaving sheds, and a new working class identity steadily emerged in the 1850s and

1860s which upheld values such as family life, a fair day's work for a fair day's wage, thrift and, to a degree, temperance. In a specifically Lancashire context this culture was formed around the cotton industry and was assertively regional. The dialect poetry of Waugh, Brierley and Laycock was the final cultural seal on this way of life.

However, since terms like 'respectability' were so easily given to differing interpretations, it is not difficult to see how middle class propagandists saw evidence that the working class had finally come round to their way of looking at things. However a working class culture remained a collective, communitarian form of respectability, not an individual attempt to ape, or even join, their 'betters'. Usually, such people who did aspire to 'middle class' status gained the unreserved contempt of their fellow workers and neighbours. This is hinted at in Staton's sketch quoted earlier. True, some of the more skilled workers did join the ranks of the bourgeoisie as small cotton manufacturers and espouse classically 'individualistic' ideas. These were the exceptions to the general rule and were not the people whom dialect literature addressed.

In studying the earlier dialect writers, a further complication does set in. Waugh, Brierley and Laycock were not simply literary mouthpieces of a 'pure' working class culture. Each had his own class position, ideology and aspirations which mediated his expression of working class values. Waugh was undoubtedly the most 'aspiring' of the dialect writers, eagerly seeking middle class approval, and writing very much what suited his patrons. However, there was a limit to how far Waugh could go without losing his working class readers. Even in "Come Whoam" the poem's end still permits 'a crack o'er a glass' and 'a bit of a spree'. His middle class publishers and admirers in the Manchester Literary Club undoubtedly felt that their ideas were being transmitted to the lower orders through Waugh's homilies. I would argue that Waugh's readers in the working class took something else from them: a sense of pride in their own culture: their speech, their locality, their traditions, and also

a support for their own aspirations towards a decent life and a sense of stability and 'being settled'.

Finally, to return to a consideration of why dialect 'took off' when it did. In my account of the 'classic' generation of dialect writers I stressed the importance of middle class backing to get their work established and into a wide readership. Firstly, why should middle class people push dialect at all, and secondly why should working class people read it? I would suggest that the mid- 1850s saw the coming together of a number of issues which led to the dialect explosion. Within the middle class there was a genuine fear of the working class and a felt need to respond to the 'horrors' of Chartism by some form of ideological offensive. Here I would go along with Foster's 'liberalization' schemes of the bourgeoisie, though I have more reservations about the results. As far as dialect writing goes, most of the ideas expressed by Waugh fitted into the middle class' idea of the sort of sound moral values the workers ought to have. The point about dialect is of interest: there was an important strand of opinion within the Lancashire middle class, exemplified by John Harland, William Axon and George Milner, which was genuinely interested in folk traditions and customs, and the writings of people like 'Tim Bobbin' as expressive of the old Lancashire before the days of steam mills. Again, Waugh's somewhat unreal idealization of Lancashire just before the industrial revolution fits well into their antiquarianism. So long as Waugh and his friends kept to 'safe' contemporary subjects like the home and the countryside, or wrote about the past, they were assured of their support. The non-recognition afforded good writers like Staton and Billington who didn't stick to what the middle class would tolerate, is indicative.

The middle class then, had good reason to sponsor a sanitised dialect literature at the time they did. Equally, working class people were receptive to it for the reasons I have outlined. Hollingworth's point about increasing literacy is a relevant subsidiary factor, so too is his observation of the 1860s as a point of transition from an oral to a

literary, reading, culture. We can follow Vicinus and see Waugh's subject matter as appealing to a newly urbanised working class, with nostalgic memories of the countryside and rural life and the accompanying sense of loss. They did not want to be reminded of what life was like in the factories, they did not want stirring up to revolution - the hopes and ideals of Chartism had just come to an inglorious end. A literature which could exalt their own way of life, in a modest, day to day sense which was reassuring and comforting, rather than challenging, fitted the needs of many 'respectable' working class people in the 1850s. It was for later writers to develop the tradition which Waugh and his friends created and relate the pressures of working class life at work and home, as well as the pleasures, into a literary form.

1. B. Hollingworth "Two Unpublished Poems of Edwin Waugh" Journal of the Lancashire Dialect Society 1985.
2. Martha Vicinus Edwin Waugh: The Ambiguities of Self-Help Littleborough 1984 p.25.
3. *ibid* p.26.
4. G. Milner Introduction to Edwin Waugh Lancashire Sketches Vol.1 Manchester no date c 1892 p.xxix.
5. Ben Brierley Home Memories and Recollections of a Life n.d Manchester c 1886 p.55. There is a short biography of Brierley, and a selection of his work, in Poems of Ben Brierley Manchester n.d. c 1886. Brierley, Waugh, Lahee and other dialect writers were celebrated in monuments; see P. Salveson The People's Monuments Manchester 1987. Brierley's stood in Queens Park, Harpurhey, until it was vandalised beyond repair. A Moston pub is named after him.
6. *ibid* p. 60.
7. Vicinus op.cit p.26.
8. Edwin Waugh Collected Works (11 vols.) were published between 1881-87, followed by a second edition, in eight volumes, edited by George Milner, from 1892.
9. Advertisements in back of Laycock's Lancashire Songs n.d. c 1867 for various Waugh and Brierley writings of 3d each; song sheets were advertised at 1d each.
10. William Billington Lancashire Songs with other Poems and Sketches Blackburn 1883. See also Michael Watson William Billington, The Blackburn Poet Blackburn n.d. c 1987 for brief biographical details, also P. Salveson (1987) op. cit p.21.
11. See advertisements in back of Laycock's Lancashire Songs Manchester n.d. c 1867. Staton has had very little research devoted to him. Robert Poole Popular Leisure and Music Hall in 19th Century Bolton Lancaster 1982 has some brief details and excerpts from his work, eg p.60. See also R.H. Brodie's (as 'Billy Button') short piece on Staton "Th'Bowton Loominary And Its Author" in Teddy Ashton's Lancashire Annual Blackpool 1923, re-printed as Appendix 8.
12. Vicinus op. cit p.33.
13. G. Milner op.cit p.xxx.
14. Martha Vicinus The Industrial Muse London 1974 p.205.
15. Proceedings of the Manchester Literary Club 1875-74 p.xii.
16. Vicinus (1974) op.cit. p.xxxviii.

17. Milner op.cit p.xxxii.
18. ibid. p.xii.
19. "Come Whoam" is supposedly based on his own experience in a pub. It was written on a scrap of paper in a Manchester hotel, according to G.H. Whittaker A Lancashire Garland of Prose and Verse Stalybridge 1936.
20. Manchester Guardian March 3 1884
21. Vicinus (1984) op.cit p.45.
22. ibid. p.45.
23. quoted in Vicinus (1974) op.cit p.51.
24. ibid p.39.
25. Edwin Waugh "Besom Ben and His Donkey" in Besom Ben Sketches Manchester n.d c 1894 pp 3-4
26. Correspondence in Manchester Central Reference Library, Edwin waugh Collection.
27. Edwin Waugh Poems and Songs 3rd series Manchester n.d c 1892 pp.67-68.
28. ibid. pp.106-107.
29. ibid p.107.
30. ibid p. 108.
31. 'The Second Gravedigger' "Ben Brierley and Edwin Waugh" Teddy Ashton's Northern Weekly July 23 1898
32. Ben Brierley "Treadlepin Fold" in Tales and Sketches of Lancashire Life Manchester 1884.
33. Ben Brierley Home Memories Manchester n.d c. 1886 pp.23-24.
34. "The Battle of Langley Heights" in Chronicles of Waverlow Manchester 1885.
35. "A Strike Adventure" in Daisy Nook Sketches (2nd Series) Manchester 1882 .
36. "The Battle of Langley Heights" p.50.
37. Home Memories p.24.
38. Ben Brierley Spring Blossoms and Autumn Leaves Manchester 1893 p.83.
39. ibid p.84.
40. ibid p.128.
41. ibid p. 128.
42. Manchester Guardian March 26 1884

43. James Haslam 'The Second Gravedigger' "Big Ben Brierley" Teddy Ashton's Northern Weekly (hereafter TANW) May 14 1898
44. Allen Clarke's early piece of dialect journalism, "Ben Brierley Interviewed by Teddy Ashton" in the Bolton Trotter, October 21 1892, shows the debt he owed to Brierley, despite their political differences.
45. G. H. Whittaker (ed.) op.cit p.197.
46. J. R. Swann Lancashire Authors St Annes 1924 p.149.
47. Samuel Hill Old Lancashire Songs and their Singers Stalybridge 1906 p.55.
48. W. Trevor, quoted by "C.W." in Introduction to Collected Writings of Samuel Laycock Oldham 1900 p.xii.
49. *ibid* p.xiii.
50. *ibid* pp. 65-6.
51. *ibid* p.66.
52. Samuel Laycock Warblins' Fro' An' Owd Songster Oldham 1893 p.174.
53. *ibid* p.164.
54. *ibid* p.243.
55. *ibid* p.367.
56. *ibid* p.197.
57. *ibid* p.209.
58. William Billington Sheen and Shade and Other Lyrical Poems Blackburn 1861.
59. William Abram Blackburn Characters of a Past Generation Blackburn 1878, and M Watson William Billington, the Blackburn Poet Blackburn 1982.
60. In George Hull (ed.) The Poets and Poetry of Blackburn Blackburn 1902 p.30.
61. See W.W. Skeat and John H. Nodal Bibliographical List: English Dialect Society London 1873.
62. William Billington Lancashire Songs with other Poems and Sketches Blackburn 1883 p.18.
63. *ibid* p.30.
64. *ibid* p.130.
65. Richard Rome Bealey Poems London n.d c1880 p.92.
66. *ibid* p.196.
67. *ibid* p.215.

68. ibid p.216.
69. ibid p.224. For Clarke's literary contribution to the Winter Hill rights of way struggle in 1896, see Paul Salveson Will yo' come o' Sunday mornin': The 1896 Battle for Winter Hill Bolton 1982.
70. 'Billy Button' (R. H. Brodie) op.cit.
71. see Clarke's "Amongst the Agitators" serialised in TANW May and June 1905. Clarke's claim of a sale of over a million copies of Tum Fowt Sketches was made in Teddy Ashton's Lancashire Annual, Blackpool 1935.
72. Bowtun Luminary January 29 1853
73. J. T. Staton What Must We Do To Be Saved?, Bolton 1839.
74. The publication date is uncertain, but is most probably in the late 1860s, by John Heywood, Manchester. Vicinus op.cit p.334, gives it as 1866.
75. ibid p.48.
76. ibid p.127.
77. J.T. Staton Billy Banks Wi'Th'Demonstrationists Manchester 1874.
78. George Hull op.cit. p. xiii.
79. Vicinus (1974) op.cit p.228. Thomas Wilson was a Tyneside writer.
80. Brian Hollingworth Songs of the People Manchester 1977 p.4.
81. ibid p.5.
82. Vicinus (1974) op. cit p.190. John Hartley was a well-known Yorkshire dialect writer.
83. ibid p.191.
84. ibid p.185.
85. see W.J. Lowe The Irish in Mid-Victorian Lancashire: The Shaping of a Working Class Community New York 1989.

Chapter 4: The New Generation of Lancashire Dialect Writers

The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate that Lancashire dialect literature underwent significant developments in the later years of the nineteenth century. A new generation of dialect writers emerged, as Waugh, Brierley and Laycock ceased writing through old age; All three were dead by the mid-1890s. The themes which differentiate the new generation from the old are i) the general lack of middle class sponsorship and cultivation; ii) a subject matter which was rooted in a contemporary industrial setting; iii) an under-current of political radicalism amongst some of the writers; iv) their use of 'alternative' publishing outlets as well as established publishers; v) the use of a wider range of literary forms, particularly the novel and to a lesser extent drama; and vi) the strong sense of being part of a continuing dialect literary tradition.

Within these themes, there are clearly transitional elements; writers who owed much to Waugh and his rural romanticism, others who looked up to middle class benefactors, and a few who looked back to a 'golden age' of pre- industrial society. However, by 1900 all these tendencies had become muted, and a frequently radical and innovative dialect literature was being read in penny pamphlets such as the Tum Fowl Sketches, and in mass circulation papers like The Cotton Factory Times and its Yorkshire counterpart, Yorkshire Factory Times, Teddy Ashton's Northern Weekly, as well as local labour newspapers and in the provincial press generally. This new lease of life for dialect literature came from a fusing of the new socialist and trade union movement of the 1880s with the tradition of dialect literature established by Waugh and his circle in the preceding 30 years. In the 1890s it became almost second nature for Lancashire working class writers to use dialect rather than standard English if they were writing a poem or short story. Some, like Allen Clarke, had a more calculated use of dialect as a vehicle for political propaganda.

Transitional Writers:

John Trafford Clegg: 'Th'Owd Weighver'

Clegg died young, and only appears to have written dialect between 1890 and his death in 1895. However, he established a considerable reputation amongst dialect writers, including Ben Brierley and Allen Clarke.(1) His Sketches and Rhymes in the Rochdale Dialect(2) occupy two large volumes, and in addition he wrote a novel, David's Loom(3) and sketches entitled Reaund Bi'Th'Derby.(4)

Despite his pseudonym, 'Th'Owd Weighver', Clegg was the son of a fairly well-to-do grocer and his working life was spent as a printer, in his brother's firm in Rochdale. In "Memoir of the Author", which precedes the contents of Volume 1 of Sketches and Rhymes, the anonymous commentator (probably his brother) mentions that Trafford Clegg had written a few unexceptional pieces in standard English for Chambers' Journal and the Manchester Weekly Times, as well as other journals. However, his interest in writing in dialect was apparently kindled when he was setting the type for the Fishwick's History of the Parish of Rochdale.(5) The commentator elsewhere notes that Clegg worked briefly in a Glossop cotton mill, owned for a short time by his father, and this experience gave him a sympathy for the industrial workers. The combination of these experiences led him to write of working class people in the Rochdale area realistically:

...his characters pass before us absolutely true to life, expressing their thoughts and feelings in the only language by which they could be adequately conveyed, and whose niceties and subtleties it were impossible to translate into "standard English."(6)

Trafford Clegg writes from a class position which is on the fringes of the working class, and whilst sympathetic to them, he is not of them in the way that Brierley and Laycock were. The creation of an artificial image of an 'owd weighver' is suggestive of the contradictory position he found himself in. He was a purist in his use of dialect,

taking the view that it was dying out rapidly and that there was little that could be done to save it. Clegg made his name as a dialect writer through a controversy over the teaching of dialect in schools, fought out in the columns of the Rochdale Observer during 1890. It was suggested by a local schools inspector, J.H. Wylie, that dialect ought to be taught in schools to preserve valuable local traditions. Perhaps surprisingly, Clegg argued against the suggestion. In the first letter of March 15th, he writes:

Keep th'owd Lanky eawt o'th'schoo's Mesther Wylie, for aw want my childer to talk smart when they grown up.(7)

Clegg, and probably many other 'aspiring' Rochdaliens, saw dialect as a handicap to career prospects. Clegg also rejected on artistic grounds any attempt to 'systematize' dialect:

...if yo'r begun to thrim it deawn to rules an' teychin' systematically, yo'll find yo just get a tuthrie roughseaundin' words an' sayins', an' yo'll find 'at o'the flavour an' beauty an' power's flown away.(8)

Clegg's resistance to the teaching of dialect in schools clearly has some justification on the artistic grounds he speaks of. However, the argument was taking place in a context of determined attempts by educational authorities to stamp out the use of the vernacular by children, and concern amongst the lower middle class that their children should 'talk proper'.

Clegg was well-versed in both classic and contemporary literature, and it is clear that his use of dialect is a conscious literary decision. The influence of Waugh, and his literary success, combined with the 'respectability' of Burns in the canon of 'English' literature gave him ground for writing in dialect. In his foreword to Reaund Bi'Th'Derby he quotes Burns, and adds his own 'apology':

Here I, a lagging gleaner in the field
Of thought, have gathered up a little sheaf,
Left by the mighty reapers who did wield

Their shining sickles on the golden leaf
In days gone past; and, in the dear belief
That all my hoardings are not chaff and straw,
Beneath the critic's flail I lay the chief
Of my scant store.....(9)

In his sketch, Reaund Bi'Th'Derby, the central character and narrator, is a cotton worker who goes for a day's walk on the moors and meets various local characters on the way. Interspersed with his thinking aloud in dialect, he quotes Smollett, and Shakespeare. The central action takes place in 'The Derby', a moorland pub, where the narrator meets a young, intellectual, 'weel favvoured fellah'. The discussion between the two becomes a sort of literary contest, with dialect and standard English recitals coming from the two men. This device permits Clegg to introduce poems completely out of context - "The Weighver's Song", and "Two Marriages". The first is one of Clegg's most well known pieces and records a weaver's pride in the job:

Clattherin loom an' whirlin' wheel,
Flyin' shuttle an' steady reed,
This is wark to mek a mon feel
There's wur jobs nor weighvin i'time o'need.(10)

The poem which follows, "Two Marriages" picks up a popular theme of Clegg's - the contrast between town and country, rural idyll and urban squalor. The first part of the poem is about the healthy countryman, coming home from the fields after a hard day's work to his cottage, kept clean and well-kept by his loving wife: "with quiet happiness their simple home is blest".

The second part is set in "a miserable street full of squalid cots, deep in the foul heart of a busy town":

In one mean dwelling an uncertain light
From a few glittering embers faintly shines;
Across a window in the darkening night,

A subtle spider plaits his cunning lines;
Of poverty and sorrow here he signs,
To move the heart and draw a pitying tear:
Rough wooden chairs, a table, whereon twines,

Strange sight! a flowering plant; the walls are bare -
But hark! is that a sound of weeping that we hear? (11)

The wife is weeping for her husband, who is slowly dying amid the abject poverty of their surroundings. They are not to blame for their tragedy - they are victims of the modern urban age. The flower symbolizes nature as the force of good, flowering amidst evil, as well as being emblematic of the couple's vestigial 'respectability'. The similarities with the much earlier work of John Critchley Prince are remarkable. By his use of the two characters, Clegg can express himself as the 'owd weighver', using dialect in both the narrative and the examples of poems he gives, and also in standard English in the words of the 'young gent'.

Despite Clegg's position as an outsider pretending he is 'an owd weighver', he never gets tempted to preach homely moralistic sermons to his readers on how working people should behave in their lives. In the long poem "Deawn I'Th'Shade" (shed, ie weaving shed), Clegg catalogues the various middle class remedies made to improve the health of working people - keep fit, exercise, good reading - etc, and proceeds to satirise them:

It's plain enough 'at when we're off this greawnd
We're noane forever whuzzin dumbells areawnd,
Climbin' up pows an' usin th'swingin bar,
Or we met happen change fro what we are
Iv we'd beaunce up i'th mornin soon an' bowd
To pop o'er th'yeard wi wayther cleyn an' cowl,
Walk oft i'th counthry in a thoughtful way,
Say th'catechism once or twice a day,
An' calm wi porritch eaur excited blood,
Wise neighbours tell us that'd do us good;
But whether these philosophers could jump
Fro bed at five to scutther off to th'pump,
Or, after bein' stewed ten heurs a day
Start strugglin wi their muscles aw cawnt say.
We shouldn't smooke, nor dhrink, nor ware mich brass,
But go t'lecthur reawm or th'science class;
But there! It's no use talkin! We're so numb,
We s'slutther on th'owd road whol kingdom come.

The poem is a long, sympathetic description of the occupants of a weaving shed, often sad:

Look next at Martha Pillin' - hoo's a face
 As honsome yet as ony i'this place,
 Though moor nor forty year th'good woman's bin,
 Wi noane too mich ov happiness cobbled in.
 Some twenty year back Martha's sweetheart dee'd,
 Just when they hoped together to be teed;
 He fell deawn th'hoist, hurtin hissel so bad
 There weren't a bit o'chance o'savin th'lad.(13)

The poem does not shy away from commenting on collective remedies for some of the weavers' wrongs, though his comments about striking have an element of hopeless bitterness about them, and contempt for the moralising of the middle class:

Sometimes, to make some extra sport i'th'cage,
 We stricken for less wark or bigger wage;
 Takkin a holiday wi nowt to spend,
 Determin't this time, 'at we'll dee or mend;
 Practisin' deein for a while, some fain
 At last to crawl to th'facthry once again,
 Wi o th'fawse craythers yappin at eaur heels
 'At never knew heaw hard wark or clemmin feels,
 Yet could ha tow'd us aw fro't'very start,
 For sich-like wickedness eaur backs mun smart.(14)

Clegg's countryside verse, for which he is better known, is covered in more detail elsewhere. It is worth noting here however that, in this verse, the positive aspects of the country are stressed against the unhealthy, disease and poverty-ridden town. These contrast with the message of his novel, David's Loom, an historical romance about a handloom weaver who invents a revolutionary new loom which vastly improves the efficiency of early power looms. He is attacked by local Luddites, and ends up being wrongly executed for murder. David's loom is taken over by the manufacturers and it transforms the weaving trade. At the end of the story, the Luddites like Big George are working, apparently happily, in the steam driven factories, and the only sour note is over the employment of children:

Power machinery, once held by them to be a rank invention of Satan, already dazzles their half-understanding vision with flashes of celestial brightness; even Big George, type of unreasoning strength and prejudice, not only labours in a steam-driven factory himself, but compels his youngest children to pass some fourteen hours a day there also, selfishly oblivious of their health and

mental development, in the blind pursuit of his own welfare.(15)

In David's Loom Clegg assumes the eventual inevitability of factory work, and is even to a degree positive about it - though aware that factory life is no bed of roses, particularly for children.

Clegg is a slightly unusual figure in dialect literature; he does not appear to have had any links with either the local middle class elite, or with the young labour movement of Rochdale. His writings, and indeed his pseudonym ('Th'Owd Weighver') suggest he was much older than he really was. He died in Bournemouth in 1895, at the age of 38. He was forced to leave Rochdale because of his failing health, but his illness was too far advanced for the change to have much effect. While some of his work was radical, he clearly saw himself as part of the established tradition of dialect literature, assuming the mantle of an 'owd weighver' to express his feelings in dialect.

William Baron: 'Bill o'Jack's'

William Baron, or 'Bill o'Jack's', published his work over a twenty-two year period, from 1888 onwards. Unlike Clegg, he was a cotton worker, starting work at the age of twelve. Some of his writing reflects his factory experience, such as "Hawf Past Five At Neet":

For fooak at's slaves to t'factory bell,
Life's noan so breet or gay;
For every morn they start at six,
An wark like foo's o't'day.
But when id gets tort stoppin' time,
Ther sinkin' hearts grow leet;
An' sich a change comes o'er 'em o',
At hawf past five at neet.(16)

However, Baron was no radical - his poem celebrating the end of the cotton strike of 1910, "On Th'Cotton Peace", shows little sympathy for collective action to improve conditions:

Industrial warfare, whenever it's waged,
Brings misery an' want in its train;
For when Capital and Labour's fiercely engaged,
It's poorest 'at suffer, that's plain!(17)

He was a regular contributor to the Tory Blackburn Standard, a point referred to by Samuel Laycock in his 'address' to Baron - see Appendix 16.

Although Baron writes about contemporary life and events, in Blackburn and later in Rochdale, the themes coming across in his work are very much those of the earlier generation of dialect writers, and can be summarised in the titles of some of his poems: "A Ramble i't'Country", "Mi Gronfeyther's Cooat", "Be Jannock" and "Th'Owd Garden Gate". In what was perhaps his most critical poem, "The Sweater's Den", about the evils of sweated labour, the poet's solution is individual, rather than collective:

Shun every tradesman 'at doesno pay a fair day's wage
for a fair day's wark.(18)

Baron's standpoint is that of a sympathetic observer, though without the broad internationalism of Laycock and even Waugh. His standard English poem, "How Trooper Baxter Died" is a hymn of praise to imperial heroism, with the British soldier attacked by the African horde, "like the fiends of a thousand hells".(19) Though Baron had none of Laycock's internationalism, he greatly admired 'the laureate of the cotton famine' and wrote an effusive "In Memoriam" when the old poet died. Arguably, Baron's imperialism could reflect a change within working class attitudes towards the end of the nineteenth century, and the patriotic frenzy of the Boer War - the poem appeared in collected form in 1902, when the war was coming to an end. There were opposing ideas within dialect literature by this time, as argued in more depth in Chapter 9, and Baron's work was attacked in the columns of Teddy Ashton's Northern Weekly for its lack of social criticism and "oversentimental" style.(20)

Though Baron's writing had a degree of popularity, his work never attracted the interest of a commercial publisher and his Bill o'Jack's Weekly, which ran from 1909 - 1911, was a pale reflection of Clarke's Northern Weekly which ceased publication in 1908.

John T. Baron: 'Jack o'Ann's'

John T. Baron was the older brother of William Baron, and there are many similarities in their work. He worked for most of his life at Henry Livesey's Greenbank Foundry in Blackburn, and was given time, one evening a week, to write his regular contribution to the Blackburn Times. These appeared without a break from October 30th, 1886, to July 5th 1919 - well over 1700 poems, a remarkable achievement. He was actively involved in the labour movement and was secretary of his branch of the engineer's union. Most of his poems are apolitical - his most well-known titles include "A Sope O'Good Strong Tay", "A Comfortable Smook", and "Th'Hooam Fireside". His image of a cheerful, take-life-as-it-comes working chap which comes over constantly in his poems, was belied by his own life. In the words of May Yates:

He had toiled hard at the foundry for close on half a century - he had gone through many years of the most agonising domestic misery - he had had much more than his fair share of sickness - all these things undoubtedly helped to shorten his life.(21)

Yet none of this finds an echo in his poetry, and we are given such profound philosophy as:

It's th'true philosophy o'life to tek things as they come;
Ah; if yo have a gradely wife an'childer reet at home,
Yo needn't cry o'er t'past, nor try to peer i'Future's book,
Use th'Present weel, an'calmly tek a comfortable smook.(22)

Joseph Baron: 'Tum o'Dick o'Bob's"

Joseph Baron was the nephew of John Baron (not to be confused with J. T. Baron), an earlier Blackburn poet, and used the title of "Tum-o'-Dick-o'-Bob's" as a pseudonym. His literary interests were both in dialect and standard English, and he wrote a considerable amount of local histories. Unlike his name-sakes John Thomas and William, he was from a middle class background and made a career in journalism. His funeral "Tennyson's Death" written in the idiom of classical augustan verse contrasts oddly with his dialect material, which is light, superficial and popular in tone. "He Olez Dud His 'Nook'" (roughly translated as "he always did his bit") is typical of his dialect poetry in its expression of homely moralism:

An' when th'Recordin' Angel teks
Eawr items in his Book,
Heaw grand when he this entry meks:
He olez dud his nook.(23)

Like other Blackburn poets, including J.T. and William Baron, Joseph Baron was fond of paying tributes to 'great statesmen', but representing them as basically down-to-earth chaps. His "Dedication of Blackburn Dickshonary to John Morley" is typical:

But oh, tha'll olez be to us -
So what tha's done, so what tha does -
Just "Honest John" as one time walked
Eawr streets an't'good owd lingo talked-
Th'owd lingo talked bi gradely fooak-
Th'owd lingo as eawr faythers spooak-
Th'owd lingo as we hooap'll leaven
Th'whul lot of 'Babel tongues i'Heaven!(24)

Joseph Baron represents the voice of Blackburn working class Liberalism, which isn't always heard quite as strongly as that of popular Toryism. His later work became increasingly radical, and he wrote a number of poems which appeared in Allen Clarke's

Teddy Ashton's Northern Weekly in 1907, when the paper was going through its most ultra-left phase. (25)

Other Dialect Celebratory Verse

It is common throughout the period from the 1850s through to the First World War for working men poets, including others trying to appear as such, to make appeals to local or even national establishment figures. Frequently, their published works may be dedicated to such figures. James Leigh dedicates his Gleams of Sunshine to Alderman Walter Ingram Sherry, Mayor of Hyde 1902-4; Henry Yates dedicated his Songs of the Twilight and Dawn to Henry Harrison, President of Blackburn Chamber of Commerce, in 1904. Tributary verse to admired figures is even more common in dialect writing, and becomes more frequent towards the end of the century. Even the radical weaver David Lawton finds space for commemorative poems on Victoria, Gladstone, Mrs. Gladstone and several local notables in his Webs From Fancy's Loom. William Cryer, writing in the same period includes tributes to John Bright, Thomas Barnes (a Farnworth mill owner) and his brother Alfred, as well as Gladstone and Victoria in his Lays after Labour.

Since the days of financial sponsorship of 'working men' poets by the local middle class had passed, one wonders why there were so many effusive tributes in the work of poets who were, in many other respects, quite radical. Poets such as James Leigh and Henry Yates were very much local writers with little appeal outside their own towns; their tributes to local personages help give their work a specifically 'Hyde' or 'Blackburn' character which may appeal to a local readership. The celebration of national figures is less straightforward. If one drew up a list of who were the most celebrated figures we would find Gladstone vying with Queen Victoria. James Leigh's "Lines Suggested by the Jubilee of Queen Victoria" in 1887 emphasises the drastic changes which have taken place in England since Victoria came to the throne but the

queen has given stability and continuity amidst all that, whilst nations abroad have had civil war and revolution:

Bur Queen Victoria's throne
Has stood'n the brunt ov each shock;
An it's stondin' today, a believe,
As firm as an adamant rock;
It's pillars are mighty an' strong.,
An' would bear it though high as a steeple;
It cannot and never will, fall
While it rests on the love of the people.(25)

Most working class writers who used dialect also wrote in standard English - usually for what they considered more 'elevated' subjects. The tributes to Gladstone are mostly in this medium, such as William Cryer's "William Ewart Gladstone", published in 1902. Gladstone is held up as the embodiment of the British democratic heritage; standing above the crudities of party politics:

Above all party creed is rife,
The wondrous unity of life,
And purpose just!
The heritage our fathers won
Inviolable from sire to son
We hold in trust! (26)

Lawton's poem on Gladstone expresses a similar sense of patriotism, a commitment to justice and democracy and sympathy for the working class when the rest of the establishment are disdainful:

Though oft maligned and scorned, misunderstood
By smaller souls too mean his worth to feel,
He lived and toiled to serve the common weal.(27)

The Importance of Locality

A further aspect of the 'transitional' writers, already alluded to, is their localism. The classic writers, Waugh, Brierley and Laycock, never identified particularly strongly with their own locality. Brierley used his area as the basis for a fictional setting, Waugh used the moorland country above Rochdale as 'typical'

Lancashire scenery. Yet in the writings of the John T. Baron and Joseph Baron (Blackburn), William Baron (Blackburn and Rochdale), David Leigh (Hyde), David Lawton (Greenfield), William Cryer (Farnworth), Henry Nutter and George Hindle (Burnley) and Fawcett Skelton (Bolton), their own localities assume a major importance in their work.

This had ideological as well as literary implications. It could be argued, perhaps rightly, that most of these were minor poets who would not get the level of literary recognition that Waugh and his circle had won. By appealing to a local readership, conscious of their limitations as national or even regional poets they could make up for some of these feelings. This is done through celebration of football victories over local rivals in Leigh's writing. Technological innovation is celebrated in Henry Nutter's "On the Introduction of Steam Trams Into Burnley". David Lawton marks local tragedy in his poem "On the Delph Wesleyan Chapel Fire". "The Bolton New Town Hall" was celebrated by John Fawcett Skelton at the time of its opening.

As well as the 'commercial' need to attract local readers, some of these poets were also expressing a sense of local pride and community feeling. They were regarded by the community in which they lived as 'their' poet, and working class readers would look forward to reading dialect poetry about their town in the columns of the local paper, or at a social event. 'The reading' became a popular institution from Waugh's time onwards, and showed little sign of going out of existence well into the twentieth century. If anything the number of 'penny readings' seems to increase in the 1880s and 1890s. Local co-operative societies, trades unions, workingmen's clubs and other social institutions began organising 'soirees' and tea-parties to which local dialect writers would come along for a couple of shillings to recite his work. Dialect was the glue which helped bind these activities and institutions together.

The 'transitional' dialect writer, occupying a position which derives from the

'classic' dialect writers (Waugh et al), would obviously employ many of the themes and forms of his predecessor: homely, sentimental moralising; a love of the countryside - though increasingly from the standpoint of the townsman; and a Gladstonian Liberalism which sees society divided primarily between the 'peers' and the 'people'. The differences lie in their contemporary subject matter - the amount of material relating to industrial life, in a non-controversial sense, increased dramatically. There is little support for these writers from middle class patrons. Many had their work published privately, or more commonly, in subscribers' in which local supporters subscribed enough funds to make a printing of a particular book feasible: names of subscribers were listed at the rear of the publication. Sometimes, an organisation such as a literary and philosophical society (as in the case of Hindle's Tales of the Brun) would publish their works. Commercial publishers such as John Heywood, James Clegg, and other firms continued to support some of the better known writers. Local newspapers become increasingly important as outlets for working class dialect verse, and most of the Lancashire papers carried some dialect. This local press, which was only in its infancy when Waugh was at his literary height, helped to re-inforce the localism of many of the writers. More specialised journals, such as Ben Brierley's Journal (up to 1895), and also the Cotton Factory Times, were available to aspiring writers as well.

The above writers were 'transitional' in the sense that they incorporated much of the previous 'classic' generation's motifs. In the next section I will suggest that they point towards some aspects of the overtly socialist, working class writing of Allen Clarke and his circle, and many of them were of course contemporary to Clarke and his friends. In other respects they were in transition from a played-out, ossified form of writing which dwelt on the nostalgia of the past, continuing to plough the furrow of Waugh and his contemporaries in the 1860s. From the 1920s, as I shall argue later, this becomes the predominant pattern of dialect writing with only the work of Ammon Wrigley showing any sign of originality.

The Radical Use of Dialect

Many of the previous writers who have been referred to were 'radical' in some sense of the word: 'Tim Bobbin's' satire of the local gentry, Bamford's democratic populism, the radical Liberalism of Waugh, Brierley and Laycock. However, it is a radicalism firmly situated within a middle class framework. Only J.T. Staton and William Billington, in their different ways, express an overtly working class message, independent of the middle class and their patronage.

However, working class writers began to emerge with the socialist upsurge of the 1880s who expressed a new, independent working class slant but nonetheless remained as an identifiable part of the Lancashire dialect literary tradition. They shared a common lack of middle class sponsorship, and tended to use the emerging socialist and trade union press to get their work published. Many of them advanced from writing only poetry and short sketches, to producing full-length novels, for serial publication. Despite their radical, often socialist, politics they strongly identified with the 'classic tradition' established by Waugh, Brierley, and Laycock - and frequently paid homage to their achievements (see Appendix 18, where Brierley is interviewed by a young Allen Clarke). Allen Clarke is the central figure in the entire development of the new generation of dialect writers, though he was not the first socialist to use dialect to express his views; for this, the credit must go to Joseph Burgess, of Failsworth.

Joseph Burgess: 'Socialist Joe of Failsworth'

Joseph Burgess was the originator of a socialist literature in dialect form, in his poem "Ten Heawrs A Day" (printed in full in Appendix 20). It has remarkable similarities to Prince's "The Factory Child", but ends on a propagandistic note. Burgess describes an individual tragedy: the death of a young child whose mother was forced to work ten hours a day in the mill, as her husband died of consumption

(compare also with Trafford Clegg's "Two Marriages"). The solution Burgess argues for is working class representation in parliament: an important step from putting faith in sympathetic Liberals to supporting independent working class candidates:

Choose members to draw up yo'r laws
'At feel an interest in yo' cause,
An then they'll have a chance to ma'e
An Act agen ten heawrs a day.(28)

Burgess quotes the poem in his autobiography A Potential Poet? "as proof that as far back as 1874 my mind was working along the lines on which ultimately the I.L.P. was founded." His most well known poem, "Ther's Nowt Loike Spinnin' Shoddy" was written slightly after "Ten Heawrs A Day" and reflects his personal experience in the mills around Droylsden. The poem is less didactic - no suggestion of electing Labour MPs - but it remains one of the most successful attacks on 'the factory system' written by a Lancashire poet and was reprinted throughout this period up to the First World War. It picks up the common theme of factory slavery 'in freedom's native isle' and taking short cuts in quality to bolster profits. These are the first few lines; it is printed in full in Appendix 19:

Shoddy, shoddy, shoddy, that's the soart to spin,
Ther's nowt loike spinnin' shoddy i yo' want to mak yo'r tin.
Ne'er moind heaw had yo' work-un yo'r honds for little wage,
Ther's nowt loike spinnin' shoddy i'this spekilatin'age;(29)

Burgess began to submit poems to the Oldham Chronicle and had some, in standard English, published. He records the initial encouragement to write in dialect came from James Butterworth, a comedian who impersonated women. Burgess records that his standard English 'moralisings' were "providentially interrupted by the demand that I should write dialect verse." "An Owd Maid's Lament" and "My Owd Bonnet" were the result, though Butterworth never used them. Instead, they were published in the Oldham Chronicle and, interestingly, as broadsheets. Both are about women growing old and pitiful, never managing to make their 'catch' of a good husband.(30) His poem, "Neaw Aw'm a Married Mon", written on November 28th 1874, expresses a

more unusual theme:

As hoo's a factory lass,
An' aw'm a factory lad,
We've noather on us brass -
Aw nobbo weesh we had.
So awst ha' to do heawse work
For yo couldno caw it fair
If aw 'weshin' up should shirk,
An' didno do mi share.(31)

Tragically, his wife died in less than two months and Burgess wrote little more poetry of any interest in dialect. He left the mill to become a journalist, and edited the Oldham Operative, Workman's Times, and then sub-edited the Cotton Factory Times, before going to work for a variety of newspapers. His later poetry tends to be doggerel verse on ILP election victories.

Allen Clarke and the Tum Fowt Sketches

If Burgess' potential as a dialect poet never went beyond two exceptionally good pieces, quoted above, Lancashire's cotton mills were to produce a writer who could use dialect well, and bring together the best of the classic tradition and the political radicalism of the growing socialist movement. This was Allen Clarke, son of a spinner and a winder, born in Bolton in 1863, at the height of the Cotton Famine. As with most working class writers, his earliest attempts at writing were in standard English. However, he was aware of the work of J. T. Staton at an earlier age, through his father's interest in dialect literature. Clarke also records reading Brierley "ever sin I were a lad"(32) Much of Clarke's early reading was classical - Shakespeare, Byron, Moore - as well as political history: of Chartism, the Luddites and the work of Cobbett.(33)

His first substantial piece of writing, the novel The Lass of the Man and Scythe, was written in the late 1880s. It was a historical romance of the English civil war, set

in Bolton. It incorporated many of the themes which became characteristic of his novels, which are discussed elsewhere: a radical political backdrop to a story of love, jealousy and ultimate victory, with frequent use of dialect in the dialogue. However, his most notable early success was the creation of the Tum Fowt Sketches, and the characters Bill and Bet Spriggs. Tum Fowt (Tonge Fold) was a small, semi-rural community, east of Bolton town centre. The sketch first appeared in March 1890, in the first edition of Clarke's the Labour Light, which was mainly a labour news-sheet for the Bolton area. In a series of autobiographical articles written in 1905, Clarke describes their origin and purpose:

In this "Labour Light" began the series of humorous Lancashire sketches which have made 'Teddy Ashton's' name a household word, as critics say, in the north. The first "Tum Fowt Debatin' Menociation" sketch (introducing Bill and Bet Spriggs) addressed to the editor of "Th'Laybour Leet", appeared in the first issue of the paper, dated March 14th 1890; and was followed by half a dozen more. I suspect that the funny sketches helped to sell the paper more than the serious articles - though I daresay "Teddy Ashton's" droll sketches have done more to help reforms than far more pretentious and direct articles. For "Teddy" even in his comic sketches, pokes sly fun and undermining sarcasm at the industrial iniquities and social injustices of the day.(34)

This statement is a key reference for the radical use of dialect in the period 1890-1920. However, the clearly thought-out radical use of the Tum Fowt Sketches, only developed fairly gradually. It is worth looking at the early sketches to see what their origins and components were.

As noted earlier, Tum Fowt had already been used by J. T. Staton - whose work Clarke was familiar with - for his own 'Billy Bobbin' sketches, which also had some political aspects (see Billy Bobbin Wi'Th'Demonstrationists for example). By using Tum Fowt as the location for his sketches, Clarke was working on an already familiar theme, and within the Lancashire dialect tradition. However, according to an editorial published in Teddy Ashton's Journal in 1896, Clarke admits that it was his printer who suggested using some dialect, to lighten the 'heavy' political articles. (35) Clarke acceded, but never had a very high opinion of them as literature and recalls feeling

"rather disappointed and disgusted that people should be so greedy after frivolity, and neglect the reading of helpful and instructive articles."(36) In fact, the 'frivolous' sketches proved so popular that they had sold, as penny pamphlets, over 100,000 by 1896 and over a million by the time of his death.(37)

The central characters in the sketches are Bill, and his wife Bet, Spriggs. Bill is a ne'er do well husband, fond of his pint in the "Dug an' Kennel", but less fond of a day's work. His wife Bet is the only force capable of keeping him in check, and is clearly 'the gaffer' in the family. The worthies of the "Dug an' Kennel" decide to form a debating club in the interests of 'mutual instructshun and discushun o' himportant subjects'. The first sketch, "Heaw T'Menociation Were Formed" is a satire on 'respectable artisans' and the selfless pursuit of knowledge, ridiculed earlier by Staton. Instead of calling themselves an 'ass- ociation' they decide on something more worthy of their position:

Well then, ostid o'cawin eawr sosiety after t'beasts o't'field, as perishes, which is scripter, let's caw it after earwsels, which is the noblest work o'creation. Let's nayther have hoss, ass, dug, cat nor anny other insect i'natural history. Let's caw it - an here he waved his hond as indicatin a vast sweep o' o'erwhelmin eloquence - Let's caw it t'Tum Fowt Men-ociation, Men-ociation.(38)

The success of the sketches lay in identifiable, though obviously exaggerated, comic characters with a highly localised setting. Everyone in Bolton knew where "Tum Fowt" was. Many of the sketches related to other parts of Bolton - "Sammy Snokes' Donkey An Th'Express Train" takes the reader from Tum Fowt, via Tonge Moor Road to Bromley Cross railway station - where the donkey has an argument with an express train on the level crossing.

The characters remained virtually the same throughout the period they were being written - from 1890 to 1930. The character of Bet Spriggs has similarities to Andy Capp's wife - complete with rolling pin, waiting for the drunken husband to come home

from the pub. Through the character of Bet, Clarke later introduced the theme of women's rights and feminism - though in a knock-about way. Other main characters include Joe Lung, Ben Roke, Cock-Eye and slightly later Patsy Filligan, the laughable but sharp-witted Irishman.

The sketches did not save the Labour Light from extinction - it had a life of little over six months. However, it had whetted Clarke's enthusiasm for his blend of working class politics, dialect sketches, and journalism. He took what was most popular from Labour Light - the dialect sketches and local satirical pieces - and started the Bolton Trotter on January 9th, 1891. Many of the first sketches published in the Labour Light were re-printed, and new ones added, usually reflecting current topics of the day - new year and Easter celebrations, the 1891 census, elections and fads like 'mesmerism'. During 1891 there was a legal case involving a Mrs. Jackson of Clitheroe, who successfully had her husband turned out of the house because of his atrocious behaviour. In "Bet Spriggs Imitates Mrs. Jackson, an Bill Spriggs Gets Turnt Eaut!", Clarke uses a real contemporary issue to good comic effect, satirising men's alleged superiority. Acting on Mrs. Jackson's example, Bet throws her husband out into the street. The men of the Debatin Menociation get together and send a deputation, led by Ben Roke, to argue the claims of the male species. They are met at the door by Bet herself:

"What do you want?!" axed Bet, fiercely. "Come, be clearin off, or I'll help yo!"

"Well, Betsy," began Ben Roke, pompously, "We're a deppytashun o'three intelligent sober men, drunk as new-born babies, bless their pratty faces; an we're sent t'thee to prove, by logick, fair an square, an oblong too-" "What are ta meit erin abeaut?" interrupted Bet.

"Wait, a bit, theau'll see. Neaw, when th'Almighty made mon, well he made him aw reet; he didn't make him eaut o'some other animal did he?"

"Neow, neow!" said Sammy Snokes. "I think not, but not beein theer at t'time I cornt swear to it."

"Well, resoomed Ben, wavin his hands abeaut like an orator, "but when th'almighty made woman he made her eaut o'Adam's rib. That were fer't'show as hoo were a part o't'chap an belungs to him, an should love, honour an obey him in that station-"

"Howd on, what station?" cried Sammy. "Is it Moses Gate or Lostock Junction?"

Ben's speech continues with further interruptions, and suggestions of Bet's brutality to her husband. Ben drones on, whilst Bet turns her back and goes indoors:

"Madam," Ben were beginnin; but he geet no further. He geet th'mop dabbed into his meauth; an then afore he could stir hoo clipped bucket full o'dirty wayter reet o'er his yed, an theer it stuck like a hat. Nearly choked, he tumbled t'greaund, an were rollin abeaut an cussin awful, an gashin t'silence o't'neet by cuttin an blasphemous oaths.(39)

The sketches came out weekly in the Trotter, and from 1892 went on sale as penny pamphlets, published by the Trotter, but using Abel Heywood and John Heywood of Manchester for a wider distribution. Sales of the Trotter increased remarkably - and reached 25,000 within six months. Clarke decided to alter the paper to take in a wider geographical readership to further increase sales and on July 14th 1893 he re-vamped the paper as the Bolton Observer and Trotter and started a new paper (in June 1893) called The Bellman, which aimed at a regional circulation. Though The Bellman was reported as doing well on July 21st, the last issue came on September 15th 1893, only a couple of months after its optimistic beginning.

The Tum Fowt Sketches, which had been continued in The Bellman, were transferred to the Cotton Factory Times, along with their writer. Working as an employee of the mass circulation paper of the Lancashire cotton operatives, Clarke now had access to the broader readership he had failed to reach with The Bellman. Its sister paper, the Yorkshire Factory Times, also carried most of Clarke's contributions - including the Tum Fowt Sketches and other dialect pieces. His novel The Knobstick was serialised in both papers during 1893.

In the "Factory Times" papers, Clarke developed a new aspect of the Tum Fowt Sketches, based on industrial life. In his first few months on the paper he produced a series of often-reprinted sketches of mill life "Bill Spriggs Goes Mindin" (reproduced in

Appendix 21), "Bill Spriggs Has a Try At Tacklin", and "Bill Spriggs As A Bobbin Carrier". (41) The mill sketches were republished as penny pamphlets, and also in latter editions of Clarke's newspapers and his Lancashire Annual, reflecting their tremendous popularity.(42) While they give workers a sense of their importance, and the dangers of the work they are engaged in, there is no direct political comment. A year previously, in 1892 at the eve of the Cotton Lock-Out, Clarke had written "Bill Spriggs o't' Cotton Crisis" which carefully avoids the issue of politics in industrial disputes, at a time when the employers were trying to blame 'socialists' as the root of the problem:

"Lord deliver us fro' them socialists!" exclaimed Tim Bullfowt, "an fro' everyone else as wants for t'divide what isn't theirs. When I've geet a penny for a gill, mun I divide it wi everybody else? ...Not me. I supports t'Queen, an t'Constitution, an t'Church, an them's what I believe in."

"That's nowt to do wi what we're talking abeawt" said Bill Spriggs "th'subject of eaur discussion is t'cotton trade, what's in a very bad way just neaw... Th'factory-mesturs is takin abeaut reducin wages everywheer, an t'spinners say they'll have no reduction; they'll do beawt fust.(43)

Clarke left the Cotton Factory Times in 1896, following an argument with the editor. (44) Almost immediately, he started his Teddy Ashton's Journal, which became Teddy Ashton's Northern Weekly, for most of its life until demise in 1908. (45) The Tum Fowt Sketches continued each week, though Clarke now had the complete editorial freedom to use the sketches for political purposes, as mentioned in the autobiographical articles referred to earlier. In an early issue of the new journal, he clarifies his use of dialect forms:

I compromise by writing a diluted and conglomerated dialect that may be read in any part of Lancashire or Yorkshire.(46)

His attempt to appeal to broad readership led him to combine the occasional political input into the sketches, with his traditional tomfoolery associated with Bill Spriggs. The first overtly political sketch which appeared in the new Teddy Ashton's Journal was "Bill Spriggs An Patsy Filligan O'er Winter Hill - Likewise Bet", on September 26th and October 3rd 1896. This sketch related to the Winter Hill

trespasses which were then being organised by the SDF and their local allies, to claim a right of way over land belonging to Colonel Richard Ainsworth. The sketch features Bill, Patsy and the author, Teddy Ashton, making their own 'trespass' over the Hill with telling comments:

"There's nobody abeaut," said Bill, "we han it aw to eaurselfs. It's bonny up here, isn't it? It's a dal shame that anybody should try to keep folk off this pleasant stretch o'moor. Is a mon to have noather freish air nor nice walks because he's poor? What reet's ony mon to aw this, I'd like to know? Owd Ainsworth will have a job to get through t'needle's eye o't'Scripter wi' aw this on his back, weren't he? No one mon owt to have mooar lond than he con look after wi hos own honds.(47)

The sketch ends with a rare display of unanimity between Bill and his wife, as Bet chases the odious Reverend Standen, Ainsworth's chaplain, off the moor with her rolling pin. The next piece of political satire was "Bill Spriggs As A Bobby" - perhaps one of his most timeless pieces of comedy, which was repeated several times over the next ninety years. The target of Clarke's wit is the role of the police and municipal corruption. Bill decides 'to have a dust at bobbyin', and is duly interviewed by the local Watch Committee:

"What's your name?"
"Bill Spriggs."
"Oh - the celebrated Bill Spriggs, eh?"
"Ay, but I cornt help it."
"And you want to be of service to the community?"
"Neow, I want t'serve in t'Police Force."

Bill eventually gets on the beat and has little success in catching villains. He is told to improve, or face the sack, and that the easiest thing is to arrest a few drunks. Bill succeeds in arresting a drunk lying on the Town Hall Steps, who turns out to be Alderman Wigglewag, Chairman of the Watch Committee. Bill has to answer for his blunder the next day:

Th'Chief Constable sent for Bill into his reaum.
"We've decided to dispense with your services." he said.
"What for?" asked Bill.
"Why, you thundering idiot! - what did you do last night?"
"Locked a drunken chap" said Bill.

"It was Alderman Wigglewag, you lunatic."
 "Whoever he were, he were drunk."
 "You ought no to have locked hum up!"
 "What should I ha' done then?"
 "You donkey! You should have called a cab and seen him safely home."
 "An' if I see a poor labourer drunk should I put him in a cab an
 send him whum too?"
 "Certainly not! You are a fool!"
 "It seems true then, that t'law shakes honds wi't'rich but pounces t'poor."(48)

In the original sketch, Bill's adventures as a policeman continued for six weeks, before reverting to more respectable forms of idleness. Later that year Bill Spriggs comments on 'the Engineer's Lock-out' and 'the Cotton Crisis' as well as getting into his usual matrimonial difficulties. As the Boer War intensified Clarke gently satirised the rising jingoism amongst sections of the working class, and editorialised for a peaceful compromise with the Boer settlers. In "Bill Spriggs Goes To Th'Labour Church", Clarke helps to remove some popular misconceptions about socialism, and publicise Bolton Labour Church, of which he was Vice-Chairman. In the following year, he ran a series on "Gradely History of England", based on a talk by 'Teddy Ashton' to the Tum Fowt Debatin Menociation. It's possibly the most unusual piece of working class history ever written, beginning with the Peasant's Revolt of 1381 and continuing through to the Levellers and Diggers. The discussion reaches Wat Tyler and John Ball:

Th'common folk (I went on), th'workin'men an' so forth, were aw i'favour o'Wat Tyler's way an took sides wi him agen th'authorities. Abeaut a hundred theausand folk jeined Wat Tyler an other leaders, an they marched to London, wantin' to see th'King, to ax him what he meant, an what he were beaund to do for t'poor folk that were sufferin under such bad hard times. "Trade wer slackt then, were it?" said Bill Spriggs, "Were th'factories stopped, an th'coal pits?"

The narrator continues the story of how Wat Tyler and his supporters met the King and were promised everything they wanted, and most of the crowd went away, pacified with his reassurances, and cheering the King for his gracious promises:

"An did th'King keep his promises?" axed Joe Lung.
 "Did he hek as like," said Ben Roke. He geet a lot o'souldiers together, copt t'leaders o't'poor folk, an hanged 'em. that's way wi cowardly tyrants. They'll promise folk owt to get them i'their power an then they'll turn reaund an kill'em."
 "But King Dick payed for his lyin." said I. "He geet kilt hisselt later on; an awfully kilt too. His own nobles rose agen him, an he lost his throne an his

life."

"An serve him reet for brekkin his word to th'poor people," said Bill Spriggs.
"Th'folk nobbut wanted their reets."(49)

The series ended in January 1902, but their popularity is suggested by Clarke's decision to republish them as a series of pamphlets. During the next six years of the Northern Weekly's existence, the Tum Fowt Sketches were a constant ingredient of the paper's success, with Clarke combining a humorous comment on current popular fads and events and a political comment on issues of the day. "At Th'Gab Show"(50) is an account of a town council meeting, where his political ally Solomon Partington attempted to carry a motion in favour of women being allowed to stand as town councillors. The anti-women arguments of the Tory councillors are satirised, as Bill Spriggs observes the debate from the public gallery. Some of his most sustained political direct writing was produced during the long strike at Sunnyside Mill, Bolton, over the introduction of American-made patent looms. New technology led to greater productivity and weavers were expected to work on six looms at once. Clarke wrote the story "Th'Patent Automatic Cemetery Looms" on 20th May 1905, reproduced as Appendix 23, to draw attention to the strike. The dispute was still in progress the following January, when a series of letters purporting to come from a "Billy Pickinpeg" appeared in the Northern Weekly (one is reproduced as Appendix 24). The argument for the strikers was strongly put across, and the series continued over several issues. On March 10th 1906 Bill Spriggs himself sent a letter in to the paper, lending his support and commenting on a sign in the window of a local shop which said: "No Knobsticks served here. By order, Bill Spriggs M.P." 'Spriggs' also comments on attacks against the 'knobsticks' and large police presence - scabbing on the rates, in his opinion. His solution is "to get eaur Labour M.P.s to do summat to prevent strikes o'this sort - to see that every mestur pays a fair day's wage for a fair day's wark."(51)

During 1907 Clarke increasingly uses Bill Spriggs as a (humorous) political weapon. "Bill Spriggs In Th'Heause O'Commons"(52) is a thinly veiled attack on the absurdities and shallowness of the parlimamentary system of the day. In "A Split at

Tum Fowt", (53) arguments for and against socialism are brought out against a background of splits in the socialist movement nationally - over parliamentary or anti-parliamentary tactics, syndicalism, and Blatchford's militarism. Even more rarified strands of socialist thought, such as the Rev. R.J. Campbell's New Theology movement get an airing, in "New Theology at Tum Fowt.":

Ben Roke introduced th'New Theology. He said, "I see that th'Rev. R.J. Campbell is stirrin' up brotherly love i' religious circles. He's gooin' in for a bit o' rationalism. He declares that th'virgin birth, an miracles, an a twothree other things is aw my eye an Peggy Martin. Well, it's abeaut time th'parsons begun talkin sense." (54)

The Northern Weekly was crippled by a bitter argument among supporters of the paper, with Clarke being accused of fraud. The re-launched Fellowship struggled hard to regain the popularity of its predecessor, but never succeeded. The last Tum Fowt Sketch was in November 1907, "Heaw Bet Spriggs Went On" - about her candidature for the local council elections. It is perhaps appropriate that it was Bet, rather than her husband, who came to figure the most prominently in the last months of the paper. One gets the impression that Clarke began to tire of the Schweikian character of Bill Spriggs, with his mix of naive innocence, apparent stupidity, and an almost peasant-like wit. He seems to increasingly prefer the more aggressive and assertive female character, Bet Spriggs. In "Bet Spriggs Election Address" she says:

Fellow women, an th'brutes yo're teed to -

At last we'ne geet chance to keep th'men in order an put th'world tidy.
Th'law neaw allows women for t'stand for teawn ceauncils, an I'm puttin up,
an yo mun put me in.
Men's had th'game in their honds lung enoof, an look what a mess they'n made
of it. They haven't even had th'gumption to secure decent wages for theirsels
to keep their wives an bring th'childer up gradely. Men's been in power for I
durnt know heaw many generations, an yet today there's theausands on em eaut
o'wark... (55)

With the final demise of Fellowship on March 1st 1908, Clarke's flexibility in being able to use the Tum Fowt Sketches to comment on current political issues came to a close. His work on the Liverpool Weekly Post, which followed directly, was more

editorially circumscribed, though some new sketches of working class life with a critical edge appeared, such as "Bill Spriggs An' Th'Tubs", (56) about mining conditions. The sketch proved prophetic - the Maypole Disaster in Wigan took place the following week. Even as late as 1925 when he was producing little new material, he produced "Red Mopski at Tum Fowt - Is he a Lancashire Ginger or a Double-Dyed Bolsheviki?", (57) which satirised the current hysteria over Soviet Russia. By the 1920s he had patched up relations with the Cotton Factory Times and began writing regular sketches for the paper.

Clarke still had his own publishing ventures after the demise of his paper. Teddy Ashton's Lancashire Annual had been published each Christmas since 1892, and continued with only one break (in 1914, caused by the war emergency) until December 1935, on the eve of his death. A posthumous edition in 1936 appeared, which he had helped to prepare.

Every issue of the Annual contained a 'Tum Fowt' sketch, although they tend to be less politically radical, perhaps aiming at a more general readership. Invariably, they were reprints from sketches published in the Northern Weekly, or its predecessors. Usually, the sketches have a seasonal ring, such as "Christmas at Tum Fowt", in the 1908 edition and "Bill Spriggs Lets Th'New Year In", in 1925. Other sketches reprinted from his Northern Weekly include "Bill Spriggs As a Bobby" (1919), "Bill Spriggs As A Newsagent" (1925), "Bill Spriggs as a Tackler" (1922), and "Bill Spriggs At Th'Baths" (1923).

Occasionally, in the "Editor's Gossip" of the 'Annual', Clarke alludes to the popularity of Bill and Bet Spriggs in local carnivals. This is from 1919:

Correspondents sent me programmes and newspaper reports about Bill and Bet Spriggs figuring in the comic portion of the processions at peace celebrations - at Chorley, Cowling and many other Lancashire towns and villages. (58)

In his introduction to "Bill Spriggs As A Minder", re-published in Teddy Ashton's Lancashire Readings, he observed that :

Bill an Bet are so popular that they'n' figured in May Queen Festivals an' Rose Creawnins at Leyland, Horwich, Chorley, etc. also in waxwork shows, likewise on ice-cream stall fronts, an bin recited abeaut at dozens o'chep tay parties aw o'er t'wide world an mooar too.(59)

The reprinted pamphlets are generally, like the Annual sketches, less political than some of his writing. There are a couple of possible reasons for this. Firstly, most of Clarke's political sketches relate to current events which lose their interest and topicality with the passage of time, and secondly, Clarke was wary of pushing the sketches in too strongly a political direction for commercial reasons. "Bill Spriggs At Th'Labour Church" may be all very well as part of a large number of other features in the Northern Weekly - but may not be as popular on its own.

Some of his most well-known sketches were broadcast on the radio, shortly before his death, by Jim Fleetwood, the Bolton dialect reciter. In his final "Editor's Gossip" he comments on the broadcasts, which included the 'Minder', 'Tackler', and "Who's T'Gaffer?", remarking on scientific progress and the invention of the wireless - unimaginable when the Tum Fowt Sketches were first written in the 1890s. In an article on them in the Cotton Factory Times Clarke wonders whether the radio will be the saviour of dialect:

I am glad we've got some real old dialect on the wireless at last, because it may do something to arrest its slipping from favour. Lancashire dialect, like other local dialect, is slowly dying though it will be a long time before it is dead. It is inevitable I suppose. There is no room for dialect writers today, and I suppose I am the last of the old ones.(60)

Clarke's Tum Fowt Sketches are Lancashire dialect writings' biggest popular success; although Waugh, Laycock and Brierley were very widely read by working class people, cheap modern printing made Clarke's sketches very accessible. He suggests that a million copies of the sketches had been sold by 1925, writing in his Annual for that year. The characters became part of popular culture - witness Clarke's

comments about the effigies of Bill and Bet Spriggs in carnivals. A further indication of their popularity is the continuing memory of his writing, as 'Teddy Ashton', amongst older people in the Lancashire area.

Why were they so popular? Lancashire people are commonly credited with a capacity to laugh at themselves and not take life too seriously; certainly within the Spriggs characters people may have found recognisable caricatures of neighbours and local characters. Bill and Bet Spriggs are always part of the Bolton community for all their absurdities. Perhaps an element of nostalgia creeps into the setting - Tum Fowt becomes suspiciously like a quasi-rural settlement of old cotton workers. In Staton's day, who first used the location, it was. The sense of community based around the 'Dug and Kennel' pub has echoes of the old hand-loom weaving days; that sort of small, closely-knit society, had not totally disappeared in Clarke's day though it had become less typical. Many of his sketches, particularly the "Minder" and "Tackler" ones, were clearly written to appeal to a specific occupational readership, as well as a class and geographical one. The majority of the working class in a town like Bolton were in some ways linked to the cotton trade; the technicalities of the above sketches would be readily comprehensible to most of his readers. The industrial sketches give a sense of pride and value to work which is often undervalued. Both the skill and the dangers inherent in textile work come out in the sketches.

There is a clear political thread running throughout the sketches, including the less overtly political ones, which are perhaps the more successful on a literary level. The sketches feature mostly working class characters; any other character who comes in from 'outside' is usually only a literary device with little substance as a character. One thinks of the mill manager in the mill sketches, the Chief Constable in the 'Bobby'. Unlike many earlier dialect sketches there is no middle class figure to act as a foil to the down-to-earth wisdom of the Lancashire worker (eg in Trafford Clegg's Reaund Bi' Th'Derby), which would help the writing appeal to a middle class, as well as working

class readership. Clarke was pre-eminently the literary expression of the industrial working class of south-east Lancashire. Within the Tum Fowt Sketches and the serial novels, we see a working class which is geographically circumscribed (within a radius of fifteen miles around Bolton) culturally defined by its use of dialect and 'way of life' generally, and industrially specific - based on cotton.

This culture, taken as a whole, was highly conservative and thrived on stability. As Allen Clarke was well aware, while the textile workers were highly class conscious it was an inward-looking consciousness. Trade unionism, rather than socialism, was the automatic expression of their situation - defensive, rather than progressive or revolutionary. The Labour Party, as the parliamentary expression of trades union conservatism, fitted in well with the working class culture of Lancashire at the turn of the century. Clarke attempted to use this culture against itself, through dialect and recognisable characters to 'make socialists' as well as making people laugh. He certainly made people laugh, but whether he was successful in his wider political ambition is more difficult to establish. The messages in the sketches were open to different readings - at times Spriggs is nothing more than an idiot; on other occasions he is used to make political points. Could the reader conclude that even his 'serious' points are open to ridicule? The obvious literary parallel is Hasek's The Good Soldier Schweik, in which the character's dumbness is a clear disguise for political and social acuteness. In Bill Spriggs this is less obvious at times, and the prevailing impression that could be read into the character is that he is just a buffoon. Similarly, with Bet Spriggs, Clarke is expressing his support for greater freedom and independence for women, using the stereotype of the 'battleaxe' type of female, complete with rolling pin. Yet, in many of the sketches she remains no more than a 'battleaxe', and the issue of women's rights and suffrage becomes in danger of being laughed out of court. Similarly, the Patsy Filligan sketches use the thick-Irishman stereotype and attempt to turn them upside down: the thick Paddy has the last word over the English gent. In sketches like "Down A Coal Pit" and "Patsy and the Prince in India" it works;

elsewhere the old stereotype is simply reinforced.

Allen Clarke's Poetry

Clarke wrote considerably less poetry than prose, and many of his poetic attempts lack the sharpness and wit of his prose writings. Dotted throughout the Trotter and Northern Weekly one comes across poems in dialect, under the name of 'Teddy Ashton'. His "Voice of the Half-Timers" is one of his most successful pieces, drawing attention to the plight of the half-timers and bitterly attacking the system which allows it. "In Praise o'Lancashire" was evidently popular, and was re-printed, with minor alterations, several times. It is unabashed chauvinism:

A song in praise o'Lancashire, O'Lancashire lad an'lass,
A posy rhyme o'roses red, for Lancashire man an' dad,
A song i'praise o'Lancashire, that spite o'speilin smook
Is th'jolliest country yet i'th'world, wherever yo' may look.(61)

His poem "Hard Times" was never re-printed after it appeared in the Northern Weekly during the cotton depression in 1903, yet is less sentimentalised than most of his poetry:

Oh, sad hard times an bitter,
Cowd hearth an cubbort bear-
There's meit enoof i'th'kingdom,
Why cornt we have eaur a share?
Oh, tell us, yo that ule us,
Why connot we be fed?
Eaur childer are cryin for butties,
An we hannot any bread!(62)

"The Gradely Prayer" is without doubt his most popular poem, and one of Lancashire dialect's best known poems as a whole which expresses in very 'homely' terms some fairly complex themes - work and leisure, learning, charity, pleasure, comradeship and democracy. An allusion to his own tragic domestic experiences and ensuing 'cosmic' beliefs is hinted at in the lines: An' give us eaur share/O' sorrows's lesson/That we

may prove/Heaw grief's a blessin'.(63) The poem is still widely read at 'Lancashire nights' even today, and often quoted in dialect collections, though the author is not always acknowledged, or incorrectly ascribed.

Allen Clarke's Circle of Dialect Writers

As important as the work of Clarke himself, is the large circle of friends and contributors which grew up around his papers. The central ones are: Fred Plant (Harry o'th'Hills), R. H. Brodie (Billy Button), James Haslam (the Second Gravedigger), Joseph Whittaker (The Salford Innocent), Alfred Pearce (Lord Knowsho), Sam Fitton (various pseudonyms), Elizabeth Eckersall (Busy Bee), J. R. Abbott (Ab'ut' Jack) and Sam Hill. There was also a wider circle of contributors who wrote in dialect, whom we shall look at later, as well as working class writers such as John Tamlyn and Arthur Laycock who wrote mostly in standard English.

Robert Henry Brodie - 'Billy Button'

Brodie wrote many dialect sketches and poems for local newspapers, as well as contributing material in the Northern Weekly. His "Lay o'Lancashire" has already been quoted as an indication of working class regional pride, expressed in such lines as:

There's mony a factory lassie
Wi clogs upon her feet,
If hoo'd nobbut brass behind her,
Could prima donnas beat

There's mony a lad i'th'factory,
Wi breeches made o'cord,
Could lick aw th'gents at College
If he could but afford.(64)

The sense of frustrated potential amongst working class people was a popular

theme in much of Allen Clarke's work also, and writers who had 'made it' against the odds of privilege and opportunity were looked on as almost heroic figures. Brodie (as 'Billy Button') wrote a short account of J.T. Staton in Teddy Ashton's Lancashire Annual 1920,(65 - and Appendix 8) describes him as "a champion dialect writer" and a supporter of working class causes in Bolton. In this article, Brodie also refers to the work of Edwin Waugh, Sam Laycock and others to defend Lancashire dialect against accusations of 'vulgarity'.

Much of his dialect poetry is unexceptional, reflecting the established themes of subject matter of the previous generation. "Eaur Childer" was published both in the Northern Weekly and his Random Rhymes, (66) but hardly goes beyond the banal:

I were comin whoam fro my wark t'other neet
An thinkin a twothree things o'er;
A thowt coom across me - what should we do,
If aw th'childer were no more?

His "Better Times" is more rooted in Lancashire workers' experience, about the sense of relief at the mill going back to full production:

Come Sally, lass, come dry thi een
An' let thoose tears no mooar be seen;
For neaw dost yer, lass? this is prime,
Next week we're startin' on full time

The poem tells how hard things have been, and now the family can get new clothes and things for the children. It ends:

Tho' it's bin a lung an dreary spell,
As plenty beside us con aw on 'em tell;
Thank God! we'n gotten th'wust on't'o'er,
An' th'clemmin an' starvin'll be no more.(67)

The poem would not be out of place in the work of Waugh, Brierley and any other 'safe' dialect poet of the 1860s. This makes his prose sketch, "Th'Invasion Bogey" all the more fascinating. Published in the Northern Weekly in 1906, the sketch is a highly

political piece of socialist anti-war propaganda, based upon a discussion between the author ('Billy Button') and 'Tommy Harrop', about Lord Roberts' plans for national defence and re-armament. Tommy Harrop exclaims, after the author tells him of 'Lord Bobs' plans to defend 'eaur country':

"Eaur country?" said Tommy, "Why, heaw much on it belongs to thee, or me? He knows that if him an aw th'big men con nobbut get folk takkin interest i'national defence they'll forget aw abeaut th'land laws, th'unemployed, an aw them measures o'reform.

The discussion takes in the issue of working class jingoism and deference, Chartism, the possibility of violent revolution and whether the army would open fire on the workers:

"Suppose they drilled an manipulated their weapons like th'owd Chartists did afore they went to Peterloo. Why mon, if they made up their minds they could soon have a revolution an' be th'masters o'th'situation."
"There's not much fear o'that," I said. "Look at th'trouble i'Russia. Did th'army theer stond up for workin folk? Not they, when they were ordered to fire, they shot their own peaceable an honourable countrymen."(68)

The author suggests that the answer is socialism based on 'rational reform' demonstrated by Blatchford in Merrie England. The sketch is interesting for its use of a common form of Lancashire dialect sketch - a conversation between two down-to-earth Lancashire workers - to put across radical socialist ideas in a quite open and direct way. For all his historical inaccuracies, the sketch reflects the rising awareness of working class struggles in the past, providing lessons for the modern labour movement.

The following year Brodie wrote a standard English piece in the re-named Fellowship about access to the land and the growing trend to prevent working class people's chance of enjoying their countryside. Moving from the particular issue of a footpath closure on Turton Moor, he goes to the general principle that this is purely symbolic of a wider denial of basic rights, the answer to which can only come from working class political representation, in the form of Socialism 'based on the ethical

teachings of the greatest of teachers, "The Carpenter of Nazareth". As a poet of the workers, his concern is to widen the readership of his work but this can only be resolved on a political level:

...the power to give utterance to one's thoughts in rhythmical measure is grand; but the efforts of the Reformers and Agitators are needed if ever the masses of the people are to become thoroughly acquainted with Art and Poetry.

Brodie is convinced that the recent successes of the Labour Party in the general election are an indication that change is on the way, and ends with a quote from Carpenter's "England Arise":

The long, long night is over,
Faint in the east, behold the dawn appear,
Out of your evil dream of toil and sorrow-
Arise O England for the day is here.(69)

Brodie clearly saw himself in the tradition of Lancashire dialect writing, yet on occasions was able to break out of the more conservative aspects of it and use dialect as a political weapon. In a debate on "Are Critics Necessary?" in the Northern Weekly, Brodie expresses his debt to "Tim Bobbin, Ned Waugh, Ben Brierley an other Lancashire Layrocks" though says that Allen Clarke "were th'mon that gan me mooast encouragement", through publishing his work in the Northern Weekly and the Lancashire Annual.

Brodie is not among Lancashire's finest literary dialect writers, but he represents an important part of the dialect writing milieu which developed around Clarke's journalism, and later took organisational shape in the Lancashire Author's Association, of which he became its first treasurer.

Fred Plant - 'Harry o'th'Hills'

Fred Plant was a working class writer from Stockport, and became one of the

town's first Labour councillors. For a while he was employed as a sub-editor on the Northern Weekly and wrote a vast amount of short stories in both standard English and dialect, as well as some novels. His standard English stories tend to be much more political than his short stories, which are largely humorous and lightweight - no political satire emerges from the humour, in the way the Tum Fowt Sketches often did. As 'Harry o'th'Hills' he wrote a series of dialect sketches in the Northern Weekly between 1897 and 1901. "Bob Bowker's Bicycle" is a comment on the bicycle craze which was then sweeping the country and also reflects the comradeship of the dialect literary milieu. He describes Bob Bowker purchasing a heavyweight 'roadster' and deciding to ride over to Bolton, from his Stockport home, via Barton Bridge and Walkden:

When he were just entering Bowtun he ran into another biker.
"Is this Bowtun? asked Bob, when t'other mon had done sayin his prayers.
"It isn't Bowtun tha wants," said th'mon, who wore a black moustache an other things.
"It's a prairie, wheer than con prance abeaut an hurt nobody."
"Yigh, it's Bowtun aw want too. Do you know a writer chap cawed Teddy Ashton?"
T'other mon looked feart.
"What dost want him for? Is it a summons?"
"That's my business" said Bob.
"Well, it's thy business to find him" said th'mon.
"Here," said Bob. "Aw'll tell thee what it is. I've a letter o'Introduction fro' Harry o'th'Hills to Teddy.
"Come on then" said th'mon, who were Teddy hissel, "I've often yerd Harry say they had some champion riders i' Stockport. But if theau's any respect for me that'll pay somebody to wheel that infernal machine some way behind us. Hast not made a mistake an browt a wringing machine ostid of a bike?"
"Aw 'combinations' are like this," said Bob. "It's a new build." (70)

Like other dialect writers Plant used a regular character - Bob Bowker, but more often 'Billy Banks'. Billy's adventures usually relate to current popular issues of the day, such as "Billy Banks An' Th'Pictor Puzzles" and "Billy Banks Diets Hissel". In the former sketch, Billy Banks comments on the latest craze of picture-puzzle newspapers, offering lavish prizes for the winners of their competitions. In "Billy Banks Diets Hissel" the subject of vegetarianism is touched on:

"This is what some folk caw livin th'higher life," he said, "They sen if yo kill nowt for t'sake o'makkin food yo are doin t'reet thing 'at's bin ordained."

"Who says that?" enquired Matty.

"Oh, tons o'folk, amung 'em an owd cobbler named Tolstoy, A Russian. He's a rare good mon too is Tolstoy, for he lives up to what he teaches as fur as they'll let him."

"I dunnot know much abeaut him bein a good mon, but if he lives upo' vegetarian slops an hemp seed, I should think Hungary 'd be a mooar likely place for him to live," said Matty.

"An another thing. If we annot to kill owt to eit, what abeawt aw them microbes we swallow wi every mouthful?"

In the end, Bill's resolve weakens, though not totally:

He kept up wi his dietin an it did hima warld o'good. He's gotten greit faith i'vegetarianism he says, but to show he's noan any ways bigoted he has a beef-steak puddin to his dinner abeawt twice a week.(71)

This sketch is about the nearest Plant comes to a political dialect sketch, making general observations about Tolstoyanism and the need for a healthy diet. This should be compared with his "Lotions An Potions: or, Yab Cronshaw's Doctorin" - an amusing tale of herbal medicine.(72) Yab and Lisha Robin go to see an old friend, Si Butterby, who keeps a herbal medicine shop on Hyde Road, Gorton. Yab and Lisha end up looking after the shop whilst Si goes out, and disaster ensues. There are numerous references to herbal remedies, an important aspect of working class self- help in the nineteenth century, which originated in the handloom-weavers' culture. Herbal medicine, healthy dieting and Tolstoyanism were all related aspects of the broader working class socialist sub-culture culture expressed in the pages of the Northern Weekly.

Fred Plant's standard English sketches, particularly his "Chronicles of Coptown", often have a more industrial setting, and deal with strikes, poverty and victimisation of trades unionists. He frequently uses dialect in the dialogue between characters in the standard English sketches. This is an exchange between the trades unionists of Valley Mill, confronting their employer Warcliff for higher pay:

"You threatened a strike eh?" sneered Warcliff.

"We threatend nowt," replied Crofts, "We're for t'arrange things if we con.

There's nowt gotten wi strikes only bad blood, an a lot of hunger for innocent women an childer".

"Spoken like a sensible fellow, Crofts," said the manager, nodding his head approvingly.

"Neow, we've noan come here to talk abeawt strikes," broke in Elkins, "If owt o'that sort happens it'll come fro t'proper quarter - an at th'last pinch." "You mean it will be your officials that will declare war; the men who live on your hard earnings," sneered Warcliff.

"I'm glad you said 'hard earnings'" broke in Drummond for the first time. Warcliff saw his mistake, and bit his lip. "I'd sooner be what I am than one o'th'officials o't'union. They 'n everybody place 'cept thersels, an I've never known one on 'em make his fortin wi doin it."

"I think we're wandering from the subject," snarled Warcliff. (73)

Here, Plant very successfully uses the dialect speech of the workers to emphasise the class differences between themselves and Warcliff. Warcliff's smooth, upper class speech is the oral expression of his class position and masks the trickery and deviousness of his nature. The dialect speech emphasises the straightforward honesty and basic decency of the workers.

Joseph Whittaker - 'The Salford Innocent'

Whittaker wrote for the Northern Weekly over a number of years, contributing a mixture of dialect and standard English prose and poetry. Eventually he emigrated to New Zealand, from where he sent the occasional sketch. One of his earliest contributions was "Th'Mon's Week" - the life of a working class man:

Th'bed pulls hard o'Monday morn an fain, i'bed yo'd lie,
But if that should be yore marlock, th'wife keeps a wakken eye.
"Ger up Ned, yo're late!" hoo says, "Come on, dost hear me speak?"
So eawt yo tumble, half-asleep an feelin very weak.
Yo get into yore workday cloas, an leave yore Sunday best,
Th'wife 'll see hem put away an brushed without request.
They're thine no more till Saturday; ay chaps, it's widely known
As warkin chaps own little they con call their very own.(74)

His dialect sketch, "Th'Rival Poets" is perhaps his most interesting dialect piece, for its reference back to the time of Waugh, Brierley and Laycock, and a suggestion of the culture of hand-loom weaving days. It has many similarities to James

Swinglehurst's Summer Evenings With Old Weavers (75) for its evocation of a group of old working class radicals, reminiscing about the revolutionary exploits of their youth and telling of their pride in their cultural roots. The central character is Ben Weakly - 'a noted character some thirty yer sin'. Whittaker continues:

His partikler cronies were worn-out factory toilers an th'like, who hadn't o'er much to spend, an fun his yarb-beer an company as beneficial an inspiring as owt to be met wi i'th'drink traffic anywheer. Other folk fun Owd Weakly's a pleasant place o'callan jined i'any gam as were gooin on, or had their fortin's tow'd. Th'skoomestur had had no hond i'eddicatin Owd Weakly or his cronies, an their rough, homespun speech an reasonin gained in force an truth what it lost i'scholarly finish. They were Radicals o'th'owd type, to a mon, an woe betide the stranger who ventured to raise his voice i'support o'Toryism...(76)

On the occasion described in the sketch, 'th'Salford poet' (probably Whittaker) and one of Weakly's 'cronies', Matt Scribble, have a poetry contest. Unknown to them, one of the visitors is Edwin Waugh. After the competition ends inconclusively, Waugh asks if he could read one of his compositions, but Weakly says "We'n suffered enough" - much to Waugh's consternation. The company departs, and only at the end does Sammy Owen, one of the company, disclose that the famous author of "Come Whoam To Thi Childer An Me" had been amongst them.

Whittaker contributed much more standard English prose sketches than dialect works, which seems a pity. His command of the use of dialect in both poetry and prose is of a high standard. His dialect work clearly brings out the sense of a literary tradition from the days of Waugh, Brierley and Laycock and present day dialect writers' indebtedness to them. However, Whittaker was prepared to take up themes of modern day working class life, exemplified in "Th'Mon's Week".

James Haslam - The 'Second Gravedigger' and 'Buffer Beer'

Haslam shared Clarke's early background as a Bolton 'piecer' in a spinning mill. His earliest work was for the Bolton Trotter. He shared also in Clarke's socialist

politics and both had been involved in the attempt to form a Lancashire Piecer's Union.(77) He worked full-time on Teddy Ashton's Journal and various other local papers including the Blackpool Gazette, before finding a more permanent position on the Liverpool Courier. He had been brought up in an old handloom-weaving family, amongst the last survivors of the craft in Bolton, and the experience formed the basis of his novel, The Handloom Weaver's Daughter, which was first published as "The Mill on the Moor" in Teddy Ashton's Journal. His industrial experience led to stories of factory life, including "A Piecer's Ambition". The story mirrors Haslam's own ambition to leave piecing and 'get on' in the world, though the story is a tragedy, rather than a tale of optimism. In it, Billy Stott's health deteriorates due to the unhealthy conditions inside the mill; Sarah, his sister, a weaver, suffers from the same cause, and the father - a minder - loses his sight and so is unable to work. One night, Billy comes home from the Technical School feeling sick and exhausted:

"Whatever's to do, Billy? Theau'rt not ill, arta? God help us if theau falls ill!"
"I'm aw reet mother. I'm just a bit teighert, that's aw. What's doctor say abeawt eaur Sarah?"

"He's aw but gan her up," said Mrs. Stott, weeping.

"Durnt cry mother. We mun pray to God. He'll happen save eaur Sarah's life an make her better. Happen he's only tryin us. Besides, as't be rich someday. Durnt cry, see yo, I'm aw reet (trying to strengthen himself). "I've browt a fruit pie for eawr Sarah - should I tek it to her?"

Sarah dies, and Billy is involved in a horrific accident. Whilst changing a broken strap which powers the mule, he gets caught and dragged round with the pulley:

"My God! He's caught in the drum!" screeched the minder.

Several other workmen were soon on the spot, two or three of them running to have the engine stopped. In a few more seconds though, Billy's body was thrown over the "Wheel yead" on to the spinning room floor. He was picked up unconscious, one of his arms having been dislocated from the shoulder. "This is a mess!" exclaimed his minder, as he sickened with the sight. Then, to the little piecer, "Harry, wipe this blood off t'wheels while we take Billy to th'watch heause." (78)

Billy survives, with the loss of his left arm. He finds a job as a letter carrier and general factotum round the mill and marries his sweetheart, Polly Yates.

Though a sad tale, Haslam avoids heavy melodrama, and succeeds in reflecting the

reality of life in the cotton industry when he was writing. The use of dialect gives an added sense of realism to the story, which is both pathetic and tragic. "The Plebeian Student" also features an ambitious working class boy as the central character. He is the son of a handloom weaver, but has to go into the mill instead of carrying on his father's occupation, which was virtually extinct. He spends his time 'pouring over the contents of a book, or endeavouring, in his uncouth way, to fathom some fascinating secret of Nature.' Enoch was raised as a Methodist, but is increasingly coming to doubt his faith. His mother calls him for Sunday School and the following ensues:

"Enoch, neaw Enoch, are ta gettin ready? It's near two bi th'clock an th'Sunday Skoo bell's ringin. Are ta comin?"

"Aw reet mother, aw'm comin'. But Enoch's mind was deeply absorbed in Bamford's vivid account of Peterloo, and he afterwards sat thinking of the social and political maltreatment which seemed to have been the lot of the labouring classes - the stock to which he belonged - for ages past. His thoughts held him spellbound until the school was over.(79)

The story is about the awakening of political radicalism amongst working class youth, and the conflict between mother and son. Enoch eventually leaves home after a major row, and joins the army. He intends to leave and become a teacher in a working class school - but dies in a battle at the Khyber Pass. His mother, on her death bed, hears the news and orders her younger son to stop burning Enoch's books, as she had previously told him to do so.

A shorter sketch, entirely written in dialect, is his "Owd Nick, Th'Weighver", based on a character that Haslam may have known in the last days of handloom weaving in Bolton:

He were a free an easy chap. Thoose folk us reckons to be eddicated would ha cawd him a Bohemian like sort o'chap. But nobody could say as Nick e'er attempted to rob a poor mon. If he did slope anybody, it were some sma tradesmen or other as could afford to be a little bit diddled i'thooose days, for they used to compensate their losses by diddlin other folk as could weel afford to pay for their stuff.... But Nick's deead neaw, an his generation o'individuals has gone spark eaut.(80)

Many years later, Haslam was involved in a long running debate with members of

the Lancashire Authors' Association over the desirability of 'preserving' Lancashire dialect, which is described in the following chapter. He argued that the dialect was "uncouth, a confounded social disadvantage, a thing that should be kicked out of existence." Perhaps the response led him to moderate his statement slightly. Later he contributed an article for the Record which adopted a more conciliatory tone, and observed that:

One district differs from another. I was cradled in the dialect. My mother was a handloom weaver's wife, and to get on with bobbin making she used to tell me dialect stories till I went to sleep.(81)

He goes on to argue that dialect speech is dwindling, and many of the features of old Lancashire - mill girls in clogs and shawls - have given way to well dressed young women who crowd 'into the gorgeous halls of the town'.

Haslam is an interesting example of a working class Lancashire writer who, ultimately, left his origins for the world of professional journalism. He became the President of the National Union of Journalists and was an active member of the Communist Party for a number of years; by 'leaving his origins' I refer to a cultural distancing, rather than a political one. Whereas Clarke was happy to continue writing for a Lancashire working class readership, and churning out his Tum Fowt Sketches, the more ambitious piecer, James Haslam, followed the path to national journalism and left behind the dialect work of his youth. In 1919 he wrote a short reminiscence of his career, and he ends by describing a meeting with an MP - almost certainly J.R. Clynes, the ex-piecer: Clynes greets him in the office of a national paper:

"Oh," he said, "allow me to congratulate you on being made president of the National Union of Journalists." And he smiled. And as we turned into Fleet Street, the world's biggest newspaper street, he remarked, "Haslam, do you ever think of our old piecer days?"

"I do," I answered.

And we lit our pipes and walked towards the dome of St. Paul's in silence - in silence amid the midnight roar of London's newspaper machinery. It is an interesting old world to be sure.(82)

Haslam is justified in his piece of self congratulatory nostalgia, though one can't help thinking that a precondition for his journalistic success was to cast off much of the cultural baggage which had gained him a foothold in journalism, on the Bolton Trotter. A skilful use of dialect would get him popularity in Lancashire, but could be a handicap in the world of national journalism; so the little piecer and Lancashire dialect writer became the clever London journalist, and could muse with parliamentary friends that the system, for all its faults, had been pretty good to them.

Sam Fitton - 'Peter Pike', 'Sally Butter'oth', 'Billy Blobb', etc.

Fitton was another former little piecer who had enormous literary and artistic talents. He was a highly popular dialect writer, and a skilful caricaturist - making his mark by drawing cartoons of workmates on the spinning room walls. After a time at Oldham Art College he began writing regularly for the Cotton Factory Times and was also in great demand as a dialect reciter. He contributed dialect sketches to the Northern Weekly, as well as illustrating many of Clarke's sketches in the Lancashire Annual and Tum Fowt Sketches - including portraits of Bill and Bet Spriggs. He was one of Lancashire's most popular dialect writers and performers: perhaps more popular than Clarke in some ways (see Appendix). The poet Ammon Wrigley describes him thus:

As a public entertainer, he was for twenty five years the delight of Lancashire audiences. Few singers and reciters are authors, and his concerts were out of the ordinary, as he rarely gave anything but his own work, and he composed the tunes to his songs.(83)

Wrigley, pre-eminently the poet of the Saddleworth moors, forms a stark contrast to Fitton. Though the two men were good friends, their subject matter was totally different. Fitton wrote about the way of life of Lancashire factory people, whereas Wrigley had little time for it. Wrigley spells it out:

He often called me a brother bard, but we were miles apart in what appealed to us and formed the subject matter of our verse. I am not stirred by the town, or its people, but to Sam, they were an unfailing source of inspiration. He loved the terraced houses, the life and bustle of the streets, and the clatter of clogs.(84)

Fitton is closer to Clarke in his love of the factory culture of Lancashire (which both helped to fashion), but he does not attempt to make political propaganda from his dialect sketches of working class life. His descriptions of Oldham factory workers are 'straight'. There is no Bill Spriggs or Patsy Filligan making subtle political points, and his work resembles his description of "Eawr Lancashire Dialect":

It has no vain pretensions, but yo'll find it's gradely made;
It's honest in it's dealin's an co'es a spade a spade. (85)

He expresses the down to earth feelings of 'ordinary people', and it is those people whom he writes for. One of his most popular songs, "Eawr Sarah's Getten A Chap", is about the consternation of a working class family having to cope with their daughter courting a clerk:

He comes a courtin' every neet,
He fills eawr cat wi'dread;
He's sky-blue gaiters on his feet,
An' hair-oil on his yed;
He likes to swank abeawt an' strut,
An talk abeawt his "biz";
He's summat in an office but
I don't know what it is!(86)

Some of his contributions to the Northern Weekly had a topical slant and reflected the broadly socialist views of the editor. At the height of the Boer War, Fitton's "A Christmas Conflagration" was published, which gently satirises the war and its supporters; the scene is the tap room of the Gib and Donkey, on Christmas Eve:

Sam o'Tummy's were sat reet i'front o't'grate, wi his shoon on t'fener an a newspaper i'front of his een. He were quite absorbed wi t'latest war news, for he were very fond o'readin' abeawt t'war, which, by t'way, is a jolly sight yessier nor takkin part in it; it's better to read a bulletin, than have a bullet in, anyway. I'd sooner be hit bi a Reuter's telegram or a lyddite shell.(87)

Fitton is at his best when he is writing about the unpretentious Lancashire factory worker who professes little interest in 'politics' though is not entirely without a sense of principle. In "Lancashire's All Right" the author falls into conversation with a Lancashire worker, sitting opposite in the third class compartment. He is heading for Nearport-on-the-Cheep, with his family. The author attempts to discuss current politics:

I ventured: "What do you think about this fabric glove controversy, and Tariff Reform, and the cotton trade generally?"

He lit a match and smiled. "Eh; I ne'er bother my yed about such things mon. I allus reckon to put trust i'those chaps up theer ut know mooar nor me. I mind who I vote for at election times. I thinks hard, make my mark, then trust to luck. I'm a warkin chap; noan a bloomin' encyclopaedia."

Fitton is tapping into a very strong part of working class culture - the sense of politics being apart from their experience, being conducted at a distance by 'them'. Fitton is putting himself in the position of the inquisitive, perhaps youthful working class intellectual, such as Clarke: he is faced with a solid, non-political wall of 'live and let live' philosophy:

I resumed: "The human race is a queer assembly, and don't you think?"

"Nawe, I don't think at o - at least when on my holidays. Never mind t'human race owd mon. What's bown to win t'big race next week? Let's talk abeawt gradely gamblin'. We con happen win an odd bob ortwo. I'm bown to let th'human race look after itsel' for a week or two, an' if tha wants to be exercisin thi political exunberance while I'm away, try to drop th'price o'beef an' bacon; an' if tha's ony time left, set abeawt th'House o' Lords. I'm on my holidays."

I gave it up. But, bet on me, Lancashire's all right.(89)

Fitton is clearly sympathetic to the down-to-earth character, and satirises himself, as the questioner fussing about 'tariff reform', the 'fabric glove controversy' and other issues which the 'politically-minded' might think important at the time. Clearly, his enthusiasm wasn't shared by this 'typical' Lancashire worker - and just as well too, Fitton is saying. As long as there are these independent-minded no-nonsense characters, Lancashire will be 'all right'.

Fitton isn't advocating or sympathising with the idea that people should sit back and take whatever comes to them; he has a sense of right and wrong, and there are definite limits to how far working class people will be pushed before they hit back, though it's a defensive response to a situation in which 'they' have overall control. In "Feight Fair" he writes in support of militant action against worsening conditions in the mills, though he advises his readers to temper militancy with a sense of fairness:

An' if we grunt or mak' a fuss,
They nobbut seem to scoff it;
They dunno care a fig for us
If they con make their profit.
They think it wisdom to deride,
An' sweat their humble neighbour;
They'd ha' no profits to divide
If they could get no labour.

But should they bring contention nigh,
Through greed and aggravation,
We'll win wi'th' "union" battle cry,
An' th'swort o' combination.
A fig for strife, an' hungry seets!
Be hanged to stormy weather!
But if we han to force eawr reets,
Feight fair, an' keep together.(90)

This poem perhaps more than any other shows the distance travelled by popular Lancashire dialect writers since the time of Waugh. The idea of referring to the cotton masters as 'them' would be unimaginable to Waugh, or Brierley and Laycock. The notion of combining together in a union, and taking strike action would be unthinkable, however fair the fight. This is the reverse side of Fitton's work: whilst most of his writing centres on the life of the cotton workers, the employers never feature as characters, only as an alien, repugnant force. In "Cotton Fowd" Fitton uses the idea behind Laycock's "Bowton's Yard" to describe the inhabitants of a small textile community - his description of the 'gentleman' who lives on the hill is worth quoting:

I'that big heawse at top o'th'hill,
There lives a millionaire.
He's o his loaves an' muffins baked,
His mind is free o'care.
There's some think he's an angel, an'
He looks it, yo' con bet.
He happen wears a halo but
I haveno fun it yet.

He wears tay-party whiskers an'
They hang deawn on his chest.
They say he's quite a gentlemen,
I reckon he knows best.
He never looks at sich as me,
He's one o'th'upper class.
I dunno like his whiskers, but
I weesh I had his brass.(91)

Clearly, Fitton is not looking for any middle class patronage or support. He is writing for a working class readership - whether on the Cotton Factory Times, Oldham Chronicle, Northern Weekly or his own short-lived Crompton Chanticlear. Although much of his writing is light, humorous and homely this isn't to tailor it to middle class standards of 'respectability' - it appears to be what his readers and listeners amongst the working class wanted. Like 'Teddy Ashton' Fitton was far more of an enigma than much of his work might suggest - he was an accomplished musician, artist as well as writer and was well read on political matters. His obituary in the LAA Record describes him as "thoroughly Bohemian in manner" and caring "little for self-advancement or for worldly gettin-on". Indeed, his work was never published in book form during his life-time, and it was only by the prompting of Ammon Wrigley that Gradely Lancashire appeared in 1929, partly as a means of supporting his widow who had fallen on hard times. (92)

Sam Hill: 'The Stalybridge Bard'

Hill has many similarities to Fitton. As Fitton was very much a part of Oldham working class life, and Sam Hill was a Stalybridge institution. Much of Hill's work appeared initially in the local press, before a selection appeared entitled Foirewood - Splinters An Shavin's Fro' A Carpenter's Bench. Hill was a blacksmith who later became a carpenter and stage manager for a touring theatre. Hill's work presents certain problems which are by no means confined to this writer alone; in particular, how representative was his published work of his output as a whole? Just as we have

seen earlier, where John Critchley Prince wrote some fairly obscure radical poems which were not reprinted in his collected writings, one must speculate whether the writings of Hill, and others including Fitton, did not suffer a similar fate. At a celebration of his work in Stalybridge, in 1957, R. H. Isherwood of the Lancashire Authors' Association made this comment:

He had no rancour or bitterness in his make-up; it was not for him to curse or rail against the hardships and settings and crudities of his time; his concern always was with the dauntless folks who with such courage faced and grappled with them.(93)

This quote in a sense expresses the contradictions of some Lancashire working class writers. Many found it difficult to portray working class people without an element of what seems like condescension. Yet the impression one gets from Hill's work, overall, is of a genial, homely character who wrote of simple everyday themes. Was he a victim of his own self-image? It is worth firstly having a look at some of the poems he was best known for. "Owd Anvil", the tale of an old blacksmith, his father's occupation, was often reprinted. This is an excerpt:

Ther'd use't be a blacksmith 'ut liv't deawn i'th'teawn,
His anvil's o'reawsty, his hearth's tumble't deawn;
But, tho' his wark's finished an'carted away,
There's mony a one tawks o'owd Anvil to-day.
Derry deawn, derry deawn day.

He ne'er aped his betters, content wi' his own;
A happier mortal aw'm sure wur ne'er known;

Th'mates ov his skoo-days wur pals up to th'end
An' he'd fasten hissel if it loosened a friend.(94)

In "Owd Anvil" we see the 'typical' Lancashire worker so beloved of middle class respectability - always ready to do a good turn, content with his lot, and always a smile on his face. In "Rich and Fettered - Poor But free", the themes of Brierley's "Weaver of Wellbrook" re-emerge, of the poor worker, satisfied with the life he leads and the spiritual riches that money cannot buy. Even so, the idyll still seems beyond the reach of many:

Aw'm but a toilin' worker here,
Aw've nowt i'th'shape o'wealth,
Nor do aw yearn for luxury:
Gie me mi strength an'health.
A white-weshed cot, wi' sonded floor;
A spring well, clear and sweet,
An' tothry bonny childer too,
Wi faces clean an'breet,
A rood or two o'garden greawnd,
A cote for t'keep some hens,
A spot for t'grow a bacon plant,
An'tothry chicken pens.(95)

Hill always wrote of working people - the class he was born into, and lived among. His treatment of them verges on the sentimental, and appears to avoid any critical comment on society. However, within his writings there is an underlying sense of pride in his class and his community. At times, he is not afraid of expressing social criticism, such as that found in "Moor To Be Pitied Than Blamed":

Ther's monny a chap sufferin' today,
Un' bearin' o'th'troubles 'ut com',
Bitin' th'lip, an' smartin' for th'sake
O'th'woife an'some childer a whoam.
Th'tyrant 'ut's o'er him grips him keen,
When he does reet it seems to be wrong;
Black looks, short time, ay, an'th'sack,
If he retaliates wi his tongue.(96)

The poem ends with a tongue-in-cheek attack on poets - "they prate abeawt beautiful things", amid a reality of poverty and death:

For poets are poverty's pals,
Tho' grand language pictures they'n framed
(Un' they don't do mich harm, after o') -
Ther moor to be pitied than blamed!(97)

Although Hill never worked in the cotton industry, his work clearly shows an understanding of the cotton workers' lives - the job itself, and the culture of the mill. His best known poem on cotton work is probably "Doffin' Toime" - or "Th'Owd Spinner's Lament". Clearly based on Bealey's poem, "My Piece is O' Bu' Woven Eawt" which he quotes at the beginning of the poem, the poem uses spinning imagery

to describe a workers feeling that his death is near:

Prepare thiself' owd lad, for t'goo
Wheer they spin nowt but superfine;
Aw'm ready, quite, when th'summons comes,
Aw'm ready neaw for th' "Doffin' Toime".(98)

Yet in "'Bridge Wakes Tuesday" the sentimentality of "Doffin' Toime" gives way to a much sharper attack on mill work, which satirises nostalgia for 'the good old days' of life in the mills. Tom, an old spinner, meets a friend and they get talking about their lives. Tom agrees to sing "Aw'm a Poor Owd Spinner" to his friend:

When aw wur six yer owd and yo' known,
To th'factory aw wur sent;
An monny a hundert happy heawrs
I'th'jenny reawm aw've spent;
Aw've bin knocked an' pounced abeawt
Loike a footbo', left an' reet,
Till aw didn't know whether aw're piecin'
Wi mi honds or wi mi feet.

The song tells of the piecer being robbed by the spinner of his earnings, though eventually he gets his 'set of mules' and treats his own piecers little differently).

Aw'd lay me deawn at th'back o'th creel
Whoile mi piecer did mi wark.(99)

All that's left for the spinner now is to go into the workhouse 'wheer o'th' good spinners go".

Hill had a great interest in local history, and his book Bygone Stalybridge, published locally in 1907, is a detailed and knowledgeable account of a town's history with a stress on the local characters and notable people. Chartism was strong in Stalybridge, and despite his reliance on orthodox histories of Chartism Hill writes sympathetically of the local movement, referring to the humorous local ballad, "The Parson and the Pike". A local reactionary parson tries to 'set up' a Chartist blacksmith by ordering a pike. The blacksmith delivers his request, well-wrapped up. The parson

promptly takes his trophy to the militia, but when the parcel is opened, "a stale, stinking pike fish was discovered." (100)

Hill wrote a poem called "Owd Bill" which was published in Fellowship - the successor to the Northern Weekly - on 15th June 1907, describing an old Chartist and commenting on the movement's leaders, in the idiom of traditional dialect sentimentality:

He'll tell abeawt th'Chartists, an' says, if aw like,
Some day when aw co' he'll show me a pike
'Ut wur made by a comrade an' carried wi pride,
By a pair o'true honds that are neaw lain aside.

He loves for't'spin yarns, when ceawrd in his cot
O'Feargus O'Connor an' Oastler, an' th'lot -
An' Stephens 'ut fowt for t'factory folks good,
Whose wark an' whose worth isn't yet understood(101)

This is a revealing poem, commenting on 'physical force' Chartism in a favourable way, and published in a paper which was, by 1907, adopting a fairly uncompromising socialist position. At the same time, Hill was giving his services to Fellowship free of charge, in the form of a touring lantern-slide lecture on Lancashire dialect Writers. Hill also appeared at 'benefit' concerts for the Northern Weekly and Fellowship, giving recitals of his work. The impression which comes over, is that of a dialect writer, strongly conscious of being part of a dialect tradition. His Old Lancashire Songs and Their Singers was an important early history of dialect literature (102). Yet in a sense his work was trapped within it. Many of his poems are heavily influenced by both the form and content of Waugh, Brierley and Laycock, and even "Owd Bill" reflects the form, if not content, of an earlier generation's poetry. His poems undoubtedly show working class life as honest, proud and virtuous, and only occasionally does the poverty and degradation which often accompanied it come through. Hill's own political beliefs are clearly radical, though whether he was organisationally affiliated to the I.L.P. or something like it, is not known. He is an example of how dialect, despite the political views of the author, was drawn into a particular mould of form and subject matter

which was increasingly conservative.

John Tyrer: 'Jack Fro' Th'Lone Eend'

Tyrer became a major figure in the circle of dialect writers around Allen Clarke, though he belongs to a slightly later period than the above mentioned writers. He began writing for Clarke's Lancashire Annual in 1909, one year after the demise of the Northern Weekly, and continued with his dialect contributions each year until 1934. Tyrer is unusual in being an 'outsider' geographically speaking. Instead of being from one of the cotton towns he spent all his life in rural Ormskirk. Like many other writers of Clarke's circle, Tyrer comments on current issues through conversations in dialect, often through the medium of his favourite character, Dick Tubb. Usually, his sketches are rural-based, rather than being about factory workers and the large cotton towns. An early sketch, satirising the war through a conversation between two country women, appeared in Teddy Ashton's War Journal. Entitled "Does Feightin Settle Disputes - A Countryside Confab". Betty and Liza are discussing war profiteering:

"Awm like thee," said Betty, "aw'm nooan mich for feightin', an it makes my blood beil when aw think o'th'way human bein's hev bin kilt an' heaped up i'great rucks to be brunt to save buryin' 'em, even if they are nobbut Jarmons. It's a bonny specticle for th'twentieth cent'ry state o'civilisation, isno it, thinks ta?"(103)

Tyrer was a Methodist, and a pacifist; in the above sketch he succeeds in putting over an anti-war message using dialect as a means of validation for the argument: these are not two cowardly cranks - they are just two down-to-earth Lancashire women talking about the war. The horror of mass death is underlined by the almost matter-of-fact comment about 'greyt rucks' of bodies being burnt, to save the expense of a burial.

In "Owd Men Made Young For th'New World", published in the Lancashire Annual just after the end of the war, he comments on the new 'fads' which were

current at the time: the main character is Reuben Tubb, beginning to feel his age:

One day he leet upo' Jemmy Solem, th'village cobbler, who towed him as he had bin readin' i'th'newspaper abeaut a frenchmon as could mek owd men into young 'uns an' that thee were another mon goin' to mak a new world as would be a deeol better for folk to live in than th'owd un had bin; an he thowt they were capital ideas, at leas as far as readin' went, but heaw they'd wark eawt i'practice were another matter awtogether.

Reuben is full of the tale when he gets home to his wife, Peggy, who is less easy to convince. As in "A Countryside Confab" it is the women, as opposed to the men, who are the ones with any sense -

Newspapers don't allus tell th'truth. Who'a goin' to believe as they con make an owd mon into a young 'un again? As for makkin a new world, aw should like to know how it's to be done. It'll tak aboon six days th'next time if some o'those big chaps fro' Lunnon get at it, for they're nobbut a slow lot at an urgent job. A new wold for sure! If they'e not satisfied wi'this, why don't they get eawt of it? It's noan a new world as we want, nor even th'owd un reconstructin', it's fooak as is in it, mon, as are at faut." "Well, don't aw tell tha as they're goin' to reconstruct th'fooak bi makkin' owd men into young uns, for they'll want aw th'yung men they con get for th'new world." retorted Reuben. "An' what abeawt t'women?" axed Peggy. "Eh, aw don't think he mentioned women. Aw dar say th'fella's bin so henpecked he wouldn't want to be tormented wi 'em aboon th'allotted spoon," suggested Reuben.(104)

Not surprisingly, descriptions of industrial life are non-existent in Tyrer's writing, though many of the evils of country life, shared by workers in the towns, are treated. In "Dicky Tubb's Flittin'" the subject is another character treated half- humorously, but with an underlying serious message. Dicky Tubb is evicted and forced to find a new home:

"What terrible times we're livin' in," said Dicky Tubb t'other neet when aw met him hurryin' along wi' a brid cage in his reet hond an' a black cat under t'other. "It's a lung while sin aw seed thi Jack," he went on, "but aw've bin putten through it sin t'last time we met. Talk abeaut this bein' a country fit for heroes to live in, why mon, aw'm fiar sick o'bein knocked abeaut, an' those as talks like that owt to see to it as th'heroes has shelters o'er their yeds when they're i'th'country. Here awm doin' a flittin, after aw at aw've done to th'property while aw've bin livin' i'yon heause, through another mon buyin' t'shelter o'er my yed; no doubt t'graspin' landlords had a good bid for th'heause an' he's gone an' sowd it, an'th'chap as bowt it gie mi notice to quit, an' that what awm doin neaw, tha sees."

Underneath Dick's breathless outpouring lies the stuff of real working class tragedy: tenants being evicted after the sale of their house by the landlord. Following Dicky's explanation of why he was 'flittin' the story settles down to a comedy of errors when he moves into his new house - which he explains he's been lucky to find - with ensuing disasters with the white-wash bucket. The ending brings the story back to the original political issue:

He tow'd Peggy if they'd mony moor flittin's he'd be wantin' to flit off th'earth awtogether, an' if ony moor o'thooose Parliament chaps coom chasin' for his vote he'd want a gradely understandin' abeaut th'heausin question befoore he'd promise owt to anyo of 'em.(105)

These writings of Tyrer again belie the image which has been passed down to us as a rural Ben Brierley, with his "Seets o'Ormskirk" describing in light- hearted vein his local community. He features in the collection of both Whittaker and Swann, but both are content to reproduce the same poem - "Ormes'(Kirke) Church" which has a claim to architectural fame as having both a tower and a steeple:

For they put up a buildin', for th'good o'aw people
I'th shape o' a church, wi a teawer an' a steeple.(106)

There is no doubt that the respectable figure who became Vice-President of the Lancashire Authors' Association and a pillar of local Methodism had a strong element of radicalism in his writings.

Other Writers for Clarke's Newspapers and Magazines

The main dialect writers who featured in Clarke's periodicals have been covered in the fore-going section. However, it is far from being complete. A great number of other dialect writers contributed occasional verse or prose sketches which it would be difficult to cover comprehensively. I have written on the literary contribution, and its political context, of writers such as Arthur Laycock, Fred Plant, and John Tamlyn in greater detail in elsewhere. (107)

In Clarke's earliest successful paper, the Trotter, J. Hilton contributed several dialect sketches. Generally, these are straight-forward humorous sketches about working class life, such as "Cawve Feet Jelly", which appeared in 1891. "Dinah Might I' Nob Fowt", also published in 1891 is a humorous reference to the time of the Fenian scare in Lancashire - about a November 5th celebration which went a bit too far.(108)

James Birchall contributed several sketches including "Billy Bump's Shopkeepin'". (109) John Fawcett Skelton, a dialect poet who was a contemporary of Waugh and Brierley, contributed five poems during 1891 including "The Thros'l" and "Lock'd Up in the Bolton Borough Jail". J. R. Abbott, or 'Ab' Ut' Jack' of Fleetwood contributed irregularly throughout the existence of the Trotter and Northern Weekly. The Northern Weekly provided an ideal medium for working class people to contribute occasional pieces of verse, or a dialect sketch. Mrs Shutt, a socialist member of Pendleton Board of Guardians, contributed a two part dialect poem "The Courtship of Tommy Knocker-Up" in the Northern Weekly during 1903, part one being 'his letter to her' and part two, her reply: the poem is a straight- forward piece of light love poetry:

An if we poo th'same road, my lass,
We're beaund to have good luck -
then let me know heaw soon theau'll wed
thy Tommy Knocker-up.(110)

Another story of 'knocker-up romance' was "The Knocker-Up's Fall" a dialect sketch by George Edgar, which appeared in the Northern Weekly in October 1903. (111) A couple of poems appeared in the Northern Weekly early in 1907 under the name of firstly, 'Dick o'Tum o'Bobs', followed by 'Tum o'Dick o'Bobs'. (111) They are obviously the same people, but are they the 'Tum o'Dick o'Bob's' who was Joseph Baron, the Blackburn dialect poet mentioned in an earlier chapter? The dialect is of the Blackburn area - the use of 'iv' for 'if' and 'hed' for 'had'. If so, the poems area a further indication of the 'hidden repertoire' of Lancashire dialect writers. The work of

Joseph Baron quoted earlier is non-controversial. The two poems which appeared in Clarke's paper are radical in tone. The first one was called "There's One Law For Rich An' Another For Poor":

When a chap has position an' wealth at his back
He con do tooathri things as are shameful an black -
Sich as feightin i'public, an' swearin' i'th'street,
An' assaultin defenceless young wimmen at neet
Ay, an' th'wastrel may float a sham company or two
An' his cheque-book an' 'torney 'll see him safe thro.
But a chap dressed i'fustian an' clogs, an beawt brass,
Mun walk streyt wi his drink, an Morn'd look at a lass
an he morn'd steyl a mowfin to keep him fro clammin,
nor - so heaw mich provooakt - do some innocent d - in.
If he does he'll be chuct into prison for sure,
For there's one law for rich an' another for poor.

The poem ends on a religious note - that we are all equal before God, and:

Tha greit thowt 'at we's find when we reich heaven's door,
There's not one law for rich an another for poor.(112)

The second poem was called "Things Wouldn'd Ha' Bin No Woss" and reflects a similar mix of radicalism and religion. The last two verses:

Hed Roman, Saxon, Dane an Jute,
An Norman left this isle alone -
Hed English Kings but followed suit
An ne'er to forrun lands ha' gooan -
Hed they thowt moor o'peace an reight,
An less o'war, an pomp, an sway -
Well, come, aw think yo'll own up straight
Things wouldn't ha'bin no wuss today.

Sun, moon, an stars - this dancin sphere,
Ocean an river, vale an hill,
Sweet fleawers an songbirds everywheere,
An teemin meads for mon to till -
No slothful rich, no clammin poor,
One God to whom to sing and pray.
Iv fooak he ne'er ha' wanted moor
Things wouldn't ha bin no wuss today.(113)

Peter Lee ('Th'Milk Lad'), the Rochdale socialist member of the Board of Guardians, was another occasional contributor to the Northern Weekly. He wrote more

often for the local I.L.P. paper (later to become a joint production with S.D.F.), the Rochdale Labour News. "Owd Moneybags" was published in July 1898 issue, part of which reads:

Owd Moneybags bragged o'er his brass,
Among his pals i'drink;
An' put hissen i'yh'upper class -
With shoddy chaps aw think.

Aw thowt him one o'th biggest foos
Aw'd se'n i'o'my days,
So aw'm noane beawn to mak a 'scuse,
For givin him no praise.(115)

The character 'Owd Moneybags' is a fairly common stereotype amongst socialist dialect writers - an immoral, false human being, obsessed with riches and a hypocrite in religion: "To th'church he went an' sung an' prayed". Lee contributed dialect to the Rochdale Labour News as 'Th'Milk Lad'. He serialised a story called "Owd Ale - A Rollickin' Tale Abeawt A Lucky Landlort An Some Ov His Pals" from March to September 1897, during the same period in which Clarke was contributing regular short stories such as "The Bully of Burlow's Shed". In October 1897 'Th'Milk Lad' contributed a poem on the controversy surrounding proposals to build a monument to Rochdale's dialect writers - including Waugh himself. The response from Rochdale's middle class was lukewarm, so the socialist movement took the issue up. The result was 'Th'Milk Lad's' "Ned Waugh's Ghost An' Th'Moniment", in which Waugh returns to haunt the townspeople of Rochdale:

Then tell me Ned, as theaw's had thine,
What's made thee come back here?
Why mix eternity wi toime?
Why fill wick foak wi fear?
He said: It's yon moniment
They're gooin' to put i'th'park -
aw want no maudlin sentiment,
But some gradely mak o'wark.
Neaw lad, he says, it's windy
An goblins come i'th'neet,
Four names mun go on th'moniment,
Ormrod and Mrs Lahee
John Trafford Clegg, wi hope weel spent,
an th'last belongs to me.

Just one work mooar, an then awm beawnd
For th'place o'ash an dust
We'll come an poo the damned thing deawn
If yo put it up on trust.(116)

Lee's most substantial work using dialect was Th'Mystery O'Sunny Fowt, examined in "Allen Clarke and the Lancashire School of Working Class Novelists". What makes Lee important is his combination of active political work as a socialist (he was on the Rochdale School Board as I.L.P. representative, amongst many other things) and his use of dialect to make political points - such as in "Owd Moneybags" and also in the above poem. The sense that it was the working class movement which was the real heir of Waugh's legacy, expressed in the poem, is also of considerable importance in the shaping of Rochdale socialism.

Several women writers contributed to Clarke's periodicals, and these are examined in more depth in the chapter relating specifically to women. However, it is important to note that Elizabeth Eckersall - 'Busy Bee' - wrote some powerful radical dialect in the Lancashire Annual - such as "A Bad Lot", quoted in Chapter 10, whilst contributing innocuous poems to the Bury Times and other local papers. Ethel Carnie, best known as an important working class woman novelist, contributed some poems and short stories towards the later period of the Northern Weekly/Fellowship. "Owd Jim's Last Looms" (117) is a short prose story using dialect in the dialogue about a son coming home from America' textile industry, to provide for his sickly father who can no longer stand the strain of weaving. "A White Geranium" (118) is another story about a weaving family, published shortly before. Sarah Robinson of Padiham also contributed occasional stories and poems, usually in standard English, to the Northern Weekly. (119)

Conclusion

It is clear that a new generation of dialect writers emerged in the period between 1880 and 1900 which was able to express current political and social issues in a far more direct way than the earlier writers had done. Allen Clarke forms the central figure in the period, both encouraging other writers by the success of his work, and also providing a means by which aspiring writers could get published - in particular, through the Northern Weekly, and the Lancashire Annual. These writers had no sponsorship by sympathetic middle class people and largely depended on the local press. There were undoubtedly differences in their published work - usually between what was published in the local press, and subsequent collections, and material which was published in Clarke's periodicals. This is particularly evident in the work of Samuel Hill, Sam Fitton, Elizabeth Eckersall and even to an extent Clarke himself.

A possible explanation for this, which avoids suggestions that there was a 'conspiracy' to prevent radical dialect being published would be as follows. Writers such as the above were broadly socialist in outlook, generally from a semi-religious/I.L.P. standpoint. They were conscious of writing within a strong tradition of dialect literature, and many of them - Hill, Clarke and Lee particularly - make constant overt references to Waugh, Brierley and Laycock. In a sense they became trapped by the cultural form of dialect literature as passed down by 'the classics' - its stress on nostalgia for the past, morality and working class respectability. Many of them continued to write in this way, with occasional socialist messages breaking through - such as Hill's "Owd Bill", which uses all the devices of traditional dialect. Bill is a friendly old man who lives down the street and calls on him occasionally. He reminisces about his life, but brings into it a radical subject matter: physical force Chartism. Hill submitted the poem to Allen Clarke who published it in Fellowship.

We do not know if he submitted it elsewhere, to local papers such as the Ashton Herald which used his work. Neither do we know if Elizabeth Eckersall submitted, or had rejected, her radical dialect poetry to the Bury Times. My feeling is that they did not. They knew who they were writing for, and were happy enough to write dialect poems about non-controversial aspects of working class life (and many of these were published in the Northern Weekly) but also wanted to express a political message on occasions too. In which case, the obvious place to send them was not to the local press, but to a socialist paper like Clarke's. Clarke himself may have had a more sophisticated approach towards his writing - including an occasional strongly political piece amongst other less overtly radical stories and poems. Hence his popularity remained, with non-socialists reading his work despite the occasional 'bit of politics'. Too heavy a dose would have jeopardised the wide readership he built up, and this is probably just what happened in 1907. The content of the paper changes at this time towards being a much more overtly revolutionary journal, before ceasing publication in 1908.

The actual number of working class dialect writers is worth noting - the above coverage is by no means comprehensive - and is suggestive of a second 'boom' in dialect literature, which coincided with the socialist revival in Lancashire in the 1890s. Hence it became almost 'natural' to express a more progressive labour-oriented standpoint, as part and parcel of one's writing. One is still struck by a degree of continuity with the 'classic tradition', both writers and readership. Most of the writers of the new generation were 'respectable' working class, from cotton-worker families in the cotton-belt towns of Bolton, Rochdale, Oldham, and Bury. Their readership was among that section of the working class which had supported Liberalism, and was beginning to question its allegiance. Some, a minority, had already made the switch to socialism. The world of the general readership was bounded by the town, the mill or weaving shed, the trade union, possibly the church, the friendly society. It read the local press, and most probably the Cotton Factory Times and possibly Teddy Ashton's Northern Weekly.

One issue worth mentioning is the treatment of trade unionism by the 'new generation', Clarke tended to reflect the views of some ILP socialists that trade unionism was 'collective selfishness', and the real issue was to change peoples' hearts, and in turn society. This did change by the turn of the century though, and he became an outspoken advocate of strike action, giving strong support to local disputes, such as that at Sunnyside Mills, Bolton. Burgess was similarly antagonistic to trade unions; both he and Clarke had experience of the autocratic spinners' unions in their childhood spent in the mills.

The importance of having an easy outlet for working class writing cannot be overestimated, and the contribution of Teddy Ashton's Northern Weekly, the Cotton Factory Times and other dialect and local papers was crucial. These outlets more than compensated for the lack of middle class sponsorship, and enabled writers like Clarke and his circle to establish themselves as the leading force in dialect literature by the turn of the century. More conservative writers, like William Baron, were consigned to the status of local commentators, rather than part of a county-wide 'movement'.

Notes

1. see comments by Clarke and Brierley in G. H. Whitaker (ed.) A Lancashire Garland Stalybridge 1936 p.93.
2. John Trafford Clegg Sketches and Rhymes in the Rochdale Dialect Rochdale vol.1 1895 vol.2 1898.
3. John Trafford Clegg David's Loom London 1894.
4. John Trafford Clegg Reaund Bi'Th'Derby Rochdale 1890.
5. Introductory memoir, in Clegg (1895) op.cit p.xvi.
6. ibid p.xvi.
7. Rochdale Observer (hereafter RO) March 15 1890.
8. RO March 29 1890.
9. Clegg (1890) op.cit p.4.
10. ibid. p.23. Sung by Harry Boardman on Trans-Pennine Topic Records, London 1971.
11. ibid. p.25.
12. Clegg (1895) op.cit p.216.
13. ibid p.233.
14. ibid. p.218.
15. Clegg (1894) op.cit. p.268.
16. Bill o'Jack's Lancashire Monthly, no.13 May 1910.
17. ibid no.18 October 1910.
18. William Baron Echoes From the Loom Rochdale 1903 p.48.
19. ibid p.192.
20. Teddy Ashton's Northern Weekly (TANW) June 25 1904.
21. May Yates A Lancashire Anthology Liverpool 1923 p.64.
22. ibid p.65.
23. in George Hull The Poets and Poetry of Blackburn Blackburn 1902 p.388.
24. in Whittaker op.cit p.29.
25. James Leigh Gleams of Sunshine Hyde 1904 p.49.
26. William Cryer Lays After Labour Farnworth 1902 p.315.
27. David Lawton Webs From Fancy's Loom Manchester 1918 p.69.

28. Joseph Burgess A Potential Poet? Ilford 1927 p.25.
29. *ibid* p.60.
30. *ibid* pp 83-85.
31. *ibid* p.115.
32. Bolton Trotter October 21 1892.
33. see "Amongst the Agitators", serialised in TANW from May 27 1905.
34. TANW August 26 1905.
35. "Billy Bobbin Wi'Th'Demonstrationists" in Teddy Ashton's Journal (TAJ) July 25 1896.
36. TANW August 26 1905.
37. *ibid*.
38. 'Teddy Ashton' (C. A. Clarke) Tum Fowt Debatin' Menociation (TFDM) "Heaw T'Menociation Were Formed" in Tum Fowt Sketches Bolton n.d. c1893 p.2.
39. *ibid* p.4.
40. 'Teddy Ashton' Tum Fowt Sketches No.9 1893, pp.111-2.
41. Cotton Factory Times, September 15 1893, September 9 1893, and November 3 1893.
42. See Chapter 7, section on "Work and Everyday Life".
43. Bolton Trotter October 14 1892.
44. See Allen Clarke "Cats Out of the Bag" Cotton Factory Times January 18th 1935 for an account of his early years on the paper.
45. Teddy Ashton's Journal began May 22 1896. It changed its name to Northern Weekly and Teddy Ashton's Journal on March 12 1898. The original title was later dropped and the paper became Teddy Ashton's Northern Weekly until April 20 1907 when it became Fellowship. It became Teddy Ashton's Weekly November 8/9 1907. The final issue, number 615 (from the start of Teddy Ashton's Journal) was March 1 1908.
46. TAJ August 1 1896.
47. TAJ September 9 1896.
48. published in TALA 1898, and in TAJ February 13 1897, reprinted in P. Salveson (ed) Teddy Ashton's Lancashire Scrapbook (Bolton 1985).
49. TANW October 12 1901.
50. TANW May 20 1905.

51. TANW March 10 1906.
52. TANW January 26 1907 et seq.
53. TANW March 9 1907.
54. TANW April 6 1907.
55. Fellowship October 18 1907.
56. Liverpool Weekly Post (LWP) August 4 1908.
57. LWP October 31 1925.
58. TALA 1919 p.65.
59. Teddy Ashton's Lancashire Readings No.2, 1922.
60. Several of Clarke's Tum Fowt Sketches were broadcast during 1935 - see Chapter 5 "Lancashire Dialect Literature in the Twentieth Century" for details.
61. TALA 1923.
62. TANW May 9 1903.
63. Written November 18 1903 in Bolton. See Salveson (ed) op. cit p. 64.
64. also in J.R. Swann Lancashire Authors St Annes 1924 pp.53-4.
65. TALA 1920 pp.66-7.
66. R. H. Brodie Random Rhymes Bolton, no date - c.1905.
67. ibid p.4.
68. TANW April 21 1906.
69. TANW March 23 1907.
70. TANW September 15 1900.
71. TANW October 6 1900.
72. TANW August 2 1902.
73. TAJ May 22 1897.
74. TAJ August 14 1897. A biography of Whittaker appeared in Labour Prophet October 1897, pp 1-2.
75. James Swinglehurst Summer Evenings with Old Weavers Manchester n.d circa 1880). See also Chapter 1, and Chapter 7, section on "The Last of the Handloom Weavers". Allen Clarke mentions Swinglehurst in Moorlands and Memories Bolton 1920 p.286.
76. TANW September 12 1903.
77. See Haslam's autobiographical sketch "From Jennygate to Journalism" in

TALA 1919 pp 8-10, and Allen Clarke "Amongst the Agitators" TANW July 22 1905..

78. TANW July 22 1905.
79. TANW July 19 1902.
80. TAJ September 19 1896.
81. The Record (R) no.100 June 1936.
82. "The Dialect and Other Social Features" R June 1919.
83. Ammon Wrigley, Introduction to Sam Fitton Gradely Lancashire p.xx.
84. ibid p.xiv.
85. Whittaker op. cit p.139.
86. Fitton op.cit p.20.
87. TANW April 21 1900.
88. Fitton op. cit pp.78-9.
89. ibid p.80.
90. ibid p.114.
91. ibid p.180.
92. R August 1923 p.9. The Crompton Chanticleer only lasted for a few months; it began in September 1911 and shortly after became Sam Fitton's Humorous Monthly which ended with issue no. 8 in April 1912..
93. R June 1957 p.16.
94. Yates op. cit p.18 and Whittaker op. cit. p.185.
95. Samuel Hill Foirewood - Splinters An' Shavin's Fro' A Carpenter's Bench Stalybridge 1902 p.171.
96. ibid p.314.
97. ibid p.317.
98. ibid p.90.
99. Samuel Hill Little Spadger's Dog and other Lancashire Stories Stalybridge 1908 p.64.
100. Samuel Hill Bygone Stalybridge Stalybridge 1907, p.75.
101. Fellowship (F) June 15 1907.
102. F November 23 1907 for notice of lantern-slide lectures. Hill's Old Lancashire Songs and their Singers was first published by the author at Stalybridge in 1898. A revised edition appeared in 1906.

103. Teddy Ashton's Lancashire War Journal October 23 1914.
104. TALA 1919 p.57.
105. TALA 1923 p.112.
106. Swann op.cit p.219.
107. See Paul Salveson "Allen Clarke and the Lancashire School of Working Class Novelists" in G. Klaus (ed) The Socialist Novel Volume 2, Brighton 1987.
108. Bolton Trotter October 9 1891.
109. Bolton Trotter May 15 1891.
110. TANW June 27 1903.
111. TANW October 14 1903
112. TANW February 9 1907.
113. TANW February 23 1907.
114. Rochdale Labour News (RLN) July 1898. A biography of Peter Lee appeared in Labour Annual Birkenhead 1898, p.201.
115. RLN October 1897. See Paul Salveson The People's Monuments: A guide to working class monuments and memorials in north-west England Manchester 1986, for an account of the building of the monument.
116. F October 4 1907.
117. F July 26 1907.
118. A feature on Sarah Robinson appeared in Cotton Factory Times on January 5 1923.

Chapter 5: Lancashire Dialect Literature in the Twentieth Century

The aim of this chapter is to survey developments within Lancashire dialect literature from the beginning of the century up to the outbreak of the Second World War. The reasons for this seemingly arbitrary stopping-off point are that the late 1930s saw the death of the most important dialect writer for the purpose of this study, Allen Clarke, who represents the culmination of the dialect tradition established by Waugh and Brierley. The time-scale also allows for consideration of important younger writers such as Ammon Wrigley and Tommy Thompson and minor writers like Samuel Hardman, W.F. Hampson and others.

The first third of the century sees the establishment of the Lancashire Author's Association (L.A.A.). It was formed in 1909, and quickly established itself as the most representative organisation of dialect writers ever formed. By the late 1930s the L.A.A. had settled into a distinctive niche within the regional culture of Lancashire and a number of interesting developments and controversies took place in the first twenty years of its existence. The first third of the century saw some important changes in the publication of dialect. Allen Clarke's Teddy Ashton's Northern Weekly ended in 1908, but his work continued in the Liverpool Weekly Post, Bolton Evening News, his own Teddy Ashton's Lancashire Annual, as well as in a number of other local newspapers and short-lived magazines. The Cotton Factory Times published an enormous quantity of dialect writing in this period, and that paper went into decline after the Second World War. Other labour movement newspapers also published significant amounts of dialect material in the same period, including Labour's Northern Voice, The Power Loom (journal of the Nelson Weavers), various co-op publications and the Woman Citizen. Many of these publications either ceased, or no longer used dialect, in the post-war era.

This chapter divides into four basic sections. Firstly, the origin and growth of the Lancashire Authors' Association is considered, with reference to early debates over political content in dialect and the issue of partisanship in literature. The social composition of the L.A.A. is an important question which relates to the previous issue, and to the links between the L.A.A. and other organisations such as the co-operative movement.

The second section looks at dialect writers of this period: the later work of Allen Clarke and Sam Fitton, and the younger writers like Wrigley and Thompson: it considers the changes in perspective from the 'radical generation' of the 1890s. A third section looks at how labour movement newspapers used dialect in this period, suggesting a deliberate use of 'regionalism' to support wider 'class' aims. In the fourth, concluding, section I will ask whether the dialect literary tradition established by Waugh and Brierley was continued in the inter-war years, or whether by institutionalising dialect writing, the L.A.A. had unwittingly contributed to its death. The development of new media, particularly radio, will also be looked at to see how far dialect writer's exploited its potential.

The Lancashire Authors' Association

The history of the Lancashire Authors' Association is a fascinating study in microcosm of the stresses and strains within dialect literature, in particular between working class and middle class writers, and over the subject-matter of dialect writing. It should be said at the outset that the L.A.A. did bring together a very diverse range of people who shared a common love of Lancashire and its literature. But the apparent harmony which it naturally tried to foster publicly was often a gloss on quite acute conflicts. Patrick Joyce has accepted the superficial appearance in Visions of the People, when he says:

In the Lancashire Authors' Association, cotton employers, teachers, and socialist trade unionists met amicably together to foster the language and culture of the region. (1)

The L.A.A. began in spectacular fashion. One of the largest gatherings of dialect writers ever held took place in Rochdale on April 3rd 1909, to celebrate the bicentenary of the birth of 'Tim Bobbin'. The day's celebrations included talks, dialect readings, an exhibition in Rochdale Art Gallery and the chance for dialect writers to discuss their work. Those present included: Allen Clarke, J. T. Baron, Joseph Baron, William Baron, Fred Plant, R. H. Brodie, Robert Atheron, David Lawton, Thomas Booth, Joseph Cronshaw, Arthur Laycock, Arthur Smith, James Lees, Sam Hill and Sam Fitton.(1) Less well-known writers present included two women - Sarah Holt from Rochdale, and Annie Spencer from Hebden Bridge. The middle class literati were represented by Colonel Fishwick, the Lancashire historian, Sir James Duckworth MP, Henry Brierley and W.E.A. Axon.(2) During the day's events (which owed much to the organising talents of Henry Brierley, Sam Hill and Art Gallery Curator F. Williamson), Allen Clarke made the suggestion of forming a 'dialect writers' association'(3). The local press announced its formation in their reports of the event, although at that stage it was still very much an informal grouping. Hopes were expressed to return to Rochdale in the summer to commemorate Edwin Waugh and put the group on a firm footing, but this did not happen. R. H. Brodie and A. H. Pearce wrote shortly after:

The project seemed likely to fail for various reasons, but eventually the present secretary (Brodie-PS) and the present Chairman of the Committee (Clarke -PS), along with Mr. W. Baron of Rochdale, got their shoulders to the wheel, and a meeting was called for November 27th 1909 at Woodhall's Restaurant, Rochdale. There were less than twenty earnest spirits at that auspicious gathering, but when it was over the "Lancashire Author's Association" was in being...(4)

Henry Brierley, a solicitor and respected antiquarian, was elected President - a largely honorary post. Allen Clarke was elected chairman, and his friend and fellow socialist R. H. Brodie secretary. Several Lancashire 'notables' were given honorary

Vice-Presidentships, including W. H. Broadhead, the entertainment tycoon and Mayor of Blackpool; also honoured were the Manchester antiquarian George Milner, Alderman R. C. Bury, Mayor of Accrington, Harold Baker MP, and Richard Ashworth, JP. The only dialect writer to be made a vice-president was William Cryer, of Farnworth.

It should be noted that from the outset the L.A.A. contained within it two trends: the working class radical writers like Clarke, Brodie, J.J. Wild, the Eckersalls, Fittons, Fred Plant, W.F. Jenkins, John Tyrer, David Lawton and William and J. W. Cryer, and the middle class antiquaries (and social leaders) like Henry Brierley, Captain J. Harwood, S. W. Partington and the Rev. Spencer, Vicar of Accrington. These two trends within the L.A.A. acted as sorts of literary 'poles of attraction' for other people within it. For example, Alfred and Ethel Pearce were both socialists and good friends of Clarke, and naturally supported his 'radical' approach to dialect literature, though they both usually wrote in standard English. The herbalist, Charles Hassall of Farnworth, was a friend of Clarke's and sympathised with him politically. Others within the L.A.A. such as William Baron, Langford Saunders, J. T. Baron, and Fulcher Robinson found nothing problematic about having middle-class 'worthies' as patrons of the organisation. If two trends existed, this is not to say that the L.A.A. was riven by conflict at every meeting. There was much that all could agree on - the importance of preserving Lancashire's literary heritage and publishing the work of Lancashire Author's writing at the time. The second meeting of the newly formed Association in Rochdale on January 29th 1910, celebrated the work of Waugh, Brierley and Laycock, which all members could admire and respect. On November 12th of that year the Blackburn meeting discussed the importance of "Lancashire Dialect" - again, a subject that all members would agree on. At the September 10th meeting a message of greetings were sent to Tolstoy on the occasion of his birthday, doubtless at the instigation of Allen Clarke.

The agreed aims of the L.A.A. were to "foster and popularise Lancashire Literature:

- a) by getting the works of Lancashire Authors into Public Libraries and placing simple memorial tablets on the houses where they were born;
- b) Organising lectures on Lancashire Authors and entertainments at which the programme shall be composed of Lancashire songs, recitations, etc.
- c) Organising pilgrimages to birthplaces, graves and haunts of Lancashire Authors, and also picnics to places made memorable in their work;
- d) Issuing, as means allow, publications and compilations of past and present Lancashire Literature;
- e) Pecuniarily assisting when necessary by means of concerts, subscriptions etc Lancashire Authors or their families(7)

Dialect is not specifically mentioned, and the L.A.A. was at pains to welcome any Lancashire writer - "historical, antiquarian, geological, botanical". Alf Pearce emphasised that "though a goodly number of our members are dialect writers, we are not solely concerned with the study and illustration of the homely dialect".(8) This was not from any sense that some members found dialect an embarrassment and wanted something more 'elevated'; it was simply that the early members genuinely wanted to have a representative association of 'writers' who were committed to a specifically Lancashire-based literature. As an example, one of their pilgrimages in 1910 was to Knutsford, former home of Mrs. Gaskell, the middle class 'industrial novelist' who made use of dialect in many of her writings, and whose husband was a dialect enthusiast.

What is clearly missing is any sense of class in the L.A.A., other than a reference in the aims that members falling on hard times could be helped out financially: a recognition of the working class composition of much of the L.A.A. who had no 'private income' to rely on. The ignoring of the class issue was inevitable given the broad

nature of the association; the inclusion of antiquaries like Brierley and Milner meant that the possibilities of developing a Lancashire worker-writers' organisation were closed off. Equally, some working class dialect writers like William Baron, were primarily interested in literature for its own sake without any particular social relevance. Literature was glorified as an absolute - being above considerations of class or politics: a common commitment to 'pure' literature could thus over-ride any differences in social background or party beliefs. Whilst having a practical use in welding together different and potentially opposing trends, the ideology of value-free literature meant that, ultimately, conservative ideas would predominate in the Association.

The first problems the L.A.A. encountered were not, however, over ideology. The difficulties were far more practical and related to the running of the organisation. Edith Pearce, writing in 1939, looked back on the early days when Allen Clarke was Chairman:

Though we had a committee, no meetings were called. The chairman would tell the secretary that our next meetings should be held at such-and-such a place and the secretary would inform the members. The meetings were held at irregular intervals whenever the chairman thought fit and had no set form.

After discussing the problems with her husband, she suggested he drew up a list of proposed improvements, and call a special meeting. However:

This was not so easy as it sounds, for at that time Allen Clarke was the practical dictator of the L.A.A. and it meant criticising him and taking the autocratic power out of his hands.(9)

The meeting took place on March 11th, and Alfred Pearce delivered a paper on "Suggestions For the Improvement of our Association". About forty members turned up, and, as Edith Pearce said, "all admirers of Allen Clarke as a writer, but not having the same admiration for his organising ability". The paper was delivered, criticising such things as:

...the futility of the current haphazard procedure, its lack of meeting- interest, usefulness, publicity; its low subscription, its lack of papers on Lancashire literary subjects, its need for an official organ to promote, by its report of useful meetings, the scope, prestige, membership of such a Society as we had at first aspired to be. The paper suggested new rules, regular meeting-months, definite procedure.(10)

Pearce's proposals were largely accepted; Allen Clarke seems to have accepted the justice of his friend's criticisms and took them in good part and Edith Pearce tells us that at the end of the meeting "all were good friends"(11). James Leigh and John Allen proposed Pearce for the position of editor of the L.A.A.'s new journal, The Record, and he was elected unanimously. Some of Pearce's proposals were deferred until the Annual General Meeting held on October 7th, in Bolton Town Hall. Meetings would henceforth be held on a regular, quarterly basis in January, April, July and October. The Record would be published mid-way between the meetings, providing reports of the previous one and notice of the forthcoming. The meetings themselves would be held in a different Lancashire town on each occasion.(12)

In response to Pearce's criticisms, the meetings were made into much more lively affairs. The Wigan meeting, held on May 11th 1912 attracted over 200 people. It was held in the town hall, with a warm welcome from the Mayor of Wigan and a visit round the library where the contribution of Wigan writers such as John Roby and John Critchley Prince were pointed out. Members visited other historical sites in the area and then had tea in the Co-operative Hall with a speech on the "Literary Associations of Wigan" by Henry Brierley, who also delivered a paper on "Wigan Dialect Words". In the evening the Wigan Harmonic Male Voice Choir performed, followed by more songs and a dialect recitation by Sam Fitton.(13)

This was the general pattern for L.A.A. meetings for decades hence: a mayoral reception, lectures on the host town's general and literary history, and visits to local shrines. This would be followed by tea, usually at the local co-op restaurant, with an

evening of talks followed by songs and members' recitations. The events of the day were usually reported on in great detail in the local press, in addition to full reports in the following Record.(14)

Following the seemingly amicable re-arrangement of the L.A.A.'s organisation, Clarke continued as committee chairman. In the early months of the First World War Clarke, amongst other committee members, argued strongly in favour of publishing a collection of members' writings, and took on main responsibility for the matter, and wrote in The Record a letter to members asking for contributions and orders for the book.(15) However, perhaps largely because of the dislocation caused by the war, few orders came in and not many contributions. At the committee meeting held in Oldham in September 1915 William Baron argued against proceeding with the venture, and got support from a majority of the committee. (16) The sixty-three subscriptions received were to be refunded. This appears to have caused some amount of ill-feeling on Clarke's part, and he was reluctant to continue as chairman of committee. However, he apparently consented to re-election but shortly afterwards resigned. At the meeting of December 9th 1916 the committee discussed Clarke's position:

Some discussion took place over the recent differences of opinion on Association policy existing between Mr.Allen Clarke and the other members of the Executive, which resulted in the former's resignation from office. Whilst it was felt that Mr. Clarke had acted unwisely in issuing his recent printed circular, it was ultimately resolved to let bygones be bygones; and without expressing any further opinion on the controversy, the meeting accorded a vote of thanks to Mr. Clarke for his past services to the Association.(17)

No copies of the 'printed circular' have, to my knowledge, survived and one can only make vague surmises as to the contents. Certainly, one issue would have been the proposed volume of members' work; yet this seems an unlikely issue to have raised such a furore. The most likely possibility was that Clarke was annoyed at the increasing drift away from being a group of working class writers towards being a

middle class 'literary and philosophical society'. The L.A.A. was acquiring an increasingly long list of upper-class patrons in the form of Vice- Presidents, such as imperialist adventurer Sir Lees Knowles, Major David Halstead, Clara Swain Dickens, Marjory Lees and a selection of local worthies in the shape of JPs and councillors. Clearly, this was not what Clarke had in mind when he suggested the L.A.A.'s formation; but equally one senses that Clarke wanted to be able to control the Association and took offence when his ideas were not followed. He resigned completely from the Association the following year "owing to lack of time and other reasons", though Pearce noted that he hoped the lapse would be temporary, and paid tribute to Clarke's contribution to the L.A.A.. Pearce also mentioned the dispute between Clarke and the Executive, suggesting the argument was long-standing: by saying "in recent years he could not see eye to eye with the rest of the executive in matters of policy." (18)

Clarke's departure from the L.A.A. does not appear to have significantly altered the overall activity of the organisation. The L.A.A. continued to publicise in a friendly manner his various publications, and there is no doubt he retained the friendships of Alf and Edith Pearce, and other L.A.A. members. However, his good friends R. H. Brodie and Fred Plant were no longer active; Brodie died in 1913 and Plant became ill. Sam Hill had died within a few months of the L.A.A. being formed, depriving the organisation of one of its most enthusiastic pioneers. William Cryer died in 1917, and his son's death followed shortly after in 1926. By 1923 the L.A.A.'s composition had changed considerably from its early shape of being mainly a body of working class dialect writers. It now had no fewer than fifteen Vice-Presidents of whom four were life members. These included the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres, Sir Lees Knowles, Major Halstead (then Tory MP for Haslingden) and Alderman Barlow of Accrington. Of the remaining Vice-Presidents there were five JPs, the aristocratic Marjory Lees, and other 'worthies'. Amongst the twenty-two honorary members there were eleven councillors (many of whom were aldermen), an archdeacon, army captain, Sir James

Hacking (Tory MP for Bury) and the novelist W. Ralph Hall Caine. A mere three of the founder, working class members had been given honorary status: W. H. Jenkins of Oldham, and the Eckersalls of Heywood. Few of the honorary members or Vice-Presidents, with the exception of Major Halstead, played any practical role in the L.A.A..

A novel feature of the L.A.A. was its Red Rose Circulating Magazine, approved at its AGM on December 9th 1916. This was a manuscript magazine of members' work, which was passed round (by post) to each member on the circulation list. In addition to inclusion of members' work, space was provided for criticism of other members' work. The editor was Edith Pearce, who continued the work throughout the inter-war years and after. The magazine provided a unique forum for members of the L.A.A. to 'test out' their work, and to receive usually helpful criticism from fellow members. Also, it helps us today to understand the approaches adopted by Lancashire authors at the time, and in some cases cast light on controversies.

The main contributors during the 1920s and 1930s were Samuel Hardman, a Liberal councillor who had little of Edith Pearce's radicalism, Mary Higgs, Oldham's remarkable environmentalist and social reformer, Elizabeth Webber, a 'non-political' dialect writer of 'homespun' verse, Ammon Wrigley, John Randal Swann, the Accrington literary figure, Alf and Edith Pearce, Sam Fitton (up to his death in 1923) and Henry Brierley. The dialect writers who contributed to the circulating magazine were in a minority, though cuttings from newspapers relating to dialect were a common insertion.

Although the contributors were predominantly conservative or non-political, the editor, Edith Pearce, was a convinced socialist. Accordingly, she from time to time inserted left-inclined writings, such as those of Hannah Mitchell, unknown to the author herself! An interesting controversy followed the appearance (unauthorised) of

Mitchell's sketch "May Day", a cutting taken from Labour's Northern Voice of May 15th 1925. The sketch advertises the new I.L.P. paper, relating it back to Teddy Ashton's Northern Weekly. It takes the form of a discussion between Dick Kilshaw and his workmate, Tom Bates. Dick tries to sell Tom a copy of the paper and Tom begins a long story about his observation of a Labour demonstration at Belle Vue the previous week. He then tells Dick that he wanted to go to a football match but his wife, Sarah-Ellen is off to an I.L.P. meeting and he has to stay at home:

Tha gets no brass off me to goo watchin bigger foos nor thisel kickin a baw abeawt. Tha con stop in an clean th'childer's shoon and peel th'taters for Sunday. Aw mun get th'dinner o'er i'good time, awm gooin to th'meeitin at Queen's Park i'th'afternoon.(20)

The combination of a wife leaving her husband at home to clean shoes and peel the potatoes whilst she goes off to a socialist meeting was strong stuff for some members of the L.A.A. and the divisions within the Association were brought into relief. Alf Pearce congratulates Hannah Mitchell's "first attempt at dialect writing", but makes no mention of the subject matter. Samuel Hardman however is more critical; while he admires the humour and finds it "as natural as one could wish", he continues:

Still, as we as an Association include all shades of public opinion which we have up till now put on one side, for obvious reasons. I believe that Mrs Mitchell would do better in not introducing anything which has a political bearing. I hope she will accept my advice in the same spirit in which it is given.

Elizabeth Webber was equally disturbed by the politics:

The dialect will not die whilst we have writers like Mrs Mitchell to carry it on, but try a subject where there will be no fear of controversy. Leave the question of politics out.(21)

Edith Pearce defended Hannah Mitchell's work in the following edition, but the defence is based on an absolutist view of 'literature as truth' and judging a work on the basis of 'what it sets out to achieve' - a somewhat open-ended yardstick. The reply is worth quoting in detail:

In criticising, some of the critics objected to the politics expressed... I mention this because I wish to take all responsibility for that sketch appearing in our mag. Mrs. Mitchell sent the paper to me for my private criticism as the first dialect sketch she had written. As a dialect sketch I thought it very good and for that reason used it.

I would like all our readers to realize that our Magazine is broad and free. It has no politics but the politics of Literature. In judging literature we should try to be above bias and seek only to realise the object of what is written, and judge if that object is likely to be attained. Mrs. Mitchell wrote for a Labour periodical to suit the taste and propaganda of that paper and I think she did her work well... Our pages are open to any member of any shade of opinion who has literary work to offer. In reading, as intelligent men and women, we shall accept that which appeals to us, and graciously allow the other to pass by, knowing that Truth is quite capable to take care of itself and not one of us can claim a monopoly of its great white light.(22)

Hannah Mitchell was a member of the L.A.A. and does not appear to have been unduly put off by the criticism from Samuel Hardman and Elizabeth Webber. Her dialect contributions to Labour's Northern Voice and the Woman Citizen continued for many years, and copies appeared from time to time in the Red Rose Circulating Magazine. However, controversy stirred once more when Edith Pearce included two of Mitchell's sketches in the June 1930 issue. "Parlours" is about the shortage of decent sized accommodation for working class families, and the long waiting list for council houses. It is an attack on the pretentious obsession with 'parlours':

But mythical parlours which they could not afford to furnish, let alone lighting and heating, bring little comfort to the men and women huddled in one or two rooms with four, five or six children... Do these people want a book-lined study, or a courting parlour or smoking room? Not likely! What they want is a big living room, a good scullery, a bathroom...with the upper floor divided into three or even four bedrooms to meet the needs of a growing family(23)

The dialect sketch which accompanied the above standard English piece was called "Why He Went" - the story of why Tom Bates went on the socialist demonstration. Dick Kilshaw is surprised to see him, and thinks Tom has been converted. After moaning to Dick about the speeches, singing "The Red Flag" and being harangued to buy a dozen different socialist newspapers Dick asks what he was doing on the demonstration after all:

"Well then, tha doesn't seem to have enjoyed thyself so weel at Belle Vue," says Dick. "It's a wonder to me what tha coom for. Aw thowt tha went to sleep of a Sunday afternoon after tha'd spotted aw th'winners i'th'pappers."
"Well, Sarah Ellen an th'childer were i'th'procession," Tom said rather sheepishly, "an aw thowt it ud happen come on wet, so aw browt their coats."(24)

The reaction to the sketches was again, mixed. Samuel Hardman suggested that Mrs. Mitchell exaggerated the housing problem, and that many working class people wanted 'parlours and gardens'. He added "The L.A.A. as an association knows no politics, no contentions. Its badge is its flag." To which 'H M M' (Hannah Mitchell? - not her handwriting) - said "Hear Hear". Alf Pearce liked "Why He Went" but was less sure of "Parlours". Hannah Mitchell responded to the criticisms in the following letter:

Perhaps I ought to supply the critics with less contentious matter, but 'Time' is a plant which does not grow in my garden, alas. But when I come to think, I have no recollection of supplying her with these samples of my literary skill, but I thank her for including them. The fact that the critics have criticised the subject matter rather than the literary style of these efforts causes me to hope that they are not hopelessly bad...(26)

She concluded by saying that the L.A.A. is "a good school" and she continued to hope that her literary skill will improve with experience. Yet increasingly she seemed a lone voice within the L.A.A. in the 1930s, despite the often unknown encouragement of Edith Pearce. While socialist propagandising in dialect was regarded as unacceptable by many of the Association's active members, the same response did not greet anti-socialist or pro-imperialist writings. "Jimmy o'Bob's Speech on Socialism and Other Topics" by Samuel Hardman was first published in the Radcliffe Times, and a cutting appeared in the Red Rose Circulating Magazine. After warning against listening to 'agitators' he continues:

Then ther's that cry abeawt 'equality o'opportunity' an 'equality o'labour'. Thoos'll never come whol there's sich a thing as human nature. Han yo ever seen a socialist procession an notic't who wawk i't'front; an who carry t'flags? If yo hannot, aw have. Its thoos behind 'at carry t'flags; thoos i't'front carry nowt but swelled yeds.(27)

The response from the critics contained no objection to 'bringing politics' into the L.A.A. Rather, the response was enthusiastic. A. B. Robinson wrote:

Well done! Better than ever! Your report of "Jimmy o'Bob's" learning are truly British. And patriotic to the core...

Robinson's comments are particularly interesting for helping us to see the relationship between region and nation in conservative ideology: regional consciousness bolsters a greater British nationality. The homespun conservative wisdom of 'the common man' represents 'patriotism to the core'. Walter Butterworth, a Manchester literary figure who had become prominent in the L.A.A. by the 1930s, wrote: that he "is a beggar to think" and "like Waugh he can write, and write and write well." Helen Lawson, and other middle class recruits from Liverpool said:

There is truth, common sense and good advice in Mr. Hardman's writings.(28)

The three other comments from critics were all favourable, though comments from either the Pearces, or Hannah Mitchell, were notable for their absence. Perhaps they did not want to rock the boat, or had already long since handed over the captaincy. In the same edition of the magazine Arthur Bennett contributed poems including his jingoistic "God Save Empire!" which included such lines as:

And may the races strange,
With dusky limbs who range
These regions vast;
Love the same laws as we,
From utmost sea to sea
Be as one family
With us at last.

Helen Lawson thought that "Mr. Bennett's poems are beautiful". W. H. Lloyd, Southport businessman thought them 'exquisite'. A. B. Robinson considered them "well worth our careful perusal". 'RA' - probably Richard Ainsworth, a literary gentleman from Accrington, called Bennett "this gifted writer of modern Athens" (that is, Warrington) and W. F. Hampson thought the poems "full of good things".(29) No

criticism comes from the socialist members of the L.A.A., leaving the field open to the conservatives.

Despite the drift away from its original, more progressive, outlook Allen Clarke patched up his quarrel with the Association and rejoined in 1926 - largely due to the pressure of Alf Pearce. He was shortly after made an honorary member. However, he took no part in the business of the Association, confining his activities to speaking on Lancashire literature at meetings. The Association did not neglect its commitment to keeping Lancashire's literary heritage alive and its meetings frequently honoured the 'classic' writers, such as Ben Brierley (Failsworth, June 1925), Laycock (Blackpool, July 23rd 1926), Bamford (Middleton March 1935) and Waugh on too many occasions to mention.

By the outbreak of the Second World War the L.A.A. had established itself, but had not developed as rapidly as some of the big early meetings might have suggested. At November 1st 1938 ordinary membership stood at 195, and the various honorary positions 21. The much-respected Henry Brierley had died, and Rev. T. C. Porteus, Vicar of Chorley, took his place.

I would argue that the development of Lancashire dialect literature advanced little during the 1920s and 1930s, at least within the Association. The L.A.A. fostered an increasingly conservative view of dialect literature which was both 'homely' and 'above politics'. The sharp, contemporary, message of dialect writing in the 1890s gave way to a self-satisfied 'common-sense' wisdom, which was ultimately banal. In the next section, the work of writers in this period shall be examined to see what sort of Lancashire dialect was being written, mainly in the inter-war years.

Dialect Writing After the First World War

The volume of dialect writing produced during the 1920s and 1930s was substantial, with a continuing interest in dialect sketches and poetry in the local press, as well as in papers such as the Cotton Factory Times, and periodicals including Teddy Ashton's Lancashire Annual. Dialect writers were published by many local publishers, and during this period three substantial collections of Lancashire literature, mostly in dialect, were published: J. R. Swann's Lancashire Authors, in 1924, May Yates' Lancashire Anthology in 1923, and G. H. Whittaker's Lancashire Garland in 1936. It would be impossible to cover the work of all of these writers, though I hope a representative selection will indicate the subject matter covered by them, and differences of approach adopted.

Allen Clarke continued to write a steady flow of 'Tum Fowt' sketches for the Liverpool Weekly Post, often commenting on, and satirising, current events. He also produced several novels, including perhaps one of his best - The Men Who Fought For Us. Serialised initially in the Co-operative News in 1912, it appeared in book form during the First World War. It is based on the struggles of the Chartists and the founding of the co-operative movement in Rochdale. The novel makes good use of Rochdale dialect in the dialogue between the characters, including Tom Livsey, Charles Howarth and other historical figures. A novel development was his history of dialect literature which appeared in the Liverpool Weekly Post during 1926 - written itself entirely in dialect. Clarke was also writing regularly for local papers like the Bolton Evening News (as 'Old Boltonian') and for the Blackpool Evening Gazette. He patched up his quarrel with the Cotton Factory Times, and, after a gap of forty years, began writing for them again.

His most regular contribution to Lancashire literature, following the demise of his Northern Weekly, was Teddy Ashton's Lancashire Annual. This continued to provide a forum of Lancashire writers and gave him some independence from the commercial pressures of the Liverpool Weekly Post. He could write and say what he wanted, and often did. In his "Editor's Gossip" for the 1934 Annual, he ridicules Conservative statements that six million people were starving to death in Russia and makes the Swiftian suggestion that we eat the unemployed in Britain, as a way of easing the burden on taxes.(33) Clarke saw the progress of the Soviet Union as the one hopeful political sign in the 1930s, and again in his 1935 Annual he returns to praising 'the first great co-operative, socialistic adventure and experiment in all history'.(34)

It must be said though that Clarke's writing did not progress in the 1920s and 1930s; it was more of a levelling-off, with new material written which was similar in form and content to his pre-war work. He re-published many of his novels in serial form in the Liverpool Weekly Post, with minor alterations (such as the titles!)(35). The new writing coming from the young Soviet Republic by working class writers like Gladkov, Fadeyev, and Sholokhov do not appear to have had any influence on him, though given his interest in Russian literature he would probably be aware of their work. The political culture which Clarke had inhabited in the 1890s and early 1900s, of sincere, moralistic I.L.P.-type socialism, was dead. The political message of his socialist novels - to hope for utopia but in the meantime support the Labour Party as an immediate end - was a long way from his youthful Tolstoyanism. Many younger working class writers, including Jack Hilton and George Chandler from Lancashire, saw the Communist Party as the most dynamic political force in the labour movement. Clarke, whose politics were formed in quite different times, became increasingly isolated politically from young, radical, writers in the inter-war years as much as from mainstream 'labourism' represented by writers such as Sam Fitton.

Sam Fitton's work did show important developments after the First World War, up to his untimely death in 1923. He increasingly became the literary spokesman of 'mainstream' labour politics in Lancashire, through his poems and sketches in the Cotton Factory Times. "The Inseparables" is a fairly typical celebration of two of Labour's main figures:

Gee and Turner, Turner and Gee
Me an Ben, an Ben an me
hond in hond in Labour's ship
Trusted, tried each troublous trip
Facin storms an bearin yokes
Doin their best for workin folks.
Staunch an true as true con be
Gee an Turner, Turner an Gee.(36)

Shortly after, Fitton warned about the dangers of 'direct action' and suggested that the best form of 'direct action' is at the polling booths, voting for the solid and reliable Labour Party candidates:

"Direct Action - Voting"

"Oh words are cheap" I hear you say
Yet let this be a word in season
Be circumspect an act direct
Get right by reason.
If you would save yourselves think well and note
The only Direct Action is the vote. (37)

Sam Fitton was more than a mouthpiece for official Labour policy however. In "The Weaver and the Bottom Dog" he shows his sympathy for the thousands of poorly paid, low-status women workers of Lancashire:

I've yerd folks talk abeawt the bottom dog,
That dog 'ats yowlin' to be free;
It may be shackled but I'll eyt my clog
If ony dog's worse off than me!
I'll swop my job wi' oather dog or cat,
I'm shackled, I'm a woman too, at that!
I merely weighve; I noather spin nor card.
I'm often tired but noody cares.
I work as long as them, an teyl as had;
My job is quite as skilled as theirs;
I mend their bad work too, you'll agree;
Heaw it is then they get mooar brass nor me?

The poem ends with a suggestion that the women weavers work as hard as the spinners, and that Labour should help its weaker members:

Who makes us bottom dogs? Does no'bdy know?
An don't yo think it seems a sin?
we're nobbut lilies but we want to grow;
We toil hard if we dunno spin.
If th'Labour cause is good an circumspect,
Why cornt its weaker members share th'effect?
Oh chivalry, this nation is a rum un
At thrives an sees its bottom dog's a woman (38)

The contribution of other, less well-known dialect writers who wrote for the Cotton Factory Times is considered in the following section on "Dialect Writers and the Labour Movement"; however, the contribution of Sam Fitton to dialect writing was wider than the labour movement, and he is rightly regarded as one of Lancashire's greatest dialect writers of the twentieth century. He acted as a literary spokesman for the working class people of the south Lancashire cotton towns. As argued elsewhere, he did not try to convert them to 'pure' socialism as Clarke did. Rather, he was happy to represent their modest, limited reformism, typified by the mainstream of the Labour Party. (39)

Ammon Wrigley: The Contradictions of a 'Countryman'

The dialect writer who increasingly came to be recognised as a potential successor to Edwin Waugh was Ammon Wrigley, of Saddleworth. Wrigley's writings stand out as being quite different to those of other dialect writers of the 1920s and 1930s in that they are strongly rural-based. Wrigley's Saddleworth was still very much an isolated industrial village in the inter-war years, surrounded by bleak moorland and a way of life little since the Industrial Revolution. Wrigley, comparing himself to Fitton, admitted, "I am not stirred by the town or its people".(40) One of his most substantial

collections - The Wind Among the Heather - seems to sum up in its title the writings of Ammon Wrigley. It is rooted in the moorland communities of Saddleworth, enriched by a centuries old 'common people's' culture. It is ironic that Wrigley spent all his working life as an industrial worker, as a minder in a woollen mill. None of this industrial experience is reflected in his writings. Although older than Clarke - he was born in 1862 - his first work was not published until 1901. (41) In one sense he is a generation behind Clarke, in that his publishing history, and reputation do not commence until this century. However, the content of his writings places him more with Waugh, on the threshold of the 'new' Lancashire of the Industrial Revolution. He seems to recognise this when he says:

I was bred in the cold grey hills,
In the days when life was stern,
When work had left the handloom,
And wages were hard to earn(42)

Reginald Kenney said of him:

He was a poet of the moors who lived and understood the moorland folk as no other living writer did.(43)

Wrigley is frequently nostalgic about the hand-loom weaving days of Saddleworth, and in addition to his literary work, spent much time researching the history of the area. "Owd Cronies" is the lamentation of two old weavers about the 'world we have lost':

Win sin yond mooredges sum busy on wick,
Win son o'th'owd naybors sum merry un thick!

When th'wayter mills sang, Jone, i'every clough,
Un foak wur o'hearty un lusty un bluff -
Those wur th'days for us two;
When a collop o'ham every neighbor ud gi'e,
Un a pint o'whom-brewed to wesh it deawn wi,
Then, wi awlus wur welcome i'every fowd!
But thoos nayburs ur gone, Jone, thi're o' lyin' cowl
Eaut ut top o'yond broo.(44)

A lot of Wrigley's poetry is in standard English - he tends to reserve his use of

dialect to represent the speech of local people, rather than use it as a descriptive tool in, say, describing the Saddleworth moors. "'Nem o'th'owd Poots' At a Churn Gathering" is an example of using dialect to let the people 'speak for themselves', describing a centuries-old village festival. The narrator sees 'Nem' at the door and calls him in to describe the events which took place:

Is that thee, Nem, hay, do come in,
Sum oft aw wundert wheer theau's bin,
Fur th'age ov a duck theau's ne'er bin sin;
Asto gotten agate o'courtin'?
Hay, now, sed Nem, but mich aw want
To get some felley in a bant,
But tother neet awd sich a rant,
Aw'll tell thi o'abeawt it.(45)

While 'churn gatherings' were the sort of traditional customs which Wrigley could exult in, occasionally he would write of more contemporary, almost modern, institutions. His "Th'Divi's Deawn Agen" is a dialogue between two local women about local people, and in particular their irritation about the co-op 'divi' being reduced:

Aw guess theau's yerd ut th'divi's deawn?
Ther'll be a row thi sen,
Fur tother neet aw yerd ther'd bin
Sum plutcherin agen. (46)

The poem indicates that, though the women see the co-op as 'theirs'. Nonetheless the committee elected to run it are not doing their job - "Not bullyeds yond Committee are". The 'committee man' and his wife get criticised for putting on airs and graces and having a good time at everyone's expense:

Un tother neet, owd Candle wife,
Wur toakin hay soh fine,
Her mester'd bin a dellygate
Toh Ashton-under-Lyne.(47)

The narrator vows to go "streyght whom" and tell her husband Bill to "wacken up" and get himself elected as a delegate - but then the conversation veers off onto another

subject, suggesting that women are too ready to complain and do nothing much about it!

Although Wrigley was a member of the L.A.A., he played little part in its activities and his membership lapsed for a period in the late 1920s. He tended to stay within his own 'back yard' and appears to have sought little of the comradeship of writers which many L.A.A. members found rewarding in its activities. However, an "Ammon Wrigley Fellowship" was formed in 1932 which acted as a local circle of admiration for the poet, and continues in existence. Whilst Wrigley's poetry is undoubtedly of a much higher literary standard than that of most dialect writers in the 1920s and 1930s, the same criticism which I earlier levelled at Waugh could be made against him - that he avoids describing the social reality of an area (perhaps the 'divi' sketch is as near as he gets) preferring the timeless beauties of the moors, or writing of 'characters' who tend to be rooted in an idealised past. While Saddleworth was certainly old-fashioned compared with neighbouring Oldham, it still had many of the social problems of its bigger neighbour - unemployment, speed-up in the weaving sheds, bad housing and - more so than Oldham - bad working conditions in the mills, where Wrigley himself worked. His work is essentially escapist, a fact which clearly recommended himself to middle class critics like Reginald Kenney:

His work is great because he follows, with instinctive genius, the canon of true literary art. He never pushed himself, his morals, or his philosophy in front of his subject.(48)

If Wrigley was open to criticism for ignoring those parts of Saddleworth life which did not fit in with his image of 'a moorland parish' - like the job he did, and many others like him - he was simply following the time-honoured path of 'rustic' working class writers supplying the sort of romanticised images of rural life which Waugh and Brierley thrived on. The Wind Among the Heather was published by subscription, and the addresses of most of the subscribers suggest that middle class patronage played a strong part in ensuring Wrigley's work was published. The great majority of names and addresses given indicates that the ordinary 'street' address is few and far between.

Middle Class Resurgence: Strike Poetry

A feature of dialect writing in the inter-war years was the increasing number of middle class attempts to use it. As mentioned earlier, the L.A.A., from its beginnings as an organisation of working class dialect writers with some middle class support, became dominated by middle class people. While many, like Henry Brierley, Walter Butterworth, Reginald Kenney and J. Cumming Walters were content to criticise dialect writing, some did write in it. One such person was A. B. Robinson, a Darwen mill manager. During the weaving strikes of 1931 and 1932 Robinson wrote a number of anti-strike dialect poems. One harked back to the great strike of 1878 which led to serious rioting in Blackburn:

Mi fayther kept a grocer's store
When I wer' th'owdest o'childer four,
i'seventy-eight.
For nine or ten weeks mill closed deawn
Un folks i'th'village un teawn
Wer short o'meayt.

While Robinson describes the privations of the strike, and displays sympathy with some of the victims, it is the strikers themselves who are to blame. The longer a strike lasts, the stronger is the likelihood of firms placing orders elsewhere:

These facts are things that must be faced,
Our orders lost elsewhere are placed;
- We miss the tide.
We can't afford to lose good trade
That British brawn and brain have made,
Our country's pride. (50)

The appeal is very much one-sided: while appealing to the workers' sense of patriotism, nothing is said about the morality of firms placing orders elsewhere to avoid the effects of the action; this is simply good business. Robinson returns to the theme of industrial conflict a couple of years later in "The Dispute" - a reference to the strikes

sweeping Lancashire at the time (1932) over the introduction of 'more looms' per weaver. The poem is interesting in that it begins in dialect, and appeals to local sentiment, as from 'an ordinary' person, and ends on the tone of the schoolteacher addressing an unruly, but potentially 'good' pupil:

Aw wer' born i'this teawnship, as many a one knows,
Un it ne'er wer' my wish to turn friends into foes,
Aw'm rather outspoken in thad sooart o'thing,
For aw'm deeply concern'd what this upset may bring

Every look-out or strike we have managed to scrape through,
Aw've sed to misel "What's this world coming to?"
We still go on muddling our chances away,
Which both 'loser' and 'winner' the cost must defray.

The poem switches into standard English, with the voice of the mill-owner:

By making this rhyme I have nothing to gain,
And if you read further will try to explain.
We are not tied to any one place, that is true,
And can leave if we find something better to do.

Robinson clearly warns the strikers that capital is not tied to one area, and has no sense of 'community responsibility' in the last resort. The voice of the pedant in the last verse upholds this 'freedom' of capital, and lectures the workers that Britain is still 'the best place on earth':

This freedom, no-one could appraise at its worth,
And bad as things are, this the best place on earth.
If you'll help to mend it there's no reason why
These clouds of misfortune will not quickly roll by.(51)

Here, dialect writing is used by the 'local' middle class to appeal to the 'local' working class: the bonds of a common industry, community and dialect over-ride those of class. 'If we only pulled together, everything would be perfect' is the message. What is interesting in the above poems is how late they were written, and how self-conscious the poems are. This is true particularly of the last one with its switch from dialect to standard English, the crude threats of the mill-owners, and the final appeal to reason

and common sense.

Samuel Hardman and 'conservative' Common Sense

Another middle-class man who established a reputation as a dialect writer was Samuel Hardman, whose father ran a Radcliffe bleaching and dyeing firm.(52) Samuel Hardman became an office manager in his father's business, and was for many years a local Liberal councillor. His 'common sense' attack on socialism, as if from an ordinary working class man, has already been mentioned. "Billy Tomkins Un His Pigs" was another dialect assault on socialism:

Billy Tomkins were a socialist as big as could be seen,
If yo look't for quite a month on end un used two pai o e'en:
He hadn't bin one very lung but then he'd larnt so fast,
He knew their creed fro' end to end, ther rules fro' fust to last.

He once had bin a workin' mon but sin he fun it eawt,
That wark were not so easy t'do he geet a job that's beawt;
Un neaw he's spendin every neet wheer he con find a spot,
In tellin' foaks they'r nowt but slaves, un sich-like tommy-rot.(53)

The poem uses the familiar theme of socialists wanting to divide everyone else's belongings; after Bill explains 'the theory' to his friend Joe, Joe explains he is a bit 'hard up' and will take one of Bill's pigs for his supper. Bill is suitably 'fooled' by his own silly ideas. The point is not that Hardman is ignorant about what socialism is, as much as the fact that he is an educated middle class office manager using the dialect of the Lancashire working class to rubbish socialist ideas. Socialism is seen as unnatural, and working class men like Bill who are taken in by it are just fools. Use of the dialect suggests a common-sense 'pro-capitalist' ideology, that everyone will get what they can and to share things collectively, is 'against human nature'. In "Advice Wuth Takkin" he gives more homely advice to working class people, as though one himself. One of the suggestions is to speak kindly of the rich, or else they might stop being benefactors of the poor:

Ther's now ut's gained bi hate an scorn, un daubin foak wi pitch,
It winnot turn wrung into reet nor poor men into rich,
Like rubbish thrown into a stream bi some unthinkin mon,
It stops the sea o'charity fro' rowlin sweetly on.

People should be happy with what they have, and strive to improve. If they meet someone worse off they should help them. Collective solutions to poverty are, however, only likely to stir up hatred and materialism:

If ther's owt good i'most o'men, un that there is, aw'm sure,
Durnt grumble if its noan so mich but try to make it moor,
Un if, when on yo'r travels, yo should come across a mon
Who's lost his way, for mony a day, just help to put him on.

Un try to live i'harmony, bid discord quickly cease,
Ring eawt thoos passion-breedin' strikes, ring in an endless peace,
Let not selfish love o'gowd but duty spur yo on,
For they are blest above the rest who love their fellow-mon. (54)

Hardman's Liberalism had none of the radical edge which Laycock's and David Lawton's had, belonging to a later generation which saw the party of Gladstone turn into a pale reflection of Conservatism. However, while he clearly saw only individual solutions to the problem of poverty - self-advancement, and charity from the rich - he was a firm supporter of religious tolerance, and of environmental causes ("The Smoke Nuisance" was a favourite lecturing topic).

Other writers of this period who could be called 'middle class dialect writers' included W. F. Hampson, of Edgworth, near Bolton, who wrote mostly 'homely' pieces like "A Bit o'Good Feighr", and "Owd Ephraim Woods". He died in 1957. (55) Major Halstead himself, who came to occupy a central position within the L.A.A., wrote a number of dialect poems, such as "Billy Suet's Song", "An Owd Fashioned Welcome" and "My Owd Case Clock" (a reply to Sam Fitton's well-known poem).

Hard Times Return

The conservative prescriptions of Hardman and Robinson met with approval from other members of the Lancashire Authors' Association; an increasingly middle class membership could strongly empathise with the homely, conservative, message of their poems. Conservatively-inclined politics, expressed in dialect, became 'plain common sense', rather than 'political'. There was a sense that this was how working class people really felt, and all the agitation over socialism and trades unions were the result of 'outside agitators'. The depression of the Thirties was frequently put down to labour unrest, or to moral reasons, such as Thomas Welsby expressed in "A Poor Look-Out":

This Christmas, I'm thinkin, poor heightin ther'll be,
For some as connot get wark,
An th'wost of it is, there's no use o'denyin',
As th'furtur' for th'mooist looks dark.

Its nobbut a few 'ats content uppo th'dole,
It hurts me to see lads abeawt,
As 'ud wark if they could, but what can they do?
It's enough to break a chaps heart.

The writer is sympathetic to the unemployed; he doesn't suggest they are idlers, but realises that most want to work. However, the reason for their troubles does not lie in economic causes:

It sarves us aw reet, to my thinkin,
Booath gentle an simple alike,
We'n aw spent too mich brass i'drinkin',
An spooart an ridin abeawt. (56)

The poem ends on vague hope that things will turn out right in the end, we'll "power on just as weel as we con" and hope that "the fight may be won".

John Mullin, a Manchester painter and decorator, wrote "The Lint Among the Yure" in the 1930s, lamenting the hard times afflicting the Lancashire cotton industry,

and comparing today's depression with past prosperity. Although, in times past, the mill workers lives were far from affluent there was a basic contentment with their lives and sense of workplace comradeship. He wrote of his attraction to the mill girls in "The Lint Among the Yure":

The'r tresses they were black or brown,
The'r faces fresh as May,
An' though they spent aw th'week i'th'mill,
They smelt as sweet as hay.
They 'ur happy as the day wur lung,
Altho' they'r nobbut poor.
An' when they looast fro' th'fact'ry yon,
They'd lint among the'r yure.

Mullin describes his own love for a mill girl and 'that lint among her yure', and ends on a note of optimism that although time are bad, as in previous slumps things will mend:

In th'cotton teawns toimes han bin bad;
They're noan loike what they wur,
An' fac'try folk han teighten't belts -
Hard toimes are reawnd the'r dur.
Bo' varra soon owd fortune's wheel
'Ull gi'e a turn, aw'm sure,
Then fact'ry honds 'ull have agen
That lint among the'r yure.(57)

Mullin very cleverly uses the 'lint' - fluff which abounded in the mill and stuck in clothing and hair - as an emblem of life and vivacity, particularly in relation to women workers. The decline of the cotton trade naturally meant that the common sight of workers 'loosing' from the mill covered in lint was less frequently seen. The poem's identification with working class people and the final optimism that bad times will mend remind the reader of Laycock's 'Cotton Famine' poetry, although this time round the decline became permanent.

Dialect in the Labour Movement

Lancashire dialect remained an important part, if declining, of the culture of the organised labour movement in the twentieth century, certainly up to the time of the Second World War. This was expressed in two ways: through labour movement publications like the Cotton Factory Times and Labour's Northern Voice, and through social events at which dialect recitations would be given. These will be looked at in turn.

The labour movement press of the period clearly had a strong regional bias. This reflected the structure of Lancashire's labour movement as a whole. The cotton industry was still organised in trade unions which usually did not extend outside Lancashire, and very often were confined to a quite small locality. The weavers' organisations, although federated in the Weavers' 'Amalgamation' were to all intents and purposes locally autonomous. (58) In the case of the Nelson Weavers for example, local disputes and pro-union propaganda were disseminated through their own journal, the Power Loom. (59) The Cotton Factory Times remained the mouthpiece of the cotton unions as a whole, covering in considerable detail current issues within the industry, but also having a 'lighter' side as well. Within the 'political' labour movement the I.L.P.'s Labour's Northern Voice expressed a quite distinctive regional politics - frequently to the left of the party nationally, and highly critical of Labour Party policies over, for example, Soviet Russia. This independent-minded approach combined with a willingness to publish dialect pieces which put across an ideal of socialism 'in the colours of the red rose'. The co-operative movement remained strongly de-centralised, with powerful grass-roots organisation. Most of the Lancashire towns had their own independent society, very often with its own publication - for example the Oldham Co-operative Record, Leigh Co-operative Record, and others. Frequently, the national publications (such as Wheatsheaf) had local supplements. These frequently used local dialect poems or sketches. A further regional publication which expressed women's interests was the Woman Citizen, which was linked to the

co-operative movement.

Dialect and the Union: the Cotton Factory Times

The Cotton Factory Times was by far the most popular of the regional labour movement publications, and was required reading for most cotton workers. It was a way of keeping up-to-date on conditions and rates of pay in other localities, and strikes and other disputes. The publishers were careful to ensure that it was, however, a popular and readable paper. Short stories, serialised novels, cartoons, pictures, dialect sketches and poems, and a column called "Mirth in the Mill" provided this broader appeal. Some excerpts from this are given in Chapter 7, in the section on "Everyday Life" in the mills. (60) One example is the following story, based on the differing meanings of 'union' to working class people:

Some weavers are refusing to learn anyone to weave who is not in the union. A small boy went up to a six-loom weaver the other day and said: "Mi mother wants to know if yo'll larn me to weighve?"
"Is hoo beawn to put thi in t'union?" inquired the weaver.
"Aw don't know," answered the little innocent, "but hoo's put mi grondad in, for they took him up yesterday!" (61)

The story was signed by 'A Jay' of Burnley - a frequent contributor to the column. In the same issue 'Fost Time' of Bury writes a dialect poem complaining about the new wages agreement in her section which - whilst reducing hours and improving the rate of pay - has cut out some tea breaks:

For "Owd Times" Sake

Yo' con talk abeawt your shorter heurs
And t'increased rate o'pay,
But everything is no all fun
Wi me an mine today.
Aw fairly miss them natty chats
We used to ha o'er tay,
When seated on a weft can
Just after t'break o'day. (62)

It was almost obligatory for the contributions to be in dialect - reflecting the actual speech of the cotton workers, giving extra realism to the tales and jokes. The column regularly received a large number of contributions, only a few of which could be given space in the paper. However, by expressing the lighter side of everyday mill life, the column helped to cement the close relationship between the paper and its readers - and also provide an outlet for inexperienced working class writers and humourists.

The paper was particularly interested in publicising and printing the work of cotton workers. A contributor to Allen Clarke's old Northern Weekly, Sarah Robinson, was featured in the issue of January 5th 1923, under the title of "Shuttle and Pen", with illustrations of her at her writing desk, and on her looms. Although she wrote very little in dialect, she did, on occasions, draw attention to grievances in the weaving shed, such as the practice of 'steaming' the cloth (a temporary 'sizing' of the material which was injurious to weavers' health):

The steam is falling upon us
Though great is the pleading of mine,
Dear comrades why don't you come forward
And join in a cause that's divine? (63)

The work of S. J. Bardsley was featured in the same year when his collection "Echoes of Controversy" was published. Bardsley was the full-time secretary of the Manchester and Salford Weavers' Association, and came from Heywood. The reviewer quotes from "Whully's Ghost" - the ghost of an old Chartist come back to berate the local councillors:

Aw'll tell thi what, between eaurself,
It's time ther'n o'pack't to he--l
Aw'll co' an' tell owd Nick misel
They're fit for fotchin.
An' once HE has 'em to hissel
He'll give 'em tatchin'.

"Nay, nay" aw sed; "yo murnt do so,
Yo, surely won't condemn 'em o.
Yon Labour councillor yo' know -

Just spare a friend."
"Well aye," he sed, "he's young an so
He'll happen mind." (64)

Bardsley's poem "Ay! Fayther!" is about a mill engineer whose two daughters weave in the same factory. The weavers are called out on strike, and the management try to force the father to pressurise the daughters not to strike. He refuses - and is sacked. One of the daughters, in the poem, addresses her father:

They thought they'd frighten yo aw'll bet,
An' make us goo a-weavin,
Aw'd freighten them if aw could get
Mi bit o't'woman's neive in!
Let thoose goo creepin' in 'at's fond
O'trucklin' an time-sarvin';
Aw couldn't be a knobstick hond
To save misel fro' starvin.'

The poem is a moving affirmation of working class family solidarity. It ends with the daughter saying she is "preawd o'sich a fayther". Other poems quoted include "Mary Jane" - the weaving shed chatterer who is always telling the official what the union should do, but is always behind with her contributions.

Sam Fitton was writing regular sketches for the Cotton Factory Times up to his death in 1923, using a variety of pseudonyms including 'Billy Blobb' 'Peter Pike', 'Sally Butterworth' amongst others. Fitton's work has been covered elsewhere so particular examples have no need to be quoted. Tommy Thompson, who later became one of Lancashire's most famous dialect writers and reciters, during and after the war, had some early work published in the Factory Times. Other writers who contributed dialect sketches included Alex Southall, J. Quinn ('Flash'), J. P. Bilsborough, Nelly Wild, J. J. Roberts, Emily Greenhalgh and Alice Pratt. The Yorkshire textile workers' leader Ben Turner frequently contributed Yorkshire dialect poems, often on 'labour' themes.

Ethel Carnie Holdsworth wrote a large number of dialect sketches for the paper,

published at various times between the First World War and the late 1930s. During the mid-1930s she had short series of sketches published under the general title "Towd In t' Bell Hour". One tale, of Ted and Mary an old weaving couple on short time, is about the approach of Christmas and the knowledge that they had no money to buy the usual goods. The sketch is a commentary on the workers who had spent all their lives in the mill, with nothing to show for it - materially or emotionally:

Mary did not say much. But Ned knew hoo were thinkin a lot. An' he felt sorry for Mary as he felt for hissel. Two grey- headed old weavers - 'at had woven hundreds o'miles o' cotton in their time, and 'at had bin kept that busy kissin t'shuttle they'd hardly had time to kiss one another! and Kesmas coming and naught for Mary to put in to'oon... (65)

Shortly before his death, Allen Clarke re-established relations with the Cotton Factory Times which reprinted several of his old 'Tum Fowt' sketches - such as "Bill Spriggs as a Minder", "Bill Spriggs in the Weaving Shed", etc. In the 50th anniversary issue (January 18th 1935), Clarke wrote a short article about his early connection with the paper, but does not mention the row which led to his departure and the establishment of Teddy Ashton's Journal. (66)

The importance of the Cotton Factory Times in maintaining a link between the labour movement and dialect writing, at a time when the Lancashire Author's Association was becoming more middle class dominated, cannot be over-emphasised. It published working class writing for a working class readership, and dialect clearly retained a considerable degree of popularity throughout the inter-war years. While many of the dialect sketches were straightforward humorous tales, some of the contributions from writers like Ethel Carnie Holdsworth, Sam Fitton, Allen Clarke and J. S. Bardsley (among many others) did put over a political argument.

Within the I.L.P. and the Labour Party, the plethora of small, irregularly produced local papers had disappeared by the 1920s. However, the publication of Labour's Northern Voice from 1925 onwards, by the I.L.P.'s Lancashire Divisional Council, gave a stable, regionally-based weekly newspaper for the socialist movement. Lancashire dialect writing did not feature in each issue, but the sketches of Hannah Mitchell, writing as 'Daisy Nook' (a reference back to Ben Brierley's Daisy Nook Sketches), appeared approximately every month. Mitchell used dialect to put over a socialist and feminist argument with the labour movement. During the run-up to the General Strike she wrote sketches about the impending conflict - "Abeawt This Coal Crisis" (July 24th 1925), "The Council of Action Meeting" (August 14th 1925), and "Coastal Propaganda" (September 4th 1925). In "Abeawt this Coal Crisis" the use of middle class blacklegs is prophesied by Sam Bates and Dick Kulshaw. Sam, the non-socialist, begins by mentioning the dispute in the mines, and wonders if there will be a strike and use of blacklegs:

"They'll look weel if they came eawt an th'bosses fill their places wi some o'these unemployed".
"Aye they will," said Dick. "They'll look weel as tha ses, but them as take their places ull look seven ways for Sunday when they gotten deawn th'pit. Sum o'these unemployed clerks 'ud mak a rare show wi' a pick an shovel aw should think. There'll noan be so mony volunteers to blackleg deawn below..."
(67)

Mitchell's sketches helped to drum up support for the miners, though she does not appear to have written anything on the General Strike itself. At the same time as she was contributing her 'Daisy Nook' sketches, other occasional dialect pieces appeared, such as the anonymous "Sam's Son". The 'two gradely 'uns' are Ned, the non-socialist, and 'I.L.P. Jack'. Ned begins by cataloguing all the things that his Tory and Liberal friends say about socialism:

Dick Tohray ses id meons thad I
Shall share wi aw mi brass,

Divide id up, then start ogen -
Aw'll noan do that, bi'th'mass!
Jem Rad ses soshalism meons
Nowt but a foolish dream,
He sees 'at some must sup milk
While other folks sup the creom.

To which I.L.P. Jack replies about socialism:

Id meons that th'nation, one an o',
Shall be a great co-op,
'At we shall buy aw th'stuff we want
At ours - that's th'nation's shop.

The poem gives a long catalogue of the socialist argument, ending with the lines:

An' Soshalism meons just this -
'At we shall nobly strive
To mak this world a place where o'
May live an reetly thrive. (68)

The poem uses similar techniques to Mitchell's 'Daisy Nook' sketches, although it is probably a different writer - the dialect spellings are different, apart from the masculine pseudonym. The gullible non-socialist 'Ned' innocently takes in all that the Tories and Liberals tell him; however he genuinely wants to hear the socialist case. Unfortunately, the technique tends to suggest that all the 'Neds' of this world are dim-wits, and the conversion is too often simplistic. On the other hand, it does provide a structure to attack anti-socialist arguments, however crudely. The difficulty one has with Mitchell's sketches is to assess to what extent they had become archaic: did they still have the contemporary force that Clarke's sketches of the 1890s and 1900s had? I suspect to many of her readers, they appeared to some extent artificial and old-fashioned.

Occasionally, Labour's Northern Voice commented on wider aspects of Lancashire literature. In 1925 the centenary of Ben Brierley's birth was celebrated in Failsworth and North Manchester. 'Amicus' contributed an article on "The Ben Brierley Centenary - A Gradely Author of Lancashire" which attacks the middle class appropriation of this

working class writer. Referring to the L.A.A. meeting in Failsworth Council Chamber, 'Amicus' compliments the Liberal Alderman Middleton for his 'masterly eulogy' of Brierley's works. However, he then criticises Walter Butterworth for his presumption in criticising Brierley's deficiencies 'in varsity English'. Major David Halstead gets the hardest knock:

The 'Major' it seemed, was the Tory MP for Rossendale, who, after reciting poetry about "beer", said he had better propose a vote of thanks to somebody, and eyeing the chairman proceeded to eulogise him. Poor Ben Brierley was forgotten....Why do we invite Tory MPs to celebrate the memory of our great literary men? Probably none are less capable of paying tribute to working class genius than those who help to crush and keep in shackles the workers. (69)

'Amicus' praises Brierley's descriptions of hand-loom weaving life, and his own radical ideas, suggesting that "an educated democracy" in the future will realize the full worth of his literary contribution. He also makes a practical suggestion that Lancashire libraries should have 'Ben Brierley' rooms, devoted to working class literature, and suggests that Labour-controlled Manchester should make a start.

Labour's Northern Voice circulated throughout Lancashire, including the weaving districts of the north-east part of the county. At least one dialect sketch, "Spendin' an Savin'", was reproduced from the Power Loom, the Nelson Weaver's paper. The sketch, by 'J.E.L.', otherwise J. E. Lee, an activist in the Nelson union. The narrator speaks to Ned in standard English, while Ned uses dialect to make his point, in this case about the local rates, and the effect of reducing them. It is election time, and the right wing candidates are saying that rates should come down:

"Tha con expect wot tha likes, but th'chap at expects th'rates commin daen so varry far must be a bit ov a simpleton."

"There seems to be a lot of them, Ned."

"A lot o'wot?"

"A lot of folks who think that the rates can be brought down a long way yet, and I fancy we shall hear a lot about it during the next few days." (70)

Both Ned and the narrator agree that reducing the rates means reducing health

care, standards of cleanliness, educational provision and services. The narrator ends by saying that we need councillors with broad vision:

Men who are not afraid of change, but who believe that precedents were made only to be broken, when a better way was found - Aye (says Ned PS), but afore tha gets awl that, tha'll hev to get a new set o'vooaters ats sin that New Jerusalem, even if it were nobbut in a dreeam, an wants to get theer.

More frequently, Ned is placed in the position of the non-socialist, or at least someone in a state of uncertainty, with the narrator presenting the full socialist argument to an unsure Ned. The first sketch Lee wrote, appearing in the Power Loom of August 1918, has Ned doubting the possibility of reducing the working day to eight hours:

"It's all varry weel for yo chaps to talk abaat moor holidays, working shorter haars, and sendin childer to skooil till they're full time, but what aw want to know is, Wheer is 't' brass goin' to come fro'? (71)

In the debate, Lee argues that over the last twenty years hours have gradually come down, yet the standard of living of both employers and workers has improved - in the case of employers markedly, with new villas springing up on the edge of Nelson. So shorter hours have not meant ruin, as the employers were arguing. Although the sketch ends with both Ned and the narrator agreeing the workers are better off, with shorter hours, Ned is not quite convinced. The narrator promises to explain the finer points of his argument in a later issue. In the same issue as "Eight Hours Day" there appeared "An Open Letter from Maggie Ann to Sarah Jane". Most probably this is also by Lee - the dialect spelling is the same, and the letter reflects the aims of the union to involve women more in the work of what is still very much a man's world. Maggie Ann tells Sarah Jane that the union has helped her in getting paid the correct price for her cuts, and also that the union meetings are worth going to. She says that she wasn't the only woman who attended, and the more women who do go, the more chance there is of the union responding to women's interests:

I've bin to meetin's at Weavers' and I find that ther's more women ner me there, and if they keep increasing and asking to know all about the workings o't'Union, it'll be some encouragement to them as has to look after t'weavers' interests. So if tha thinks tha'd like to know more about it thee just ask thi collector or Union chap at works wheer tha does, and don't be flaid on him, he weant hurt thi, if there's owt goes wrong let him know and tha'll see, he'll look after it for thi. (72)

The Nelson Weavers were not typical of Lancashire trade unionism in the inter-war years. Nelson was one of the most militant centres with a strong I.L.P. tradition, into which the Communist Party was able to step. The publication of the Power Loom was only possible on the basis of a large, committed rank and file group of activists. However, the fact that it used dialect in its propaganda suggests that the left-wing leadership saw advantages in putting across a socialist message in 'local' terms. Many of the readers would be familiar with the dialect sketches of the Cotton Factory Times, and the more overtly socialist writings of J. E. Lee could build on that tradition. There was further over-lap, as we have seen, with regional socialist publications such as Labour's Northern Voice.

It should also be emphasised that by the early 1930s the I.L.P. was going into decline nationally. Labour's Northern Voice was not a mass circulation paper, in the way that the Cotton Factory Times had been in the 1920s, or even Northern Weekly in the 1890s and 1900s. The organisational break with the Labour Party, and the I.L.P.'s drift to the far left in the 1930s, resulted in its own isolation, although strong pockets of support continued in its traditional heartlands of the North of England.

Summat Abeaut Co-operation

The co-operative movement's publications within Lancashire used dialect, although the picture is uneven. Many of the local 'Co-operative Records' had regular contributions in dialect, some appear to have had little. Mary Thomason wrote regular sketches for Leigh Co-operative Record during the 1920s, and was an active member of

the Women's Co-operative Guild in the town. David Lawton for many years edited the Greenfield Co-operative Messenger and the local edition of Wheatsheaf (a national co-op journal with local editions). In addition he made regular contributions to Co-operative News and Millgate Monthly (a co-op magazine). Many of the dialect pieces published in Webs From Fancy's Loom had previously appeared in one or other of the co-operative publications. J. T. Taylor was instrumental in establishing, and then editing, the Oldham Co-operative Record in 1894 and included regular dialect items. Sam Fitton was a keen co-operator, although his contribution was mainly in cartoon sketches for the Co-operative News. During and immediately after the First World War he had a series of cartoons published supporting the aims of the Shillito League for co-operative ownership of raw materials, as well as cartoons promoting the co-operative movement generally.(73)

Local co-operative societies had a long record of dialect recitals at social events - or 'soirees' - going back to the time of Edwin Waugh. Co-operative Women's Guild groups often invited speakers like Edith Pearce to talk on dialect writers during the 1920s, or were entertained by recitals from amongst their own members.(76) The independent co-operative societies helped to support a distinctive local and regional culture; and dialect formed an important part of it. It was not accidental that Rochdale, the birthplace of co-operation, also lays a strong claim to having been the dialect capital of Lancashire (see Appendix 32).

Post-War Decline

The decline of these local and regional periodicals after the Second World War contributed to the general demise of dialect within the labour movement; the plentiful outlets that existed for working class writers in the inter-war years, whether through The Cotton Factory Times or local co-operative periodicals, ceased to exist. Labour's Northern Voice continued into the 1960s, although the dialect material had long since

disappeared.

As well as the publication of dialect material through labour movement newspapers and magazines, dialect recitals were a regular form of entertainment at social events, concerts and presentations. Hannah Mitchell gave readings of her works at Labour Party/I.L.P. events, and also mentions in her autobiography hearing other people recite her work.(74) The Communist Party, although I have found no publication of dialect writing, certainly had dialect poetry and sketches recited at social events. Mrs. Emma Partington regularly recited socialist dialect poetry for Bolton Communist Party socials at the Socialist Club on Wood Street, and Harry Pollitt was well known for his 'party-piece' recital of Laycock's "Welcome, Bonny Brid".(75)

The tradition of social events within the labour movement did not die out in the post-war years, but it certainly became less common as an institution; dialect recitation as such became out-dated with the inception of radio, and then television. Dialect reciting probably reached its high point in the early 1920s. (76) Performers like Sam Fitton, L.T. Whipp, Teddy Whittle and others attracted great crowds for their readings (see Appendix 27). The genre was popular for both labour movement socials, and other social gatherings; in some cases, such as the Bolton Communist Party events, the content would be strongly political. In most cases, the sketches would probably be similar both within and outside the boundaries of the movement.

Dialect on the Air

The 1930s saw a number of dialect sketches broadcast by the B.B.C.'s North region, based in Manchester. Among these were several of the original 'Tum Fowt' sketches, recited by Jim Fleetwood of Bolton, and included "Bill Spriggs as a Minder",

"Bill Spriggs as a Gaffer", and similar sketches.(77) Writing in his last Teddy Ashton's Lancashire Annual, published December 1935 just before his death, Clarke commented:

Most of you will have heard the adventures of Bill Spriggs, of Tum Fowt, on the wireless the last few months. It's over forty years since Teddy Ashton wrote the first Tum Fowt sketches that speedily became popular. Well, at that time, if anybody had said, "In forty years somebody in Manchester will be reciting these yarns, and by a marvellous invention, without any telegraph wires, people, hundreds of thousands of 'em, sitting in their homes all over Lancashire, all over England, and abroad, listening to 'em", we should all have answered, "Incredible". (78)

The same theme was picked up in an article published in the Cotton Factory Times, to which Clarke was then contributing similar sketches. Clarke is interviewed and expresses the same astonishment that when he first wrote the pieces he never imagined he would one day sit at home in Blackpool and hear them being recited in Manchester. He also picks up the point that the radio may give dialect a new lease of life:

I am glad we've got some real old dialect on the wireless at last, because it may do something to arrest its slipping from favour. Lancashire dialect, like all other dialect, is slowly dying, but it will be a long time before it is dead.(79)

The 'Tum Fowt' sketches were not the first dialect pieces to be recited on the radio. On June 14th 1932 some of Ammon Wrigley's poems and songs were broadcast by Tom Case. The broadcast was commented on in the Radio Times of June 3rd, in the following way:

Why not give us some of the real Lancashire and Yorkshire songs? is a question often asked by listeners. Perhaps the best answer to this is another question. "Where are these songs?"

The Radio Times goes on to mention Waugh and Brierley, but pleads ignorance of any contemporary dialect writers - other than Ammon Wrigley, whose broadcast it announces. The attitude of the B.B.C. towards dialect was a contentious one in the

1930s; many saw it as more of a threat to the survival of dialect, than a potential aid.

Reginald Kenney identified 'B.B.C. English' as the most serious enemy of dialect:

The announcers of the B.B.C., and the lecturers and speakers who broadcast, are standardising both the English vocabulary and the English pronunciation, and the effect is being gradually felt throughout the cities and shires.(81)

We shall return to this theme in more detail in Chapter 6, "Defending Dialect"; suffice at this stage to note the alarm which was being expressed over radio's potential effect. J. R. Swann, editor of The Record suggested that L.A.A. members write to the B.B.C. requesting that Kenney be commissioned to give a series of talks on the air about Lancashire dialect, in view of his popularity as a speaker on the subject.(82) The L.A.A.'s request was acceded to it in a sense: the B.B.C. put on a programme called "Jannock" which produced this reaction quoted in The Record from an unknown newspaper:

This medley is the sort of thing Southerners lap up as eagerly as a cat swallows cream - and with about as much knowledge as the cat has of a milk separator.(83)

In the following issue of The Record the editor re-published a Radio Times letter congratulating the B.B.C. in broadcasting some Cotswold dialect, and expressed the wish that more dialect might be similarly broadcast. J. R. Swann added:

"Hear hear" say we. It is to be hoped that the B.B.C. having admitted this letter into their organ will pay it appreciative attention. We venture to say that a series of Lancashire dialect recitals on the Wireless would prove highly successful. Now and again in the past we have had brief expositions from L. T. Whipp and Mr. G. Baldwin but many others of our members could well be included.(84)

Swann goes on to suggest several L.A.A. members as possible contributors including Hugh Beech, W. F. Hampson, Hamilton Harris, Sam Heywood and A. Webster. For more general commentaries he proposes Clarke, Hardman, Halstead, Kenney, Butterworth, Pomfret, Swann, Ainsworth and Salkeld. He adds that such

material is less likely to result in the 'switch-offs' which greet 'such an intolerable "heap of jazz 'music'" and other objectionable forms of entertainment. One clearly gets a sense of a campaign by the L.A.A. to get 'on the air'; no doubt the decision to broadcast some of Allen Clarke's early stories was a response to it. Certainly, The Record quotes approvingly from an un-named newspaper report in its December 1935 edition:

And so 'Teddy Ashton' has actually won a B.B.C. showing, even though it is only a series of his Bill Spriggs sketches. The way of the Lancashire dialect writer is hard; nobody takes him very seriously, and the problem of finding an outlet for his work is a heart-breaking one. (85)

Despite the half-hearted praise of the above piece, the broadcasting of the 'Tum Fowt' sketches proved to be a breakthrough. In the following year Hamilton Harris gave a recital of Waugh's songs and poems.(86) During 1937 the B.B.C. ran programmes entitled "The Northern Muse" with poems by W. F. Hampson and Ammon Wrigley, and "Gradelly Folk" with contributions from Hugh Beech and Ammon Wrigley.(87) In the December 1938 edition of The Record J. R. Swann could comment that "Our Association members have had quite a good show recently on the Wireless". The B.B.C. broadcast a "Lancashire Neet" on October 27th with performances by Hamilton Harris, Wrigley, Pearce, W. H. Jenkins, and recital of a Sam Fitton sketch. Pearce was critical of the B.B.C.'s refusal to name all the authors and performers who appeared in the programme. He announced the L.A.A.'s intention to send a letter to the B.B.C., suggesting that the L.A.A. should act in an 'advisory capacity' in relation to the broadcasting of dialect pieces. It mentions the contributions already made by performers like Beech, Wrigley and Harris, and suggests other possible contributors covering literary and historical matters.

The offer does not appear to have been accepted, but the B.B.C. expanded their coverage of dialect and poetry and prose. "The Northern Muse" became a regular feature, although covering Cheshire and Yorkshire, as well as Lancashire. Another

regional programme which included some dialect verse was "North Countrywoman" broadcast during the war years. Mary Luty was one of the contributors to the programme. (88)

The L.A.A. fought a successful campaign to get dialect broadcast on the radio. In a sense though it was a pyrrhic victory. The rapid spread of television in the 1950s made the breakthrough short-lived. While dialect was eminently suitable to radio, it was less well fitted to the demands of television, both artistic and commercial. However, it cannot be said that Lancashire dialect writers were slow to exploit new media; further it seems clear that the radio dialect recitals were popular and made the B.B.C. put on more. In the post-war years Wilfred Pickles and Tommy Thompson became regular, and nationally famous characters.

Conclusion

This chapter has primarily covered the inter-war years, surveying developments in dialect writing, writer's organisation (the Lancashire Authors' Association), the use of dialect in the labour movement, and finally the impact of radio. What stands out is the continuing popularity of dialect in these years, evidenced by the wide publication of dialect - including radio broadcasting - and its use at social events. Middle class writers felt a need to write in dialect, as well as working class socialists. Arguably in both cases, they were trying to 'reach out' and influence a working class readership in different political directions; once again, it was the medium which was primarily the message!

For members of the Lancashire middle class like Major Halstead and A. B. Robinson, dialect was a naturally conservative medium, expressing a changeless 'common sense' world in which everyone knew their place and all worked for the common good. By using dialect a sense of community could be developed which over-

rode class differences, based on a shared locality, and a shared industry, cotton. Dialect was used to attack strikes and suggest that they only harm the people they were meant to help; at the same time middle class writers like Samuel Hardman used dialect to express the 'common sense' opinions of a typical Lancashire worker, dismissive of the mistaken ideas of socialism. However, writers like Allen Clarke, Sam Fitton and Hannah Mitchell were able to write dialect sketches in which socialism becomes the 'common sense' of the working class. Use of dialect in the 1920s was contested terrain and, while middle class writers came to dominate the Lancashire Authors' Association, the existence of a network of labour movement publications gave working class dialect writers an alternative outlet. However, working class writers using a socialist perspective were increasingly on the defensive. Socialism in the 1920s and 1930s became increasingly centralist, whether it was the social democracy of the Labour Party, or the Marxism-Leninism of the Communist Party. Regional sentiments fitted uneasily with either of these political ideologies. The conservative writers, who could use dialect to express a message of class harmony were in a much stronger position. Dialect was able to emphasise the claims of locality and region over those of class; a socialist politics which could have both a regional message as well as a class appeal was no longer available as the 'old' I.L.P. turned into a far-left sect, owing more to Trotsky than Keir Hardie and Bruce Glasier.

The late 1930s mark a clear dividing line for dialect literature; the death of Allen Clarke marked the last link with the dialect tradition of the nineteenth century, with its broad world-view combining with its 'homeliness' and domesticity. It was most appropriate that the first real breakthrough for dialect broadcasting were the 'Tum Fowt' sketches which Clarke originally wrote in the 1890s, and which hark back to Staton's Bowtun Luminary stories.

Notes

1. Patrick Joyce Visions of the People Cambridge 1991 p.290.
2. Rochdale Observer (RO) April 7 1909.
3. "The Rise and Progress of the Lancashire Authors' Association" in The Record (R) June 1930.
4. "Our Association - Its Rise and Development" by R. H. Brodie and A. H. Pearce, R May 1911.
5. L.A.A. Membership List, May 1911, in Lancashire Record Office (LRO).
6. Ethel Pearce edited The Young Socialist for a number of years.
7. L.A.A. - Rules and Objects, May 1911. see Brodie and Pearce, op. cit.
8. *ibid.*
9. "Reminiscences of the L.A.A." R December 1939.
10. Pearce R June 1930.
11. R December 1939.
12. R January 1 1912.
13. R July 1912.
14. It should be noted that the order of proceedings at L.A.A. events has changed little to this day.
15. R May 1915.
16. R February 1916.
17. R February 1917.
18. R August 1918.
19. R November 1923.
20. Labour's Northern Voice (LNV) May 15 1925.
21. Red Rose Circulating Magazine (RRCM) February 1927.
22. RRCM February 1927.
23. RRCM June 1930.
24. RRCM June 1930 and LNV May 1930.
25. RRCM June 1930.
26. *ibid.*
27. RRCM November 1931.

28. ibid.
29. ibid.
30. Many of Clarke's early sketches were reprinted in slightly altered form - his sketch on the 1893 Miners' Lock-Out re-appeared in 1926!
31. C.A. Clarke, The Men Who Fought For Us Manchester 1914.
32. Liverpool Weekly Post (LWP) February 27 1926 to December 11 1926.
33. Teddy Ashton's Lancashire Annual (TALA) 1934, p.8.
34. TALA 1935 p.8.
35. for example, The Knobstick became A Workaday Wooing.
36. Cotton Factory Times (CFT) December 17 1920.
37. CFT July 6 1920.
38. CFT June 11 1920.
39. see Chapter 4 "The New Generation of Dialect Writers".
40. Ammon Wrigley, introduction to Sam Fitton, Gradelly Lancashire p. xiv.
41. see biographical notes in M. Yates A Lancashire Anthology p.298.
42. R May 1915.
43. Talk to L.A.A. at Oldham on March 27 1915, reported in R May 1915.
44. in Yates op.cit. p.327.
45. Ammon Wrigley The Wind Among The Heather Huddersfield 1916 p.230.
46. ibid p.367.
47. ibid p.369.
48. Yates op.cit p.303.
49. see List of Subscribers, in Wrigley op. cit pp.377-399.
50. RRCM March 1931.
51. RRCM April 1933.
52. Yates op.cit p.173.
53. Samuel Hardman Around the Fire Radcliffe 1930 p.97.
54. ibid p.91.
55. see obituary in R March 1933

56. Warrington Examiner December 10 1932, reprinted in R March 1933.
57. G.H. Whittaker A Lancashire Garland of Prose and Verse, Stalybridge 1936, p.214.
58. see E. Hopwood The Lancashire Weavers' Story Nelson 1976 and Andrew Bullen The Lancashire Weavers' Union Nelson 1984.
59. see Alan and Lesley Fowler The History of the Nelson Weavers Association Nelson no date, c 1986.
60. See Chapter 7 section on "Everyday Life". Prizes were given for the best entries, most of which were in dialect.
61. CFT February 13 1900.
62. *ibid.*
63. CFT January 5 1923 H. Poulton "A Padiham Poetess - the Writings of Mrs Sarah Robinson".
64. CFT July 23 1920.
65. CFT November 23 1934.
66. CFT January 18 1935.
67. LNV July 24 1925.
68. LNV July 3 1925.
69. LNV July 9 1925, and see R, August 1925 for L.A.A. report.
70. Power Loom (PL) August 1918.
72. *ibid.*
73. Many of Fitton's cartoons are in the L.A.A. collection, Lancashire Library, Preston, as cuttings.
74. Hannah Mitchell The Hard Way Up London 1968.
75. Conversation with Mrs L. Davies, Bolton.
76. The Record carried regular accounts of co-operative dialect recitals.
77. "Bill Spriggs as a Minder" September 9 1931
 "Bill Spriggs as a Barber" and "Who's T'Gaffer?" September 23 1935
 "Bill Spriggs as a Sowjer" October 2 1935
 "Bill Spriggs at Top o'th'Pow" October 12 1935
 (information courtesy of B.B.C. Written Archives)
78. TALA December 1935 p.7.
79. CFT October 2 1935.
80. Radio Times June 3 1932.

81. R December 1933.
82. R November 1934.
83. R March 1935.
84. R June 1935.
85. R December 1935.
86. R June 1936.
87. R June 1937.
88. R June 1940.