A sepia-toned photograph of two women wearing headscarves and long coats, standing on a cobblestone street and talking. The woman on the left is looking towards the woman on the right. In the background, there are buildings and a street lamp.

# NORTHERN ENGLISH

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A SOCIAL AND  
CULTURAL HISTORY

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Katie Wales

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## Northern English

### A Cultural and Social History

English as spoken in the North of England has a rich social and cultural history; however it has often been neglected by historical linguists, whose research has focused largely on the development of 'Standard English'. In this groundbreaking, alternative account of the history of English, Northern English takes centre stage for the first time. Emphasising its richness and variety, the book places Northern speech and culture in the context of identity, iconography, mental maps, boundaries and marginalisation. It re-assesses the role of Northern English in the development of Modern Standard English, draws some pioneering conclusions about the future of Northern English, and considers the origins of the many images and stereotypes surrounding Northerners and their speech. Numerous maps, and a useful index of Northern English words and features, are included. *Northern English: a Cultural and Social History* will be welcomed by all those interested in the history and regional diversity of English.

KATIE WALES is Research Professor in the School of English, University of Sheffield, and formerly Professor of Modern English Language, University of Leeds. Her previous books include *The Language of James Joyce* (1992), *Personal Pronouns in Present Day English* (Cambridge University Press, 1996) and *A Dictionary of Stylistics* (2001). She is editor of *Feminist Linguistics in Literary Criticism* (1994), co-editor of *Shakespeare's Dynamic Language: A Reader's Guide* (2000), and co-editor of *Dialectal Variation in English* (1999).



# Northern English

A Cultural and Social History

KATIE WALES



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To my parents



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## Preface

It is a universal truth that we have no control over our place of birth but we live with the consequences for ever. (Alan Plater, 1992: 71)

This book is as much a personal journey, as it is a journey in time and space to discover the history of Northern English, itself a story of migrations, emigrations, travel and border-crossings. I was born at the end of the Second World War in Darlington, on the edge of County Durham separated from North Yorkshire by the River Tees. Midway between the glorious Dales and the sea-side, and poised in its dialect between ‘Geordie’ and Yorkshire English, Darlington was for me the *origo*, the still-point of my personal or ‘numinous map’, in York-born W. H. Auden’s terms (1967: 830), of the North and its ways of speech. *Salve magna parens*. My family rarely ventured north of Newcastle, and Hadrian’s Wall was a clear border: for Scotland was certainly perceived as being too far away and too cold, even for us Northerners. J.B. Priestley obviously had similar feelings: north of Newcastle he felt he was ‘marooned in Lapland’ (1934: 290). For the writer Beryl Bainbridge also, but on the other side of the Pennines, ‘the North stretched from Birmingham to Liverpool and then became Scotland’ (1987: 15). Rarely did we ourselves venture ‘over the top’, that is, over the Pennines, to the Lake District; and certainly Blackpool was out of bounds as being ‘common’. In the 1920s and 1930s Lancashire folk apparently had misgivings about Scarborough: not that it was ‘common’ (quite the contrary), but that it ‘lay somewhere in the Mysterious East’ (Mitchell 1997: 83). Our family holidays were always spent Down South, and so beyond Doncaster on the old A1, our mental boundary of the North–South divide. At the age of eighteen I left the North for London, believing in the Dick Whittington trope, like

Bainbridge and many before me, that its streets were paved with gold. However, I was determined never to lose my short *bath* vowel. After nearly thirty years in the University of London I became the Native Returned, coming back to the North to teach in the University of Leeds, the home of the famous *Survey of English Dialects*, the vision of a scholar himself born in County Durham. Leeds, it must be said, was never part of the ‘real’ North from my own childhood perspective; but of course, from a southerner’s perspective it certainly is; and as a product of the Industrial Revolution and the birthplace of Richard Hoggart, Alan Bennett and Tony Harrison it is integral to the present-day mental and cultural landscapes of the North. West Yorkshire too, like the rest of the North, is in J.B. Priestley’s words again ‘the region of stone walls’; and to me, as for Priestley himself ‘When I see them, I know that I am home again; and no landscape looks quite right to me without them’ (1934: 154).

As the North-east writer Alan Plater said in *Close the Coalhouse Door* (1969), ‘there is no such thing as cold objectivity, in theatre or anywhere else’. Neither is there, as this book aims to reveal, in media or literary or historical discourses or in perceptions of dialect and accent. Least of all is there cold objectivity in my own narrative, since my own linguistic centre of gravity is the North and especially the North-east. My only defence is that, in order to reclaim the history of Northern English from obscurity and marginalisation, this itself the product unconsciously or consciously of an ideological perspective in the writing of histories of English, it has been necessary, once again, to *feel* what it is like to be a Northerner. To paraphrase a Northern proverb, you can take the woman out of the North, but you can’t take the North out of the woman.

The North may be familiar territory to me, but in trying to weave a coherent and plausible narrative of the history of Northern English I have ventured into hitherto unexplored domains. Many puzzles still await an explanation, and many areas still await further research. However, I am grateful to the following people for their patience in responding to my many questions, or for their helpful encouragement: David Bovey, Joan Beal, Helen Berry, David Britain, Malcolm Chase, Stanley Ellis, David Fairer, Alison Findlay, Vic Gammon, Rowena

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I should also like to thank the School of English, University of Leeds, for permission to reproduce map 5.1 from the *Survey of English Dialects*; Helen Burnley for permission to reproduce map 3.2. from David Burnley's *Guide to Chaucer's Language* (1983); and Dick Leith for map 2.9. from his *Social History of English* (1983). Taylor and Francis are to be thanked for permission to reproduce map 2.5 from D. Graddol et al. (eds) *English History Diversity and Change* (1995) (Routledge/Open University); maps 2.2. and 2.3. from A.C. Baugh and T. Cable *A History of the English Language* (1978) (Routledge and Prentice-Hall); and map 3.1. from J. Smith, *An Historical Study of English* (1996) (Routledge). Maps 2.2 and 2.3 are also reprinted by permission of Pearson Education, Inc., NJ. Maps 1.1. and 1.2. are reproduced from C.S. Upton and J.D.A. Widdowson *An Atlas of English Dialects* (1996) by permission of Oxford University Press; maps 1.4., 1.5., 2.7. and 5.2. from Peter Trudgill *The Dialects of England* (1999) by permission of Blackwell Publishing; and maps 2.1., 2.6. and figure 2.1 from D. Freeborn *From Old English to Standard English* (1992) (Macmillan Education) by permission of Palgrave Macmillan and the University of Ottawa Press. Maps 1.3. and 1.6., from M. F. Wakelin *English Dialects: An Introduction* (1972) (Athlone Press), are reproduced with the kind permission of Continuum. I have been unable to trace the copyright holder of map 2.8 from *The Story of English* (1986) by R. McCrum et al.

## Abbreviations and symbols

Cu	Cumberland
DAR	definite article reduction
<i>DARE</i>	<i>Dictionary of American Regional English</i> , ed. F.G. Cassidy, 4 volumes, 1985–2002
Du	Durham
<i>EDD</i>	<i>English Dialect Dictionary</i> , ed. J. Wright, 6 vols., 1898–1905
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
EME	Early Middle English
IE	Indo-European
La	Lancashire
ME	Middle English
MS(S)	manuscript(s)
NATCECT	The National Centre for English Cultural Tradition, University of Sheffield
Nb	Northumberland
NE	North-east
NECTE	Newcastle Electronic Corpus of Tyneside English
Norw.	Norwegian
NW	North-west
OE	Old English
<i>OED</i>	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i> , 2nd edition
ON	Old Norse
pl.	plural
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
RP	Received Pronunciation
<i>SED</i>	<i>Survey of English Dialects</i> , ed. H. Orton et al., 4 volumes, 1962–71
sg.	singular

SW	South-west
US	United States (of America)
We	Westmorland
WGmc	West Germanic
WS	West Saxon
Y	Yorkshire
< >	enclose graphic symbols (letters of the alphabet)
//	enclose phonemic symbols
[ ]	enclose phonetic symbols
:	long vowel
'	Main accentual stress or pitch prominence on following syllable

## Old English graphic symbols

- <ð> as in *this*; *thorn*  
 <ƿ> as in *this*; *thorn*

## Phonemic symbols

- /ɪ/ as in RP *hit*  
 /i:/ as in RP *heat*  
 /e/ as in RP *hen* (Cardinal Vowel no.2, front mid-close)  
 /e:/ Cardinal Vowel no. 2 (lengthened)  
 /ɛ/ Cardinal Vowel no. 3 (front mid-open)  
 /ɛ:/ Cardinal Vowel no. 3 (lengthened)  
 /ɜ/ Cardinal Vowel no. 3 (central)  
 /ə/ as in RP *vanilla*  
 /ɜ:/ as in RP *bird*  
 /æ/ as in conservative RP *bat*  
 /a/ as in German *Mann* (Cardinal Vowel no. 4)  
 /a:/ Cardinal Vowel no. 4. (lengthened)

- /ɑ:/ as in RP part  
 /ɒ/ as in RP dog  
 /ɔ:/ as in RP paw  
 /u:/ as in RP food  
 /ʊ/ as in RP sugar  
 /ʌ/ as in RP bud  
 /aɪ/ as in RP night  
 /eɪ/ as in RP day  
 /ɔɪ/ as in RP boy  
 /aʊ/ as in RP house  
 /əʊ/ as in RP road  
 /o:/ Cardinal Vowel no. 7 (lengthened)  
 /o:/ rounded Cardinal Vowel no. 2 (lengthened)  
 /ɪə/ as in RP ear  
 /ɛə/ as in RP care  
 /ʊə/ as in RP tour  
 /p/ as in RP pin  
 /b/ as in RP bin  
 /t/ as in RP tin  
 /d/ as in RP din  
 /k/ as in RP kin  
 /g/ as in RP gun  
 /x/ voiceless velar fricative  
 /s/ as in RP sin  
 /z/ as in RP zoo  
 /θ/ as in RP thin  
 /ð/ as in RP this  
 /f/ as in RP fin  
 /v/ as in RP vine  
 /ʃ/ as in RP shin  
 /ʒ/ as in RP genre  
 /tʃ/ as in RP chin  
 /dʒ/ as in RP judge  
 /h/ as in RP house  
 /m/ as in RP mouse  
 /n/ as in RP nice

- /ŋ/ as in RP singing
- /l/ as in RP lull
- /r/ as in RP roll
- /ʁ/ uvular fricative
- /j/ as in RP yawn
- /w/ as in RP win
- /ʌ/ voiceless labial-velar fricative
- /ʔ/ glottal stop or plosive



# 1 *'The North–South divide'*

## 1.1 Introduction: an 'alternative' history of English

Imagine a map of England upside down, as if London was not in the South-east, but 'Up North' in the far North-west, where Carlisle should be; and as if Lancaster was roughly in London's present location 'Down South', with Berwick the furthest point south. Even with the map the right way up, and Scotland included, it is hard to accept the fact that, as Cumbrian-born Melvyn Bragg has stated ([1976] 1987: 15) 'Wigton is the middle of the British Isles'. (Pearce (2000: 172 claims Dunsop Bridge in Lancashire for this same 'epicentre'.) For a rich variety of reasons, some of which will be explored in this book, the perceived centre of national gravity, so to speak, whether culturally, politically or economically, is 'Down South', particularly London and its 'Home' Counties, and this is certainly embedded in history; but one of my major aims is to upturn common conceptions of regions by changing the perspective. In focussing on the North of England and Northern English, a region and a dialect with a history that stretches far back before the Norman Conquest, the aim is also to turn upside down common conceptions of the history of the English language by inverting accepted hierarchies of influence and prestige.

By sheer coincidence this same metaphor recurs on the dust-jacket of a recent book by David Crystal, *The Stories of English* (2004). The book's avowed aim is to 'turn the history of English on its head', by placing 'regional speech and writing . . . centre stage'. Crowley (1991: 2) noted over ten years ago how the history of the English language, on the evidence of the many textbooks on the subject, has been a 'seamless narrative' which takes the story actually to be that of 'Standard' English: a metonym for the whole (see also J. Milroy 2002: 7). This is what I would term a 'funnel vision', not a 'tunnel vision' of the

development of the language, which has been continually enriched by forms of speech conveniently forgotten or marginalised. Even the four volumes of the *Cambridge History of the English Language* from the Old English period to 1997 have little to say that is not centred on the development of Standard English; nor indeed more recently Fennell (2001). It is essentially the same story that is being told over and over again. Dialects of English, conveniently subsumed under the general term ‘non-standard’ (and thus labelled *only* in relation to the ‘standard’, a point to which I shall return), are marginalised and silenced, ceasing to have any significance at all after the Middle English period. At an extreme there is the explicit comment by Burnley, but which is indeed implied in many accounts, that he ‘sustains the consensus view of the development of the language through successive historical periods *to the goal of present-day standard English*’ (1992b: x, my italics). Such a statement is an inheritance of similar sentiments from language study of the early twentieth century. Here is Wyld’s more brutal comment (1929: 16; my italics):

Fortunately at the present time, the great majority of the English Dialects are of very little importance as representations of English speech, and for our present purpose we can afford to let them go, *except in so far as they throw light upon the growth of those forms of our language which are the main objects of our solicitude, namely the language of literature and Received Standard Spoken English.*

Further, given the historical fact that standard written English emerged out of London from the late fifteenth century; given London’s influence thereafter on fashionable pronunciation with its associated notions of ‘correctness’; and given the basis of ‘Received Standard Spoken English’ or ‘Received Pronunciation’ (RP) in the phoneme inventory of Southern English, there has also been a strong bias in histories of English towards both a metropolitan bias, and a southern one: what I shall term *metrocentrism* and *austrocentrism* respectively. So take these statements by Lass (1992: 32): ‘English in the *normal* sense means one or more of the standard varieties spoken by educated native speakers . . . These considerations, as well as the weight

of tradition, make it *natural* for histories of English to be tilted *south-eastwards . . .* (my italics). For Trudgill (1999b: 13) and Crystal (2004: 217), it is the dialects in this same ‘southeast of England’ which rose to prominence, because this is where Oxford and Cambridge, as well as London, were also to be found. In the South-east? Such comments might go unnoticed, so used are we to the absence or ‘silence’ of dialects in linguistic historical accounts. We are used also to statements like, for example, ‘English does not have front rounded vowels.’ As Foulkes and Docherty (1999: 12) protest, however, this is really about Received Pronunciation, for front rounded vowels are certainly prevalent in Tyneside speech. Again at an extreme there is the strangely biased view of Zachrisson (1914: 47), which, thankfully, is no longer accepted: ‘Northern English is merely a variety of the Standard speech of the Capital. In earlier days London English was the best and purest form of English, and was therefore imitated by provincial speakers. This pure form of English has remained in the North of England.’

As it so happens, David Crystal provided an invited ‘Epilogue’ to a collection of essays on what is usefully termed ‘alternative histories’ of English edited by Trudgill and Watts (2002). This must be seen as a watershed for histories of English, which in future, as Crystal clearly recognised, can no longer provide what Trudgill and Watts describe as the same ‘system of self-perpetuating orthodox beliefs and approaches . . . passed down from one generation of readers to the next’ (2002: 1). Yet it is to be said, my own comments above notwithstanding, that while Crystal’s own work (2004) interleaves sections on regional variation in his ‘interludes’, he otherwise follows the orthodox history of English in the main. It is fitting, however, that a new millennium does appear to be signalling a change of direction in academic discourse towards a more variationist approach. For it is certainly the case, as I shall discuss further in chapter 5, that on the one hand vernaculars continue to be ‘threatened’ by Standard English but also, on the other hand, there are yet clear signs, especially in the spoken medium, that the ideological hegemony of a ‘Standard’ is being seriously undermined.

This book, then, is a contribution to the ‘Alternative History’ of the English language. So far as I know, there is no similar focussed account

of the history of a variety of English in England that is not the Standard; and certainly not of Northern English, whose 'pedigree' is much older. Even book-length studies of Northern English viewed synchronically are rare. One hundred years ago appeared R. J. Lloyd's *Northern English* (1899), but a short description only of phonology. Yet Northern history and culture of itself has attracted considerable academic interest (see Musgrove 1990, Jewell 1994 and Kirk (ed.) 2000 in particular), and is the focus of such significant journals as *Northern History* and the *Northern Review*. Interestingly, however, thirty-five years ago Tomaney (1969: 64) complained about the tendency for historians to 'reduce a complex and variegated history of English to a version of the history of the southern core'.

As I hope to reveal, the history of Northern English certainly raises interesting questions about the notion of a 'standard language'. One important and recurring theme is that, in fact, Northern English (and its speakers) since the fifteenth century is perceived very much in relation to an Other, the prestigious Standard English, which is perceived as superior: thus, along with other vernaculars, dismissed not only as 'non-standard', but also therefore as 'subordinate': cf. the *OED*'s definition of *dialect*: 'One of the *subordinate* forms or varieties of a language arising from local *peculiarities* of pronunciation and idiom . . .' (my italics). Further, historically also dialects like Northern English are seen essentially as 'sub-standard': socially stigmatised and culturally inferior, 'provincial' and (in particular) 'working class' and 'uncouth'. As Colls says very strongly (1998: 196–7): 'In England, to be called a region from some metaphorical 'centre' is an act of patronage . . . regions are . . . used to fix a place's relationship to power rather than geography.' Or, as Jackson puts it, 'To refer to a dialect is to make a political rather than a strictly linguistic judgment' (1989: 159). For Northern English (as indeed for Cornwall English no doubt), such a biased opposition is most likely influenced by the perceived geographical periphery of the region. But in one sense, however regrettable, and however much I shall myself be trying to reclaim Northern English from what are sometimes seen as 'post-colonial' phenomena of marginalisation, illegitimacy or subordination, the relationship with Standard English is still part of the modern definition of Northern English,

and this ‘cultural opposition’ in Bakhtin’s terms (Morson 1986: 5) has been continuously and dynamically constructed and negotiated over the centuries. However, I have scrupulously tried throughout to avoid using the term *non-standard*, because of its negative ideological connotations.<sup>1</sup> Since the nineteenth century the opposition has been compounded by the intervention of Received Pronunciation, which has deepened a perceived social contrast between working and middle/upper class (chapters 4 and 5). Lying behind the relationship between Northern English and written and spoken standards is the North’s general relation to the South, an even more significant, and much older, cultural dialectic, to which I return in the sections below, and which again is a pervasive theme of this book. Despite Jewell’s historical treatment of the subject (1994) and essays edited by Baker and Billinge (2004) more recently, this relation, as Samuel had earlier stated (1989: xii), ‘remains to a great extent unstudied’, especially in linguistic terms.

Yet the reclamation of Northern English does raise other important issues in relation to provinciality, the periphery and so-called ‘standard’ varieties. Viewed over almost 1,500 years the history of Northern English reveals its own periods of cultural and literary prestige; and also time and again as we shall see, reveals the general fact that community and supra-local ‘norms’ of language or ‘regional standards’ exert as much influence as extra-regional, right up to the present day. There is also the fact that, particularly in the North-west and the far North-east, dialect, identity and literary output through the centuries have been shaped as much as by the attraction or pull of a Scottish ‘standard’ as by an English. Indeed, for some linguists the speech of these regions even at the present day could equally be regarded as Scots (Tom McArthur, p.c.). Moreover, in the Anglo-Saxon and medieval periods, as we shall see in chapter 2, the North of England, whose

<sup>1</sup> In the discourse of pedagogy *non-standard* is sometimes synonymous with *ungrammatical* or *unidiomatic*: as in the QCA document *Improving Writing at Key Stages 3 and 4* (1999), where it is equated with a ‘poor understanding of written standard English’, ‘errors’, and inappropriate ‘informality’ (p. 19). Cheshire and Stein (1997) try to distinguish between *vernacular* and *non-standard*, but do admit that their contributors vary in their use of these terms (p. 11).

domain stretched from Edinburgh to the Humber, remained politically, culturally and also linguistically distinctive, almost another ‘country’.<sup>2</sup> Even after the ravages of the early Vikings in the late eighth century which destroyed the best of Northern arts and literature famed throughout Europe, the North, precisely because of these same Scandinavian tribes who turned settlers, remained distinctive. York became the capital of a powerful Anglo-Scandinavian and ecclesiastical ‘province’ (the antonym of ‘provincial’) with its own distinctive language and laws, and the locus arguably of an important standard or linguistic ‘norm’ within the region’s bounds. Interestingly, Trudgill (1999b: 13) contemplates what might have been, in another twist to the idea of turning ideas upside down. ‘If the capital of England had been, say, York, then Standard English today would have shown a close resemblance to northern dialects of English.’ In actuality, the capital of part of England certainly has been York, and a strong challenger until the Industrial Revolution to London’s dominance; and it is precisely because of this, as we shall see in chapter 3, that Northern English did have some considerable influence on the emerging ‘Standard English’. Moreover, Northern English had momentous effects on the English language in general, since its dramatic sea-change from a highly inflected language to its so-called ‘analytic’ form happened first in the North.

While it has to be said that this significant shift has been much discussed in histories of English, the idea of a possible catalyst of an Anglo-Scandinavian koiné has been underplayed; and the mechanisms or agencies and motivations for the influence of Northern English on London English have been seriously left unexplained. The so-called ‘spread’ of Northernisms is presented simply as a *fait accompli*. This does lead to problems of understanding and explanation, and I cannot say that I have necessarily resolved them. Clearly, a scarcity of relevant documents and documentation does not help. Other problems have to do with what I term the ‘anachronistic fallacy’ or what Banton (1980: 21) terms ‘chronocentrism’: the tendency to interpret other historical periods in terms of the values and

<sup>2</sup> C. H. Williams (1993: 176) notes how Northumbria was not fully incorporated into the English state until the 1530s. The prince bishops of Durham used to hold their own parliament and mint their own money.

concepts of the present time, and hence to see language change and diffusion from a modern, and particularly urban, even metropolitan, sociolinguistic perspective. I recognise that my own ideas and approaches are not all of them found in the conventional textbooks, in my attempt to imagine what it must have been like to be a Northerner in a distant time whose mental map of the landscape, its boundaries and trade routes, would have been quite different. One version of chronocentrism is certainly to underestimate the significance of waterways, as distinct from roadways, for Northern success and influence, and more research is needed. For despite the persistent image of isolation, the North's 'water-map' included the great estuaries of the Clyde and the Humber in the Anglo-Saxon period, 'highways to wider worlds' (Musgrove 1990: 45); the ports of Newcastle for coal with a direct sea-route to London, and of Liverpool and Whitehaven, gateways to Ireland and to the United States for exports and a flow of immigration and emigration (chapters 3 and 4).

Other problems of understanding and explanation are connected to the very fact of standardisation itself: notably with the gradual suppression over time of dialect syntax and spellings in printed public documents reflecting local accents in public writing as the written standard grammar and orthography took hold. As Cheshire and Stein (1997: 5) have said, and as will certainly be revealed in chapter 5, it is thus very difficult to 'relate present-day dialect forms to past . . . and to establish historical continuities'. But the general lack of interest in dialect grammar on the part of modern linguists does not help: the codification of the language essentially means the codification of Standard English.

There is the danger, it has to be said, that the suppression of the vernaculars in the written standard belies their strong voice in the spoken medium, however hard to retrieve before an age of technical recording. (But even in this new age, studies of dialect prosody, for example, are rare, as we shall see in chapter 5.) The emphasis on the written standard and the apotheosis of Wyld's mainstream literary standard in our educational system also suppress the flourishing dialect voices in popular literature, both oral and written. This book is therefore a 'cultural' as well as social history of Northern English in the broadest sense in order to bring into stronger focus the North's rich heritage of

genres such as ballads and dialogues, particularly from the eighteenth century onwards (see chapters 3 and 4): confirming a continuing sense of strong regional, and also local, identities.<sup>3</sup>

As we shall see time and again from chapter 3 onwards, literature written in ‘deviant’ dialect spellings has generally been received by readers and reviewers outside the region with either distrust or disgust. It is dismissed as unintelligible, and its authors as uneducated. An author who attempts to represent local dialect is caught in the double bind of having no local ‘standard’ orthography that is not the mainstream, and so must invent his or her own. Yet dialect spelling provides useful evidence in the reconstruction of historical linguistic features, despite some modern academic misgivings. For while it may be technically inconsistent and potentially an inaccurate guide to accent, we have to recognise, as Murray states (1873: vi), that it is ‘in so many cases . . . our only guide to the living organism which once breathed within’. And whilst we must also allow for literary licence in representation, there is no doubt that local authors were generally sensitive to the ‘high-frequency variables’ (Glaser 1997: 125) or shibboleths of their vernacular, whether pronunciations, lexis or discourse markers, in those genres which attempted to mimic or recreate the informality of everyday dialect in use. Indeed, without such popular literature valuable clues would be lost. While cultural historians of the Industrial Revolution have recognised, as we shall see in chapter 4, the social value of the ballads of the mill-worker and pitman, they await further linguistic and pragmatic analysis; as indeed the songs and play-bills of the Northern music-hall which flourished well into the twentieth century (chapter 4).

<sup>3</sup> Studies of the history of Northern literature generally are surprisingly scarce, although northern texts have featured in studies of the nineteenth-century regional novel (see e.g. Snell 1998; also Pocock 1978). Russell’s (2004) study of popular cultural representations of the North since the nineteenth century unfortunately appeared too late for discussion here. Students of Wordsworth are rarely introduced to the Cumbrian ballad tradition from which he drew inspiration, the focus of 3.4. Despite its title, Craigie’s *The Northern Element in English Literature* published some seventy years ago (1933) is mostly about the ‘far North’ of Scotland and Scandinavia. But his rueful comment on the North’s ‘absence’ in histories of English literature provides a nice illustration of one of the enduring myths of the North, discussed further below (1.3) and in chapter 2: perhaps, he says, it is because the North was ‘regarded with the same aversion as the Frisians who gave it the significant name of *de grime herne*, “the grim corner of the world”’ (p. 9).

Moreover, there is considerable value from popular literature defined in its widest sense for what it tells us about the *speakers* of a dialect, their beliefs about their own vernacular and local identity, and attitudes to others and ‘posh’ speech. Conversely popular literature, including regional novels, can tell us a great deal about the attitudes of ‘outsiders’ and those who presume themselves to be sophisticated metropolitans; it also contributes to the creation of stereotypes for external consumption. Whether it be the novels of Emily Brontë or John Braine, the television soap *Coronation Street* or the strip cartoon of *Andy Capp*, all have contributed to the formation of images of the North and its dialects which continue to haunt the images of the present. These themes recur throughout the book. Hence my definition of ‘culture’ follows that of Schiffman (1996: 5): ‘the set of behaviours, assumptions, cultural forms, prejudices, folk belief systems, attitudes, stereotypes, ways of thinking about language’. It therefore includes not only literature but any kind of discourse or text which embodies or illuminates ideas and myths about Northernness and Northern English, in space as well as time, and so the Northern mental landscape as well as the physical. For the twentieth century this would therefore include the mass media: film and television soaps and advertising (chapter 5); and newspaper headlines and cartoons (see 1.3 below). Again, I think the significance of the media has been seriously understudied in relation to language change, and so too the general phenomenon of the *perceptions* of the speech of others, outside the local community. Coupland (1988: 95) is right to suggest that dialects are ‘value-laden’. Certainly in this book, the history of Northern English and the history of perceptions of it are inextricably linked. In [the next section](#) I show how such perceptions colour our very sense of where the North actually is.

## 1.2 The ‘boundaries’ of Northern English

Where does the North of England begin? Where does it end? Where is Northern English to be heard? There is no ‘North’ on a map (or ‘South of England’), but most English people have some idea of their own, if there is no common agreement. Pocock (1978) argues rightly that the

North is a geographical expression, with a relative rather than exact latitudinal definition (cited Law 2004: 33). In a similar way the phrase the ‘North–South divide’ has been used constantly in the media since the Thatcher-led Conservative government of the 1980s, right up to the present day, largely with reference to the economy and social issues such as housing, and with a polarity negatively weighted towards the North; but it is marked in different places in different mental landscapes. Asked in a perceptual exercise to mark it on a map of England, students at the University of Leeds ranged widely from a Humber–Mersey line, to a Severn–Wash, but in all cases to the exclusion of ‘the Midlands’ (Shuttleworth 1998). When my own students (sixty-six over two years) were asked to mark dialects they knew, a line just north of Birmingham across the country corresponded to the lowest limits of Northern dialect areas they offered. (See further below.) ‘Beyond Birmingham’ seems to have been George Orwell’s boundary, in his *Road to Wigan Pier* (1937; see also 1.3 below).

A great deal depends on the *origo*, the point of departure: southerners tend to place a ‘divide’ much further south than northerners. ‘Beyond the Solent’ marks the North for those who live on the Isle of Wight (letter to the *Times* 4 October 2003). For Londoners and the metropolitan-oriented media, popular ironic phrases like ‘North of Potters Bar’ or ‘North of Watford’, beyond the northern limits of the former Greater London Council and the last stop on the Metropolitan underground line respectively, suggest that these are cultural faultlines, the bounds of civilisation (see also Wales 2000: 4).<sup>4</sup> The cultural historian Robert Colls (1977: 12), born in South Shields, ruefully remarks that ‘the first flat vowel dropped and the suburban serfs *south of Hatfield* know a Geordie for what he is’. I return to the question of a linguistic ‘North–South divide’ below; and ‘flat vowels’ in 1.3. More recently has appeared the phrase ‘north of Notting Hill’ (A. A. Gill, *Sunday Times* 3 September 2000).

<sup>4</sup> ‘North of Watford’ is noted in the *OED* (from 1973); but strangely, ‘North of Potters Bar’ is absent. In the early 1970s the Council in Doncaster (noted below) produced a caricature of Londoners’ perceptions of the North in the form of a distorted map, which marked Potters Bar as ‘the end of civilisation’, Manchester as ‘the end of railways’, and Scotland as ‘the end of roads’: see Gould and White 1974: 40, also Wales 2000: 6–7.

Routes by road and rail are certainly significant markers: Doncaster on the old A1 marks the boundary between North and South for many North-easterners like myself; a former stage-post half-way from London to the Scottish border thereafter. It also lies on the river Don, the historian Musgrove's boundary (1990: 8). For Leeds-born Tony Harrison 'the rot sets in at Retford', just south of Doncaster on the mainline railway to Edinburgh (1987: 46); but for W.H. Auden on the mainline to Glasgow 'to this day Crewe Junction marks the wildly exciting *frontier* where the alien South ends and the North, my world, begins' (1947, my italics; cited Myers and Forsythe 1999: 8). The opening of the M1 motorway in the 1960s provided a new phrase: 'North of Watford Gap', i.e. a service station in Northamptonshire, a county certainly around the 'middle' of the country (although the popularity of the phrase may have more to do with its associations with 'Watford').<sup>5</sup> On the same motorway there is a sign 'The North' actually near Luton as well as Leeds; but 'just south of Sheffield' is the personal boundary for the social commentator David Smith (1989: 266); and Sheffield also for Beal (2005). The more recent motorway, the M62, cutting east and west between Liverpool and the Humber estuary, is the limit of the North for the young South-Yorkshire-born poet Simon Armitage (1999: 16). Rivers, which act as both borders or 'moats' (Musgrove 1990: 8) and trade-routes, are ancient divides as we shall see further in this book: the Humber and the Trent are frequent cultural signifiers both today and over the centuries. In the North-west the Mersey fulfils the same function. For the Scots, the River Tees is such a salient marker, once the limit of the scope of the Domesday Book; or even Hadrian's Wall.<sup>6</sup>

While the Northern limits of the North of England may have shrunk somewhat since the Middle Ages, the political border with Scotland seems an obvious present-day boundary, intensified by the recent restitution of the Scottish parliament. My own students, interestingly, tend

<sup>5</sup> 'Travels beyond the Watford Gap' is the subtitle of Jennings' satirical travelogue *Up North* (1995); see also 1.3.

<sup>6</sup> In one of the early episodes of the Newcastle-set TV series *The Likely Lads* in the 1970s (see 5.1) Bob explains to Terry that he can't come to the pub that night as they are giving a party for some of Thelma's friends, from 'Down South'. Terry: 'What, you mean Middlesbrough?'

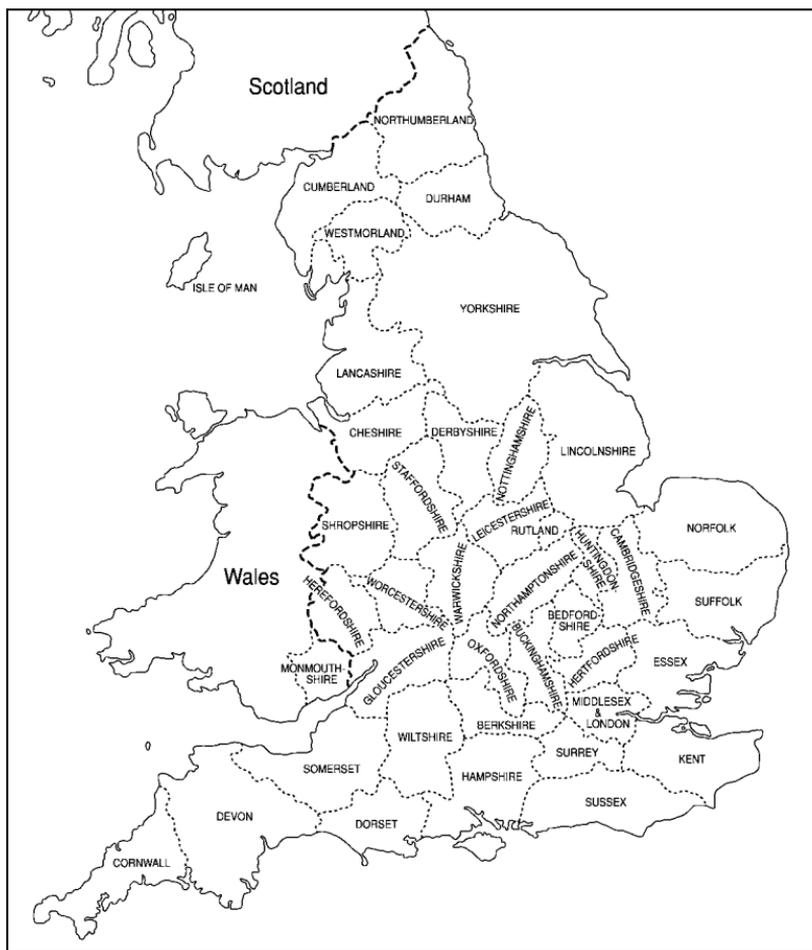
to mark it on a map between Durham and Yorkshire, reflecting again a southern *origo* (as well as geographical ignorance perhaps: see 1.3 below). The Scottish border area has always been fiercely contested: Berwick-upon-Tweed may find itself now in England, but history has seen it change hands, as it were, over a dozen times since the thirteenth century, with significant linguistic consequences. Yet while there is an increasing tendency for Scottish borderers to assimilate their speech to Lowland Scots, and English borderers theirs to Northumbrian or Cumbrian English, it is perhaps premature to agree with Crystal (1996: 325, 328) and McArthur (ed.) (1992: 893) that this is the real linguistic ‘North–South divide’. (See further chapter 5.)

Related to the slippery definition of the northern and southern limits of the North is the equally variable definition of what it circumscribes. Here definitions can vary according to genre or public discourse: bewilderingly at the present day from tourist guides to TV reception areas, for instance, or from Local Education Authorities to the judiciary circuits. According to Smith (1989: 3), the country’s Central Statistical Office distinguishes generally, if somewhat confusingly, the ‘North’ from the ‘North West’ and from ‘Yorkshire and Humberside’ (crossing the Humber estuary). There is thus neither ‘North East’ (since Cumberland and Westmorland are part of the North, not the North-west) nor generic ‘North’; but some Northerners north of the Tees or close to the Scottish border might have some sympathy with the view expressed to Simon Armitage that Yorkshire ‘isn’t the North at all’ (1999: 217). For sampling purposes, the British National Corpus in the mid-1990s distinguished a generic ‘North’ north of a line from just below the Humber estuary across to the Mersey, and including Cheshire; and, confusingly, another ‘North’ within that area covering the North-east and Cumbria. The two other designated sub-regions were Lancashire and Yorkshire and Humberside.

In this book, the terms *North-east* and *North-west* are convenient general labels. The North-east covers the territory east of the Pennines from the Scottish border down to and including Teesside; the North-west that west of the Pennines from the border down to Merseyside. The term *the far North*, (albeit austrocentric) when it is not used for Scotland, covers north Northumberland and Cumberland

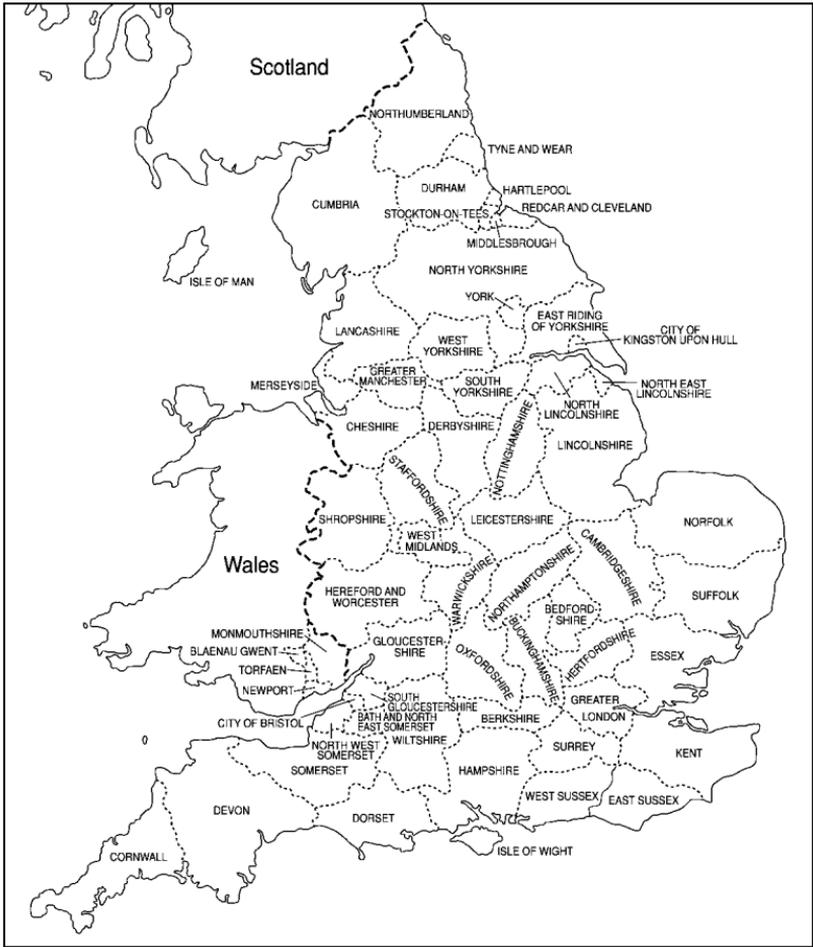
and the Scottish Border area. But more specific labels are sometimes clearly needed, especially in relation to dialect variation and local culture. It may be easier, for older English people at least, to think of the North in terms of the ancient county boundaries which existed for public administration until 1974, and which form part of the nation's psycho-geography and cultural history. County histories, of course, have been an important focus for historians; and many useful nineteenth-century publications from the English Dialect Society use the counties as their frameworks. The North would then typically comprise six counties: Northumberland, Durham and Yorkshire in the East, and Cumberland, Westmorland and Lancashire in the West. This is the region named by Orton and his colleagues for their post-Second World War *Survey of English Dialects (SED)* (to which I shall return below, and in chapter 5), and which forms the area surveyed in this cultural history of Northern English. However, unlike the *SED*, I am not including the Isle of Man, despite its own rich linguistic history (see Belchem 2000). Some accounts of the North would include Cheshire in addition (see e.g. D. Smith 1989); even Cheshire and Derbyshire (*Collins English Dictionary* 1987). For Jewell (1994: 23) Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Staffordshire and Cheshire are in the 'near north'. All these counties are excluded here. Speakers in the *SED*'s six counties satisfactorily uphold a present-day 'General Northern English'. Yorkshire, the largest of the counties of England, covering one-eighth of the whole country, more than 6,000 square miles, and believed to have 'more acres than letters in the Bible' (Armitage 1999: 18) comprises historically three divisions or *ridings* (from a Scandinavian word 'third part': see 2.3): North, East and West, and these divisions I shall also refer to, where necessary. As map 1.1 below visibly reveals (taken from Upton and Widdowson 1996: xxii–xxiii), the Northern counties, which make up one third of England, are generally much larger than those in the Midlands and further south, reflecting their origins in powerful regions before the Norman Conquest.

For historical reasons, and also for convenient linguistic reasons, I have tended to favour these old county names for reference. However, in 1974 the county divisions changed, largely to reflect the growth of conurbations, which by this time as we shall see in chapters 4 and 5,



Map 1.1. County boundaries pre-1974.

affected the development of the North of England quite considerably. Since there have been additional changes since 1974 (see further Royle 1998: 3–7), this is another reason to favour the old historical county names where these are most relevant. As map 1.2 below reveals (also from Upton and Widdowson 1996), in the mid-1990s there is Cumberland and Westmorland merged to form Cumbria; Tyne and Wear carved out of the south of Northumberland and the north of Durham; and around the Tees estuary Hartlepool, Stockton-on-Tees, Redcar and Cleveland



Map 1.2. County boundaries in 1996.

and Middlesbrough, reflecting dramatic growth in these towns.<sup>7</sup> Only the East Riding of Yorkshire keeps its ancient name, since it refused to be abolished; North and West Yorkshire remain in essence, but South Yorkshire now joins them, thus making four ‘ridings’ instead of three, in defiance of etymology. (Winifred Holtby’s novel *South Riding*

<sup>7</sup> As Llamas (2000: 127) records, Middlesbrough, on the south bank of the Tees and once in the North Riding of Yorkshire, has had four different identities since the late 1960s.

(1936), however, proved to be prophetic.) Technically speaking then, as most contemporary dictionaries record, ‘Yorkshire’ no longer exists, but Yorkshire people themselves tend to resent this. The cities of York and Kingston-upon-Hull, and the conurbations of Greater Manchester and Merseyside are all new areas, the latter two carved out of Lancashire. As Ellis (1992: 14) records, overnight in 1974 many Yorkshire people ‘felt their birthright [had] been taken away’, when they found themselves ‘inhabitants of Cleveland, Humberside [later abolished] and even Lancashire’. Villagers in the Pennines, the ‘natural’ geological border between Lancashire and Yorkshire, found themselves in contested territory, and Saddleworth changed sides almost as many times as Berwick-upon-Tweed (see further Armitage 1999: 2). Where I have occasion to refer to urban conurbations I have tended to use terms like *Merseyside*, for example, as geographical rather than administrative regions: hence my use also of convenient labels like *Tyneside*, *Humberside* and *Teesside*. (I also use *Newcastle* as a shorthand for *Newcastle-upon-Tyne*.) The only convenient term from the post-1974 county boundary arrangement has proved to be *Cumbria*, to comprise both Cumberland and Westmorland. But this term, like the term *Northumbria*, also has an historical usefulness for the early period of the North’s history.<sup>8</sup>

It is against this complex bureaucratic grid of county boundaries that we can begin to map Northern English; but this, too, raises similar and interesting questions about shifting locations and mental perceptions, and about generic (‘Northern English’) versus specific labels (‘Yorkshire English’, ‘Geordie’, ‘Scouse’, etc); and about the disputed relationship in general between dialect boundaries and cultural boundaries (see further Long 1999a,b, Wales forthcoming). There are certainly

See further chapter 5 for potential linguistic consequences of this. Paxman (1999: 79) recounts a campaign for the ‘Real Counties of Britain’ in 1997 to restore the ancient county names and to abolish terms like *Cleveland* and *Merseyside*. The county names listed by Cheshire, Edwards and Whittle (1989: 193) to accompany their map of ‘Standard Regions’, the basis for their urban dialect survey, and the same as those cited by Smith (1989) above with reference to the Central Statistical Office, are now out of date.

<sup>8</sup> Crystal (2004: 536–7) has a hybrid map since he too marks *Cumbria* amongst the older county names. Puzzlingly, he does not label or number Northumberland and Durham at all: this area is totally blank.

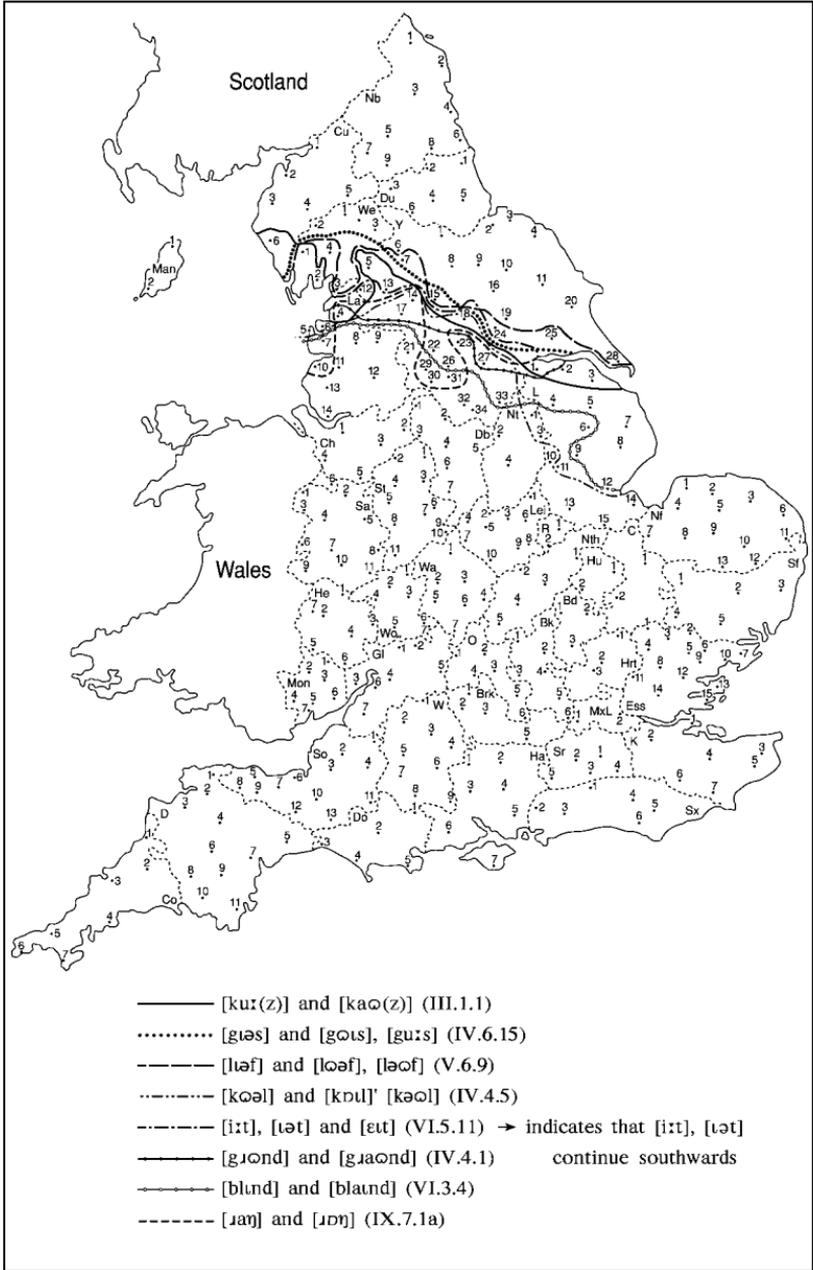
many dialectologists who would deny that there are dialect ‘boundaries’ in any case; and who would argue that isoglosses, however carefully researched, are but rough and ready guides to distinctions; and that it is rightly preferable to see dialect features on a continuum, with ‘focal’ and ‘transition’ areas (see, e.g. Orton and Wright 1974: 3, Davis, Houck and Upton 1997). Rarely, moreover, do isoglosses bundle together to mark one significant whole dialect from another (but see below); and phonological isoglosses do not always coincide with morphological or lexical. Orton and his colleagues carefully avoided classifying English dialects in this way: the division of the volumes of the *SED* into ‘Northern Counties’, ‘West Midlands’, ‘East Midlands’ and ‘The South’ is a pragmatic convenience: for, as Glauser states (1991: 3) ‘it is difficult to talk about regional speech without referring to the area in which it is found’.

Yet as a historical linguist Orton was still fascinated by the association of ancient natural boundaries with traditional dialect variation: the River Tees for him was one such important marker (Upton, p.c.). And these same natural bounds, of rivers, marshland and hills came also to signify ecclesiastical and administrative regions: this same Tees, for instance, both the boundary between the ancient kingdoms of Bernicia and Deira and the settlement limit of the Scandinavian immigrants (see further chapter 2). The landscape is as much a ‘text’ inscribed with cultural meaning as a conventional one. Because of the distinctive geological character of Cumberland and Westmorland, for instance, in contrast with that of the East Riding of Yorkshire, and because of their different histories of settlement and language contact, we should not be surprised if the communities have developed and preserved cultural practices and different varieties of speech; and just as significantly have come to *perceive* differences in speech. As Glauser says generally (1991: 4), ‘whatever reservations dialectologists may have about boundaries, they are actually disconfirmed by dialect speakers who are quite willing to say where their speech forms come to an end’. The Pennines definitely divide Lancashire from Yorkshire, an ‘East–West divide’; and we should no more be surprised about linguistic differences between the two regions than differences of architecture and sport and historical embattlement in the ‘Wars of

the Roses'.<sup>9</sup> Nearer to the present day, the growth of cities and conurbations has had a significant impact on new dialect formation, as we shall see in chapters 4 and 5.

There is, however, an interesting bundle of phonological isoglosses, identified by Wakelin (e.g. 1972, 1983), and to which I shall return many times in this book, which has come to be known as the 'Humber–Ribble line', since it roughly follows the river courses (including the Ouse, Wharfe and Lune) east and west between the Humber Estuary and the mouth of the Ribble near Preston and Lancashire. (See map 1.3 below with additional *SED* data.) Wakelin argues convincingly that this, for him, 'transitional area' (1983) accords with the ancient boundaries of the kingdoms of Northumbria and Mercia, i.e. the Midlands (see further chapter 2); and that it was a significant marker also of 'Northern' and 'Midland' speech until the middle of the twentieth century in what is termed 'traditional', i.e. rural dialects: thus an ancient linguistic 'North–South divide'. On this basis areas like Merseyside and West and South Yorkshire would be Midland dialect areas; and even today it is arguable that they represent interesting 'transition' zones between Northern and Midland dialect speech (as indeed North Lincolnshire or Lindsey, to which I return in chapter 3). For the phonetician Alexander Ellis (1889), the first to try and classify English dialects systematically on the basis of selected linguistic features, the southern parts of Lancashire and Yorkshire were certainly excluded from his 'northern division', one of six major dialect areas; but he excluded the far north of Northumberland and Cumberland (his 'lowland [i.e. Scottish] division') (see Ihalainen 1994: 238–45). For Trudgill too (1999b, see also 1990) South Yorkshire in 'traditional' dialect terms (more properly *accent*) would be outside the 'Northern' proper ('Eastern Central'); but so also would be the whole of Lancashire strangely ('Western Central'); although his criteria of pronunciation are different from both Ellis and Wakelin. The 'Northern' areas are simply 'Northumberland' and the rest: the

<sup>9</sup> Places near the 'border', or close to the Pennine peaks, do raise problems of dialect identification, however. For Tolkien, for example (1928: xiv), traditional Huddersfield dialect in the West Riding was part of the North-west region, and also on the boundary between Northern and West Midland: see below.



Map 1.3. The 'Ribble-(Calder-Aire)-Humber line'.

'lower North' (see map 1.4 below). The 'South' is technically everything else, including the 'Central' areas, and therefore including Lancashire and South Yorkshire. However, it is debatable whether traditional dialectologists (e.g. Wakelin) would have seen what is essentially North Midland speech in this way (see also Sheard 1945: 184).

Trudgill's criteria for 'modern' dialects (i.e. accents) are different, although still based on features of pronunciation (see map 1.5 below). The 'North' is now subdivided into 'Northern' and 'Central' (no longer in the South), with Merseyside, along with the 'West Midlands' and 'Northwest Midlands' as part of the 'West Central' group. The northern division proper is subdivided into the 'Northeast' (from the Tees to the Tweed) and the 'Lower North', which includes 'Humberside', and also, across the Pennines, 'Central Lancashire' and the 'Central North', i.e. Cumbria. (That Cumbria is either 'lower' or 'central' does seem rather odd.)<sup>10</sup>

What is most significant is the main 'isogloss' which divides his 'North' from the 'South': the vowel in words like *butter*, which is pronounced /but/ north from a line running roughly from the Wash, south of Birmingham to the Welsh border (a 'Wash-Shropshire line') and pronounced /bʌt/ south of this line. (This same line, as can be seen, is found on his map of Traditional Dialect areas, to distinguish the sub-regions of 'Central' and 'Southern'). I shall be discussing this isogloss, and what Wells (1982: 349) calls the FOOT–STRUT split in several places in this book (see, e.g. chapters 3, 4 and 5; also 1.3 below), because it is arguably one of the most culturally salient markers of a linguistic 'North–South divide' today, and popular in linguistic stereotyping (see 1.3). Strangely, the other most salient marker in pronunciation, the vowel in BATH words, typically short /a/ in the North and lengthened with a change of quality in the South /ɑ:/, which I shall also be discussing, is not explicitly used by Trudgill as one of his criteria, although he admits he could have used it (1999: 69), and it is so used by

<sup>10</sup> Confusion about his own terminology may explain Trudgill's statements in two places (1999: 67,70) that he has assigned Sheffield to the 'Central North'. The latter is Cumbria for him. Sheffield would have to be on his border between 'Central Midlands' and the 'Lower North'.



Map 1.4. Trudgill's 'traditional' dialect areas.

Wells (1982: 349) to distinguish his linguistic 'North' from his 'South', along with the FOOT–STRUT split (see also Wakelin 1972: 85–7 and map 1.6 below).<sup>11</sup> The BATH line at its easternmost end runs parallel with the STRUT line, but it dips down to the Severn estuary to the west

<sup>11</sup> It is sometimes forgotten that maps which show the limits of /ʌ/ and /ɑ:/ in publications from Chambers and Trudgill onwards (1980) are based on Wakelin (1972),



Map 1.5. Trudgill's 'modern' dialect areas.

(a 'Wash–Severn' line). A diagonal Wash–Severn line NE–SW is certainly cited in many different kinds of discourses as a 'North–South divide', not necessarily linguistic, even if the basis is not necessarily made clear: e.g. Smith (1989: 31), and the *Collins English Dictionary*

itself based on the *SED*'s rural and working-class data: so that they are not reliable indications of the possible 'limits' today, or of the sociolinguistic distribution. See further chapters 4 and 5.



For both Trudgill and Wells then, the Midlands lie mostly in the ‘North’ for purposes of pronunciation; although, the linguistic North–South divide(s) notwithstanding, typical Northern accents are more likely to be associated with what Wells terms, much more simply than Trudgill, ‘the middle North’ (covering Yorkshire; and also Merseyside for him, unlike for Trudgill) and the ‘far North’ beyond that, and ‘focal’ rather than ‘transitional’ areas.

Although I have used neither Trudgill’s nor Wells’ terminology, their attempts to classify Northern accents do indicate the diversity of Northern speech concealed under the blanket term ‘Northern English’. I shall certainly return to these modern dialect and accent areas in chapter 5 to discuss modern and possible future trends: e.g. the extent of ‘Geordie’, for example, and its potential overlap with ‘North-east English’. Yet there is even more rich differentiation historically from dale to dale, and from coast to inland city. However geographically close places may be, conceptually they may be miles apart. Wells himself suggests (1982: 350–1) that local accent differences like these are ‘sharper’ in the North than elsewhere, and he sees an interesting connection between this and the fact that Harold Orton and most of his colleagues were Northerners. So too, in fact, was Joseph Wright, editor of the monumental *English Dialect Dictionary* (*EDD*) (1896–1905) (see further chapter 4). Both dialectologists also published studies of their native village dialects: Wright (1892) of Windhill in West Yorkshire, and Orton (1933) of Byers Green in County Durham. Along with a perception of ‘sharper’ differences, there is also a general perception that accents are ‘broader’ in the North than the rest of England.

### 1.3 ‘The North is a different country’: the mythologies of Northern English

Toolan (1992: 31) has suggested that ‘dialect . . . is grounded in and made possible by a collective and conventionalised perception of significant differences’. Certainly, that Northern English is as much a cultural construct as it is a reality is one of the themes of this book; also that the perception of differences as realised in stereotypes is

inextricably interwoven with the differences themselves; and that ‘significant differences’ between Northern English and ‘Southern English’ have been noted, and exaggerated, over the centuries. This book will also reveal how the polarity between Northern English and Southern English is also intertwined with a deep-rooted cultural opposition between the North and the South, comprising a mish-mash of mythologies of Northernness accrued in different phases of the North’s history. Each of the following chapters will attempt to tease out these representations, to explain their origins.

Basic even to this cultural opposition is a more pervasive global semiotic of a North–South divide based on temperature: consider phrases like ‘the frozen North’ or ‘the warm South’. This can be applied to the British Isles with some truth, so that persistent images of the north and south of Britain are in terms of ‘cold’ and ‘warm’, with a negative and positive bias, the North of England, like Scotland, further ‘up’ from the Equator on a map towards the North Pole, as opposed to Down South. (See further Wales 2000: 4–5.) The harsh weather of cold (and also rain) recurs in Elmet-born Ted Hughes’ poem ‘Wild Rock’ as a motif: ‘Roof-of-the world-ridge wind / And rain, and rain. Wind. Cold. A permanent weight / To be braced under. And rain . . .’ (1993: 17). The weather, and the mists from the Irish Sea, are popularly believed to account for the adenoidal quality of the Scouse accent. The climate is matched by harsh and bleak scenery; and a harsh language: the granite and grit of the mountains of the Pennines and Lake District up to 350 million years old matched by the hard(y) or ‘gritty’ Northerners with their ‘hard’ consonants, ‘granite speech’ (*Guardian* 10 September 1998) and ‘wind-swept vowels’ (*The Times* 14 October 1995), trying to graft a hard living sheep-farming from the infertile soil, or digging out the coal and lead. Arable lowland Britain, tilting towards the South-east, is based on the ‘softer’ limestone, sands and clays: so that already we can begin to see how inequalities of perception are based on a landscape which itself is inscribed in power (Short 1991: 66). For the writer Mark Hudson (1994: 11), attempting to record his family’s Northern roots, ‘as a child the Northern World had seemed as harsh and unyielding as the cold, hard surfaces of the chapel [of Durham Cathedral] . . . the

unrelenting physical ugliness . . . the . . . brightness and hardness of the people themselves . . . the blunt forcefulness of their speech’.

As we shall see in chapters 2 and 3, the North for much of its history until the eighteenth century was relatively inaccessible: so that it was perceived by travellers from the south as alien and uncivilised, a mixture of Gothic wildness and wilderness, as if it were a ‘foreign’ country, and hence a region to be feared.<sup>13</sup> In the nineteenth century Emily Brontë’s novel *Wuthering Heights* epitomised the untamed nature of the moorland and its inhabitants with their unintelligible vernacular. Even in the late twentieth century the writer Robert Chesshyre (1987: 48) feels that as he drives north, ‘beyond Scotch Corner [where the A66 leaves the A1 to go north-west across the Pennines to Penrith] . . . Beowulf and the monster Grendel might have been out there somewhere, fighting their legendary battles for bog and moor . . . The north is another country.’ And even today, it has to be said, Northerners and Southerners are frequently ignorant, as Bryson (1995: 212) has noted, ‘of the geography of the other end of the country’. As the journalist Beatrix Campbell says (1984: 33), ‘London experiences the “provinces” as if they were up the Amazon, up a mysterious not say jungle path.’ ‘Pig-ignorant southerners like me’, confesses Charles Jennings (1995: 62) ‘generally fail to distinguish between Yorkshire and Lancashire. We can’t tell the accents apart . . . And if in doubt, we tend to lump everything north of Birmingham up to say, Sunderland, into Yorkshire. Lancashire is the forgotten country.’ There are those who would argue that Cumbria is equally ‘forgotten’, a ‘blank space’ on the Northern map. East of the Pennines, the poet Philip Larkin, when he was Librarian at Hull University, notoriously rather played on London journalists’ reluctance to venture east of Doncaster, and revelled in his isolation (*The Guardian* 6 July 1999).<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Schama’s description (1996: xxvii) of the Roman perception of the Germanic peoples beyond the Danube and the Rhine interestingly parallels ancient Southern perceptions of the North of England: ‘The inhabitants of these forests . . . were regarded pejoratively as savage and uncouth people who failed to cultivate the land’, and ‘beyond the insiders’ world of the known and the everyday’.

<sup>14</sup> Bradford officials in 2002 according to the *Daily Mail* (18 September 2002) organised a poll amongst 1,000 Southerners to locate nine cities north of Birmingham within

The Industrial Revolution merely compounded images of Northern alienation: the wilderness of nature replaced by the wastelands of slag-heaps, which continued to evoke well into the twentieth century the Other Worlds of either the lunar or post-Holocaust landscapes. Grime was added to the grit. The iconography of the North became strongly associated with mine, mill and factory, with poverty and working class, and hence naturalised. According to Samuel (1998: 56) the gloom, smoke and cold for Matthew Arnold was symbolised in the very Northern names like *Higginbottom*, *Stiggins* and *Wragg*, still the stuff of jokes, it has to be said. A.A. Gill, already cited above, describes the home town of a Yorkshire ‘girl’ as being ‘up in Grimslurry, or wherever she hails from’ (*Sunday Times* 9 April 2000). People spoke loudly in the North, it was believed, to make themselves heard above the clatter of the looms in the mills. The late twentieth century aftermath of the Industrial Revolution, with the dereliction of factories and mills leading to widespread unemployment, did little to alter such negative perceptions. Even Northerners themselves, albeit emigrants, contribute to this image of otherness. The Liverpool-born novelist Beryl Bainbridge wrote after her ‘journey’ back to the North: ‘I had thought that North and South had long since merged, and discovered they were separate countries’ (1984: 8), a sentiment echoing even Beatrix Campbell’s (1984), who made her own journey from London back to Carlisle: ‘Throughout my journey I found myself saying, “they’re different countries, North and South”’ (p. 4). Campbell’s title (*Wigan Pier Revisited*) evokes George Orwell (1937), who must be seen as one of the most significant contributors to the mythology of the North and South in the early twentieth century, albeit an outsider, and whose views are endlessly inscribed in travelogues or social commentaries

twenty-five miles of their correct position. One third failed to register Hull was by the sea; and Newcastle was placed anywhere between Scotland and the Wash. Only one in six people could place Bradford in anywhere near its correct location. The *Guardian* (6 March 1999) reported on a ‘twinning’ initiative between a former mining-town Ashington in Northumberland and its namesake over 300 miles away in West Sussex. The latter’s parish council chairman said: ‘We’re stuck at opposite ends of the country with little knowledge about life in the other half . . . We’ve got this great divide—everything north of Watford is almost foreign – and it seems a bit silly.’ A lecturer from the northern Ashington joked: ‘It will be interesting to see whether brown ale-swilling ex-pitmen can be understood south of the Tyne.’

like Chesshyre's and her own. As Orwell wrote, to go to the North was 'to enter a strange country'; for it was the industrialisation of the North that gave the 'North-South antithesis' its peculiar slant (1986 edn: 101).<sup>15</sup> Bainbridge's later publication (1987) was 'an attempt to examine the roots of that evergreen assumption that England is two nations' (p.9), and has an epigraph from Disraeli's novel *Sybil, or The Two Nations*. The popular American travel-writer Bill Bryson (1995), already cited, and who lived for a time in Yorkshire, plays upon this image for defamiliarisation; the journalist Charles Jennings (1995) exploits it for satire.

One important consequence of this idea of the North as another 'country', is that it is rarely seen as essential to 'Englishness' and national identity (see Colls 1998: 197, Matless 1998: 17). Paxman (1998: 156) suggests 'rul[ing] out places like Northumberland and Yorkshire, where fields would have dry-stone walls and . . . [be] full of sheep anyway'. England, by synecdoche, is the land of the 'soft' South, thatched cottages, *luncheon* and bowler hats, not blackened back-to-backs, *dinner* and flat caps; the English language is Southern English, and middle class to boot.<sup>16</sup>

Yet against these negative images there are the persistent more positive stereotypes, exploited in modern advertising for example, of the resilient Northerners, hard-working and humorous in the face of adversity, blunt speaking and straight-forward, friendly to strangers, their working flat caps matching their 'flat' vowels. As Northerners themselves would say, they have 'no side': they are what they seem, like the Hovis brown bread which actors with Northern accents have advertised 'wi' nowt taken owt'; or Tetley tea-bags. From the 1990s the hugely popular animated films starring Wallace and his dog Gromit, created by Preston-born Nick Park, have owed a great deal of their success not only to Wallace's string-vest and slippers but also

<sup>15</sup> Although Bell (1995: 18) compares Orwell's journey to 'a trip to a remote part of the British Empire', Orwell was not entirely unsympathetic to the North: '. . . there is at least a tinge of truth in the picture of Southern England as one enormous Brighton inhabited by lounge-lizards. For climatic reasons the parasitic dividend-drawing class tend to settle in the South' (cited Bell 1995: 17-8).

<sup>16</sup> I would therefore disagree with Campbell, referred to above, who argues that the genre of the journey is rooted in the 'quest for the essence of England and Englishness' (1984: 3).

his Lancashire accent.<sup>17</sup> What Colls and Lancaster (1992: 25) see as the ‘commodification’ of regional, and here Northern, culture is not new: the new railway companies in the nineteenth century ‘sold’ the burgeoning Northern sea-side resorts and the Lake District to tourists and holiday-makers, and the music-hall promoted the Northern comics and singers (see further chapters 4 and 5).

Linguistic features, like cultural artefacts such as caps and braces, leeks and whippets, serve again as metonyms or synecdoche, standing for the whole image, and this is clearly the case for the short vowel in words like *bath*, *grass*, and *laugh*, and the vowel in *butter*, *up*, or *bugger*, which are mentioned time and again in characterisations of Northern English.<sup>18</sup> This cultural ‘shorthand’ is useful in austrocentric or metrocentric media headlines or cartoons: e.g. ‘It’s Not Grim Oop North’ (*London Midweek* 3 February 1997); ‘Ey oop! Soaps put the accent back on dialects’ (*The Times* 16 March 1998). There is certainly condescension here: very rarely indeed are other accents and dialects featured in headlines and cartoons in this way, and with ‘deviant’ or ‘non-standard’ orthography. The Northern speech of the Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott, born in Wales but brought up in the North-west, was the regular butt of ridicule when he first took office; so too was the short ‘a’ of the former Conservative leader William Hague, born near Doncaster, as in (the originally Northern) *daft*. The speech habits stand for the whole person, who becomes the butt of ridicule. (See also chapter 5.) The successes of a university mathematics professor at Bradford University were headlined: ‘By ‘eck, lad, this triumph of number crunching adds up to nowt’ (*Guardian* 31 January 1997). The playwright Alan Bennett born in Leeds, and to whom I return in chapter 4, records in his diary for 18 September 1984 how he has been irritated by the ‘inane’ publicity hand-out for *A Private Function*. ‘I find myself described as “This Northern lad” – Is Pinter ever described as “This East End boy”?’

<sup>17</sup> Northern MPs protested in July 1998 when Oxford University Press released plans to ‘translate’ Nick Park’s film *The Wrong Trousers* into RP for the EFL market.

<sup>18</sup> An interesting parallel can be drawn between the cultural and linguistic situation as depicted here, and the ‘North–South divide’ in France: the *langue d’oil* and *langue d’oc* regions (based on the words for ‘yes’ in the thirteenth century). Chambers and Trudgill (1998: 101–2) note the correlations of isoglosses, perceptions and cultural artefacts and practices, but make no reference to England as a comparison.

(1994: 137). Sixteen years later (22 November 1990) he records how the *Guardian* printed his 'fairly uninspired' comment about the departure of the Prime Minister Mrs Thatcher, but prefaces it with 'Oo 'eck and systematically drop[s] all my aitches. I suppose I should be grateful they didn't report me as saying "Ee ba gum, I'm reet glad t'Prime Minister's tekken her 'ook"' (1994: 192). Ten years on, the *Guardian* were still at it: when Bennett turned down an honorary degree from Oxford University, the headline ran 'Nooooo, nooooo, ever so gently, nooooo' (15 January 1999), emphasising the typical general Northern long vowels instead of RP and southern diphthongs. Other Northern writers have been subjected to similar treatment: an article on the poet Simon Armitage, for example, headlined by 'Nowt wrong with iambic pentameter' (*Daily Telegraph* 28 August 1998). When Tony Harrison wrote a poem in the *Guardian* in 1999 about the poet laureateship, a full-colour cartoon appeared in the same newspaper, with the Queen's flunkey on the phone: "'Er majesty says 'ow about poet in residence at the Tower, Mr 'arrison' (19 February 1999). Although Tony Harrison was sensitive to H-dropping (see further chapter 4), it is a feature of many dialects, not just Northern: but, of course, socially speaking it is strongly stigmatised.

I return to exclamations and discourse markers like *ee ba gum* and (*by*) *'eck* in chapter 5. They are clearly used stereotypically, particularly for Trudgill's 'Lower North' varieties: *ee ba gum* tending to represent Yorkshire dialect, and (*by*) *'eck* to suggest the Mancunian/Lancashire idiom of the television soap *Coronation Street*, itself a cultural construct (5.1): 'By 'Eck, Vera and Red Mick have a ball on gala night out' (*London Evening Standard* 30 September 1998). Consider also: 'Ay up, the accent's on good job prospects' (*Daily Mail* 19 June 1996, on the move of telesales to Sheffield and Leeds); and 'Regional riches put one over on standard English, like' (*Guardian* 16 March 1998). Irritating though such stereotypes may be (and 'Howay the lads!' for Geordies) it is nonetheless interesting to note how they do suggest a spoken idiom, and features rarely transposed to the printed page. Unlike visual signs such as cloth caps, braces and whippets, linguistic stereotypes also sometimes distinguish very broadly between different 'types' of Northerners (e.g. Yorkshire *tykes*,

Scousers and Geordies) and their local speech. Wells' 'middle North' speech is rarely confused with that of the 'far North': definite article reduction, for example, represented by <t'> in spelling, or even by complete omission, is confined mostly to Yorkshire or Lancashire speech representations ('there's trouble at t'mill'), whereas *divvent* for Standard English 'don't' or 'doesn't' is assigned to Geordie stereotypes (but see further 5.3). Like the visual cloth caps and whippets, linguistic stereotypes 'may become increasingly divorced from the forms which are actually used in speech' (Labov 1972: 180); yet in some cases cartoons actually seem to be noting quite up-to-date features of pronunciation, salient to the local community itself. Consider, albeit in a heavily satirical frame, *Private Eye*'s Newcastle United supporters: 'If them poncey *blurks* *divvent* stop staring ahm gannin-to chin 'em' (22 March 2002) (see further chapter 5).<sup>19</sup> The interplay of *salience* and *stereotyping* I shall return to time and again. Moreover, it has to be recognised that, just as with landscape or custom, a linguistic feature which is potentially a source of ridicule or condescension to an outsider, can be a source of pride to its speaker, as with the short 'a' in *bath*, *grass*, and *daft* for instance. Even stereotypes can amuse local speakers, external and inward 'gaze' in collusion: take the Newcastle-based satirical magazine *Viz*, and the cartoon 'Sid the Sexist' with its broad Geordie representation (see further Beal 2000). I shall return to this issue in chapter 4, in particular, in relation to the Northern music-hall tradition.

Fifty years ago Weinreich (1954: 397) argued the case for relating dialectology, concerned as it is with 'borders, centers and overall dynamics of language areas', to 'culture areas' in the broadest sense. In the following chapters I trace the diatopic 'dynamics' of Northern English in close inter-relations with the cultural tropes and representational practices of different historical periods. In the next chapter I go back to the beginning.

<sup>19</sup> The title of the regular strip cartoon in *Private Eye* plays upon the North–South divide: *It's grim up North London*. In this particular set of three frames, the trope of the North as an alien country is also played upon: the Geordie football fans in the final frame are heralded by: 'I just love the racial melting pot that is London'; 'Yes, hearing the patois of far off lands, the poetry of distant tongues. I could listen to it for hours!'

## 2 *The origins of Northern English*

### 2.1 Northern dialects and ‘boundaries’ in the Old English period

Many of the present-day images of Northern English and the North discussed in [the first chapter](#) are deeply rooted in history. Much of the North, especially the North-west and Scotland also, has remained ‘alien’ and inaccessible till modern times. Indeed, until the advent of the railways the easiest route to Scotland via the North-west was by boat from Fleetwood in Lancashire to Ardrossan on the Clyde coast (Hannavy 2003: 58). Lancashire until the eighteenth century remained hemmed in between the Mersey marshes, the Pennines and the Lake District, although accessible to Ireland. According to a seventeenth-century poem *Iter Lancastrense* the sparse roads were ‘gulphes of dust and mire’ (cited Langton 1998: 83) since the main roads north and south across Britain lay east of the Pennines. There was Ermine Street, for example, built by the Romans, part of the present-day Great North Road or A1, and implied on an early map of Britain by Matthew Paris of St Albans (c.1250). But even as late as 1740 there was no turnpike north of Grantham (see further chapter 3). The Norman bishop Geoffrey of Monmouth in his *History of the Kings of Britain* said of the land across the Humber that, for the invading Saxons, it was ‘a frightful land to live in, more or less uninhabited’, and that it therefore offered a safe hiding-place for foreigners (cited Jewell 1994: 187). Reginald of Durham in his *Life of Oswald* (twelfth century), echoing Geoffrey, describes how the land twixt Tyne and Tees, his own territory in fact, ‘was then a wilderness inhabited only by wild beasts’ (cited Hunter Blair [1949] in Lapidge and Blair 1984: 50). Both may have taken their cue (and so perpetuated the image) from Bede, also himself a North-erner, in his *History of the English Church and People* (see below).

He describes Lastingham on the North Yorkshire moors near Whitby as being set ‘amid some high and remote hills which seemed better fitted for the haunts of robbers and the dens of wild beasts than for human habitation’ (Book III, ch. 23, p. 177).

These facts, and also others relating to the geological make-up of Britain as described in chapter 1, have had major consequences for the settlement patterns and economy of different regions. The North has, until the nineteenth century, remained relatively sparsely populated, lacking as it does in the main the rich agricultural farmland and pastures of the South. The poor land quality, because of the millstone grit and volcanic rocks of the uplands meant that, in the medieval period in particular, the North’s share of wealth suffered in comparison with elsewhere (Horobin and Smith 2002:28). One of the earliest comments in English on this ‘North–South divide’ in economic terms, a divide which is still much discussed today, comes from a Cornishman John of Trevisa (1385), comments reproduced a century later by William Caxton in his *Description of Britain* (1480): ‘. . . the kyngis of England abyde and dwelle more in the south contrey than the north . . . by cause that ther is better corn londe, more people, more noble citees, more profitable havens in the south countrey than in the north . . .’ (cited in Görlach 1991: 215). Now it is well known that John of Trevisa was himself translating the Latin *Polychronicon* of Ranulph Higden of Chester (1327), itself based on William of Malmesbury’s *De Gestis Pontificum Anglorum* (c.1125) (see Wakelin 1972: 34). I shall have occasion to discuss Trevisa and his forebears again in this chapter and the next; and we must recognise the contribution such textual ‘recycling’ makes to the formation of stereotypes. Nonetheless, these comments on the economic divide are not in William of Malmesbury; and are also hard to disagree with throughout the medieval period (see further Musgrove 1990, Jewell 1994).

By the time of John of Trevisa in the late fourteenth century linguistic differences between the North and the South are clearly evident. It is probable that these linguistic differences emerged soon after the continental invaders from various regions in Saxony and Denmark and along the North Sea coast settled and dispersed in Britain from the fifth century onwards; although it is also probable that some levelling

between lects took place first (Trudgill 1986: 288). It is also possible that distinctive features survived the invasions (cf. Bradley 1911: 26–7, Hogg 1992: 3); or were encouraged by continued links across the North Sea (cf. Nielsen 1985: 61, Knowles 1997: 34). According to Bede's well-known account in his *History of the English Church* or *Historia Ecclesiastica*, written from his monastery in Jarrow, the Jutes settled in Kent and the Isle of Wight, the Saxons in Essex, Sussex and Wessex, and the Angles from Angeln in Schleswig settled north of the Thames in East Anglia, the Midlands and the North. Other tribes may well have been involved in the migrations, for example the Frisians (cf. the place-name *Dumfries*). Scholars have traditionally, if rather crudely, labelled what they see as the 'major' dialects in the Anglo-Saxon period largely on the basis of Bede's account, because of the scarcity of actual linguistic data: hence 'Anglian' from the West Germanic dialect of the Angles; 'Kentish' from that of the Jutes; and 'West Saxon' from that of the Saxons. 'Anglian' itself is traditionally divided also into 'Northumbrian' in the North and 'Mercian' in the Midlands: see Freeborn 1992: 17 and map 2.1 below. For the ME period these dialect areas are traditionally renamed and redivided: 'Northern' for Northumbrian, 'Southern' for West Saxon and Mercian divided into 'East Midlands' and 'West Midlands': see further 2.3. and map 2.2 (from Baugh and Cable 1978: 190) below.

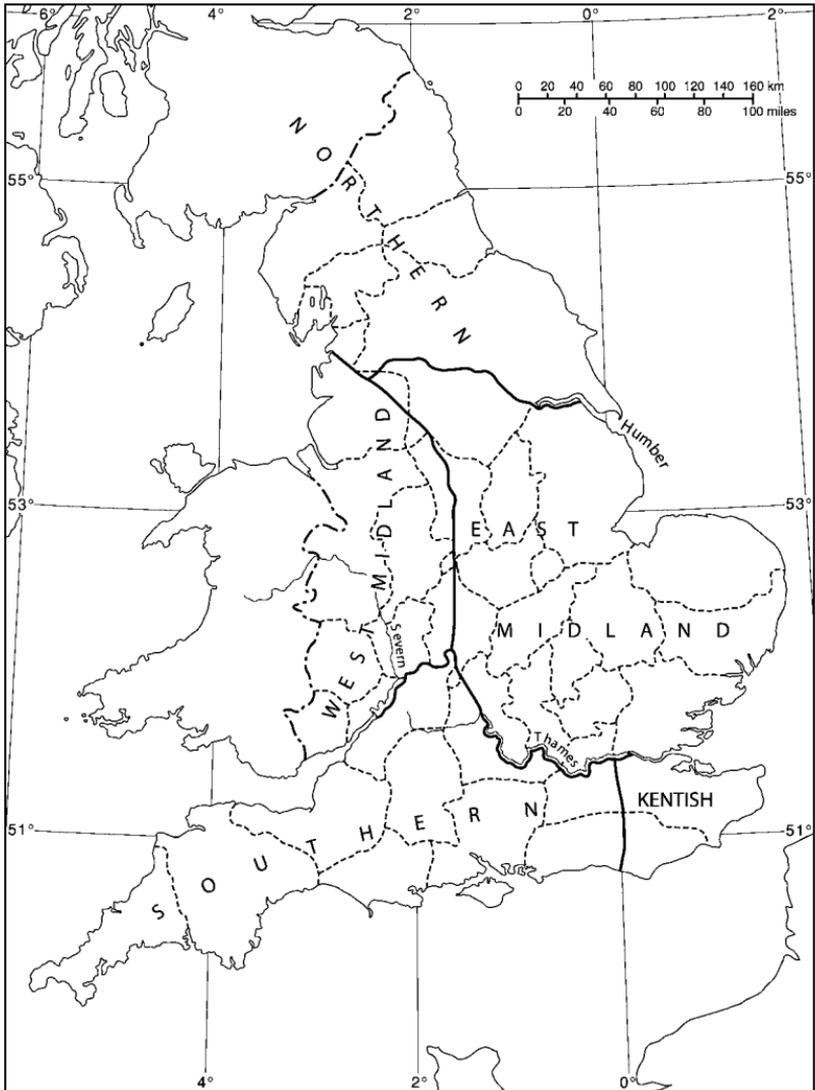
Of course, as Campbell insists (1959: 10), any dialect 'map' must be a matter of conjecture, since our knowledge of the English language at this early date is based primarily on a small number of written extant texts from quite specific centres of culture. Nonetheless, even from these earliest texts it is possible to see significant differences between Northumbrian and other textual dialects in the south. One of the earliest isophones separates general Anglian north of a rough 'Wash–Severn' line from West Saxon, Kentish (and East Anglian), where OE long *ae* (WGmc *a*) was raised to long *e*: cf. *Stretford* (Lancashire) vs. *Stratford* (De Camp 1958: 233). The Northern dialect words *owt* ('anything') and *nowt* ('nothing') appear to derive from Anglian *awit* and *nawit* (Elmes 1999: 24).

What is a matter of dispute is the relations between these supposed dialect areas and the extent of the major Anglo-Saxon kingdoms that



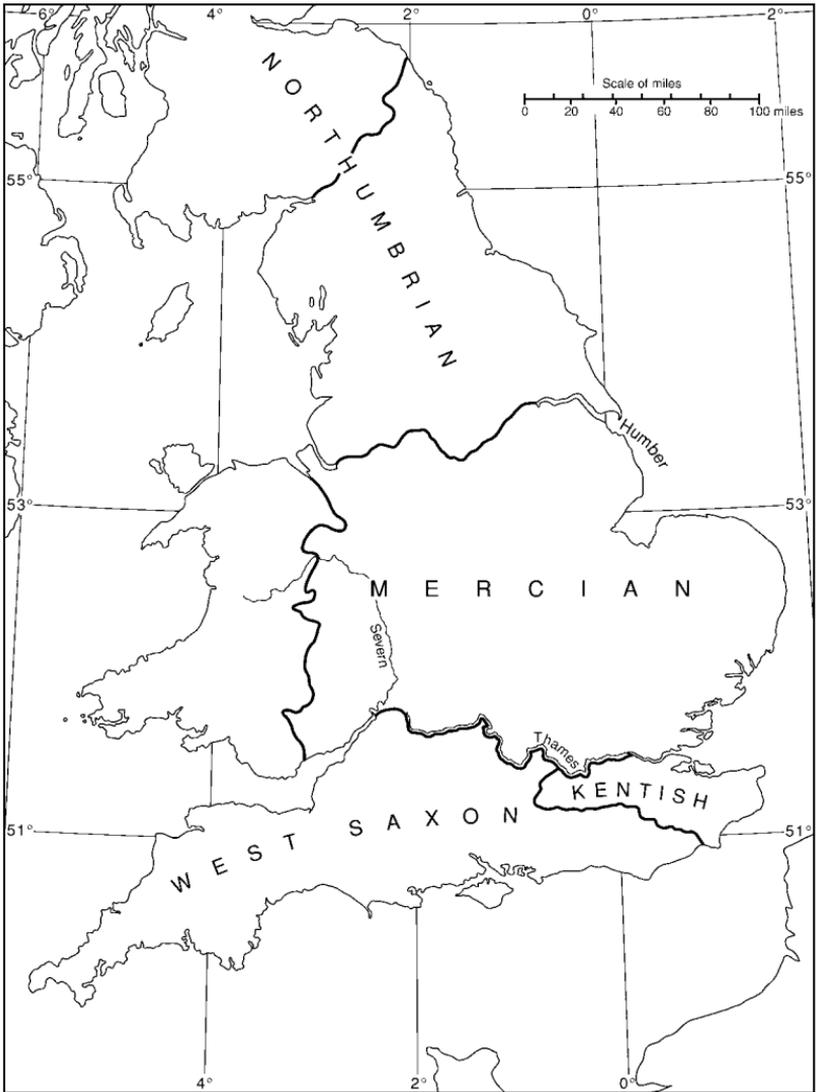
Map 2.1. Freeborn's dialects of Old English.

gradually emerged; and indeed, whether the possible dialect boundaries should be linked to political boundaries at all, as well as topographical or ecclesiastical, for example. Hogg (1988, 1996) argues against broad correlation, but I follow Crowley (1986) and Knowles (1997) in seeing indeed the strengthening of dialect formation by political and cultural divisions, whilst recognising that any dialect



Map 2.2. Baugh and Cable's dialects of Middle English.

boundaries must inevitably be fuzzy (see also chapter 1 for further general discussion, and see below on Lindsey). Baugh and Cable's OE dialect map (1978: 53) (see map 2.3 below) is explicitly based on the presumed limits of kingdoms. Very few historians of the language actually avoid marking either dialect or kingdom boundaries: but see



Map 2.3. Baugh and Cable’s dialects of Old English.

Hogg (ed.) (1992: xxiii); avoiding kingdom boundaries (map 2.4 below); also Leith (1996: 108) (map 2.5 below); and Crystal (2004: 24).

At one stage in the Anglo-Saxon period there were seven major kingdoms: Northumbria (the largest), Mercia (West and Central Midlands), East Anglia, Essex, Kent, Sussex and Wessex (as on map 2.5



Map 2.4. Hogg's Anglo-Saxon kingdoms.

below). In the seventh and eighth centuries Northumbria was undoubtedly the most powerful and cultured kingdom in England. Musgrove (1990: 16) emphasises how it was at the 'crossroads' of both intellectual communications and landed and mercantile wealth, with its influence



Map 2.5. Leith's Anglo-Saxon kingdoms.

extending into Western Europe. After the death of Bede of Jarrow, the monastic school of York, founded by one of his pupils, became an international centre of learning, especially under Alcuin. In 782 he was invited to the court of Charlemagne to be head of the palace school. As its name suggests, Northumbria stretched 'north of the Humber', a salient geographical boundary that persists until the present day. It was Bede who popularised the name *Northanhymbri* to refer to the

peoples who lived *ad Boream Humbri fluminis* (Hunter Blair (1948) in Lapidge and Blair 1984: 104).<sup>1</sup> In the early seventh century there was in effect an ecclesiastical ‘North–South divide’, with the Church in Northumbria following Celtic Christian rituals, long known in Britain before the English settlements, and the Church in Kent, for instance, following those of Rome. The Northumbrian Church, particularly influenced by Aidan from Iona who founded Lindisfarne and introduced our alphabet, was as Byrne stresses (1999: 19) entirely independent of the world in which the Church of Rome was a part, but to which it was eventually subordinated at the Synod of Whitby in 664. The later West Saxon *Life of King Oswald* by Aelfric records how Oswald of Northumbria, a converted Christian, acted as Aidan’s *wealhstod* (‘translator’) in 635, *for þan þe he wel cuþe scyttysc* (‘because he well knew Scotch Gaelic’), and the bishop could not *gebigan* (‘turn’, i.e. ‘translate’) his speech into the *Nordhymbriscum gereorde* (‘Northumbrian language’) quickly as yet (see Onions (ed.) 1959: 76).

An early literary reference to the Humber itself as a cultural ‘North–South divide’ is provided by King Alfred of Wessex’s prefatory letter to his own translation of Pope Gregory’s *Cura Pastoralis* (c. 891). He laments that when he came to the throne there were very few on this side of the Humber (*behionan Humbre*) who could read their mass-books in English, or translate an epistle from Latin; and he thinks that there weren’t many on the other side of the Humber (*begiondan Humbre*) (Onions (ed.) 1959: 4). By Alfred’s time the North and East had been ravaged by Viking raids (see 2.3 below), and the intellectual and creative religious settlements and scriptoria at Lindisfarne, Wearmouth and Jarrow all destroyed. These, as Bailey suggests (1991: 19), must have ‘provided an environment for the development of a prestige dialect of English’. Other important cultural centres were Hexham, Whitby and Ripon. Most of the earliest Old English extant texts (from the eighth to the ninth centuries) are of Northumbrian origin: e.g. Caedmon’s *Hymn*, Bede’s *Death-Song*, and the runic inscriptions on

<sup>1</sup> Hunter Blair ((1948) in Lapidge and Blair 1984: 101–2) notes Bede’s apparent southern perspective in his naming practice, but does not account for it. To be fair, Bede also used *Syðdhumbri*, but *Mercia* superseded it.

## Cædmon's hymn

## West Saxon dialect

Nu we sculan herian heofonrices weard  
 Metodes mihte and his modgeþonc  
 weorc wuldorfæder; swa he wundra gehwæs  
 ece dryhten, ord onstealde.  
 He ærest gesceop eorðan bearnum  
 heofon to hrofe, halig scyppend;  
 ða middangeard, moncynnes weard,  
 ece dryhten, æfter teode  
 firum foldan, frea ælmihtig.

## Northumbrian dialect

Nu scylun hergan hefænrices uard  
 Metudæs mæcti end his modgidanc  
 uerc uuldurfadur, sue he uundra gihuæs  
 eci dryctin, or astelidæ.  
 He ærist scop ælda barnum  
 heben til hrofe, haleg scepen;  
 tha middungeard moncynnes uard,  
 eci dryctin, æfter tiadæ  
 firum foldu, frea allmectig.

Now we must praise heaven-kingdom's Guardian  
 Creator's might and his mind-thought  
 work Glory-father's; as he of-wonders each  
 everlasting Lord, beginning established.  
 He first shaped of-earth for-children  
 heaven as roof, holy Creator;  
 then middle-earth, mankind's Guardian,  
 everlasting Lord, after determined  
 for-men earth, Ruler almighty.

Figure 2.1. Versions of Caedmon's *Hymn*.

the Ruthwell Cross in Dumfriesshire.<sup>2</sup> The interlinear glosses to the famous illuminated Lindisfarne Gospels (c. 720) date from the late tenth century, at Chester-le-Street near Durham. The interesting fact that there survive both Northumbrian and West Saxon versions of Caedmon's *Hymn* (in manuscripts of translations of Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*) means that we can see clear evidence by the late ninth century of phonological differences between the two dialects (see figure 2.1 above, from Freeborn (1992) 1998: 32–3). Northumbrian clearly

<sup>2</sup> A nineteenth-century 'Geordie' translation by R.O. Heslop of Bede's *Death-Song* nicely captures the monosyllabic strength of Old English (cited in Geeson 1969: 17–18):

Afore thor need-fare  
 Yen is niver mair  
 Wise in thowt  
 Than he owt  
 Think what he can  
 On his way gan  
 What tiv his ghaist  
 O' good or ill maist  
 After his deith day  
 Doom then may say

Cf. the original, found in ninth-century manuscripts of a letter in Latin describing Bede's death: 'Fore them neidfare naening uuiurthit / thoncsnottera than him tharf sie / to ymbhycganne are his hiniongæ / huaet his gastæe godes aeththa yflæs / aefter deothdaeg doemid uecorthæe' (Onions (ed.) 1959: 167).

reveals monophthongisation or retraction of diphthongs before /r/ in a labial environment, as in *uard* (WS *weard* ‘ward(en)’); *barnum* (WS *bearnum* ‘bairns’) and *uerc* (WS *weorc* ‘work’).

In the sixth century and periods of the seventh century Northumbria had consisted of two political regions ruled by separate kings: Deira, between the Humber and the Tees, comprising the modern North and East Ridings of Yorkshire; and Bernicia northwards (see map 2.2 above), both formerly Celtic kingdoms. Even today the River Tees is a salient boundary for those born in Yorkshire on one side and Durham on the other, and there are interesting linguistic differences between the ‘Lower North’ and the ‘North-east’ (Trudgill 1999; see also chapter 1 and chapter 5). H-dropping, for example, was not until relatively recently a significant feature north of the North Riding; and glottalling of the definite article, as part of what is generally known as ‘definite article reduction’ (DAR) is not found north of the Tees either (see Beal 1993a, ch. 6). Indeed, this glottalling, represented by <t’>, is a typical Yorkshire stereotype. Its origins are obscure, but as we shall see in 2.3 below, patterns of Viking settlement possibly led to this and certainly other linguistic differences between the North-east and Yorkshire.

So far then, the distinctive boundary for Northumbria in the Anglo-Saxon period appears to have been the River Humber at its southern edge. But there are problems in determining its western boundary; and modern historians of the language are not always clear in marking its northern limits, as we shall see below in 2.2. Even the southern limit, at the Humber, is not necessarily so clear-cut, and there are indeed linguistic consequences of this. Rivers are not only borders, but communication and trade routes, and the Humber was an important route to Europe throughout the medieval period. (See also chapter 3.) It was also an important entry to the heart of England for the Scandinavian invaders who pushed their way inwards via its many tributaries. On both sides of the Humber, in East Yorkshire and the Lindsey (*Lindissi*) district of Lincolnshire, physically marked off by the River Trent (which, unusually for English rivers flows north/south not east/west), i.e. the present-day county of ‘Humberside’, there were significant Viking settlements. Throughout the Anglo-Saxon period the political allegiance of Lindsey was in fact disputed, and although technically part

of Mercia, after 671 it was under the ecclesiastical authority of the Bishop of York. Dialectally speaking it appears to have had features in common with Northumbrian (see further Kristensson 1965: 151, 1997: 658); and arguably the district can be seen as a ‘transition’ area with Yorkshire (see also Wardale 1937: 9–10).

A major discrepancy between historians of the language arises from a consideration of the western (and also south-western) limits of Northumbria, also a source of much vagueness. Standard text-books like Baugh and Cable (1978) have maps with ‘Northumbria’ running down the middle of the kingdom (see map 2.3 above), the Pennines as it were; and hence suggesting that Northumbria extended westwards (see also map 2.4 above from Hogg 1992; Pyles and Algeo 1993: 98; Leith 1983: 25; Freeborn 1992: 16 (called ‘Northumberland’); Fennell 2001: 57). But as Leith himself later pointed out (1996: 106), the earliest Anglo-Saxon settlements were in the east, and it took over 200 years to establish a frontier in the west where the displaced British had settled. Manchester is not noted as being part of Northumbria until the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* entry of 916 (Jewell 1994: 15). Edwin of Northumbria in the seventh century severed Cumbria’s (*Cymry*) strong link with Wales, but the region remained Celtic-speaking until the Viking invasions, if not later. Strang (1970: 256) and Thomason and Kaufman (1988: 287) conjecture that little English would be spoken in Cumberland, relatively sparsely populated anyway, until the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The kingdom of Elmet in the shadow of the Pennines in the south of Yorkshire, and once stretching into the Vale of York, and not actually settled by the British until 616 (Leith 1996: 106), also remained Celtic-speaking until after the Viking invasions. Another Celtic kingdom hidden away in the Yorkshire dales was Craven, subsumed by Northumbria in 670.

Standard histories of English tend to give the impression of a successful routing of the indigenous Celtic peoples to the western highlands of Cumbria, Wales and Cornwall by the invading Angles and Saxons, and with little of linguistic consequence, apart from a scattering of residual place-names. Fennell (2001) has but two short paragraphs on the subject in her 3.1.1. But given the political and ethnic situation in the North, and the extent also of Northumbrian influence into

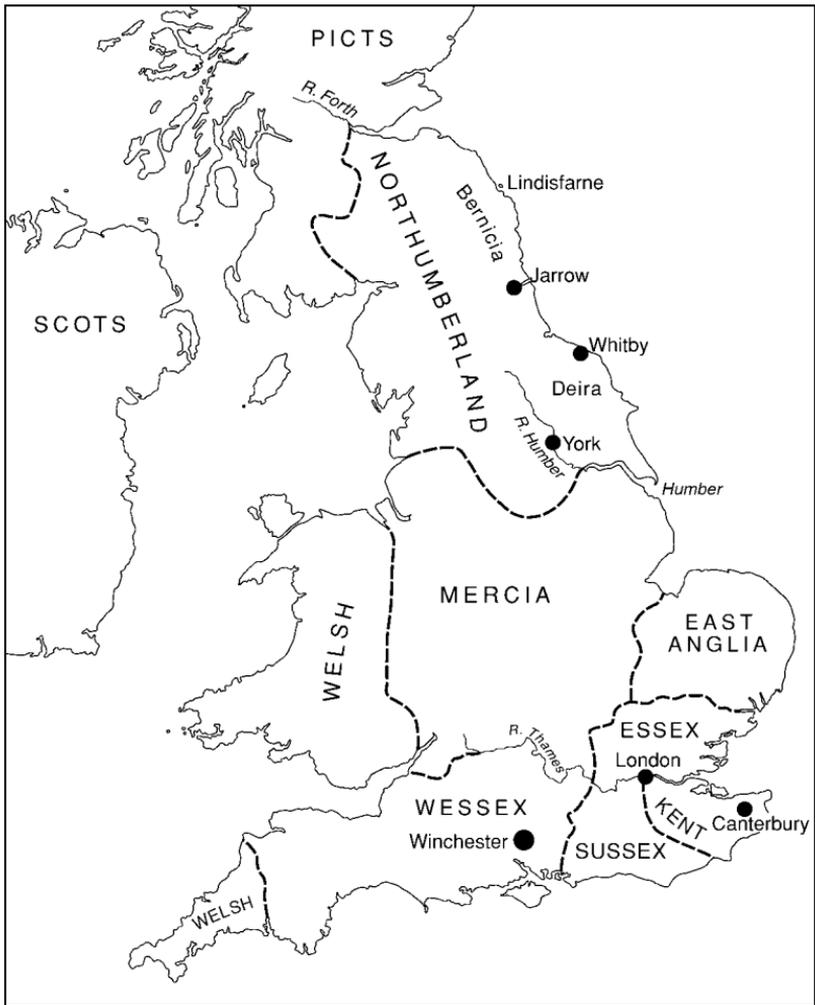
'Scotland' (see 2.2 below), some reassessment of Celtic influence on Northumbrian Old English or Old Northumbrian at least may well be necessary. In the North-west, there is also the possibility of direct influence from Irish Gaelic across the Irish Sea via Whitehaven until the tenth century (Elmes 1999: 27). In general, the existence of Celtic kingdoms in the south of Yorkshire, at Elmet and Craven, may have confirmed a perception of difference between the North and the South; and even of an essential distinction between Northumbrian English and dialects further south (cf. Grose and McKenna 1973: 18). As noted below, the River Calder appears to have been part of a major dialect boundary by ME times, and Elmet itself included, as its native poet Ted Hughes has stated, 'the deep valley of the upper Calder and its watershed of Pennine Moorland' (1993: 181) – perhaps no mere coincidence. Recently, Tristram's volume (2000) persuasively argues that linguistic interaction between the Celts and the English has indeed been under-rated, and that effectively Celtic influence marked the beginnings of a linguistic divide between English and the other West Germanic dialects. In lexis, it has been suggested that Celtic influence has been left specifically on the sound-patterned sheep-scoring numerals of Cumbria and West Yorkshire, later spreading to Teesdale and Swaledale. Certainly in Craven there is traditionally heard *arn, tarn, tethera, fethera, pubs* (1–5). An example from Swaledale begins *yahn, tayhn, tether, mether, mimp(h)* (see Witty (1927) 1997: 25–32).

More significantly, in morphology, it seems more than a coincidence that Old Northumbrian, even on the little evidence extant, shows signs of loss of inflexions long before dialects south of the Humber, and which seems to precede the Viking settlements and the resulting dialect contact situation (see 2.3 below). One may note, for example, the loss of final *n* in infinitives and past tense plurals on the inscription on the early eighth-century Ruthwell Cross, e.g. *bismaeraedu* (WS *bysmaredon* 'they reviled') (see Wakelin 1972: 63). The loss of inflexions may be explained by contact with Celtic tribes and inter-marriage. Higham (1986: 270) notes how several seventh-century kings of Bernicia must certainly have been bilingual (and see further 2.2 below). German (2000: 370) also supports a view of morphological simplification having been influenced by Brittonic speakers, who had in their own

language simplified their morphology by the end of the sixth century.<sup>3</sup> Another morphological feature is perhaps worth citing in this context. The origins of the so-called ‘Northern subject rule’ (Ihalainen 1994: 26) or ‘personal pronoun rule’ (McIntosh [1983] 1989) are much disputed (see also Murray 1873, Wright and Wright 1923: 171; and chapter 5 below). North of what McIntosh ([1983] 1989) sees as a ‘Chester–Wash line’, and including the far north of Scotland, in the past tense the verb in traditional northern dialects takes the <-s> ending in all persons, unless adjacent to a personal pronoun subject (e.g. ‘horses *runs*’; ‘they *run*’; ‘they that *runs*’). Viereck (1999: 129) and Klemola (2000: 329–46) argue for Celtic influence, although clear documentation for the feature is lacking until the ME period. (For a counter-argument, see Pietsch 2005.)

One consequence of the Celtic settlements in the North is that the southern limit of Northumbria west of the Pennines as traditionally marked on maps must historically have been of a later date in the Anglo-Saxon period than that to the east. There is no agreement amongst historians of English on this matter, and considerable confusion. Small wonder then that some linguistic historians avoid showing any boundaries at all, of either dialects or kingdoms. Knowles (1997: 22–3) places the kingdom barrier at the Mersey (etymologically ‘boundary river’), noting also in terms of dialect that there are marked differences of pronunciation even today between southern Lancashire and Cheshire. McCrum et al.’s dialect map (1986: 64) clearly shows the Mersey as the boundary of the Northumbrian dialect. Like Pyles and Algeo (1993: 98), Freeborn’s (1992) map of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms (p. 16) has the political boundary at the mouth of the Ribble (see below on the linguistic implications of this) (map 2.6 below); but confusingly, his dialect map (map 2.1 above) has it at the mouth of the Mersey. Trudgill’s map (1999b: 36) of the kingdoms c. 650, and

<sup>3</sup> The possibility of Celtic influence on loss of inflexions is raised by Kastovsky and Mettinger (2001: 10), as a result of the influence of stress-timing, triggering morpho-phonemic developments. (In contrast, Fennell (2001: 131) sees stress-timing and its influence a consequence of the change from IE to Germanic.) They also believe that to assume Celtic influence on English generally was ‘negligible’, the common view, is a ‘somewhat doubtful assumption’, but they do not explain why. Curiously, their edited volume on ‘language contact in the history of English’ has no chapter on this subject.



Map 2.6. Freeborn's Anglo-Saxon kingdoms.

hence quite early, has the border with Mercia no further south than Morecambe Bay, north of present-day Lancaster, reflecting rightly Northumbria's lack of influence in the west at this period (map 2.7 below). Curiously, however, Baugh & Cable's map of OE dialects (not kingdoms) has Northumbrian stretching to the Mersey (map 2.3 above); but on their ME map (map 2.2) 'Northern' has receded to Lancaster. (Even more curiously Crystal's map (2004: 24) of 'domains



Map 2.7. Trudgill's Anglo-Saxon kingdoms c. AD 650.

of power' in the seventh century has no rivers at all west of the Pennines in the North or Midlands, not even the Mersey.)

However, Wakelin (1972: 102–3) argues that from the later OE period at least there was a discernible linguistic 'boundary' following the River Ribble, and so separating what is now southern Lancashire and the West Riding, part of Mercia, from Northern Lancashire, and that this corresponded both to an ecclesiastical and to the 'ancient'

kingdom boundary. Although the evidence for the latter is not clear cut, as the argument above suggests, Campbell (2004: 149) would support him in certainly seeing the Ribble as an important marker between the see of York and that of Canterbury in the Anglo-Saxon period, and so in effect also marking the different allegiances towards Northumbria and Mercia. Certainly in the ME period what is sometimes termed the ‘Ribble–(Calder–Aire)–Humber’ line, running across the Pennines to the Humber estuary, marked the rough confluence of a set of up to eight phonological isoglosses that clearly distinguished rural Northern speech well into the twentieth century (see Map 1.3; also Wright 1996: 271).<sup>4</sup> As we shall see further in chapter 5, this bundle of isoglosses has receded northwards into rural Northumberland and Cumbria, where, for example, /kuəl/ ‘coal’ and /lɪəf/ ‘loaf’ and /ku:/ ‘cow’ (ME *cu*) may still be heard amongst older speakers. However, the long vowel /u:/ in particular is certainly a flourishing feature of working-class male speech on Tyneside, and a stereotypical marker of ‘Geordie’ (see Watt and Milroy 1999, Beal 2000). Wright (1996: 272–3) sees this same Ribble–Humber line as also marking the Northern limit of the Great Vowel Shift, which began in the fifteenth century. But it was only the long back vowels which remained unaffected in the North: for the long front vowels the North appears to have had its own, earlier shift, with, e. g. ME long *a* becoming /ɛ:/ before 1400, giving rise to /ɪa/ or /ɪə/ in words like *bake* and *gate* (see further Wakelin 1972: 107–8, Smith 1996: 99–101). The same diphthong marks present-day rural Northumbrian /hɪəm/ ‘home’, and /stɹən/ ‘stone’, fronted and raised from OE *ham*, *stan*, where long *a* was rounded to long *o* in the South in the ME period.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The other features not noted in the text are the vowels in /grʊnd/ (‘ground’), /gɹʊs/ (‘goose’), /blɪnd/ (‘blind’), /ɪət/ (‘eat’) and /rəŋ/ (‘wrong’). As map 1.3 reveals (but more clearly in Wright 1996: 271 because of the use of colours) two of the isoglosses demarcate much of modern Lincolnshire (/blɪnd/ and /kuəl/); and the /ku:/ isogloss passes just south of the Humber river in Lindsey. See the discussion of Lindsey above.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. modern Cumberland dialect *yem* (‘home’). Samuels (1989: 112) argues that the fronting here could also have been influenced by Norse: cf. (later) ON *steinn* (‘stone’) *heim* (‘home’) (see also Knowles 1997: 41, Horobin and Smith 2003: 57). On terminology, see also note 7 below.

## 2.2 ‘The far North’: Northern English and Scots

Like the western and southern limits, the northern limit of the kingdom of Northumbria, and also of the Northumbrian dialect, is not always easy to detect from the maps provided in standard histories of English. So Freeborn’s map of the dialects of Old English (1992: 17) (see map 2.1 above) appears to show Northumbrian just over the present-day Scottish border into Berwickshire; whereas Baugh and Cable’s (1978: 53) (map 2.3) extends the dialect well north of the present-day border (strangely indicated) towards the Firth of Forth; the limit also of Freeborn’s Northumbrian kingdom confusingly (map 2.6). It is well known that the kingdom of Northumbria stretched well north of the present-day border to Edinburgh, i.e. from the Solway Firth diagonally up to the Firth of Forth. It is also the case that modern Scots and modern Northern English derive from Old Northumbrian. Hence the kingdom straddled the present political border, and also crossed the ancient Roman border of Hadrian’s Wall (128 AD), running from the present-day Wallsend on the Tyne to the Solway Firth.

For the Romans, beyond Hadrian’s Wall was really the end of civilisation: *Britannia barbara* (‘barbarous’); separated from *Britannia inferior* (‘lower’) to a Mersey–Wash line with its capital at York (*Eboracum*); and *Britannia superior* (‘upper’), with its capital *Londinium* (London) (McArthur 1985: 24). Images of the barbarity of Scotland and its barbarous, unintelligible language have recurred frequently over the centuries, often inextricably associated with the Border regions and the ‘far’ North-east. So John of Trevisa, cited in 2.1 above, following Higden, attributes part of Northern English’s outlandishness to the influence of nearby ‘strange men and aliens’, presumably the Scots.<sup>6</sup> He adds: if you go to ‘the north contray’, you go ‘with gret help and strengthe’ (cited Sisam 1967: 150). An Italian named Piccolomini, who visited Britain in the 1430s, wrote in his memoirs that the borders

<sup>6</sup> Bailey (1991: 25) thinks John of Trevisa and Higden ‘ignore’ the influence of the Scots, but it is hard to imagine who the ‘aliens’ were otherwise. Osborn Bokenham’s fifteenth-century *Mappula Angliae*, an adaptation of Higden, makes the Scottish influence on the North (the *artyke*) explicit: ‘for the nygheness onto the Scottis’ (cited in Burnley 1992b: 173).

to the north of Newcastle were ‘rude, uncultivated and unvisited by the winter sun’ (cited Pollard 1997: 132). A twentieth-century commentator writes: ‘The bare rolling stretch of country from the North Tyne and Cheviots to the Scottish southern uplands was for a long time the territory of men who spoke English but had the outlook of Afghan tribesmen ...’ (B. Lloyd 1967: 159).

Scotland itself was seen as the ‘enemy beyond’ for 1,000 years (Jewell 1994: 18). The North, including Scotland, has also been seen as a long way from civilisation: Chaucer’s ‘younge poure scholars’ in his *Reeve’s Tale* come from ‘fer in the north’ (see further 3.1). Northumbria itself was not finally confirmed to the crown of England until 1242 (Beal 1996: 188). But even the earlier Anglo-Saxon Northumbrian kings themselves found dealing with the Goedelic Celts and Pictish tribes a constant pressure, whether in marriage or warfare. (Not surprisingly, several kings in the seventh century were bilingual.) On the western flank, the ancient British kingdom of Strathclyde, originally settled by the Welsh or Brittonic Celts, stretched from the Clyde into Cumbria, and ‘continued in some sort of existence down to the thirteenth century’ (Samuel 1998: 24). It has been only a period of several hundred years that Gaelic has contracted to the Highland area.

Into the thirteenth century certainly, the Northern limit of Northumbria can be said to have been ‘volatile’ (Higham 1986: 336). After the Battle of Carham (1016) on the river Tweed Lothian was divided from Northumbria, and was subsequently incorporated into Scotland (Beal 1993a: 188). It had already been conquered in 970 by the Gaelic-speaking Kenneth III, who yet allowed the province to keep its English speech. With the royal seat in Edinburgh this Northumbrian-speaking region became highly influential and the kings of Scotland adopted its dialect, which came to be known as Lowland Scots (or *Inglis* in Scotland in the medieval period). Despite the obvious influence from Gaelic on Scots, and Wardale’s interesting distinction (1937: 8) between ‘North English’ and ‘South Scots’ at the end of the ME period, the closeness of Lowland Scots with Northumbrian English, however, has remained until the present-day, especially in the border regions of the Cheviot hills, e.g. Roxburgh, Selkirk, Dumfriesshire and Berwickshire (see also chapters 3 and 5). The dialectologist Alexander

Ellis (1868–89) assigned North Cumberland/Northumberland to Scotland linguistically. But even in present-day Tyneside English, as Beal (1993a: 193) describes, there are shared grammatical features with Scots: e.g. *can/could* as second modals ('He *wouldn't could've* worked', i.e. 'be able to'); and *for to* plus infinitives. Trudgill and Chambers (1991: 49) note North-west *no* and North-east *na*, corresponding to Scots *nae* as enclitic negatives (e.g. *canno, shanno*).

Two early accounts are of interest in this connection. Clark (1981: 504–5), retold in Bailey (1991: 25) notes how at a bigamy trial held at York in 1364 the judge discounted the testimony of one witness because he shifted between three kinds of English: Scots (*Scoticum per modum*), Scottish English (*Scotorum sonando idioma Anglecanum*) and 'pure' Northern English (*alicuando Borialem mere*). He had apparently spent his childhood in the Scottish border area.<sup>7</sup> In William Bullein's *Dialogue Against the Fever Pestilence* (1564) a beggar fleeing to London from the border raids in Redesdale is questioned by a woman: 'What doest thou here in this Countrie? Me think thou art a Scot by thy tongue.' His short vowels are certainly noticeable: '*gud* Master', *Leddie* ('lady'), *shem* ('shame'). Mendicus is mightily offended: 'I had better be hanged in a withie ["willow"] or in a cowtaile than be a rowfooted Scot' (1888: 6). In the Middle Ages and the Early Modern period both Scots and Northumbrian would have been marked phonetically by marked initial aspiration in words like *when* written <quhen>, reflecting OE /hw/; velar articulations in words like *loch* and *night*; and the trilled *r* (on this and the Northumbrian 'burr', see further chapters 3 and 5). Post-fourteenth century, in the ENE period, words like *hame* ('home') and *mus* ('mouse') (OE long *a* and *u*) would have marked their difference from English further south, which would be affected by the Great Vowel Shift.

<sup>7</sup> The reference to 'Scottish English' is interesting, since it shows in the fourteenth century the 'anglicisation' of Scots which has continued to the present day. The entry on *Scottish English* in McArthur (ed.) (1992: 903–5) notes how some would include Scots in its definition, others would exclude it, and both can be seen as part of a continuum, with Scottish English having most of its vocabulary and grammar in common with 'general English', with degrees of closeness to Scots in its phonology. Confusingly, *Scottis* in the medieval period was used to refer to Gaelic.

The enduring literary tradition of ballad-making and recitation in the border regions from the Middle Ages well into the nineteenth century, to which I shall return in chapters 3 and 4, also confirms the linguistic closeness of what was ambiguously termed in balladry ‘the North Country’: e.g. spellings/pronunciations like *muckle* (‘much’), *kirk* (‘church’), *baith* (‘both’), *sic* (‘such’), *twa* (‘two’), *wrang* (‘wrong’), *mair* (‘more’); morphological variants like *dinna* (‘don’t’) and present participles with *-and*; and shared lexical items like *gang* (‘walk’), *bairn* (‘child’), *bonny* (‘pretty’) and *ken* (‘know’). Yet, ideologically speaking, the ballads reveal conflict and antagonism, not solidarity, with their stories of cross-border raids and feuds. Even in the eighteenth century antagonism remained. In *Humphrey Clinker* (1771) by the Scottish novelist Tobias Smollett, an epistolary tale of Matthew Bramble’s pursuit of health cures round the spas of Britain, Bramble’s nephew writes how ‘from Doncaster northwards, all the windows of the inns are scrawled with doggerel rhymes in abuse of the Scottish nation’ (cited Wales 2002: 52). (On Doncaster as a cultural boundary, see further chapter 1.)

The political actions of the Union of Crowns (1603) and the Act of Union (1700) should in theory have strengthened the linguistic closeness between the border regions. There were certainly attempts made to ‘anglicise’ Scots, to bring it in line with the language of the London court (*Sudron*). James I/VI even designated the border regions as the ‘Middle Shires’ (see Blank 1996: 129). However, in due course, as Jones (1993) describes, two ‘standards’ as models of language developed: a Scottish standard based on the capital, Edinburgh’s usage, and the London standard (see further chapter 3). The Scottish standard was bolstered by an inheritance of a robust literary standard language, originating in the work of the so-called ‘Scottish Chaucerian’ poets like Robert Henryson and William Dunbar in the fifteenth century, and continuing through to the work of Allan Ramsay and Robert Burns in the eighteenth century. Indeed, as we shall see further in 3.4, the Cumberland ‘bard’ Robert Anderson, a contemporary of Wordsworth, looked to this Scottish literary standard for much of his inspiration in his ballads and songs.

### 2.3 The impact of the Scandinavian settlements

The view that the North, in Piccolomini's terms cited above in 2.2, was 'unvisited by the winter sun', is an enduring image to the present day. Even before his comments, in 1227 a justice apparently begged not to be sent to Cumberland 'not only because the place is so far away, but also because the climate there is most disagreeable to my constitution' (cited Jewell 1994: 40). He was actually from Yorkshire! Other negative connotations have regularly accompanied perceptions of the climate. John Ray (1670) records the proverb 'Cold weather and knaves come out of the north', also the home of the Devil in folk-lore. This belief may also be based on biblical utterances such as 'Out of the north an evil shall break forth upon all inhabitants of the land' (*Jeremiah* 1:14), a prophecy which, as Pollard (1997: 140) suggests, seemed to be fulfilled on Northumbria itself by those even further north than Scotland, the Scandinavian raiders.

The general story of the Viking destruction of the monasteries on the coast of Northumbria, and their later settlements in England, is well known from standard histories of English; so too the general impact on English of the Scandinavian languages brought with them, and especially on place-names. (See also chapter 3.) Problems and caveats have certainly been well aired: e.g. the fact that the impact is only widely revealed from Middle English texts and inscriptions, because of the lack of extant Old English written evidence. Not surprisingly perhaps, there are also conflicting theories about relations between the English and Scandinavian settlers, with significant linguistic implications as a result. What I would like to do in this section, however, is stress the significance of any evidence or suppositions from the perspective of Northern English. As Holman has written recently (2001: 4), there is as yet 'no agreement . . . as to the nature, extent and impact of the Scandinavian settlement in northern and eastern England'. However, the huge impact that this must have had on spoken Northern English cannot be underestimated. It also added an important dimension to emerging differences between the dialects of the North and of the South.

The Vikings first landed in Dorset, in 787. Their main attacks, however, were more devastating in the North. As the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* graphically records, the North-east coastal monasteries of Lindisfarne and Jarrow were plundered in 793 and 794, after fiery dragons were seen flying in the air, portents of the Devil's work. In the following century, however, the Danes began to settle on the East Riding coast (875) and later Lincolnshire and Norfolk in 876 and 879 (Wakelin 1972: 24). In 876 they proceeded up the Humber estuary from East Anglia and seized York (Higham 1986: 307). The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* again records for that year how 'Halfdan shared out the lands of Northumbria, and they were engaged in ploughing and making a living for themselves' (1977 edn: 74). Interestingly, despite more pillaging north of the Tyne and as far as Strathclyde around this time, the Danes seem to have preferred to settle south of the Tyne, at least on the evidence of place-names. Pålsson (1972: 59), however, states that there were some Scandinavian settlers in the fertile border valleys of the Tweed, Coquet and Blyth rivers. Even later, Norwegian settlers came via Ireland to the Isle of Man, to the Mersey estuary (901) and to the Cumbrian and Lancashire coasts (900–50).

Dialectal differences between the Danes and the Norwegians, often simply lumped together in standard histories of English, must have confirmed emerging dialectal differences east and west of the Pennines. Similarly, settlement patterns of the Danes have certainly contributed to emerging differences over time between Northumberland and Durham/Yorkshire dialects. So in Northumberland and the border regions streams are still *burns*, in Teesdale *becks*. Indeed, even by the 880s, what Higham (1993: 183) calls a 'fracture' was emerging politically between Bernicia and Deira, since the Danes had sovereignty over the latter, the present-day 'lower North', their capital being at York (see further below and 3.2).

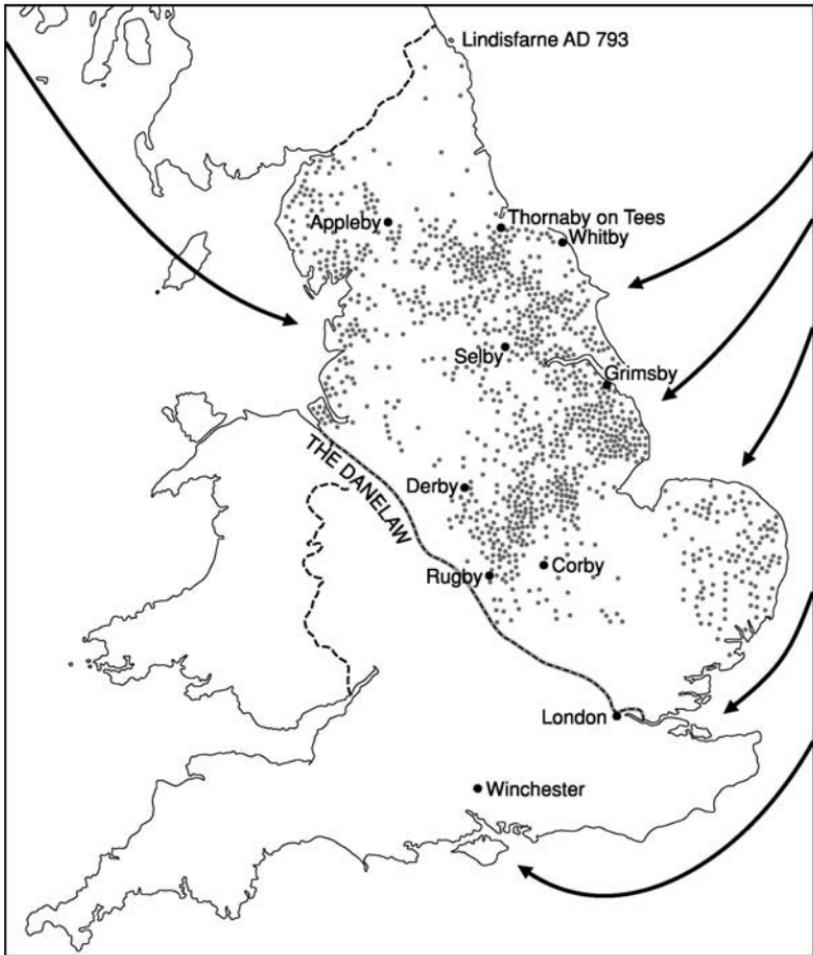
It is in the 880s also that another important political boundary emerged, with important linguistic consequences; or at least confirming tendencies that were emerging anyway from these new settlement patterns. Following Guthrum's baptism at Wedmore in 878, the Danes agreed to Alfred of Wessex's demands that they settle north and east of a line roughly running diagonally from the Thames and River Lea up

the Bedfordshire Ouse, also following Watling Street, to the Mersey: the so-called ‘Danelaw’ area, as it came to be known in the reign of Aethelred II (978–1016). (See map 2.8 below, from McCrum, et al. 1986: 68.) Very crudely, the West Midlands, the South-west and the South-east (including London) were separated from the East Midlands, East Anglia and the North.<sup>8</sup> The word *Danelaw* means exactly that: that the lands north and east of that line were under Danish law, and Danish customs were observed. So counties were divided into *wapentakes* not (OE) *hundreds*. The traditional division of Yorkshire into its three ‘Ridings’ (chapter 1) is based on the Scandinavian division into ‘thirdings’ (cf. the later ON *ðriðungr*), or three parts.

There is no doubting the huge influence that the Scandinavian languages have had on English vocabulary generally, since many common words gradually diffused from the main areas of settlement northwards into Durham and Northumberland and also entered the word-stock of the language as a whole. (On the important issue of the ‘spread’ of linguistic features southwards, see further 3.2.) For the North, however, McCrum, et al. (1986: 71) speak in particular of the ‘literally thousands’ of borrowings, many of which still survive in regional use, especially in rural areas: e.g. *addle* (‘earn’), *fell* (‘hillside’), *lug* (‘ear’), *loup* (‘jump’), *flit* (‘move’), *laithe* (‘barn’), *garth* (‘yard’), *laik/lake* (‘play’), *stee* (‘ladder’), *brant* (‘steep’), *steg* (‘gander’), *by* (‘farmstead’), *lop* (‘flea’), *aye* (‘yes’), *nay* (‘no’). Middle Scots texts reveal further borrowings: e.g. *ser* (‘various’), *dang* (‘struck’), *levenyng* (‘lightning’) and *ger/gar* ‘make’. Not unreasonably Bragg (2003a: 22,28) sees the ‘new invaders’ words’ as ‘clawing deeply’ into the North, and lying ‘at the core of the fundamental separation . . . between north and south’.

Striking too is the influence on the grammatical structure of English (see further 3.2, however, on the 3rd person plural pronouns). ME texts reveal the present participle form *-and*; and it is possible that the use of *as* and *at* as relative pronouns from Cumbria across to East Yorkshire

<sup>8</sup> Technically, however, Cumberland, Westmorland and Northumberland were not in the Danelaw, despite waves of Norwegian settlers. The Danelaw really stretched from the Welland to the Tees (Musgrove 1990: 54).



Map 2.8. The 'Danelaw'.

well into the twentieth century (5.3) was based on Viking Norse usage (Seppänen 1997: 155, Poussa 1999: 90): e.g. 'That's the chap *at*'s uncle was drowned.'<sup>9</sup> Interestingly, Samuels (1989: 114), following Murray

<sup>9</sup> I think it preferable to follow Thomason and Kaufmann (1988) in distinguishing 'Viking Norse' (700–1100) from 'Old Norse' (1100–1500), despite Old Norse (ON) being commonly cited in discussions of the linguistic consequences of the Scandinavian settlements (see, e.g. Curzan 2004 *passim*, and the quotation in note 12 below). One can note also Werner's distinction (1991) between 'proto-Nordic' and 'classical ON/Old Danish'.

(1873: 86) sees a Scandinavian origin for the characteristic modern Northern phenomenon of definite article reduction (DAR) south of the Tees. On the evidence of later Old Norse, where the definite article was a postpositive enclitic, it is not easy to see a direct relationship; and its origins therefore are still much disputed, as we shall see in 5.3.

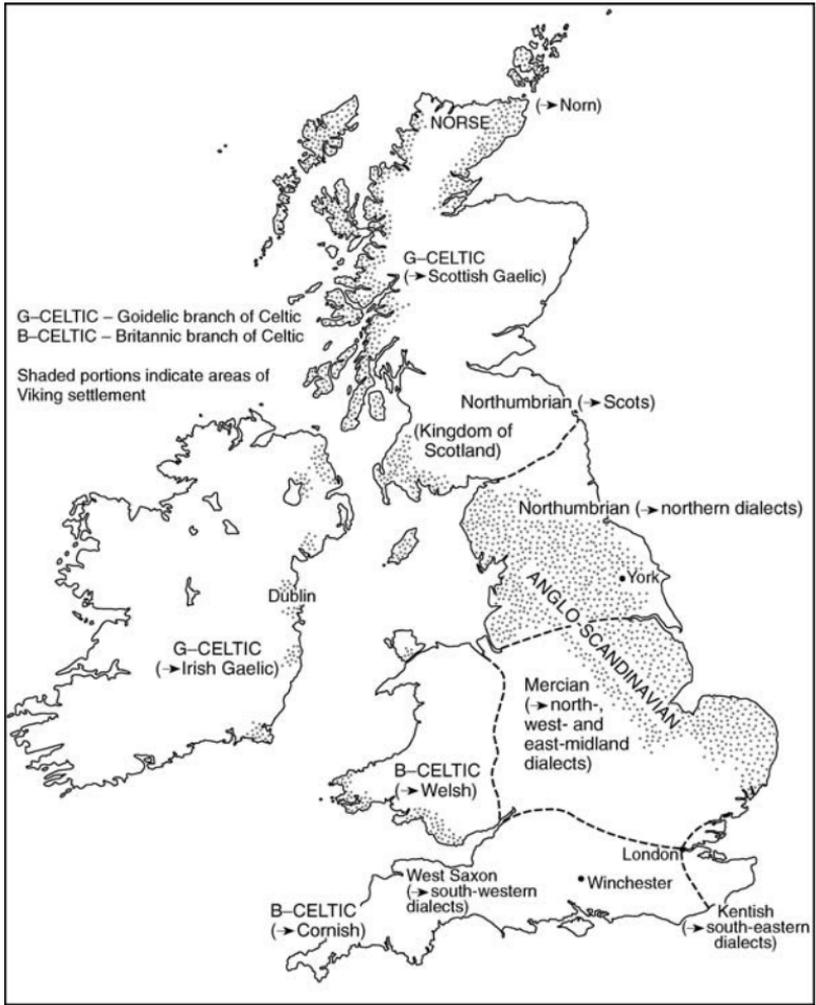
Scholars are certainly not always in agreement as to Scandinavian influence, especially in respect of grammatical features; and indeed it is the case that because of the strong ‘family resemblance’ between the Old Anglian dialects at least and the Viking Norse languages, in phonology and lexis as well as grammar, much Scandinavian influence, especially in the North, could well have been undetected by philologists, or underestimated. Moreover, because of the linguistic similarities the Scandinavian languages are likely to have reinforced tendencies in English, especially again in Northern varieties. For example, the verb form *are* is often said, as Samuels notes (1989: 115), to be Scandinavian-influenced, but *aron* occurs in Old Anglian dialects. Burnley (1992b: 65) suggests that the dative plural inflexion *-um* survived longer in the Danelaw area than elsewhere, preserved by identification with the same inflexion in Danish. Wakelin (1988: 50) notes *til* (‘till’, ‘to’) as a ‘rare’ Old Northumbrian word, reinforced by Norse *til*. It appears in the earliest Northumbrian version of Caedmon’s *Hymn* (c. 737), reproduced in figure 2.1 above. Knowles (1997: 34) argues that the <-s> ending on noun plurals and the 3rd person sg. present of the verb, a marked feature of Old Northumbrian as found in the Lindisfarne glosses for example, and which eventually spread southwards (see 3.2), was intensified by Danish influence, with a correspondence with Viking Norse forms. (See also Baugh and Cable 1978: 102, Crystal 2004: 218–21.) Trudgill (1999:106) suggests that *is* for all persons in some traditional Northern dialects in the ‘lower North’ might be due also to Scandinavian influence. Phonologically speaking, the velar plosives /g/ and /k/ and cluster /sk/ marked a Northern, as well as a Norse, pronunciation, as distinct from WS /j/, /tʃ/ and /ʃ/, as in *give*, *rigg* (‘ridge’), *skrike* (‘shriek’), *kist* (‘chest’), *kirk* (‘church’), *ik* (‘I’ (*ich*)). In this striking distinction between what the modern laity term ‘hard’ versus ‘soft’ consonants, may well lie the root of the persistent myth that Northern consonants are ‘harder’ than Southern.

Such tendencies might reasonably reinforce a view that Northern dialects at least and Norse dialects were mutually intelligible.<sup>10</sup> It is also plausible that words and forms could pass from one variety to another in code-switching (Bjorkmann 1969: 8); and that a hybrid language arose, a *Mischsprache*.<sup>11</sup> Leith's marker (1983: 25) of an 'Anglo-Scandinavian' variety on his linguistic map c. AD 1000 (see map 2.9 below), roughly following the Danelaw boundary (not marked by him, however), might give a name to this hybrid; or J. Milroy's (1996: 172) 'Anglo-Norse'. More than one hybrid language was indeed possible. Knowles (1997: 44) argues plausibly for a continuum of mixed Anglo-Norse dialects, 'ranging from anglicized Norse to English influenced by Danish', and a general 'convergence' between English and Danish in the Danelaw area (p. 12). It seems reasonable to support Burnley (1992a: 403) in suggesting that there would have been no stigma in interchanging features between languages, nor a compulsion to learn a second language 'properly'. Following the ideas of Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985) we could argue that, in the Danelaw area, there existed a 'diffuse' rather than 'focussed' situation, speakers having no clear idea about what language they were speaking; and what would and would not constitute 'English' would be of no great importance. Out of such a situation it is likely that there arose what Trudgill (1986: 107) terms 'interdialect forms', that were present in none of the dialects that went into the 'mixture'. It is possible that the 3rd person pronoun *she*, the origins of which are still much disputed, but which have been claimed for both OE and Viking Norse, may be one such form. It first appears in extant texts in the East Midland *Peterborough Chronicle* of the mid twelfth century (*scce*) (also *sche*, *zhe* etc.), and of the form *scho* in the North c. 1300 (cf. /ʃu:/ in traditional West Yorkshire dialect (Lass 1992: 119)).<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> The commoner view is that English generally was mutually intelligible with Scandinavian varieties (cf. Wright and Wright 1923: 78, Strang 1970: 282); but Knowles (1997: 37) speculates quite rightly whether the Wessex dialect would have been so.

<sup>11</sup> A late tenth-century/early eleventh-century inscription on a sundial from Aldbrough in the East Riding has a Viking Norse dative pronoun *hanum* ('him') used as a reflexive (Wakelin 1988: 64).

<sup>12</sup> This interpretation is hinted at by Werner (1991: 393): *she* is 'not simply a loan, but a product of language contact, possibly of complicated borrowing and reborrowing',



Map 2.9. Leith's linguistic map of the British Isles c. AD 1000.

In buying and settling land, and in marriage, there is no doubt that the new farmers in the ninth century would quickly have become integrated

e.g. in the imitation by Anglo-Saxons of their bilingual Scandinavian neighbours. Most recently Curzan (2004: 191) appears to favour the popular native development theory based on sound changes, although she admits (p. 192) that 'at the same time it is not necessary to shy away from explanations that stress the influence of contact with Old Norse [sic] as one factor in the development and preservation . . . in the northern areas'. J. Smith (1996: 133) follows Dieth (1955) in seeing *she* as a 'contact blend, whereby a Norse vowel-prosody was transferred to an English context'.

into the local communities. It is, of course, also plausible that succeeding generations would have been predominantly English-speaking, and that in due course (but not long) the Scandinavian languages would have ceased to be spoken. This is commonly stated: see Page [1971] 1995, Geipel 1971, Thomason and Kaufmann 1988, the latter dismissing 'Norsification' as a 'fad' (p. 298). However, it is equally plausible that bilingualism was the norm in many areas of the Danelaw, and even that Danish was predominant in other parts of the Danelaw, depending on the sociolinguistic situation (cf. Baugh and Cable 1978: 95). Bailey puts it quite starkly: Norse was the 'predominant language on one side' of the Danelaw border, 'English on the other'. The Norwegian saga of *King Harald Hardrada*, set after the Norwegian defeat at Stamford Bridge in the East Riding in 1066 clearly indicates that a native Yorkshire farmer understands the Norwegian who asks to buy his coat: 'Not to you, you are a Norwegian, I know you by your speech' (cited Gordon 1923: 14). On the face of it, it may well appear that only three generations or so separate the capture of York in 876 and its re-capture by the English in 954; but by 1013 Danish kings were actually on the throne of 'all England'; the court attracted Scandinavian poets, as well as Wulfstan archbishop of York; and there was continued migration from Scandinavia and royal inter-racial marriages until the end of the eleventh century (Bailey 1991: 18). According to the later ON saga of *Gunnlaugr Ormstunga* there was in the eleventh century 'the same tongue in England as in Norway and Denmark' (cited Wright and Wright 1923: 78). Norse runic inscriptions survive from eleventh-century Cumbria. It may, therefore, have only been after the Norman Conquest that 'Norse as a living language died out' (Werner 1991: 379), surviving longest in closed communities, as in the Lake District (see also Gordon 1923: 14).

The most striking evidence for the impact that contact with the Scandinavian settlers must have had on Northern English comes not only from penetration into the lexical and grammatical core, but also from the marked loss of grammatical inflexions which must have taken place before the Norman Conquest. (See also 3.2.) Not that linguists are all in agreement as to what to call the explanation; nor do they all

agree as to the extent of the significance of Norse influence. So Fennell (2001) rather plays it down, arguing that the change in English from a synthetic to an analytic phase would have happened anyway. But even allowing for pre-Viking Age simplification (discussed above 2.1 in relation to possible Celtic influence) it seems no mere coincidence that simplification and levelling of inflexions should take place earliest in the Danelaw area (see also, e.g., Bradley 1911: 32, Geipel 1971: 24, Burnley 1992b: 64, J. Milroy 1992: 181, Millar 2000). A contact language situation generally provides a characteristic environment. It seems plausible that some kind of ‘creolisation’ process took place (cf. Poussa 1982); or that a supra-local koiné developed (J. Milroy 1992: 177, Millar 2000: 60), a *lingua franca* for the Danelaw, or even part of it, e.g. Deira, I suggest, with its (Danish) capital at York.

It is important not to underestimate the pre-eminence of York/*Jorvik*, once the Roman capital of the North, as the centre of what I would argue was a new Anglo-Danish ethnic identity in the North from the ninth century onwards; along with its significance as the political, ecclesiastical and cultural capital of the Northern part of the Danelaw until the mid tenth century: more than a match for Winchester in Wessex, on which historians of the language tend to focus. At the centre of a network of old Roman roads north and south and at the confluence of two rivers (Lindkvist 1926: 347), its domain stretched to the east coast, giving it access to international trade routes. There is a nice linguistic comment by Knowles (1997: 35) that when the Norwegian king Eric Bloodaxe was expelled in 954, to the people of York Eadred of Wessex ‘may well have seemed at least as foreign as King Eric’. Lindkvist (1926: 390) argues that, from the evidence of street names, in the eleventh century York was ‘practically a Scandinavian town’.

Strangely, in this connection, I note the almost complete lack of comment by historians of English on a reference to York in the otherwise much quoted passage by John of Trevisa (1385) on linguistic diversity in Britain, cited at the beginning of this chapter. Translating Ranulph Higden, he notes how the whole language of the Northumbrians ‘specialych at York’ [*maxime in Eboraco*] ‘ys so scharp, slyt-tyng, and frotyng, and unsschape’ that ‘we southeron men [*nos*

*australes*] can hardly understand it' (cited Sisam 1967: 150).<sup>13</sup> John of Trevisa is actually embellishing here the *stridet inconditum* of Higden, and also of the early twelfth-century William of Malmesbury before him. Why especially at York? Why not the Scottish border regions? The likeliest explanation is the cultural memory of the inheritance of a strong Scandinavianised element, much closer, of course, to William of Malmesbury in 1125. I return to the linguistic significance of York in the later medieval period, in chapter 3.

## 2.4 Conclusion: the roots of diversity

Jewell (1994: 20) makes the point that only when the last Norse king of York, Eric Bloodaxe, was defeated in 954, then and only then did England technically come under one rule. But as we have seen in 2.2 it is arguable that Northumbria retained its relative independence until the thirteenth century, and Jewell herself also acknowledges that effective government of the North by the Normans rather 'petered out' at the Lake District and north of the Tees (also not recorded in the Domesday Book). Carlisle was retaken by the Scots in 1136. No matter that Northern influence stretched from Ireland to Scandinavia, and the journey from York to Dublin involved only twenty miles of land travel (Musgrove 1990: 47), the prevailing view of the North in its early and medieval periods of history was of its isolation, geographical and political, its alien-ation and its alien-ness. Not surprisingly, it had a reputation for ferocity and rebellion, and in William of Malmesbury's words again, 'degenerate manners' (cited Jewell 1994: 37). King John's supporters apparently used 'Northerner' as a pejorative term with undertones of 'barbarism' to refer to the barons north of the Trent who rebelled against him (Dellheim 1986: 216). Both *uplandish* (to borrow a word from John of Trevisa) and 'out-landish', the distinctiveness of the North is confirmed by its language, or rather

<sup>13</sup> The Latin is quoted in Strang (1970: 160). R. W. Bailey (1991: 24) notes how the verb *slitten* is normally used in ME for the sound of ripping cloth: apt in this context in view of York's importance in the ME period in the woollen and cloth trade (see further 3.2). On the significance of *nos australes* see 3.1.

languages. Its association with the 'barbarous' Celtic tongues has been noted already (2.2); also the Welsh writer Gerald in 1193 speaks of the 'northern regions hav[ing] been greatly corrupted by the Danish and Norwegian invasions' (cited by Bailey 1991: 18). Indeed, the last recorded Viking raid on the North-east coast, by the Norwegian king Eysteinn Haraldsson, was not until 1151 (Fellows-Jensen 1991: 344). This 'corruption' most probably included the language.

The diversity of the North's linguistic inheritance even at this early period must be stressed, and also its volatility: matching the flexibility or fluidity of its very political boundaries. Of course, as Sisam rightly reminds us (1967: 267) it is all too easy to apply to earlier periods the modern mindset of 'homogeneity and stability' as being 'natural' states of language based on five centuries of written standardisation. Nonetheless, the linguistic map of the North makes for interesting reading. Pollard (1997: 133) says the north of England in the fifteenth century was 'not one homogenous province; it was a kaleidoscope of overlapping regions and localities'. So too before the Norman Conquest. The Northumbrian dialect in the OE period is no monolithic variety of language, but born out of and shaped by language contact with Viking Norse dialects and Celtic varieties on all its borders. Viewed from this perspective it is easier to see how its continual contact with other languages led to loss and simplification of its grammatical inflexions, for instance. The North was certainly the 'crucible' for the movement towards the analytical phasing of the English language generally, driving language change in a way that West Saxon did not.<sup>14</sup> And generally, for a variety of reasons, already at this early period the roots of our modern dialects under the broad aegis of 'Northumbrian' are beginning to be distinguished: in the Border regions; in Cumbria; in the far North-east; between the Tyne and the Tees; Merseyside; Humberside; and Yorkshire West and East in the 'lower North'.

<sup>14</sup> It might be argued, following the tenor of Frantzen and Venegoni (1986), that general resistance by modern language historians to ideas of Celtic and Scandinavian influence and (degrees of) 'creolisation' has to do with an inheritance of the nineteenth-century idea of presenting a 'pure' form of OE in origin (see also J. Milroy 1996: 185).

### 3 *Northern English and the rise of 'Standard English'*

#### 3.1 A North–South divide? Images of Northern English to 1700

In this chapter I wish to probe and tease out aspects of that particular semiotic opposition, deeply rooted, which ultimately marks the story of Northern English as being quite distinctive from that of other regional dialects, although all of them have been lumped together and branded by the ideological labelling of ‘non-standard’. The issue of an opposition between ‘standard’ and ‘non-standard’, especially in speech, will be explored in particular in 3.3 on eighteenth-century developments; in this section I explore the older opposition, that between the North and ‘the South’: inevitably, as London’s power and prestige increases, compounded by an opposition between the North and the capital city. As stated in chapter 1, the North tends to exist in popular perception in relation to an ‘Other’, and to be defined by something outside it. And in the large majority of instances, this popular perception is negative, although, as we shall see in this chapter, a more positive image has sometimes emerged at different historical moments.

One important caveat for the earliest periods of the North’s history, noted also in chapter 2, is the paucity of data, or of evidence about linguistic attitudes. We might not want to agree with Skeat’s rather startling dismissal (1911: 24) of knowledge of the Late OE and ME periods for this region as ‘with a few significant exceptions . . . a total blank’, but we can sympathise. R. W. Bailey (1991: 24) notes how the first ‘extended’ discussion of linguistic diversity in Britain is found in Ranulph Higden of Chester’s Latin history *Polychronicon*, itself ‘elaborated’ sixty years later by John of Trevisa, a Cornishman (1385) (see 2.1 and 2.2 above). But it is the ‘first’ discursive discussion of any length that we know of. Moreover, it is not original in

inspiration, since, as pointed out in chapter 2, Higden's discussion (like John of Trevisa's) is based on William of Malmesbury's *De Gestis Pontificum Anglorum* (c. 1125). How reliable are the fourteenth-century treatises as contemporary accounts, however much elaborated? As noted in 2.3, it is the language of the Northumbrians that is singled out as being difficult to understand, a comment that many people even today would be in agreement with. In any case, it is certainly a fact that many manuscripts in the ME period were 'translated' from Northern English into other dialects for ease of reading, and vice versa, although such reverse translation appears not to have been so common (Jewell 1994: 189). McIntosh (1963) gives the example of *The Information of Richard the Ermyte* 'translate[d] oute of Northarn tunge into Sutherne that it schulde the bettir be understandyn of men that be of the Selve [own] Countrie' (repr. 1989: 27). There are numerous Midland and southern translations of the Northern *The Prick of Conscience*, and of the lengthy encyclopaedic poem *Cursor Mundi* (c. 1300). The Durham author of this latter poem himself translated the story of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary from southern English: 'And turned it have I till our aun / Lantage o notherin lede / that can nan oither englishe rede' (cited in Baugh and Cable 1978: 184).<sup>1</sup>

But looked at from another angle, however, the fact that John of Trevisa and Higden repeat many ideas from William of Malmesbury 250 years before is in itself noteworthy for what it tells us about the persistence of images in popular folk perceptions, and the growth of stereotypes. As chapter 2 has also argued, the North was 'constructed' from the medieval period onwards as alien and barbaric: in Pollard's words (1997: 39) 'this frightening north was a cultural construct, a state of mind'. It is also, significantly, as Pollard rightly states, the product of a southern consciousness and *origo* or point of departure. John of Trevisa's comment quoted at the end of 2.3 that 'we Southeron men' can hardly understand the language of the Northumbrians, echoes Higden's, and also William of Malmesbury's '*nos australes*'.

Comments on the differences generally between the language of Northerners and Southerners from non-Northerners recur over time.

<sup>1</sup> On the problems and pitfalls of such scribal 'translation', see Wakelin 1988: 86–7.

As John of Trevisa himself remarks, and echoed in the fifteenth century by Osborn Bokenham's *Mappula Anglica* and Caxton's revision (1482), 'men of the est with men of the west . . . accordeth more in sownynge of speche than men of the north with men of the south' (cited in Freeborn 1992: 100; see also Görlach 1991: 215 for Caxton). Thomas Wilson's catalogue of 'evill voices' which 'deface' pronunciation includes grunting and cackling but only one accent: 'This man barkes out his English Northern-like, with I say and thou lad' (*The Arte of Rhetorique* 1553). The antiquarian Richard Carew, himself from Cornwall, writes in his *Excellency of the English Tongue* (1595) of the 'Northern and Southern [dialects], gross and ordinary, which differ from each other, not only in the terminacions, but also in many words, terms and phrases . . .' (cited in Görlach 1991: 243). At around the same time, John Bullokar's *An English Expositor* (1616), the first dictionary to include the term *dialect*, notes in explanation how the 'manner of Speech in the North is different from that in the South' (cited in Blank 1996: 7).<sup>2</sup> He adds a third aspect to the opposition: the 'Western dialect differing from them both'. This triangulation is nicely illustrated by Richard Verstegan in his *Restitution of Decayed Intelligence* (1605), but with London by this time standing in for the South: 'for pronouncing according as one would say at London, **I would eat more cheese if I had it** the northern man saith, **Ay shud eat mare cheese gin ay hadet** and the westerne man saith: **Chud eat more cheese an chad it**' (cited in Freeborn 1992: 137, Verstegan's highlighting).<sup>3</sup> Alexander Gill, in his *Logonomia Anglica* (1619) written in Latin, recognises four dialect areas, and, interestingly, puts his own native Lincolnshire in the North (see 2.1 above). Northerners, he says, use *gang* for 'go', and *sen* for 'self', as *SED* informants were still doing in the mid twentieth century (Ihalainen 1994: 199). However, by this date, he is clearly

<sup>2</sup> *Dialect* is first recorded by the *OED* as occurring in EK's glosses to Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar* (1579) (see below), but in the general sense of 'manner of speech'. In the sense of a local variety or provincial mode of speech, the first citation with reference to English dialects, as in Bullokar, is not until 1847.

<sup>3</sup> *Gin* meaning 'if' is noted as 'of obscure origin' by the *OED*, and 'Scot. and dial.' This quotation here predates their earliest citation, from Ray (1674).

advocating a fifth dialect, his 'general', based on London, for a model for his pupils at St Paul's School.

It is noteworthy that through the ages again, and well into the eighteenth century, the speech of the South-west in particular, the birthplace of the early chroniclers described above, is commonly opposed to that of the North. For a Cornishman (John of Trevisa) and a man from Wiltshire (William of Malmesbury), as far as from the North as one could be, the differences between the dialects of these areas would indeed have been striking. (Higden, from Chester, just 'south' of the ancient Danelaw boundary, poses an interesting question about regional identity.) John Hart (1569) believed that speakers of dialects, whether 'at Newcastle upon Tine or Bodman in Cornewale', had a right to spell as they pronounced (*An Orthographie*; cited Mugglestone 2003: 14–15).<sup>4</sup> Much later, Hugh Jones (1724) in his *Accidence to the English Tongue* believes that 'the speech of a Yorkshire and Somersetshire downright countryman would be almost unintelligible to each other' (cited Watts 2000: 38). William Johnston (1764) in his *Pronouncing and Spelling Dictionary* hoped that the 'youth of Cornwall and Cumberland' would learn by themselves to pronounce English 'tolerably well', in an interesting alliterative collocation (cited Mugglestone 2003: 33).

Not surprisingly, in view of the marked differences between dialects, particularly the South-west and the Northern, literary authors that we can identify increasingly as using dialect for characterisation from the sixteenth century onwards tended to provide, as Blank so aptly puts it, a 'simple and schematic map of regional difference' (1996: 70), thus reflecting the broad oppositions that were also commented upon. Salient features provided crude yet effective markers of regional identity, along the lines of Verstegan's examples, quickly falling into stereotype, however. Edgar's use of South-west/Southern dialect in his peasant disguise in Shakespeare's *King Lear* (IV.6) is well known, echoing the extended representation in the interlude *Gammer*

<sup>4</sup> Even so, Hart also believed that nothing 'should be printed in London in the manner of Northerne or Westerne speeches', since educated London speech was 'the best and most perfit' (cited Freeborn 1992: 132).

*Gurton's Needle* (pr. 1575): e.g. *ch*-forms for 'I' (*Ich*), as in *ch'ill* ('I will'), *ch'ud* ('I would'), and the voicing of initial consonants /f/ and /s/ as /v/ and /z/, as in *zir* and *volk*, for example.<sup>5</sup> A good example of 'pure oppositionality', in Blank's terms again (1996: 69), to suggest diversity of voices comes towards the end of Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* (1614), the fair itself a symbol of Bakhtinian polyphony in a public space. Gathered at Ursula's booth is an intoxicated and quarrelsome assortment of characters, including Puppy, obviously from the South-west ('do you vlinch, and leave us i' the zuds, now?'); Captain Whit an Irish bawd; and one called simply Northernner, a clothier: 'I'll *ne mare*, I'll *ne mare*, the *eale's* too *meeghty*'; 'I'll *ne mair*, my *waimb warks* too *mickle* with this *auready*.' The unrounded vowels (*mare*, *waimb*, *wark*) and the non-diphthongized long vowels (*eale*, *meeghty*), as well as the Northern and Scots *mickle* for 'much' clearly mark stereotypes by this date of the (far) Northern accent and dialect.<sup>6</sup>

The crucial question, however, is how far, by the seventeenth century, the schematic oppositions between dialects, and particularly between Northern and Southern, are simply neutral. Accounts of the history of English are almost unanimously agreed that by this date regional dialects are effectively all but extinguished in formal writing as a result of the 'standardisation' of written English that was at first centred on the Chancery official writings in fifteenth-century London and encouraged by the new technology of printing. Some indeed, see standardisation in the fifteenth century itself: 'Northern and Southern dialects have all but disappeared in formal writing since the fifteenth century' (Blank 1996: 3; see also Baugh and Cable 1978: 194). 'That there was a standard written English in the fifteenth century is obvious and a commonplace' says Kristensson (1994: 103). It is not obvious, however, that 'standard' *is* the term to be

<sup>5</sup> However, the fact that SW and Northern discourse was regionally marked *per se* might account for Northern *gait* ('way') and *I'se* ('I shall') in Edgar's speech in *King Lear* (IV.vi).

<sup>6</sup> In Thomas Deloney's *Thomas of Reading* noted below, a group of clothiers appealing to the King include Hodgekins from Halifax. Forms like *gude*, *whiat* ('quite'), *sae* ('so') suggest a stereotypical 'far North' representation. On links between London and the North via the wool-trade, see 3.2 below.

applied at this date, especially outside London and in the North. More plausibly, Smith (1996: 7) speaks of a more 'focussed' usage; Takeda (2002) of dialect levelling. Moreover, rates of 'standardisation' varied for spelling, lexis and grammar, the latter really an eighteenth-century development. In any case, little research has been done on how supposed Chancery English, itself influenced by Midland forms, was disseminated from the fifteenth century onwards to the provinces. For spoken English the situation is even more complex, and notions of a spoken 'standard' are best considered at a much later period (see 3.3 and chapter 4.)

Nonetheless, as has been well tabulated, there are certainly growing signs in the sixteenth century of a sense or perception of an ideological distinction between London English, especially courtly English, and the speech of the shires, a distinction based on the opposition between metropolitan superiority and provincial inferiority that lingers to the present day. What is not clear, however, is how far back in time this loaded opposition can be read; and the extent to which it actually compounds the basic loaded opposition premised on southern superiority over the North. The question still arises, however, as to how far back in time even this latter opposition can be traced. Moreover, there is all too likely the danger that modern notions of Standard English, with the concomitant negative, even pejorative, connotations of 'non-standard' (chapter 1), will be read into medieval discourses in particular. This is a variant of what I term the 'anachronistic fallacy', to which historians of the language and sociolinguists are prone (see also chapter 1 and 3.2 below).

Take the oft-quoted *Second Shepherd's Play* (c. 1430), from the cycle of pageants originating in Wakefield in the West Riding of Yorkshire. Mak, a sheep-stealer, affects the disguise of a 'yoman . . . of the kyng', his accent revealing marked Southern affricates: 'What! *Ich* be a yoman . . . / The self and the some, sond from a great lordyng, / And *sich* . . . / I must have reverence. / Why, who *be ich*?' He does not fool his companions ('Why make ye it so qwaynt? [Why are you behaving so proudly] Mak, ye do *wrang*'); indeed, the First Shepherd orders him: 'Now take outt that Sothren tothe, / And sett in a torde!' (Cawley (ed.) 1968: 48). It is very clear what the shepherds think of

a Southern accent (*tothe*): more worthless than a turd. They are also clearly critical of Mak acting, and also speaking, above his social station. This has not stopped many commentators, however, stressing the supposed superiority of Southern speech, because of its associations here with the King's court. Wakelin (1972: 35) goes even so far as to state that we can see 'the beginnings of a form of spoken Standard English' (see also Baugh and Cable 1978: 194). For the shepherds London was certainly 'down South', but London English at this date was not predominantly southern in its dialect forms (see further 3.2 below).

Wakelin, like other commentators (e.g. Cawley 1968, Smith 1992) also yokes together the *Second Shepherd's Play* with Chaucer's *Reeve's Tale*, even though they are separated in time and place by about fifty years, on the grounds that both texts' use of imitation dialect 'suggests that one type of English is best, while other varieties are inferior' (1972: 34–5). In the case of Chaucer's use of Northern dialect for the characterisation of the two Cambridge students John and Aleyn, the general assumption has been that the characters 'are comic because they speak a regional, *non-Standard*, dialect' (Wakelin 1972: 35, my italics); and that Southerners are enjoying themselves at the expense of Northerners' linguistic habits (Cawley 1968: xxvii, 131), which are 'stigmatised' (Smith 1992: 58). But these kinds of views represent a potentially anachronistic reading of attitudes to regional speech before the mid sixteenth century when ideas of 'superiority' and 'inferiority' in varieties of English begin to emerge. (See also Penhallurick and Willmott 2000: 19).

Horobin and Smith (2002: 36) argue, however, that 'Chaucer's humour seems to be based upon the oddness of people from different parts of the country rather than from the sense of a standardised spoken language.' The assumption is that the medieval audience would find the students comic simply because of their marked dialect. 'Chaucer', writes Melvyn Bragg (2003a: 77), 'gives us our first "funny northerner", a character who has been with us ever since'. But it is not entirely obvious why the students should be seen as the chief butt of ridicule, since they outwit the thieving and socially pretentious Miller of Trumpington, and cause mayhem in the bedroom at his and his

family's expense. That there is fun to be made of the students' speech, however, can be seen at their first introductory meeting with the Miller. Explaining why they have come to the mill, John adds: 'Oure manciple, *I hope* he wil be deed' (l.4028). The Southern (and modern) meaning of 'hope' rather than 'think' (cf. Norse *hopa*) produces quite the opposite intention (see also Burnley 1983: 147–8). It is important to remember, however, that from the Miller's point of view this would undoubtedly have confirmed the naivety (*nycetee*) of these simple (*sely*) students, whom he despises anyway for their education. He is in turn, therefore, doubly duped by their cunning and Northernness.<sup>7</sup>

Moreover, that the students are from Cambridge University is a plausible stroke of delineation. Not only is that within a day's distance from Bawdeswell in Norfolk, home of the Reeve, but it would be well known even to educated Londoners like Chaucer himself that a large proportion of Cambridge's students came from the North. John and Aleyne are students at *Soler Halle*, i.e. King's Hall, founded earlier in the fourteenth century in 1337, which made significant statutory provision for Northern students.<sup>8</sup> It is interesting in this respect that the *Reeve's Tale* is Chaucer's only example of extensive dialect imitation, suggesting, for one reason, that for him and his audience Cambridge and Northernness were as likely as Sheffield and steel ('A Sheffield thwitel ["knife"] baar he in his hose' (l.3933)).

My argument, then, is that the use of Northern dialect in *The Reeve's Tale* is mainly for lively realism, but in general harmony with the tale's comic subversion of pretension. It just happens to be the case that Chaucer is the first writer we know of to use dialect as a method of characterisation, so extensively and consistently. However, I do not

<sup>7</sup> See Williams (2000: 49) for a *clericus vs. rusticus* reading of the *Reeve's Tale*, but no illumination as to why the Northern dialect is used. It is interesting that in the Hengwrt MS (see note 9 below) the Miller boasts that he shall 'blere [the students'] iye / For all the sleights in hir *phislophy* [sic]'. Burnley (1992b: 161) suggests it may be a 'scribal error', but as a malapropism it would nicely turn the tables on the Miller.

<sup>8</sup> Jewell (1994: 138) further notes that Northerners more commonly went to Cambridge than Oxford; yet Queen's College Oxford was itself founded in 1341 with an in-built preference for able students from Cumberland and Westmorland, because of the 'waste, desolate and illiterate condition of those counties'. Oxford divided students into *boreales* and *australes*: *boreales* 'began once one crossed the river Nene', i.e. north of Northamptonshire and Lincolnshire (Pollard 1997: 139).

agree with Crystal (2004: 168) that the dialect is not ‘carrying any kind of hidden agenda’, and that ‘there is no more to say’. There certainly is. I believe that his choice of Northern English, as distinct from Devon or Kentish English, is not random. What linguist historians have completely ignored are the Anglo-Scottish wars of the fourteenth century, and especially the tense political situation in the years surrounding the likely date of composition of the *Canterbury Tales* (the late 1380s and early 1390s according to Pearsall 1992), culminating in the Battle of Otterburn in 1388 and an English defeat. (See further below.) The attention of Richard II was entirely focussed on the wild borderlands as a political arena, and he depended heavily on powerful Northern families like the Percies and the Nevilles for maintaining border security. Royal clerks were appointed to the see of Durham and to the Wardenship of the Marches (Dobson 1992). Chaucer’s dialect itself appears to be no hotch-potch of Northernisms from Yorkshire to the Scottish borderlands, which characterises so many later literary representations, and hence no ‘parody’ as Smith (1992: 58) would call it, but a fairly consistent rendering of salient features of general Northern pronunciation: chiefly the un-rounded vowel in *na*, *waat*, *bathe*, *atanes*, *tald* from north of the ‘Ribble–Humber’ line (2.1); and of marked lexis (*ill* [Norse]; *til*; *werkes* [‘aches’]; *wanges* [‘molars’]). Interestingly, there are no marked border or Scots features, such as <qu-> for <wh-> or *sae* and *baithe* for Northern *sa* and *bathe*, so that the right kind of nationalist sympathies could be implied here.<sup>9</sup> There does seem to be a particular slant towards the North-east in the morphology: note in particular the <-s> in the present tense for 2nd and 3rd person sg. (‘the corn *gas* in’), found in the Lindisfarne Gospel glosses from Durham in the early tenth century. Note also *is* for the 1st

<sup>9</sup> Tolkien (1934: 6) comments without explanation on Chaucer’s selectivity: no present participles in *-and* for instance; yet he also praises his consistency (p. 46). Tolkien’s overall analysis is based on a facsimile of the Ellesmere MS, and also of the Hengwrt and Harleian MSS. Robinson (1957), from which my quotations are taken, bases his text on the A-type of MSS, including Ellesmere and Hengwrt. Hence he reproduces the Ellesmere *geen* (‘gone’) and *neen* (‘none’) which seem to reflect early shifts in the realisation of long vowels in the North (see further Smith 1996). According to Blake (1981: 31) many MSS introduced new Northernisms, e.g. <qu-> for <wh->. Apparently the scribe of the Paris MS ‘translated’ the whole text into Northern dialect (Mugglestone 1995: 216).

person of the verb *be* ('I is ful wight ["swift"]'): a salient marker of the speech of this region up to the present day.<sup>10</sup> There is also the nice expletive/vocative *man*, also used in North-east English today (5.3): 'Com of, *man*, al atanes' (1.4074).<sup>11</sup>

Particularly noteworthy is the fact that John swears by 'seint Cutberd' (1.4127), St Cuthbert (seventh century) being the patron saint of the North-eastern region, and buried in Durham Cathedral. The cult of St Cuthbert, at one time second only to Thomas à Beckett in Canterbury, was still very strong in the North in the fourteenth century (see further Rollason (ed.) 1987). Although he himself had been born in the seventh century in Teviotdale in the Scottish border area, by the fourteenth century his influence was firmly southwards within a forty-mile radius of Durham, and he became an increasingly nationalistic emblem of the English from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century (Dobson 1992). The saint of 'assistance', his banner was regularly carried into battles even in the fourteenth century by the powerful prince bishops of Durham. The exception was indeed the Battle of Otterburn in Redesdale in Northumberland, a parish dedicated to the saint, when the Bishop of Durham John de Fordham arrived too late. The defeat of the English also brought the capture of 'Hotspur', son of Henry Percy Earl of Northumberland.

<sup>10</sup> Burnley's outburst (1992b: 161) that 'the concord of *I* with *is* is simply outlandish and an exaggeration of northern barbarity' is wrong. In the twentieth century *I is* is consistently found in the *SED* areas of Cumberland, Westmorland and Durham, but not the 'upper' or 'far' North (vol. I pt 3, 1998 edn: 1050, 1063); see also Wakelin's map (1982: 17). (Trudgill's map (1999: 107) would also include south Yorkshire and the North Riding.) *I is* is strangely missing from Lass's table (1992: 137) of Northern ME c. 1300. Wakelin (1972: 135) treats it as a Scandinavian loan (see also 2.3). It is not often noted that Chaucer's students are given *I* not *ik*, which Robinson (1957) notes in his glossary as 'Northern'. Burnley (1983: 15) wrongly states that Chaucer 'imitates the speech of northerners, who used the form *ik*'. It is the Reeve from Norfolk to whom *ik* is assigned (as in *so thee ik* ['so may I prosper']), also a Norfolk feature in Passus V of the B text of *Piers Plowman*, cited by Beadle (1991: 94). Perhaps this signifies Norfolk rusticity and conservatism, or an inheritance from Norse influence in the Danelaw (2.4). *I* is certainly found in the North from the thirteenth century onwards (Horobin and Smith 2002: 111).

<sup>11</sup> Tolkien (1934: 56–7) is also inclined to locate the students 'beyond the Tees': he thinks *slyke* is a Durham feature. As non-Geordies, Klemola and Jones (1999: 27) express surprise at finding *man* in their twentieth-century Northumberland *SED* data, which they associate only with African American Vernacular English.

In this connection, comment has sometimes been made on the place-name *Strother*, of the *toun* which the students are described by the Reeve as coming from, ‘Fer in the north, I kan nat telle where’ (ll.4014–15). It is possible, as early critics cited by Robinson (1957: 687–8) suggest, and more recently historians of the North (e.g. Tuck and Goodman both 1992), that Chaucer knew the prominent Northumberland family of that name and that the ascription of dialect therefore represents an ‘in-joke’.<sup>12</sup> There is also the possibility that his references to Strother, and ‘fer in the Northe’, are also part of the same in-joke, and used ironically. For *Strother* as a common noun meant ‘marsh’, ‘bog’ in Northern OE.<sup>13</sup> And through the persona of the Reeve, Chaucer could also be aping the obviously distancing and dismissive perspective of the ‘outsider’ south of the Humber estuary, whose mental map of the North was indeed, from earliest times, as we have seen in chapter 2, that of a remote and alien territory, off the edge of the known, a view little changed, and indeed confirmed, by the Anglo-Scottish wars. ‘Far’ and ‘North’ are certainly collocated elsewhere in the *Canterbury Tales*: Constance is cast ashore ‘Fer in Northumberlond’ in *The Man of Law’s Tale*, and in *The Friar’s Tale* the yeoman dwells ‘fer in the north contree’ (albeit he is a fiend of hell in disguise: see 2.3). Any

<sup>12</sup> Horobin and Smith (2002: 9) state that Chaucer’s family ‘seems to have originated in northern England’, but do not give further details. The possibility of an ‘in-joke’ is raised by Tolkien (1934: 3, 58), who also argues (p. 15) that the source of Chaucer’s linguistic knowledge was largely literary; but no evidence is given. He also suggests that by this date many words and forms would be familiar to Chaucer and his contemporaries from East Midland influence (also suggested by Burnley (1983: 146–7) with reference to words of Scandinavian origin). See further 3.2, and also on the presence of Northerners in London. News of Northern events like the Battle of Otterburn would be circulating in London in the *Westminster Chronicle* and popular ballads (Goodman 1992: 5). Chaucer, as Clerk of Works (1389–91) might have known about the huge sums of money spent in the last decades of the fourteenth century on building and maintaining the many fortifications and defences in the North-east particularly, and he may have personally known John Lewyn, mason, who repaired or rebuilt Bamburgh, Bolton in Wensleydale, Raby, and John of Gaunt’s own Dunstanburgh and Warkworth castles (Dobson 1992: 138).

<sup>13</sup> At the beginning of *The Summoner’s Tale*, set in Yorkshire, reference is made to a ‘mersshy contree called Holdernesse’, which may be part of the same joke. However, this area of the East Riding, draining into the Humber, is indeed flat and marshy to this day. Scholars have in any case found place-names with *-strother* in medieval Northumberland and Durham records (see Kristensson 1967: 88).

ironical readings in no way contradict a reading of a realistic function for the actual dialect, nor indeed a nationalistic.

It certainly suggests, however, that there might be more to Chaucer's use of Northern dialect and evocation of place than just the simple opposition between southern superiority and northern inferiority. In a sense Chaucer's use of a North-east dialect would be unavoidable, because in the 1380s the political perspective was to 'all points North'. Chaucer could be seen as essentially nailing his political colours to the mast, supporting the English, and his king, against the Scots. If the use of Northern English in the *Reeve's Tale* does *not* prefigure the rise of a 'standard' vs. 'non-standard' ideology, perhaps it does prefigure instead the use of language and dialect from the fifteenth century onwards in what Davies (1997: 2) calls the 'propaganda wars' between the peoples of the British Isles. So the mythology of the 'North-South divide' is intensified and complicated by new images of the political and ethnic, as the border conflicts and defence of the 'frontier' began to heighten the sense of an 'English' nation.

Two hundred years later, there is no doubting the often-quoted George Puttenham's regional bias towards 'our Southerne English', particularly in metropolitan usage, with, socially speaking, the 'usual speech of the Court' as its epicentre (*The Arte of English Poesie*, 1589, cited Freeborn 1992: 133). He is anticipated by John Hart in his *Method* (1570), who writes of those 'of the farre West, or north Countryes, which use differing termes from those of the Court, and London, where the flower of the English tongue is used' (cited Blank 1996: 106). Their comments, about what later grammarians like Hugh Jones (1724) would term 'the Proper, or London Language', set in train the movement towards the denigration of regional dialects. (See further 3.3.) The aspiring poet is advised by Puttenham to follow the usage of 'the better brought up sort', who are found in every shire of England, he admits, writing 'as good Southerne as we of Middlesex or Surrey do'; but preferably to follow those in 'the shires lying about London within lx.myles, and not much above'. Such a span, which appears to point almost to a supra-regional 'norm', would clearly encompass the present-day metrocentric 'Home Counties': all of the south-east coast, south-west to present-day Southampton, eastwards to Ipswich, westwards to

Oxford, and north to Cambridge. Puttenham clearly disapproves of university usage as a model however: ‘Schollers us[ing] much peevisch affectation of words out of the primitive languages’. The radius of sixty miles is interesting, and would, I suggest, have been within comfortable travelling distance to and from London at that time within one day (see Musgrove 1990: 18). An even more specific radius in the 1580s is given in what could be the first ‘North of Watford’ joke, by one Richard Kereforde. He thought it ‘but a sport to deffraude a northern man, ffor so he termeth all northeron men that be born xxii mylles north from London’ (cited in Jewell 1994: 147).

Explicitly ruled out by Puttenham as a model for literary composition are the ‘termes of Northern-men . . . whether they be noble men or gentlemen . . . [and] in effect any speech used *beyond the river of Trent . . .*’ (my italics).<sup>14</sup> Around the same time William Harrison divided the country, rather like King Alfred before him (2.1), into ‘south of Thames’, ‘Thames to Trent’ and ‘North of Trent’. He also noted the Trent as distinguishing the speech of Northerners from the rest of the country; their own speech again distinguished from Scottish English ‘much broader and lesse pleasant . . . till of late’ (*The Description of Britaine* 1587; cited Bolton 1966: 18f.; also Görlach 1991: 235). References to ‘north of the Humber’, into which the Trent flows, have been noted in chapter 2. As far back as the thirteenth century officialdom had made the river Trent a dividing line (Jewell 1994: 23): *ultra citra Trentam* for the administration of the royal forests. The Trent as a political ‘north–south divide’ can be seen in the reign of King John, to distinguish supporters from baron rebels who were synonymous with *Boreales* (Dellheim 1986: 216 and 2.4). It is a significant political boundary for Shakespeare’s purpose in *I Henry IV*, where Hotspur complains about the share of the kingdom proposed for him, ‘the remnant northward lying off from Trent . . . north from Burton here’, as

<sup>14</sup> A much less well-known comment by Puttenham on Northerners is cited in Green (1902: 24): ‘I remember in the first yeare of Queen Marie’s raigne a knight of Yorkshire was chosen speaker of the Parliament, a good gentleman and wise . . . but as well for some lack of his teeth, as for want of language, nothing well spoken . . . A bencher of the Temple . . . asked another gentleman . . . how he liked M. Speaker’s Oration: marry, quoth th’other, methinks I heard not a better ale-house tale told this seven yeares . . .’

being too small: 'See how this river comes me cranking in' (III. i). The Percy family and the Nevilles of Middleham in the North Riding mentioned above virtually ruled the whole kingdom north of the Trent in the Middle Ages (Jewell 1994: 44). The idea of the 'north of Trent' in popular imagination may go some way to explain Ben Jonson's otherwise rather strange use of a conglomerate Northern/Scots dialect in his unfinished play *The Sad Shepherd*, set in the Robin Hood country of Sherwood Forest, west ('north') of the Trent.<sup>15</sup>

It would be easy to identify signs in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century literature of the inextricable association of regional dialects with lower social status, i.e. provincial boorishness and country bumpkins, which continued into later periods. Jest-books, like later plays and ballads, made fun of unsophisticated Northerners and other country-folk on trips to London (Blake 1981: 48–9, see also 3.3 below and chapter 4). The SW dialect-speaking peasant is the basis of Edgar's disguise in *King Lear*, as has been noted above, and the butt of ridicule in *Gammer Gurton's Needle*. In Thomas Heywood and Richard Brome's play *The Late Lancashire Witches* (1634), Northern dialect is ascribed to two rebellious bewitched retainers Lawrence and Parnell (possibly the earliest examples of a literary representation of 'Lancashire' dialect); similarly, in Thomas Shadwell's play *The Lancashire Witches* (1681), both plays set near Pendle-Hill, the notorious site of alleged witchcraft. (Not surprisingly, Lancashire at this time was seen as one of the darkest corners of the kingdom: see further Poole (ed.) 2002.) In Shadwell's play Sir Edward Hartford's retainer, 'a country fellow', significantly named Clod, is ascribed features like: 'What *mun* Ay do?' (cf. Norse 'must', found only in the North); *to neeght, reeght*; 'well *neegh* parisht'; *condle, lonthorn, hont, bonk*; as is another country fellow called Thomas o Georges. In his dialogue the distinctive (N)W (*w*)*hoo* for 'she' is found (OE *heo*), recorded still in the mid twentieth century in

<sup>15</sup> So Scathlock, one of Robin's huntsmen: 'I, qu'ha suld let me'; 'i' the chimley nuik'; also Maudlin, the witch of Papplewicke: 'gang thy gait'. Blake (1981: 77) makes the point that Scots would have become more familiar to seventeenth-century dramatists following the accession of James I. There would also possibly be a mental link of 'outlaw' with the border regions, as well as Sherwood Forest. On the significance generally of the Trent as a trade and communications route as well as a boundary, see further 3.2.

the *Survey of English Dialects* (*SED*) data. Two visiting Yorkshiremen can ‘neither understand [Clod’s] words, nor his sence’. The dialect moves socially up the ranks, however, in that it also marks the speech of Sir Jeffery Shacklehead’s younger brother Tom: but he is a ‘drinker’. Although they are figures for ridicule, it is the case that both he and Clod defeat the witches (represented in ‘standard’ English).<sup>16</sup>

That there was ambivalence, certainly, in the connotations of Northernness and Northern dialect in the literature of the period is found in other texts. It cannot be assumed that condescension to the North and Northern English was the only attitude. So Hodgekins, the clothier from Halifax in Thomas Deloney’s novella *Thomas of Reading* (1600), dares to ‘unmannerly interrupt the King . . . in broad Northerne speech . . . this rough-hewen fellow’ (1964 edn: 101). But his passionate outburst is because he feels there is injustice still in the operation of his trade, which the King accepts. And it is only in this one scene that Deloney makes any attempt at dialect ‘imitation’. Boorishness is near allied to simple plain speaking and honesty, without the wiles of courtly affectation or sophistication. Parnell in *The Late Lancashire Witches* may be coarse, but there is no doubting the strength of her feeling: ‘yeow shall as soone pisse and paddle in ’t as stap me in the mouth with an awd Petticoat, or a new paire of shoine to be whyet, I cannot be whyet, nor I wonnot be whyet, to see sicky [“such”] doings, I.’

Richard Brome clearly saw the attractiveness of this plain speaking, a perennial image of Northerners over the centuries, for jaded London palates in his characterisation of the virtuous heroine Constance, in his play *The Northern Lass* (1632). As Blank (1996: 111) states, the play ‘attempts to sell the novelty of “northernness” itself to its audience’. In his dedicatory letter Brome says ‘shee came out of the cold North . . . she is honest, and modest, though she speake broad’. Interestingly, he presents himself as a Northerner, although, as Findlay notes (2001), he could equally turn to the South-west axis in the Epilogue to his *The Court Beggar*. As she kindly suggests, this may generally indicate ‘his

<sup>16</sup> In the nineteenth century, Lancashire-born William Harrison Ainsworth’s novel *The Lancashire Witches* (1854), based on the same stories, makes a similar social distribution of dialect, reserving it for cottagers and cowherds; however, it also marks the speech of the deformed girl witch Jennet and her churlish brother James Device.

emotional affinities with region rather than metropolis' (n.p.). Nonetheless, there is a joke for Southerners to appreciate. Captain Anvil repostes of Constance; 'Is she northern (d'ye hear) will she not shrink i' the wetting?' In Act III we are told that she comes from 'the bishoprick of Durham'. Her dialect features point to this area in some respects, and there are similar features as in Chaucer's *Reeve's Tale* (*I is; are he geane; till* ('to')). But as in Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* cited above there are also the general Northern marked long vowels in words like *thoosand* and *neet*; the verb forms *gar* ('make') and *mun* ('must'); and stereotypical 'far Northern'/Scots forms: the fronted long vowel in *tuke, luke*; also *dee* ('die'), *weel* ('well'); *maer* ('more') and *mickle* ('great').

Conventionalised though the representation may be, it is likely that the audience were already willing to be receptive to the play's Northernness, and that Brome was cashing in on the appeal of Northern popular culture, no doubt brought from the North, the border and Scotland by wandering minstrels. The dialogue is interlarded with songs and airs from the 'North Country' (printed in standard spelling), such as 'A bonny northern lad / as ever walkt the streets of Edenborough town', and 'A bonny bonny bird I had / A bird that was my marrow'<sup>17</sup>. Londoners' appreciation of Scottish and border ballads, as indeed of the Scottish dialect, must have intensified after the Union of Crowns in 1603, and James VI of Scotland's accession to the English throne (cf. Blake 1981: 77).

An inheritance of a flourishing oral culture is matched in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by that of a literary poetic tradition deriving from the so-called 'Scottish Chaucerian' poets, from John Barbour in the fourteenth century and James I of Scotland (1394–1437), through to Robert Henryson and William Dunbar (d. 1516). The influence of these Late ME poets on Edmund Spenser is well known, who valued their diction in his pastoral poem *The Shepherd's*

<sup>17</sup> According to the *OED* *marrow* in the sense 'mate' was common in Scottish and Northern literary texts from the mid fifteenth century. It is noted by Ray (1674) and Bailey (1721) as a 'North Country' word in collocations with gloves and shoes. It reappears in Newcastle and Durham mining talk ('pitmatic') well into the nineteenth century: see chapter 4.

*Calendar* in particular for the antiquity, purity and also rusticity.<sup>18</sup> And herein lie the seeds of another persistent image of Northern English that remained well into the nineteenth century. (See also 3.4 below.) If Puttenham dismisses it because it is not ‘so currant’ as Southern English, he yet admits contrariwise that this same old-fashionedness, or unfashionability, this archaism and obsolescence, reveals ‘the purer English Saxon’. At the same time that playwrights were stuffing their Northern dialect with obvious archaisms to reinforce provincialism (*eyne* for ‘eyes’, *shoine* for ‘shoes’), there were antiquarians keen to highlight the ancient origins of the national tongue, in an interest partly sprung from religious controversies.<sup>19</sup> Alexander Gill, perhaps with Spenser in mind, noted in his *Logonomia Anglica* (1619) how poets used dialects, chiefly the Northern, ‘for the purpose of rhythm and attractiveness, since that dialect is the most delightful, the most ancient, the purest, and approximates most nearly to the speech of our ancestors’ (1972 edn: 104).<sup>20</sup> Dean Laurence Nowell, in *Vocabularium Saxonicum* (1565), the first dictionary of Old English extant (although unfinished and apparently never published), clearly delighted in finding Lancashire parallels in particular to OE words: over 170 of them (seventeen only from other counties, cf. Marckwardt 1947). But born at Whalley in Lancashire himself, his motives may be partly due to the pride and local patriotism of an ‘insider’. OE words ascribed to

<sup>18</sup> Blank (1996: 122) and Fennell (2001: 155) talk simplistically of Spenser’s reproduction of Northern speech, yet his so-called dialectalisms are not confined to one locality or period of time, and are best seen as literary archaisms culled from the poetic diction of his forebears, including Chaucer’s *Reeve’s Tale* (e.g. *fonne* ‘fool’), *liggen* (‘lie’), *gang* (‘go’); and the non-Northern verbal prefix <y->. Spenser also makes extensive use in this poem and especially in his *Faerie Queene* of the old Northern present participle –*and* for ‘antique’ effect.

<sup>19</sup> The <oi> spelling in *shoine* in the Heywood and Brome quotation above indicates fronting from Northern ME long *o*, also found in Scottish English *u* (Wakelin 1982: 5). *Shoon* as the weak plural noun is recorded in the twentieth century in the *SED* from Northern counties, and Cheshire and Derbyshire in the North Midlands (Wakelin 1972: 109).

<sup>20</sup> Gill has a nice example of Northern dialect from a poem about Machiavelli (1972 edn: 169–70): ‘Mächil iz hanged / And brened iz hiz bvks. / Đoh Mächil iz hanged, / Yit hi iz not wranged. / Đe dil haz im fanged / In hiz krvked klvks. / Mächil iz hanged, / And brened iz hiz bvks.’ Kökeritz (1938/9: 277) suggests that this is the first scholarly attempt at a phonetic transcription of dialect.

Lancashire later by the *EDD* include *chaffes* ('jaws'), *frayne* ('ask'), *outcumling* ('stranger'), *scathe* ('hurt') and *walme* ('heat').

As the earliest extant collection of Lancashire dialect words, Nowell's *Vocabularium* precedes by over a century *A Collection of English Words* (1674) by John Ray the botanist. This is our earliest general dialect dictionary extant, collected at the behest of the Royal Society with the help of his antiquarian friends such as Ralph Thoresby from Leeds. Words 'proper to the Northern' are divided from the Southern and Eastern Counties, his 'North' including Cheshire, and as far south as Warwickshire. His forty-eight pages of North Country words by far outnumber the rest, perhaps reflecting his lack of knowledge of that region until his travels (see also 3.4). Some words are given quite specific labels of origin: so *bumblekites* ('blackberries') and *chats* ('sycamore keys') are ascribed to Yorkshire, *attercob* ('spider's web') and *harns* ('brains') to Cumberland. Afternoon drinkings are *dondinner* in Yorkshire, but *orndorns* in Cumberland. *I's dazed* ('I am very cold') is a grammatical feature noted, also *nor* for 'than' ('More nor I'), *a way bit* ('a little bit') and *hoo, he* in the North-west for 'she'. Noteworthy also is the vocalisation of /l/ as a feature of pronunciation/spelling in words like *aud*, *caud* and *wauds* ('wolds'); and yod-formation in *yance* and *yane* ('once', 'one'). *Bearn* ('bairn') Ray notes as 'an ancient Saxon word'. *Bleb* for blister is certainly still widely used in the North, although *daft* ('stupid'), found also in Brome's play *The Northern Lass*, is now more widespread. Strangely, he does not include *canny* or *bonny*, very common adjectives today, especially in the North-east and border regions, and frequent in popular ballads (see 3.4 and 4.1). *Canny* certainly appears in Francis Grose's *Provincial Glossary* (1787), referred to in 3.3. Ray's dictionary proved useful to the lexicographer Elisha Coles just two years later, with his explicitly stated addition of dialect words (*English Dictionary* 1676; cf. Görlach 1991: 426). Ray was more extensively useful to Nathan Bailey for his *Universal Etymological Dictionary* (1721) (cf. Axon 1883). His own 'companion' volume, *A Collection of English Proverbs* (1670), has an interesting proverb from Cheshire, used by 'the common people . . . in scorn of those who have been at London', and who are 'ashamed to speak their own country dialect': namely, 'She hath been at London to

call a *strea* a straw and a *waw* a wall.’ Such an attitude will recur frequently in later nineteenth-century ballads and songs (see further chapter 4).

### 3.2 The ‘spread’ of Northern features into London English

Charges of lack of ‘currency’ in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries against Northern English accord with a world-view of centre (London) and periphery (the North, the South-west), which has been with us ever since. But these charges sit in some respects quite contrary to modern historians’ views, with the benefit of hindsight, of what was happening in the English language from the ME period to the seventeenth century, especially in grammar. A common idea is that of Baugh and Cable’s (1978: 192), where it is Northern ME which is seen as ‘radical’ and Southern ME as ‘conservative’ (with Midland English a compromise). It is important to remember that the notion of London as the site of what J. Milroy (1993: 227) calls innovations from ‘mainstream norms’ was not yet firmly part of the linguistic landscape (see further 3.3). As we have seen already in chapter 2, it is in the North that both levelling and loss of inflexions appear to have begun first, with far-reaching consequences generally on English’s case, gender and article systems, for example. On the evidence of extant documents, final <-n> disappeared in the North by the end of the Late OE period in non-monosyllabic words, and so affecting infinitives, for instance (Wright and Wright 1923: 108); unstressed final <-e> is dropped in the North by the end of the twelfth/beginning of the thirteenth century (Pyles and Algeo 1993: 150). Invariable *the* was in place by about 1150 in the North and Midlands (Wright and Wright 1923: 101), elsewhere by 1300. The breakdown of grammatical gender is in evidence in the glosses to the Lindisfarne Gospels in the tenth century: by the end of the fourteenth century grammatical gender is lost in all dialects (Lass 1992: 106). The extension of <-es> to other noun declension plurals happened first in Late Northumbrian English, and by the second half of the fourteenth century was predominant elsewhere (Fisiak 1968: 79). Other features of

later Modern English that can claim a Northern origin include *I* as the 1st person pronoun form; *him* for *hine* (objective case); levelling of past tense plurals (e.g. *sang/song*; *drank/dronk* for *sungen, drunken*); and the loss of the prefix <ge-> on past participles, a prefix which became a marked 'southernism' by Chaucer's time (Lass 1992: 147). Much commented on in histories of English are the 3rd person plural pronoun forms *they, their, them* and the 3rd person sg. pronoun *she* (see 2.3.); also the 3rd person present tense ending <-s> (London and southern dialects with <-eth> until well into the seventeenth century), to which I return below. Since all these changes and others ultimately affected the English language as a whole, how did they 'spread' from the North?

The verb *spread* is certainly the most frequently used verb in histories of the language in relation to various grammatical features and changes, with the North as the starting point and London English as the end point. Other verbs include *percolate, reach, transmit, drive out, conquer* and the phrases *gradually replaced by, adopted more widely, accepted from, borrowed by, began to appear in*. Very few of these linguistic histories try to explain how or why.<sup>21</sup> That features did spread to London is stated as if the fact was the explanation. (A similar situation arises in relation to the 'spread' of written Chancery English northwards: 3.1.) Nor is it indicated whether changes came first in writing, or in speech, or both.<sup>22</sup> However, there are some linguists who would belittle Northern influence in the first place. Thomason and Kaufman (1988: 274) express puzzlement about its effect on the Midlands and the South, since the North 'was much poorer than the rest of England'. Millar (2000: 61) wonders why 'low status dialects' should have affected 'higher status' dialects to the south. Such views thus reveal yet another variant of the 'anachronistic fallacy' referred to in

<sup>21</sup> A similar point is made by Keller (1994: 69). Fennell (2001: 143) appears to be alone in having an explicit section on 'the spread of Northern forms', but only two short paragraphs and no explanations provided, except a hint of gradual diffusion.

<sup>22</sup> In the discussion that follows I have rather assumed that diffusion came through the spoken language. However, for an interesting explanation based on scribal copying, see Black (1999: 65, 75–6). She suggests that the increasing circulation of texts during the ME period may be assumed to have raised considerably the familiarity and tolerance of scribes towards 'alien' forms, e.g. a Midland scribe towards Northern, so that such forms like *she* become generalised. Certainly, the diffusion of the Chancery 'standard' to the rest of the country, however difficult to understand, was through the written medium.

chapter 1, here implying that change can only happen from motivations of social prestige. Wyld (1929: 256) would go so far as to deny the North even as a starting point. He states categorically that northern influence is ‘out of the question’ for the emergence of <-s>, for example, to replace <-eth> in the 3rd person sg. present. (His own proposal is that it arose analogically with *is*.) Blanking out the North in this way is not incompatible with attempts to trace Modern Standard English as the direct descendant of ‘standard’ West Saxon. But there is a lot to be said for J. Milroy’s view (1996: 172) that it is instead in the direct descent of an Anglo-Norse contact language in the North and the East Midlands (see also 2.3). How different might the prototypical history of the English textbook have looked if West Saxon had not been taken as the ‘norm’? Take Burnley’s conclusion (1992b: 64–5), in this connection, on the rapid inflexional loss in the Scandinavianised areas: so the South and the South-west ‘preserved the grammar of the Anglo-Saxon language [sic] the longest’. Why not that the North preserved it the shortest?

Others would ‘dilute’ Northern influence by suggesting that any spread of features must have come by an indirect route, namely, by way of the East Midlands or Eastern counties generally. So Baugh and Cable (1978: 194), in discussing the fifteenth century, state that ‘even such Northern characteristics as are found in the standard speech [sic] seem to have entered by way of [the Eastern] counties’. (See also Samuels 1963, Lass 1992: 33 for <-s>; Knowles 1997: 45, Fennell 2001: 129 (but contradicted on p. 130)). This is very important to consider for particular kinds of developments, but Baugh and Cable like others give no explanation of the mechanisms of movement and ‘entering’. It is noteworthy that their map of ME dialects (p. 190; see map 2.2) implies London just over the very southern edge of the East Midland area, an edge itself (along the Thames) probably based on the southern limit of the old Danelaw, and the southern limit again of any significant Scandinavian influence (see 2.3).<sup>23</sup> But any changes that seem to have been triggered by, or directly influenced by, former

<sup>23</sup> Burnley’s map (1983: xvi) of ME dialects (see map 3.2 below) actually has the border of the East Midlands and the South-east cutting through London. Baugh and Cable

Scandinavian settlements clearly had more of an impact well to the north of the Thames, even north of the Humber, as we shall see below; and long before their effect was registered on London's English (200–300 years). The gradualness of impact could be explained, however, by a 'wave' or 'ripple' effect (Chambers and Trudgill 1998: 1666): changes slowly diffused from the North to the North Midlands, to the East Midlands and to London by way of 'transition zones' at the 'borders' of dialect regions, as people came into contact with each other, e.g. in marriage, re-location, farming or markets. In general, as stated in chapter 1, the actual concept of a dialect boundary is problematic in any case: Wardale's metaphor (1937: 9) aptly describes the probable situation: 'everywhere [in the ME period] there must have been areas in which the recognised regions on either side overlapped . . . they should be like the links in a chain', so that dialects are best seen as a continuum.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, it has to be generally accepted, as J. Milroy states (2000: 22) that features can co-occur even within the same speech community, older and newer forms, possibly for centuries. So the co-occurrence of both <-s> and <-eth> in both East and West Midland dialects in the fourteenth century is often commented upon (cf. Wright and Wright 1923: 170, Lass 1992: 137, Pyles and Algeo 1993: 160).

What is proposed here is a variant of the 'wave' theory, which would highlight the significance of local trading and markets, and which has become even more significant in later centuries as towns increased in size (see further chapters 4 and 5). For my 'spokes of a wheel' theory we need to visualise the North, the North Midlands, West and East Midlands and East Anglia as overlapping circles whose centres comprise the major market towns, themselves at the cross-roads of important (local) routes, whether roads or rivers. So there could be envisaged Carlisle and Newcastle in the far North, York to the south; Sheffield or Wakefield on the North Midlands border, Beverley or Lincoln to the

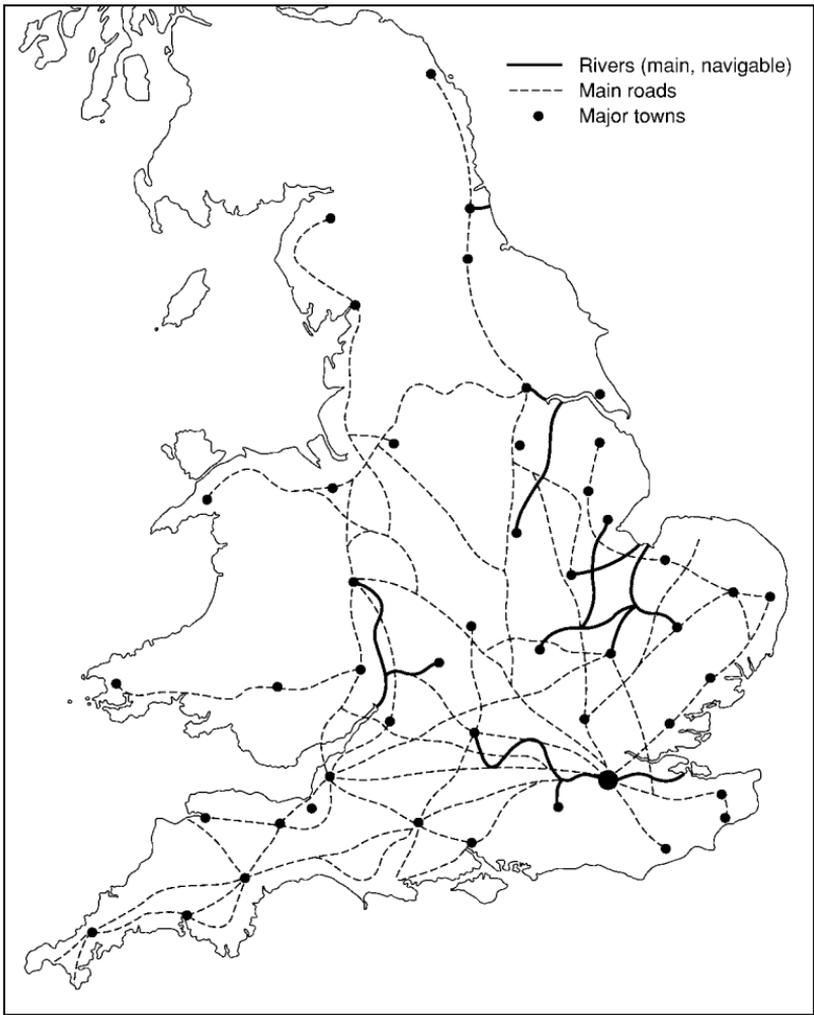
(1978: 194) explicitly make London English a 'Southern' dialect, but Fennell (2001: 123), like Wakelin (1972: 25), states that 'up until 1370 London [sic] was an Essex dialect'. See also Kristensson (1994: 103–4), who notes how London was in East Saxon territory in the OE period.

<sup>24</sup> On this basis Horobin and Smith's map (2002: 51) of ME dialects does not show boundaries. However, it is not very helpful. 'Midland' does not distinguish between 'East' and 'West', and their 'South East' stretches well into East Anglia.

east; Nottingham to the south, Bedford further south, and so on. Linguistically speaking, such towns could provide the locus and focus for local ‘norms’, within the hinterlands of their own regions, but also beyond it; and thus encourage both diffusion and levelling (for ease of communication in trading).<sup>25</sup>

To take York as a potentially relevant example: In 2.3 I stressed its significance as the important centre of the Anglo-Scandinavian kingdom and of a supra-localised koiné. In the Middle Ages York continued to be important: the second largest city in England, with a population of 13,500 at the end of the fourteenth century, and at the cross-roads of major trade routes by road to the North-east and to the sheep-farming dales to the North-west; and also by water, the Ouse on which it stands flowing into the Humber Estuary (see further Lindkvist 1926: 347–8f.; and map 3.1 below taken from Smith 1996: 91 below). The Humber itself continued to be of significance: once the highway for Viking invasions and settlements, but also for international trade to the Low Countries and to the Baltic region. And since Roman times (and to the present day), the Humber had been crossed by ferry from Beverley along Ermine Street (a route strangely absent from map 3.1), that ran southwards to Lincoln in Lindsey, the northern administrative district of Lincolnshire, and also an important wool-producing district. In one sense this river can be seen as a significant boundary, as stated in 2.1; but in another sense, as even 2.1 indicated from the southward ‘drift’ of certain phonological isoglosses, it is equally possible to see it as the vehicle of language change, facilitating communications between Yorkshire and Lincolnshire farmers and traders on either bank, with the Trent pushing changes further south (see map 3.1). Burnley’s ME dialect map (1983: xvi, map 3.2 below) actually marks Lindsey in his Northern ME area (see also Crystal’s 2004: 201). As Nielsen

<sup>25</sup> Trudgill’s theory (1974: 243) whereby innovations spread from one centre of population to another bypasses hinterlands and is very much conditional on post-Industrial urbanisation. It also tends to assume London as the *origo* of (linguistic) change. I prefer Keene’s idea (2000) of ‘urban potential’ as a force of influence, i.e. the capacity of any individual town to interact with others with differing degrees of intensity. He also specifically notes how ‘economic contacts [with London] seem to have been mediated through places like York, Beverley and Newcastle’ (2000: 106).

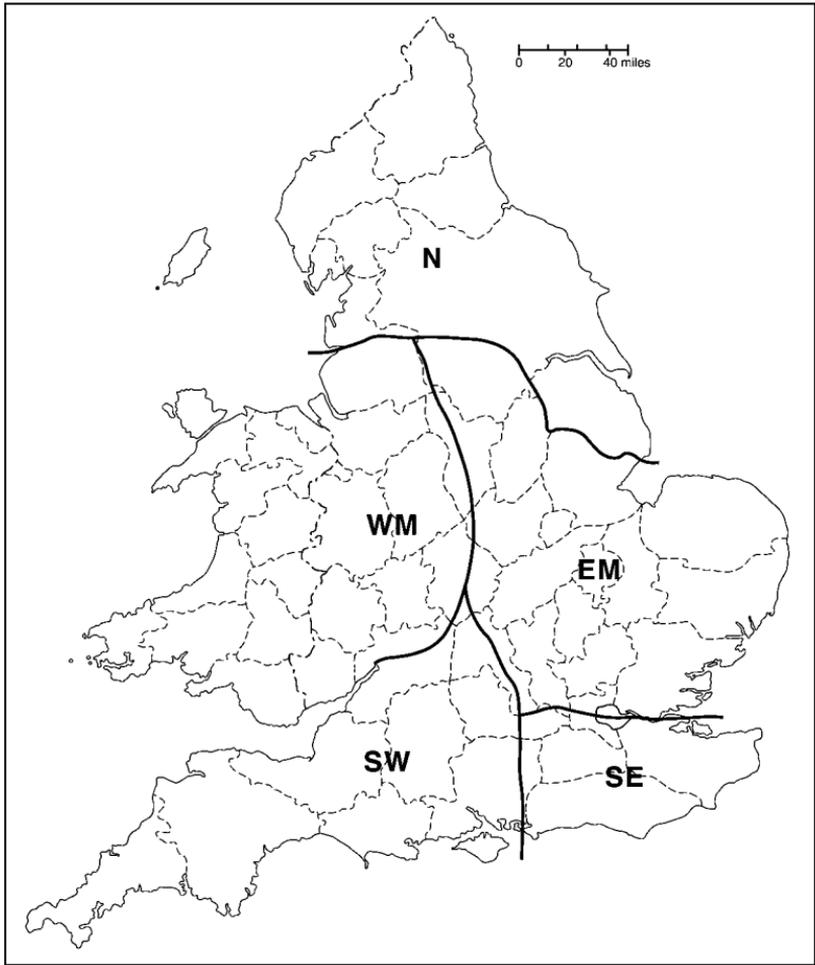


Map 3.1. Main road and river systems c. 1600.

(1985: 77–8) states in general, it is a matter for debate as to whether rivers ‘prevent or promote the expansion of linguistic features’.<sup>26</sup>

I would go further and argue for an important nexus between York and Lincoln, a forerunner of the present-day ‘Humberside’ region, with

<sup>26</sup> Chambers and Trudgill (1998: 167) make a brief suggestion about the ‘spread of changes along rivers’, but this is not pursued. Knowles (1997: 40) had suggested York’s influence on the five Boroughs south of the Humber in the Late OE period, to produce linguistic uniformity (see further 2.3).



Map 3.2. Burnley's Middle English dialects.

close linguistic ties and identity. As noted in 2.1 even in Anglo-Saxon times Lindsey had variously been under the ecclesiastical aegis of Northumbria rather than Mercia. It is interesting that Thomason and Kaufman (1988) see the main locus or catalyst for simplification of inflexions precisely in the Lincolnshire area of the Danelaw; but I think they underestimate the significance of York as the region's former capital and continuing commercial centre (and they do not explain how or why Lincolnshire English should 'spread' during the eleventh

century (p. 283). Between 1290 and 1340, as Jewell (1994: 41) records, central government personnel in the Chancery and Exchequer went to York for periods at a time; and clerics from the York archdiocese penetrated central government offices. Because of continual engagements against the Scots (see 3.1 above) Richard II apparently considered the transfer of the capital to York, and this meant some northerners moved to London as members of the royal household (Takeda 2002: 152). In turn, royal clerks were moved to the Archbishopric of York and to the bishopric of Durham. Richard III had considerable influence in York, coming from Middleham in the North Riding in 1483 to seize the throne.

Linguistically speaking, then, it is plausible to see this Humberside region as the 'heartland' in particular for the radiating out of features that appear to have originated from Anglo-Scandinavian contact, e.g. inflexional loss; *are* as the pres. pl. of *be*; <sh-> 3rd person feminine and <th->: 3rd person pl. pronoun forms (see also 2.3). The earliest extant ME text to exhibit <th-> pronouns (in stressed positions) is Orm's collection of metrical homilies, *The Ormulum*, from Lincolnshire c. 1180, in his own idiosyncratic phonetic spelling (*þe33ze*, *þe33re*). It also contains *zho* for 'she'. The 'full complement' of forms is shown in the late thirteenth-century Northern poem *Cursor Mundi* (Wakelin 1988: 92–3).

In general, it is important not to underestimate the significance of trade for influence from the North on London English. Despite the terrible state of the country's roads until the eighteenth century, they were vital to London's economic supremacy (see map 3.1 and further 3.4 below). Deloney's *Thomas of Reading* (1600) may be a fictional account of the London-centred activities in the days of Henry I – of the nation's clothiers, the woollen manufacturers, come from Reading, Gloucester, Salisbury, Worcester and Exeter in the West, and Kendal, Halifax and Manchester in the North – but it is not likely to be implausible. From the fourteenth century certainly, the West Riding abbots and priors became rich on the backs of sheep (see Musgrove 1990: 6), and the Wakefield pageants (3.1) testify to the region's prosperity. Shaklee (1980: 52) notes how in the fifteenth century the Northern counties, the centre of wool production and woollen goods,

became the country's centre of economic power: she too sees a possible correlation between this and the diffusion of Northern linguistic features. As Keene (2000) states generally, sociolinguists stress the importance in language 'evolution' of face-to-face exchange between individuals, but when such exchanges are reinforced by physical negotiation and contractual obligation, mutual linguistic accommodation and influence is more likely.

Keene (2000) also looks at London's exchange of goods and services from 1100–1700 from the perspective of 'distance' values, measured not only in road miles, but also in time. By sea, the North was actually 'closer' to London for trading, again via the Humber. But in this respect it is also the North-east, around Newcastle on the Tyne, which can also be highlighted: not only again for the export of wool, but particularly for the production and export of minerals, lead, iron and especially coal, for the capital's consumption (see further chapter 4). In the thirteenth century Henry III had given Newcastle 'licence to dig coals and stones' (John Collier's *Essay on Charters* 1777: 12); and Elizabeth I obtained a lease from the Bishop of Durham for all the coal-mines in the manor of Gateshead (p. 15). 'Carrying coals to Newcastle' is a proverb at least as old as the sixteenth century (and noted by Francis Grose in his *Provincial Glossary* 1787), and refers indirectly to the regular sea-trade by keel-boats between the Tyne and the Thames Estuary. There is a curious play acted at Newcastle in the early seventeenth century and printed in London in 1655, which gives a literary twist to this interchange. *The Love-sick King* by Anthony Brewer, loosely set in Anglo-Saxon times, features two Newcastle merchants and 'Grim the Collier', who lends King Alfred his colliers for his army. His role is mainly expressed in 'standard' English, but there is a touch of the North-east in his salutation: 'How *ist't*, how *ist't man?*'; and in his mutterings about *chaldrons*. This was the Northern weight of measure, twice the London, until 'standardisation' in the mid-eighteenth century (noted by Arthur Young on his travels (1770: xiii); see 3.4).<sup>27</sup>

<sup>27</sup> See also the tract *The Compleat Collier* by 'J. C.' (1708: 19). In Act III of *The Love-sick King* Grim the collier urges his men: 'Come *bullies*, fetch more Coals.' Although the *OED* has a citation from 1538 as a term of endearment, their dialectal meaning of 'mate' lists only 1825 as the earliest example, from Brockett, as used among 'keelmen and pitmen'.

In general, however, it is not trade as a 'pattern of mobility' (Wright 2000: 3) between London and the provinces that is suggested as a source of Northern influence by those language historians who consider the issue, but immigration: either directly from the North and North Midlands (J. Milroy 1992, Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 2000, L. Milroy 2002); or via the Central and East Midlands in the fourteenth century (cf. Ekwall 1956, Samuels 1963, Wakelin 1972, Thomason and Kaufman 1988). Particularly noted is the tendency for certain kinds of trade apprentices to move south, illustrating what Keene (2000: 105) calls 'betterment' migration. Both he and L. Milroy (2002: 6) cite Thrupp's (1948) research from late fifteenth-century records which suggest that nearly half of the young apprentices to tailors and skippers came from Northern counties. London also attracted Northern law students to its Inns of Court. Such young adults were likely to be influential on speech habits of the next generations, especially if they themselves acquired wealth and social prestige. 'Subsistence' migration from the North also took place, but before 1300 and in the sixteenth century (Keene 2000: 105). People fleeing from the Scottish border raids, for example, as typified in Bullein's *Dialogue* (1564) cited in 2.2, would fit into this category. Mendicinus notes how lots of his fellow countrymen have come to the City and twenty or thirty miles around, fleeing the 'limmer ["rogue"] Scottes' looking for jobs. Even Civis admits that he himself was born in the North and had come to London when he was young and poor.

During the latter half of the sixteenth century the population in London had nearly tripled in a century, which can only be explained by large-scale and continuous immigration (Klemola 1996: 187). By the end of the sixteenth century 1 in 20 people lived in London (Wakelin 1972: 29), a veritable melting-pot or 'open community' (J. Milroy 1992: 203) for the mixing and levelling of different dialectal features. This ever-changing or fluid situation perhaps partly explains why any 'Northern' feature could be influential at all: otherwise one might expect the assimilation of immigrant lects into the general London dialect; or by the early seventeenth century some social stigma (3.1 and 3.3). Ultimately, we have to see Northern influence on London English as happening by various social mechanisms, direct and indirect,

over centuries, and at different rates for different features, themselves in competition with other variants in different registers by different users. And from the example of <-s> (3rd person sg. pres.) any 'progression' southwards need not be a straightforward one, but in fits and starts (cf. Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 2000: 289). <-s> appears in London English after Chaucer's death, but appears stylistically to have been regarded until the mid sixteenth century as colloquial or informal, commoner in prose (e.g. merchants' letters) than verse (Bambas 1947). <-eth> had marked formal Chancery documents, however, and its sudden non-historical appearance in Northern letters in the fifteenth century suggests that it was re-evaluated by the upwardly mobile even in the North as prestigious for a time, with <-s> correspondingly being seen as too 'provincial' (Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 2000, Takeda 2002: 172). Nonetheless, since <-th> itself eventually dies out in the seventeenth century, and <-s> was the predominant form in metropolitan literary usage of the 1590s, a further shift in stylistic or sociolinguistic evaluation must have taken place.

Even with the benefit of hindsight, it is not easy to see why some Northern grammatical features passed into London English and others not: why not Northern present tense plurals? Or why did Northern English *the which*, noted as being in London English by Late ME, not survive? (see Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 2000: 321.) The role of analogy has been suggested, e.g. for the extension of <-es> noun plurals; also seen as a kind of Darwinian 'survival of the fittest' by Baugh and Cable (1978: 160). Functional motivations for innovation and spread are suggested particularly by Samuels (1963): e.g. for *she* and *they* pronoun forms. Subjective *they* might resolve the 'ambiguity' caused by a plethora of homonymous *he* forms of OE origin, but was this the reason for its diffusion southwards? The subjective case is certainly found in London English earlier (fourteenth century) than the oblique cases (early fifteenth century), which may therefore have been adopted by analogy (Horobin and Smith 2002: 130). Again, such explanations are easiest in hindsight, and I have a great deal of sympathy for Keller's view (1994: 90) that functionality paradoxically can be 'unplanned', and that the majority of language changes illustrated in this section were random, piecemeal, unconscious and unintentional:

despite Bradley's claim (1911: 37) that Northern developments were 'recommended by their superior clearness'.

### 3.3 On the margins: attitudes to Northern English in the eighteenth century

The conclusion reached at the end of the last section bears a not insignificant resemblance, quite coincidentally, to that reached by Wright (2000: 5–6) in her introduction to a collection of essays on the development of Standard English to 1800. For her there is no single ancestor, be it in dialect, text type, place or time; it was a 'consensus' dialect, progressing in 'piecemeal' fashion. So far, I myself have tried to avoid talking about a 'Standard English', but clearly, by the eighteenth century, it cannot be ignored, nor the implications for regional varieties like Northern English. In terms of Haugen's (1966) well-known criteria for 'standardisation', as early as the end of the sixteenth century, encouraged by the new technology of printing, a variety based on London English (*selection*) was being used for more and more registers and text types associated with government and formality, and for mainstream or serious literature (*elaboration*); and certainly, as we have seen in 3.1, socially accepted by a literate influential section of the population centred on the fashionable and educated elite of the metropolis (*acceptance*). But what is not really in evidence, however, until the eighteenth century is what Haugen terms *codification*: the 'fixing' of this selected and elaborated variety through a consensus on what is 'correct' or desirable, manifest in such prescriptive authorities as spelling-guides, grammars and dictionaries.

Moreover, despite what some linguists might argue (e.g. Pålsson 1972: 27), it is only in the eighteenth century that we can begin, albeit tentatively, to discuss the notion of a 'spoken standard', not really covered by Haugen's criteria, although pressures to make grammar and lexis conform to the written standard are more apparent under the later influence of a national universal education system (see further 4.3). However, it is very clear from the number of pronouncing

dictionaries and works on ‘elocution’ from the eighteenth century onwards that ideas of a ‘standard pronunciation’ were also being proposed. Here, Haugen’s criterion of *acceptance* is noteworthy, since this was indeed a status-driven model, and found its roots in Puttenham’s courtly London English at the end of the sixteenth century. However, it is best seen as a ‘norm’ for aspiration, as we shall see. Indeed, right up until the present day, the notion of a ‘standard pronunciation’ is very much an ideal (see also chapters 4 and 5 on Received Pronunciation). Nonetheless, the perception that there *is* a ‘proper’ or ‘correct’ or ‘best’ way of speaking has been hugely influential on the way regional accents have been regarded in the past 200 years or more, as much by those who have them as by those who write to proscribe them. In general, there is no doubt that regional varieties have become marginalised, and even ‘eroded’ as standardisation has become more firmly embedded (see further 5.3); just as dialect literature has become marginalised by, and submerged beneath, a standard literary language, and dialectal spelling replaced by a standard orthography.

It is a well-known fact that the editors of the *New English Dictionary (OED)* in the late nineteenth century made it policy for dialect texts after 1600 to be ignored for data, in their concentration on the history and development of the (written) ‘standard’. Dubbed ‘non-standard’ (1.1), such texts have largely been doomed to be ignored, whether in histories of language or of literature. Yet both non-literary documents and literary texts provide interesting insights into the representation of vernacular features, especially discourse markers and colloquialisms normally ‘erased’ from formal writing; and also insights into evaluations and attitudes. Most importantly, as Shorrocks (1999: 87) recognises, in their use of regional English they help ‘to define identities at the periphery’. One could be forgiven even for thinking that little of such writing was published, let alone published widely. I return to particular genres in 3.4 below and 4.2 (notably the ballad and song); but one text type popular from the seventeenth century onwards in the North was what I shall term the ‘bucolic dialogue’, in both verse and prose: lively and rumbustious, full of family bickering. Several survive from Yorkshire. Cawley (1959)

quite plausibly relates them to the fifteenth-century pageant plays from the Wakefield area (see 3.1). Skeat (1896) reprints a broadside first published in York in 1673 in rhyming couplets called *A Yorkshire Dialogue (between an Awd Wife, a Lass and a Butcher)*. It reveals the hardships of farming life: the ox fallen into the pig trough and broken his *cameral-hough* ('hind-leg'). The vowels are markedly Northern: *Mack heast an' gang* ('Make haste and go').

Similar in tone is the slightly later and much longer *Yorkshire Dialogue* by George Meriton (1683), possibly an attorney from Northallerton. Of course it is perfectly possible that such poems reflect, however unconsciously, a growing sense in the late seventeenth century of social condescension, and confirm the use of dialect for non-serious topics in the mouths of the lower classes, and its banishment, in terms of diglossia, to 'low' rather than 'high' registers, even for writers local to the area. Yet, one also suspects, as time and again and well into the nineteenth century and beyond, a fond appreciation for the expressive possibilities of the vernacular. Meriton, for example, stuffs his dialogue set in a seasonal framework evoking the 'calendar' genre, with proverbs, farming terms and onomatopoeia. A later edition provides a glossary (*clavis*) at the end which is worthy of comparison with John Ray's, and so confirming a general antiquarian interest in dialect at this time (3.1). Indeed, according to Cawley, Meriton's editor (1959), the glossary was actually used unacknowledged by Francis Grose in his *Provincial Glossary* (1787) (see below). Here is the typical flavour of the dialogue. The son bursts in to say: 'Fatter our Bull segg's pus-som'd, hee's degbound' ['our gelded bull is poisoned, he's swollen'] 'Wellaneerin, wellaneerin' ['Alas, alas'] is the father's reply. And the daughter complains:

Fatter I've gitten Cawd, I can scarce Tawk  
And my Snutles ['nostrils'] are seay fayer stopt, I can nut snawke  
['smell']  
Nor snite ['blow'] my Nose . . .<sup>28</sup>

<sup>28</sup> For a detailed comparison of Meriton's spellings with twentieth-century Yorkshire pronunciations, see Dean (1962), Wakelin (1988: 136–7).

Interesting in this poem is the representation of the definite article as <th> as in ‘*th* Cribb’, ‘*th* Pot’, which may signify the definite article reduction so characteristic of traditional Yorkshire speech still today.<sup>29</sup>

A much later example in the same vein is *A Lonsdale Dialogue* (1801) by W. Seward printed at Kirkby Lonsdale on the border of Westmorland and Lancashire (see Skeat (ed.) 1896). This is a homely prose dialogue between a couple engaged to be married, Malle and Harre. Read aloud, the dialect would sound quite familiar in this part of the North even today, and the sentiments and colloquial vigour would not be out of place in the dialogue of the longest-running TV serial set in Manchester, *Coronation Street* (see further 5.1). Malle asks Harre: ‘Mun e mack ya a sup a Te?’ ‘War an war!’ he replies, ‘It’s nowt bat sla puzzum [‘poison’]’. Malle later moans: ‘That’s o at fellas thinks on, gittin a hauseful o’ barns for t’ wimen ta tack cear on.’<sup>30</sup>

Across the Pennines in the eighteenth century, *Tumms and Meary* (1746) by so-called ‘Tim Bobbin’ (John Collier of Urmston on the border of Lancashire and Cheshire) gives the lie to the lack of broad appeal that such dialogues might provoke. This and other works, including his *View of the Lancashire Dialect*, were popularly reprinted well into the next century (over 100 editions of the dialogue, some of them pirated), not only in other cities in the North (Leeds 1790, Salford 1811, Rochdale 1894), but also in London (1806, 1820). *Tumms and Meary* is prefaced by a dialogue between Tim Bobbin and the ‘book’

<sup>29</sup> Noted also by Ihalainen (1994: 208) and by Jones (2002: 328). The <th> spelling usually represents a fricative, although as Jones notes (1999: 105), <t> is also commonly used as a spelling for this and the plosive in definite article reduction (DAR). See the *Lonsdale Dialogue* (1801) cited below: like *Tumms and Meary* antedating the *OED*’s first example from Addy (1888). An early literary example of possible zero-realisation is found in the ballad opera *The Honest Yorkshireman* by Henry Carey (pr. 1736), first acted in Dublin. Sapscurr, a Yorkshire squire, and Blunder his servant, marvel at the wonders of London: ‘Ay, Master . . . and [if] ye go to Tower ye mun see great hugeous ships as tall as Housen: Then you mun go to play housen, and thee be no less nor six of ’em . . .’ (1780 edn: 9).

<sup>30</sup> See also Glauser (1997) for an extract from ‘Two Familiar Dialogues in the Dialect of Craven’ (2nd edn 1828) by ‘A native of Craven’, i.e. the antiquarian William Carr. Note the wonderful opening sequence of greetings: Giles: ‘Good morning to the, Bridget, how isto?’ Bridget: ‘Deftly as owt, and as cobby [“merry”] as a lop [“flea”], thankso.’ *The York Minster Screen* (1833) by George Newton Brown, in the North Riding dialect, is a dramatic dialogue in verse, and begins with Mike Dobson greeting another: ‘Hollo, Bob Jackson, owr’t [“where”] the plague’s thee boon [“bound”]?’ (Skeat 1896: 1). See also 5.3.

itself, which urges him to ignore the linguistic tastes of the 'fawse Lunnoners' and to use his own dialect: 'let 'em speak greedly ["properly"] as we dun i God's num'. Clearly proud of his dialect Tim Bobbin begins with 'Observations' for those who are 'strangers to Lancashire pronunciation': particularly noteworthy is the *a* for *o* as in *shart* ('short'); and also *hoosht* ('she shall'). *Te* could be 'thy', 'they' or 'the'. He also notes changes in his local dialect, casting an interesting light from the provinces on the encroachment of 'standardisation':

But as Trade in a general way has now flourish'd for near a Century, the inhabitants not only Travel, but encourage all Sorts of useful Learning so that among Hills and Places formerly unfrequented by Strangers, the People begin within the few years of the Author's Observations to speak much better English. If it can properly be called so . . . (1775 edn: 10)

Successive editions provided useful glossaries, and the work was explicitly used as resource by Francis Grose again in his *Provincial Glossary* (1787), who continued in the antiquarian tradition noted in the seventeenth century above (3.2). Indeed, Shorrocks (1996: 387) argues convincingly that John Collier's own intention was to provide linguistic 'specimens' of interest to antiquarians. In the mid nineteenth century the dialogues were also extensively annotated, corrected (to remove 'Cheshire' forms) and also expurgated, by Samuel Bamford, a radical poet and dialect writer, dubbed the 'Lancashire bard' (see Hewitt and Poole 2000: 117), who gave them a new lease of life well into the 1920s. By Bamford's time Lancashire was an important area for a flourishing dialect literature born from the cotton industry, at which John Collier's pen-name also hints (see also 4.2).<sup>31</sup>

Despite the popular and widespread appeal of Tim Bobbin's works, there were still those metropolitan reviewers who found such writings

<sup>31</sup> 'Tim Bobbin's works also include a verse tale in Standard English of *The Battle of the Flying Dragon and the Man of Heaton*, which provides an early literary attempt to render a Geordie dialect by an 'outsider'. A Lancashire beau goes to London and brings home the fashionable pig-tail. On a subsequent visit to the Newcastle area the wind blows it away. A local 'countryman' mistakes it for a dragon, and it is his monologue that is rendered in dialect. So, when he learns what it really is: 'Wha sense is then e Tele so black / Tha's teed to th'Heod, an rows o'th back?' (Collier 1775 edn: 32).

difficult to appreciate. The *Gentleman's Magazine* (1746) found the dialogue 'dry and unentertaining'. When Ann Coward Wheeler's *Westmorland Dialect in Four Familiar Dialogues* appeared in 1791, published in London as well as Kendal, the *Monthly Review* complained that, like Tim Bobbin's, 'such compositions require an intimate acquaintance with the vulgar provincial dialects in which they are written'; and although there is 'much of nature and somewhat of humour' in Wheeler's dialogues, they nonetheless 'would baffle the united learning and abilities of all the Reviewers in Europe' (1802 edn: i). Certainly, as the eighteenth century progressed, the establishment of a standard orthography meant that any 'deviations' from the 'norm' proved less and less acceptable, and dialect literature written in broad phonetic spelling was branded *in toto* as ideologically abnormal (see also 4.2). Wheeler in her own Address to the reader admits that 'provincial orthography is one of the most difficult tastes of literature' (1802 edn: v); actually, however, she had not written the dialogues for publication originally, but for the amusement of her friends. What is interesting about the dialogues is their concern for the emotional problems and pleasures of being a woman. Set against the background of coastal cockle-picking, one dialogue reveals the desire of Mary to leave her husband ('I'll nivver leev wie him maar, ise ["I shall"] git a sarvis sum whaar I racken' (p. 12); and even to go to London, so desperate is she. Ann replies: 'Wauk thau cannet, it's a terrible way' (p. 19). In the fourth dialogue a girl goes to London to visit her cousin, who 'tauked sae fast en sae fine I knew net what she sed, sure it wur quite lost en me' (p. 102). Wheeler herself, a native of Lancashire, had spent eighteen years as a housekeeper in London, and on her husband's death had returned to the North-west (Bailey 1996: 268).

What London reviews of such dialogues also reveal is a growing feeling that deviant spellings also represent 'corrupt' pronunciations (*The Gentleman's Magazine* 1746). Thomas Sheridan (1762), of Irish birth, in his *Course of Lectures on Elocution*, denounces provincials for speaking 'a corrupt dialect of the English tongue' (cited Crowley 1996: 3). Again, regional pronunciations are measured against the 'norm' of the 'best' of fashionable London. This parallels the belief that Standard English itself was more rational and logical than regional

dialects (Adamson 1998: 612); a belief that weighed against the speech of all corners of the British Isles, not only the commonly cited Cornwall and Cumberland (3.1), and so including Scotland in the 'far North'. Educated Scottish people, like the Irish, were encouraged to abandon their 'barbarous' dialect, even by fellow countrymen (e.g. James Buchanan and James Beattie, the latter Professor of moral philosophy at Aberdeen). In many grammar books of the period, and well into the nineteenth century, provincialisms appeared as examples of 'bad grammar' to avoid, and as bearing the stigmata of vulgarity, a poor education, and, at worst, lack of civilisation (see Smith 1984: 29). Dialect speakers were encouraged to be 'cured', or to cure themselves, of their 'infected' speech (see Sheridan 1762).

These views were propounded by schoolteachers even of Northern extraction, e.g. Ann Fisher, married to a Newcastle printer, whose *New Grammar* (1750) reached thirty-five editions by 1800. Indeed, aside from London, Newcastle published more grammars during the eighteenth century than anywhere else (Beal 1996: 364). The Newcastle-born Thomas Spence, self-educated, wrote his *Grand Repository of the English Language* (1775), partly influenced by Fisher, for the benefit of the poor, so that they might no longer be scorned for their improprieties of usage. As Beal says (1993b: 9), 'Not even such an extreme Radical as Spence would have suggested that the dialect of Newcastle upon Tyne was as good as any other.' Because of his own strong accent, however, reflecting his own working-class origins, he was subject to patronising comment. Northern grammar schools certainly took to the ideology of standardisation and 'correct' pronunciation with great zeal. However, it is difficult to estimate the extent to which educated Northerners actually modified their accents: presumably preachers, teachers and actors were more likely to do so, as in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (4.3). James Adams, in his *Appendix* to his *Pronunciation of the English Language* (1799) laments that 'education and absence from the country never entirely hide the Lancashire-man' (n.p.) Still, Francis Drake, a York surgeon, writes in 1736 that 'the better sort talk the English language in perfection at York without the affected tone and mincing speech of the Southern people, as well as the broad open accent and twang of the more northern' (cited in Bennett 1982).

Nonetheless there is evidence to suggest that wealthy businessmen and upwardly mobile colliery owners sent their sons south to acquire fashionable tastes and an education which included ridding their language of 'Northernisms', e.g. the Tyneside rising intonation (Jewell 1994: 122–3; see also 5.3). Mugglestone (2003: 36–7) gives the example of Sir Christopher Sykes looking for a tutor in 1778 for his offspring able to 'correct their Yorkshire tone'. The *Critical Review* (1796) commended William Smith's pronouncing dictionary (1795): 'We have seen an eminent lawyer getting rid almost entirely of his Northern accents, and thus making his way to the highest post in his profession' (cited Mugglestone 2003: 37). In this period, then, the view that a broad accent could hinder professional advancement, still prominent in the late twentieth century, took firm root (see also 4.3).

The role of pronunciation in what Crowley (1991: 65) aptly calls the 'construction of social identity' is illustrated by metropolitan, and even local, attitude to the so-called 'Northumbrian Burr', or 'uvular *r*', which became a salient symbol of rusticity and 'barbarity', precisely at a time when /*r*/ before a consonant and word finally was gradually disappearing from London and southern pronunciation, to become stranded as it were, in the far North, the North-west and the South-west. The distinctive uvular articulation, however, is peculiar to Northumberland, and so its origins were much disputed then as now (5.3). While strong /*r*/-articulation is a feature of neighbouring Scots, and therefore possibly both descended from Old Northumbrian roots, the distinctiveness of the Burr could also be seen as arising out of a (un-) conscious desire to maintain difference of identity in the border region. Local folklore has attributed it (proudly) to the imitation of Hotspur's speech impediment (Shakespeare notes only his 'speaking thick' in *2 Henry IV*, II. iii).<sup>32</sup> Hugh Jones (an American) ascribed it to Scottish influence (*Accidence of the English Tongue* 1724); James Adams to the influence of Norman French (*Appendix to the Pronunciation of the English Language Vindicated* 1799); and John Collier of Newcastle to problems in articulation

<sup>32</sup> Heslop (1892: xxiv) notes the Hotspur legend, but doubts the Burr is of 'Old Northumbrian' origin, suggesting instead continental influence. Ellis (1890: 125) believes it is 'of recent origin', of 'no dialectal value', but a 'defect of utterance' (see also note 34 below).

faced by Danish and Norwegian settlers (*An Alphabet for the Grown-up Grammarians of Great Britain* 1778). He graphically describes it as a 'choaking guggle' of a sound (pp. 18–19). Echoing Collier, John Trotter Brockett later in his *Glossary of North Country Words* (1825) notes that *Croakumshire* is the 'cant' name for Northumberland, because of the 'peculiar croaking' by its inhabitants. Similar unflattering imagery, intensified, is used by the local writer Richard Dawes, Master of Newcastle's Free Grammar School, who wrote an epic poem on its supposed 'Origins' (2nd edn. 1767). Set in the time of Edwin of Northumbria, when the inhabitants were a 'rude, unpolish'ed, cut-throat Band', they were civilised by the maiden Rurefratra, but misled again by the Devil. God gets his revenge by branding them with the Burr:

A gutt'ral Noise, like Crows and Jays:  
Or somewhat like a croaking Frog,  
Or Punch in Puppet-Show, or Hog:  
A rattling Ear-tormenting Yell,  
Much us'd 'mong low-liv'd Fiends in Hell . . . (p. 19)

When a Newcastle man goes to Hell, the password is, appropriately, 'Rurefratra'.

Daniel Defoe has generally been considered to be one of the earliest commentators on the Burr, following his 'tours' of Britain (1724–6) (cf. Wakelin 1972: 41, Ihalainen 1994: 198, Beal 2004: 9). He calls it the 'Wharle', and says it is 'a Shibboleth upon their Tongues', for the natives 'cannot deliver [the letter R] . . . without a hollow jarring in the Throat' (1927 edn: 662).<sup>33</sup> However, Hugh Jones has been left unnoticed as also commenting upon what he calls a 'Kind of Burr in the throat', in his *Accidence to the English Tongue* probably earlier than Defoe (1724).<sup>34</sup> Like Defoe, Brockett (1825) cited above also sees it as a failure of pronunciation: 'a peculiar whirring sound, made by the

<sup>33</sup> *Wharl*, 'to whirr', is given as 'imitative' in origin in the *OED*, like *whurl*. The quotation from the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (1797) seems to be based on Defoe, but with a more graphic image: '. . . as if they hawked it up from the windpipe, like the cawing of rooks'. Early seventeenth-century commentators had also, interestingly, noted *wharling* in Carleton in Leicestershire.

<sup>34</sup> Hugh Jones' reference to the Newcastle 'Burr in the throat' also predates the *OED*'s earliest example (1760). Grose (1787) explicitly comments on the phrase, adding

inhabitants of Newcastle, . . . in endeavoring to pronounce the letter R' (see his entry for *burr*). Yet Defoe recognised that what is a 'shibboleth' to outsiders can be an emblem of regional identity to its users: 'the natives value themselves upon that Imperfection [sic], because, forsooth, it shews the Antiquity of their Blood' (see further 3.4).

Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that the Burr provides an interesting illustration of the general regional custom of 'testing' outsiders by challenging them to pronounce set-pieces as rapidly as possible, where the salient feature is very marked. As Widdowson states (1975), it is thus the outsider, not the 'native', who can thereby appear unintelligent. Certainly the Burr appears in alliterative rhymes to this day; but these same rhymes, ironically, could be used by elocutionists precisely to help 'cure' the speech 'defect': cf. C. F. Springarn's *Six Exercises on the Letter R; Arranged to Obviate the Difficulty of its Articulation (Peculiar to the Natives of Newcastle and Northumberland* (n.d.).<sup>35</sup> And when Tynesiders went to London, 'wor burr' could be expected to be made game of in 'rum-gum-shus chimes', as the poem *Canny Newcassell* records (in Bell 1812).<sup>36</sup> For a variety of reasons, the Northumbrian Burr is now a recessive feature (see further chapter 5); although it has left its mark on the distinctive modified vowels of present-day Geordie, e.g. /fɔːst/ ('first') and /wɔːd/ ('word'); and *Wharle* itself (see note 33 above).

As Beal (2004: 4) notes generally, eighteenth-century textbooks provide useful evidence not only for provincialisms, like the Burr, but also of changes in progress which come to mark newly fashionable and 'vulgar'

' . . . few if any of the natives . . . are ever able to get rid of this peculiarity' (n.p.). The *OED* suggests plausibly that *burr*, apparently 'imitative', was also popularly associated with the roughness of the bur(r) plant, and the sense of sticking in the throat under that entry is found from Langland onwards. Milton (1641) interestingly uses it of language: 'honest natives coming to the universities . . . sent home again with a Scholastic Bur in their throats'. Both Murray (1873) and Ellis (1876) call the Burr a *crhoup*, i.e. 'cough', a Scottish word in origin (see further chapter 5). The *OED* does not note this spelling, but cites a phrase (n.d.): 'He croups like a Newcastle man.' This sense of *croup* is not found in the *EDD*.

<sup>35</sup> Kenrick (1773: 31) cites 'Round the rude rocks the ragged Rachel runs', as does Ellis (1889: 642). As Beal notes (2004: 11) modern Geordies substitute *rascal* for *Rachel*. Scott Dobson's (1970) mnemonic goes: 'Around Rothbary and Rowlands Gill the rugged rocks gan clittor clatter doon the brae and through the watter' (n.p.).

<sup>36</sup> *Rum-gum-shus* means 'sharp, witty' according to the *EDD*. See further Wales (2004) for more examples in eighteenth-century verse.

pronunciations and so further stigmatise the regional. Two of the most important of these, since they came to be probably the most salient markers of the linguistic 'North–South divide' today discussed in chapter 1, are the so-called 'FOOT–STRUT split' and 'BATH-broadening' (Wells 1982). I shall return to these pronunciations and their socio-linguistic implications in 4.3 in particular (and also chapter 5). There is certainly evidence that the lack of unrounding in respect of non-labial vowels as in words like *strut* was being noted as a salient feature of Northern English by the mid eighteenth century. Both the FOOT–STRUT split and the lengthening of 'a' before fricatives (except /ʃ/) as in *bath* and also before nasal groups (as in *dance*) appear to have emerged in the South-east (possibly first in the East Midlands), in the mid- to late seventeenth century. (The change of quality of /a:/ to /ɑ:/ came much later.)<sup>37</sup> Cooper comments on the lengthening of 'a' in *The English Teacher* (1687) (cited Görlach 1991: 11, Freeborn 1992: 167); and Simon Daines (1640) notes unrounded 'u' in London speech. But they appear only to have become fashionable in 'polite' London speech in the eighteenth century, although fluctuation in social values persisted well into the nineteenth century (Mugglestone 2003: 78). John Kirkby (1746) (a Cumbrian), Thomas Sheridan (1762) and John Walker (1791) all note the lowered and unrounded /ʌ/ as in *pun* in addition to the original back rounded /ʊ/ as in *pull*; Walker specifically noting the Northern 'u', as if written *troonk*, *soonk*, etc., as being 'mispronounced' (see Beal 2004: 7). The Newcastle writer Thomas Spence shows no evidence of the fashionable 'u' (see further Shields 1974); and Ann Fisher (1750) has only the conservative short 'a' in words like *blast* and *past* (ch. 2, p. 5).

<sup>37</sup> As Leith indicates (1983: 141), the corresponding Northern long 'a' in words like *cart* and *calf* is fronter than the present-day RP vowel. It is also the case that in the South and later RP short *a* was fronted to /æ/ (see further chapter 5). In Lancashire, as Leith (1983: 139) also notes, in words like *look* and *book* the original long /u:/ is retained, so *look* and *luck* are not homophones as in other Northern varieties. (And cf. also RP *tooth*, *room*.) In Scots, the entire class of short 'u' vowels (as in *put*, *cut*) was lowered to /ʌ/ (cf. Harris 1996: 14).

As discussed in 1.2, evidence from twentieth-century dialect maps (see map 1.6) would see the area around Birmingham as the ‘terminus’, so to speak, for both isoglosses in their historical diffusion northwards amongst broad dialect speakers. (The common rubric, based on Wakelin (1972), of ‘southern limits’ is misleading, since the change spread from south to north.) This rough ‘Severn–Wash’ line has proved remarkably stable. Knowles (p.c.) suggests that this line also demarcates the limit of the ‘Londonisation’ of that area after the Civil War, at precisely the dates when these changes in pronunciation are first noted. As we shall see in [the next chapter](#), from the late eighteenth century onwards towns north of Birmingham began to grow dramatically, which resulted in new urban dialect speakers conscious of their own identities, and hence more resistant to metropolitan influence. Pronunciations like *bath* with a short ‘a’ or *oop* (‘up’) could be salient emblems of pride. It is interesting in this respect that although final ‘g’ in *–ing* forms ceased to be pronounced in educated London English in the seventeenth century, places like Birmingham, Manchester and Liverpool have retained it (see Wells 1982: 365). Nonetheless, as we shall see in 4.3, the growth of a new working class to replace the peasant class along with the rise of industrialisation simply intensified the class-tying of peasant speech, as did the inexorable growth of mass education. The linguistic ‘North–South divide’ became a sociolinguistic minefield.

### 3.4 Northern English and the routes of Romanticism

It is thanks to elocutionists like Sheridan (1762) that regional dialects which bore the stigma of a ‘rustic, provincial, pedantic or mechanic education’ were to be avoided by those aspiring to be gentry (cited Crowley 1991: 64–5). Never mind that Sheridan’s own ideology, like that of James Buchanan (1766), was the promotion of social equality and political unity: an awareness of social difference, paradoxically, was all the more heightened. There were those few who advocated an acceptance of dialects: Edward Phillips, in his *New World of English Words* (1658) felt that the crucial element was not to approach them with bewilderment equal to if you ‘had met with a Hobgoblin’. More

seriously, there were those who foresaw the dangers posed to the survival of regional usage. A reviewer of Francis Grose's *Provincial Glossary* (1787) warns prophetically: 'If not caught at this moment, [provincialisms] will be forgotten, since more frequent communication . . . will soon make little variety, except in the wilds of Exmoor, the barren heaths of Northumberland, or the sequestered mountains of Lancashire' (cited Bailey 1996: 267). As we have seen already in this chapter, there was a strong antiquarian interest in dialect from the late sixteenth century onwards, and praise for the deep roots of dialect in history and their 'purity'. Samuel Johnson in his *Grammar* (1755) expresses nicely the mainstream ambivalence to Northern English, echoing Defoe's on the Northumbrian 'r':

The language of the northern counties retains many words now out of use, but which are commonly of the genuine Teutonic race, and is uttered with a pronunciation which now seems harsh and rough, but was probably used by our ancestors. The northern speech is therefore not barbarous but obsolete.

(Cited Barrell 1983: 138)

The glimmerings of an enlightened attitude to Northern dialect reflect a growing awareness as the eighteenth century progressed, not only of the history of the language, but also a changed cultural perception of the North itself and the people, so long condemned in popular mythology as rough and uncivilised. The reviewer of Grose cited above gives a clue as to the mechanism: improvement in communications. His imagery, moreover, hints at the growing vogue for the educated and middle class metropolitans to undertake recreational 'tours' of the unsullied mountains and lakes of Britain. They saw the rugged countryside, in Lucas' words (1990: 9), following Williams (1985: 127–8), as a valuable 'regenerative alternative to the decadence of the society of the city'. As is discussed further below, under the influence of Romanticism Northern peasants become manifestations of the 'noble savage', surrounded in their solitude by a sublime landscape, and speaking an uncorrupted language in harmony with nature.

As we have seen in 3.2, travel to and from the North in the Middle Ages was largely for trading (and a good Northern word for a travelling

huckster was *cadger* (Brockett 1825)). Travels to the North for non-business reasons are certainly recorded from the sixteenth century onwards, particularly by antiquarians, despite the difficulties recorded in 2.1. Moir (1964: xiii) wryly notes that *travel* and *travail* come from the same etymological root. As map 3.1 very obviously reveals, much of the central North along the Pennines had no major routes in the early seventeenth century, and cross-Pennine travel was very difficult. John Leland's *Itinerary* (1536–9), by royal permission, led him through Yorkshire as far as Durham in pursuit of churches, bridges and other monuments. William Harrison's *Description of England* (1577) has a chapter on 'inns and thoroughfares', and notes the way from Berwick to York and London via Doncaster, Stilton and Ware, with places' distances measured in miles; and also from Cockermouth in the Lake District to Kendal and thence to London.

A popular literary genre in the seventeenth century was what I shall term the 'itinerant's peregrination', fictional or non-fictional. Several found the North an interesting challenge. John Taylor, born in Gloucester in 1580 and apprenticed to a London waterman walked from London to Edinburgh and beyond without a penny in his pocket (*Pennilesse Pilgrimage* 1618). In a mixture of verse and prose he recounts his journey northwards via Coventry and Manchester, and tells how the Scottish border in 'Anandale' in former times

Was the curst climate of rebellious crimes:  
For Cumberland and it, both kingdoms borders,  
Were ever ordred, by their own disorders. (p. 127)

Dubbed the 'Water Poet', he also made a *Very Merry Wherrie-Ferry Voyage to York* (1622), out of the Thames and past Yarmouth, then via the river Witham from Boston to Lincoln, along the Trent to the Humber, and up the Ouse.

Exceedingly popular in the eighteenth century, to judge by the number of editions, was Richard Brathwaite's *Barnabae Itinerarium* ('Drunken Barnaby's Four Journeys to the North of England') in Latin and English verse, first published in 1638. It is not so much the castles and churches that are described in Yorkshire, the Lake District and 'Tra-Montane' (across the Pennines) to Darlington, but the taverns,

hostesses and horse-fairs. He cited the common proverb found in Ray's (1670) collection: 'Sure thou know'st the North's uncivil / Small good comes thence, but much evil' (1805 edn: 29).

In 1643 an account was published anonymously of three Norwich soldiers' visit to the North, much attracted by the ancient monuments. Their comments on the natives confirm the then prevailing perceptions of 'barbarousness'. In the Lake District they found 'bare-legged rusticks . . . suche as wee never saw before, nor likely ever shall see againe' (p. 35). From Penrith to Kendal the way was stony and boggy:

If a man marke not his waye very well, and chance to be out a wea bit, the rude, rusticall, and ill-bred people, with their gamyng and rating, have not will enough to put us in. We could not understand them, neyther would they understand us. (Anon. 1849 edn: 33–4)

Similar problems in communication, with the possibility of wilful deception, are given in the intrepid Celia Fiennes' journal account of her journey *Through England on a Side Saddle* (1695):

I observe the . . . people both in these parts of Yorkshire [near Malton] and in the northern parts Can scarce tell you how farre it is to the next place unless it be in the great towns, and . . . they tell you its very good yate Instead of Saying it is good way, and they Call their gates Yates, and do not Esteem it uphill unless so steep as a house or precipice; they say its good levell gate all along then it maybe there are Several great hills to pass. (1888 edn: 74–5)

Like the Norwich soldiers she notes the poverty of the people in the Lake District, which she attributes to their 'sloth', however. In Northumberland 'the more I travell'd Northward the longer I found ye miles' (p. 173). The Methodist preacher John Wesley wrote in his journal in 1757 that, when he rode over the mountains to Huddersfield 'a wilder people I never saw in all England . . . and appeared ready to devour us' (quoted in Armitage 1999: vii). William Hutton (1810) on his way home from his 'Trip to Coatham, A Watering Place in the Northern Extremity of Yorkshire', calls at Boroughbridge to see some Roman remains. The woman answering the door 'remarked in language which I could scarcely understand, "That she could shew me a Roman pavement"' (p. 200).

Of particular linguistic interest is the account of the antiquarian Thomas Kirk of Cookridge near Leeds (1677) of his *Journeys through Northumberland and Durham* on his way to Scotland. Although a Yorkshireman by birth the ‘far North’ is clearly unknown to him, and he records what must be one of the earliest specimens of the Berwick dialect extant:

When any body dies, they send about the bell-man to proclaim in the streets that such a one died, at such a time . . . ‘Beloved brouthrin and sustars, I let yaw to wot, thaut thir is ane fauthfill broothir lawtli dipawrtid out of thes prisant varld, aut this pleswir of Almighty God, his naum is Wooli Voodcock, third sun to Jimmi Voddcock, courdinger [“cordwainer”, i.e. shoemaker], he liggs aut this ext door within the noord gawt closs on the nauthir haund, and I wod yaw gang to his [burial] before twa a clock.’ (1845 edn: 15–16).

His journal was actually transcribed by a fellow historian from Leeds, Ralph Thoresby, a woollen draper by profession, and a friend of John Ray’s (3.1), and who himself had to make frequent journeys to Durham and Northumberland. He too kept a journal (printed 1690), and it is clear that he was in perpetual fear of peril.

Travel to the North was much facilitated following the publication in 1699 of John Ogilby’s *The Traveller’s Guide or a Most Exact Description of the Roads of England*, with useful distances given, market days, rivers and places to be avoided. By his account there were clearly five main routes to the North from London, the one from London to Berwick being ‘one of the most frequented’ (1712 edn: 10); and two cross-Pennine roads. The Carlisle to Berwick road he notes is ‘chiefly Mountainous and unfrequented’ (p. 116); the other, from York to Lancaster, is ‘bad’ (p. 163), as is the road from Kendal north to Carlisle, and from York to Scarborough. Even though it could take six days to travel from London to Yorkshire in the mid-eighteenth century (Bowers 1986: 17), such a guide must have proved useful to those health-seekers like Hutton (1803, 1810) mentioned above, tempted by the knowledge that there were spa towns north of the Humber, notably Harrogate, Knaresborough and Scarborough (see also 4.2 below).

The emphasis on the bleakness and inhospitality afforded by the rugged terrain is given a new slant in eighteenth-century discourses of visitors who stress the 'barrenness' of the Lake District in particular in the purely functional and economic terms of agricultural production. As we have seen earlier in this chapter, the North since the Middle Ages was an important centre for wool and woollen products, and from the eighteenth century onwards took full advantage of technical revolutions. County Durham grew wheat and rye, Lancashire farmed cattle, and 'dairy and pasture remained the "linchpin" of the Cumbrian economy' in the eighteenth century (Jewell 1994: 100–1). Imagine the surprise, then, of those travellers with a distinct economic agenda, who found themselves admiring parts of the North almost against their will. So Defoe, on his *Tour thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain*, once across the Trent, his own significant 'divide', is amazed that no other 'pretended [i.e. "claimed"] Travel-writer' has yet thought West Yorkshire 'worth their speaking of' (1927 edn: 594). He is struck by the prosperity of the cloth-market towns, Leeds providing a 'noble scene of industry and application'. Yet Westmorland clearly scares him: 'the wildest, most barren, and frightful of any that I have passed over in England' (p. 679; see also Wales 2002, 2004).

Like Defoe, Arthur Young (1770) in his epistolary *Six Months Tour through the North of England* was primarily concerned with regional economy, industrial as well as agrarian (he shows a strong interest in cabbage-growing). The vast tracts of 'waste' moors from Alnwick across to Carlisle and from Carlisle to Kendal clearly upset him, and he notes that, although he may have mis-spelt some place-names he could yet be excused on the grounds that 'many of the places I mention are not to be found in maps' (vol. II letter xvii, p. 156). The work is significant, however, by this date, for the intercalation of a new discourse, that of the *picturesque*. It is simply not true, as Hill states (1996: 7) that scenery meant nothing to him. Whether stately home or hill and waterfall, all are described and evaluated with a painter's eye for composition; and where nature has not been tamed by landscape gardeners, as at High Force in Teesdale, 'the scene is truly sublime' (p. 199).

By the 1780s certainly, as Moir (1964: 123–4) records, the cult of the picturesque was inextricably associated with writings of the Cumbrian-born Reverend William Gilpin (see, e.g. 1786), and affected painters as well as tourists. The new discourse and landscape of Romanticism combined the antiquarian Gothic with its fondness for ancient ruins and the primordial mountains with an aesthetic obsession with Nature framed as Art. The Lake District was the most popular summer excursion by the 1790s, and many guide-books were written, including one by William Wordsworth (first published anonymously in 1810). Notable was the poet Thomas Gray's, which took the form of a journal to Dr Wharton (1769), and which later became an Appendix to Thomas West's *Guide* in 1780, itself reprinted in many editions. Gray had begun working on translations of Norse and Welsh poetry in the 1750s, preoccupied as he was with the history of 'primitive' tribes, including those of the (far) North (Lucas 1990: 50). In the folk art of such tribes lay the roots of national identity (Snell 1998: 44). In his own guide West ponders on the possible 'British' derivation of *Pen-Rith* (7<sup>th</sup> edn 1799:165); similarly Wordsworth in his on the Saxon root for the plots of land marked out for agriculture (*dales*; cf. *deal*) (1951 edn: 91). West's comments on the 'vulgar language' of the Lake District echo those of the antiquarian tradition:

In parts so sequestered from the world [it] may be supposed to continue very little altered from what it has been for many ages, and to be what was once generally used through the country. (p.98, fn)

His Appendix to the 7th edition also includes Mrs Radcliffe's poem (in Standard English) *Description of the Scenery in a Ride over Skiddaw 1794*, in the popular genre of verbal paintings nicely parallel with the landscapes of painters like J. M. W. Turner, who made his own tour of the North in 1797 (see further Bowers 1986, Hill 1996).

Particularly significant are the appended 'specimens of the Cumberland dialect' taken from the pastoral poems of the Reverend Josiah Relph, 'an author of some estimation in those parts'. Born in Sebergham, Relph had died in 1743, before his poems, including translations of Horace's Odes into his local dialect, were published (with Glossary

attached in Glasgow, 1747; wrongly attributed to 'Westmorland' by Trudgill 1999: 137). In the specimen *Harvest*, Robin, a bashful shepherd, laments that 'my het bluid, my heart aw' in a bruil ["broil"] / Nor callar ["cold"] blasts can wear, nor drops can cuil'. The spellings of *bluid*, *bruil*, *cuil* represent the typical fronted vowel /ø:/ of Lowland Scots; other spellings like *cworn* ['corn'], *bworn* ['born'] show intrusive /w/ before a vowel, a salient marker of Cumberland dialect at this period. It is tempting to dismiss this 'mixture', or what Craig Gibson (1869: v) called the 'Scoto-Cumbrian' as in the pastoral and literary tradition of Spenser (see 3.1 above); but the closeness of Cumberland to the Scottish border can explain the hybridity. Nonetheless, Relph was undoubtedly influenced at this time by the work of the Scottish poet and antiquary Allan Ramsay (1686–1758). Later poets in the North-west, and also Lancashire (4.2) were influenced by Robert Burns, Scotland's 'national' poet (1759–96). They combined in their own hybrid poetic discourse the 'aureate' style of their forbears and vernacular Scots. The Scotticisms could have been intensified to suggest an affinity with this Scottish tradition (and Relph's poems were published across the border). Nonetheless, there was also the strong local border tradition of ballad-making stretching back to the early Middle Ages (2.2), and this tradition thrived in the eighteenth century in Cumberland, and also the North-east (4.2). Ballads, as we shall see, became the locus of scholarly attention from the antiquarians and educated 'Romantics' like Thomas Gray, and many collections for a metropolitan middle-class readership began to be published: notably Thomas Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765).

One of the most popular of the local self-styled 'bards', connoting both the ancient unlettered poetic tradition as well as the influence of his contemporary, Scotland's national poet, Robert Burns, was Robert Anderson, a calico-printer, born in Carlisle in the same year as Wordsworth (1770). His collection of poems, *Cumberland Ballads*, set to well-known tunes, first appeared in 1805. Many are lively monologues or dialogues, recording the seasonal rituals and festivities of village characters like Luckless Jonathan, Feckless Wully, or Dick Watters. The intrusive /w/ abounds in *cwoat*, *fwokes*, *cwoach*; as do Scottish border features such as *sae* ('so'), *sec* ('such'), *mickle* ('much'), *stuid*

(‘stood’). There are also the general Northern *neet* (‘night’), *lig* (‘lie’) and *feace* (‘face’). Prevost (1905) notes the distinctive <tn> cluster in Anderson’s poetry, the vestige of the older <kn> cluster, as in *tnit* and *tnee* for ‘knit’ and ‘knee’. In his poem *Canny Cumerlan* there is an interesting reference to the tourist industry: he notes how ‘thousands on thousands’ have come to the Lakes to wonder at them. His own message is ‘We help yan anudder; we welcome the stranger.’ Anderson’s poems were popular in the region well into the nineteenth century and were eventually published in London, but again as antiquarian ‘specimens’. Even the Carlisle and Wigton editions (1808) had an appended Glossary, suggesting that their appeal was to the middle-class local clerics and farmers, and the small-holders or *statesmen* as they were known locally, with a long tradition of literacy and book-ownership (Joyce 1991: 198, 267). As Anderson’s editor commented (1805): ‘the locality and peculiar phraseology must necessarily circumscribe their popularity’: a perennial problem, as has already been noted (3.3).

It is against this vibrant Cumberland and Border tradition that we can set William Wordsworth: a tradition ignored by those historians of English (e.g. Crystal 2004: 484–5) who mention Wordsworth at all. Born in Cockermouth in Cumberland, Wordsworth was certainly familiar with the work of Robert Burns. A letter from his sister Dorothy reveals that he had read his 1786 poems while he was still a pupil at Hawkeshead Grammar School (cited Leask 2004: 263). Wordsworth himself later wrote that his own ‘familiarity with the dialect of the border counties . . . made it easier for me not only to understand but to feel [his poems]’ (cited Leask 2004: 263). But clearly not to imitate. Undoubtedly he was familiar also with the work of many of the Lakeland nature poets, e.g. John Dalton (1709–63), John Brown (1715–66), Suzanna Blamire (1747–94), John Stagg (1770–1823) and Elizabeth Smith (1776–1803). These were by no means ‘peasant’ poets, since most of their work was in Standard English with only a smattering of dialect poems (see further Melvyn Bragg’s edn 1984). Since Wordsworth’s own poetic oeuvre is in Standard English, including his and Coleridge’s *Lyrical Ballads*, whose title appears to evoke the local and border and Scottish traditions, his own relations to balladry and to the

Romantic ideology of the Northern peasant, are not straightforward.<sup>38</sup> It is certainly impossible to agree with Lucas (1990: 91–2) that Wordsworth had a 'desire to keep dialect alive', despite his precepts of the *Preface* to the 2nd edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* (1800), and the *Advertisement*. Here supposedly was a 'selection of the real language of men'; and the language was more 'permanent' of those who commune daily with nature and with the 'best objects from which the best part of language is ordinarily derived'.

Most critics like to argue that Wordsworth was still avoiding the artificial poetic tradition of the mainstream literary tradition, and that the traditional hegemony of the literary standard was broken (cf. Adamson 1998: 598–9; see also Smith 1984: 208). However, despite the foregrounding and even elevation of the simple lives of the local rustics (no drunkards here) and indeed the social 'elevation' of the genre of the ballad itself, the poetic discourse of the poems, and even the embedded monologues and dialogues, evoke not so much Anderson's living voices of the demotic as the mainstream discourse 'sanitised' of colloquialisms, regionalisms and other 'barbarisms', for a sophisticated yet non-radical metropolitan readership, uncomfortable with 'deviant' spellings, etc. In Wordsworth's own words, this is a language '*purified* . . . from what appears to be its real *defects*, from all lasting causes of *distaste* or *disgust*' (1800 edn: 336, my italics). Coleridge's own phrasing in chapter 17 of his *Biographia Literaria* (1817) also echoes the predominant eighteenth-century ideology: '*purified* from all provincialism and grossness'. So the rustic's speech is not so much 'pure' as 'purified', a subtle yet significant difference. Perhaps Wordsworth shared the view of the Scottish antiquary Ramsay of Ochtertyre, namely that, unlike for Scots, a 'national language', 'songs in the dialect of Cumberland or Lancashire, could never be popular, because these dialects have never been spoken by persons of fashion' (cited Leask 2004: 265). As Bailey (1996: 274) so vividly

<sup>38</sup> Leask (2004: 265–6) makes the intriguing suggestion that Wordsworth may have co-authored one of Robert Anderson's songs 'Lucy Gray, of Allendale' (1794); and his name appears on the subscription list for his *Poetical Works* (1820), although he 'nowhere mentions' Anderson by name.

puts it, the discourse of the *Lyrical Ballads* is the kind ‘that one might expect of a shepherd who had idled away a few years at Cambridge and taken a pass degree’.

Despite his Cambridge education, Wordsworth himself apparently retained traces of his Cumberland accent to the end of his life (cf. Mugglestone 2003: 261). As Tony Harrison writes in his poem *Them & [uz]*, ‘Wordsworth’s *matter / water* are full rhymes’ (see further 4.3). Yet Wordsworth, like Ramsay of Ochertyre, seems to have seen its social drawbacks. His sister Dorothy urged her nephew John to be sent to Sedburgh boarding school, because of his speaking ‘in the very worst and most barbarous of all the dialects of Cumberland’. His parents, however, sent him to the local Hawkshead Grammar School, and both Dorothy and William continued to complain of his ‘rustic accent’, which boarding at Sedburgh might well have ‘cured’ (cited Mugglestone 2003: 228–9). As a conclusion to this chapter there is a wonderful anecdote about Wordsworth still circulating in the early twentieth century (cf. Moorman 1918: 11) told by a Cumberland innkeeper:

Many’s the time . . . I’ve see him a-takin’ his family out in a string,  
and nivver geein’ the dearest bit of notice to ’em; standin’ by  
hissel’ an’ stoppin’ behind a-gapin’, wi’ his jaws workin’ the  
whoal time; but niver no crackin’ wi’ em, nor no pleasure in ’em—  
a desolate-minded man, ye kna . . . It was potry as did it.

## 4 *Northern English after the Industrial Revolution (1750–1950)*

### 4.1 ‘The two nations’: the impact of industrialization

On his *English Journey* in the 1930s J.B. Priestley finds himself approaching ‘home’ in the North Country. Near Huddersfield at sunset he describes how the hills ‘were beginning to take on . . . that Wordsworthian quality which belongs to the North . . . a brooding tenderness’ (1934: 155). He later notes how, because of the dales nearby, he and other Bradford folk ‘have Wordsworth in our very legs’ (p. 174). Because of the massive impact made on the North in particular by the Industrial Revolution it is all too easy for the Romantic image of the North presented in the last section of chapter 3 to have been replaced in modern cultural memory, especially in that of outsiders, by the ‘Lowry-esque’ (Dodd 1990) of grime and grimness, mechanisation and misery. (See also chapter 1.) In another sense, however, the age-old image of the alien wastelands and ‘barbarity’ of the North is simply reconfigured: the medieval view of the North being the Devil’s homeland replaced or reinforced by an industrial underworld. As Dellheim suggests (1986: 226), to sensitive Victorians the ugliness of the industrial North was mirrored in the uncouthness of the language. Yet for Northerners themselves, Priestley’s Wordsworthian trope rings true. It is hard to invoke any modern Northern townscape that is not also inextricably linked with either sea-side, dale or moorland; and even the Northumberland and Durham pit-villages, well into the twentieth century, measured their daily lives according to the rhythms of country customs and rituals as well as those of the working shifts.

This has significant linguistic consequences, which are important to remember with the growth of towns and cities in the nineteenth century. For, with the exception of a major port like Liverpool, with extensive Irish immigration (and to a lesser extent Newcastle), most Northern

cities grew on the strength of the incoming populations from their rural hinterlands (see Görlach 1999a: 145, 1999b: 2), with which they remained in a close symbiotic relationship. Early in the century farmers' sons may well have gone to work in the new towns 'but they often went back at weekends, or for hay-time' (Cowley 1963: 9). 61 per cent of the immigrant population to Oldham in the mid-nineteenth century came from only three miles away. Mid-nineteenth-century Lancashire 'retained more of its native-born population than any other county' (Joyce 1991: 281). In consequence the local regional dialect(s) still formed the basis of the new urban dialect: J.B. Priestley in the 1930s, for example, was able to state that 'once you reach Manchester . . . you are really in Lancashire. The people talk with a Lancashire accent' (1934: 253).<sup>1</sup> But with the inexorable rise of the middle classes and the nouveaux riches, and the promulgation of literacy and compulsory education towards the end of the nineteenth century, dialect levelling towards the 'standard' tended also to reach out to the hinterlands in due course. Pease's *Dictionary of the North Riding of Yorkshire* (1928: iii) provides explicit evidence of such levelling, e.g. *aboon* replaced by *above*; *yakron* by an 'intermediate' *acrun* ('acorn'), *hod* by *hawld* ('hold'). Nonetheless, the magnetic 'pull' of a large town or city remained strong; and within the town or city the presence of a huge working-class workforce helped to maintain the local vernacular very vigorously (cf. Romaine 1998: 16; see also 4.2). As a result, by the late twentieth century we are confronted by the emergence of strong local 'regional standards', based on an urban centre, to which the dialects of the hinterlands tend to converge. (See further chapter 5.) Interestingly, there is evidence of such regional standards in the first half of the twentieth century even in the new Northern cities. The linguist H.C. Wyld (1929) comments on the vowel quality of *bird* in what he terms the 'modified standard' of the Liverpool area, as having a "mean and vulgar quality" (cited Crowley (ed.) 1991: 213; see also below).

The dramatic expansion of new towns and cities away from the ports and harbours was also significant linguistically in that there remained a

<sup>1</sup> Bamford (1854: xviii), however, argues that Manchester is 'a more mixed people', whose speech is somewhat different from the 'country folks around them'.

strong sense of cohesion and coherence amongst the inhabitants. This was no haphazard or piecemeal development, of a kind that typifies the present day, but 'systematic and ordered [usually] around a single kind of work' (Williams 1985: 220), socially and physically, whether cotton or coal, iron or steel. In the first half of the nineteenth century certainly, employers and workers appeared generally to have a 'strong sense of interdependence' (Musgrove 1990: 279), despite obvious class differences. Moreover, demographic stability and socio-economic homogeneity amongst the workforce was particularly in evidence in the textile towns and the pit villages, where children followed parents into the same line of work. This again led to dialectal stability and conservatism. The early twentieth-century tendency for middle classes to move out to the newly created suburbs meant that 'dialect' and 'working class' was even more intensified in the city centres (Rawnsley 2000: 6).

According to Jewell (1994: 112), even by the mid-eighteenth century, at the start of the so-called 'Industrial Revolution', Liverpool and Manchester had reached populations of 20,000. According to Williams (1985: 152), between 1821 and 1841 London grew by 20 per cent; but Manchester, Leeds and Sheffield by more than 40 per cent, and Bradford by 65 per cent, the centre of the woollen industry. Put the populations of these places together, and there was an increase of over 400 per cent in size between 1821 and 1901 (Görlach 1999b: 4). Manchester, states Smith (1989: 13), was 'the world's first industrial city', a 'cottonopolis' (Guest 1998: 88) to match the metropolis, and close to Liverpool for its imports and exports. Liverpool prospered on the strength of cotton, and its population reached half a million by 1841 (Knowles 1997: 144). In the North-east, the population of County Durham alone in the last half of the nineteenth century grew from 390,000 to just over one million (Cookson 1986: 31), as places like Hartlepool and iron-manufacturing Middlesbrough grew from tiny hamlets. The writer and traveller George Radford was ruefully reminded of Middlesbrough's original 'four farmhouses' when he wrote in 1891 that Gladstone's 'youngest child of England's enterprise' now comprised 'cylindrical masses of slag'. Samuel Bamford in the mid-nineteenth century, himself a weaver, noted similar great changes in the manufacturing districts of Lancashire in the 100 years since the first

publication of Tim Bobbin's *Tummas and Meary* (3.3), when spinning and weaving were a family occupation. Not surprisingly, metropolitans viewed with trepidation the growing contrast between an industrial 'nation' in Disraeli's terms north of Birmingham and the remaining agricultural nation to the south (*Sybil, or The Two Nations*, 1845; cf. also the title of Gaskell's novel *North and South*, 1855). Reports of the working and living condition of the workers, the dirt and pollution, inevitably coloured popular outsider perceptions, and so too the images of Northern cities as Dickensian 'Coketowns', an alien Other. As Orwell noted about the 'North-South antithesis' in *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937), 'it was the industrialization of the North that gave [it] its peculiar slant'. The 'industrial North' was also a 'strange country' (cited Smith 1989: 10, 30).

In economic terms, however, there was a shift in the balance between North and South in the former's favour, to produce what has already been called the 'golden age' of the industrial North (Smith 1989: 17), and this was already happening by the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Ship-building prospered on the North-east coast from Hull through Scarborough and Whitby to Newcastle; and even in the 1680s the Durham and Northumbrian coalfields had been producing over one million tons of coal a year (Smith 1989: 11–12), again helping Newcastle as a port (see also 3.2). Coal-mining also prospered in the eighteenth century in Cumberland and south Lancashire (Jewell 1994: 101–2). Steam engines were working in and from the mines long before they were powering passenger transport; and the first powered woollen mills were working in Batley in the late 1700s. Already by the 1720s Defoe, whilst recognising on his Tour (see 3.4) the prosperity of the wool towns of Wakefield and Leeds, also noted the black houses from steel pollution in Sheffield.

Musgrove (1990: 261) may be exaggerating when he states that 'cotton revived the civilisation of the North in a way comparable to the international connections of monasticism in the age of Bede', but certainly Liverpool and Manchester were the richest provincial towns by 1880 (1990: 265), and also rivals. Even in 1695 Liverpool had impressed Celia Fiennes (3.4) as a 'very Rich trading town' when she crossed the Mersey (1888 edn: 152). It is unlikely that 200 years later

she would have recognised the dialect, because of the huge influx of Irish and other immigrants in the nineteenth century, and those peoples stuck in transit to the ‘New World’. Already by 1801 one in four Liverpudlians had been born in Ireland. The potato famine in 1846–9 led to increased settlement, here and also in Manchester, Newcastle and Middlesbrough, because of the huge demand for their unskilled labour (see further Beal 1993: 189; Chase 2000: 39). At the time of the 1861 census 25 per cent of the population were Irish immigrants (Knowles 1978: 80). It has frequently been suggested, for example, that the ‘adenoidal’ or velarisation quality of the present-day Liverpool English accent is due to Hiberno-English influence (in popular mythology due to the climate); and a particular pattern of rising inflection even for statements. Outsiders tend to dislike both even today (see further chapter 5): Alan Bennett, brought up on the other side of the Pennines, believes that the intonation ‘gives even the most formal exchange a built-in air of grievance’ (1994: 144; cited Belchem 1997: 100). Wells (1982: 372) ascribes the heavily aspirated even affricated word-final /p, t, k/ to Hiberno-English; which probably accounts also for the dental articulations of *dat* (‘that’) and *tree* (‘three’). In grammar, the 2nd person pronoun plural *youse*, very common in present-day usage (and in Newcastle) is probably also due to Hiberno-English usage. In the nineteenth century Liverpool English retained post-vocalic /r/, as did Hiberno-English, and Liverpool-born William Gladstone’s retention of it was commented upon at the time. Indeed, Sir William Hardman commented generally that ‘Gladstone has too much of the Northern accent to be strictly gentlemanly’ (cited Mugglestone 1995: 81). As we saw in 3.3 rhoticism had been gradually disappearing in educated English from the late eighteenth century onwards, especially in urban areas. While it is true that Lancashire speech at the time also retained postvocalic /r/, the Liverpool /r/ had a distinctive ‘tapped’ quality, suggesting Hiberno-English influence. Even by the 1880s Liverpool had expanded along the waterfront and across the Mersey into the Wirral in Cheshire, to Birkenhead (Knowles 1974, 1978). Traditionally perceived as on the border of the North-west and the North-west Midlands anyway (see 2.1), its modern expansion (also into North Wales) has consolidated its mixed dialect features. So characteristic

of this whole area is the conservative /aʊ/ in *brew* (sounds like ‘brow’), long /u:/ in *book*; the merging of the *fair/fir* diphthongs, and the l-vocalization of words like *owd* (‘old’).<sup>2</sup> The [g]-articulation in words like *singing* was noted by Bamford (1854) as a characteristic feature of Cheshire speech, across the Mersey. In this connection, the popular present-day nickname for the Liverpool dialect and its inhabitants, *Scouse*, from *lobscouse* meaning ‘hot-pot’ to sailors, is an appropriate label. The term is not found in the *EDD*, but Belchem (1997: 107) makes the interesting suggestion that along the waterfront Scouse was used as a ‘lingua franca’ by the dockside labour of diverse origins; and further, that the ‘adenoidal’ quality served as a form of linguistic bonding, an assertion of group identity.

When the heroine of Gaskell’s novel *Mary Barton* (1848), set in Manchester, goes to Liverpool, she is overwhelmed by the ‘variety of languages used by the passers-by’ on the quay-side (1978 edn: 351–2). The ‘nasty, smoky hole’ (p. 351) of Manchester is her true ‘home’, and Gaskell suggests the Lancashire dialect which is the city’s spoken bed-rock in much of the sympathetic delineation of many of the working-class characters. A strong sense emerges from this novel, and also from *North and South*, of dialect as a marker of working-class solidarity. To some extent Elizabeth Gaskell was herself an ‘insider’, living in Manchester all her married life. Other novelists had certainly begun to draw attention, very importantly, to the difficult working conditions and justifiable grievances in the mill-towns of Lancashire: e.g. Frances Trollope in her lengthy and often heart-rending *Life and Adventures of Michael Armstrong* (1840). But in line with the prevailing and long-standing linguistic ideology outlined in 3.3 whereby dialect was stigmatised against the social ‘norm’ of a standard, Trollope was typical of the burgeoning realist novelists of the Victorian period in showing ‘only a sporadic interest in presenting working-class speech’, and in tending to see ‘non-standard’ language as a ‘class marker’, and indicative of ‘moral

<sup>2</sup> Wells (1982) follows Knowles (1974, 1978) in seeing [ɛ] as in *dairty* a characteristic Scouse variant, and [ɜ:] in *fair*, homophonous with *fur/fir*, as more widespread in the North-west. McCrum et al. (1986: 207) make a distinction between *airly* for Liverpool Roman Catholics and *urrly* for Protestants, under Irish influence, but give no evidence for this assertion.

coarseness' (Ingham 1986: 519). Eye dialect (e.g. *yor*, *sed*) simply confirmed popular associations of dialect with illiteracy. The apprentice Michael and his brother appear to speak in standard English.<sup>3</sup>

To this extent, such novels of social realism and political intent failed to do full justice to issues of power(-lessness) and (in-)equality. But the pragmatic fact remained, as Mugglestone (2003) describes, that writing the dialogues of hero and heroine in standard English aided intelligibility, however unrealistic sociolinguistically speaking. Charlotte Brontë's (1850) revisions of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* are well known: 'I am sure Southerners must find [Joseph's speeches] unintelligible, and thus one of the most graphic characters in the book is lost on them' (cited Bailey 1996: 295). The irony of her own remarks appears to be unconscious. Gaskell continued in this mainstream tradition for the heroine Mary Barton herself, despite her obvious interest in Manchester speech. That she wished for a wider audience may be confirmed in that her husband William Gaskell provided glosses to Northern words (e.g. *nesh*, 'tender') and appended two lectures on the Lancashire dialect to the 5th edition. But the motivation was also to show the authenticity of the representation on the one hand; and the ancient history of the dialect on the other. Manchester may have been a monster of a city growing at alarming speed to metropolitan eyes, but its speech was deep-rooted and genuine, like the emotions of its speakers. Eason (1985: 696) would go further and suggest that the glosses provide 'a living historical link with the virtues of the past that the South has lost'.<sup>4</sup> That there was an obvious need to educate the metropolitan reader is confirmed by the complaint of the *Daily News* when *Mary Barton*

<sup>3</sup> In volume 2 Michael is apprenticed to a stocking-weaver in Derbyshire. For Trollope this is Northern enough. An old farmer speaks in a 'north-country dialect, so broad as to be *dangerous* for south-country folks to spell' (1840: 143, my italics). Even for Emily Brontë in *Wuthering Heights*, whose representation of the speech of the retainer Joseph is well known (see below and Petyt 1970), dialect is inextricably associated with poverty, coarseness and religious fanaticism.

<sup>4</sup> In Gaskell's novel *Sylvia's Lovers* (1863) set in Whitby in the 1790s there is a strong sense of the narrator commenting on and even translating phrases for the benefit of those readers 'down South' (e.g. *conks* 'private talks'). Although Gaskell only spent two weeks in the area, this novel, and also *Mary Barton*, was selected by Wright for the EDD (Spencer 2001: 40).

was published at the ‘unpronounceable patois of the Yorkshire [sic] dialect’! (cited Easson 1991: 38). The comment is somewhat surprising, since Gaskell is careful to avoid deviant spellings, so that features of dialectal pronunciation are not generally indicated. The apostrophe, as with other novelists, denotes colloquial elisions (*wi’*, *’em*, *o’*), although Northern definite article reduction is quite consistently rendered by *th’*. There is a striking contrast between her representation and that for the text of the locally celebrated song *ldham Weaver* or *Jone o’ Grinfilt Junior*, which is reproduced in chapter 4 of *Mary Barton*, beginning ‘Oi’m a poor cotton-weyver, as mony a one knowwas’. Yet its inclusion was clearly politically motivated, enhancing the story’s connection with the region’s continued deprivations and also its own vigorous and flourishing vernacular literary tradition (see further 4.2).<sup>5</sup>

Dickens was much bolder in foregrounding Lancashire dialect in his portrayal of the worker Stephen Blackpool, in *Hard Times* (1854). He evidently spent very little time in Preston, on which Coketown is based, visiting it during a two-week strike in 1853; but he is likely, as Easson (1976: 413) suggests, to have been much indebted to ‘Tim Bobbin’/John Collier (3.3), a copy of the 1818 edition of whose work he had in his own library. As a major character Stephen is clearly, as Ingham also suggests (1986: 521–2), a ‘vindication of the moral superiority’ of the powerloom weavers against the self-made ‘millocrats’ (Trollope, 1840), like Bounderby. Nonetheless, Dickens’ consistent use of traditional forms like *-en* participles (*broughten*, *growen*), ‘archaic’ when measured against the standard, merely confirmed Stephen’s marginalisation, and hence his powerlessness to effect change.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> There were at least thirteen versions of *The Oldham Weaver* in circulation at the time, in different spellings (Joyce 1991: 236). That used by Gaskell may explain her three missing verses and the censuring of lines attacking the parson (Vicus 1974: 58). The song was composed after the Battle of Waterloo when the wages of the handloomers fell.

<sup>6</sup> Dickens’ rendering of the speech of the Northern farmer John Browdie in *Nicholas Nickleby* written in the late 1830s is much less realistic, granted that the setting of Greta Bridge near Barnard Castle is a border area (Cumberland, Durham and North Yorkshire). Again, Dickens’ own visit to Bowes near Barnard Castle (1838) was a brief one. As well as the conventional non-standard spellings (*wooman*, *reddy*) there are features indicating general Northern (*awa*, *boans*, *aboot*), Yorkshire/Durham (*t’ oother*, *mak*, *tiv*,

Nonetheless, despite the images of harshness and dirt which Dickens and other Victorian novelists confirmed for the North (Gaskell's Milton Northern of *North and South* is located in Darkshire), they also promoted the positive images of honesty, hard work and plain-speaking, which have continued to the present day. When the social reformer Beatrice Webb in her early twenties visited her family roots in Bacup East Lancashire in the 1880s, she felt she gained an insight into a way of working-class life that had changed little in a hundred years, 'with all its charm of direct thinking, honest work and warm feeling' (1938: 195). Words and phrases like 'mid-dling *snod*' ('smooth'), *atayin* ('going out for tea') and 'e'en *warty*' ('even on weekdays') made an impression, and also the discourse final tag *like* ('got talkin' *like*'; 'interesting *like*').

By the 1870s the novelistic representation of Lancashire dialect against an industrial setting appears to have become so commonplace as to inspire metropolitan parody. Manchester-born Frances Hodson Burnett's first novel *That Lass o' Lowrie's* appeared in 1877, set in a mining-village called 'Riggan'. In *Punch* of that year appeared *That Lass o' Towery's*, where the narrator's opening stance is to view the Lancashire folk of 'Swiggin' (sic) as if a barbarous foreign tribe: 'They were a strange, bold, unwashed sort of people to look at'. A 'footnote' from the 'editor' states that 'we have sent a Special Commissioner to the North, who . . . will give us, on his return, some idea of what the dialect may be'. But another footnote adds: 'Our Special Commissioner with a dictionary has not yet returned from the North, nor has he sent us either a line or a telegram' (cited Görlach 1999b: 210). However satirical, this recalls Disraeli's words from thirty years before: 'Two nations between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy; who are as ignorant of each other's thoughts and feelings, as if they were dwellers in different zones or inhabitants of different planets' (cited Smith 1989: 50).

*eneaf*), border (*bluid*) pronunciations but also pronunciations he probably found in his reading of Lancashire ballads like *The Oldham Weaver*, particularly /oi/ for /au/ in *loight, loike, broide, sploiced*.

Southern perception of the foreign-ness of the North was intensified by the landscapes of the coal-mining industry, in South Yorkshire, Durham and along the banks of the Tyne: in Holderness's words (1984: 21) 'the blackness and savagery . . . the self-evident signs of . . . a fascinating and frightening otherness'. Under the influence of Romanticism (3.4), 'tourists' to the North had found visits to coal-mines as awesome as those to Lakeland (Moir 1964: 91–3); as if indeed journeying to the 'other world': the 'under-world' below the ground evoking the classical underworld of Hell.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the distinctive dialect of the mining communities, almost unintelligible to outsiders, merely reinforced the image of barbarousness. Samuel (1998: 54) records that when in 1869 a Select Committee of the House of Commons summoned a group of Northumberland miners to give evidence on working conditions, an interpreter had to be employed. And a Parliamentary Commissioner inspecting Sunday School teaching in the colliery villages of Durham and Cumberland in 1861 thought it was done 'in one of the most uncouth dialects it was ever my lot to hear' (cited Joyce 1991: 199).

What has been traditionally known in the North-east as *pitmatic* (first noted by Heslop, 1892, as a jocular term) and used until the decline of the coal industry from the 1980s, is in general terms a broad local Durham or Northumberland vernacular. Ellis (1889: 641) noted the marked intonation of the pitmen, still a striking feature of the North-east generally today: 'The singsong and musical drawl . . . must be heard to be understood'.<sup>8</sup> Pitmatic is conservative in phonology (e.g. Durham *yem* 'home'; *yuks* 'hooks'; *byuts* 'boots'); and, as Priestley noted (1934), conservative in the preservation of old Scandinavian words, overlaid with distinctive occupational terms. Surprisingly, however, there has been little mainstream research on pitmatic, although glossaries of the

<sup>7</sup> A popular ballad from the North-east (4.2) *The Collier's Rant* describes how 'me and my marra' 'met with the devil' in the dark, and knocked off his horns and club feet. Miners and the devil are associated in early proverbs and Upian Fulwell's play *Like Will to Live* (1568).

<sup>8</sup> Ellis also acknowledged that two pitmen told him 'we are allowed to speak properly at the weekly meetings of the Trades Union' (1889: 650), cited Chase (2000: 148). Hudson (1994: 11) notes how in his grandfather's day children in the 'top half' of Hordern in Durham were told not to talk pitmatic.

coal-trade generally were produced in the nineteenth century, notably Greenwell's (1849). A very early tract on the *Compleat Collier* by 'J.C.' for the Newcastle and Sunderland area was published in 1708. The relatively closed communities of the pit villages, with successive generations of miners involved in an intensive occupation, were the ideal breeding ground for a virtual 'anti-language'.<sup>9</sup> So *chum*, *teum* or *toom* marked an empty coal tub (cf. Norw. *tøm* 'empty'). There were words for different types of coal (*chinley*, *cannel*, *cinder*, *dant*, *jet*, *mushy*, *parrot*, *sooty*). Some words have clearly come from farming or rural occupations: so *stook* for the last bit of coal in a section (Hitchin 1962: 105); *corf* for 'basket'. As Greenwell (1849) also reveals, each worker knew his place and his role, from *trapper* to *backoverman*, *headsmen* to *wailer*, in an occupation as stratified as the coal seams themselves.<sup>10</sup>

In drawing workers from the land, the new industries endangered not only the ancient country trades but the rural dialects themselves. Antiquarians in the nineteenth century continuing in the long tradition of recording dialect words (see chapter 3) were clearly alarmed at what they saw as the decline and even disappearance of rural speech, for a variety of reasons, including compulsory education, the encroachment of standard English, increased mobility and industrialisation (see also 4.3 below). Bamford (1854) mourns 'the old dialect, with the old customs . . . and the old fashions . . . gradually receding towards oblivion' (p. x). Not surprisingly, therefore, this was the age of the founding of local dialect societies such as the Yorkshire Dialect Society (1894–); as well as the age of a burgeoning scientific and historical interest in dialect, to which the comprehensive works of Alexander Ellis and Yorkshire-born Joseph Wright bear witness. The

<sup>9</sup> Beal (1993a: 188) suggests that the 'clannishness' was due to the inheritance of the sixteenth-century borderers who had moved south. Orton (1930) would rather stress the mixed nature of the mining communities in Durham, come from Wales, Cumberland, Ireland as well as Scotland. In turn, Durham miners went 'south' to the Derbyshire coalfields (Wright 1972: 34), where they would encounter different 'dialectal' terms. It made pragmatic sense for each area to maintain a consistent occupational dialect in the interests of safety.

<sup>10</sup> *Trappers* were young boys who opened the ventilation ports for the tubs; *backovermen* inspected the workings and men during the backshift; *headsmen* were lads not strong enough to work alone; and *wailers* were boys who sat in the wagons to pick out the stones.

founding in Manchester of the English Dialect Society in 1873, of which Wright was Secretary, to aid the production of his *English Dialect Dictionary* (1896–7), gave a huge impetus to the production of regional glossaries, and also the collection of local tales, proverbs and superstitions.

Generally, however, since industrialisation was seen as a blight, its impact on regional speech, whether in lexis or in gestating new dialects per se, was ignored, just as urban speech was seen as ‘adulterating’ the local vernacular (cf. Addy 1888: viii on the Sheffield dialect). Pease’s comment (1928: ix) on the intermingling of the speech of the Tees Valley and the industrial areas is a rare one. As Crowley (1989: 156) notes, despite the fact that by 1901 around 78 per cent of the population of England as a whole lived in towns, most dialectologists did not see the new modes of speech as worthy of study. Even Ellis (1889), who surveyed sizeable industrial towns like Sheffield, Leeds, Bradford and Halifax, and who noted how actually these ‘manufacturing population[s] rejoiced[d] in their dialect’, believed that the ‘real’ dialect was heard in the surrounding villages (cited Petyt 1980: 151). Ellis similarly discounted Sunderland speech on the grounds of its ‘strong Scotch and Irish elements’ (1890: 126). Indeed, it is only in the last quarter of the twentieth century that urban dialects have attracted academic attention, but thus with their histories frustratingly inadequately recorded. With a few exceptions (Addy 1888, for instance, notes a few coal-mining and cutlery terms), opportunities were lost to see the new industrial occupational dialects as just as worthy of attention as those of farming or fishing; to see how older terms were borrowed; or to see how even industrial terms could generally spread into the wider domestic and local regional sphere, or even enter the mainstream lexicon. So in the North-east a snack is *bait* (in Yorkshire *snap*), words used by miners; *duds* are working clothes. *Shoddy* (adj.), meaning ‘of poor quality’ comes from the woollen industry, i.e. the waste material from making cloth (see Easter 1883).

The irony is that in the last quarter of the twentieth century many of the ‘new’ industries of the nineteenth century themselves declined or even disappeared in the North, from coal-mining to ship-building and iron and steel, so that collecting the corresponding occupational dialects

is no less a matter of urgency than the collecting of agricultural terms to the nineteenth-century antiquarians.

## 4.2 'The Road to Wigan Pier': Northern English in performance

A veritable treasure-house of occupational terms from mining and weaving comprises the hundreds of ballads and songs which flourished particularly in the North-east and the North-west from the late eighteenth century well into the twentieth: works which in their own way reflect the change from an agrarian to an industrial society with varying degrees of unease or acceptance.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, as Shorrocks suggests (1999: 89), such works flourished precisely because they met the needs or calmed the tensions of the new urban-industrial populations. So on Tyneside there are *trams* ('coal-trucks'), *hoggars* ('pumps': pre-dating the *OED* citation of 1850s), *P.D./Pee-dee* (boy on crew of keel-boat: of unknown etymology) and *keel-bullies* (men who carry coals to and from the ships). The song *The Row between the Cages* by the Durham pitmen's Union 'bard' Tommy Armstrong (1848–1919) has technical terms that 'could only have been understood by pitmen themselves' (Watson 1983: 75): terms which also kept pace with technological changes and safer working practices. In Lancashire there are *bones* ('bobbins') and *haddles* ('loops of cord'), *picking over* ('weaving') and *roving off* ('drawing out a sliver of cotton'). Ben Brierley's *The Weaver of Wellbrook* (1863) has wonderful lines such as:

... Wi' m pickers an' pins,  
 An mi wellers to th'shins  
 Mi linderins, shuttle and yealdhook;–  
 Mi treddles an' sticks,

<sup>11</sup> I tend to agree with Vicinus (1974: 192) that most of this literature is 'apolitical', despite songs about working hours, strikes and shortage of money. The foregrounding of home and hearth meant that dialect was entirely appropriate. The songs may often be jovially riotous in subject, but they are not unethical or socially disruptive or rebellious. Rowland Harrison (b. 1841) in a poem called *Geordy Black* (see below) addresses the young lads in the audience to '*mind te de the thing that's reet*' (Allan in Harker ed. 1972 edn: 516).

Mi weight ropes an' bricks;–  
 What a life!– said the wayver o' Wellbrook.<sup>12</sup>

Joseph Wright and the members of the English Dialect Society certainly acknowledged local songs, and the popular Lancashire poet Edwin Waugh (1817–90) from Rochdale was appointed to the Board. But it is a striking fact that present-day linguists, like present-day literary critics, have largely ignored, or at best under-estimated, this vast and significant Northern literature, and other related genres as diverse as almanac and stage recitation (see below).<sup>13</sup> Social and cultural historians such as Vicinus (1974, 1975), Hollingworth (1977), Maidment (1977), Colls (1977, 1987), Harker (1980, 1985a, 1986) and Joyce (1991) have brought the material quite rightly to the foreground in their field, because of its reflection of working conditions and lifestyles, but they have made few comments on the language. Shor-rocks (1996, 1999) is almost alone as a dialectologist in stressing the need for further study; Beal (2000) has an all too brief discussion of nineteenth-century Tyneside ballads. Histories of the English language are largely silent on the period 1750 to the present, assuming the hegemony of standard English; likewise histories of English literature have tended to concentrate on the rise of the mainstream realist novel, and so ignored the provincial voices rooted in the oral traditions of ballad, song and music-hall. Both kinds of histories on the one hand assume mistakenly that literacy and the written standard killed off both oracy and dialect writing (although the relationship between the standard, the production of dialect and the representation of dialect was complex); and on the other hand underestimate the strength and potency of Northern English as living speech used by both working and middle classes. Indeed, I would go further and say that it is significantly because of this vibrant body of literature, and later the music-hall to which it is related, that Northerners themselves became more conscious than ever before of their own regional identities and differences: dialect

<sup>12</sup> *Wellers* are footless stockings; *linderins* ropes round the beam; *yealdhook* a hook for wires to keep the warp threads separated (see Hollingworth 1977: 129).

<sup>13</sup> Almanacs contained local stories, jokes, proverbs, news and lore: see further Dewhirst 1997: 31–4.

was not only spoken but consciously performed and enacted for both entertainment and edification on a scale hitherto unknown. This in turn promoted still more creativity and, increasingly, local civic pride. Better levels of literacy, in fact, over the nineteenth century as a whole and into the twentieth century meant that the very act of writing down or reading the local vernacular drew attention to it as a dialect, and not simply as a 'corrupt' way of speaking. 'Deviations' from standard spellings are not shied away from. Although code-switching and bidialectalism increase as the century progresses, dialect is by no means an object of shame, but cherished as an emblem of local identity, and this persists until the present day (see also 4.3 and chapter 5 below).

In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries literacy levels in the North of England, particularly the North-east, make interesting reading. Jewell (1994: 143) notes that by the 1740s the rates for the gentry were 100 per cent, and even for tradesmen and craftsmen were 72 per cent, yeomen 76 per cent. High literacy rates continued well into the nineteenth century in the rural North. In the West Riding, John Hartley's *Halifax Illuminated Clock Almanac*, which flourished from 1856 for a century, was selling 50,000–80,000 copies a year by 1887 (Vicinus 1974: 207). However, in what Musgrove (1990: 296) describes as the 'urban-industrial quadrilateral' enclosed by Manchester, Bolton, Rochdale and Oldham, in the mid nineteenth century literacy levels were still as low as 40 per cent, as a result no doubt of the influx of cheap or unskilled labour. So on the one hand this meant that the inherited tradition of ballad-making rooted in the Middle Ages and encouraged by the cross-border influence of Robert Burns (see also 3.4) continued and flourished amongst the operatives who sang the songs at work, which were also printed cheaply in broadsides or chapbooks to be sung by ballad-hawkers and 'chaunters'. In the eighteenth century Newcastle was the main provincial centre for chapbook printing. On the other hand, partly under the influence of antiquarianism and Romanticism (see 3.4), educated Northern middle-class men, characteristically teachers or booksellers, took to collecting and printing local ballads and songs, and well into the nineteenth century, for a voracious middle-class local reading public, fond of music, who also read and even wrote them themselves in local newspapers. Regionally patriotic, or what

Joyce (1991: 273) calls ‘anti-metropolitan’, journalism flourished in each Northern town as the century progressed.<sup>14</sup>

I agree with Beal (2000: 369) that Harker (1972: xxvi) is far too harsh in his criticism of the ‘fashion among the Tyneside middle classes for doing the stereotyped party-piece of being more Geordie than the Geordies’.<sup>15</sup> This is to intensify class differences in the production and reception of dialect literature, which were blurred also when worker ‘bards’ on both sides of the Pennines educated themselves and rose from poverty (see also 4.3). However, notable North-east collectors and publishers were Joseph Ritson (1780s–90s), who was undoubtedly influenced by collections of Scottish and border songs by such as Allan Ramsey (1748) and Bishop Percy (1765); John Bell Jr (1812), Thomas Allan (1862), John Collingwood Bruce and John Stokoe (1882) and Joseph Crawall (1888). In Lancashire John Harland (1865) of Manchester can be noted; and in Yorkshire Abraham Holroyd (1892) of Bradford.

It would be easy to get too over-anxious about the editorial practices of such collectors. Certainly there was a tendency for them to ‘tidy up’ or ‘modernise’ the dialectal orthography in the interests of intelligibility for a non-local reading public. In Allan’s case there was a desire to see some form of regional standard spelling (Harker (ed.) 1972: xxvi). Since there never had been in the Middle Ages a consistent way of representing Northern dialect(s) in writing, there was no single way of representation, although conventions did tend to arise; and some poets had their own semi-phonetic spelling ‘systems’. However, not all such poets used what might be called ‘broad’ dialect spellings; and many also wrote poems and songs in Standard English, especially for solemn, patriotic or poetically conventional subjects.<sup>16</sup> Not all poets were consistent

<sup>14</sup> The Newcastle *Weekly Chronicle* held local song competitions, and there were prizes and medals to be won (Harker 1972: 570). The removal of tax on newspapers mid-century made it possible to publish cheap weeklies to attract more working-class readers (p. xvii). The *Yorkshire Comet* was printed all in dialect for a short time in 1844 (Halliwell 1847, n.p.)

<sup>15</sup> I also disagree with Harker in his belief that the ‘patronizing’ phonetic orthography of printed songs was for the benefit of outsiders only (1980: 165); see the discussion below.

<sup>16</sup> Lloyd (1967: 340) gives a political motivation for the use of a ‘conventional literary language’: accounts of pit disasters in order to collect money for widows and orphans.

from poem to poem or even rendition to rendition orally; and no two poets from the same town necessarily indicated the same features.<sup>17</sup> The same songs or ballads, especially those deeply rooted traditionally or anonymous, could recur from collection to collection with differing degrees of dialectal 'broadness'. There are many extant versions of the famous West Yorkshire song *On Ilkley Moor bahn'* for instance. The important point to remember is that they were generally meant to be recited orally, often memorised, or to be read or sung aloud, in drawing-room or public-house, so that any singer or reader was at liberty to overlay the words on the page, even those in Standard English, with their own accent, to accentuate the vernacular. Indeed, the fact that so many ballads survive only in Standard English may simply reflect the fact that this aided 'borrowing', and alteration to fit local demands from town to town or region to region (cf. Palmer 1979: 9). Well-known standard tunes, often of Scottish or Irish provenance, similarly helped, in Lloyd's words (1967: 404), 'the rapid and unhindered spread'. Dialect 'levelling' would be bound to increase the further a song travelled. The practice of oral accentuation, of course, and local variation, was translated to music-hall and variety show.

Nonetheless, despite the differing degrees of dialectal representation, the songs do tend to reveal quite consistently those features which were linguistically salient to the speech community. In Lancashire the definite article is typically represented as *t' / th*, the feminine pronoun as *hoo* and 'our' as *er/eaawr*. Phonologically, *wheer*, *theer* ('where', 'there') can be noted, and *fayther*, *rayther* (Southern English /ɑ:/). There are short vowels in *tak*, *mak* ('take', 'make') and open diphthongs in *theaw*, *teawn* ('thou', 'town'); and /w/- and yod-formations in *whoam* and *yed* ('home', 'head'). Lexically, the adjective *gradely* ('fine', 'proper', etc.)

<sup>17</sup> One can compare Edwin Waugh (1817–90) and Ben Brierley (1825–96), both born in Manchester and rivals and friends, often engaging in the same circuit of poetry readings. But Brierley has spellings like *dhrunken*, *sthrange*, *childher*, which Waugh does not. This spelling seems to reflect a widespread Lancashire aspirated or devoiced articulation: see, e.g. the letter by a Bury man in Halliwell (1847) (also in Görlach 1996: 206), where *ladthur* and *thryin* can be noted. Easter (1883: n.p.) also notes this in the Huddersfield district and Pease (1928: x) for the North Riding. Indeed, William Marshall (1788: 308) thinks this 'common to the Northern counties', and he knows 'no better test of a Northern pronunciation'.

is common, and so too *fooak/folk* as in Yorkshire. In the North-east, in phonology there is the characteristic fronted and diphthongised /ɪə/ as in *myek* ('make'), *hyem* ('home'), *byeth* ('both'); /u:/ for /aʊ/ as in *oot* ('out'), *roond* ('round'); /i:/ as in *neet*, *reet* ('night', 'right'); the fronted *tyeuk*, *seun*, *stuil* ('took', 'soon', 'stool'); and the striking linking prosody /v/ as in *iv* ('in'), *intiv* ('into'). Grammatically, *wor* ('our') is notable, *divvent* ('don't') and *thorsels* ('themselves'), and the familiar pronoun of address (*thou/tha/t*). Lexically, *lad/laddie*, *hinnie* ('honey'), *man* and *marrow/marra* ('mate') are common terms of address in songs which are typically dialogues or monologues; and recurring epithets are *bonny* and *canny* ('nice'). By the common collocations *wor canny lads* or *me and my marrows* are conveyed a strong sense of occupational and community solidarity.

Labov (1972) attempts to make a distinction between linguistic variables subject to social-class variation (*indicators*) and those with especially high levels of awareness associated with them (*stereotypes*). It is possible to apply this to regional variation also, but with some qualifications. In common parlance, as discussed in chapter 1, *stereotype* has negative connotations of an over-simplified or out-of-date image, often by 'outsiders'. The linguistic features mentioned above certainly mark the regional and social identities of the working classes of the period, and also certain styles for those who could code-switch (*markers*) (4.3); and many of the features persist to the present day. That there were indeed high levels of awareness is certainly the case, but this is more a reflection of their living *salience* to the local speech community. However, in so far as salient features are prone to imitation by outsiders (Trudgill 1986: 12), then stereotyping is a matter for consideration, especially, as we shall see below, in relation to the music-hall tradition. But in relation to the ballads, as indeed local music-hall, what we could say is that dialect is consciously *emblematic* of regional and social identities; and of the associated community values of common sense, stoicism, homeliness, humour and self-reliance (see also McCauley 2001: 289). Nonetheless, if stereotype also suggests cliché, it is noteworthy that recurring epithets and formulaic language, for instance, are characteristic of ballads through the ages, and the use of refrains characteristic also of folk-songs, from the Scottish and Irish traditions, as well as English. The opening

formula ‘Come all ye [bold miners/cotton weavers]’ found both sides of the Pennines may be due to the influence of Irish immigrants (Lloyd 1967: 5). The recurrence of epithets like *gradely* and *canny*, carrying a load of connotations difficult to pin down, creates and confirms a community’s self-image: as the opening lines of *Th’ Surat Weyver* by William Billington from Blackburn says, popular in the 1860s: ‘We’re werkin lads frae Lankisher un gradely daysent fooak’.<sup>18</sup> Such epithets function in exactly the same way as the recurring and extremely popular character types like the simple-minded yet put-upon weaver Jone o’ Grinfilt, the subject of many Lancashire political ballads from the 1790s onwards; or the miner Bob Crankie/Crank(e)y introduced on Tyneside by John Selkirk (see Bell 1812, and also below). Such characters became literary and cultural *archetypes*, alongside the more general regional types like the ‘Yorkshire tike/tyke’, recurring in Holroyd (1892) for instance.<sup>19</sup> What Joyce (1991: 259) says of the almanac could equally well apply to ballad and music-hall: ‘they gave people what they desired, a set of representations figuring their own mythologies’.

It is in this context that it is worth re-considering the origin of the term *Geordie*, now popularly used to describe an inhabitant of Newcastle/Tyneside/the North-east and also their dialect (see also chapters 1 and 5). To my mind, this has never satisfactorily been explained, and the possible contribution of local songs and ballads to its linguistic history has been completely overlooked. The *OED*’s entry does have a quotation from Allan’s collection of songs, but it is used erroneously, as

<sup>18</sup> *Gradely*, Scandinavian in origin, is chiefly found in the North-west, but the *EDD* also gives Yorkshire. The *OED* has its first citation in ‘Tim Bobbin’. It can mean ‘decent, respectable, worthy, thorough, comely, excellent, suitable, proper’, etc. For *canny* the *OED* tries to distinguish ‘Scotch’ senses, closer to its roots (‘knowing, sagacious, shrewd, frugal’, etc.) from English (‘agreeable, comely, tidy, nice, good’, etc.), but the *EDD* quite rightly, to North-eastern ears, includes them, and gives examples such as ‘Be canny wi’ the sugar.’

*Th’ Surat Weyver* sold 14000 copies during the Cotton Famine (1861–5). The Yankees had blockaded southern cotton ports, so that cheaper inferior materials were imported from the Surat area of India (Hollingworth 1977: 98).

<sup>19</sup> *Tyke* is of Scandinavian origin, meaning ‘dog’. Reference to ‘The Yorkshire tyke’ is also made in the opera *The Honest Yorkshireman* (1736): see 3.3 above. In view of the discussion of labels such as *Bob Cranky*, *Geordie* and others below, it is interesting that the *OED* suggests that the phrase was ‘perhaps originally opprobrious, but now accepted and owned’. A Yorkshire tyke dressed as a yokel in a smock appears on Edwardian mugs, with mottos such as ‘See all, hear all, say nowt / Eat all, sup all, pay nowt’.

we shall see. Literally, *Geordie* is a diminutive of *George*, and is found in Scotland as well as the North, with particular application to a guinea coin engraved with the head of George III (see *EDD*, otherwise unhelpful). One suggestion is that it denotes a supporter of the Hanoverians from the time of the 1745 Jacobite Rising. *Geordy* was certainly the name of King George in the patriotic dialect poem ‘The Pitman’s Revenge against Bonaparte’, first published in Bell (1812). From this appears to come Griffith’s (1996: 16) notion that because industrial development was being pioneered by the Whigs, *Geordie* referred to ‘the talk of the workers on the side of the Hanoverian dynasty’. But no dates are given for the shift in meaning from supporter to dialect. Another suggestion (cf. Greenwell 1849) is that *Geordie* is a nickname for the Newcastle engineer George Stephenson’s pit safety lamp: at least this predates the *OED*’s first reference for this usage (1881).

I think it highly unlikely, however, that the term was first used by outsiders (Colls and Lancaster 1992: x). Outsider nicknames for groups or regional communities are common and often pejorative (see also below); but *Geordy/-ie* is actually one of the commonest names given to pitmen and keel-bullies in the ballads and songs of the region during the nineteenth century. One *Geordy* turns up as early as Ritson (1793), and four in Bell (1812). By the mid-nineteenth century the name appears prominently in the titles of two extremely popular songs, still known today, by the song-writer, professional singer and printer Joe Wilson (1841–75): *Geordy, Haud the Bairn* and *Keep your Feet Still, Geordie Hinnie*, as well as three others of his songs. Its emblematic associations even by then appear to be confirmed by the ‘patter’ of the travelling showman Billy Purvis (1780–1853), who used to shout to his pitmen audiences: ‘Are ye cummin’ in te see wor show, *Geordy*? Only a penny for trappers . . .’ (Allan, in Harker (ed.) 1972 edn: 414). It is this patter which is referred to in Ned Corvan’s song *Deeth o’ Billy Purvis*, composed after his death in 1853, and reprinted in Allan:

Ne mair at wor races, friend Billy, thou’ll grace us,  
Nor call *Geordies* in yor fine show to admire . . .

He invokes it again in his own spoken patter to accompany the song; and it is this patter which contains the very quotation used by the *OED*

to indicate a more generalised sense of ‘a native or inhabitant of Tyneside’. But it is very clear, however, that in its proper context Corvan, like Purvis, is referring to the pitmen audience: ‘Where’s a’ his funny sayin’s, that set a’ *the Geordies* in a roar?’ (Allan 1891, in Harker, ed., 1972 edn: 415). In which case, both Purvis and Corvan would ante-date the *OED*’s first reference to *Geordie* as a ‘coal pitman’, which is given as 1876.<sup>20</sup> In this connection it is interesting to note the elegiac song *Geordy Black* about an ageing miner which was reproduced in the 1872 edition of Allan, and was written by Rowland Harrison of Gateshead (b.1841), a singer who toured the music-halls of the North-east and Glasgow, and who was landlord of a public house called *Geordy Black*. Pictures added in Allan (1891) show one of Harrison in costume with waistcoat and miner’s pick over his shoulder, and a colliery scene in the background (see figure 4.1). My contention is that, thanks to popular culture, by the mid-nineteenth century at the latest the miner and keelman had become industrial icons of the region, and the label *Geordy* affectionately and proudly reflected this. Interestingly, it appears to have replaced an earlier ballad emblem, notably the figure of Bob Cranky mentioned above: *crankie* in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries a mining cant term (see Brockett 1825, and *EDD*). Of disputed origin, it is most likely to be a metonym for the checked material of the pitmen’s ‘Sunday best’ trousers.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> The *OED* puts the sense ‘coal-pitman’ (2) before ‘A native of Tyneside’ (3), although the dates for the pitmen quotations are actually later than for sense (3). In fact, the nineteenth-century quotations for sense (3) are generally suspect: not only Allan’s as discussed here (which also appears in the *EDD*), but also Heslop’s (1892). Heslop actually clearly indicates that the ‘lower Tyneside’ men were working at the South Tynedale pits. The 1866 quotation, clearly from a non-English source, could well indicate keel-men rather than simply ‘sailors belonging to a port’.

The only unambiguous quotation for a ‘native of Tyneside’ is as late as 1955: 1945 if the entry for *Scouse* is cross-referenced. Further research is clearly needed on the linguistic history of both terms, for its is puzzling that their commonest senses today appear to be relatively recent. The sense of ‘dialect’ appears to be an even later development: the 1960s for *Scouse*, 1959 for ‘Geordie twang’.

<sup>21</sup> In this I would agree with the *EDD*, finding the sense of patterned fabric in Marshall (1788) and Grose (1787). Harker (1985b: 59) believes *cranky* means ‘merry’, as in ME; it could also mean ‘crazy’. The *OED* is unhelpful. That the miners were proud of their clothes on holidays is illustrated in John Selkirk’s poem (1803), although Bob here actually wears ‘yellow breeks’. Wright cites Heslop (1892) who thinks the term was first used by ‘outsiders’: *Howky* (from a verb meaning ‘dig’) was also similarly used in Morpeth, as the *Daily News* (1872) interestingly records (see *EDD*), and possibly later



Figure 4.1. Rowland Harrison as ‘Geordy Black’.

In hindsight, the fact that the music-hall flourished as it did in the North from the mid-nineteenth century well into the twentieth century seems the inevitable progression from a popular culture of both the working and lower middle classes rooted in song and also music and performance: whether in public house, working-men’s club, chapel gathering, seasonal fair, dance or *hoppin(g)*, pantomime and assembly room, with brass band or small-pipes in accompaniment (see further Russell 1997). The emphasis was on entertainment, on the carnivalesque,

*pit-yacker* (‘pit-hacker’, cf. ‘clod-hopper’) (Hitchin 1962); although as with these other terms, it was also used by the miners themselves (cf. also *pitmatic*).

predominantly humorous, if seasoned with pathos, sentiment and social satire. Bourdieu's description (1984: 34) of the music-hall as 'liberating' by its 'revelry . . . plain speaking and hearty laughter' is valid for much of the popular culture generally. Local 'bards' were also commonly 'minstrels', who made their living as showmen or fiddlers, and from the 1830s onwards, in the growing number of specially built concert-halls. And it was thanks to the economic benefits of industrialisation that the emerging new towns and cities of the North built new theatres, each town attempting to out-do its local rivals. Bolton's music-hall (1832) preceded the first in London by ten years. Such municipal buildings matched local culture with the same civic pride. There is an interesting parallel to be drawn with the notion of towns providing 'regional standards' (4.1) in Joyce's comment (1991: 230) that, culturally speaking, the big provincial centres like Preston, Newcastle, Manchester and Leeds represented autonomous influences over their regions.

The increasing prosperity of workers by the end of the century, and the building of railways, meant that paid holidays in 'Wakes Week' and the new 'Bank Holidays' (1871) led to the development of sea-side resorts for pleasure and entertainment, for which the North became famed. The now common phrase *week-end* was apparently first used by Northerners (Geeson 1969: 78). Some resorts, like Scarborough, had been fashionable spa towns in the eighteenth century; but others, like Redcar, south of Middlesbrough, merely fishing villages, 'with a few miserable huts' (Radford 1891: 24). Blackpool, still renowned today for its Tower and 'end of pier' variety shows, was created within one generation from a tiny watering place at the edge of a marshy pool which gave it its name (Hutton 1789, 1944 edn Appx). Dialect found a new medium printed on the postcard home: 'Whi, thi's left thi clogs at hoom!' (cited Joyce 1991: 167).

Once again, it is unfortunate, but not unsurprising, that critical attention has tended to focus on metropolitan developments in the music-hall rather than the 'provincial', as indeed on London 'types' like the city 'swell' or Cockney costermonger (but see Mellor 1966, 1970, Vicinus 1974). In any case, the study of the Northern music-hall and its performers is beyond my scope here. However, there are

important implications for the (re)presentation of Northern English which need to be discussed, however generally, and which are in need of further research (see briefly Joyce 1991: 220–1). As with other strands in the history of Northern English discussed so far, there are issues both of intelligibility and audience reception beyond the immediately local; and issues of tension, often creative, however, between ‘North’ and ‘South’. Some performers certainly creatively exploited the differences between Northerners and Southerners and their dialects. Joe Wilson’s song *Varry Canny* begins:

A Sooth-Country fellow one day says te me,  
 Ye Newcastle foaks is queer tawkers,  
 Ye puzzle us sair wi’ the words you’ll not find  
 I’ Johnson’s, or Webster’s, or Walker’s . . .  
 ([1890] 1970 edn: 8)

Another of his songs (*Affected Bella*) laments the fact that as a result of Bella’s visit to London ‘Ye wad think she’d forgotten Newcassil / She mixes the dialec se’ (pp. 126–7). J.B.Priestley (cited in Richards 1997: 257) believed that dialect humour and songs did not travel, and certainly some performers never ventured beyond their local region. But it is the case, however, that just as ballads and collections were regularly reprinted in London (often with glossaries) or reviewed in metropolitan journals, some Northern performers carried their acts south of Birmingham on the theatre circuit. In 1853 *The Grapes* public house advertised ‘Master Thompson’ with his New Lancashire Clog dance (Mander and Mitcheson 1974: 30). Reception in both cases was often mixed. The *London Literary World* (June 1874) yoked together the ‘strange vernacular’ and the ‘smoke-enveloped’ town of Newcastle, but was forced to concede that Joe Wilson’s songs ‘afforded no small pleasure’ to ‘those who can interpret the local dialect’ (1970 edn: xxix).

However, it is important to bear in mind that deviations from standard orthography meant that written Northern English was much more likely to be deemed unintelligible than spoken. Shrewd performers no doubt modulated the broadness of their vernacular to suit audiences ‘down South’. They were also not afraid to adjust their acts: Northerners’

frames of social reference and their dialect to be laughed *at*, rather than *with*. In one sense, as Russell (1997: 132) reminds us, there was the risk of generating ‘stereotypes which fed existing metropolitan prejudices’, but self-parody is a characteristic feature of Northern popular culture generally. It accounts for the figure of the Northern innocent let loose in London that appears on stage and in songs from the seventeenth century onwards; and is an important factor in home-grown archetypes like the silly keel-bully of the ballads, the ‘Yorkshire tyke’, and the *daft* or *gormless* ‘Lancashire Lad’ or ‘Loon’ of the music-hall, epitomised by the George Formbys, father and son.<sup>22</sup> As Bailey (1986: xvii) suggests, songs and acts could both celebrate and satirise at the same time, identify and discriminate. George Formby senior (born 1888), who introduced the phrase *Wigan Pier* into the language, apparently based his bitter-sweet naive character ‘John Willie’, popular in the first two decades of the twentieth century both North and South, on the bronchitic condition of a typical mill-worker: ‘Coughin’ summat champion toneet’ was his catch-phrase (North 1986: 130, Bracewell 1997: 171). Catch-phrases themselves became the equivalent of the ballad formula.<sup>23</sup>

Theatrical historians indicate in general terms that by the turn of the century more and more London-based material was finding its way into the provinces, and there was a greater degree of homogenisation of music-hall material (cf. Vicinus 1974: 257, Bratton 1986: xv, Russell 1997: 7). This makes an interesting parallel to the increasing ‘standardisation’ of English nationally. Nonetheless, it is undoubtedly the case that Northern English became known more widely, and to mass audiences

<sup>22</sup> See also the discussion of ‘Yorkshire tyke’ above. *Daft* (OE ‘meek’) is noted by Ray (1674) as a North Country word; *gormless*, from a Scandinavian root, is first recorded by the *OED* in ‘Tim Bobbin’, and then in *Wuthering Heights*.

<sup>23</sup> Northern catch-phrases include, in the First World War, Fred Walmesley’s ‘Eeh, Mother. Look at t’ Tower’; in the 1920s Jimmy Pullen’s, also from Blackpool, ‘T’ trolley’s off t’ wire’ (both cited Mellor 1966: 8). Ken Dodd from Liverpool was famous for ‘Where’s me shairt?’; Ken Platt from Lancashire (1921–98) ‘I won’t take me coat off, I’m not stopping’; Sandy Powell, born in Rotherham (1898–1982): ‘Can you hear me, mother?’; Hylda Baker (1905–86) born near Bolton for ‘She knows, you know’ and ‘Be soooon’. The catch-phrase ‘Hallo, kidders! How’s yer luck?’ of Jimmy Learmouth at the Newcastle *Hippodrome* is behind the title of the *roman à clef* *Kiddar’s Luck* (1951) by the miner Jack Common (1903–1968): see 4.3 below.

of a diverse social mix, than ever before. With the advent of the technological media audiences became less partisan, more accepting of regional linguistic differences, at least outside news-casting (see 4.3 below). Indeed, so popular became the image of ‘Northern-ness’ in national entertainment, later carried over into film, music recordings, radio and early television, that in this domain of ‘low’ rather than ‘high’ culture spoken Northern English acquired not only ‘symbolic capital’ in Bourdieu’s terms (1991), but also, literally, economic. Even the later Scouse pop groups of the 1960s like the Beatles could not match it.<sup>24</sup> Northern music-hall magnates equalled the earlier mill-owners; comic singers like George Formby junior and erstwhile factory worker Gracie Fields, a type of the resilient ‘Lancashire Lass’, became international film and recording stars. As the extant records and films so helpfully reveal, in Richards’ vivid phrase ‘their accents remained as thick and strong as hotpot’ (1997: 257). It was the vogue to be Northern: Charlie Chaplin, born in poverty in London, started his career at the age of eight in Leeds (1897) as one of the ‘Eight Lancashire Lads’ (Mellor 1970: 15). The still recited Lancashire dramatic monologues about the unfortunate mishaps of Albert and the Ramsbottom family were composed by Marriott Edgar from Kirkcudbright, and popularised by Londoner Stanley Holloway. It is not un fanciful to suggest that the Cockney costermonger in music-hall, as described by Stedman Jones (1989) was ‘invented’ to compete against the popular Northern hero.

As we shall see further in chapter 5, for Northerners themselves the kinds of Northern English performance described in this section are not yet entirely part of the past, and there are indeed new permutations. Yet for non-Northerners it may well be the case in consequence that one strong contemporary national image of Northern English referred to in chapter 1 matches J. B. Priestley’s: ‘[In Lancashire ] the people talk with a Lancashire accent, and if you are a Southerner, you may imagine that you have landed among a million music-hall comedians’ (1934: 253). This does not simplistically equate, however, with the age-old image of Northern English as the butt of ridicule and condescension. Northern

<sup>24</sup> There is an interesting parallel to be drawn between the 14–16 year old (female) Liverpool audience for the Beatles and the 14–16 year old (male) Liverpool early music-hall audience, identified by Russell (1997: 91).

comedians present and past have undoubtedly built accent and dialect into their comic routines, but they have tended rather to capitalise on the connotations of warmth, solidarity and lack of pretension. There is no doubt too that the persistent image of a working-class, and at best lower middle-class, Northern English has some basis in the cultural memory of mill-worker and pitmen music-hall and sea-side pier audiences, carried over into the BBC radio shows like *Workers Playtime* and *Variety Band-box* of the 1950s. But again, the appeal is to the demotic resonances, of the archetypal Common Man. The [next section](#) focuses on the existential tensions that arose from the end of the nineteenth century onwards for the aspiring Northerner faced by the class-tied image of their dialect and harsh sociolinguistic perceptions.

### 4.3 ‘Between Two Worlds’: Northern English and liminality

The poet Tony Harrison, born in Leeds in 1937, wrote in his poem ‘Punchline’:

. . . For the kids who never made it through the schools  
the Northern working class escaped the grind  
as boxers or comedians, or won the pools . . .  
([1978] 1987: 150)

Escaping the mine or factory by becoming a professional singer or entertainer was certainly a common way from the nineteenth century onwards of avoiding a premature death, or unemployment due to illness or injury (e.g. George Ridley from Gateshead 1835–64). Some workers found a living between the two worlds of day-shift and theatre, to gain extra income. Others taught themselves to read and left to become teachers, printers or booksellers (e.g. Edwin Waugh (1812–90) in Lancashire; the Tynesider poets Thomas Wilson (1773–1858) and Joe Wilson (1841–74)). Those who became full-time entertainers were also inclined to leave the North, to seek their fortunes ‘down South’, in London. The ‘Dick Whittington’ trope or narrative had had strong resonances for Northerners through their history, with their own equivalent in folk myth being the pedlar Roger Thornton, who features in

Brewer's play *The Love-Sick King* (1655) (see 3.1): he became Mayor of Newcastle eight times. And there are many Northerners, to this day, who have left the North in the belief that London's streets were 'paved with gold'. As Orwell wrote rather wearily in *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937): 'At the back of the mind of every Yorkshireman . . . who comes to London is a sort of Dick Whittington picture of himself as the boy who starts off selling newspapers and ends up as Lord Mayor' [1937]/1986: 135). The writer Sid Chaplin (b. 1916 in Shildon), left the North twice, but returned to the same coal-pit: 'It was taken for granted that any Geordie given half a chance would get out . . . Half the heavy lorries that roared southwards down the A1 . . . were loaded to the bows [with pit-workers]' (1972: 50).

However, from the late nineteenth century onwards, and well into the twentieth century, a particularly striking variant of this narrative for Northerners of a physical journey crossing the 'boundary' between North and South for personal betterment and higher social status is what I shall term, following Honey (1989), the 'Pygmalion' narrative (prose) or trope (poetry). Crossing a social boundary brings a change of status or a change of class: by going to grammar school; or leaving the North to go to university, especially Oxbridge. Again, Orwell had something to say about this: 'Literary London now teems with young men of proletarian origin [who] have been educated by means of scholarships . . . Many of them are very disagreeable people' ([1937] 1986: 152). Because of the predominant concentration of working-class and industrialised conurbations north of Birmingham, and because, at the same time, of the strong pull of a Northern regional identity opposed to the national, this narrative has found a powerful expression in Northern discourses, both autobiographical and literary, and indeed has provided the inspiration for much creativity. That the majority of these discourses have been by male writers, and the majority of these journeys themselves by men, is of course to be noted: opportunities for women were severely limited until well into the twentieth century (outside domestic service or the music-hall) and aspirations traditionally less highly held (see also below).

Issues of language as a semiotic are central: in changing status school-educated or self-educated Northerners have had to face the

prospect of crossing particular sociolinguistic and also psycholinguistic boundaries in addition to the dialectal in order to meet the expected norms of the ‘Received Standard’ and ‘Received Pronunciation’. In anthropological terms this can be seen as a ‘rite of passage’, a movement from one role or stage of life to another, with not only associated ‘rituals’, but psychological states of tension, anxiety and friction, and a feeling of being in social limbo: also termed generally *liminality* (Martin 1981: 50, following Turner 1967). As its Latin root suggests, liminality is the stage or state of being ‘on the threshold’, between clear social identities, ‘between two worlds’, as the academic Richard Hoggart (2000) describes it, born in Leeds in 1918 and raised, an orphan, in a working-class household.<sup>25</sup> For Rampton (1995) liminality is associated with ‘code-crossing’, the northern grammar school pupils from both white-collar and blue-collar families encountered one or even two such liminal stages, and with it the decision, conscious or unconscious, to change speech habits, and to risk turning one’s back on the solidarity and rituals of the *communitas*, betraying one’s own identity and roots. Anthony Burgess, born in 1917 in Manchester, the son of a cashier, evokes the tension between pride in one’s origins and the fear of social exclusion in his autobiography, and adds the emotive comment: ‘Cradle-speakers of that South-Eastern dialect which has become the national language of the educated have never sufficiently realised the *pain* the provincials have *suffered* in *forcing* ourselves to conform’ (1987: 11–12, my italics). Not that many working-class families did not accept the benefits of education. As Tom Hadaway’s Tyneside aunt once put it, ‘Ee [“you”] stick in at yor readin’ an’ writin’, that’s yor place on the bus. Yor chance ti mix wi’ berra people’ (in Colls and Lancaster (eds.) 1992: 87). But as Hoggart (1988: 130) also indicates, it assumed airs of speech that were generally resented. To speak ‘posh’ or ‘la-di-la’, to sound *throssen up*, or to *knack* (also Yorkshire: see Marshall 1788), was unforgivable.<sup>26</sup> As with Shaw’s Eliza Doolittle,

<sup>25</sup> Chapter 10 of Hoggart’s *The Uses of Literacy* (1957) is called ‘Unbent Springs: a Note on the Uprooted and the Anxious’. He notes (1976 edn: 292) how the scholarship boy is ‘at the friction-point of two cultures’.

<sup>26</sup> *Throssen up* was used by the mother of Joseph Wright who, as a fitting exemplar to the themes of this section, left school in West Yorkshire at thirteen to become a mill-worker, but eventually became an Oxford professor (Samuel 1998:56).

however, changing one's accent to what Wells (1982: 283–4) calls 'adoptive RP' was a 'passport' to the new world of those with the same new intellectual interests, who would provide approval. At secondary level code-switching between the worlds of school and home was possible, and common (it still is); but the social pressure intensified at university, particularly Oxbridge, to change codes irrevocably, and to lose, in Tony Harrison's words, 'the tongue that once I used to know / but can't bone up on now, and that's mi mam's' (*Wordlists* 1987: 118). The composer William Walton born in Lancashire in 1902 was apparently bullied at Oxford by his peers because of his accent (Muggleston 2003: 266); the linguist H.C. Wyld reduced women students to tears at Oxford (1920–45) by his fierce comments on their Northern pronunciation (Bailey 1991: 9). In sum, Waller (1987: 1) so nicely expresses the dilemma in a paradox: 'Language is an instrument of both communication and excommunication'.

From the late nineteenth century developments in education to make it a more coherent system meant that self-advancement and the movement 'upwards' from class to class became a particular phenomenon, paradoxically at a time when class divisions were becoming more marked and the relationship between language and class hardened (see Crowley 1989: 156). However, these developments as a whole became particularly important for Northerners from the 1930s onwards, when the great heavy industries of weaving, ship-building and mining started their irrecoverable decline. The Education Act of 1870 had made school attendance up to the age of ten compulsory; the Education Act of 1936 raised the school leaving age to fifteen from 1939, but this was delayed by the Second World War until 1947. What was formerly the School Certificate (1917) given at age sixteen was replaced by the General Certificate of Education (GCE) 'Ordinary' (O) Level in 1951. Around the turn of the century, meanwhile, there were several government initiatives to provide free scholarships for aspiring working-class and lower middle-class children at grammar schools, but with 'attainment' tests and then 'means' tests gradually introduced in the 1930s as competition became fiercer (Gordon and Lawton 1984). This led after the War to the notorious 'Eleven Plus' examination, which enabled free entry to good grammar schools until

the 1960s, when the 'Comprehensive' system of education was introduced. However, public boarding schools remained outside the state system (Garner 1986: 17). It also became possible to receive bursaries for attending university, not only Oxbridge, but the new 'red-brick' universities that were flourishing in Northern towns, themselves the output of colleges or institutes set up in the nineteenth century to educate workers. The Education Act of 1944 introduced grants and scholarships for higher education. However, as Dennis et al. state (1969: 9), even in the late 1960s 'the chance of a working-class girl entering university [was] one in 600'.

This was the same period also when Standard English and especially 'Received Pronunciation' (RP) were becoming in national popular consciousness much more significant than ever before as the means of social advancement and mobility (see 3.3). The term *Received Pronunciation* was introduced by the dialectologist A.J.Ellis, and became popular to refer to a standardised accent that was socially 'received' or 'accepted', notably by those in professions or social groups of high status: the upper classes, for example, or lawyers, civil servants and Oxbridge dons, and centred as in the past on London and the Home Counties. For Ellis dialect was clearly confined to the 'uneducated' (1890: 2). As Honey records (2000), with the growth of public and boarding schools at the end of the nineteenth century RP became the socially accepted accent of this kind of education throughout England: although in Lancashire public school education was only a minority option for even the largest employers (Joyce 1991: 202). With the launch of the British Broadcasting Corporation in the 1920s, and recruitment of staff and announcers from public schools and universities, RP's cultural capital increased in Bourdieu's terms (1991), since it became inextricably associated with 'BBC English' in the public mind, and the governing body of the BBC itself regarded RP as the accent most intelligible to the British population as a whole, in ways that regional accents could not be (see also below). At the same time, the related notion of the 'King's' or 'Queen's English', made popular in Victorian grammar books, was also heightened by the new wireless technology. The accent of the King (George V) was heard by an audience of millions for the first time across the British Empire.

It was in the 1920s also that the Newbolt Committee, set up by the Board of Education to examine the position of English in the educational system, strongly advocated ‘systematic training in the use of standard English’, synonymous with ‘civilised speech’, to be taught to those pupils with ‘defective’ dialects, and ‘evil habits of speech contracted in home and street’ (1921; cited in Crowley (ed.) 1991: 194; also Doyle 1989: 41). Following in the tradition of Thomas Sheridan (3.3), undoubtedly such initiatives, which applied to grammar and lexis as well as pronunciation, were motivated by the ideological consideration of social equality on the one hand, and the pragmatic one of better employment on the other, even though this confirmed the long held image of dialects as ‘sub-standard’ in the qualitative sense. Inspectors of Schools were already playing their part. A Mr Perez reported in 1887 that ‘long-inherited peculiarities of mode of speech and pronunciation’ inhibit achievement in Cumberland (cited by Mugglestone 1995: 307). The teacher’s role, both in public schools and local grammar schools, was also paramount in the ‘fight’ to civilise and empower their charges. In Jack Common’s semi-autobiographical novel *Kiddar’s Luck* (1951) set in Newcastle around the time of the First World War, the teacher even at the infants’ school tells little Freddy not to say *divvn’t*, the characteristic Geordie equivalent of *don’t* (1990 edn: 32). Common’s own general comment interestingly portrays the role of the teacher in imagery fitting for a liminal frame of reference: ‘The teacher must prepare [pupils] for that position [in adult society] by the appropriate character-conditioning, *initiation into that peculiar code of behaviour* which is the mark of their kind . . .’ (1990 edn: 83, my italics). In the early years of the twentieth century Blackpool Grammar School ‘imported’ masters from the South of England to ‘eradicate’ the local accent: in the case of the broadcaster Alistair Cooke this certainly worked (Mugglestone 2003: 266). Hoggart (1988: 164) also notes the presence of middle-class teachers from the South ‘with accents to match’ at Cockburn High School in Leeds in the late 1920s and early 1930s. In the very first volume of the *Transactions of the Yorkshire Dialect Society* (1897–8), the Rev. R.V. Taylor clearly deplores one effect of such interfering schoolmasters, a kind of dialect ‘levelling’ which results in a ‘hideous mixture of what may be called book-words . . . and the words

of the local dialect . . . The result is very unpleasant to the ear . . . All over the North of England the old, heavy, broad “Aye” of the affirmative is pushed out of the way . . .’ Again, the liminal is evoked in his suggestion that this ‘mongrel speech’ is the result of a ‘curious *struggle* between the dialect [the children] have learned, from their mothers chiefly, and the correct speech they hear at schools from their teachers’ (1897–8: 28–9, my italics). It is his teacher who acts as both guide and catalyst in Tony Harrison’s famous poem *Them & [uz]*, dedicated to Hoggart, which re-enacts the seminal moment in his transition to grammar school in the 1940s when he became conscious of the schism between his own dialect and the standard discourse of education and literature, even when the written word was read aloud:

‘ . . . 4 words only of *mi ’art aches* and . . . ‘Mine’s broken,  
you barbarian, T.W.!’ *He* was nicely spoken . . .

‘ . . . All poetry (even Cockney Keats?) you see  
’s been dubbed by [ʌs] into RP,  
Received Pronunciation, please believe [ʌs]  
Your speech is in the hands of the Receivers.’

‘We say [ʌs] not [uz], T.W.!’ That shut my trap.  
I doffed my flat a’s (as in ‘flat cap’)  
My mouth all stuffed with glottals, great  
Lumps to hawk up and spit out . . .’

([1978] 1987: 122; italics in original)<sup>27</sup>

The imagery in the last two lines aptly suggest his own revulsion against his coarse accent, his social as well as physical discomfort, and also the educationalist view that dialect was a speech ‘impediment’ that could be ‘cured’ by elocution lessons. The reference to ‘glottals’ nicely evokes Lecercle’s term (1990) *glottophagy* for the repression of dialect. Generally, the poem highlights salient indicators of Yorkshire/Northern pronunciation prone to stereotyping (the so-called *flat a*, like the stereotypical image of the *flat cap*); but, more significantly, prone to stigmatisation by ‘outsiders’, especially the socially sensitive: not

<sup>27</sup> Barry (1999: 338), commenting on the poem ‘Latin Master’ by the Liverpool poet Matt Simpson, born before the Second World War, notes this ‘archetypal figure in such ‘*transitioning*’ lives, that is, the schoolmaster who opens the way for the *crossing of social boundaries*’ (my italics). Intriguingly, no mention is made of Harrison as a parallel.

only the short 'a' in words like *bath* (see below), but also H-dropping, T-glottalling for the definite article, the voicing in [uz] and the rounded 'u' also (see again below). These features, and others, such as long vowels for RP diphthongs in words like *ache*, as a result become a sociolinguistic 'minefield' for the aspiring Northerner, who, in Hoggart's words (1957: 301), now caught between worlds fears that his speech can 'give him away' daily.

The Leeds-born playwright and essayist Alan Bennett (b. 1934), educated at Oxford, repeatedly in his writings evokes the traps and dilemmas that await the unwary. A TV film is called *Dinner at Noon* (1988), nicely exposing a lexical faux pas even at this date in the twentieth century: Southerners eat *lunch*. His liminal anxiety in matters of pronunciation is a good illustration of what Knowles (1978: 86) terms a kind of *hypercorrection*, where a 'sensitive' vowel occurs twice in a tone-unit. Code-changing Liverpooldians might have problems with *chairperson*, for instance; or Northerners generally with *gasmask*. So in *Writing Home* (1994) Bennett describes how

I tried to lose my northern accent at one period, then reacquired it, and *now don't know where I am*, sometimes saying my 'a's long, sometimes short, and 'u's a continuing threat, words like 'butcher' and names like 'cutbush' always lying in ambush. Anyone who ventures south of the Trent is likely to contract an incurable disease of the vowels.

(p. xiii; my italics)<sup>28</sup>

The same metaphor of an 'incurable disease' recurs again in *Telling Tales* (2001: 95) where he describes a recital in the 1970s where the phrase 'puff of a dunce' came out as the 'paff of a dunce', and the 'poof of a dance'.<sup>29</sup> In his semi-autobiographical novel *Crossing the Lines*, with its appropriately liminal title, Melvyn Bragg evokes the

<sup>28</sup> In his Introduction (p. xii) Bennett also writes of the 'fissure' between provincial and metropolitan, and having 'two voices', north and south, 'in conflict'.

<sup>29</sup> Anthony Burgess (1987: 12) believes that the vowel in words like *love* has always been 'unnatural to [his] tongue', and he gives a wonderful example of an elocution rhyme:

Don't rush upon your butcher in a rash and bloody passion  
If he offers you blood puddings for the customary ration.  
Don't push your mother over, utter threats or even mutter  
If she puts no sugar in your cup or on your bread and butter.

same vacillation in his charting of the progress of Joe Richardson from Cumberland Grammar School to Oxford in the late 1950s:

Joe's accent had started to behave as if it were on black ice. Whenever he braked the attempted pronunciation of a word to fit the governing sound of English, it slithered around helplessly . . . sometimes his pronunciation just skidded away. *Neither Oxford nor Wigan nor anything else.* (2003b: 393, 449, my italics)

Interestingly, there appear to be few records in public circulation of aspiring Northern women facing the same linguistic dilemmas with the same doubts. The writer Beryl Bainbridge, who in her own words (1985) ran away to London, Dick Whittington-like, at sixteen was glad to lose her Liverpool accent; and so was the novelist Catherine Cookson (b. 1906) from South Shields, who moved south from Tyneside in 1928.<sup>30</sup> The novelist Dodie Smith arrived at St Paul's Girls School in London from Lancashire in 1910, and was assumed to be 'Scotch'. She needed the required 'high clipped voice' to enter the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts later (Grove 1996: 20). The broadcaster Joan Bakewell from a lower middle class upbringing in Stockport 'ditched' her Lancashire accent at Cambridge in the early 1950s (*The Independent* 13 October 03). However, the account of the children's writer Lucy Boston, who went to Somerville College Oxford just before the First World War reveals a liminal struggle:

I had decided my Lancashire accent was perhaps not an adornment, so *did my best to control* my a's into ah's, with the result that at the end of a week it was known that I was Spanish and it was thought that under the circumstances my English was good. I soon learned from my first friend that there was more to a North Country accent than the a's. She pointed out that I clipped all my vowels, as 'mi book', 'th' door', etc. *So I gave up trying.* (1979: 93, my italics)

<sup>30</sup> When Catherine Cookson's husband first met her 'her voice sounded cultured: she articulated correctly' (1986: 7). As she says herself (pp. 11–12) she had always desired 'to be a lady, and to speak correctly . . . but all my hoodwinking could not cover up that girl from East Jarrow': certainly the source of her inspiration. The speech of her own characters in her Tyneside historical novels are rarely represented by dialect spellings to indicate 'broadness', but local idioms and 'non-standard' grammatical features abound.

As Mugglestone records (1995, 2003) there had been a strong perceptual link between the ‘standard’, ‘speaking properly’, and lady-like behaviour from the nineteenth century onwards, and present-day sociolinguists have also noted greater levels of receptivity to statusful variants amongst women of all social groups.

As Boston’s account also illustrates, it is noteworthy that time and again it is the vowels of *bath* and *butter* that are commented on, even up to the present day. The prestigious lengthening of ‘a’ before fricatives and nasals (e.g. *bath*, *dance*) and the FOOT–STRUT split (see 3.3) were an established feature of Southern English pronunciation by the beginning of the twentieth century, but had still failed to spread north of the Trent (to echo Alan Bennett), or even Birmingham.<sup>31</sup> A handbook for teachers in public elementary school (1891) advises:

Remember, as I have said, that the person who pronounces the ah thinly . . . *must* come from the northern part of England; but the person who pronounces the ah long and full *may* come from any part of England . . . the [short] ah is not wrong; *but it is provincial* . . .  
(cited Mugglestone 1995: 309; author’s italics)

Indeed, the twentieth century has seen these two vowels become significant symbols of a ‘North–South divide’ (chapter 1), and the older variants powerful markers of Northern identity. But it is precisely because they have been such potent markers for Northerners themselves that they have been the sites also of much existential angst for those in social transition. Wells’ comment (1982: 354) that many educated Northerners ‘would feel it to be a denial of their identity . . . to say BATH words with anything other than short [a]’ rings true even twenty years later (see further chapter 5). A striking illustration of a moment of angst in respect of short ‘a’ is provided by the BBC radio announcer and early television presenter Wilfred Pickles, born in Halifax in 1904.

<sup>31</sup> Curiously, Ellis (1869) identifies the *sum–soom* isoglosses, but not the short and long ‘a’ lines. Ihalainen (1994: 213) also does not mention this distinction as a feature of Northern English to 1870. It is likely that until the late nineteenth century the vowels in the South were still in fluctuation. Lloyd (1899: 32), however, notes the Northern ‘resistance’ to long ‘a’ in *glass* and interestingly, to the long ‘a’ also in *bad* and *man*. Confusingly (p. 20) he has the symbol [ʌ] for Northern *but*, noting, however, that it is not identical in Southern words. The Northern ‘u’ ‘closely resembles German short *u*’.

In his autobiography (1949) he recounts how he got his first audition to be a holiday relief announcer at BBC Manchester in 1938, and he practised listening to London-based RP news readers like Stuart Hibberd. But the long ‘a’ did not sound right. To the very moment when the light flashed on for his first broadcast he was wavering between the long and short ‘a’: he used the short ‘a’. When he later transferred to the BBC in London during the War he became the ‘central figure in a heated national controversy’ (1949: 95). Headlines appeared like *Lahst a Thing of the Pahst* and cartoons with *Here is the news and ee bah gum this is Wilfred Pickles reading it*, complete with visual stereotypes of muffler and cloth cap. However, many listeners south of Halifax appreciated the ‘homeliness’ of Pickles’ voice in such difficult times; and even the Ministry of Information approved of his accent, on the grounds that it might not be so easily copied by the Germans (p. 132–3).

There is a story apparently that Paul McCartney’s mother wished to eradicate his local Scouse enunciations as part of her aspirational desire for her son to better himself (Mugglestone 2003: 273); by the early 1960s however, it was fashionable to proclaim one’s working class (and also Northern) origins. Certainly, as we shall see in chapter 5, thanks to pop groups like the Beatles for a time Scouse and Northern English were part of a ‘standard’ accent for popular music; what is a matter for debate, however, is the extent to which, socially speaking, fifty years on, the hegemonic grip of the standard has been loosened and the prestige of RP dimmed: in the words of Honey (1989), does a Northern accent matter?

#### 4.4 Epilogue: Northern English transported

Many nineteenth-century Northerners attempted to escape Tony Harrison’s ‘daily grind’ referred to at the beginning of 4.3 by seeking their fortunes overseas, digging for gold rather than coal: California and Australia (1851) were particularly popular destinations, once rumours of riches reached home. It is not fanciful to compare the new frontier towns with the new towns left behind: indeed Chase (2000: 145) notes a comparison being made in the Newcastle press in 1863 of

Middlesbrough with America. Emigration became a popular sub-genre of dialect song (4.2): Ned Corvan's *Asstrilly; or The Pitman's Farewell*, for example, is a dramatic monologue in which the Geordie pitman gives his reasons:

For wor maisters keeps us strikin', so what mun a pitman de? . . .  
When we cannit raise wor beer, man, it's time te gan  
away . . . (Allan in Harker ed. 1972: 400–1)

Corvan's accompanying spoken patter complements it: 'It's ne use stoppin' here . . .' Another of his songs, *Asstrilly's Goold Fields*, sung to the nationally popular parlour tune 'I dreamt that I dwelt', has patter which reveals a miserable letter home from 'Tommy Carr': some hungry convicts have bitten off a 'laddie's lugs' ['ears']. Tommy Carr's *tures in Asstrilly* continues his lament:

Maw inside's a'most gyen  
Tho' aw wance weighed thirteen styen. (401–5)

And concludes: 'O welcum, Coaly Tyne, frae Asstrilly, O!' In another popular song first published in 1849 by J. P. Robson, Geordie's wife Mally is frightened that he will be eaten by crocodiles and sea serpents on his way to *Callerforney*; but 'like Whittington [he] hears the bells / That says, "come on your journey"' (Harker (ed.) 1972: 303). By the turn of the century there certainly appears to have been a market for Tyneside songs amongst homesick Geordies in America and Australia, and in South Africa also (Harker 1986: 112). The extent of the Geordie diaspora is also reflected in the activity of the Newcastle and Durham Society in colonial Hong Kong (*Daily Mail* 27 July 2000). Even earlier an American book of folk songs introduces *On Ilkla Mooar Baht 'At* as an 'old Welsh folk song', obviously baffled by the Yorkshire dialect (Kellett 2000: 39). A potentially appreciative, and sizeable, audience of emigrant Yorkshiremen may have prompted the West Riding dialect-writer John Hartley, author of the *Halifax Clock Almanac* (4.2) to seek his fortune (twice) in America and Canada (1872–5, 1894) by public readings of his poetry, if unsuccessfully (Dewhurst 1993: 23). However, he capitalised on the first experience in his semi-fictional epistolary *Grimes' Trip to America*, a series of letters home in dialect. (Interestingly, his wife has

the same name 'Mally' as Geordie's noted above.) On his return he finds that 't'same muck seemed to be in t'same gutters, an t'same ponds o' watter i't' streets' (Waddington-Feather 1983: 11–12).

Although evidence is frustratingly sparse or slow to come to public light, there were certainly genuine accounts written in the nineteenth century of Northerners' experiences in America for the benefit, and education, of their families back home and would-be settlers. Not all were miners or mill-workers, many were farmers. Rebecca Burlend (1793–1872), for example, from Barwick-in-Elmet in the West Riding, had her story written and published by her son in 1848; Ann Raney Coleman, born in Whitehaven in 1810, left England in 1832 to own eventually a plantation in Louisiana (1971). However, these published accounts are written in standard English, and so tell us nothing about the dialect that the settlers took with them on the one hand, or their linguistic experiences in, or even influences upon, their new communities on the other. In respect of the former, as Giner and Montgomery suggest (1997: 168), unpublished material such as informal letters might indeed be useful for supplementing existing information from non-literary sources about Northern English in the nineteenth century in England, let alone North America. (Their own corpus of 250 letters contains forty-five from two families from Lancashire and Yorkshire.) Letters become even more useful as potential evidence in earlier periods of settlement, before standardisation took such a firm hold, and when literacy levels were more unstable. And it is in earlier periods also that the tantalising question can be better raised, difficult to answer, about the possible role that Northern speech played in the actual formation of American English. This question itself, of course, is part of a larger issue, much debated, about the debt owed directly to English dialects by the emerging American English, in all its variety.

Accounts of the colonisation of New England in the seventeenth century from the 1620s onwards are generally agreed that most of the settlers came from East Anglia, the Midlands, London and the South-east, and also the South-west. Cressy's account (1987) of the migration patterns in this period has only four examples of Northerners' experiences. He notes (p. 65) the unfortunate loss of lists of

embarkations from Northern ports, such as Liverpool and Whitehaven presumably. Investigations cited by Dillard (1992: 32–42) into seventeenth-century papers and the Salem witch trials reveal evidence of possible Northern pronunciations from rhymes and spellings, but these are likely to have remained idiolectal and non-influential. At this period in any case there is no evidence of communities dominated by Northerners. And it is hard not to believe that speakers of different dialects on board ship together for some eight to twelve weeks had not already begun to ‘accommodate’ to each others’ speech to produce dialect ‘levelling’ even before the building up of new communities in their new environments. (It took several months to reach Australia and New Zealand in the nineteenth century.) However, Northerners between the seventeenth and the nineteenth centuries seem to have left their mark on place-names, certainly: e.g. Newcastle (Delaware, Wyoming, New Brunswick, Indiana, Kentucky, West Virginia, Pennsylvania); Durham (North Carolina, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Ontario); Manchester (New Hampshire, Connecticut, Georgia, Iowa, Kentucky, Massachusetts, New York, Ohio, Vermont); Darlington (Wisconsin and South Carolina) and Carlisle (Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Ohio). The story such place-names in so many different states suggests is some Northern involvement in primary settlement provinces and heavier in the secondary settlement areas, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (William Kretzschmar, p.c.). Read (1938) notes that in the eighteenth century the Northern origins of runaway indentured servants were indicated in newspaper advertisements through their dialect: but, like West Country speech, this was indeed very marked even to English ears at that time, as we have seen in chapter 3. Back home in England, no. 16 of the *Cumberland Pacquet* (1775) featured a Whitehaven advertisement for an Englishwoman wanted to housekeep on a Virginia estate where there were several Cumberland tenants (Hughes 1952: 334).

Some linguists certainly do suggest that in the eighteenth century a Northern presence became more marked. Cassidy (1984: 201) for example, states that Philadelphia was allegedly founded and much influenced by Quakers ‘whose chief strength was in the north of

England'; Kurath (1928: 393) similarly notes the presence of Northern Quakers in the 'Middle Atlantic States'. Algeo (2001: 7), however, gives the origins of Quakers in the Delaware Valley as England's 'North Midlands', although he later includes Lancashire and Yorkshire under this heading (p. 12). He explicitly declares direct influence of Quaker immigrants on the North Midland dialect of American English. Bailey (1991: 153) suggests Northerners 'overwhelmingly chose New York and North Carolina'; Quirk (1972: 5) identifies a 'concentration' of Northern English settlers in New York and also Ohio, who thus began a 'modification' of New England speech. However, since there were Scots and Irish settlers alongside, and indeed in other areas such as the Appalachians as settlers moved westwards (and Philadelphia itself later), and since for some 'far Northern' dialects there would have been considerable overlap with Lowland Scots, it becomes very difficult to pinpoint specific Northern features, as we shall see below in particular in relation to lexis. The articulation of post-vocalic 'r', for example, was a feature of both Northern English and Scots at this period. It is interesting that the regular border conflicts referred to time and again already in this book are given as the cause of large-scale immigration from the 'North Border regions' to western Pennsylvania and the Appalachians (1715–75) by Fisher (2001: 60). In Canada, so-called 'Canadian raising' of [ɑʊ] to [ʌu] and [aɪ] to [ʌɪ] before voiceless consonants as in *lout* and *bite* is usually attributed, in Brinton and Fee's words (2001: 427) to 'Scottish or Northern British' settlement; but it could also, as they add, be an adaptation, or even a 'distinctive' Canadian development in its own right. In grammar, the use of double modals (e.g. *might could*) is a striking feature of Scots and Northumbrian speech (see chapter 2), and plausibly explains the usage in American English of the South and South Midlands (McDavid and McDavid 1959: 25). Horobin and Smith (2002: 117) have a very brief reference to the 'relics' of the Northern and Older Scots Subject or 'agreement rule' in 'rural' varieties of American English to this day. (See also below, and Pietsch 2005.) Butters' statement (2001: 331) that double modals were brought from settlers 'north of the Humber' is rather too vague. *Yous(e)* in the Appalachians and New York and other northeastern urban areas (cf. also *yiz* in Newfoundland English) is

probably due to Irish influence in the nineteenth century, as indeed historically in Liverpool and Newcastle English (see 4.1 above, and Montgomery 2001: 95).

One can imagine dialect words, like particular grammatical constructions, being more resilient than pronunciation features, but words of definite Northern origin that survive into present-day English appear to be relatively few. (Görlach (1987: 48) is cautionary about the number of survivals generally from British English dialects.) Many words that appear to be characteristic of Northern English in the modern period undoubtedly had a wider distribution across England in earlier centuries, and so were taken to the New World accordingly: e.g. *scallion* ('onion'), *chuck* ('throw'), *goosegrass*, *lap* ('wrap'), *bait* ('light snack'), *mind* ('remember'), *pisshead* ('dandelion'), *fash* ('trouble'), *poke* ('bag'). More likely Northern words include *brash* ('brittle') and *brief* ('strong') from an early nineteenth-century source, cited in Mathews (1931: 102). Dillard (1985: 182) cites *conscience* meaning 'judgment, estimation'. *Addle* 'to earn', turns up in New England in 1969 according to the *Dictionary of American Regional English (DARE)*; and *dinner* for 'lunch' in the Appalachians. *Claggy* for heavy bread (Cumberland) is noted in Southern US, and *barley*, a truce term in children's games, in Ohio, Wisconsin and Virginia.

There are many other words in American English which are found both in the North of England and Scotland (and also Ireland) on the evidence of the *EDD*: e.g. *gob* ('mouth'), *paddock* ('frog'), *clod* ('throw'), *poss* ('scrub clothes'), *nebbly* ('nosy'), *nesh* ('soft'), *gilt* ('young sow'), *nicker* ('neigh'), *galluses* ('braces'), *gawp* ('stare') and *first-footer* (referring to a New Year custom). Cassidy and Hall (*DARE* 2001: 191) cite American South and Midland *drouth* ('drought'), but rightly see it also as feature of Scots speech: it is also found in Hiberno-English. The J. K. Rowlingesque *dobby*, meaning 'house spirit', is noted by the *OED* in a novel by Washington Irving, and by the *EDD* as 'North Country' in origin, but also from Scotland again. *Flit* meaning 'move house' is found again in both Scotland and the North of England: on the evidence of *DARE* it looks increasingly archaic in American English.

There is much research still to be done on what Trudgill (2004) calls ‘colonial new-dialect formation’ in countries like Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. Lancashire and Yorkshire were two of the counties of origin of initial South African settlers, but so too London and Ireland and Scotland (Branford 1994: 487). In Natal, as distinct from the Cape, Gordon and Sudbury (2002: 75) suggest ‘greater input [of settlers] from northern British dialect regions’. For Australia they note not insignificant numbers of Lancashire- and Yorkshire-transported convicts, the majority from urban areas, who were transported to Australia. Trudgill (1986: 138) states firmly that ‘North of England dialects . . . have . . . contributed lexically to Australian English quite considerably’, but unfortunately gives no examples. Baker (1966) devotes 450 pages to lexis, but only one word *kelly* (‘crow’) is suggested to be related to a Northern word, Cumbrian *kelp* (p. 396). Ryan (1999) discusses *skerrick* in Australian and New Zealand English, from a Yorkshire dialect word meaning ‘nothing’.

As with American English, certain grammatical constructions stand out: Trudgill (1986: 140) notes sentence-terminal *but* in Australian English, as in ‘I don’t want it, *but*’, which is a noteworthy feature of North-east English. However, he also suggests it is a feature of Scottish and Irish English. Again, there were many immigrants from Ireland in the nineteenth century, drawn there, as to America, after the Potato Famine. Similarly, *youse* in both Australian and New Zealand English could have come from Newcastle or Liverpool by the time of the major period of settlements, or from Glasgow or Ireland, as noted above; likewise *mustn’t* meaning ‘can’t’ as in ‘He *mustn’t* have seen me.’ Trudgill (2004: 18) erroneously thinks this is ‘unknown in England . . . except in Liverpool’, but it is certainly common at the present day in the North-east. The examples of the so-called Northern Subject Rule (see chapters 2 and 5) in New Zealand English Trudgill also suggests (2004: 18) are due to Scottish English rather than Northern English, in view of the rarity otherwise of North of England forms. He has no comment to make, however, on the origins of ‘There were a mill in town’, from the 1946–8 recordings of New Zealanders (2004: 15), which is certainly a typical feature of Yorkshire speech today.

His general thesis is that for nineteenth-century immigration to New Zealand, the North was ‘underrepresented’ (pp. 16, 110), and hence any features that might appear to be Northern (like sentence-final *but*, *youse* and *mustn’t*) are unlikely to be so.

In lexis Bauer (2000: 46) believes that the North of England is actually well represented in New Zealand dialect words attested before 1914 during the colonisation period, particularly from Yorkshire and Lancashire. However, no examples of words are given. In 1994 (1994: 407) he cites *pikelets* (‘crumpets’), a word also used in Scotland.

In phonology Trudgill (1986: 153) has an interesting though tantalisingly brief comment on the fact that pronunciations such as *dance* in the BATH subset before a nasal group with both a short ‘a’ and also a long ‘a’ are found in Australian English, but with the long ‘a’ occurring more frequently in southern Australia. Nearly twenty years later in 2004 this is not mentioned; and in any case, he appears out of line with Turner (1994: 293–4) who finds long ‘a’ in Adelaide, but short ‘a’ in Sydney, both relatively ‘southern’. Trudgill in 1986 as in 2004 certainly suggests that the short ‘a’ is ‘sociolectally lower’ than the long ‘a’, which is ‘higher’, but also seen as ‘posh’ or ‘affected’ by some Australians. The social scenario he paints of Australian English is interestingly similar to that in England, as we have seen already in 4.3 above, but he himself draws no comparison. The 1940s recordings of New Zealand speakers also revealed ‘Northern and Midland’ short ‘a’ as in *dance*, but this appears to have receded today (Trudgill 2004: 122–3).

It seems highly probable that social symbolic values of pronunciation were ‘imported’ along with the linguistic features themselves, however unconsciously. In general, since the export of Northern English and its speakers coincided with the rise of Standard English and the ever-increasing prestige of London English and that of the Home Counties, and since in many new colonies Standard English remained the prestige model, we should not be surprised that Northern English continued to be ‘marginalised’ even in its new contexts; and that, in the succinct words of Knowles (1997: 217) it appears to have made an

‘insignificant contribution’ to extra-territorial Englishes. As Lass (1990: 269) concludes generally:

Whatever the size of the non-southern input, it will normally leave only unsystematic relics (for example odd lexical items . . . or minor constructions); there will rarely be larger-scale structural effects (for example in the system of phonemic oppositions).

## 5 *Northern English present and future*

### 5.1 The 1960s and beyond: the ‘renaissance’ of Northern English?

Three years after the publication of Richard Hoggart’s *The Uses of Literacy* (1957) (see 4.3 above) Granada TV in Manchester broadcast the first episodes of a soap opera *Coronation Street* set in the working-class area of a fictional Northern town called Weatherfield. The *Daily Mirror* predicted after the first episode that it was ‘doomed’, with its ‘grim [opening] scene of a row of terraced houses and smoky chimneys’ in grainy black and white (North, ed. 1985: 14). Even other independent television companies in the North and Midlands were hesitant about transmitting it at first, believing that no one ‘south of Stockport’ would appreciate it (Kelly and Jones 2000: 41). Over forty years later it is now the longest running TV soap opera, remains one of the most popular programmes in Britain and has been ‘exported’ all over the world. The idea of the script-writer Tony Warren, born in Salford, it clearly owes part of its inspiration to pre-Second World War writers like Walter Greenwood, whose novel, *Love on the Dole* (1933) was set in Salford, and later made into a film (1941). Remarkable characters of the early years like Ena Sharples, Minnie Caldwell and Martha Longhurst evoke Greenwood’s colourful triumvirate of old Mrs Dorbell, Jikes and Bull, as well as the formidable Northern women of the earlier plays set in Lancashire of *Hindle Wakes* by Stanley Houghton (1912) and Harold Brighouse’s *Hobson’s Choice* (1916), both filmed three times. The iconography of the credit sequences possibly evokes another connection to Salford: the gloomy industrial landscapes of the painter L. S. Lowry (1887–1976). Not surprisingly, this ‘Lowryscape’ itself, to borrow Dodd’s term (1990), has contributed to Londoners’ mental images of the North. ‘I think the North starts when you look out of a train window

and you see a lot of terraced streets. *Coronation Street* left a great mark on me . . . That's what I think the North looks like' (vox pop, in Armitage 1999: 217–18).

The influence of Hoggart himself is seen in the very first episode, in the invocation of the liminal 'scholarship boy' trope (4.3): Kenneth Barlow is preparing to go to Manchester University, and the stage directions read: 'He has little or no northern accent and looks fairly out of place in those surroundings' (in North ed. 1985: 79). The characteristic vividness of the dialogue generally was set in this first episode by Elsie Tanner's simile: 'Yer Granma Tanner was that bandy she couldn't 've stopped a pig in an entry [back lane]' (in North ed. 1985: 89). Warren continually took note of the phrases he heard around him: 'I'll have that meat pie now before t'steam 'its t'ceiling' (Tinker 1985:13). (See further 5.3.)

However, *Coronation Street* can also be seen, along with Hoggart's work, as arriving at a particular moment in Britain's mainstream cultural history: contributing to the 'new wave' of post-War realist fiction, drama and films, which were drawing more and more attention to the working-class urban landscapes of the North; and also to ruthless or determined young men, anxious to succeed. John Braine's novel *Room at the Top* (1957) (made into a film in 1958) was followed by *A Kind of Loving* by Stan Barstow, a miner's son, in the same year as *Coronation Street*, set in a mining community in the West Riding of Yorkshire (and filmed 1962). John Braine himself, in a radio programme about the North in 1996 devised by the South Pennines poet Simon Armitage, claimed some influence on the legacy of the image of the 'gritty' industrial filmscape that the 1960s promoted to metropolitan audiences, noting that the 'clear river . . . the woods and pastures and the moors and hills— all this had to be left out' (Armitage 1999: 218). He is right to claim only part responsibility, since the iconic chimneys and mills had been part of the fabric of Northern literature since the nineteenth century, as we have seen in chapter 4.

In 1960, however, Northern English itself was not yet considered 'fashionable', and Warren lamented the fact that in the early days *Coronation Street* actors were brought from London (North, 1985: 25). The aim was to use genuine Northern accents, albeit Liverpool

and Yorkshire as well as Lancashire/Manchester, and Northern script-writers. Northern features were often ‘pan-Northern’ as a result, and easy to spot markers of Northern ‘difference’, discussed further in the following sections: e.g. <t> for the definite article; *aye* for ‘yes’; ‘*appen*, *any road* and *owt* for ‘perhaps’, ‘anyway’ and ‘anything’; *us* as a possessive; and /r/ as a linking prosody replacing /t/ in *shurrup*, *gerraway*, etc. (‘shut up’, ‘get away’); and common oaths (*By ’eck*; *is it ’eckaslike*; *ecky thump*). If Northern audiences were attuned to the different regional nuances of actors’ assumed or genuine accents in a way that Southern audiences were unlikely to be, the representations, albeit sometimes stereotypical, were at least plausible for individual character delineation. Kenneth Barlow’s uncle, Albert Tatlock, had a broad Lancashire accent that matched his folk wisdom, and his supposed upbringing in a family of weavers; the street-wise and rakish Len Fairclough was a ‘comer-in’ from Liverpool. Annie Walker, landlady of the pub *The Rover’s Return*, had a ‘posh’ near-RP accent that hid her alleged origins as a Clitheroe cotton-mill worker.

Just two years after *Coronation Street* began, media attention shifted westwards to Liverpool, with the advent of the new pop group, the Beatles. This was just what Merseyside needed, officially designated one of England’s main ‘depressed’ areas after the end of the Second World War, along with Tyneside and West Cumberland (Musgrove 1990: 302). As the *OED* entry for *Scouse* records in 1963: ‘This rock group suddenly made Liverpool fashionable in the entertainment world. After their first two records it became necessary for people in the business to learn a few words of Scouse.’ Hitherto, Scouse had been dubbed an ‘awful’ accent (1960); *The Times* (1959) stated that ‘their catarrhal speech would identify [Liverpudlians] as “Scousers” wherever English is recorded’ (*OED*). (See also 4.1 above.) As Trudgill (1983: 153) indicates, the Beatles were significant for the fact that they tried less hard to sound like Americans, infusing the ‘standard’ American English dialect of rock singing with their own Liverpudlian accent. So heavy aspiration and affrication of voiceless plosives is noticeable; rhymes like *aware/her* which show the SQUARE/NURSE vowel merger (see 4.1); /bu:k/ for *book* and [g] articulation before a vowel in ‘long ago’. Such features, and others, might not have been noticed,

however, but for the media interviews with the Beatles that ensued, and the proliferation also of other ‘Mersey Sound’ pop groups and singers. There were fifteen number 1 hits by Merseyside groups in just over a year in 1963–4 (Russell 2000: 29). New TV serials were commissioned set on Merseyside such as *Z-Cars* and *The Liver Birds*. (At first there was a similar problem as with *Coronation Street* in attracting actors with the local accent: see Plater 1992: 72–3.) In 1966 the American poet Allen Ginsberg famously declared Liverpool to be ‘at the centre of the consciousness of the human race’ (cited by Barry 1999: 329), acknowledging not only the explosion of activity on the pop music scene, but also in poetry. However, although poets like Adrian Henri, Roger McGough and Brian Patten put the Liverpool cityscape at the heart of their poems, they did not write in dialect, perhaps because Liverpool lacked the tradition which other Northern regions possessed (see 4.4). But with the success of the Mersey Sound, in 1966 popular comic ‘dictionaries’ were produced like *The ABZ of Scouse*, which explained words that were now increasingly familiar to the nation’s youth, and which inevitably became emblematic of the Sixties: *the gear* (‘the best’); *grotty* (from *grotesque*: ‘bad’); *butty* (‘sandwich’); and *dead* as an intensifier (‘very’). *Chuck* as a term of address became inextricably associated with the singer Cilla Black, like a catchphrase of Northern comedians (4.2). Interestingly, however, Scouse did not replace American English as the ‘standard’ of pop music, although in the early 1990s the Manchester-based group Oasis paid homage to the Beatles by subtleties of initial alveolar affrication in words like *today*, *to* and *do* (Simpson 1999: 363).

Across the Pennines in the North-east the 1960s saw a resurgence of popular cultural activity on Tyneside and hence Southern and media interest also, undoubtedly influenced by the Liverpool scene. Similar comic ‘guides’ to Geordie were produced as for Scouse (see Dobson 1969, 1970), but colluding also in the ideology of the Tynesiders being both ‘foreigners’ in Southerners’ perceptions and also a race apart, a separate ‘nation’, in the perceptions of the ‘natives’ themselves (see further 5.4 below). New television series like *The Likely Lads* (1964), *When the Boat Comes In* and later *Auf Wiedersehen Pet* (still popular in 2003–4) pushed Tyneside dialect and accent to the forefront of

national attention. Such new cultural formations, and others, also linked to the past: the Durham ex-miner and writer Sid Chaplin contributed to *When the Boat Comes In*; the folk group the High Level Ranters had been partly inspired by the revival of interest in the old North-east pitsongs (4.4), still sung and also composed, collected by Bert Lloyd for the National Coal Board as part of the 1951 Festival of Britain (see Lloyd 1951). One of their members had been an underground surveyor. Even (aspiring) politicians took note in the 1960s. The Conservative MP for Derbyshire South, Edwina Currie, admitted in 1997 that she 'used to have a really strong Scouse accent and in the 1960s it would open all sorts of doors . . .' (*Daily Telegraph* 1 January 1997). Prime Minister Harold Wilson, born in Huddersfield and educated at Oxford, reverted from RP to his native accent to underline his image as a 'man of the people', and befitting the ideology and Northern roots of the Labour Party, which swept to power in 1964.

Such post-War developments in cultural productions and media confirmed a strong sense of local regional identities and differences within the North. They are likely also to have encouraged a greater acceptance nationally of regional variation in speech, while at the same time preserving Northern stereotypes to outsiders (see further chapter 1). What is a matter for serious debate, and more importantly for research itself, is the extent to which this new kind of Northern-based popular entertainment in the music industry and television had any linguistic influence outside the North. (Indeed, this raises the general question, as yet unanswered, of the impact of the media on language use.) On the vocabulary of young people there was influence from Scouse certainly, and television, if not pop music, continues to be significant in this respect today. Trudgill (1986: 40–1), however, plays down the influence generally of media on language change, arguing that personal contacts are more important. But Foulkes and Docherty (1999: 14) are right, I think, to dispute this stance, especially given that television viewing has increased even more in the fifteen years or so since Trudgill's statement, and that young people are exposed to television from birth in a way that their parents were not.

That there does appear to have been some influence of Northern English even on RP in the last half of the twentieth century whatever

the explanation, can be illustrated in several features. There is the increasingly common pronunciation of one as /wɒn/ not /wʌn/, for instance. The TRAP vowel, traditionally represented as /æ/ for RP, is now best represented as the lower ‘Northern’ /a/, its own historical original (3.3) (see Weiner and Upton 2000: 44–5).<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, only very recently there has also been noted a development in the long BATH vowel, becoming both increasingly centralised and more shortened (Upton 2005). This might be related to the trend towards a lower articulation of the TRAP vowel.<sup>2</sup> In grammar, there is *youse* to be considered. This is a characteristic pronoun plural in both Liverpool and Newcastle English, probably because of Irish influence (4.1); but, contrary to Trudgill’s statement (2004: 19) that it is ‘unknown’ in the rest of England, there is strong evidence from the British National Spoken Corpus collected in the early 1990s that it has spread south of the Trent and is commonly used in informal speech, filling the historical ‘gap’, as it were, for a useful plural marker (see further Wales 2003–4: 179).

At the very least from the 1960s it became fashionable to be young, working class and urban, and the importance of this on language change in the late twentieth century should not be underestimated. And it is plausible even to see an indirect connection in impact between the growing awareness of Scouse and other Northern accents post-Beatles and the rise of so-called ‘Estuary English’. This is discussed further below (5.2), but consider the so-called *happY* vowel (Wells 1982). In my own post-war North-eastern accent pairs of words like *taxes-taxis* have never been homophones, because of a lax versus tense or close distinction respectively. Upton (2005) claims /i/ or /i:/ in *happY* words is now found in RP, rather than /ɪ/ but gives no explanation. Trudgill (1999b: 82), however, believes that the tense vowel is a ‘Southern’ feature which has ‘jumped’ over ‘intervening’ areas to cities like Liverpool and Newcastle. It is not clear at all why it should ‘jump’

<sup>1</sup> Trudgill & Chambers (1998) still use the /æ/ symbol; see also Trudgill 1999b and 2004 passim, who also uses /æ/ for Northern /a/.

<sup>2</sup> It can be noted, however, that the long vowel before a fricative in words like *off*, *cloth* and *moss* has now receded in RP since the early twentieth century, so that BATH words in RP may have been influenced by that change.

over cities and towns in Yorkshire, a traditional /ɪ/ region like RP.<sup>3</sup> My own view rather is that the popular London English pronunciation and the traditional North-east and Liverpool pronunciations are mutually reinforcing, as modern urban tendencies. Further, as I discuss below in 5.2 not all changes can any longer be assumed to have a London origin by default.<sup>4</sup>

It is true that popular ratings of accents have not always been favourable to Scouse itself, as indeed to Cockney, as Giles revealed in 1970, for example (reported in Mobärg 1989: 23–4). And even in a national 1990s survey reported in *The Guardian* (11 February 97), in contrast to RP with the highest score Scouse had only a 6 per cent approval rating (Cockney 5 per cent), possibly because of the distinctive intonation and velarised pronunciation (4.1). Nonetheless, Scouse often scores highest for ‘friendliness’ (Upton, p.c.); along with Geordie and Northern accents generally (Mobärg 1989: 289). Not surprisingly, Northern accents, particularly Geordie, sell everything in TV advertising from ‘camera film to shampoo and sausages’ (Jennings 1995: 117). In recent years many businesses have placed their telephone sales and enquiries in Northern cities and towns like Leeds and Darlington to take advantage of the positive images of Northern accents in terms of hospitality and openness. Indeed Foulkes and Docherty (1999: 3) report an ‘influx’ of call centres in 1998 to Merseyside, ‘bring[ing] into question the usual stigma attached to Scouse’. The rise in Northern English’s symbolic capital appears to have been most recently confirmed in March 2005 by the fact that the new Doctor Who in the revised BBC television series, played by the actor Christopher Eccleston, had a Northern accent. When asked by his assistant Rose in the first episode why he has such an accent if he is an alien, his response was ‘Lots of planets have a north.’

<sup>3</sup> Of course the flea-like metaphor belies the fact that it is speakers who are agents of change. As discussed in chapter 3, the mechanics of ‘spread’ are by no means clear. Trudgill (1999b: 72) also notes the tense vowel in Humberside, so perhaps it spread round the coast from port to port. /ɪ/ and not /i/ or /i:/ appears to be replacing Sheffield’s traditional /e/ and /ɛ/: see Widdowson 1999: 12, also 5.4 below.

<sup>4</sup> Beal (2005) finds evidence from eighteenth-century sources that ‘happ Y-tensing’ is not a recent innovation in either London or the NE; Ihalainen (1994: 258) notes it in Walker (1791). Trudgill (2004: 137) seems now to claim a SW origin, but again does not comment on how and why it should spread from there.

Myths and stereotypes die hard however, as discussed in chapter 1. Over forty years on the media of the late 1990s mocked both John Prescott (Deputy PM, New Labour, Hull) and William Hague (Tory Leader, South Yorkshire) for their Northern accents. Elocution lessons may have disappeared from girls' grammar schools since the 1960s, but Northern 'speech therapists' can still profit in giving lessons to those who wish to 'speak properly'. 'It sounds incredible – but folk are paying to lose Leeds accent', ran a headline in the *Yorkshire Evening Post* (7th May 1999). Even Liverpool-born Beryl Bainbridge has confessed to hating the Liverpool accent, and recommended compulsory elocution lessons generally (BBC News 3 March 1999). Perhaps too many popular films of the 1990s mentally yoked the post-industrial North with unemployment: e.g. *Brassed Off* (1996), *The Full Monty* (1997) (and later *Billy Elliot*, 2000). 'Northern' and 'working-class' remain a strong collocation. To answer the question posed at the end of 4.3, it seems that for many people accent does still matter at the start of a new Millennium, at least in terms of images of social aspiration and power (see also L. Milroy 1999). And as we shall see in [the next section](#), the accents of many middle-class Northerners continue to appear to be drawn towards RP.

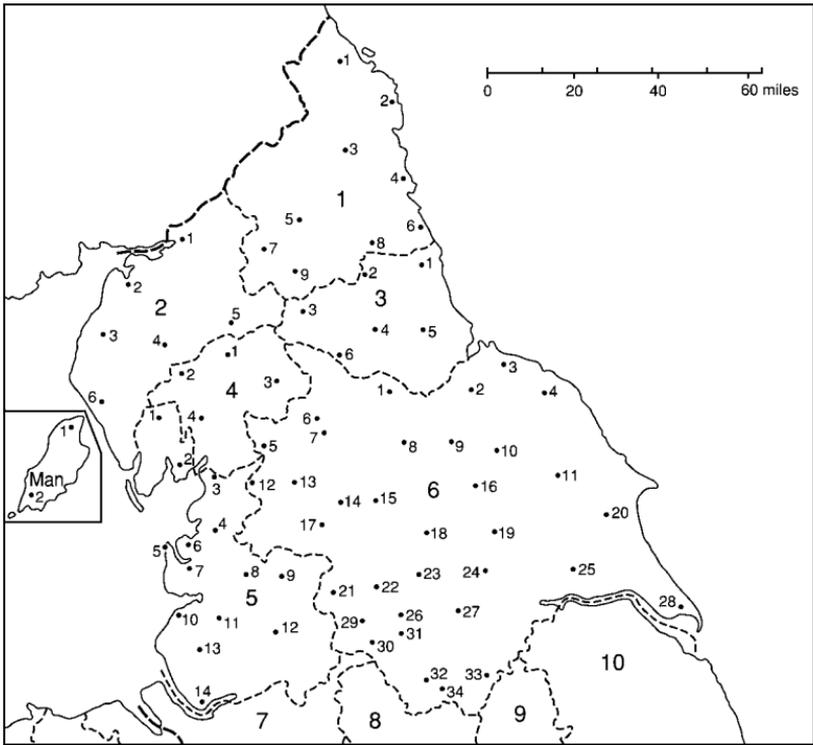
## 5.2 The influence of RP and 'Estuary English' on Northern English?

A recurring theme of this book has been the relationship between Northern English as a 'non-standard' variety in common parlance and the 'standard', and the 'threat' to regional dialects generally as perceived by many commentators and linguists over the centuries from trends in standardisation and with it the rise of stigmatism. A related trend, also noted anxiously, has been that of dialect 'levelling', with the reduction in regionally marked forms at the expense of more regionally widespread features, as a result of such factors as industrialisation, increased social mobility and easier communications (see also 4.1, 4.3). These issues will also be discussed below in 5.3. As for nineteenth century scholars, the 'decline' of rural dialects in particular was a

matter for concern for the Durham-born Harold Orton, who had a life-long interest in the ‘traditional vernacular, genuine and old’, particularly for its relevance to the history of English (1960: 332). From 1929–39 he made a corpus of Northumberland speech from thirty-five localities from Berwick to the north bank of the Wear (see further Rydland 1998, 1999). After the Second World War he initiated a full-scale survey of dialects from informants in over 300 stable localities in the whole of England and the Isle of Man, the only one ever completed. The *Survey of English Dialects (SED)*, noted in chapter 1, and published in the 1960s from the University of Leeds, aimed to make a systematic record of significant linguistic features (chiefly pronunciation and lexis) of older rural inhabitants (mostly born after 1880) before the dialects disappeared for ever. (See further the Leeds Archive of Vernacular Culture: [www.leeds.ac.uk/english/activities/lavc](http://www.leeds.ac.uk/english/activities/lavc).) Map 5.1 below gives the *SED*’s Northern network of localities (vol. I, pt 1: 9). Issues to do with Northern grammar and lexis I shall return to below in 5.3, where present-day comparisons with the *SED* materials are considered, particularly for vocabulary; in this section I consider what can be termed ‘accent levelling’ following Foulkes and Docherty (1999); and the related issue of the extent of influence of RP on the apparent ‘loss’ of traditional distinctive Northern features of pronunciation. My concern here, then, is with segmental phonology: the important question of prosodic features I shall raise in 5.4.

Even in the 1960s it was apparent that the ancient bundle of isoglosses that marked a salient ‘boundary’ between the North and the North Midlands (see chapter 2.1 and map 1.3) was in danger of recession, and the process has continued. Cumberland and Northumberland in the ‘far North’, and especially in the border area, are the regions where pronunciations such as /kʊəl/ ‘coal’, /lɪəf/ ‘loaf’, /ku:/ ‘cow’, /grʊnd/ ‘ground’, /grəs/ ‘goose’, /blɪnd/ ‘blind’, /ɪət/ ‘eat’ and /rɔŋ/ ‘wrong’ are most likely to be heard, and amongst the older speakers still (who were, of course, themselves mere youngsters at the time of the *SED*); and also *sna* for ‘snow’.<sup>5</sup> Also in the border area, a ‘relic area’ for Wakelin

<sup>5</sup> In the Malton area of East Yorkshire in the mid-1980s French et al. (1986) found only one farmer who said *beats* for ‘boots’.



Map 5.1. The *SED*'s northern network of localities.

(1982: 15), can be heard /hw/ as in *which*; but the palatal and velar fricatives as in *night* and *drought* had already receded across the Border from both Cumberland and Northumberland into Scotland by the 1930s (Wakelin 1972: 98), if not earlier (see Murray 1873: 87). However, other traditional Northern features can still be heard: e.g. /ri:t/ 'right' in broad areas of Yorkshire (and are part of phatic formulas such as *good neet*), along with *a(h)* ('I'), *nowt* and *owd* ('old') and /ðɪə wɪə/ ('there where'). More locally, initial /t/ for /k/ is still heard in Sheffield (Widdowson 1999: 13).<sup>6</sup> For many pronunciations, research is needed to mark the

<sup>6</sup> Stoddart et al. (1999: 76) think /t/ is mostly used by 'older females'. *tl* for *cl* is noted by Easther (1883: xxvii) for the Huddersfield district, and *dl* for *gl* by Haigh (1928: 22) as in *gloves* in the same area. /t/ is also noted by the *SED* for all the six Northern counties.

extent of their survival. What has happened, for instance, to linking /v/ (Ihalainen 1994: 213), a feature of the nineteenth-century ballads of the North-east and Cumberland? This is illustrated in forms like ‘*iv* a hurry’; *intev*, *tiv/tuv* (‘into’, ‘to’).<sup>7</sup> And what has happened also to yod-formation (Ihalainen 1994: 213) in many parts of the North, as in *yan* ‘one’, *yak* ‘oak’? And to w-insertion as in the Cumberland ballads (3.4), also noted as a feature of Northumberland English by Heslop (1892)?

Most striking has been the recession of the Northumbrian ‘burr’ or uvular fricative (see 3.3), a particularly marked and localised pronunciation of /r/ in all positions from the outset, and once widespread from Berwick down into Durham. Dobson’s popular guides to Geordie in the late 1960s and early ’70s specifically highlight it as a salient feature of the Newcastle man, an urban as well as rural feature (see also Pålsson 1972); but by the time of Wells (1982: 57) it had apparently receded from the city further north. It was certainly a ‘party-piece’ for any Geordie throughout my own early adulthood in the 1970s, and beyond (see also 3.3), however stereotypical. Yet if it has receded once again, it has not yet completely disappeared, and nor is it restricted to elderly males: I have heard it myself recently used by middle-aged golfers in Embleton, near the Northumberland coast. Traditional burr-modified vowels are heard in words like /ʃɔ:t/ (‘shirt’, sounds like ‘short’) and /bi:ɔ/ (‘beer’), again from older speakers on Tyneside. Lancashire also was once wholly rhotic, and Wells (1982: 57) and Beal (2005) seem to be suggesting that this is still the case at least for north and east of Manchester in the early 1980s. More recently Trudgill (1999b: 53) states rhoticity is found in the Burnley area; interestingly, he also (p. 28) claims ‘partial retention’ of /r/ before a consonant in East Yorkshire. This was certainly noted in a survey of older Malton speakers in the mid-1980s (French et al. 1986).<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> I note the occurrence of linking /v/ three times in a ballad called *Sedgfield Fair*, sung to Roy Palmer (1979) by a North Yorkshireman. See also Marshall (1788) for Yorkshire, Heslop (1892) for Northumberland, Wright (1892: 161) for the Windhill district in the West Riding, and Pease (1928: x) for the North Riding. See also *divvent* in 5.3.

<sup>8</sup> Wright (1892: 9) noted the ‘gently trilled’ sound of *r* before a vowel 100 years ago in Windhill in the West Riding. Trudgill (1999: 27) features ‘r’ in a wide area of Lancs,

For other features of traditional regional pronunciation commentators have been more explicit in blaming any decline or even loss on the influence of RP. Its powerful pull as a prestige accent at the level of an individual has been noted above in 4.3; in dialect studies focus has tended towards the speech community as a whole. So over thirty years ago Viereck (1968: 68) noted the decline in Gateshead speech of /u:/ in *cow* and *now*, etc., and the replacement of /a:/ by RP /ɔ:/ in words like *law* and *claw*. Beal (2005) believes that /u:/, once widespread from Cumbria to Humberside, has now receded north of the Tees and east of Cumbria. Widdowson (1999: 12) notes /əu/ 'gaining ground' in Sheffield speech, especially amongst women, over /ʊə/ in *coat*, and /ɔ:/ over /ʊə/ in *door*; and even the distinctive *coil hoil* for 'coal-hole' could soon be a pronunciation from the past. But despite the potency of its image, one wonders for how much longer RP's influence will continue. It is a striking fact, as some linguists tell us, that RP as it is traditionally defined is spoken only by between 2 per cent and 5 per cent of the population of England (see Crystal 2004: 472), and that the majority of English people therefore speak the language with either a regional or modified regional accent (see Wells 1984: 55, some 20 years ago). RP could even be regarded as 'recessive', in a term normally used for traditional rural accents and dialects (see Watt and Milroy 1999: 43). What is evident, however, is that the perceived linguistic 'centre of gravity' is still firmly fixed on England south of the Watford Gap (see chapter 1 and 5.4), on what can be termed a London or South-eastern 'regional standard', with RP at one end of a continuum, and so-called 'Estuary English' or 'popular London English' and Cockney at the other (Wales 2003: 37–8).<sup>9</sup>

In the last twenty years since the term 'Estuary English' came into fashion (see Rosewarne 1994 for its history) sociolinguists have had to come to terms with the recognition of a possible variety with

and also the Lake District and Merseyside on his 'traditional' map 5, but makes no further comment. See also the map in Chambers & Trudgill (1998: 95).

<sup>9</sup> Upton 2005 follows the standard synchronic line that RP is not to be associated with any one geographical region in England. Since its roots lie in educated and upper-class Southern and London English, as its phoneme inventory bears witness, a regional association is claimed here.

considerable covert prestige and influence, and with a street-wise image of urban working-class youth, which complicates the scenario of accent levelling. Moreover, what is still a matter for much dispute is the extent to which this popular London speech style (which I shall continue to call Estuary English for convenience) is exerting influence on varieties North of the Trent, beyond comfortable commuting distance from London, and how. The question is clouded by the paucity of published or accessible sociolinguistic research until comparatively recently on Northern towns and cities, with the major exceptions of Tyneside, Sheffield, Hull and Liverpool. Manchester, the 'capital' of the North in the nineteenth century, Leeds and Bradford with their significant minority group populations, Lancaster and Carlisle, for example, all await investigation.<sup>10</sup>

In general terms, however, I would like to suggest here that there were two major trends in Northern urban speech in the twentieth century, with the second emerging into prominence in the last decades. Both of them have tendencies which are by no means modern phenomena in themselves, but it is the overall pattern which is significant. The first (A) is a consequence of the growth of suburbanisation (or Watt and Milroy's 'counterurbanisation' (1999: 26) into the town or city hinterlands: a 'pushing outwards', so to speak, by the upwardly mobile middle-classes towards RP; yet at the same time a 'pulling back' into a kind of speech which acts as a regional 'norm': a 'paralect' (to adopt Newbrook's term 1999: 105). The result is what Trudgill and Chambers (1991: 2) term 'mainstream' dialects (seen in contrast with the 'traditional dialects' above), or what others call 'supra-local norms'. A good example of this trend is illustrated by Knowles (1978) on Merseyside speech. Middle-class speakers at that time on the outer fringes of

<sup>10</sup> Foulkes & Docherty (1999: 16) note how over 50 per cent of Bradford residents in some suburbs are of Pakistani origin. Crystal (2002: 241) refers elusively to the 'currently evolving Caribbean Scouse in Liverpool'. Houck's survey of Leeds (1968) remains unfinished. There is a need to update research also: Knowles (1978), and even Newbrook (1999) are over twenty-four years old now. A major study of Newcastle and Tyneside begun in 1963, the Tyneside Linguistic Survey, is still unfinished (see Pellowe and Jones 1978), although that has been used as the basis for the recent Newcastle Electronic Corpus of Tyneside English (see 5.3 below). There are also problems of comparability of data, since there is no common methodology (Widdowson 1999: 11).

Liverpool and in the 'stockbroker belt' of West Wirral (Newbrook 1999: 91) tended to modify the marked, and to them stigmatised, Scouse features of [g]-articulation as in *singing* and /bu:k/ for *book* under the influence of RP (p. 80). For speakers born before 1918 *sure*, *shore* and *Shaw* are not homophones; for speakers born since 1938 they are all /ʃɔ:/ (p. 85). The results of this trend (A) also are often pronunciations which are neither RP phonemically or traditionally local: so for Hull speech as well as Merseyside and Newcastle a schwa-vowel in *mud*, for instance, that is neither /u/ nor /ʌ/; and also a 'compromise' vowel in *ant* in Merseyside (Knowles 1978: 83; Williams and Kerswill 1999: 146). (See also Beal 1996: 371–2 on the 'Jesmond' accent of Newcastle. ) This compromise tendency has been noted even in smaller communities, e.g. Filey (Widdowson 1966: 28). Here *stone* can be /stɔ:n/ /stɔ:n/ /stʊən/ as well as the traditional /stɹən/. In Gateshead (Viereck 1968) the traditional diphthong /ɪə/ in words like *bake*, *name* and also *stone*, *bone* has tended to give way to long vowels /e:/ and /o:/ respectively, which, although historically ancient and 'pan-Northern', have been regarded in such communities as educated/middle-class.<sup>11</sup> Wakelin (1984: 71), following Orton as long ago as 1933, argues that the twentieth-century emergent rounded front vowel /ø:/ in words like *bone*, *loaf*, *road* in north Durham and Tyne and Wear rather than the traditional and endangered /ɪə/ is an attempt to 'conform more closely' to RP, but this is a matter of debate. Since it is used by working-class males as well as young middle-class males according to Watt and Milroy's research (1999: 28) it could also be seen as an urban pronunciation influenced by the Northumberland east coast hinterland (L. Milroy, p.c.): see also the discussion below on trend (B).<sup>12</sup> However, the NURSE/NORTH vowel merger noted by Wells twenty years ago (1982) as a feature of 'broadest Geordie' as a result of burr-loss (see above) appears to be reversing, or rather,

<sup>11</sup> Ihalainen (1994: 260) notes how the traditional /dɹən/ for *done* (on the *stone* pattern) has been replaced by the pan-Northern /dʊn/.

<sup>12</sup> A similar centralised vowel as in *bert* for *boat* is noted by Trudgill (1999b: 72) for Hull and Humberside (see also Williams & Kerswill 1999), but neither work comments on the origins.

amongst young women in particular, changing to a ‘compromise’ front rounded /ø:/ (Watt and Milroy 1999: 28).

Another consequence of this trend (A) is the assumption of the dominant regional urban accent and not RP as a model for ‘talking properly’ in the villages of the hinterland. Kerswill’s research (1987) in four former pit villages in the radius of Durham city posited a ‘Durham standard’, a ‘secondary vernacular’ for shop assistants, salesmen and secretaries. So /do:nt/ was used and not the traditional local /dɪn(ə)t/ (‘don’t’); /wo:nt/ not /wɪnət/ (‘won’t’) with the long vowels mentioned above; also /mɔ:/ for /mɜə/ (‘more’). In general, more research is needed on the *perception* of such regional ‘standards’ vis-à-vis RP. Is it the case that speakers of standard Merseyside, Tyneside or Durham, for example, feel that they are socially and culturally closer to, or distinctive from, RP speakers?

The second trend (B) in contrast is a ‘pulling inwards’ by the young working classes especially at the core of a city or large town, with close ties and little occupational mobility, to the focussed ‘community norms’ (J. Milroy 1994: 125) of the traditional or broad vernacular; but with an apparent tendency also to ‘push outwards’ to the external influence of not RP but Estuary English, a covert prestige norm, and similarly stigmatised as the local vernacular as ‘non-standard’. So as illustrations of the ‘pulling inwards’ tendency we can note that working-class Hull speech has a distinctive vowel in PRICE words: a diphthong before voiceless consonants (e.g. *price*, *bike*) and a monophthong /a:/ before voiced (*bride*, *pint*), a feature noted in this part of East Yorkshire in the mid-nineteenth century (Kerswill and Williams 1999: 217). The /tə/ diphthong in FACE in Newcastle speech is still common amongst males, as is the elsewhere recessive /u:/ in *down*, *town*, *house* (Watt and Milroy 1999: 28–9), and the unstressed final syllable of words like *letter* as /ə/ enjoys ‘covert prestige’ (Beal 1985: 34). Such conservative features appear to be resilient and also remain consistently salient to the speech community as a badge of identity: the popular *Toon*, for example, shows lexicalisation for the local name of Newcastle United Football Club (Beal 2000). Such features are also prone to stereotyping by outsiders and mimicry by comedians (see also chapter 1). Influence from the hinterland can be illustrated by the

Hull PRICE vowels and possibly by the rounded vowel /ø:/ in *bone*, etc. in Newcastle speech mentioned above. Certainly evidence from the *SED* shows it present in words like *stone* and *poke* in the later 1950s throughout Northumberland, especially the coast (see vol. I, pt 1: 94, 200). Although Rydland notes the influence of RP as a possibility, he also suggests a development from /ʊə/ as in *coal* (1999: 10).<sup>13</sup> In lexis, interestingly, there can be noted the intensifier *geet*, of unknown origin, which also seems to have spread from coastal areas into young people's speech (Beal 1993a: 208). Such innovations generally are a salutary reminder that what Foulkes and Docherty (1999: 10) term 'dedialectalisation' is not necessarily either inevitable or universal (or that only middle-class females initiate change).

In 1999 a headline in the *Daily Telegraph* (1 June) proclaimed 'Scouse accent sinking into the estuary', and warned that it was 'in danger of extinction from the relentless northward march' of Estuary English. The 'spread' of Estuary English has certainly been noted by linguists (e.g. Trudgill 1999: 82, Williams and Kerswill 1999: 159). Two features in particular characteristic of popular London speech are usually highlighted: T-glottalling and TH-fronting. Both of these have been stigmatised by educationalists and prescriptive pundits. Using the *SED* data for comparison, in recent years T-glottalling in Northern towns has certainly increased 'dramatically', as Stoddart Upton and Widdowson (1999: 78) say of Sheffield speech, as it has in southern, and in RP itself, to the extent that the Milroys and Hartley (1994) are probably right to speak of a 'general British pattern'. Williams and Kerswill (1999) discuss its presence in Hull, and Llamas (2000) in Middlesbrough, with /p/, /k/ also replaced: again, the *SED* had not noted it as a feature of Teesside.

Yet there are interesting comments and caveats to be made on T-glottalling in the North. In Tyneside speech there is also a particular kind of glottal 'reinforcement', or 'glottalisation', distinctive to Geordie, especially amongst older men, for the medial voiceless /t/ and also

<sup>13</sup> Rydland (1998, 1999) notes front rounded vowels as a 'prominent and well-known feature of traditional Northumberland speech' (1999: 1), yet, interestingly, these are not noted by Ellis (1889), although they are present in Orton's corpus collected in the 1920s.

/p/ and /k/, as in *waiter*, *paper* and *taken*: /ʔt/, ʔp/, /ʔk/ (Docherty and Foulkes 1999: 54). Noted by O' Connor over fifty years ago (1947), this is probably rightly to be distinguished from T-glottalling proper, the replacement of /t/ inter-vocally and finally by /ʔ/ (Matthisen 1999: 114), although perhaps the latter's rise on Tyneside could have been influenced by the local variant. In Middlesbrough there appears to be a subtle continuum in usage across speakers of different ages, class and gender: the preferred variant of /p/ being glottalised; of /t/ being replaced, and of /k/ being fully released (Llamas 2000: 131). Here, as in other speech-communities, style-shifting is no doubt also common. The situation in Middlesbrough is very interesting from the point of view of influence: it seems more likely that Newcastle is acting as the *origo* of the development, rather than London, because of its geographical proximity (see further 5.4). Moreover, as Milroy, Milroy and Hartley (1994) have pointed out, in the North-east there may have been another influence historically on T-glottalling, since it is also a feature of urban Scottish English across the border, e.g. Glasgow and Edinburgh, and may have a long pedigree. In view of the historical linguistic closeness of Northumberland and the Scottish Lowlands, a possible link is tempting to consider. Another point is that there are tantalisingly much earlier references by linguists and dialectologists which seem to indicate that glottalling is not historically unknown in the North. The incidental material from the *SED* files notes its presence in the Sheffield area (Stoddart, Upton and Widdowson 1999: 77); even further back Henry Sweet in 1908 noted its occurrence in some 'Northern English and Scotch' dialects; one of A.J. Ellis's informants thought it 'vulgar' in Leeds (cited Bailey 1996: 76); and a glottal replacement for /k/ was noted in Lancaster in 1914 (cited Llamas 2000: 125).<sup>14</sup>

These comments illustrate generally just how important a historical perspective can be in relation to supposed innovations and changes, and yet how frustrating (once again) any statements can be in the absence of

<sup>14</sup> There are problems relating to the representations of glottalling and glottalisation in earlier accounts. According to Bailey (1996: 78) Otto Jespersen touring Britain in 1887 noted a 'glottal stop' in Lincoln, Sheffield and Glasgow, as in *boo'k*, *po'pe*, and *tha't*. This looks like glottalisation.

research or in the light of inadequate evidence. However, Milroy, Milroy and Hartley (1994) are some of the few to try and look at T-glottalling in a different, diachronic way. They note, for instance, that changes like T-glottalling may have more ‘time-depth’ than contemporary linguists have thought; and, more interestingly, that there may be ‘variable manifestations’ in different dialects at different times (p. 3). I would go further and suggest that T-glottalling might be latent or ‘dormant’ in many speech communities (Trudgill (1999b: 136, 2004: 81) notes its presence in East Anglia in the *SED* data of the 1950s); and that its modern burgeoning in popular London English and the *yoof* media, complete with a street-wise image, has provided the catalyst for its resurgence amongst speakers in other regions (i.e. an ‘internal development’ in Milroy, Milroy and Hartley’s terms), in addition to any possible direct influence (‘borrowing’). A similar explanation might account for the manifestation of TH-fronting, as in *yoof* (‘youth’) itself, *frush* (‘thrush’) and *bovver* (‘bother’). Over thirty years ago Wakelin (1972: 98) heard *fing* in Leeds, more recently noted (along with *bruvver*) by Williams and Kerswill (1999: 142) in Hull, and by Llamas (1998: 105) by Middlesbrough young working-class men. More strikingly, Wright (1892: 91) notes it as a recessive(!) feature of the speech of his native Idle in the West Riding, but that fifty years before it had been ‘quite general’ there: so people would say *fink* and *smivvy*. Addy (1888: xxxv) had also noted *f* for *th* as a ‘common’ feature of Sheffield speech. Further research on the older glossaries and descriptions by local antiquarians might unearth even more of such instances.<sup>15</sup>

Let us consider the possibility of the indirect, rather than direct, influence from Estuary English on Northern English in relation to another often-noted feature, H-dropping, which has tended to be socially stigmatised south of Doncaster. In chapter 2 I noted how the River Tees has traditionally acted as a linguistic ‘boundary’ for the

<sup>15</sup> My concept of ‘latency’ might not be unrelated to Sapir’s idea of ‘drift’ as discussed by Trudgill (2004: 131–2). ‘Language varieties may resemble one another because, having derived from some common source, they continue to evolve linguistically in similar directions by undergoing similar changes.’ (And not necessarily at the same time.) Trudgill adds that varieties can inherit ‘shared tendencies or propensities’, which can lead to the development of ‘similar . . . changes [and] characteristics’. See also Chambers (2004) on the concept of Vernacular Universals.

northern limit. Currently, however, instances have been reported further north to Sunderland on the Wear (see Beal 1993a: 187, Simmelbauer 2000: 26). (See also 5.4.) One explanation might simply be that the isogloss is moving gradually northwards; but also that the shift has been given impetus by the influence of Estuary English amongst the young.

In conclusion, some general comments made by Pålsson over thirty years ago appear to have been remarkably prophetic: 'In my view it may be argued that the position and influence of RP today is likely to be less prominent and operative than it used to be . . . It seems not unlikely that local regional standards will exert a relatively greater influence in the future, as melting-pots drawing upon the received standard and different regional dialects . . .' (1972: 27). Other prognostications I shall return to in 5.4. Certainly this survey in 5.2, broad though it is, shows evidence of loss or further recession, but also a remarkable resilience of some traditional features of pronunciation amongst each successive generation of 'older' speakers; and even a resurgence of certain features amongst the young. This, as a result, complicates the generally accepted division following Trudgill (1999b) between 'traditional' and 'modern' dialects, i.e. accents. There are, of course, many areas of the North which await fuller investigation: not only many urban areas, but also in particular Cumberland and Westmorland.

### 5.3 The 'erosion' of Northern dialect?

It is in the areas of grammar and vocabulary that standardisation and levelling have made the most impact on English dialects, especially in the written medium. I shall first in this section discuss these issues in relation to grammar and also discourse markers; and then try to evaluate the impact of what is commonly termed the 'erosion' of Northern lexis.

#### 5.3.1 *Northern English grammar*

At the present day it is undoubtedly impossible on grammatical grounds to identify the *locus* of publication of local evening newspapers from

Newton Abbott or Newcastle, Ramsgate or Rochdale; although within such publications there may well be special dialectal pieces or poems by local writers, continuing the nineteenth-century tradition (4.2). There may well be some regional grammatical features in personal letters, journals and even e-mails, where the social risk of stigma is not so significant. Certainly writers of grammars of present-day English, where 'English' is synonymous with 'Standard English', assume that there is little regional variation of any significance and ignore the subject. Even Trudgill (1999a: 125) claims that 'grammatical differences between Standard English and other dialects are . . . rather few in number'. There has also been a tendency to see dialectal grammar as simple rather than complex, when it is often not, as we shall see. Even with the trend to take more heed of spoken rather than written grammar, the same tendencies recur: so Biber et al. (1999: 20–1) state that 'dialectal differences are not as pervasive as we might imagine . . . the core grammatical structures are relatively uniform across dialects'. Here, however, a dismissal of regional variation suffers particularly from a lack of both systematic study and corpora. Antiquarians and dialectologists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, including the *Survey of English Dialects* team of the 1950s and 1960s, at best focussed on morphology rather than syntax.<sup>16</sup>

However, it is very obvious that grammatical features specific to particular regions do survive in the spoken language, not including those features recognised as being more widespread in colloquial speech, for which a label like 'non-standard' has conventionally been seen as appropriate (e.g. double negation or irregular past tense or past participle forms). Again, this has not been adequately studied, but in the North as elsewhere, style- or code-switching is common in speech, and with it a shift from informal to formal register or vice versa, and a

<sup>16</sup> See also the lament by Shorrocks (1997: 217–19) on both the lack of attention to grammar in British English dialectology and also on the 'demonstrably wrong' assertion that English dialects do not vary greatly at the morphological and syntactic levels. Nearly twenty years ago Hudson (1986: 1) concluded that 'the gap is rather wide [between the vernaculars and Standard English], much wider than laypeople and uninformed linguists often assume'. The *Survey of British Dialect Grammar* (1986–9) disappointingly used elicitation tests, and only in eighty-seven schools (see Cheshire, Edwards and Whittle 1989).

shift from standard to local grammar. Nonetheless, as with pronunciation and lexis (see below), it is certainly the case that, on the one hand, many traditional Northern features appear to be recessive, and in possible danger of extinction; and on the other hand that others remain resilient as salient markers of either local or pan-Northern identity. Moreover, as with accent, dialectal grammar applies to both urban as well as rural dialect speakers, middle and working class; and similarly the distinction between ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ or ‘mainstream’ dialect usage is often hard to maintain. Further research is acutely needed, however, on urban varieties for a more accurate picture.<sup>17</sup>

Very obvious and ancient markers of regional English within the North appear to be particularly vulnerable. The 3rd person feminine pronoun *ho(o)* (OE *heo*), a traditional feature of Lancashire and the NW (3.1), and noted by Addy (1888: xxxv) even in Sheffield, features sporadically in the *SED*, but even there is noted as an ‘older’ pronunciation (see e.g. I: 1052–5: ‘Is *hoo*/isn’t *ho* married?’; p. 1058 ‘weren’t *hoo*?’). One of Seabrook’s eighty-year-old informants from Blackburn in 1969 uses *hoo* (1971: 27–8). Thirty years ago Duncan (1972), using the older *SED* data, noted a blended form *shoo* in South Yorkshire (as used by Joseph in *Wuthering Heights*), and *hoo* in Lancashire, Cheshire and Derbyshire. Trudgill (1999b) simply states that it is a ‘traditional’ marker of Lancashire speech. Scandinavian origins (2.3) are detectable in phrases like *till and fra* (‘to and fro’), noted for Cumberland by Prevost (1905), and by Wakelin (1972) for Northumberland; and for the modal *mun/munna* (‘must/must not’), noted by both Heslop (1892) for Northumberland and Wright (1892) for West Yorkshire. These forms feature in all the six Northern counties of the *SED* (1963, I: 1027–9); but Petyt (1978: 74) believes the modal *mun* had ‘disappeared’ by then from West Yorkshire certainly. The preposition *at* has traditionally had two main functions in Northern English which distinguish it from Standard English, and both are attributed to Scandinavian influence: with a verb as the equivalent of *to* (Wakelin 1972), and noted as a

<sup>17</sup> For Tyneside grammar, however, see Beal (1993a, 2005), where she draws on the Newcastle Electronic Corpus of Tyneside English, itself building on the Tyneside Linguistic Survey (5.1). See [www.ncl.ac.uk/necte](http://www.ncl.ac.uk/necte). There is also the Corpus of Sheffield Usage (collected in 1981): see <http://www.shef.ac.uk/english/natcect>.

Lakeland feature in 1895; and as a relative meaning ‘who/which’ (Ihalainen 1994: 213), noted by Wright (1892) in West Yorkshire, and by the *SED* for all the Northern counties except Lancashire, where *as* prevails (I: 1082–4): as in ‘I know a man *at/as* will do it for you’. *As / at his* would be the equivalent to whose (*SED* I: 1085). I return to other grammatical features possibly influenced by contact with Scandinavian settlers below.

Marked in relation to standard English is the 2nd person pronoun singular *thou*, which has its origins in form from Old English, and its origins in function (as a familiar form of address) from the Late Middle English period and French influence. (See below.) Indeed, *thou* and its many phonetic variants are usually omitted from most tables of pronoun forms in contemporary English grammars, and ignored in histories of English after the eighteenth century at the very latest as being ‘obsolete’ except in liturgical registers (see further Wales 1983, 1996, 2003–4). Dialectal usage is not considered. Evidence from the *SED*, however, shows *thou*’s retention widely throughout England after the Second World War. Upton, Stewart and Widdowson (1987: 217) have a map based on the *SED* which shows a pattern of distribution well away from London, the East Midlands, East Anglia and the South-east: namely, parts of the South-west, the West Midlands and Welsh borderlands, and north of the Humber Estuary and the Mersey (see also Upton, Parry and Widdowson 1994, Upton and Widdowson 1996). In the far north-east of Northumberland, however, they also note a singular *ye*.<sup>18</sup>

My focus here, of course, is on *thou*’s ‘survival’ in the North. To be noted, as Ihalainen (1994: 229) states, is the corresponding verb ending in *-s* widespread in the North rather than the OE *-st* as elsewhere; and a distinctive enclitic as in ‘*Ista* ready?’ There is no doubt that

<sup>18</sup> A map clearly based on Upton, Sanderson and Widdowson (1987) but unacknowledged is to be found in Graddol et al. (eds) (1996: 155). The legend gives the impression that *thou*-forms are ‘still’ used in England, but Upton et al. were using *SED* information for their own map. A similar map (unsourced) is found in Trudgill (1990: 86) for ‘traditional’ as distinct from ‘modern’ dialects; but his *ye*-usage reaches to the Scottish border. Griffiths (1996) believes *ye* is still typical of Northumberland at large, although encroached upon by *you*. He notes (1999a) the emergence of a new plural *ye*’s on Tyneside, probably under the influence of the usage of Irish immigrant workers: see 5.2 on *youse*.

*thou*-forms were expected to be recessive by the *SED* field-workers, and used mainly by the elderly; indeed, Wright (1892: 118–19) recognised that in his own native Windhill in West Yorkshire *thou* was not so general as it had been twenty years before. However, as with phonology, older generations are continually replaced by new generations of ‘older’ speakers: Tidholm (1979) nearly 100 years later found it still ‘disappearing’ in North Yorkshire (cited Ihalainen 1994: 229). Moreover, the age range of users may have been broader even in the 1950s than it was commonly supposed. The novelist and broadcaster Melvyn Bragg, reminiscing about his boyhood in Wigton in Cumbria in the 1940s and early 1950s, states ‘*We thee’d* and *thou’d* each other as if we had just got off the “Mayflower”’ (2003: 26). Barry Hines’s novel *A Kestrel for a Knave*, set in Yorkshire in the 1960s, reveals consistent *thou*-usage amongst the schoolboys. It is also the case that, since the *SED* largely ignored non-rural or industrial localities, significant ‘pockets’ of *thou*-usage were overlooked, in the North (and also the Midlands) especially. So Shorrocks’s research into the Bolton area of what is now Greater Manchester, formerly Lancashire, in the 1970s and 1980s revealed extensive use amongst a wide age group, and localised special complex features such as enclitic interrogatives such as *dust* (‘doest thou?’) (Shorrocks 1996, 1998, 1999). Melvyn Bragg (2003a: 27) recalls a similar enclitic in *siste* (‘seest thou’) in his native Cumberland. Such expressions, however, easily turned into formulas, are likely to retain *thou* as linguistic ‘fossils’. In the North-east, *thou*-forms emerge in the mining songs of the pit villages well into the 1970s continuing a nineteenth-century tradition (4.3) (see Lloyd 1978); and they are also tabulated (*thoo*, *tha*, *theesell*) by Griffiths (1999a) more recently for pitmatic in the same area. Kerswill identified *thoo* and *thy* (‘your’) as part of the Durham Vernacular in 1987. In Leeds in 2001 I myself heard the following exchange on a bus between a toddler in a buggy and his young mother in her early twenties:

‘That man’s looking at me.’

‘That man’s looking at *thee*? That’s all right’.

In February 2000 *thoo* (/ðu:/) as a vocative was uttered to me by a Sheffield bus driver, as part of a farewell formula ‘Tek care’ (see

below). It is significant that when a survey on Sheffield dialect conducted by John Widdowson was reported in the local press in 1999 it was headlined: ‘*Tha wot?* As they say in these parts’ (*Sheffield Star* 13 January) and ‘Watch what *tha’rt* saying’ (*Sheffield Telegraph* 15 January). However, the testimony of the headlines is ambiguous, although valuably so. On the one hand they suggest the use of *thou*-forms is a characteristic and recognisable feature of the local dialect. Indeed Stoddart, Upton and Widdowson (1999: 79) note how Sheffielders used to be called *thee-thous* (/ði: ða:z/), although they do not say by whom. On the other, the headlines also suggest the same kind of ‘fossilisation’ of *thou* as mentioned above, here in the formulas of discourse tags (*tha wot?* ‘you what?’).<sup>19</sup> Such formulaic language I return to more generally below. Moreover, the headlines might even suggest that if it is formulaic, *thou* is fast fading both into local cultural memory (see also below and 5.4) and into stereotype.

What makes *thou* particularly interesting is its role in the rich and complex pattern of sociolinguistic usage for pronouns of address historically inherited from French, and the broad distinction between ‘politeness’ (*you*) and ‘familiarity’ (*thou*) (see further Wales 1983). Whilst Standard English, of course, lost this useful distinction by the eighteenth century at the latest, its significance for regional varieties has been almost entirely overlooked outside occasional comments by local antiquarians or enthusiasts.<sup>20</sup> Even the *SED* is frustrating, since, with the emphasis on morphology (as well as phonology and lexis), syntactic and usage information is either lacking or piecemeal. Yet the details gleaned reveal a complex system. Fieldworkers were expected to mark with special symbols whether, for example, *thou* was used to an older man or a younger; to anybody; to relatives; to close friends; young people; or not at all. ‘Test’ questions included: ‘A little boy comes up

<sup>19</sup> See also Shorrocks (1998) for many examples of *tha knaws* (‘you know’) in Bolton speech in the 1970s and 1980s. Geeson (1969: 30) notes *thoo knaas* as a common feature of the Durham dialect at that date. See further Wales (2003–4: 178) on a possible impersonal or generic sense in such phrases.

<sup>20</sup> It is therefore impossible to agree with Burnley (2001: 26) that once introduced into English the *ye/thou* distinction in the singular was ‘unknown to the unsophisticated’. The assumption has always been that the lower classes simply *thou’d* each other indiscriminately.

and talks to you in the street, and you are not sure you know him, so you say, Tell me—' (I: 1081). Answers such as 'What dost *thou* call thee?' 'Whose bairn/little lad art *thou*?' occur in all six Northern counties. Another asked: 'To find out whether I had a wife, you'd ask me— (Art wed/is *thou* married, etc.)'. One Cumberland informant apparently added: 'Dinna *thou* anybody older than *thisel*', which seemed to be the norm across the North. In Yorkshire three informants would *thou* anyone, and four would *thou* relatives, but others said it would be 'impolite' or 'rough'. One informant claimed *thou* was 'obsolescent' (I: 1051–2).<sup>21</sup> Clearly both the recent *thou* of the Sheffield bus-driver and the Leeds mother suggest the connotations of familiarity, and the former even to a stranger. One of the many stereotypes about Northerners discussed in chapter I is that they are friendlier than Southerners; and the use of *thou*-forms in linguistic stereotyping by 'outsiders' may well reflect this image. (It may well have other connotations, e.g. of rusticity and old-fashionedness.) Early in 2003, for example, there appeared on the internet an advertisement from one 'John Northerner' for a new software package that would 'translate' a document into 'proper' English for Northerners. It begins: 'Ow do youth, 'ow's *tha* bin?'; and includes as a specimen option 'Dust *tha* wanna sev t'changes *thaz* med, love?'<sup>22</sup> Twenty years ago there was a report in the *Guardian* (August 1983) on the increasing use in the Barnsley area of the West Riding of 'familiar' *thou* amongst children to parents and teachers, a form normally reserved for their schoolmates. It is significant that the newsworthiness consisted in the spread of the familiar forms, not in the fact that it was young people rather than the elderly who were using *tha* in the first place. Twenty years on, are schoolchildren in this part of Yorkshire still using it?

<sup>21</sup> The unpublished fieldworker notebooks are highly likely to contain much more information on *thou*'s usage, augmenting the tantalising and brief notes in the published volumes. Melchers (1972: 137), using *SED* materials from the West Riding, wishes for a full sociolinguistic investigation. One of Ellis's pitmen informants from Newcastle (1869: 650) said he would use *thou* in anger and to be disrespectful, and to a child younger but not older than twelve years old.

<sup>22</sup> The responses are 'Aye/ Nay/Sod it'. Note the personal tenor indicated by *youth* and *love*: see terms of address below.

More research is also needed on possible gender differences in usage. According to John Widdowson (p.c.) there used to be a South Yorkshire saying used by women, in the 1970s at least, ‘*Thee tha thisen* an see how *tha* likes it!’ And the greeting ‘Now then, *thee*’ was most likely between men rather than women. (See also Stoddart, Upton and Widdowson 1999: 79.) According to Beal (2005) recent research on a former mining community in Barnsley showed *thou*-usage between men (which would be in harmony with the close-knit community and the ethos of ‘solidarity’ with one’s fellow workers), although wives used it to their husbands in the privacy of their own homes, suggesting a mastery, in effect, of two dialects.<sup>23</sup> Certainly the gritty Northern realist writing of the post-War period (5.1) reveals consistent *thou*-usage amongst older working men in particular, as a sign of kinship and paternity, or of camaraderie in the local pub or club (e.g. Stan Barstow’s *A Kind of Loving* (1960); Barry Hines’ *The Blinder* (1966); David Storey’s play *The Changing Room* (1971)).

There are other pronominal forms that seem marked and ‘archaic’ in relation to Standard English, and which are threatened with obsolescence: notably, the reflexives. The *SED* records two variants, *-sell* and *-sen* in the North, as in *mysell*, *mysen*, *(h)issell*, *(h)issen*, *theirsell(s)*, etc., the former characteristic of Northumberland, Durham, Cumberland, Westmoreland and Lancashire, the latter (along with *-sell*) of Yorkshire (I: 1093–8). Wright (1892: 123) saw the Humber estuary as the southern limit. *Uszen* is given by one West Riding informant. Although used in the novels of Barry Hines, *-sen* forms now appear to be ‘declining’ in Sheffield (Stoddart, Upton and Widdowson 1999: 79). *Worselves*, however, noted by the *SED*, like *wor* (‘our’) is still a characteristic feature of present-day urban Geordie. Notably, where pronoun functions appear marked in relation to Standard English, but not the forms, then there appears to be a better resilience to the influence of Standard English in speech. And such usages are characteristic of Northern so-called

<sup>23</sup> On this kind of bilingualism see Seabrook’s interview with a local Blackburn historian, b. 1899: in his youth ‘many Lancashire families were virtually bilingual. They could speak the ordinary King’s English when they were addressing a meeting or anything like that, but in the family circle they *thee’d* and *thou’d* each other to their hearts’ content’ (1971: 84).

'mainstream' urban speech: e.g. *us* for *me* widely in the North-east ('Give *us* a ride'); *us* for 'our' in Yorkshire ('We'll wipe *us* feet') (noted by Addy 1888 for Sheffield). Widespread in the North is the use of *our* as a kinship term: '*Our* Annie' is a close relation, such as daughter or sister; *our kid* is definitely a (younger) sibling. Shorrocks (p.c.) refers to the usage in the Bolton area whereby a stressed pronoun refers to the speaker's wife/mother/sister-in-law, and not mentioned in the co-text: as in 'He's gone for t' pick *HER* up.' This seems comparable to the Geordie use of *wors* ('ours') as in 'A'll see aboot it when *wors* comes hyem' (Geeson 1969: 35). In Yorkshire, *me* is commonly used as an emphatic tag at the end of an utterance: 'I'm off on holiday, *me*' (also noted as a Tyneside feature by Beal 1993a: 210).<sup>24</sup> Northern usage is also more subtly marked by a difference in word order for pronominal direct and indirect objects. 'She gave it him' is quite unremarkable both in the North-west and the North-east.

Much more complex, however, is the whole system of deictic reference and its expression, which, probably because of its complexity and diversity is under threat from the much simpler system of Standard English. *Them* used as a demonstrative 'those' is widespread in colloquial 'non-standard' usage (as in '*them* boots'); but in the North particular usages are also found. As well as the adjectival *these* and *those* for proximate and distal reference, traditional Northern dialects also had *tho*, *thae* (OE *þa*: 'those'); *thor*, *thur*, *thir* ('these': noted by Heslop 1892: 727 for Northumberland). The system is three-way rather than two-way (Melchers 1997: 83) in that there is *thon*, *thonder* for the further distal 'that over there' and 'that yon', 'that yonder' (*yon* itself rarely used in Standard English, but found in Scottish English as well as Northern), as in '*thon* ones' (= 'those over there': Wakelin 1972: 116).<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> A media stereotype of the former Cabinet Minister Alan Milburn, MP for Darlington (educated in Stokesley in the North Riding) spotlights this feature: '. . . Alan Milburn chips in his *Geordie* hard man twopennorth ("I'm that bastard hard, *me*" runs the official translation, "I'm gangin' to give that Scottish twat a hidin . . .")' (Matthew Norman, *Independent* (1 October 2004), my italics).

<sup>25</sup> The *SED* also found *yon over yon* ('that over there') (We), *yon far one* (Nb), *tother* (Du, La), *yon one* (Y), *that over yon* (Y), *yon over yonder* (Y), *yon tother* (Y), *yond* (Y) (I: 1089–90). Shorrocks (p.c.) has noted the usage of *yon mon* ('that man') in the

One of the most salient features of traditional Northern English south of the Tees (and into the North Midlands), and hence prone to stereotyping, is what has come to be known as ‘definite article reduction’ (DAR) (see M. Jones 1999, 2002). This is conventionally represented in writing and stereotypes as <t>. Indeed, in comparison with Standard English, and to non-dialect speakers, the definite article appears so ‘reduced’ in some contexts as to be phonetically indistinguishable from zero. In parts of the East Riding (e.g. Holderness) zero-realisation may actually be the case (see W. Jones 1952, following Ellis 1889). So marked a feature this may be, especially of Yorkshire English, and yet the origins of the phenomenon, and its first appearance, are unknown.<sup>26</sup> The definite article may be realised phonetically as /t/; a glottal stop (particularly in the South Pennine region); other variants or combinations of these; or a fricative <th>, the latter especially in Lancashire, and/or prevocally. (For a full list, see Jones 1999: 104.) Before a word beginning with a dental, it is difficult to distinguish at all (‘*t* tram’) (see Barry 1972: 173): what Wright (1892: 91) calls a ‘suspended *t*’. Further research is needed to determine the likelihood of the flourishing of DAR in the future. Tidholm (1979) found a sharp decline in its use amongst young speakers in North Yorkshire born after the Second World War (cited in Ihalainen 1994: 219). Northern novelists of the 1960s and beyond use it for delineation in dialogue, but chiefly that of older characters. DAR is certainly still heard in parts of the North amongst middle-aged speakers, although it is highly probable that users keep it for informal or familiar contexts and so ‘code-switch’. In other words, standard *the* is also part of their repertoire.

Also much disputed as to origin (see chapter 2) is what has been termed the ‘Northern subject rule’ (Ihalainen 1994: 213), which affects verbs in the present tense. Here ‘the verb takes the *-s* ending in all

Bolton area, to refer to the speaker’s relative who lives elsewhere, but known to the interlocutors.

<sup>26</sup> See 3.3 on George Meriton (1673). Barry (1972: 166) suggests an origin in EME, on the evidence of *pe/te* spellings. M. Jones (2002) is doubtful, and he also (p.c.) rules out a ‘dialect contact’ origin as a result of Scandinavian influence (cf. Murray 1873 for instance; see also 2.3). It is noted by Addy (1888: xviii) as a feature of Sheffield speech, and by Wright (1892: 109) as a feature of Windhill’s.

persons, unless it is adjacent to a personal pronoun subject; and except for the 3rd person sg, where *-s* is used regardless' (Klemola and Jones 1999: 26). Hence 'Birds *sings*'; 'Peas and carrots *was nice*'; 'They *peel* them and *boils* them.' This 'rule' has certainly been noted consistently as a feature of Northern English since the ME period (McIntosh 1983, Pietsch 2005), and is well attested in the *SED* tape recordings of the 1950s (Klemola and Jones 1999). Beal (2005) notes examples from the Newcastle Electronic Corpus of Tyneside English (*NECTE*). Unrelated appears to be the use of *is* in all persons. Certainly for the first person in particular 'I *is*', noted as occurring in *The Reeve's Tale* (3.1), is still common on Teesside and further North. Heslop (1892) had noted how *I's* in Northumberland can mean 'I am', 'I shall', or 'I have'. *se*, *ye'se* for 'we shall', 'you shall' (unstressed) are noted in the nineteenth century for Huddersfield (Easther), Sheffield (Addy) and the West Riding (Wright): undoubtedly now relic forms. The *SED* records *sa* for just two Yorkshire informants (I: 1017–8).<sup>27</sup> Since variation in subject–verb concord is so common in dialects outside Standard English, and across global English varieties also, the survival of 'I *is*' is likely, and in urban as well as rural speech. In Yorkshire, for example, is found very commonly in the speech of speakers of all ages 'he *were*'; in Sheffield 'they *was*' (Stoddart, Upton and Widdowson 1999: 79).

One major grammatical area for consideration here is negation, especially in relation to auxiliary verbs. Again, the picture for Northern English is rich and complex, with some particular local variations; and again the distinction between traditional and modern usage is hard to maintain, since many usages appear to be robust. In some cases there is also some overlap with Scottish English usage across the border. The contrast with Standard English is often subtle, which may partly explain why levelling has not yet occurred. For example, many Northerners

<sup>27</sup> The *OED* records these reduced enclitic forms from the thirteenth century in a wide range of texts and areas, but they have tended to be most frequent in the Northern counties and Scotland. There is an interesting reference to *The Merie Tales of Skelton* (1566) where *I'se* is part of the stereotype of a Westmorland character: 'In gewd faith saith the Kendalman, . . . *I'se* bay ['pay'] for your skott ['bill'] to London'. <s> forms occur in one version of *On Ilkley Moor balt'at*, but they are hardly sung today (as in 'Then wi *s'll* a' ter bury thee').

today will say 'I've *not* done that', or 'I'll *not* be wanting that', quite unaware that south of the Trent the preferred usage is not reduced auxiliary and full negative, but full auxiliary and reduced negative ('I *haven't* done that'; 'I *won't* be wanting that') (cf. Hughes and Trudgill 1979: 20). Near the Border, the negative could well be *no* ('I'll *no* be wanting that').<sup>28</sup> For the negative of *I'm* alone, the *SED* records *I ain't* (Y) / *ammet* (Nb) *ammet* (La) / *aren't* (Y) / *isn't* (Cu, Du, We, La, Y); *I'm none* (Y) / *not* (La); *I's none* (Y) / *not* (Nb, Cu, Du, We, La, Y) (I: 1064–5). Commoner these days in cities like Glasgow across the Border than in Newcastle are the double modal constructions as in 'He'll *not can* stay'; 'he *won't can't* do that' (Cheshire et al. 1993: 84). Prevost (1905) had noted the subtle nuance in Cumberland speech of the double modals in an utterance such as 'He wadn't cud dea't', i.e. he couldn't bring himself to do it; and 'he won't can sing' meaning that he can't physically sing. In the Durham vernacular, traditionally /dɪnət/ means 'don't' and /wɪnət/ 'won't' (Kerswill 1987: 28); in Sunderland 'don't' is traditionally /dɪnə/ (Cheshire et al. 1993: 84). The *SED* records *disn't* in Nb, Du, Cu, and We; *dizna* in Nb and Cu; *dinna* in Cu, *dond* and *doesna* in La and *dint* in Y (I: 1036–7). Glauser (1974) found /duənt/ in Nb and Cu and /dʊvənt/ in We. On other variants in the TLS corpus, see Rowe (forthcoming).

What Petyt (1978) terms 'secondary contractions' were noted by him in the late 1970s in informal West Yorkshire speech: forms like /dɒnt/ ('doesn't'), /kʊnt/ ('couldn't') /mʊnt/ ('mustn't'); and even further contracted forms such as /a:t/ ('aren't') and /do:t/ ('don't'), especially in Bradford. In the thirty years since then it has to be said colloquial speech of all areas favours contracted forms such as these: /dɪnt/, for example, a widespread common pronunciation of 'didn't'. (See also Shorrocks 1996 on contracted forms in Bolton area negative tags.) In Newcastle, *dee not* and /dɪvənt/ spelled *divvn't* have been popular forms traditionally (Geeson 1969: 28). The *SED* records the latter in Nb, Du and Cu, but not We, La or Y (I: 1036–7). The MP for Newcastle

<sup>28</sup> The *SED* records (but inconsistently) 'I'll *not*' in Nb and Du and 'I'll *no*' in Nb and Cu (I: 1018–19). Interestingly, no examples of *shan't* (only variants of *will* + negative) are found outside Yorkshire in responses to IX.4.4., perhaps reflecting Scottish influence or common origin (cf. Beal 1993a: 193).

famously stated in 1991: ‘The English *divvent* want we and the Scots *winna* have we’ (cited Watt 2002: 53). According to Charley Rowe (p.c.) *divvn’t* certainly appears to have been experiencing a resurgence since the late 1960s. Its origins are obscure, and subject to much debate.<sup>29</sup> There is the positive equivalent *div ye* found in questions and tags (Beal 1993a: 192). Rowe (forthcoming) notes how such forms are used by young working-class youths, locally known as *charvers* from a Romany word (see below), who, with their ‘tough’ street-wise image certainly wish to set themselves apart from mainstream and middle-class society. Their adoption of local conservative forms, obviously now lexicalised, parallels that of local pronunciations as discussed in 5.2 above.

Tag questions generally can be quite subtle, with both negative statement and negative tag, at least in the North-east (cf. Simmelbauer 2000); and also the Bolton area of the 1970s and ’80s (Shorrocks 1996). Consider ‘She can’t come, can she not?’, when needing information; and the multiple negation of ‘She can’t come, can’t she not’, when requiring confirmation. In the North-east also ‘He *mustn’t* be at home’ means ‘He *can’t* be at home’, a deduction (cf. Beal 1993a: 196).

### 5.3.2 *Northern discourse features*

In the dialect of Bolton in the Greater Manchester area, formerly Lancashire, Shorrocks’ research from 1972 to the late 1990s (see his 1997 article) analysed an aspect of tag questions which leads to further interesting discussion about those grammatical features or particles generally that are in some cases difficult to assign to a word class, but

<sup>29</sup> A cartoon in the *Independent* (4 September 2002) shows Tony Blair in cloth cap and braces with whippet in his constituency of Trimdon’s Labour Club in County Durham. ‘*Divvn’t* worry, pet – No decision’s been made to target Iraq.’ Rowe’s own view (forthcoming) is that /v/ in forms of *do* and also *to* (see 5.2 above) is a ‘fortisization of [u, w] of the round vowel’s offglide’; and the /t/ vowel intervocalically is the result of Northern Fronting in EME, as in *goose* (/gɹæs/). *Div(n’t)* is also found in Scots. His view also that *tiv* is the basis for *biv* (‘by’), *frov* (‘from’) and *wiv* (‘with’) by analogy, seems plausible. Prevost (1905: 5), who notes *div* and *ah divn’t* in Cumberland, believes the /v/ is by analogy with *ah hev’n’t*.

which are an important, and little researched, aspect of colloquial speech, and which also give significant clues as to dialect origins of speakers. For ease of reference I shall here call them simply *discourse markers*. In the Bolton area then there is a four-term system of affirmative and negative particles as opposed to the two-term system of Standard English *yes-no*. When the situational polarity is positive, speakers answer *aye* ('yes') if the polarity of the preceding utterance is positive, but *yigh* (i.e. 'yes oh but') if it is negative (Shorrocks 1997: 213). Hence a question 'does thou like that?' would be answered 'Aye'; 'I can't find my scissors' could provoke a response 'Yigh they're over there'. As Shorrocks adds in a footnote, the etymologies of both *aye* and *yigh* are obscure: the latter probably from Old Northumbrian, cognate with *yea*; *aye* appearing as late as the last quarter of the sixteenth century, and (according to the *OED*) not primarily associated with Northern English. Undoubtedly it is at the present day very much a marker of Northern English, as even in the early nineteenth century when Brockett (1825) claims, in his entry for *aye*, that it is 'perhaps more characteristic of a Northern dialect than any other word that could be named, as it is nearly universal and uniform'.<sup>30</sup> In addition, in Bolton there are two negative particles *now* ('no'), in answer to a *yes-no* question; and *nay* for contradictions ('certainly not') (Shorrocks 1997: 214–15). In the North-east, a sign of assent and feedback to the speaker is *a-ha* (not Standard English /æ'ha:/, stressed on the second syllable, an exclamation of discovery). Like the well-known and stereotypical markers of assent for Geordie, there appears to be no standard spelling (and often no obvious etymology), since these are markers of the spoken not the written medium, from which they would be routinely erased in any case: e.g. the emphatic *why-aye* or *way-eye (man)*; *eigh wye*, as noted by Heslop (1892), routinely uttered with a rising intonation. J.B. Priestley (1934: 290) found

<sup>30</sup> Map 176 in Orton and Wright (1974: 252) illustrating question VII.8.13 of the *SED* shows *aye* north of a diagonal line roughly from the Humber westwards to Herefordshire, but also including Suffolk, a swathe of the South Midlands and a small area in Hampshire. Their spelling for *yigh* is *yaye*, and interestingly includes a small area of Kent as well as Lancashire. Quotations from the *EDD* certainly suggest that by the eighteenth century commentators see *aye* as northern.

'objectionable' the constant 'Ay-ee, man', or 'Ay-ee, yer b—', of the men's talk in Newcastle, and the never-ending 'hinnying' of the women (see below).

Other characteristic Geordie exclamations include (*h*)*oway* or (*h*)*away* ('give over', 'come along now with you'), equivalent to the Lancashire and Durham *gerraway*, *ger on with you*. Very much a Yorkshire stereotype is the exclamation (*Ee*) *by gum*. How this euphemism for 'by God' came to be associated with Yorkshire is a mystery, and how *ee* came to be attached to it. When it was announced in 1999 that the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* had entered *ee!* for the first time, the headline in the *Daily Telegraph* ran: 'Ba gum, there's an ee in t'Oxford Dictionary' (9th June 1999).<sup>31</sup> A similar exclamation associated with *Coronation Street* (5.1) is *by 'eck (as like)*, with *'eck* substituting for *hell*. (See also chapter 1.)

In speech also, different Northern dialects have traditionally interesting adverbials in end position of an utterance. I do not know whether the Cumberland *likely* in utterance-final position still means 'probably' or 'I suppose', as noted by Prevost (1905); or that in Sheffield *like* is still favoured (Addy 1888), although certainly it is in other parts of the North (as noted by Ellis 1889: 495), meaning 'so to speak': as on Teesside. Widely in the North-east end-final *but* is still prevalent ('however'), and also *mind*: as in 'She's got a bugger of a temper, *but/mind*': often used in warnings or challenges. Beal (1993: 211) appears to be attributing this use of *but* to the influence of Scots or Hiberno-English.

Greetings and partings are also traditionally localised, and a flavour of their richness has been revealed in 3.3 in the bucolic dialogues from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. Many are still heard: *Noo then* and *ey up* favoured in Sheffield (and the latter further south in

<sup>31</sup> *Ee-ee-ee* is noted by Easter (1883) as an exclamation of surprise in the Huddersfield area. Dated quite late (1815), *by gum* is not given a Northern origin by the *OED* (and nor are there quotations with *ee*). The *EDD* indicates a range from Scotland as far south as Nottinghamshire and East Anglia. It became the catchphrase of the popular BBC broadcaster Wilfred Pickles, born in Yorkshire (see 4.3). It features in the refrain of a well-known music-hall song of the early twentieth century *My Girl's A Yorkshire Girl*: 'Eh! *By gum*, she's champion!' A correspondence in the *Daily Telegraph* (23 January 1997) claimed it for Lancashire.

the Midlands); ‘How yer diddlin?’ in Liverpool; (*H*)ow do? in Lancashire, *ta ta* or rather /tara:/ for ‘goodbye’ in the North-east (noted by Ellis 1889: 650). Geordies of the late 1960s apparently favoured ‘Hoo ye gannin?’ or ‘What fettle the day, lads?’ (Dobson 1970), retaining an archaic noun *fettle* (cf. the Standard English idiom *in fine fettle*, i.e. ‘condition’): also elicited in the *SED* (I: 900–1). ‘What fettle’ also appeared in the *SED* in Du, Y and Cu, along with ‘Hoo’s thee fettled?’ in the latter county. Schoolchildren in East Yorkshire apparently did not know *fettle* (verb) ‘fix’, although it is used by Ted Glen in the popular children’s books about *Postman Pat* (Cade 1995: 15). ‘What cheer’ is also found in Nb and Du, and also noted by Dobson (1970). The typical Geordie response to any greeting is ‘Nowt but canny, hoo’s yersel?’ Asked for the equivalents of Standard English ‘I’m very glad/pleased to see you’ *SED* informants from Northern counties produced a rich array of adverbs in place of *very*: notably *gradely* (La), *reet* (La), *gay* (Nb, Cu, We), and *bonny* (Nb); and *fain* for ‘glad’ in La and Y (I: 906–7).

As ‘What fettle the day, lads?’ also indicates, such routines are often accompanied in everyday speech by terms of address. To non-Northerners, many seem like terms of endearment even to strangers, and so contributing to the image of Northern friendliness. Widespread in the North is *love*, for example, which in West and South Yorkshire at least can be used between male peers, as well as male and female interactions (Beal, 2005). In the North-east *man* is still very frequent for both female and male address (often in exasperation or emotion); *bonny lad*, *son* (to non-offspring and cat or dog), and *lass(ie)* are still heard; but the pitmatic *marra* (‘mate’) is under threat. Hudson noted ten years ago (1994: 234) that despite the decline of the coal industry ‘in East Durham, even in Peterlee, unlike Sunderland, you were still called *marra* as a matter of course’. The common *pet* and *hinny* (‘honey’), noted by Grose (1787), from men to women or wives are woven into the stereotypes of Geordies, as are *chuck* and *wack(er)* of Liverpudlians.

Such ‘phatic’ language gives a fascinating glimpse into the richness of everyday conversational rituals and routines that both bind communities together, and in so doing distinguish one group from another. Oral narratives and gossip are but two examples of other spoken genres

which, because they have never been systematically recorded, remain untapped for their dialect phraseology potential. Phrases, like lexical items themselves, are handed down from one generation to another, until – ? Dialectologists and word-smiths alike fear that this process has declined, even halted altogether, as the traditional close-knit communities and families themselves become more dispersed or open to ‘infiltration’ by ‘foreigners’. The aspirant working-class scholarship boy Richard Hoggart (4.3) looked back years later (1957) at the phrases, sayings and proverbs that bound the community of his childhood, its politics and ethics; so too did the sociologist Bernice Martin (1981), who grew up in a Lancashire cotton town in the 1940s and 1950s : ‘Clogs should stick wi’ clogs’ marking a salient social boundary (p. 66). In the Wakefield area ‘It’s muck or nettles’ gives a grim choice of two evils (Payne 1996: 26). But not all are serious or moral. In Lancashire, if you were really surprised, you would ‘go to the bottom of t’stairs’. One wonders whether in *Coronation Street* as in the early days there are still heard similes like ‘a face as long as Wigan Pier’ or ‘a face like a wet week’; or ‘thick as two short planks’: I suspect so. Or whether in Yorkshire they still use similes like ‘to sweat like a brock [“badger”]’; or ‘as flaysome as sin’ (Pickles (ed.) 1955: 88). The *SED* records particularly vivid examples for the semantic field of ‘silliness’: ‘daft as a besom/boathorse/cuddy/gate that opens both ways/mop-rag/brush’; ‘gaumless as a cuckoo/dying duck/goat’; ‘soft as a barm-dumpling/turnip’, etc., with a strikingly vivid list for Yorkshire (I: 971–3). Minnie Caldwell in *Coronation Street* once uttered the immortal lines ‘She’s not got all her chairs at home’. Productive still in this field are the phrases along the lines ‘Two X short of a Y’ as in ‘Two sandwiches short of a picnic.’ The images, however, often evoke a material culture that has long since gone, and may contribute to the decline of the simile itself: e.g. ‘as flat as a backstone’ (Y.); ‘Badly used like a dolly-tub bottom’ (Prevost, 1905, for Cumberland); ‘aboot as sensitive as a tram-driver’s glove’ (W.Yorks: Spenser 1999: 21). Some keep alive, or ‘fossilised’, pronunciation features that have otherwise receded: e.g. ‘as blind [blind] as a bat’ in East Yorkshire (French et al. 1986: 29). Still other phrases and formulas, whilst retaining ancient pronunciations, tend to be used jocularly, or as if in quotation marks,

reflecting the user's self-consciousness. For example, many Northerners might say 'Put t'wood in' t'hoil' (lit. 'put the wood into the hole', i.e. 'close the door'), knowing that it was in common circulation in the North, yet unaware of its alleged origins in Sheffield knife-grinding (Addy 1888: 287).

### 5.3.3 *Northern vocabulary*

It is precisely because of the decline in many traditional crafts, trades and industries, and because of the shift in working practices from farming to industrial and now post-industrial, that many words have inevitably ceased to be part of the active (used), and even passive (known) lexicon of English speakers of all regions, not only the North. Increased social and physical mobility, and the influence of standardisation, has also played a role. And if dialects are not 'dead', then language change is inevitable: words must come and go, as in the Standard, as new objects, pastimes, etc. appear or disappear, and cultural practices change. Men in Northumberland no longer wear *galluses* ('braces') and girls no longer play with *boodies* (broken bits of crockery) or boys with *allies/liggies* ('marbles') (Simmelbauer 2000:161). There are important class issues here also. As Macafee reasons generally (1994: 114), after the Second World War

when the opportunity for material improvement arrived, there was little room for nostalgia. To have clung to old ways – and old words – would have been to show oneself unable to live up to a new and better standard of living – to keep coals in the bath as it were . . .

Stereotypes, of course, as discussed in chapter 1, reflect a 'time lag' in this respect: working-class Northerners may no longer keep coals in their bath, or have netties (outside toilets) in their backyards, or breed whippets or pigeons, or grow leeks or rhubarb, or wear cloth caps with their braces, but cartoons retain them as icons.

Clearly, however, words like 'erosion' (Widdowson 1993: 8) and 'attrition' (Trudgill 1999b: 125) are used so frequently in dialect studies of lexis, that the issue of the alleged dramatic loss of dialect vocabulary in

the twentieth century cannot be ignored; and the attitudes of the working class towards their own past (Macafee) is not the whole cause. Trudgill puts it starkly: 'Fewer people know fewer traditional dialect words' (1999b: 122). There are also ecological implications, which are also perhaps implied in the geological metaphor of 'erosion'. The landscape of Britain has drastically changed in the twentieth century. Many species of flora and fauna, lexicalised in local words, have disappeared or are under threat: hence the words are no longer used or needed: in the Northern landscape, Moorman's evocative *gowlands*, *paigles*, *blobs*, for instance (for king-cups, cowslips and globe-flowers), in his Yorkshire dialect poem *Our Beck* (1918: 32). Even the common *spuggy* (NE for 'sparrow') is dwindling in numbers.

Unlike the study of grammar, there have been many attempts to measure and analyse changes in knowledge and use of dialect vocabulary; and because of the flourishing and longstanding interest in Northern English in local regional societies and communities, many of these studies have indeed focussed on Northern usage (see e.g. Widdowson 1993, Cade 1995, Payne 1996, Rhodes 1997, 2000, Cunningham 1998, Simmelbauer 2000, Burbano 2001).<sup>32</sup> Here, the materials from the *SED* have proved an important yardstick for comparison in many cases, although there has been a tendency to focus on rural words, and to use the questionnaire format as the main method of eliciting data, rather than the analysis of 'real' speech. The result is often also a skewing towards passive knowledge rather than active use. But, for example, two-fifths of a list of words for the Hillsbrough area of Sheffield (recorded 1952–3) were no longer in use forty years later (Widdowson 1993). The Millennium Survey in Sheffield found only five words of a check-list of 100 'in use and/or known' by 75 per cent of informants aged fifty-six or over: *badly* ('ill'); *barm* ('yeast'); *bonny*; *bull week* (week before works' holidays) and *spice* ('sweets') (see further Widdowson 1999).

<sup>32</sup> The National Centre for English Cultural Tradition (NATCECT) based at the University of Sheffield also launched a Millennium survey of 100 Sheffield words: see Widdowson 1999 and below. Simmelbauer (2000: 230) reports on a survey by the Northumbrian Language Society to compare Heslop's list of Northumbrian dialect words (1892) with today's knowledge and use.

Generalisations are dangerous, but as one might expect, as with pronunciations, rural areas like the border area of Northumberland tend to be 'relict' areas for traditional words that have disappeared elsewhere, e.g. *oxter* ('armpit'), *herd* ('shepherd') (Simmelbauer 2000: 1). Older people over retirement age know more traditional dialect words (and use them to a lesser extent), than younger age groups. (As with pronunciation, however, these 'older' speakers were once younger, a fact to which I shall return.) Adults, however, as well as children in towns in Westmorland no longer see *robin-run-up-the-dike* ('goose-grass') or in Cumberland *partles* ('rabbit droppings'). In Northumberland they no longer see a *gowk* ('cuckoo'), *steg* ('gander') or *paddock* ('toad') (Simmelbauer 2000: 53–8). But even the dialect words for the common robin (*ruddick*) and mole (*mowdyrat*) are declining (pp. 53, 60). Words of Scandinavian origin seem particularly vulnerable: *lig* ('lie'), *flig* ('fly'), *lop* ('flea') *loan* ('lane') and *addle* ('earn') for example (see Cade 1995, Payne 1996, Widdowson 1999).

However, the term 'erosion' also implies, more positively, that there might still be a 'bedrock' underneath. If we look at the core or foundation of daily activities then many words might still remain. In Yorkshire grammar school pupils still *mash* ('brew') the tea, and get *spells* ('splinters') in their fingers (Payne 1996) (*spelks* on Teesside). They buy *spice* ('sweets') as those in the North and East of Yorkshire buy *goodies*, and in Sunderland *kets*. There are still many words circulating throughout the North for cold (*starved*, *perished*, *nithered*, *parky*), dirty (*clarty*, *mucky*) and tired (*fagged out*, *knackered*, *jiggered*); although the variety of colourful words for 'left-handed' appears to be diminishing (e.g. *dolly-pawed*, *dolly-handed* in different parts of Sheffield); as for 'icicle' (*ice-shockle*; *tanklet*). (On the words for 'left-handed' recorded in the *SED* for the Northern counties, see I: 649.)

Nonetheless, a 'common core' of traditional dialect words for common core everyday concepts and feelings is likely to remain as a 'General Northern' phenomenon. And it is for everyday concerns and concepts that new words are likeliest to emerge amongst the younger generations, or older words revived. So *ganzie* is a popular term for 'sweater' and *goosegogs* for 'gooseberries' amongst North-east

youngsters (Simmelbauer 2000: 230), the latter once more localised to the Merseyside area (Upton and Widdowson 1996). There is *slape* 'bald' in West Yorkshire; and *charver/chava* ('townie') and *gadgie* ('old man'; both from Romany) in Newcastle, the border villages and Berwick. Interestingly *gadgie* is now common in the Middlesbrough dialect, if 'Teesside Tommy's Soapbox' in the area's *Evening Gazette* (2003, *passim*) is to be trusted.<sup>33</sup>

An equally sanguine view might be that common core dialect words are the likeliest to be transmitted to new generations. They might be unused or even forgotten in early adulthood, but be remembered and brought into active use again for children and later grandchildren, who circulate them amongst their peers. Brook forty years ago (1965) suggested that 'the most common reason for using dialect is the accident of early associations' (cited Simmelbauer 2000: 80). As a lower middle-class child growing up in County Durham in the 1950s I myself would *bool* a hoop ('bowl') or *chuck* a stone, eat *finnie haddie* ('haddock'), *panhaggerty* (a meat and potato dish), *black bullets* (sweets) and *paste eggs* (painted hard-boiled Easter eggs); and ride in *shuggie-boats* ('swings') and wear *sandshoes* ('gym-shoes'). I would get *spelks* in my fingers, *blebs* ('blisters') on my hands and *cots* ('tangles') in my hair. I thought everyone in the country said *brambles* for blackberries, *breadbuns* for rolls and *backend* for autumn. 'Give us a *croggy*' defies an equivalent phrasing, but meant 'Give me a ride behind you on your bicycle.' Many of these words remain in active use in my own personal lexicon, although I have long since left my home town, confirming Brook's further view that, however 'modified' our dialect may eventually be, we will 'often keep a fondness for a particular word, because it reminds [us] of [our] childhood'. Others I never personally used, but they were heard all around, and became part of my passive vocabulary: *bairn*, *cuddy-wifter* ('left-handed'), *mebbies* ('maybe'), 'I'll *bray* you' ('hit').

<sup>33</sup> See also Burbano (2001), Beal (2005). *Gadjis* and *chaver* are also noted by Melvyn Bragg (2003a: 26) from his childhood in Wigton in Cumbria. Part of the methodology of the Survey of Regional English (SURE) launched at the universities of Leeds and Sheffield in the late 1990s is designed to elicit such new words in everyday life amongst the younger generations. See further Upton & Llamas (1999).

Any Teesside or Durham readers can obviously check whether the words I have cited are still used or known (see also Llamas 1999). The danger certainly remains that traditional dialect lexis, like dialect grammar, which is not actively used is not retained in personal memory; and that it joins the ranks of words and usages retained only in local cultural memory, as recorded in glossaries, newspapers and dialect literature. As Melvyn Bragg so vividly puts it:

I spoke a very strong Cumbrian dialect until I was 13 years old and I still can, but I never do because I'd feel very self-conscious. It's a little *embalmed thing, somewhere in the back of my mind, moldering away* [my italics] (*Independent Review* 15 January 2004).<sup>34</sup>

#### 5.4 Conclusion: whither Northern English?

It can be noted that all the headings of the subsections of this last chapter have been framed as interrogatives, hinting at questions still unresolved and areas of research still badly needed. The need for a question mark for this last subsection is quite obvious, since the future of anything is impossible to predict. Nevertheless, even an attempt at the contemplation of the potential scenarios for Northern English raises fascinating and significant issues. It has to be said that predictions of the future of English dialects generally have been made, as in previous periods, undoubtedly influenced by the approach of the second Millennium (e.g. Ellis 1992, Widdowson 1993); and notably by Trudgill (1999), to whom I shall return. To generalise, predictions tend to be gloomy and eschatological: prophesying either a general levelling towards greater uniformity or even (in the popular press) complete disappearance. The *Independent* (2 April 2004) reports that 'some have forecast that Geordie could disappear within thirty years'. Griffiths

<sup>34</sup> In Livi Michael's novel *Inheritance* (1999) a middle-class woman returns from London to the Pennine town of her birth to do some family history research. She has given up her dialect. 'Martha laid down her spoon. *Pike off, tha gawmless boggart*, was what she thought – "I wish you would not say such things, Charles", she said . . .' [p. 27, italics in the original].

(1999b: 126–7) probably represents the majority view that the range of distinctive Northern vocabulary has shrunk quite seriously in the last half century, and that grammar (especially written) is very close to the Standard. He follows those other social commentators in the last hundred years who have pointed to the influence of schooling, pressure to ‘get on’ and mobility and migration. Martin (2004: 37) writes generally of the ‘rapid dissolution of class structures’ since the 1970s, once sustained by the ‘traditions and institutions of industrial capitalization’, of great significance for the North, and for the potential levelling of social dialect variation. Also a current threat, I believe, is the homogenisation or ‘levelling’ of the English physical urban landscape in terms of housing, town-planning, leisure, culture and occupation, at the expense of the regionally distinctive. In one important sense, then, this book could be seen as an elegy, on the ‘decline’ of Northern English; and in this way an ample illustration of the elegiac summary sentence of Melvyn Bragg (2003: 7):

The passage of history [has] reduced the once fierce language of power and rule to the local speech, if not of the oppressed then certainly of those outside the pale of a tongue which calculated its civilisation partly by its distance from what had become a dialect.

Can anything be stated that is positive, or more hopeful? From the discussion so far of tendencies in present-day pronunciation, grammar and lexis, I would argue that for Northern English at least there is evidence to suggest that not all of its various regional sub-varieties are dying or disappearing. On the contrary, some are resilient and vigorous, with new forms and usages emerging. It may have to be expected that, as far as many speakers are concerned, Northern dialect is something they switch in and out of (and with differing degrees of self-consciousness, as yet under-researched); or that they are unlikely to use grammatical forms or particular dialect words consistently or all of the time (Beal 1993a: 191). Moreover, as the previous sections have also revealed, it is not actually the case that the differences between one variety of Northern English and another, as indeed between Northern English as a whole and Standard English, are ‘linguistically rather trivial’, as Chambers and Trudgill state (1991: 2). But it is

equally fair to say that it is in respect of *accent* rather than *dialect* that Northern Englishes reveal much of their continuing strong distinctiveness; and that therefore it is by accent that Northerners will mainly be identified for a long time to come. As Alan Bennett so vividly, if rather negatively puts it: 'People tend to imagine that a northern English is simply standard English with a sort of dirty dishcloth sort of accent' (cited Armitage 1999: 219).

An important aspect of accent not discussed so far in any focussed way (aside from what Knowles (1974, 1978) calls the 'articulatory setting' of Scouse in 4.1) is what can be conveniently placed under the heading of 'prosody': that is, intonation, voice quality, stress, loudness, rate of delivery, etc.: supra-segmentals as distinct from segmental phonology. It is a worrying irony that such features are such readily distinctive markers of regional origin, but that they have been quite seriously under-researched.<sup>35</sup> Northern English, as it happens, presents a rich array of such markers. They are also features which are so frequently commented on by the lay-public, and present such obvious signs or emblems of regional and social identification: the Geordie 'sing-song' versus the Scouse 'twang', 'whine' or 'catarrh', for instance. Fred Reed (d. 1985), the so-called 'pitman poet', in a poem called *When a Northumbrian Speaks*, wrote:

He's taalkin' in the tongue o' history.  
He disn't wave wi' wild gesticulations;  
Ye'll knaa jist whaat he means bi intonations. (1999: 91)

These same 'intonations' were dismissed as the 'most barbarous, monotonous and irritating twang' by J.B. Priestley (1934: 290). However, in 1928 Pease stated: 'The dialects of Westmorland and Cumberland and the language of North Durham and Northumberland, with its very peculiar intonation and uvular "borr" and its extraordinary sing-song inflections do not offend our ears as does the lingo of the

<sup>35</sup> See Petyt (1980: 161–2). As Cruttenden (1997: 131–6) states in two very short sections, and on intonation alone: 'There is no book or article which includes any detailed comparison of the intonation of . . . English dialects: all that is available at present is a number of sketchy articles, and paragraphs in books and articles which are only suggestive'. Farrar, Grabe and Nolan (1999) outline their proposed project on Leeds and Newcastle intonation.

West Riding towns, say, beyond the latitude of Harrogate' (p. x). He further comments on the 'terrible and foreign pronunciation' of the West Riding towns, apparently confirmed by Sheard's comments twenty years later: 'To a person from the East Riding the speech of West Riding people is harsh and grating and countryfolk, at any rate in the West Riding, usually speak more slowly than townspeople' (1945: 168).<sup>36</sup>

Interestingly, the predominance of a pattern of rising intonation for 'statements' in urban speech in the North, which has been acknowledged by linguists, might suggest a 'General Northern' contribution to a linguistic 'North–South divide' (see below), at least north of Birmingham; but this belies interesting local variations. Cruttenden (1999: 133) admits that in his first edition he was tempted to assume direct or indirect Irish influence (via Scottish English) on the rising tones in speech in Northern cities (including Belfast and Glasgow), but he has now changed his mind, at least in respect of Tyneside. Rising tones are now also a distinctive feature of urban West Yorkshire speech, e.g. Leeds. In Tyneside speech for simple statements as in personal narratives there is a steady rise on the final tonic syllable; if the nuclear syllable is non-final, there is a sustained level pitch which then steps up to the next syllable with level pitch; and any post-tonic syllables thereafter are produced on the same pitch level (Pellowe and Jones 1978: 101, Local 1986: 184). Cruttenden (1999: 133) distinguishes this 'rise–plateau' for Liverpool speech, and also a 'rise–plateau–slump' and a 'rise–fall'; there is also, he states, a narrower pitch range in Liverpool speech, as indeed Yorkshire, than in RP (p. 136). (See also Knowles 1978: 87). Again, so far as I know, a General Northern lexical stress pattern has not actually been advocated, but Wells (1982: 362–3)

<sup>36</sup> Other lay comments like Pease's in dialect accounts of older periods might provide fruitful information, but these also have been under-researched. Cruttenden (1999: 133) cites a comment in 1789 on the 'Tyneside Tone', but gives no source. Beal (p.c.) suggests it is from Hughes' account (1952: 365) of two boys from Gateshead sent to a prep school near High Wycombe. The headmaster noted in 1789 that after four terms the tendency to raise the voice on the last syllable had not been eradicated. Both Pease and Sheard interestingly appear to confirm a correlation between perception of differences (West and East Riding) and the ancient Midland–North linguistic 'border' (see further chapter 2).

certainly indicates a tendency in Northern English to give full vowel strength to syllables weak in RP: e.g. the first syllables of *ob-ject*, *ad-vance* (cf. also the second syllable of *tortoise*: /oɪz/ vs. /ʌs/ in RP). Although he does not say so, this can affect word stress, as in Northern /'ri:sɜ:tʃ/ rather than /rɪ'sɜ:tʃ/. Ena Sharples in *Coronation Street* (5.1) was famous for her pronunciation of *e-clair*. However, true Geordies are recognised by their own pronunciation of *Newcastle*: not 'New-castle with stress on the first syllable (and /ɑ:/ in *castle*), but *New-* (unstressed, /nɛə/) -'Castle (stressed, with /ɑ/).

As 5.2 and 5.3 in particular have made clear, issues of accent and dialect levelling and focussing are continually being raised: so spoken Northern English either 'pulled' in the direction of Standard English, or focussed around more localised regional standards or regiolects. It is a moot point whether, in relation to the first tendency, the hegemony of Standard English will continue for much longer, given its relatively weaker grip in any case on speech as distinct from the written medium; and given the cultural predominance of secondary forms of oracy developed in the twentieth century which foreground the voice and/or speech, as in television, recording and film. (See also the Conclusion in Crystal 2004.) And, despite the apparent longevity of this stranglehold since the sixteenth century, as the preceding chapters have attempted to chart, it is tempting to agree with J. Milroy (1993: 230) that the 'natural' state of the language is to be 'divergent' rather than 'convergent'. In any case, for people in the far North-east and North-west at least, it is arguable that it is Standard Scottish English that could exert more of an influence in the future. But the increasing importance in the future of regional standards, centred upon a local 'metropolis' is highly probable, as Pålsson (1972: 27) also suggested (see 5.2 above).

It is in this context that Trudgill's general predictions at the turn of the Millennium (1999b) are interesting to consider in relation to Northern English, and his projected map (p. 83) of 'possible future dialect areas' (see map 5.2 below). 'We can predict', he says, 'the survival of the Northeast area focussed on Newcastle, Merseyside focussed on Liverpool . . . and the Northwest Midlands [sic] focussed on Manchester as distinctive areas' (p. 83). These areas are labelled



Map 5.2. Trudgill's possible future dialect areas.

by these major cities, which suggests their locus for supra-regional 'norms'; but in addition, he has areas termed 'N. Lancs and Lake District' 'N. Yorks' and 'S. Yorks', the former two largely rural areas of course, but the latter presumably hiding the significant conurbations of Bradford, Leeds and Sheffield to the south and west and Humberside to the east. As the map therefore indicates, 'Geordie' (Trudgill's 'Newcastle'), once confined to Tyneside, seems set to absorb not only the traditional Durham dialect but also that of urban Teesside; and

northwards to Berwick in the border region: the 'Geordie North'. There is certainly evidence that, for example, the younger inhabitants of both Berwick and Middlesbrough are not only identifying Newcastle as their local centre, but are indeed adopting certain apparent 'Geordie' features (see Watt 2002, Llamas 1998, 2000, but see also below). There is certainly a popular perception that 'Geordie' and 'North-east' are synonymous for accents, perhaps reflecting popular mental mappings of the area and accent (as in my own students' case). For the present, it looks as if the Pennines remain the natural boundary for any westward expansion; and that Yorkshire speech is so distinctive in its own right as to remain reasonably strong against any further spread southwards. Trudgill's own view is that the speech of the rural Lake District, largely traditional, is under threat (1999b: 84) and he may be right; however, there is no reason to see the disappearance of a general 'North-west' speech, albeit heavily influenced by Scouse and his 'Manchester' speech.

This raises the question of whether Scouse and Manchester dialects themselves are likely to merge with each other in the future. At either ends of the great Ship Canal (4.1) the conurbations of Liverpool and Manchester are certainly closer today, yet their distinctive origins as port and mill-town can still be seen. There is, of course, a Lancashire base to the dialects of both cities, and they share the [g]-articulation in nasal groups of words like *long* and *finger*, which Trudgill (1999b: 58) sees as a 'defining characteristic of the Central Lancashire, Merseyside, Northwest Midlands and West Midlands dialect areas'. At present, however, the Scouse voice is so distinctive that no one in the North is likely to place a Mancunian as a Liverpudlian; any more, indeed, as Trudgill himself admits, than anyone 'from Middlesbrough would mistake a Tynesider for someone from Middlesbrough' (1999b: 81), despite a general 'Geordie' or 'North-east' accent label.

There is thus also the important issue to consider generally of the relations between dialect and group identity. Dialect not only signals a bonding with others who speak 'the same', but also serves to mark one group from another, along with other social symbols. The industrial rivalry which existed between Liverpool and Manchester in the nineteenth century still manifests itself today in other ways, in football

teams, for example, and teenage fashions.<sup>37</sup> Recent research reported in the *Metro* newspaper early in 2005 suggests indeed that Scousers' accents are getting 'stronger', precisely because they are determined to sound distinctive.

A similar rivalry exists between Newcastle on the Tyne and Sunderland on the Wear, even though both cities are now part of the Tyne and Wear administration, and especially in relation to football teams. And while the inhabitants of both cities may well be contributing to a spreading Geordie dialect in the future as Trudgill's map suggests, at the same time the inhabitants of the two cities are acutely aware of differences in speech, to the extent that the local label for Sunderlanders is *Mackem*, reflecting the Wearside pronunciation of verbs like *make*, and *take*, as in 'making' ships and 'taking' them down the river Wear (Beal 1999). (The label *Mackem*, I might add, is used pejoratively by 'true' Geordies, and proudly by Wearsiders.) Beal (2000: 367–8) gives a fascinating list of other phonological and grammatical features which local people are aware of to signal difference.<sup>38</sup>

It is a remarkable fact, then, that even in this age of spreading conurbations and dialect levelling there is a social force which remains that serves to mark difference even in language. Historically, of course, there were communities from dale to dale in the Pennines, or coastal village to village, whose speech habits were distinguished one from another, and the rich variety of Northern Englishes within Northern English has undoubtedly declined. William Marshall (1788: 304) notes the difference between the pronunciation of Wakefield and Leeds

<sup>37</sup> The 'Liv/Man' exhibition running in both cities in 2004 illustrated such rivalry and difference between the two cities. Audio footage showed how Manchester was still perceived as the 'upstart' for building the Ship Canal in the 1890s to bypass Liverpool's ocean-going trade. Research reported also revealed how people in each city were unable to impersonate the accent of the other (*Independent* 28 June 2004). See also Paxman (1998: 157) on the differences between the two cities.

<sup>38</sup> The *Daily Mail* in August 2001 noted how the *OED* planned to include *Mackem* because 'people in Sunderland, offended at being called Geordies . . . hope that [this] definitive guide will recognise their separate identity'. It will be interesting to see whether H-dropping, which has spread northwards to Sunderland speakers (5.2) will be adopted in the future by inhabitants of Newcastle across the Tyne. Thirty years ago research by Townsend and Taylor (1975: 385) 'confirmed the well-known antipathies between the three [industrial] estuaries of Tyne, Wear and Tees', rivers which have endured as symbolic boundaries since Anglo-Saxon times (see chapter 2).

twenty miles apart. Ellis's research (1869–89) identified fifteen varieties of Cumberland accent alone, ten in Westmorland, and seven in Lancashire north of Furness (Ellwood 1895: iv). Nonetheless, it is surprising what variation has remained even in, and at the end of, the twentieth century. Heslop (1892) identified four major dialect areas for Northumberland, reconfirmed by the Northumbrian Language Society today (Simmelbauer 2000: 18). Melvyn Bragg (2003: 26) records how in the 1950s 'Wigton's dialect would be different from that of Aspatria eight miles away and that of Carlisle eleven miles away and hugely different from that of Newcastle sixty miles away.' Thirty years ago Douglas (1973) identified four regional varieties of accent in Durham (cited Townsend and Taylor 1975: 386). Much more recently Simmelbauer (2000: 227) reports how one of her Northumberland informants told her: 'Even Barden Mill speech differs to [sic] ours [in Haltwhistle], and it is just a few miles away.' The poet Simon Armitage (1999: 3) notes how the first village 'over the top' of the Pennines into Lancashire from his own 'might only be five miles away, but in terms of dialect . . . it might as well be in Cornwall': *look* and *book* rhyme with *fluke*, for example.

The deeply rooted instinct to delimit both territory and language survives, and so helps to explain innovations and not only losses. As we saw in 5.1, for example, 'happY-tensing' is found in both Liverpool and Humberside speech, but not in South Yorkshire between: so one community, say in Sheffield, distinguishes itself from its neighbours by such subtle nuances of accent (see also Beal 2005). Ellis (1992: 9) stresses quite strongly the fact that '*something* still very local [is] keeping going, something to differentiate one place from another' (his italics).

Related to this instinct, I believe, is the equally deep-rooted cultural phenomenon, discussed in chapter 1, of mapping difference and boundaries in mental space. And this is despite the physical bulldozing of former working communities and pit villages; and the breakdown of close community and kinship ties and networks (Griffiths 1999b: 126); the building of motorways and telecommunication systems, and increased mobility, etc. which are routinely identified (along with other factors) as potentially significant in regional dialect levelling. As

Kerswill, Llamas and Upton state (1999: 264), echoing Cohen (1985), ‘communities and boundaries are often symbolic’.<sup>39</sup> Evidence is often frustratingly anecdotal, unfortunately, and not often recorded in published work. A middle-aged Newcastle woman told me in 2003 that she would never dream of crossing the Tyne Bridge to go to Gateshead (once in County Durham); and, in any case, ‘they spoke funny there’. This is thirty-five years on from an interview (1969) stored in the archive from the Tyneside Linguistic Survey, where a Gateshead woman, when asked if she ever crossed the Tyne to go shopping in Newcastle, replies that she would get lost if she did (reported in the *Daily Mail* 6 April 2001). Chesshyre (1987) records how he asked one woman in a pit village four miles from Wakefield whether young people ever went to work there. ‘Not from here, they wouldn’t’ was the reply (p. 155). For present-day Liverpooldians Wigan still seems to mark the gateway to the far North, if the phrase ‘nothing like it this side of Wigan’ can be used in evidence.

On a less personal level, the sense of local identity is actively being promoted throughout the North with the construction of cultural regions to promote tourism, albeit playing on a historical heritage rather than contemporary activity: e.g. ‘Beatrix Potter country’ in Cumbria and ‘Catherine Cookson country’ on Tyneside (see further Samuel 1994: 159). Interestingly, as the magazine produced by the Yorkshire Tourist Board would indicate as an example, the promotion of regional difference leads to an emphasis on local village events with strong if quirky community traditions: e.g. the Haxey Hood Game near Doncaster, the Blessing of the Boats at Whitby, the Saltburn Swashbuckle, Tolling the Devil’s Knell at Dewsbury, Sowerby Bridge’s Rushbearing and Slaithwaite’s Moonraking Festivals, Marsden’s Cuckoo Day and Coal Carrying at Gawthorpe. That factories, mills and coal-mines are turned into museums and galleries rather than being obliterated from the landscape may help to retain local cultural symbols in the collective

<sup>39</sup> It is interesting that L. Milroy, a pioneer in social network theory, has recently written that, even where dialect levelling occurs, ‘the maintenance of linguistic distinctiveness vis-à-vis an identifiable outgroup is a sociolinguistic priority’ (2002: 9). Generally it is a pity that network theory has not allied itself with cultural geography, and its concerns with mobility and perceptions of space.

local memory. It cannot be stressed enough that a sense of a local identity, and pride therein, must help to preserve dialect; just as holding on to one's dialect contributes to the sense of local identity (Widdowson 1999: 10).<sup>40</sup>

In this connection also I would like to add a further dimension to Cohen's notion of a 'symbolic' community, by extending Anderson's (1991) own idea of an 'imagined community' to that of a 'virtual community'. The rise of the Internet and World Wide Web has given new force not only to dialect societies but also to any local group keen to assert identity, to engage in political and social issues, and to provide a cohesive bond with homesick 'exiles'. So Teessiders, for example, can log on to [www.smoggy.org.uk](http://www.smoggy.org.uk), *smoggy* being an originally pejorative label given to them by neighbouring Geordies, because of the polluted air from Billingham chemical industries. (See also [www.theprt.co.uk](http://www.theprt.co.uk) for Middlesbrough; and [www.pitmatic.co.uk](http://www.pitmatic.co.uk) for the Durham and Tyneside Dialect Group.)

Cohen (1985) again might argue that a strong sense of identity is 'reactive', that is, reacting to the threat of losing oneself in another community, or another culture. One of the major themes of this book has been the continual 'threat' posed to Northern English and its culture from both Southern and Metropolitan dominance through the ages. Trudgill's (1999) map of possible future dialect areas (map 5.2 above) certainly predicts huge areas of the South-east and East Anglia being absorbed under the 'London' English-speaking area. Ecologically shocking though this may be, there are, sadly, no real surprises here, and his suggested limits certainly correspond to the social limits of commuting. Yet the map is also premised on the assumption that London and the Home Counties will continue to be the centre of gravity for political, economic and cultural activity as well as linguistic, and there is certainly continuing evidence that the so-called 'North-South divide' instituted into media and public consciousness in the 1980s (see

<sup>40</sup> One can note here also the continued flourishing of the local dialect societies such as the Yorkshire Dialect Society (founded 1897); the Lakeland Dialect Society (1939-); the Lancashire Dialect Society (1951-); the East Riding Dialect Society; the Oldham Dialect Society; and the Northumbrian Language Society (founded 1983) (see also chapter 4).

chapter 1) as a result of heavy job losses in the North, remains a potent phrase in the national headlines, with varying degrees of sensationalism and economic accuracy. (See further Baker and Billinge 2004.)

This book has also tried to illustrate, however, how the ‘North–South divide’, like the idea of the Two Nations, is deeply embedded in the nation’s cultural history in a variety of manifestations, including the linguistic; and that the opposition itself helps to determine the ‘meaning’ of the North and being Northern. My own prediction for the future would be that, whatever the degree of levelling towards regional standards, there will be the maintenance not only of variety within Northern English symbolic of the distinctive regions within the North as discussed above, but also of a General Northern dialect and accent identified by its *perceived* difference to the Other, beyond what is *perceived* to be the ‘boundary’ of the North, whether the Trent or Birmingham, or Watford Gap. The long vowels /o:/ and /e:/, the short vowel in *bath* and *dance*, and the /ʊ/ vowel in *butter* are likely to remain salient and symbolic markers of this difference, markers then of the perceived prototypical ‘linguistic North’ (Wells 1982: 349).<sup>41</sup> However, were these particular features to disappear in due course, new isoglosses would emerge to maintain the divide.

It is actually not impossible to conceive that, some time in the future, London will cease to exert its strong political and economic influence on the rest of the country, an influence that emerged only gradually in the Middle Ages, and certainly not before the Norman Conquest. To paraphrase Taylor (1993: 137), neither national nor regional images are ‘eternal’. Or to pursue the thesis of Musgrove (1990), in the cyclical process of London-based ‘centralisation’ and ‘decentralisation’ every 400 years, a period of relative authority for the North could be

<sup>41</sup> This is not to assume that these particular isoglosses are congruent; nor indeed that they are stable. Wells (1982: 354) elsewhere appears to suggest that the /ʊ~/^/ distinction is not so controllable for some Northerners as the /a~/a:/ (which has a more limited distribution), and certainly a modified or ‘fudged’ vowel is not uncommonly heard in the North; although it is unlikely to be perceived or heard by a Southerner as /^/. Trudgill (1999b: 82) believes that the /^/ vowel might be spreading generally northwards, but not /a:/. (On problems in the reliability of maps which show the ‘limits’ of /^/ and /a:/ in publications from the 1980s onwards see chapter 1 fn.11.) On Trudgill’s inconsistent use of the STRUT but not BATH vowel to delimit modern dialect areas, see further chapter 1.

imminent. This book has also tried to show how a city like York could once make claim to be the capital of a Northern kingdom that rivalled the Southern, and a kingdom that was long regarded as the ‘foreign country within’ (Taylor 1993), and relatively independent politically until the end of the medieval period. Potts (1998: 50) interestingly, argues for a future scenario that sees the capital of England as a whole at York; but why not Manchester, or Leeds?

What might be a more immediate political scenario is ‘devolution’, following the success of Wales and Scotland, whose own histories, of course, have seen a pattern of divergence and convergence in relation to England and London. Whether this might lead, ultimately, to the restitution of the Anglo-Saxon heptarchy discussed in chapter 1, is interesting to speculate (see Potts 1998: 50), but such a neat full circle is probably the stuff of fantasy. However, it is noteworthy that it is the North of England that has tended to take the English lead, a region with a long history of pride in its identity and difference. Colls (1998: 168) points to calls for ‘self-government’ or ‘Home Rule’ for the North as early as 1919. Following the Campaign for a Northern Assembly in the mid-1990s (focussed on the North-east) came, in 1999, a Campaign for Yorkshire; and in the autumn of 2004 a (Government-led) referendum to vote on the prospects of a North-east assembly. That it was a failure (only 22 per cent in favour) was most likely due to pragmatic scepticism about the mechanisms and expense of the proposed political structures.<sup>42</sup>

Will devolution come too late to save Northern English? Because there is, nonetheless, a strong sense of regional identity in the North, I remain optimistic that, of all the varieties of English remaining within England at the beginning of this new Millennium it is Northern English, especially its distinctive accents, that will survive the longest. Dodd (1990) might lament that, culturally speaking, the North is continually in thrall to the past; but with such a glorious past, of 1500 years, its

<sup>42</sup> The satirical magazine *Private Eye* (12 November 2004) put the defeat down to the ‘primitive beliefs’ of people living in the North-east. One theory circulating for the defeat was that there was resentment in Durham against the possibility of Newcastle empire-building (*The Independent* 6 November 2004).

history helps to confirm its distinctiveness in its language, and also to nourish it. Like Joyce (1991: 196), who writes, however, about dialect in general, I would emphasise the continuing capacity of Northern English for its 'change and regeneration'.

## Epigraph

*Sum think theor tongue should be refined.*

*Aw aye,*

*But divvent let expressive speakin' die.*

(Fred Reed, in Bragg (ed.) 1999: 33)

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