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THE PRESENTATION OF FOLKLIFE IN THE BIOGRAPHIES AND AUTOBIOGRAPHIES OF ENGLISH RURAL WORKERS

by

© Martin John Lovelace, B.A., M.A., M.A.

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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ABSTRACT

This is a study of the information on folklife found in writings about English country life. It is also an attempt to describe the conventions of personal experience narration, spoken and written, among rural English working men. Its sources are biographies and autobiographies of rural workers, country journals and character sketches, journalists' reports on social and economic conditions, antiquarian studies and village histories. The period surveyed is from approximately 1700 to the 1960's. Its contention is that in such sources lies a relatively unknown literature of folklore and folklife which can augment the record of folk tradition. In particular, it is suggested that such writings fill in some of the contextual background lacking in the text-oriented folklore studies of the nineteenth century.

It is argued that several writers who created biographies of working people made valuable contributions to the tradition of ethnographic writing. George Sturt is taken as an exemplar and his works are considered in detail. Other writers discussed include Stephen Reynolds, W.H. Hudson, Alfred Williams, and Flora Thompson. Like Sturt they achieved a breadth and depth of contextual description through close attention to everyday conversation and personal experience

narration among their rural neighbours. As amateur recorders of folk tradition their sense of what should be recorded was not limited by the narrower paradigms of the folklore science of their day; furthermore they gave detailed and humane descriptions of their informants as individuals.

From these biographical studies and the passages of oral autobiography often incorporated in them, together with autobiographies of rural workers, an attempt has been made to delineate an oral canon for personal experience narration. This takes the form of five story topics, all dealing intrinsically with a man's competence in his life's work, which emerge with striking regularity in oral and written recollections from this society. In addition to revealing such preoccupations the oral canon is a means for testing the authenticity and representativeness of works purporting to be insiders' views of rural working life.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

On completing a study of biography and autobiography I feel that I must look back in a personal way to its original sources in my home town of Bridport, Dorset, and the people who helped, often without my knowing it at the time. Two teachers of English had faith in me when others did not: Bruce Critchinson and W.L. Chapman-Andrews. I learned a lot too from the men I worked with, as "boy," in Mike Hussey's bakehouse. To them all and especially to Gilbert Staple and the anonymous wit who observed, sagely, "You G.C.E. buggers ain't got no common sense," thanks. Later, as a student of folklore, I met others who became my "informants"; I am grateful to them all, but especially to "Les Ollerton," incognito at his own request, and to the late Mrs. Elizabeth Crabb, whose passing is a great loss. My boyhood friends Mike Murless, Wally Axford, and Keith Newman lend my life a sense of stability and continuity; they have shared many ideas and much beer with me; may they live to buy me many more. My parents and brother have also given in many ways to my "history of the world."

In St. John's my studies have been made financially possible by fellowships awarded by the School of Graduate

Studies; Dean F.A. Aldrich has been notably patient with me. The staff of the inter-library loans department at the Queen Elizabeth II Library have provided a vital service with great efficiency. My fellow students and faculty colleagues in the Department of Folklore have created a stimulating and co-operative environment in which it has been a pleasure to work. Scholars within and beyond Memorial University have also helped me; I am especially grateful to Dr. Raoul Andersen and Dr. W.J. Kirwin of Memorial; Dr. Kenneth S. Goldstein of the University of Pennsylvania; Dr. W.J. Keith of the University of Toronto; and Dr. J.D.A. Widdowson of the University of Sheffield. The dissertation has been expertly and expeditiously typed by Ms. Linda Fraize, Mrs. Sharon Cochrane, and Mrs. Cathy Murphy.

My deepest gratitude is to my thesis supervisor, Dr. Herbert Halpert. He judiciously selected an ideal thesis committee in Dr. David Buchan and Dr. G.M. Story, whose readings of my first draft have improved it in many ways. This study is built upon Dr. Halpert's vision in assembling a great folklore library, one part of which consists of English rural life books of the kinds surveyed here. Many of the ideas in it belong to him; their expression, and whatever errors may have crept in thereby, is my own.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS		iv
I	INTRODUCTION	1
II	GENRES OF RURAL WRITING	12
	I. Rural Sketches and Journals	14
	II. Galleries of Characters	48
	III. Journalism and Case-Histories	72
	IV. Antiquarian Memoirs and Studies	105
	V. Village Histories	145
III	THE ORIGINALITY OF GEORGE STURT	184
	I. Sturt's Journals	188
	II. The Bettesworth Books	209
	III. Sturt and Autobiography	227
IV	OTHER INTERPRETERS OF RURAL LIFE 1909-1967	247
	I. Participant Observers: Holdenby and Reynolds	248
	II. Good Listeners: Gambier-Parry and Harman	269
	III. Biographers of Working Men: Hudson and Porteous	281
	IV. Autobiography and Occupation: Rose and Barrett	297
	V. An Ethnographer on His Home Ground: Alfred Williams	314

V CHILDHOOD AUTOBIOGRAPHIES 353

I. Alison Uttley: Magic in the Commonplace . . . 355

II. Flora Thompson: A Sense of Transition 364

III. Laurie Lee: Lyrical Memory 378

IV. Spike Mays: Anecdotes and Reputations 384

V. Richard Hillyer: Angry Young Man 393

VI. George Baldry: Written Reminiscence in Oral Style 400

VI ADULT AUTOBIOGRAPHIES 415

I. Fred Kitchen: Between Worlds 417

II. James Edwin Saunders: A Pilgrim's Progress 425

III. Autobiographies of Poachers: Honest Rogues 430

IV. Gaius Carley: A Craftsman's Pride 449

V. P.H. Emerson: "Dick Windmill," A Young Man's Life 459

VII ON READING BIOGRAPHY AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY 475

I. Literary approaches to Autobiography 476

II. Anthropology and Life History 502

III. Oral History and Social History 516

IV. Folklore and Folklife and the Use of Personal Documents 529

V. An Oral Canon 551

VI. Conclusion 572

NOTES 575

BIBLIOGRAPHY 623

I

INTRODUCTION

This is a study of some autobiographies written by English rural working men, and a few women, from approximately 1700 to the 1960's. Equally it considers various styles of biography which have been used to portray individual countrymen over the same period. In order to arrive at a body of examples of writing by and about rural people it has been necessary to read widely in rural literature of all kinds. This has had the effect of making this as much, or more, a critical analysis and evaluation of English writing about country life as it is a study of autobiography *per se*. As an essay in the study of folklife its first aim is to survey the types and quality of information about folk tradition to be found in such sources. Beyond this, it seeks to draw parallels and contrasts between oral and literary conventions of personal experience narration. As a consequence of taking a broad definition of the types of books which might usefully contribute to folklife studies, this work may also show something of the impressive corpus of research into folk tradition that has been carried out in England by amateur scholars who were not, for the most part,

trained in the discipline; hence it is offered as a complement to Richard M. Dorson's history of the more "official" group of British folklorists, the founders of The Folk-Lore Society in 1878.[1]

The writers on rural life that I have discussed show varying degrees of awareness of the folkloristic theories of their contemporaries in Dorson's "Great Team" of British folklore scholars: Andrew Lang, George Laurence Gomme, Alfred Nutt, Edwin Sidney Hartland, Edward Clodd, and William Alexander Clouston. Yet, without wishing to slight the achievements of these men, justly termed "giants" by Dorson, in establishing many of the fundamental concepts of folklore as a discipline, it is argued here that the course taken by the subject in the twentieth century has swung toward the interests and methods of such acute observers and gifted writers about local people and environments as George Sturt, Stephen Reynolds, and Alfred Williams.[2] The best of these authors wrote with a seemingly intuitive sense of the value of recording the full social context of folk tradition, and the subsequent adoption of the sense of context[3] as the cornerstone of twentieth century folkloristics makes it appropriate, and necessary, that these often little known writers be recognized and, in some respects, emulated. In short, in my study of writers <u>about</u> country people, I have

attempted to show that there has been a tradition of ethnographic writing in English literature from which much can be learned in terms of content and method by modern folklorists concerned with the full contexts of folk tradition. My consideration of folk autobiographers, country people writing about themselves and their communities, is similarly based on the hope of finding in their writings more contextual information about traditions that were not always adequately recorded by the more orthodox, text-oriented, folklorists of earlier periods.

In attempting to see this sprawling field of literature as an entity, with its own patterns and tendencies, I have drawn deeply and gratefully on the remarkable vision of Herbert Halpert whose wisdom it has been to see this as a whole. His teaching, writing, and the development of his personal library and Memorial University collections all demonstrate this vision and judgement as to the surprising quantity of writing that can properly be considered folkloristic and deserving to be known by the scholar.[4] A glance at my bibliography will show that relatively few of its titles even include the terms "folklore" or "folklife," and that it includes village histories and rural sketches in addition to memoirs and biographies. Librarians must have blenched at the acquisition, at Halpert's request, of

such books as the superficially unpromising Nummits and Crummits, by Sarah Hewett, or "Trinkum-Trinkums" of Fifty Years, by F.B. Kettlewell, to name two serious and useful books cursed by a whimsical taste in titles.[5] But this miscellaneous literature must be searched by anyone who aims to know the English folklife of the last and present centuries.

My first guide to this material then has been Dr. Halpert's teaching and the free access he has granted me to his superb personal collection. It may be noted here that the volumes in his library show signs of very careful reading, with abundant marginalia. I have not made fullest use of this "bonus" feature, however, as our specific interests do not always coincide; nevertheless, it has been comforting, for example, to find my own judgement of the interest of a particular book confirmed by his own annotations. I have not made separate acknowledgements of the particular help I have received from him through such cases; my indebtedness must rather be seen as running throughout this study. I also enjoyed the luxury of a year's reading in the extensive English folklore collection in the personal library of Professor Kenneth S. Goldstein during his period as Head of this Department. This also helped greatly in framing my sense of the scope and nature of this body of literature.

Additionally, of course, I have made use of the Memorial University library holdings which, as I have mentioned, owe much to Dr. Halpert's direction in this field. Acknowledgement of the kind help given me by many others appears in respective footnotes.

Published guides to the subject are few. The discovery of autobiographies has been aided by William Matthews' British Autobiographies: An Annotated Bibliography of British Autobiographies Published or Written Before 1951,[6] which is most useful since, to its annotations on content it adds a detailed index including occupations, counties, and even the heading "folklore." Matthews lists some 6,500 autobiographies; I have sampled only the merest fraction of them. Two bibliographies with some relation to my topic but from which I have not needed to draw extensively are Edna Oakeshott, Childhood in Autobiography,[7] and Lucien Leclaire, A General Analytical Bibliography of the Regional Novelists of the British Isles 1800-1950.[8]

Leclaire's subject leads us to the second major source of my material, the literature written about rural England. The best discussion of this is W.J. Keith's The Rural Tradition: A Study of the Non-Fiction Prose Writers of the English Countryside.[9] Keith naturally concentrates on major authors while I have felt free to select for the intrinsic

interest of content rather than literary ability; however, his excellent chapters on Mary Russell Mitford, Richard Jefferies, George Sturt, and others, have been most stimulating. John Fraser's unpublished dissertation "George Sturt ('George Bourne') and Rural Laboring Life,"[10] has also been of great interest and value. This is a study of the influence of George Sturt in breaking down stereotypical modes of thinking and writing about the rural labouring class. Fraser chose to confine his discussion to books written between 1870 and 1914 while, again, I have felt it desirable to take a longer view, but we share a number of authors in common and I hope that I have duly acknowledged the ideas I have absorbed from him. Raymond Williams in The Country and the City[11] offers the long view par excellence for this is a sweeping review of the meanings which "country" and "city" have had in literature from Virgil to Chinua Achebe. Like John Fraser he debunks middle-class and aristocratic complacencies about the sweet contentments of a country life and singles out for praise several of the more realistic, clear-sighted authors that I have considered. Of course none of these literary scholars deal with the folkloristic merits of these works.

Two anthologies of excerpts from working-class autobiographies have been produced by John Burnett:

Useful Toil: Autobiographies of Working People from the 1820's to the 1920's, and Destiny Obscure: Autobiographies of Childhood, Education and Family from the 1820's to the 1920's.[12] I have been unable to see the latter, very recent volume, but Useful Toil contains an interesting preface which offers sound generalizations about the content and style of working-class autobiographies. His selections, however, are mainly from reminiscences of people in urban, industrial, and domestic service occupations and so are not directly comparable with my focus on recollections of rural life and work.

Other influences on my concept of the shape of this field are discussed in my final chapter under four headings: literary criticism of autobiography; anthropology and the use of life history; oral and social history; and the value of personal documents to students of folklore and folklife. This section of the thesis, recognizably the "review of the literature" obligatory in an academic dissertation, has been left to the end out of a desire to first present the reader with the actual material. It is hoped that by following this course the questions asked about biography and autobiography from the perspectives of the four disciplines mentioned will seem more meaningful for being discussed in relation to specific examples that I have presented

from primary sources.

Hence the order of my discussion is as follows: after this introduction my second chapter, "Genres of Rural Writing," looks at five categories: country journals and sketches; galleries of rural characters; journalists' reports on social and economic conditions; the memoirs of antiquarians; and village histories compiled by old inhabitants. Each is a relatively distinct genre, though there is inevitable overlapping, and each produces a different type of information about rural folklife. This chapter is intended to establish a broad picture of the nature of writing about the countryside as it stood prior to the influence of George Sturt, whose originality in his manner of presenting the labourer, "Frederick Bettesworth," through long, carefully transcribed passages of his direct speech, and unpatronizing recording of his views on many subjects, is the topic of my third chapter.

After much comparative reading, and some personal fieldwork experience, I have judged Sturt to be the touchstone for authenticity and the exemplar for method; so, in the fourth chapter, the works of some of his contemporaries and successors, of the period 1912 to the 1960's, in the genres of sketches and biographies of working men, have been compared with Sturt's. My fifth chapter looks at what

appear to be characteristic features of autobiographies written about childhood; those I have selected are arranged in an order intended to show contrasts between autobiography written in accordance with elite literary models and that which follows patterns from oral narrative. The same continuum from literary to oral style is set up in the sixth chapter which considers some autobiographies which focus on adult life. Here again I comment on what seem to be the most "oral," and "traditional" elements in the stories told in these autobiographies as compared with the content of autobiographies composed in accordance with more standard "literary" canons of taste.

In conclusion, following my review of the approaches to life writing taken in various disciplines, I have outlined an "oral canon" for oral and written reminiscence. Here I have simply tried to state the range of topics and manners of expression which seem permissible in self-presentation within the society I have studied, that of rural working men in England in the past hundred years. In speaking as if it <u>were</u> a single society I am, of course, over-simplifying; yet there are regularities which survive differences in region, occupation, and period and these regularities are what I have attempted to make clear. The idea of a "canon" is a rough attempt to systematize my

otherwise intuitive perceptions as to who among these autobiographers, and subjects of biographers, strikes the right, authentic, note in what he recalls and in the way he expresses himself.

In defence of my judgements on the question of authenticity I should mention that this is not entirely the "desk-bound" thesis it may appear. In fact it could not have been written in its present form without some field experience. In some respects it builds upon the life history interviewing I undertook for my M.A. thesis, "The Life History of a Dorset Folk Healer."[13] My conversations with shepherds and carters, elderly men, have enabled me to recognize standard topics and styles of reminiscence when they appeared in published sources. Furthermore, I could not have appreciated Sturt's achievement had I not faced some of the same problems and attempted to write for myself in his careful, objective and observant manner. I do not, however, claim to be describing my own culture; I do not have an insider's perspective. Though I was born in the small town of Bridport in the rural county of Dorset some thirty-five years ago my father and grandfather were managers in the town netmaking industry; I have not walked at the plough tail nor starved the rooks; nor indeed have any of my contemporaries. If I am like Sturt in anything it is

in his character of being a fascinated hanger-on, a pale onlooker to the kind of life described in these country books. I have admired the vitality of men who lived the farming life; I also know that I am repelled by some things in it and could not have lived it myself. Being aware of such self-contradictions I have sought to avoid romanticism in what follows.

Notes on Procedure

The specific aspects of folk tradition that I have selected to comment on from the books in my sample reflect, of course, my own predilections, or hobby horses, though I have tried to indicate the general scope of each work. But this is not an annotated bibliography and short of devising some classification scheme that would objectively measure the content of each source the problem of personal selectivity seems unavoidable.

To prevent undue proliferation of footnotes I have placed page references in parentheses in my text, with short titles where necessary. Some works, to which successive reference is not made, are cited within the text, in parentheses. Where possible I have given dates of an author's birth and death as well as the date of the first edition of the work in question; footnotes indicate the date of the edition actually used for quotation.

II

GENRES OF RURAL WRITING

In his "Bettesworth" books[1] George Sturt brought a real country labourer directly before the reader with neither condescension nor sentimentality. Although not the first to write seriously about country life, Sturt was exceptional in the consistency with which he maintained his seriousness, through objective descriptions of Bettesworth, the labourer, and long passages of his talk, accurately and respectfully rendered. Sturt's rejection of the implicit contract between author and reader to supply the expected rural idyll is shown in the following excerpt from a letter he wrote to Arnold Bennett on a vicar's criticism of The Bettesworth Book:

> But when he talks about "the old fellow's quaint narratives" then I behold the country parson in whose sight a man like Bettesworth has next to no virtues and is either coarse or "quaint." If my book has enough of the real man in it to grate on a parson's nerves, then perhaps it should not be altered. . . . You twig his idea of reconstruction: it's to be my notes and appreciation of the "country life." He wants me to come and entertain him in his study with anecdotes of the quaint old fellows in the village, so that we may smile over 'em together, and then sigh, and be struck perhaps by a "thought" for tomorrow's sermon. . . . The pity is that the parson and his set have to be considered, so that a man can't try to publish things about labouring people which are by no means "quaint."[2]

The complacent vision of rural life held by Sturt's anticipated readers was coloured by a long literary tradition, aspects of which will be illustrated in this chapter.

By the late nineteenth century a variety of genres of rural writing had become established, though to think of them as discrete or static is misleading for there is considerable interplay between them. Neither should it be assumed that each contributed equally to the manner of quaintness and inconsequence to which Sturt objected; much rural literature of literary and ethnographic merit appeared before Sturt, and much bad writing has followed him. I have attempted to divide rural writing into five categories, to be discussed in the following order: an individual's country journals and rural sketches; galleries of rural "characters"; journalists' investigations of rural economic and social conditions; the memoirs of clergymen and others of antiquarian tastes; and village histories compiled by native sons and daughters. George Sturt's conversations with Bettesworth are taken as the touchstone by which these generally pre-twentieth century works are to be tested. Not all of the authors surveyed here intended to provide accurate descriptions of folklife but the sampling in this chapter will show the type and quality of ethnographic information likely to be furnished by each of the respective genres. Within these

genres I have selected for comment those works in which individuals are presented in some depth, particularly through the medium of their conversation, since this mode has made available the "texts" of autobiographical reminiscence from which I hope to construct, as the ultimate objective of this study, a sense of the normal content and style of oral autobiography for rural English working men of the earlier twentieth century.

I. Rural Sketches and Journals

Leslie Stephen, in his sardonic remarks on "Country Books," has observed that love of the country is, inexplicably, seen as a virtue; to claim to love it is to claim this virtue for oneself: "We assert a taste for sweet and innocent pleasures, and an indifference to the feverish excitements of artificial society."[3] It is, however, often a rather patronizing tone which emerges in the conventional rural sketches and journals kept in the country." Implicit is often the assumption that it is the refined sensibility of the sensitive observer that is the real subject of interest -- not the rude subject matter of rustic doings that he haphazardly notices. Writing in this vein becomes an act of self-conscious literary virtuosity in which the game is to see what can be made out of such dull provincial surroundings.

One of the worst examples of this condescending attitude is to be found in two books by John Halsham, Idlehurst: A Journal Kept in the Country (1908), and Old Standards: South Country Sketches (1913).[4] They are of the same region and period that Sturt was writing in but reveal a very different sensibility. They illustrate exactly what Sturt was trying to avoid in his writing about country people, namely, that implicit compact between author and reader to feel complacently superior, to be charmed and amused by their quaint rustic humours. "Halsham," a pseudonym, is by his own admission a "twice-dipped Tory", with no sympathy for radical ideas such as the education of working people. Their role is to serve their country in their appointed station. He admires the older generation of labourers for their fortitude and endurance but, unlike Sturt, seems untroubled by any thought that this was achieved through the stunting of body and mind.

As a corollary to the agreement with the gentle reader Halsham invokes abstruse similes from English and Classical literature in purple passages leading into the main business of each journal entry; the Rector's faithful old retainer, for example, is "the Damoetas to the hawk-nosed AEgon" (Idlehurst, p. 47). Whether deliberately or not such allusions are exclusive as though the only worthwhile readership

were those who could enjoy such references and knew how "damp garden quarters under the early Spring sun closely imitate the mouldy reek of Oxford meadows. . .and recall. . .the time when one rowed in the Torpids"[5] (Idlehurst, p. 48)! In short his education has bred only an arrogant vulgarity and lack of imagination; in his talks with farmers, ploughmen, gardeners, he never experiences Sturt's intellectual excitement at uncovering the worldview of Bettesworth. Rather it is taken as a given that the labouring poor are natural inferiors, from their homely looks -- "the faces are hopelessly heavy and animal in expression" -- to their "lazy intellect" for subscribing to old weather beliefs, and their lack of an aesthetic sense: "The gossips never check a moment to listen to the nightingales; the black pipe is to the old men better incense than all the smell of the larches and the moist thorn" (Old Standards, p. 27). He expects little from his rustic neighbours and, comparing them physically with the Rector and an Oxford undergraduate, finds that they "seem to belong to another race" (Idlehurst, p. 167).

What remains of any worth in Halsham's journal and sketches are some briefly described situations, such as the ride in the carrier's van and the noting of the kinds of story told in it -- local legends and the histories of the crops planted in various fields passed by -- (Old Standards,

pp. 34-35); the children's May day quête, though told of with grumbling at its supposedly mercenary degeneration (Idlehurst, pp. 94-95); and the scene in the village during Saturday evening shopping visits:

> . . .cottage girls. . .strolling arm-in-arm deep in circumstantial secrets, or formed in a line at the edge of the pavement to badiner with the contemporary youth, who balance on their heels in the roadway, spit, and exercise repartee, with minute-gun explosions of horse-laughter. (Idlehurst, p. 122)

It is a grotesque description, brief and condescending, yet it has a touch of life.

Of most value are his records of talks with individual countrymen and, while he lacks Sturt's interest and ability to transcribe speech, the characteristic topics of personal reminiscence show through. Some old men at the almshouse tell of feats of strength, and wagers on it, performed by their generation:

> "Seemed we took a pride in it when I was young," he says, "shifting timber by ourselves when we ought to have had three on it; or getting a waggon loaded up in twenty minutes, and working in harvest from six in the morning to ten at night, and walking home two mile after that, and getting in as the cocks were crowing. But it killed us, all the same; that's what I call exertion." (Old Standards, p. 94)

A ploughman narrates something of his life story ("The Ploughman's Horizon," Old Standards, pp. 215-233), and an old gardener, of whom Halsham seems to be a patron, much as Sturt is to Bettesworth, speaks of the lax standards of modern farming and his own feats of endurance in very authentic style:

> And once I was mowin' at Nonsuch Park in Surrey, as you may have heard on; well, there was four chaps there called themselves the Flyaway Mowers; they said nobody could cut so much in a week as they could. They'd got a barrel of beer of their own under a tree, and that. I was mowin' after them, and I wasn't not very far behind 'em, all day. (Idlehurst, pp. 35-36)

Halsham's records of the topics of reminiscence, however brief, help delineate the oral canon for autobiography. There are other scattered references to folksong -- "melancholy rubbish" -- folk medicine, and belief, but no extended discussions (Idlehurst, pp. 163, 158-159, 160-162).

Just once in Idlehurst Halsham is brought up sharp; after some self-indulgent musing in his study on a wet morning he steps outside where he meets, sheltering from rain under a sack drawn about his shoulders, an eighty-four year old man sent out to mend hedges:

> I looked back from the gate into the next field, and saw him, the sack drawn a little closer, the head dropped lower, motionless under his thorn tree, a figure of patient misery; a form of dread surely to us his masters, if we could look beyond those walls of reasonableness and decency and well-meaning which we build about our ways. (Idlehurst, p. 145)

Here is the note of self-questioning about the rightness of the social order that is much more developed in Sturt, yet Halsham reflects comfortably that a word from himself to the vicar on the man's behalf will set things right, as "our large landowners are anything but hard men."

Behind Halsham stand two centuries of rural sketches varying in attitude between well-bred contempt and romantic idealization. The classic essays of Joseph Addison and Sir Richard Steele in the Spectator papers (1711-1714),[6] particularly those numbers describing Mr. Spectator's sojourn on the country estate of Sir Roger de Coverly, may serve as a convenient starting point for a discussion of the changes in focus and sensibility which occurred between the beginning of the eighteenth and the close of the nineteenth century in the genre of the rural sketch. On first reading the Spectator essays, the reader is struck with the absence of traits that were to become established in later rural sketches; there is a lack, for example, of that veneration for the countryman as "child of nature," or "nature's gentleman," imbued with

strange and almost mystical knowledge, and a variety of useful skills. The "common people" of the Spectator papers are simply that; little is expected of them beyond the ability to work (and the urbane Mr. Spectator takes no interest in the intricacies of agriculture), or to amuse with their apish contests at grinning (No. 173), or their rough sports and comic courtships at country wakes (No. 161); without the institution of church attendance, he observes, "it is certain the Country-People would soon degenerate into a kind of Savages and Barbarians" (No. 112). (A curious echo of this phrase occurs over two hundred years later in P.H. Ditchfield's fear that without public respect for the farmer "the nation should degenerate into savagery and become Bolshevist."[7]) Sir Roger himself is presented as a typical country squire, a Tory, benevolent toward his servants and parishioners though naive and reactionary in his opinions.

Although Mr. Spectator declares his enthusiasm for collecting "Odd and uncommon Characters" his attention does not descend much below the social level of Will Wimble, the younger son of a baronet, who in the absence of any suitable career has devoted himself to the lore and practice of field sports (No. 108). Two exceptions to the latter point would be his encounters with the gipsies (No. 130) and the local witch (No. 117). The sketch of Moll White, the witch, is

useful as a snapshot of contemporary beliefs including Sir Roger's wavering between disbelief and credulity as the Justice of the Peace who had frequently to try her. Addison's summary of the social and economic circumstances leading to witchcraft accusations is sensitive and cogent:

> I have been the more particular in this Account, because I hear there is scarce a Village in England that has not a Moll White in it. When an old Woman begins to doat, and grow chargeable to a Parish, she is generally turned into a Witch, and fills the whole Country with extravagant Fancies, imaginary Distempers, and terrifying Dreams. In the mean time, the poor Wretch that is the innocent Occasion of so many Evils begins to be frighted at her self, and sometimes confesses secret Commerces and Familiarities that her Imagination forms in a delirious old Age. This frequently cuts off Charity from the greatest Objects of Compassion, and inspires People with a Malevolence towards those poor decrepid Parts of our Species, in whom Human Nature is defaced by Infirmity and Dotage. (No. 117)

As low-life, exotic, figures, however, the gipsy and the witch are stock characters; we do not see, as yet, the range of interest in the ploughmen, carters, shepherds, who populate later rural sketches. The term "countryman" as used in the Spectator refers not to the labourer, who is almost socially invisible, but to the yeoman farmer, as seen in the bumbling marriage proposal, boasting of his household goods, addressed by a yeoman, "an honest Countryman," to a lady (No. 324).

The country had not yet become mysterious to the city-dweller of this period and country people are as much taken for granted as hares and rabbits. There is some faint level of antiquarian interest in such seasonal festivities as May day: the term "Green Gown" is considered sufficiently well known, and lubricious, not to be explained; the May pole, and the milkmaid's headgear of a pyramid of silver tankards for her annual quête among her urban customers are mentioned (No. 365). Sir Roger's Christmas feast for the villagers in his great hall is described but its details -- "a string of Hogs-puddings with a pack of Cards to every poor family," the people's "playing their innocent Tricks, and smutting one another" -- are frustratingly brief (No. 269). In short, the country is only interesting to the Spectator authors in so far as it can be used satirically as a foil to the artificialities of the town, as has always been the essence of pastoral.

Even the common sentiment of the time that a periodic "retirement" to the solitude of the country was necessary for contemplation and spiritual refreshment --

> In our Retirements every thing disposes us to be serious. In Courts and Cities we are entertained with the Works of Men, in the Country with those of God. One is the Province of Art, the other of Nature. (No. 465)

-- is ironically subverted at the end of the de Coverly papers when Mr. Spectator finds himself so overwhelmed by hospitality, neighbourly curiosity and speculation caused by his solitary habits (the country people suspect him of being a "Cunning Man" brought to defeat the local witch) that he is obliged to seek the solitude of city life:

> I shall therefore retire into the Town, if I may make use of that Phrase, and get into the Crowd again as fast as I can, in order to be alone. (No. 131)

The Spectator papers are recognized as a superb source of information on contemporary attitudes and manners, particularly among the metropolitan upper class. This as much as rural and lower class life is the province of the folklorist; a paper (No. 7) on superstition shows how the same beliefs ran throughout society, as they do still. Addison comments on his particular delight when travelling to hear "the Songs and Fables that are come from Father to Son, and are most in vogue among the Common People of the Countries through which I passed" (No. 70). Steele also shows a fine sensitivity to style and performance in the Spectator, No. 138, with its nice example of the circumstantiality many tellers feel necessary as proof of their tale:

> He remember'd a very pretty Repartee made by a very Witty Man in King Charles's time upon the like Occasion. I remember (said he, upon entring into the Tale) much about the time of Oates's Plot, that a Cousin-German of mine and I were at the Bear in Holborn: No, I am out, it was at the Cross Keys, but Jack Thompson was there, for he was very great with the Gentleman who made the Answer. But I am sure it was spoken some where thereabouts, for we drank a Bottle in that Neighbourhood every Evening: But no matter for all that, the thing is the same; but ---
>
> He was going on to settle the Geography of the Jest when I left the Room, wondering at this odd turn of Head which can play away its words, with uttering nothing to the purpose, still observing its own Impertinencies, and yet proceeding in them.

Despite the literary sophistication of its leading figures the interest in wit and good speaking reflects the considerable degree to which eighteenth century England was still an oral society. Addison admired popular ballads and called the growing disdain for them among the learned mere "Affectation or Ignorance":

> . . . it is impossible that any thing should be universally tasted and approved by a Multitude, tho' they are only the Rabble of a Nation, which hath not in it some peculiar Aptness to please and gratify the Mind of Man. Human Nature is the same in all reasonable Creatures; and whatever falls in with it, will meet with Admirers amongst Readers of all Qualities and Conditions.
> (No. 70)

Addison gives a similar defence of the popular ballad in No. 85 where he praises the old ballad of the "Two Children in the Wood" for its moving sentiments despite the poorness of its expression.

As rural sketches the Spectator papers have not yet adopted the Romantic view of the countryman as the possessor of arcane but worthy knowledge and abilities lost to the modern, urban world. To the Augustan satirist humanity is the same everywhere -- a milkmaid coquets like a "Woman of Quality" (No. 308) and a coachman, through long service, has acquired "the Looks of a Privy-Counsellor" (No. 106) -- and, while these examples are obviously satirical, Addison's remarks on the ballads are forthright expressions of his opinion. The early eighteenth century view of country life was more realistic than some later visions of it; it is not until after the primitivism and mysticism of the Romantic period had subsided that such an objective attitude could be regained.

Approximately a century after The Spectator ceased its series of sketches, the country life theme of its "de Coverly papers," and some of the character types they had established, reappeared in The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent. (1820), by Washington Irving, the American essayist, who arrived in England in 1815.[8] Immediately

apparent in a comparison of the two works is the effect on the latter of the rise of the Romantic movement in the intervening period and its stimulation of the idea of folklore as a survival from a simpler and more naturally poetic age. Irving came to Britain and Europe eager to be impressed by "the charms of storied and poetical association. . . . the masterpieces of art, the refinements of finely cultivated society, the quaint peculiarities of ancient and local custom" (Sketch Book, p. 9). In Irving's writings we see, perhaps for the first time in English (if we except such earlier antiquaries as John Aubrey), folklore being regarded as an important indicator of national character and something which the curious traveller should try to absorb with as much interest as he would give to the "mouldering stones" of past architecture, the beauties of landscape, or the elegant conversation of polite society.

With regard to Irving's "American" perspective, however, it is perhaps not generally known that Irving's parents emigrated to America from the Orkneys; this, as Dr. David Buchan has suggested to me, may have been a stimulus to his interest in folklore and desire to meet Sir Walter Scott; indeed it has been claimed, by Orcadians, that Irving's celebrated tale of "Rip Van Winkle" is based on an Orcadian legend.

Regrettably, Irving, as the essayist "Geoffrey Crayon," maintains the same degree of social distance from the peasantry as did Mr. Spectator. Irving is known to have admired the Spectator papers in his youth and there is considerable similarity between the personnel of the de Coverly sketches and the denizens of "Bracebridge Hall," an old English country estate described first in The Sketch-Book and later in Bracebridge Hall (1822).[9] Squire Bracebridge is the same type of benign old Tory landowner as Sir Roger but with an even more pronounced affection for old customs and holidays which he obliges his tenants to celebrate according to the traditional styles he establishes as a result of his reading or through the antiquarian researches he has enforced upon his parson. "Master Simon," the old bachelor relation of the Squire, and who devotes himself to field sports and harmless amusement, is another version of Will Wimble, and other familiar figures include the character of a sturdy English yeoman farmer, "Ready-Money Jack," fortune-telling gipsies, and a love-struck girl who joins in a village wrestling match to save her lover who is getting the worst of it (Bracebridge Hall, pp. 200-201). This episode seems developed from Spectator's description of a writhing, grimacing, country girl, suffering in sympathy with her sweetheart in the wrestling ring at a country wake

(Spectator, No. 161); but where the Spectator was content to hint, Irving must have broad clownish farce with a general melee ensuing. It is as though Irving's vision is socially limited; like the Spectator authors he offers no detailed portrait of any figure below the rank of yeoman, with the exception, as in The Spectator, of the gipsies who are exotic figures and hardly within the social system at all. The labouring people are not encountered as individuals but are merely seen in a blur of smock frocks and smiling contentment at cottage doors as though glimpsed from a carriage bowling up to the gates of the estate. It is the antiquarian parson or the benevolent old squire who recount the villagers' superstitious beliefs; we do not hear the people themselves.

This is particularly unfortunate because there is no doubt of the sincerity of Irving's interest in folklore; the parson advised him that the people are "rather shy" of avowing their traditional beliefs to strangers, "and particularly to 'the gentry,' who are apt to laugh at them" (Bracebridge Hall, p. 228), and while Irving was enraptured by happening on such examples of folk culture as a May pole --

> I shall never forget the delight I felt on first seeing a May-pole. . . . My fancy adorned it with wreaths of flowers, and peopled the green bank with all the dancing revelry of May-day. The mere sight of this May-pole gave a glow to my feelings, and spread a charm over the country for the rest of the day. . . . my imagination turned all into a perfect Arcadia. (Bracebridge Hall, pp. 175-176)

-- barriers of class or convention prevented him from personally interviewing members of the peasantry.

In fact the great majority of the popular antiquities discussed by Irving are things he only wished to have seen, having researched them in his extensive reading in seventeenth century texts -- Markham's Country Contentments, Peacham's Compleat Gentleman, Evelyn's Sylva -- and especially in English drama and poetry, which, in his American earnestness, he probably knew better than most of his English contemporaries. In some of his sketches he is merely the literary antiquarian, stitching together some pretty thoughts on funeral customs, for example, on the basis of his reading ("Rural Funerals," Sketch Book, pp. 109-118). Such essays have some value for their more arcane literary references but they rarely contribute any original folkloristic observation.

Neither is it clear that the narratives Geoffrey Crayon encounters even at second hand from the parson at Bracebridge Hall have not come directly from Irving's own library research. The essay "Popular Superstitions" (Bracebridge Hall, pp. 227-233) mentions "Dobbies" or household goblins; a check of the county citations for the term in Joseph Wright's English Dialect Dictionary showed reports from a cluster of Northern counties and among the

citations one from Sir Walter Scott's Rob Roy (1817) -- Irving visited Scott in this year -- and another from Francis Grose, A Provincial Glossary (1790), which seems to contain the core of the supposedly local legend which Crayon retells as one he had heard while staying at Bracebridge Hall;[10] it is of a Dobbie who jumped up behind a traveller on horseback and almost squeezed him to death (Bracebridge Hall, p. 229).

In addition to the de Coverly sketches of The Spectator the other accepted source for Irving's portrait of Bracebridge Hall and its Squire is his visit to Sir Walter Scott at Abbotsford in 1817, which is described in his essay "Abbotsford" in The Crayon Miscellany.[11] Squire Bracebridge attempts to implant legends in local tradition, revives defunct customs such as the sword-dance and the May-pole, and at Christmas has a pig's head served to represent the boar's head of medieval carol tradition. Irving's attitude to these revived presentations is an interesting compound of humour and regret that they are only staged and not real. Whatever traits he has taken from Sir Walter Scott, much of his own romantic enthusiasm for antiquities is satirised in the hobbies ridden by the squire and the parson. Irving admits that the local people did not entirely enjoy being pressed to take part in these antiquarian

charades; Crayon, catches the eye of "two or three of the younger peasants" who were grimacing behind the Squire's back while accepting his largesse of beer following a performance of the sword-dance ("Christmas Day," Sketch Book, p. 179). The Squire confessed mournfully that a neighbour who had revived May-day on his estate had "merely resuscitated it" and kept it up "in a forced state of existence," finding "great difficulty in getting the country bumpkins to play their parts tolerably" ("May-Day Customs," Bracebridge Hall, p. 175).

Irving's intention seems less to play the satirist than to explore, through the squire's fantasies, his own delight or disillusion at having his preconceptions about romantic Britain confirmed or denied by reality. His visit to England tested the ideas he had formed of it through his reading; Brown's Britannia's Pastorals had coloured his expectations of the kind of landscape in which fairies appeared, hence his pleasure at finding his anticipations confirmed:

> When I first found myself among English scenery, I was continually reminded of the sweet pastoral images which distinguish their fairy mythology; and when for the first time a circle in the grass was pointed out to me as one of the rings where they were formerly supposed to have held their moonlight revels, it seemed for a moment as if fairy land was no longer a fable. (Bracebridge Hall, p. 232)

He is quite aware of the delusive nature of his own romantic antiquarianism, the rustics' brawl at the May Day celebrations is, he admits, probably closer to the temper of times past than is the Arcadian gloss writers have put on them, yet he "still must envy them an age/That favoured such a dream." Irving is a literary tourist, at times believing that he has only come too late, while at others knowing that the place he sought was always imaginary.

Yet he is more than a romantic litterateur, palely loitering. His intuitive remarks on the way English fairy beliefs reflect the "national character" in their concern with order and cleanliness in the household and dairy -- fairies reward tidiness but pinch sluttish dairymaids -- prefigured the modern "functionalist" theories of fairy belief:

> I think I can trace the good effects of this ancient fairy sway over household concerns; in the care that prevails to the present day among English housemaids, to put their kitchens in order before they go to bed. (Bracebridge Hall, p. 231)

Though he was not a fieldworker in folklore he had considered it more deeply than the usual dilettante.

A contemporary critic observed justly that Irving's failing in Bracebridge Hall was in not remaining "American"

enough (Bracebridge Hall, p. xxv). He seems to lose his original detachment and almost identifies with the Squire's antiquarianism and Tory principles. The earlier essay, "Rural Life in England" (The Sketch Book, pp. 50-55), however, offers a fresh, initial vision of England by a stranger. In it Irving makes one trenchant point that reflects upon the whole literary tradition we are considering; it is this:

> In rural occupation there is nothing mean or debasing. It leads a man forth among scenes of rural grandeur and beauty; it leaves him to the workings of his own mind operated upon by the purest and most elevating of external influences. Such a man may be simple and rough, but he cannot be vulgar. The man of refinement, therefore, finds nothing revolting in an intercourse with the lower orders in rural life, as he does when he casually mingles with the lower orders of cities. He lays aside his distance and reserve, and is glad to wave [sic] the distinctions of rank, and to enter into the honest heartfelt enjoyments of common life. (Sketch Book, p. 53)

This is a statement, in very pure form, of a central idea of English rural writing. The cliché that the countryman is "nature's gentleman" becomes achingly familiar in this literature and persists to the present.

The description of rural life was elevating. It could be done by maiden ladies, curates, old inhabitants,

without fear that in doing so they would encounter any of the darker sides of human existence. The countryman of this early phase of rural literature is amusing to his superiors, fanciful, naturally poetic. Irving establishes it as an axiom that "as people grow polite they cease to be poetical," (Sketch Book, p. 114) and if modern country people seemed "too knowing," "expensive and artificial in their pleasures" (Bracebridge Hall, p. 176), it could always be regretted by the writer as connoisseur that they were no longer the real, true, country folk of the days of the May pole and hobby horses.

The expectation that a book about country life will be full of charm must owe much to the success of Mary Russell Mitford's Our Village: Sketches of Rural Character and Scenery (1824-1832).[12] It is loosely a record of a young lady's walks in the country, reflections on nature, and encounters with villagers, especially children, worthy old people, and animals. Her descriptions, however, are deliberately restricted to the pleasant and decorative; her genre -- the pastoral sketch -- forbids too piercing a look below the picturesque surface, though allowing for irony, as in her characterization of the workhouse through the flowers in its garden: "Nothing but for sober, melancholy use" ("Violeting," pp. 61-62). In these idylls it is as

though everything -- weather, seasons, country people, landscape -- has been laid out for the narrator's and reader's delight and that it would be in some way perverse, or impious, to dwell on darker prospects. Yet Mitford writes with wit and intelligence, and it would be unfair to dismiss her as a complacent pastoralist. She gives intimations of contemporary problems; witness "The Incendiary," the major part of which is a fine account of the atmosphere in the country during the machine-breaking riots, and a tense courtroom scene. It is symptomatic of the demands of the genre, however, that she must complete her "country tale" with the romantic uniting of lovers, the young man having been exonerated of a false charge of rick-burning ("The Incendiary," pp. 318-331).

The rural people in her sketches are types rather than individuals and there is no attempt to transcribe their conversation. Compassionate insight may be shown, as in her explanation that John Bint the drover's need for gin is the result of years of work in "wet and weary ways, in frost and in fog" which "we water-drinkers, sitting in warm and comfortable rooms" cannot imagine ("Hannah Bint," p. 234-235). The portrait of "The Mole-catcher," while giving some description of his personality and trade -- he is a recluse and also a charmer and prophet -- concludes in

moral fashion with his surprisingly charitable adoption of an orphan. The style is that of Wordsworth's "Michael": the reader is not expected to be interested in rural life and work for their own sake, there must be some arresting story told to justify the attention. Consequently, however pleasing these sketches may be as literary pastoral, their ethnographic content remains undeveloped.

One of the most interesting successors to Mitford in the genre of the rural sketch is Thomas Miller (1807-1874). In his Our Old Town (1857) we are shown a specific town in Lincolnshire, though it also stands for the provincial past in general. The genre of the rural sketch becomes the more valuable folkloristically the more it limits itself to the description of a specific region. Mitford's Our Village, though written of Aberleigh in Berkshire, was so general, or ideal, in its descriptions as to be applicable to any village in Southern England. She had been concerned with the essentials, as she saw them, of the country life as contrasted with the town; she dealt in the conventional meanings of pastoral. By the end of the nineteenth century, in a change reflected particularly in Thomas Miller's works, sketches of particular areas become more common than those that are merely general evocations of the countryside.

This was due to a number of factors, among them

being that railways had opened up distant regions of the country and with an exodus of rural labour to the cities, and the re-export of urban products, whether material items or mores, there was a dismay felt among some writers that regions formerly distinct in language and culture were losing that distinctiveness. In short the city had changed from being the symbol of sophistication and fashion, to which all might aspire, to become the familiar bogey of standardised mass society against which writers of rural sketches reacted, using their regional folklife as a countervailing symbol.

Prior to Our Old Town, Thomas Miller had written a number of books with such conventional titles as Beauties of the Country; or, Descriptions of Rural Customs, Objects, Scenery, and the Seasons (1837), Rural Sketches (1839), and Pictures of Country Life, and Summer Rambles in Green and Shady Places (1847).[13] He was a native of Lincolnshire and his experience there, for example, his participation in seasonal customs such as blowing horns and bringing home oak boughs on the 24th of May, or watching the ploughboys' performance on Plough Monday, provides a realistic basis underlying the decorative surface of his works. It seems possible to trace in his writing an increasing determination to move beyond mere prettiness in his depiction of rural

life towards conveying genuine folklife information. He may well be also the coiner of the term "oral history,"[14] for he held the opinion that histories would be much improved for the addition of commonplace details of daily living; the term appears twice in Our Old Town, on pp. 156-157, and in the following, from p. vii:

> With but a few exceptions, what is here written I have beheld with mine own eyes, or heard with mine own ears, for the traditions that make up the oral history of OUR OLD TOWN, have been handed down from generation to generation through years that are now hoary; and they still live, though the names of those who first heard them, when they were but work-a-day gossip, have long since been forgotten.

The shift in sensibility expressed in turning from the mere charm of the countryside, with occasional tidbits of information, toward making a genuine folklife record can be seen in his sketch of a sheepwashing (Pictures, pp. 57-59). The conventions of the genre still oblige him to titivate his account with references to Shakespeare and classical myth but under this superficial gloss lie sharp observations:

> Sometimes the village girls will come down to the sheep-washing, and then there flies round many a rough random shot of country wit: the girls trace strange likenesses amongst the sheep to some envied rival; and, in allusion to the number

> of lambs, "more is meant than meets the ear" -- the frailties of some fair Phyllis are shadowed forth, while Damon, although midway in water, burns up to his very ears. You find that Dianas are not the only nymphs who haunt the neighbourhood of these pastoral Arcadias.

Yet in the succeeding paragraph he seems determined that the reader shall learn something of the technicalities of sheep and wool; he quotes the farmer's explanation of why sheep cannot be shorn as soon as they are washed:

> . . .If the sheep are dry in three or four days, they clip hard and "husky," and far from easy; but if they stay ten or twelve days after the washing, the oil returns into the fleece, and then the shears move quite free. . . . The old farmer is no bad representative of the "weather-bitten" shepherd in the "Winter's Tale."
>
> (Pictures, pp. 58-59)

In the same book his chapter "Osier Peelers" gives brief but worthwhile details of another seasonal trade and its concluding ritualistic celebration of cutting the last osier, a parallel to the "last sheaf" in harvest customs. Again it is apparent that Miller has been there in both work and festivity and has been interested to record the workers' practical knowledge:

> . . .to see the men cutting, in their huge jack-boots, knee-deep in water, in a wet spring, to prevent the too-forward kinds from becoming "double-skinned"; which means, the ring of wood forming for a second year's growth. . . .(Pictures, p. 98)

Osier harvesting involved men and women workers, the men cutting while the women peeled; as usual, this led to bantering and Miller gives a good passage of their chaffing remarks (pp. 90-91). His account of the cutting of the last osier implies the occasion had a ceremonial quality but offers no sense of the more profound magico-religious associations discussed by folklorists:

> But supposing the osier bed is cleared all but the last stock; a fine one, left, like the last rose of summer, to be cut down when all its companions are gone; yet more honoured than all the rest, for it is decorated with ribbons; and loud huzzas, from young and old, accompany each stroke of the cutter, until the last willow bows its tufted head." (Pictures, p. 98)

There followed the "Osier-feast supper," with games, tales, and songs; frustratingly, none of these are described, though he shows himself familiar with contemporary song collections in his coy note that at such a supper "you will hear many a choice ditty . . . which have escaped Percy and Ritson" (Pictures, p. 99). Possibly his earlier description

of the shearers' feast (pp. 61-64) made him reluctant to offer a further sketch of a similar occasion. His shearers' feast shows that lines of social demarcation were not forgotten, even in times of revelry. While the labouring men were feasted the farmer withdrew to drink port with the butcher, miller, maltster, doctor, and publican. The same distinctions were observed in the dancing which followed; Miller's observation of what he sees as a new spirit of pretension in farmers' families is gently acerbic:

> The young lawyer has brought his fiddle, for he is a gentleman-fiddler, and the young ladies in the parlour will come soon, and dance on the lawn, -- for even there the line of distinction is drawn. The wealthy farmer's daughter may condescend just to dance a turn or two in the barn; and when they have gone, the old one-eyed common fiddler will strike up "Bob and Joan"; just to show his contempt for such "proud, stuck-up thingumterrys," as he will call them; "with their waltzes and quadrilles, and such like outlandish fal-the-rals, as their grandmothers would have been ashamed to have been seen in."
> (Pictures, p. 64).

The perception of a growing social distance between farmers' wives and daughters, in particular, and the work folk, is one that Richard Jefferies and Thomas Hardy would comment on unfavourably; a view from the "inside" occurs in The Diary of a Farmer's Wife, 1796-1797,[15] where we see Ann Hughes, the young wife of a prospering farmer, rising in

the local social world but also trying to maintain older ideals of charity to the poor, though this is much against her husband's wishes.

Miller does not describe individuals in any depth; they tend to be one-dimensional type figures like the worthy labourer enticed into drinking and poaching in his moral tale against the Game Laws, "The Poacher" (Pictures, pp. 279-230). "The Old Woodman," is seen through a Wordsworthian cast of mind as naturally philosophic, his character and beliefs shaped by his solitary occupation. We are told of his superstitions but they are paraphrased; it is all Miller's Romantic idea of what this man must think and feel rather than the direct expressions of the man himself.

He is more successful when setting down things he knows from intimate experience. In Our Old Town which he describes as "nakedly near to nature. . . .almost entirely fanciless," he can partially eschew the elevated style being more confident of his readers' interest in old fashioned provincial life. Domestic interiors are described in fine detail, for example, and even verbal commonplaces:

> They called going to bed "climbing the wooden-ladder". . .[noting there were only wooden ladders to the upper floor in some houses]. . . and when about to retire for the night, would sometimes say, after a few sleepy yawns,
>
> If I was in bed, and fast asleep
> I would not get up for a flock of sheep.
>
> (p. 43)

There are descriptions of funerals, weddings, and other customs and related beliefs.

His report of an incidence of "riding the stang," while "written-up" in a lightly comic style, is closely observed:

> A little further on lived a fellow who was in the habit of beating his wife, and I was nearly deafened one evening by a crowd blowing on bullocks'-horns and beating old tin cans; and on going out to inquire what was the matter, I was told that he had again thrashed her, and that they were "Riding the Stang." I saw a rough-looking man, seated on a chair, high above the heads of the mob; he was borne on the shoulders of half-a-dozen men, like a Guy, and was the merriest of the lot. He repeated the rhymes which had been used on such occasions time out of mind. At length they halted before the door of the house where the man had beaten his wife, and then the deafening outcry recommenced, accompanied by the words of "ran tan, tan a ran tan," and the mounted speaker, beating an old frying-pan at the end of every line, of which the following was the burthen --:
>
> "Ran tan -- tan a ran tan,
> By the sign of this old frying pan,
> Harry Sage has been beating his good woman,
> He beat her, he beat her -- indeed, and indeed,
> For spending a penny, when she was in need,
> He beat her black, and he beat her blue,
> When the Old One gets him, he'll give him his due,
> Ran tan -- tan a ran tan,
> And we'll send him there in this old frying pan,
> Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!
>
> The ran-tan chorus came in at the end of every line. And Mrs. Sage showed herself at the window with a couple of blackened eyes, as Bunyan says, "The same to testify." Sage, however, did not approve of the proclamation, but made an unexpected rush out of his door, and overthrew the man who rode the stang

> (or poll), chair and all. He had better have kept in, for he had no more chance than a fox hemmed in by a pack of hounds. They forced him into the chair, held him there, and bore him into the market-place in triumph, a living witness of his own shame. (pp. 198-199)

In George Sturt's A Farmer's Life two men gossip about a local instance of rough-musicking, commenting that it's not "much of fun", unless, like Sage in Miller's example, the man comes out to face his tormentors.[16]

Miller had a good memory for the style of conversation; a nice account of the debate style of legend performance occurs in "The Haunted House," (Rural Sketches, pp. 261-283), where he records one of the traditional things for sceptics to say:

> "Well, I've never seen aught worse than myself," said the first speaker, "and I've been under Tom Otter's gibbet-post at Drinsey nook, when Saxilby church-clock's been striking twelve. . . ."[17]

Similarly he conveys the manner, if not the words, of talk about hay:

> . . . still prouder he who forms the hay-stack in the farm-yard! He will boast of its roundness, firmness, and regularity for many a night over his ale, and appeal to the old men, who, instead of answering him will enter into a long narrative of the large stacks which they have formed when young men. (Beauties, p. 210)

While not contributing much to our sense of the style of oral reminiscence, except in brief passages like the above, Miller is nevertheless an interesting transitional figure between the merely decorative writers on country life and the more realistic humanitarian, and incipiently ethnographic recorders of the latter nineteenth century.

A contemporary of Miller, who wrote in the same mixed style of personal observation "graced," or obscured by, literary allusion, was William Howitt (1792-1879). His The Rural Life of England (1838)[18] attempts a comprehensive view of country life, including chapters on calendar and life cycle customs, occupations and sports, but disappointingly draws too little on direct experience -- though he seems to have had much to offer -- and too heavily on "Old Aubrey," John Brand, William Hone, and other antiquaries. Of more interest is his The Boy's Country-Book (1839),[19] which purports to be "The Real Life of a Country Boy, written by Himself; exhibiting all the amusements, pleasures, and pursuits of children in the country." The term "exhibiting" in the sub-title is the keyword for its style; the book is not so much an autobiography as a catalogue of childhood amusements carefully laid out by a rather serious, nostalgic, adult. In no way does the style of the writing reflect a childhood sensibility. Within this limitation, however, many interesting aspects of folklife appear, such

as his good account of November 5th bonfires (pp. 80-83); miners and their nicknames (p. 18); child labour (pp. 113-116); and local anecdotes, particularly stories of sham ghosts (pp. 178-197). Best of all is the way it tends to eschew description of the more formal games in favour of discussing activities, like riding on gates, tree branches, the brush harrow, or debates the respective merits of goats, sheep, pigs, and cart horses as mounts; it is good to find a favourite sport of my own boyhood, the blowing up of wasps' nests with gunpowder, so lovingly detailed (p. 74).

Though a line of development can be traced in rural sketches and country journals in which the purely decorative and whimsical elements give way to greater realism in the description of country life and work, it is also true that volumes of sketches in the older styles continue to appear. Familiar devices like the "walk round the village," used by Mitford, are still favoured as a means of unifying random thoughts and observations, and the motif of the cycle of the country year is still popular for its attractive implications of permanence in contrast with modern urban instability. Francis Brett Young's summer in an English village, for example, is artfully framed by the arrival and departure of the swallows (Portrait of a Village, London: Heinemann, 1937). Keepers of country journals, such as J.H.B. Peel, continue in the inconsequential and patrician

manner of Halsham. In his book promisingly entitled Country Talk (London: Hale, 1970), the talk is largely his own; what he quotes of country people's speech patronizes their dialect and seems to have been selected for its unconscious humour. It is as though Sturt had never written.

Since it would seem that in country literature certain modes seem never entirely to die out it will not be inappropriate to look back to the seventeenth century for the origins, in terms of English literature at least, of the next genre to be discussed: the gallery of rustic characters.

II. Galleries of Characters

The gallery of characters, being short sketches of recognizable types of personality, age groups, occupations, and statuses in rural life, was incipient in the rural sketches of the Spectator, where Sir Roger de Coverly, Will Wimble, and others represent types that would already have been familiar to a literary audience. Addison and Steele were heirs to the tradition of the "character" writers of the seventeenth century.[20] The genre derives ultimately from the classical Greek character sketches of Theophrastus who, as a natural scientist, made them in a classificatory spirit, as though botanizing among types of humanity. Character writing was redeveloped in England in the seventeenth century by Ben Jonson, Joseph Hall, Sir Thomas Overbury, John Earle, and others; men were described not only as possessing intrinsic qualities but as playing certain parts in life. The character, as a genre, demands a cool aloofness in the observer, who from a position of almost God-like detachment, points out the virtues and vices of his subject with witty concision.

The figures described are predominantly urban, creatures of the court, the universities, the taverns and low life of London, in which their authors moved. Overbury's "A Fayre and Happy Milke-Mayd" (1616),[21] however, has been

much admired by country writers; it is decorative and coincides with an image of country life as innocent, pastoral, and sweetly contented that was dear to such idealists as P.H. Ditchfield, who quotes the character in full in his own Country Folk, pp. 221-222. Douglas Bush notes that it was cited by Walton and that it is drawn in part from Sir Philip Sydney's pastorals,[22] so that it is a much cherished icon of the English rural pleasance.

John Earle's "A Plain Country Fellow" (1628)[23] is less pretty, though more profound, and has been less noticed. The yeoman, Earle says, thinks and speaks of nothing but his animals and his plough: "his ditch and landmark is the very mound of his meditations"; his house is poor and distinguished from the barn only by loop-holes in the thatch to let out smoke; he is little interested in religion, except to pray for the right weather; he is sententious:

> He thinks nothing to be vices but pride and ill husbandry, from which he will gravely dissuade the youth and has some thrifty hobnail proverbs to clout his discourse.

(These traits are still borne out in oral autobiography as I know from interviews with farm workers in Dorset in the 1970's). Yet Earle's characters are distinguished by their humane feeling, which is apparent in the concluding lines:

> For death he is never troubled, and if he get in but his harvest before, let it come when it will, he cares not.

Here, of course, is the immortal, enduring, countryman of the poems of Thomas Hardy and Edward Thomas; but the stoic bluntness in the man is also the quality admired as manliness by rural workers, and is the theme of the proverb declaring the need to farm as if one would live forever.

One seventeenth century collection of characters, Picturae Loquentes; or pictures drawne forth in characters (1631),[24] by Wye Saltonstall (fl. 1630-1640) contains several rural occupational and character types and institutions. Within the usual punning, double meaning, style there is some good observation making it worthwhile for its glimpses of folklife as well being interesting as an early example of the depiction of some rural characters that would become established as types expected to be drawn by any later author writing in this genre. Wedding customs are included in No. 6 "A Country Bride," where she goes to church escorted by two bachelors, walking on flowers strewn before her; rosemary and ribbons are prominent; the ring is placed on her thumb; there are fiddlers for the dance at the wedding; the bride is set at the head of the table to signify her supremacy in household affairs, and the bride-cake is broken over the couple's heads. The work of "The

Ploughman" (No. 7) is invested with a certain religious significance -- a Biblical and literary commonplace -- in the conceit which draws the analogy between the life of a man and that of grain:

> . . . and a good harvest is his happinesse, and the last seede he sowes is his own bodye which hee knowes like his graine, though it seeme to perish, yet shall spring againe.

Yet Saltonstall is also drawing realistic pictures; he knows that a ploughman eats "barley pudding," and may spend his winter nights mending his whip or his shoes, the latter studded with hobnails bought at fairs. The fair is vividly seen:

> Afarre off it seemes a tumult of white staves, and red petticoates and muflers, but when you come nearer they make a fayre shew. (No. 21, "A Petty Countrey Faire")

Women buy household trifles here, "yet such as are for use more than ornament." Men treat each other to drinks and "balletsingers" sell copies of love songs to maids "to get it by heart at home, and after sing it over their milke-payles." In the "Countrey Alehouse" (No. 22), the "inward hangings is a painted cloath with a row of Balletts pasted on it"; bargains are made there and the woodwork is covered

with chalk scores.

Rustic courtship is already seen as inevitably clumsy and comic: the ploughman kissing his girl at the country wake "layes such blowes on her lips you may heare the smacke affarre off." The pastoral conventions are followed in No. 16 "A Shepheard" -- he is an emblem of kingship, his flock as his subjects, and should be the happiest of men -- but this is plainly also an English shepherd; Saltonstall knows the use of the tarbox, the term "to pitch" hurdles; and the ambition of shepherds "to be elected the Shepheards King, which he obtains not by any corrupt suffrage, but by having the first Lambe yeand that yeare." "The Baylye," "A Keeper," "A Farmer's Daughter," and "A Gentleman's House in the Country" are also characterized. In the latter sketch the servants are lackadaisical, but the food, if rough, is abundant and:

> Hee observes all times and seasons of the yeare, and his Christmas is the butlers Iubile. To conclude, his house is the seat of hospitality, the poore mans Court of justice, the Curats Sunday ordinary, and the onely exchequer of Charity, where the poore goe away relieved, and cry, God blesse the founder. (No. 26)

This is reminiscent of Overbury's "The Franklin," who also kept up the holidays:

> Rocke Monday, and the Wake in Summer, shrovings, the wakeful ketches on Christmas Eve, the Hoky, or seed Cake, these he yearely keepes; yet holdes them no reliques of Popery. (No. 79)

Here are recognizable prototypes for Addison's and Irving's portraits of the benevolent, paternalist, country squire.

The character sketch, then, is part of a long tradition -- with Chaucer as another antecedent -- but what I shall trace here is the strengthening of the ethnographic aspect of the sketches as opposed to their simply witty and amusing element. They had to become exploratory, adventuring, taking the reader beyond his comfortable presumptions about what life and mankind was like. To accomplish this a more patient and tentative style of sounding out the opinions of individuals of other classes and occupations had to replace the mode of Olympian judgement made on the basis of an absolute scale of values. The recognition that there were other world views, other forms of spiritual life, beyond the attitudes of the educated elite was to be developed best in the writings of George Sturt; nevertheless, glimpses of this change in thinking may be seen in some of the rural writers using the "gallery of characters" format.

Rev. Charles L. Marson's Village Silhouettes (1914)[25] is by first appearances a typical example of this sometimes weak-kneed genre, but closer reading reveals an unexpected

seriousness. He presents character studies and little histories of working-class people: a church musician, a devout old labourer, two spinsters, a ne'er-do-well, an old woman theologist, an Irish teller of saints' legends, and a pub landlord. Marson is modest about his chosen form; the silhouette is

> . . .the mere idea of a person, perhaps nearer than we know to the man as we think him. It has therefore a pleasant or contemptible audacity about it, according as one looks at it. Finally, it always has a sense of fun and laughter in it, which is chiefly why some of us value a form of art which is cheap and quick and very limited. (p. vi)

But although he lacks the imagination to change a conventional format his intention is to show that there is a distinct and valuable rural working class culture.

Marson (1858-1914) had collaborated with Cecil Sharp in his gathering of Folk Songs from Somerset (1904). Now, however, he wished to suggest that those who had applauded his discovery of a "great gold mine of beautiful song in Somerset," should find the people themselves as interesting as their songs -- a quite radical idea in the context of contemporary folksong collecting:

> Now the prospector wishes to proclaim a far greater discovery. The graceful, manly and fine-wrought melodies are not separable accidents, they belong to lives and characters at least as interesting, as full of fine art and exquisite melodiousness as are the songs we have discovered and valued. Not only is the expression great, but the life which is so delicately expressed is worthy of our utmost attention and admiration. (pp. v-vi)

Marson demonstrates some traits of local manners, for example, the care for personal reputation which makes a man refuse to cut a hedge in anything less than the "right" way:

> "Maybe parson would be satisfied with stubbing, but if one [who] knowed comed along I'd be most ashamed to be seen to it," James explained. So he told the Vicar that it should be "laid proper or it would be something and nothing." (p. 23)

The same sensitivity gives satirical songs their bite; the Vicar, providing topical verses for a village entertainment, made rhymes on himself to be sung by a local singer, knowing that he and the singer "were the only men in the village who would not take offence at such banter." After the performance the village boys "pleasantly gathered around and told him not to be affronted, as 'he did mean not no harm, and we did not mean none either'" (pp. 98-99). A nice observation of the respective roles of wives and unmarried daughters is contained in his droll sketch of "Al-Parn"

(Alice Perrin), a village girl who kept house for her father; when he spanked her for sloppiness she vowed to "larn him that maids is not wives, however under they might be," and left home (p. 51).

One of the childhood reminiscences of the village musician was of being threatened with Bonaparte as a bogey figure: the village tailor had put off making him a suit, saying:

> . . . grimly, "Boney is coming, and you will have your head cut off, 'long o' the rest. Clothes won't do you no good, not then. You won't want 'em." (pp. 1-2)

New figures had to be improvised on Bonaparte's defeat:

> Little John remembered how his brother, when next promised to Boney, answered, "Boney be beat. He can't get us now." But the brisk old Grannie replied, "Somebody or nother will be after you. You won't be left in peace long, I know." But as she could not even think of the somebody's name the young villains showed her that they were no longer ruled by fears. (p. 2)

Another old woman recalled the adults' fear of Bonaparte: "It was hardly worth while going to work, and the farmers, when they sowed, used to say that they "never knowed who'd reapy'" (p. 60).

Marson noted religious legends, giving summaries of three heard from a woman in Ireland, and mentioning local traditions that animals were drawn to Glastonbury Tor on old Christmas Eve. The village musician told of Godney, a place named for Joseph of Arimathea's last words: "'God night were his last words', as he would say with a deep reverence, which hushed all criticism" (p. 4). Among other folklore material, Marson describes "egg shackling," and quotes one of his informants speaking about the possibilities of ill-wishing.

He was also interested in dites and gives a list of twelve bird species and the traditional interpretation of their cries; in Somerset, for example, crows were said to say "'Sharp frast this marnin' or 'Dead harse! dead harse!' 'Where be to?' 'Down by the shore,' or 'Down to orchard ditch' 'Is a fat?' 'Full of grease'" (p. 89). In collecting these sayings Marson was aware of their regional variation and suggests they be collected and compared, observing modestly, " It would be an absorbing hobby and possibly more useful than appears at first sight" (p. 93).

Village Silhouettes is itself the fruit of a hobby and more useful than it appears from its title and genre. His characters do suffer from apple-cheeked worthiness but the material he presents is based on personal contact and

it is this which frees him from prejudices. Yet there is an air of diffidence about the book; the sketches are brief, he does not dare to present more than snatches of his subjects' conversation, and he hovers between the market's expectations of "charm" in a country book and what seem to be feelings that there is something more serious to be shown.

The Book of Crafts and Character (1907),[26] by Walter Raymond (1852-1931), is a further example of the gallery of characters format and consists of short interviews about their work and lives with representatives of "the old sort" in a Somerset village and neighbourhood. Like Thomas Miller, and others, Raymond suffers from divided purposes; although he has collected authentic material and has a sound knowledge of the crafts he describes, and the local dialect, he feels obliged to maintain the light, allusive, style of the sketch. As he says, breaking off from a description of a furze-covered linhay and other parts of a typical smallholding, "But why laboriously accumulate this wealth of detail? A sketch should but suggest, and tickle the imagination into lively appreciation of things untold" (p. 260). Accordingly, his real ethnographic data is compressed within the orthodox confines of the rural life sketch. His characters display an almost unnatural degree of geniality even given the truth that most men enjoy talking of their particular skills.

Trades described with particularly good detail include hurdle-making, hedging and ditching, the wheelwright, the shepherd, and the mole-catcher. The carter besides boasting the merits of his team, also tells a witch legend -- a witch is suspected of stopping his brother's horses when he fails to offer her a ride -- and an account of consulting a conjuror over a wife's illness (pp. 120-122). Both are realistic versions of standard legend topics but they seem unlikely subjects to be broached so readily to a gentleman stranger casually met on the highway. A devil legend and a story of an encounter with pixies are told by "The Oldest Inhabitant"; again, the texts are convincing but the context seems fabricated (pp. 214-216). Perhaps more likely is the wheelwright's use of his craft proverbs; the straightness and trueness of a well-made wheel, for example, makes it an apt lesson:

> I used to say to my bwoy, "Noah, my son, a good wheel, mind, is a moral. You consider un an' larn from un." (p. 69)

And likewise the axle must be straight:

> He must be set in wonderful firm and true or the wagon will swerve from right to left and "look into everybody's windows all down-street," as the saying is. (pp. 69-70)

Demonstrably authentic, because it fits the patterns of personal reminiscence, is the miller's story of how he ground his first sack of corn, without his father's permission, thus proving he could do man's work:

> There wur my vather wi' eyes like a cod-fish an cheeks so red as a turkey-cock. He gi'ed me jus' one look. But he wur too frightened like to so much as catch me a clout. He runned to the spout to test the flour atween finger and thumb. He runned up; he runned down; he runned out to hatch. I stood there all to a trem'le, whilst he did run to an' vro. He wur a staid heavy man, an' did blowy an' panky like a pair o' bellows. But he comed back wi' his face a-beaming like a zunvlower vull-blowed. "Hang thee, Miller Toop the younger, I couldn' a-done better my own zelf," cried he. An' I've a-bin Miller Toop ever since. Farewell childhood, that wur. For he put me to work the very next day. (p. 222)

Possibly the story has been tinted a little for literary effect, yet this is exactly the kind of story -- of becoming a man -- that is told to the curious stranger and which is ubiquitous in the personal narrative repertoires of rural workers.

As a whole, however, despite its relatively realistic conversations with rural people, the collection suffers from a lightness of tone and a fundamental complacency about rural living and working conditions; there is too much of that conspiracy between author and reader, that

Sturt dreaded, to be gently amused by his referring to bird-trapping methods as "these quaint ingenuities" (p. 201), or his describing a man as "this quaint relic of a bygone world" (p. 257). He has, in fact, pushed this new interest in recording rural occupations so far that it has become a search for the arcane and is self-parodying. He interviews "The Snail-Merchant":

> "A snail do dearly love an old boot," quoth the snail-merchant as he picked out two dozen. (p. 131)

That archaic "quoth" nicely detaches Raymond from his uncouth subject and we feel he is still aiming to amuse the gentle reader under the guise of serious enquiry.

Walter Raymond wrote a number of other rural life works, including novels set in Somerset, and under the pseudonym 'Tom Cobbleigh,' dialect literature.[27]

A slight work which is yet a precursor to Sturt's is Country Conversations, by Georgine Tollet, first published in a private edition in 1881.[28] The conversations are recorded by "Miss G." in her visits among farming and labouring families in the Midlands; some of the conversations are dated between 1845 and 1864. A preface by W.C. Bridgeman assures us that the material is true:

> Whatever interest these records may have, arises from the fact that they are not the work of an inventive genius. The writer had a singularly accurate memory, a sense of quiet humour, and keen powers of observation; but of the faculty which creates she had no share. Her sole object was to preserve the exact expressions of those whose histories of themselves and their affairs she had found so interesting. She scrupulously avoided making any additions or changes, though she sometimes omitted trifling details, and recorded as little as possible of her own share in the dialogue.

Most of the talk is between women and the conversations almost all turn on marital relations, the bad temper of husbands especially, and religious enthusiasms, the poorer people being rabid chapellers, "Ranters," or "Primities." Some of the early sketches concern a bourgeois farm family and their arrangement of marriages with great calculation as to the ultimate good of the dairy:

> "Before she went away her father said to her, 'Now, Mary, you be sure to do your duty to your cheese, and then you'll put your husband in a position that he cannot deny you anything in reason that'll make you comfortable.'" (p. 46)

The conversations are given without comment by "Miss G." but they are selected with a sardonic eye to their unconscious humour. If anything they are reminiscent of Dickens, one speaker being given to malapropisms:

". . . maybe, ladies, you're not apprehensive what a crowbar is," (p. 88) and, in the way some conversations capture a stultifying world of domestic littleness, of George Eliot's depiction of the rural bourgeoisie in Middlemarch.

The Introduction gives tributes from J.R. Lowell, Professor Jowett, and John Addington Symonds, all professing fascination with its glimpse of working, peasant life. A comparison with serious investigation like that of Sturt, however, reveals her superficiality. The concept of a verbatim record of conversation is there but it is linked unfortunately to the conventional form of a gallery of semi-humorous portraits. Country life is still being treated as intrinsically comic.

Village Notes and Some Other Papers (1900),[29] by Pamela Tennant (1871-1928), is a collection of brief pieces, barely essays, from a titled lady of the manor recording her visits to some of her picturesque old parishioners in cottage and almshouse. What raises it above the welter of country journals kept by sensitive lady authors of the period is her ability to transcribe rural speech and her interest in recording quite mundane narration with an exactness only surpassed by Sturt, whose Bettesworth Book was not to appear until the following year.

She shares in that sudden revaluation of the poor by the educated classes that occurred increasingly around

the turn of the century and, like Sturt and Stephen Reynolds, Tennant perceived qualities in "the uneducated" that her own class had lost; the language of the poor seemed to her simpler and hence more vigorous, their lives seemed more "real." The poor, she observed, spoke in the language of the Bible and had "kept a true sense of the weight and value of words" (p. 93).

The majority of narratives she quotes were recorded from women and concern women's themes: a spat with a mother-in-law, memorates of dreams, omens, ghosts, witchcraft and evil eye beliefs, a tale of groundless frights. Despite the difference in social class, Tennant (Baroness Glenconner, afterwards Viscountess Grey of Fallodon) seems to have enjoyed good rapport with her informants; her own interest in spiritualism[30] may have inspired the confidence of those who told her of supernatural experiences.

One memorate, among several worth quoting, may serve to illustrate the authenticity of her rendering of speech; it concerns the hearing of apparently supernatural voices singing and is interesting further as an instance of how the dominant local belief-system, non-conformism, establishes the interpretation; elsewhere these might have been identified as fairy voices:

> "O! that weren't no dream, not that one. Why I was awake and aout walking along the road, with that one! That weren't no dream. I was 'wake same as we are now, and I never heerd singing like it! It weren't like anything I've ever heerd before. It simm'd to be three or four voices, and I couldn't see a soul! It come from over. I heerd it come from over, and as I went along it went too, and when I stayed to listen, it didn't go before. And I looked to right and left -- couldn't see a soul!
>
> It is quite a different face to the one that told of "the knuckles drawed inside and the terr'ble stiffness." Her cheeks flush and the eyes look out brightly as she says, quite triumphantly, "Couldn't see a soul!"
>
> "Was it summer or winter?"
>
> "O! it were summer. And the sun a shining. I were going to Motcombe to work, 'twere when I went glovin', and I heerd un as I went. O! the road did seem to goo so nice. But I never heerd singing like it. I told Harriet Marchant of it when I come home. And I told Jim Barbage's wife. They was both on 'em terrible deep Chapel women, and they said as 't were angels that I had heerd. Spirits, you know. Spirits in the air, singing. (Village Notes, pp. 60-61)

The same woman also told of dreams in which her dead son tried to call her away, or in which she seemed to be in heaven, and again, her choice in the latter dream between two roads, one of them bright and green which she took despite warnings against it by "not a very pleasant-looking person," has resonances with fairytradition, as in the ballad of Thomas Rymer (Village Notes, pp. 62-65).

As the passage shows, Tennant properly indicates what her own questions were; she also shows due appreciation

of the social courtesies of the visit before enquiring after the dreams which were her real interest: first "There was much to be told about rheumatics and the gradual disablement and stiffness of one hand"; and, to Tennant's credit, she lets the reader share in this prosaic stuff as well as in the story of the dream:

> "No, no! I can't do me sewing, now. Nor yet I can't put he on," pointing to the kettle. 'No. This un has to do all the work now," showing her other hand. "I should get starved if it weren't for this 'un. He has all the work now." (p. 59)

The accuracy of her transcription is vouched for by the repetitions; it has not been tidied up to suit the pace of a hurrying reader. Tennant, like Sturt, takes the chance of boring us with reality.

In addition to verbal accuracy she is also sensitive to her narrators' mannerisms, noting them like stage directions, and their whole demeanour while speaking:

> A piece of news, even though it refer to their own trials, retains its charm.
>
> "I've been a widow now this long while" (smoothing apron with thoughtful shake of head). "God's hand is heavy upon His servants, and it's now seven year -- Oh! you didn't know, m'm?" (entire change of voice). "Oh! yes. Found in a hedge." (Briskly), "Dead in a hedge wi' a hook in his hand. Left for work in the morning same as usual an' all, and dead in the afternoon." Even a grief can in time become very enjoyable. (pp. 40-41)

Alfred Williams gives a similar story of a sudden death, also told by a wife about her husband, in Villages of the White Horse (London: Duckworth, 1913), p. 53.

Though her main interest was in the supernatural memorate, Tennant also gives some details, from her own collecting and memory, of a Wiltshire mummers' play. Younger men, she says, "will go a long way to learn it from some old "'Granf'er" famed in more villages than his own for knowing "Saint Jurge" by heart (p. 193). She mentions the continuing substitution of modern figures as national heroes, or villains (Napoleon is ceasing to be a historical figure to the children watching the play), and quotes an uncommon verse from her childhood memory:

> Then pity the fate of the poor Prince Imperial
> Who fell by the hand of the cruel Zew-lew
> [invervening lines are forgotten]
> The feelings of his mother I'm sure you will pity
> For he was a soldier -- and a t'rew son of France
> (p. 197)

She apologises for not getting a full text:

> The actors wear coloured ribbons on high paper hats, and their coats are bunched with rosettes and tied about with sashes of coloured calico. They stamp round in a circle whenever the repeated duels permit, and unfortunately between the sound of heavy feet and the clash of wooden swords the words are difficult to catch. (p. 194)

She says nothing of where she encountered the play, but almost certainly it was brought to the "big house" for the squire's amusement and the players' profit. Tennant's ability to present realistic passages of speech should be apparent; yet it would be wrong to present her as an equal of Sturt in setting about a considered objective description of rural life. While there is respect and affection in her portraits there are also lapses into sentimentality and the mere retailing of "so many priceless sayings" for our superior amusement. Tennant seems to have stumbled onto the basic form that Sturt would use, the verbatim transcript of a conversation, without his seriousness of purpose and without realising its full potentialities. Thus her book is transitional, part still nature sketches and pleasant verses, part reaching towards a genuine interest in the ethnography of speaking.

By 1921, in John Drinkwater's Cotswold Characters,[31] a new attitude toward the countryman seems to have become established. He is now almost venerated as the possessor of special knowledge and "unquestioning and perfect mastery" of traditional skills. There is a tone of artistic envy in Drinkwater of the rural craftsman's participation in "the real life which consists of a personal contribution to a tradition that has never died out" (p. 8). The new orthodoxy of this opinion must owe much to Sturt. The

sense that the poor, or country people, led lives that were more "real" than those led by writers, artists, or academics, is one still current; it is noted above in Tennant's work and is apparent too in Sturt's admiration for Bettesworth who, in contrast to his own dilettantish, cossetted situation, faced existence each day "like a lion in the street." For Drinkwater the countryman's realness is almost preterhuman: "The Cotswold yeoman is as unoriginal and as new and vital as an oak tree or a starry night" (p. 8). But the reintroduction of such natural metaphors suggests that this revised attitude is only a revamping of the Romantic vision of the countryman as dwelling closer to the divine truths revealed in nature.

The five sketches are brief, each seven to eight pages of large type, and are honed down as elegant prose to match the wood-engravings with which they are decorated. Nevertheless, though based only on casual conversations with local men, outlines of traditional attitudes emerge. "Rufus Clay, The Foreigner," exemplifies the convention that "Settlers, if only from the next parish, are foreigners, and openly called so" (p. 29). Clay had set up as a cobbler but got no trade; there was no antagonism towards him but in the minds of the villagers "He just did not exist" P. 32). "Joe Pentifer and Son" concerns an old thatcher's

disgust at his son's poor workmanship; when he points out a fault the enraged son beats the old man. In his will the thatcher leaves to his son "the stick with which he beat his father" (p. 49). Cotswold Characters is only of slight folkloristic value; its main interest is to show the re-evaluation of rural crafts that was occurring in the 1920's.

Drinkwater's mystical view of the countryman points forward to the views of the writers of the "Return to Husbandry" school of the 1930's and 1940's. This group of writers, and their works are conveniently listed in Edmund Blunden's annotated bibliography Return to Husbandry,[32] and will not be considered here. Their unifying belief in the necessity for English farming to return to more "organic" and "natural" techniques often produces fine description of earlier folk methods; Thomas Hennell's Change in the Farm (1936) and The Countryman at Work (1947) are examples.[33] H.J. Massingham, the leading influence in this group, made tours through the English regions, describing crafts and giving scraps of his conversations with countrymen.[34] Other members of the "school" include Adrian Bell, C. Henry Warren, and Rolf Gardiner; the tendency to preach at the unconverted reader, to overplay the undoubted virtues of the old way of life in contrast to a blighted present, is

their common weakness. W.J. Keith gives a sympathetic discussion of Massingham in The Rural Tradition, pp. 233-252.

Examples of the gallery of characters format continue to appear in contemporary rural literature. E.W. Martin's The Countryman's Chap-Book (1949)[35] is an anthology of such portraits by earlier writers, and more recently Ronald Blythe has been much praised in literary circles for Akenfield which consists of the supposedly authentic testimonies of characteristic types of contemporary English villagers.[36] Blythe's work will be discussed further in the final chapter but here it is worth pointing out the extent of the shift that has occurred between the convention of the seventeenth-century character writers that their subjects did not speak and the twentieth-century preoccupation with the original words of the speaker as the truest index of character. Salstonstall's "Speaking Pictures" did so only through details of manners, dress, of physiognomy; Blythe's characters are purported to be speaking directly to author and reader through tape recorded interviews. Of course the tape recorder has contributed greatly to this verbal emphasis, but the reorientation to speech goes back to the nineteenth-century, as I have shown, in such works as Country Conversations. The other group of writers who helped turn attention to the actual words of rural labourers were the investigative journalists of the nineteenth century, some of whose works are discussed in the following section.

III. Journalism and Case-Histories

From the 1830's to the 1890's, as a reflection of public concern over the condition of English agriculture, several journalists made walking tours on which they questioned labouring men and women about their wages, living and working conditions. Their reports are polemical, for they were generally horrified by the poverty they discovered, and tended to use the rhetorical structure of first building up a conventional image of rustic contentment -- the cottage with roses round the door -- then blasting it by leading the reader inside to show him the reality of squalid overcrowding, lack of sanitation, and near starvation. A related weapon in their assault on public complacency was to cite direct testimony from labourers. Their reports, then, are biased toward social problems and are not necessarily representative of the ongoing "ordinariness" of life; nevertheless, rural poverty in the latter nineteenth century obviously influenced the shaping of several of the oral autobiographies discussed in later chapters and it must be considered as a part of the general context of the folklore and folklife of the period.

Before considering the later journalists, however, we should take note of their predecessors. The manner and the tone of moral outrage in these reports owes much to

William Cobbett's Rural Rides (1830);[37] on his excursions through different parts of the country he investigated improvements in agriculture, advocated his own schemes, lambasted a legion of political enemies, and also sympathised with the condition of the labourers. Yet, though Cobbett (1763-1835) made no difficulties of caste about speaking with working people, having begun life as a plough-boy himself,[38] there is no sign in Rural Rides that he expected them to have anything worthwhile hearing; indeed, his vigorous propounding of his own views on everything leaves little room for other opinions.

Cobbett was a practical man with no romantic notions about peasant life. He casts an appraising, farmer's eye, over a group of turnip-hoers:

> It is curious enough, but I have always observed that the women along this part of the country are usually tall. These girls were all tall, straight, fair, round-faced, excellent complexion, and uncommonly gay. . . . (Rural Rides, p. 140)

He could give the same frank enthusiasm for a particular breed of sheep or a field of wheat; his interest is in the conditions of soil, climate, husbandry, or, in this case, fair wages, which produced these wellgrown examples. When he criticizes bad farming the evidence is the same:

> I never before saw country people, and reapers too, observe, so miserable in appearance as these. There were some very pretty girls, but ragged as colts and as pale as ashes. The day was cold too, and frost hardly off the ground; and their blue arms and lips would have made any heart ache but that of a seatseller or a loan-jobber.[39]

Having been born into the labouring life, and risen from it by his own efforts, he knew there were no differences except wealth between members of the labouring class and any other. His values were theirs: he talks of "useful" work in the same way as George Sturt's "Bettesworth": as the stockbrokers' villas spread over the Surrey heaths they "beggared" agricultural hamlets "And all the useful people became less numerous" (Rural Rides, p. 67).

By coincidence Cobbett's birthplace was the Bourne from which George Sturt took his nom de plume and where Fred Grover, the labourer he called "Bettesworth," lived. W.J. Keith has cited Sturt's observation that Cobbett's ideas were still "in the peasant world, the folk world, of material success"; Sturt felt himself divorced from this and forced to consider the labouring classes as separate, "a species of living things dwelling under the sky and working out a mysterious fate" (The Rural Tradition, p. 82). Working people were not the mystery to Cobbett that they were to Sturt and his recommendations for improving their conditions were material ones:

> I will allow nothing to be good, with regard to the labouring classes, unless it make an addition to their victuals, drink or clothing. As to their minds, that is much too sublime a matter for me to think about. (Rural Rides, p. 137)

Cobbett is being ironic here for his target is the contemporary attempt by religious zealots to make the labourers "dutiful" through sermons and tracts rather than by improving their living standards.

Cobbett may have been too "close" to labouring life to have had a sense of its "traditionality." In his Cottage Economy (1822)[40] he was offering improvements on old techniques and, in some cases, reintroducing to England older ideas that he had seen work well in America, but he was in no sense an antiquarian seeking out customs or beliefs to describe to a curious audience. His description in Rural Rides of Sunday evening courting seems to appear only as a rather amusing accident that occurred to him when his horse cast a shoe, so that he had to go slowly by the couples:

> Sunday evening is the time for courting, in the country. It is not convenient to carry this on before faces, and, at farm-houses and cottages, there are no spare apartments; so that the pairs turn out, and pitch up, to carry on their negociacions, by the side of stile or a gate. The evening was auspicious; it was pretty dark, the weather mild, and Old Michaelmas (when yearly services end) was fast approaching; and, accordingly, I do not recollect ever having before seen so many

> negociacions going on, within so short a distance. (Rural Rides, p. 417)

Cobbett's realism, however, can be appreciated better if we consider what he has avoided: the urban smirking humour of Saltonstall or the Spectator over the supposed clumsiness of rustic lovemaking.

The "surveyors" of the condition of agriculture in the English counties during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries also conducted riding and walking tours and, like Cobbett, were practical men with little time for popular antiquities. They interviewed farmers rather than labourers and summarised their remarks about climate, soils, livestock, crops, and the labour supply. Their works are vital resources for the history of the material culture of a region because they deal in such local detail, sometimes on a farm by farm basis; William Stevenson's General View of the Agriculture of the County of Dorset (1812),[41] for example, tells how Mr. Groves of Abbotsbury deals with overheating in his ricks, or how the cider allowances are calculated at Dallwood: ". . .they make it a kind of a rule for the men to have half a pint of cyder every ridge they go down in harvest." William Marshall in his Rural Economy of the West of England, 2 vols. (1796)[42] shows a particular interest in the history and distribution of implements and

practices, almost anticipating the regional ethnologist's mapping of culture traits, in his remarks on spade types, for example (I, 127-128), or waggons, drays, and sledges (I, 119-121). He drew carefully on oral tradition in his investigation of past practices, and notes

> TRADITION, when it reaches not farther than a few generations, is entitled to every respect, and is frequently good authority. On perilous events, as of war or pestilence, it is able to go much farther back, than it is respecting the ordinary and quiet operations of agriculture. (II, 133)

Like Stevenson, he includes a list of "Agricultural Provincialisms." The emphasis in such works is, of course, on the material rather than the spiritual culture of the farming community, with, in some authors, diatribes upon the persistence of superstitious practices, especially in folk veterinary medicine. Occasionally, as with Marshall, the labourer's characteristic voice is heard:

> The LABORERS of the District [West Devon] are below par: many of them drunken, idle fellows; and not a few of them may be said to be honestly dishonest; declaring, without reserve, that a poor man cannot bring up a family on six shillings a week and honesty. (I, 107).

The agricultural historian G.E. Fussell has provided useful bibliographies of these, and earlier, surveys and manuals of husbandry and they would repay the attention of students of folklife.[43]

For a closer attention to the lives and opinions of the rural labourers we must turn to the journalists of the nineteenth century, among whom Richard Jefferies (1848-1887), developed the case-history, as an illustration of social forces and economic circumstances, with the greatest literary skill. Jefferies is a difficult writer to "place" in terms of his attitudes toward the labourer -- which vary between an unattractive superciliousness and a guarded sympathy -- and such adjectives as "objective" and "unromantic," which I have generally applied as terms of praise when discussing other writers, need to be qualified in Jefferies' case; he seems to have been so careful not to romanticise as to be reluctant to credit the workfolk with much in the way of a spiritual culture or folk tradition.

Like Cobbett, Jefferies makes no mystery of the ideas and culture of the peasantry; he assumes that they are like himself but with cruder ways of thinking due to their lack of education and to the blunting of their sensibilities by hard upbringings, physical abuse, little and coarse food, and exposure to wind and weather. Jefferies was a farmer's son -- the freeholder Hilary Luckett in Round About a Great Estate (1880)[44] may be an idealized portrait of his father -- and the positions he takes in his essays are generally in defence of the interests of the small farmer. In contrast with George Sturt, who is consistently exploring the "otherness" or working men's lives as something alien to his middle class experience and assumptions, Jefferies is confidently summing up; as he says at the conclusion of his sketch of a labourer's downfall in "John Smith's Shanty," in The Toilers of the Field (1892), "This is no fiction, but an uncompromising picture of things as they are."[45] There is a dourness, a grudgingness, in Jefferies' view of the labourer's life which may reflect the small farmer's attitude, or the need to take an authoritative stand as a reporter.

While his approach may have made for an unclouded presentation of contemporary issues, the questions of wages, drink, allotments, for example, it is unsympathetic to folk culture. Jefferies' complaints of the lack of "poetry"

and "colour" in the lives of the labourers need to be set against the rich, supple, variety of life discovered by Alfred Williams in the same region some forty years later; Williams recorded folk plays, songs, and narratives. People who were merely "dummel" -- meaning "dumb, sullen, churlishness" (Toilers, p. 95) -- to Jefferies were engaging, spirited, and knowledgeable to Williams. This contrast is due in part to the difference between a polemical essay on rural economics and a portrayal of a culture through its songs, anecdotes and talk, but it seems that Jefferies did not visit in the labourer's homes as Williams did. His contacts were often at one stage of remove; his notes on cures and herbal lore in Round About a Great Estate, for example, come from the farmer's wife and daughter who, in turn, had them from the "many labourers and labouring women [who] were continually in and out of the kitchen at Luckett's Place" (Estate, p. 80). Thus there is a lack of intimacy about Jefferies' portrayal of folk tradition, and a tendency to be dismissive of it, as though he had assiduously adopted the standards he assumed in his middle class urban readership.

Exceptions to this occur, predictably, where he describes encounters with individuals rather than generalising of what he knows about "Hodge" en masse. The miller is shown busy at the delicate craft of recutting the grooves

in the millstones; Jefferies is impressed with his skill and knowledge and summarises the topics of the miller's conversation, which turn out to be the traditional ones of feats of strength of men in the past and the lack of endurance in the moderns (Estate, pp. 163-171). He is also particularly convincing when describing the life of the farmer, rather than the labourer; the economies of old Jonathan in "A Farmer of the Olden Times," are savoured:

> With his own hands he would carry out a quart of beans to his pigs -- just a quart at a time and no more, that they might eat every one and that none might be wasted. . . . He saved every bit of crooked wood that was found about the place; for at that date iron was expensive and wood that had grown crooked and was therefore strong as well as curved was useful for a hundred purposes. . . . Every groat thus saved was as a nail driven into an oak, fixed and stable, becoming firmer as time went on. . . . Each one of Jonathan's beans in his quart mug, each one of the acorns in his pocket became a guinea. (Estate, pp. 115-116)

These are things he heard of this old-style farmer from Hilary Luckett and clearly Jefferies is most at home in describing the farmer class; the first essay in Hodge and His Masters (1880)[46] depicts another substantial farmhouse and his delight in its easy hospitality. A detailed inventory of farmhouse furnishings appears in "An English Homestead" (Toilers, pp. 151-174).

There is little of this affectionate, nostalgic tone in his accounts of labouring life, however. Jefferies uses two styles of description: the essay, in which he takes up issues -- morality, wife-beating, the saturnalian manner of harvest field joking, weddings, drink ("Field-faring Women," in Toilers, pp. 111-150) -- and the fictional case-history which illustrates the same points. "A True Tale of the Wiltshire Labourer," in which a harvest time flirtation leads to pregnancy, marriage, jealousy, wife-beating, desertion and the woman's death, is only a reworking in novelistic style of the earlier essay (Toilers, pp. 259-285). Another case-history "One of the New Voters," in The Open Air (1885)[47] describes, with great force, the situation of "Roger the reaper," a young single man drunk on harvest beer but unable to continue without it; the essay is "about" whether to give allowances of beer or extra money for harvest work and about the public house, as a temptation to misspend money yet also the only source of conversation and company open to the labourer. Jefferies is compassionate here, laying out the perhaps unconsidered aspects of the case for the urban reader to judge. The sensations of the work are powerfully evoked:

> The fire falls straight from the sky on the heads of the harvesters -- men, women, and children -- and the white-hot light beats up again from the dry straw and the hard ground. (Open Air, p. 100)

In The Life of the Fields (1884),[48] "The Field Play," gives the history of a seduced and beaten girl, and is about various kinds of mindless hatred and violence, from the "brooding moroseness" of labourers who burn ricks to the repressive violence practiced on them by society by means of the workhouse. This is one of the most radical of Jefferies' essays and is a warning to society of revolutionary forces building within it.

"John Smith's Shanty" is the most artistically successful of Jefferies' case histories, as W.J. Keith has shown in his Richard Jefferies: A Critical Study.[49] It demonstrates an apparently inevitable progression from the labourer's cold and wet work, return to a miserable home with little food or heat and a wife driven to nagging despair, his striking his wife in frustration after a night of drinking, to his imprisonment and the workhouse for the family. Jefferies describes all this with relentless detachment and while it is a tract, like the other case-histories, he achieves an impressive sense of the waste of John Smith's resources of strength and endurance due to these implacable circumstances. The objective description is interesting for

its own sake too; Smith's style of eating a hunch of bread and cheese shows the traditional method of the "thumb bit":

> He held the bread in his left hand and the cheese was placed on it, and kept in its place by the thumb, the grimy dirt on which was shielded by a small piece of bread beneath it from the precious cheese. His plate and dish was his broad palm, his only implement a great jack knife with a buck-horn handle (Toilers, p. 180).

This detailed mode of observation, perhaps developed through Jefferies' interest in natural history, can sometimes fix a detail of folklife with precision.

The Gamekeeper at Home (1878) and The Amateur Poacher (1879)[50] are the two works by Jefferies that hew most closely to the line of depicting an individual countryman, but neither Keeper Haylock nor the poacher Oby Bottleton is explored in idiosyncratic depth. The Gamekeeper at Home is a detailed account of field sports, poaching techniques, the position of the gamekeeper in rural society, and his attitudes toward his craft -- but it is not biography. Jefferies takes a novelist's freedom in characterizing by means of imagery; the keeper is "an ash-tree man," his neck is "the colour of mahogany" and he "stands like an oak" (p. 11). His upright staunchness can be compared with the long-suffering stolidity of the labourer John Smith who is also described

in terms of wood: Smith represents "strength without beauty," "the natural oil of the skin... was gone like the sap in the tree he was felling" (Toilers, p. 175). And as Smith is likened to the handle of the axe he works with so the keeper's gun is seen as having become a part of him; its weight, and heavy game-bags, have caused his slight stoop and his aim is sure for the gun "answers" like a limb to the volition of will without the intervention of reflection" (p. 9). Commentary on the moulding of the body by an occupation is common in rural writing; one contrast is, of course, with the genteel readership whose own physiognomies show no adaptation to labour.

In contrast to these stalwarts, the poacher by Oby Bottleton (the name is "in character" in the Dickensian manner), is first introduced lying drunk in the road; his character is developed in terms of the stereotype of the poacher as a "Bohemian," an artful rogue who glories in his own cleverness and whose "nerve" covertly amuses the magistrates who sentence him. A question arising from the depiction of Oby, however, is whether the stereotype has been applied in the writing by Jefferies or is a real social construct, an "ideal self" held by poachers that has been lived up to by him. In another connection Jefferies quotes "an old country saying, 'Bear the name, carry the game.'

If you have the name of a poacher, then poach; you will be no worse off, and you will have the pleasure of the poaching" (Life of the Fields, p. 4). The enjoyment of poaching as a game of wits, the distinction between poaching and stealing, the pride in it as a craft with a body of intricate knowledge, are borne out in the autobiographies of poachers discussed in a later chapter.

Oby is allowed to narrate his own story to a much fuller extent than Jefferies' other individuals and this makes him more convincing as a character; his testimony is a composite, rather than direct transcription, but it is realistic in idiom and attitude; his admiration for the boldness of navvies strikes the right note:

> There ain't no such chaps for poaching as they navigators in all England. . . . They used to spread out like, and sweep the fields as clean as the crownd of your hat. Keepers weren't no good at all. . . .(p. 258)

His pride in knowledge is also characteristic of the independent-minded piece-worker: "You see, I knows more than the fellows as have never been at nothing but plough" (p. 258). And his retort to the magistrate --

> Last time the chairman said to I, "So you be here again, Oby; we hear a good deal about you." I says, "Yes, my lard, I be here agen, but people never don't hear nothing about you." That shut the old duffer up.(p. 263).

-- is typical of the kind of wit enjoyed by Bettesworth, who tells similar stories of "fitting" pompous antagonists with smart rejoinders (Bettesworth Book, pp. 273-274).

Oby, however, plays a small part in The Amateur Poacher, the "amateur" being Jefferies himself. The opening chapters are fine explorations in childhood autobiography and his boyhood enthusiasm for learning how to trap, shoot, and fish enlivens what is otherwise a comprehensive treatise on venery. The reader, in a device adopted from Walton's Compleat Angler, is made Jefferies' companion: "But you may safely stay to harle him" (p. 233), and the tidbits of information are presented gradually and without ostentation until the great scope of unrecognised "knowledge" held by poachers has been revealed. Jefferies' precise, unemotional, and practical style of observation is a salutary example, particularly when compared with the sentimentality of another naturalist, W.H. Hudson; it is also more truly a countryman's view.

Though Jefferies was inclined to slight the folk culture of the labouring class, his essays still contain material worth a folklorist's attention. This often takes the form of an aside, a casual but precise observation such as this: old style farmers and their wives never walked side by side or arm-in-arm: "The husband walks a yard or

two in front, or else on the other side of the road; and this even when they are going to church" (Estate, p. 143). The collection Wild Life in a Southern County (1879),[51] despite its title also contains four essays on folklife: "The Village," including cottage industries, "Village Architecture," "The Hamlet," with some summarized ghostlore, and "The Farmhouse," in which he mentions visits by an "aged man of wisdom -- not exactly a wizard, but something approaching it nearly in reputation' whose "simple presence and goodwill -- gained by plentiful liquor -- was supposed to be efficacious against accident and loss" (p. 136). His account of a cottage preacher's style of describing an ancient martyrdom as if it had happened in familiar local fields, working in an incremental pattern of threes till a "continuous moaning" came from the congregation, is a nice example of how the non-conformist movements harnessed the forbidden energies of the storyteller (p. 104). A version of the folktale "The sausage rain,"[52] is summarized, Jefferies recognizing it as one of the tales in the Pentameron but also, somewhat stupidly, asking "But how did it get into the mind of an illiterate old woman in an out-of-the-way village?" (p. 96) He seems disappointed at getting only this "rambling narrative" from a brisk old lady who "seemed quite unable to understand what was meant by history, but

could tell me a story if I liked" (p. 96). St. Thomas Day begging and Christmas mumming are also mentioned, though with a note of condescension -- he feels that the mummers' lack of "attempt at dressing in character" is a fault:

> They dress in a fantastic manner, with masks and coloured ribbons; anything grotesque answers . . . (p. 110)

The formation of brass bands, which also made Christmas house visits, were becoming a more popular pastime with the young men. His descriptions of those aspects of the labourers' folk culture recognised as superstitious or outmoded suffer, as I have already suggested, by his over-eagerness to endorse the values of his town audience; with the culture of his own, farming, class he is less "superior." This note on waggons and their owners' names does not poke fun:

> Many times repaired, the old ship outlasts its owner -- his name on it is painted out. But that step is not taken for years: there seems to be a superstitious dislike to obliterating the old name, as if the dead would resent it, and there it often remains until it becomes illegible. Sometimes the second owner, too, goes, and the name fresh painted is that of the third. (Wild Life, p. 128)

Jefferies' real interest, warmth, and intimacy of description are reserved for the world of the old style yeoman farmer.

Like Jefferies, Francis George Heath (1843-1913) also used life histories in his Peasant Life in the West of England (1880);[53] but with deliberate objectivity he focusses on the economic situation of his subjects and little that is idiosyncratic shows through in his retelling of their lives. Only the outlines remain of the story George Mitchell, a former labourer in Somerset, told Heath in 1872, of how he had quit his job because the farmer had called him lazy (p. 102); below it will be argued that this is one of the most frequent themes and story types in the oral autobiographies of rural workers. Heath devotes a chapter to "Superstition and Folk-lore," which is largely on magico-religious folk medicine, looking upon it as the kind of ignorance which should be dispelled.

Over a decade later his namesake, Richard Heath (1831-1912), published The English Peasant: Studies: Historical, Local and Biographic (1893),[54] written in the same exposé tradition. He had originally begun to write a series of illustrated articles on types of English cottage but discovered the subject was "too serious to be treated in the pretty fashion I intended"; his account of a Wealden cottage shows why:

> To realize this poverty and the wretchedness of their homes one must live amongst them, not as a mere bird of passage, or a summer visitor, or a gentleman resident, but as one of themselves. One must pass up and down the Weald in winter-time and in rainy weather, note how they have neither cisterns nor drainage, how therefore they suffer from thirst in the dog-days when all the springs are dry, and have floors swamped when the rainy season sets in, while the house-filth oozes out from a slit in the wall to trickle into the garden or wayside gutter. One must go into the cots themselves, blackened with ages of wood fires, see the mother and children cowering over a few poor sticks smouldering on some bricks under the great chimney. . . . One must see the children eating bread and butter for dinner, and drinking the hot wash they call tea; one must note the bleared eyes, the scrofulous skin, the ulcerated legs, the rheumatic agonized bodies, -- one must see these things and a hundred others for oneself to realize the depth of their miserable poverty. (pp. 193-194)

Richard Heath gives a more comprehensive account of folklife than Francis George Heath. He describes, for example, a village wake (p. 103), men's games, courtship, and singing at the inn during harvest time, in addition to details of living conditions. The rise of non-conformism is explained by reference to the snobbery endemic in the Anglican Church: labourers in southern England being regarded by it as brothers and friends "in much the same way that horses and dogs are brothers and friends" (p. 87). He recorded legends of witchcraft and the power of a child born in the middle of the night to see apparitions (p. 191), but again, his attitude as a reformer was to link superstition with

ignorance, immorality, and poverty as evils to be eradicated.

In condemning traditional education he nevertheless gives a good description of it; tracing the life history of a Kentish waggoner he shows how his son learns the vital skills, by which he will live, at home, and by following his father, rather than at school:

> ....a waggoner's son is carter-bred, and as used to horses as to his brothers and sisters. The atmosphere of his home is redolent of the stable. The horses are the one object of thought, of talk, and of interest to father, mother, and children. Speak to a waggoner about his team, and you have won his heart; ask the poor worn-out mother about her husband's horses, and her face will brighten up, and in the midst of her cares and hard work, she will find time to dilate on the merits of Captain, or Violet, or Jerry. Visit them when the day's work is over, and the whole family are gathered round the hearth, and the never-failing topic of conversation will be the horses.
>
> As a babe, the first words he lisps are the names of the horses. Does he cry -- he is taken to see "Prince," or lifted up to pat "Diamond." He no sooner learns to walk than he finds his way to the stable, toddling with the rest of the family after "dadda," as he spends hour after hour cleaning and baiting his charge. Thus from earliest infancy, he is receiving a technical education; he hears of nothing, thinks of nothing, talks of nothing but of that one business by which he is to live. . . and when in due course he becomes a mate, he displays at once an inborn and inbred faculty for managing horses. (pp. 155-156)

Heath is right, of course, in showing how the attainment of this skill is at the expense of the stunting of faculties that might have been developed by formal education, but the problem of striking a proper balance between the two types of learning is one that would exercise Sturt and many other rural writers.

Life in Our Villages (1891)[55] by George Francis Millin, the correspondent of a Liberal newspaper, is another series of reports on the plight of the agricultural labourer, mainly in the south-eastern counties. His argument is for their need to regain "independence of character," perhaps through smallholdings, and he exposes the alliance between landlords, clergy, and farmers which was suppressing dissent and union activity among the labourers. It is unfortunate for our purposes that the format of his articles was too brief for him to develop the interviews with working men from which he quotes; though they have been edited for terseness the fragments of their speech are authentic in tone and make an impact. A man makes the traditional complaint that the farmers are not cleaning their land properly (and of course skimping on labour):

> Why, there's five crops in that there field. There's thistles and docks, and poppies and curlock and squitch, besides the barley. (p. 40)

Another sardonically recognizes the deception practised by landlords who let ground for allotments at twice the price they could have got from a farmer: "They does a little charity and they doubles their income" (p. 64). A man of seventy-two recalled the higher wages paid in his youth:

> There was one-pun' notes in them days, and many's the time when I was a boy o' fourteen and worked wi' the flail wi' my feyther we'd taake home a one-pun' note for our week's work. Why, if they were to pay 'e a one-pun' note now they'd think as they were goin' to be bust up. (p. 47)

In tied cottages one farmer even tried to dictate what time his men should go to bed (p. 149); the rector's wife controlled the loan of blankets and the clothing club, checking that the clothes bought through it by the labourers' families were "suitable" for people in their station in life (p. 55).

Millin seems to have been quite sensitive to his informants' feelings that he, as a gentleman, might be on the other side in this system of oppression. He tells the story, against himself, of how, as a gentleman occupying the bar of a public house, he had too graciously invited an old labouring man to come in; the man refused and sat outside:

> Perhaps there was just a touch of the patronizing in my tone. If there was my priggishness was promptly rebuked. "Oh, I ain't afeerd o' you mate," said the old man. . . . . (p. 10)

Millin anticipates George Sturt's observation in Change in the Village (pp. 113-118) that labourers' children seem cowed by the many regulations in defence of property:

> They have to be very careful. Their children mustn't wander from the pathway in the park, and dreadful things could happen were they known to bring home a few dry sticks (p. 55).

As part of his attack on the sapping of initiative and independence brought about by benevolent paternalism he makes the folkloristically interesting suggestion that those villages traditionally known as the abode of numskulls might have a common factor in being controlled by great estates where a single landowner is the only employer:

> Under this spiritually minded and enlightened regime of the Church on the one hand and the great landed proprietor on the other, Combe seems to have been in the past a bye-word and a scoffing to all the villagers around. Anything specially simple-minded and stupid it has been the habit to put down to "Silly Combe," and in the country around you may hear how that one native of the place sat on the branch of a tree while he sawed it off . . . how that another turned a horse out to graze with the nose-bag on. . . . (p. 82)

In support of Millin's suggestion we might remember from Sturt's Memoirs of a Surrey Labourer how Bettesworth scorned men who had worked on estates all their lives and consequently had no idea of how to shift for employment if they were laid off:

> They hadn't looked out for theirselves; their fathers had always got the work for 'em, and law! they didn' know where to go more than a cuckoo! But I reckon that's a very silly thing. (Memoirs, p. 171)

The same sentiment is expressed in Eric Benfield's novel of Purbeck, Dorset, folklife, Saul's Sons.[56]

Taken as a whole, however, Millin's interviews give only flashes of characteristic phrases and attitudes; his need as a journalist for a few pungent comments to give point to a series of briefly treated topics precludes any more sustained study of individuals.

The Reverend Augustus Jessopp's (1823-1914) essays, originally published in the periodical The Nineteenth Century and collected in Arcady for Better for Worse (1887),[57] are generally of the problem-solving variety in which he addresses such contemporary problems as rural depopulation and the evil condition of labourers' housing. The basis of his observations, however, is a true rapport, probably

uncommon in Anglican ministers, with his mid-Norfolk parishioners. Jessopp's originality, and the several ways in which he prefigures George Sturt -- principally through his interviews with individual labourers -- have been well described by John Fraser;[58] my own comments will focus on his interests in folk belief and popular religion and, especially, in recording life histories. Of course as an essayist writing for a journal Jessopp could develop his ideas and techniques at more length and with greater subtlety than could newspaper correspondents such as Millin.

His unorthodoxy is shown in his chiding of his brother clergymen for "obstinately refusing to know anything about the inner life and religious practices of the sectaries at their own doors" (pp. 75-76); to know the labourers he felt it vital to "study the phenomena of their religious life and worship," even though it was conducted in chapels and at camp-meetings. In "Arcady in Some Phases of Her Faith," therefore, he presents an overview of the spiritual beliefs and experiences of labouring people, grouping together in a sensitive arrangement traditional ghost legends with the "conversion" stories of Primitive Methodists; the essay also includes case histories of witchcraft and the role of the cunning man, and accounts of ill-wishing and counter-magic,

Since the "slightest words and acts of the great leaders in art, politics, or literature, are greedily sought for and jealously preserved," Jessopp observes ironically, "the personal reminiscences of the humble peasant . . . surely ought to have something to suggest to us" (p. 32). He gives an outline of his interviewing technique, which is composed of tact and patience:

> . . . we love to drop into the little cabins and gossip with our elders, picking up the fragments that still remain of the language and the traditions that are fading. . . . They are, however, a wary and reticent race, and shy of letting out too much at a time. . . . Round and round and round we beat. More often than not it's a blank day. But then again, awoke by a chance word, up there rises from the dark storehouses of memory a cloud as big as a man's hand, and how slowly we have to set to work if we hope to see it gather form and distinctness. If you lose your chance, you may never get it again. "It's easy does it," as they say. (p. 35)

The sincerity of Jessopp's regard is evident, and it is also unsentimental, despite his avuncular tone. Unfortunately he summarizes portions of the life stories he collects but those excerpts he gives in near-verbatim speech ring true and are valuable evidence in the enumeration of the topics of personal reminiscence; the following extract, for example, is of the dispute genre that I have described elsewhere;[59] the speaker is describing his boyhood when he "lived-in" at a farm:

> [Jessopp:] "How did you get your clothes if you got no wages?" "I didn't get no clothes. I was always a little 'un, yet I grew, and when my first year came to an end I said to my master, 'Look here!' and I showed him how I had nothing between my breeches and my jacket. We used to fasten up our breeches with a strap or a cord. 'I couldn't buy a strap, so I had to truss up with string, and the breeches were good breeches, but they were too heavy for the jacket, and they'd tore the bottom part off. So I says to master, 'Look here!' says I, 'I can't go on so.' And he was put out about something, and he took me up short, and says he, 'Then you may go off so!'. And I did go off, and I went and hired myself with Farmer Olde -- up that way -- and there I was to get a pound a year, for he knew I was handy! (p. 38)

The working career and the relations between master and man are the focus of these reminiscences; another man tells vividly of being flogged by a farmer and a woman makes it a boast that she "'never had a mistress as ever give me a flogging -- not one!'" (pp. 40-42). Jessopp also noted a significant omission in their stories:

> The old people never have anything to say about their fathers. Whatever memories they have of tenderness, pity, or sympathy, these all have to do with their mothers. The fathers seem to have been a terror to the rising generation and only that. 'Father used to hide me with a strap,' says one. 'My father didn't hold wi' beating you wi' a stick -- he used to flog us,' whatever that may mean, says another. All the octogenarians tell the same tale. (p. 48)

Though it would be desirable to have more information on what questions Jessopp posed -- beyond his indications that he was largely passive -- the responses sound like authentic topics of personal reminiscence among rural labourers. It is unfortunate that although fragmentary comments from labourers are scattered throughout the collection, only one essay, "The Arcady of our Grandfathers," treats reminiscence extensively.

Jessopp's title, and the substitution of classical for English place names, is sardonic. He is no pastoralist: "'Merry England' certainly does not exist in our country parishes, and I am not sure but that our life is getting more and more monotonous, depressing and stupid year by year" (pp. 241-242). Sturt's attitude is presaged in Jessopp's analysis of the causes of this gloom -- enclosure of the common lands leading to wage labour rather than independent peasant life, and the imposition of alien standards of behaviour by the rising middle class: "We in the wilderness have been legislated for, and had so much done for us and done to us, and have become so disgustingly orderly, enlightened, and decently respectable, that a farm labourer is a heavy, sanctimonious, and thoroughly cowed creature . . . " (pp. 229-230). And Jessopp admits

that the clergy and their families are much to blame for "the general deluge of smug and paralyzing respectability which has overrun our country villages" (p. 231). This is the tone of disgust in which Sturt would write Change in the Village and it prefigures his awareness of the corrosive effect of "respectability" on so many social traditions like mumming and Bonfire Night.

One other very thoughtful contribution to the contemporary debate in newspapers and journals on the condition of the rural labourer, the rise of trade unionism, and the decline of "picturesqueness" in rural life, was made by Thomas Hardy in "The Dorsetshire Labourer," published in Longman's Magazine, July 1883.[60] Of course, as is well known, Hardy's novels are full of fine folklife detail but they lie beyond the scope of this study. Hardy's essay takes a middle position between the bleakness of Richard Jefferies' view in "John Smith's Shanty" and the mindless nostalgia for an imagined Arcadia displayed by some other writers. Hardy regrets that the labourers' adoption of current fashions in dress, frequent moves between farms, and contact with urban ideas, has caused them to lose their "individuality," but accepts that they should not be held back from independence "for the pleasure of romantic spectators" (p. 181). But his disappointment at

the modern farm worker's exchange of "a mangy old cloth coat" for "the genuine white smock-frock of Russia duck and the whity-brown one of drabbet" (p. 176), however, curiously echoes John Aubrey's complaint that

> . . .since 1671 [our shepherds] . . .are grown so luxurious as to neglect their ancient warme and useful fashion, and goe a la mode. . . . Before the civill warres I remember many of them made straw hatts, which I thinke is now left off, and our shepherdesses of late yeares (1680) doe begin to worke point, whereas before they did only knit coarse stockings.[61]

We are dealing here with an aspect of that receding vision of the "traditional" age which, as Raymond Williams pointed out, successive generations of rural writers have regarded as having so recently, tantalizingly, passed away.[62]

There are some sharp vignettes in Hardy's essay: the bowed figure of the old shepherd at the hiring fair, two farmers dubiously considering him: "'There's work left in en still,' . . . 'You'd get en cheap'" (p. 175), or the description of the annual removals to new farms: the dresser, hive of bees, barrels, bedding, the looking glass, all carefully assembled on the cart "to a well-nigh unvarying pattern. . . .peculiar to the country labourer" (p. 178). Many of the investigators of the rural poor were horrified by their apparently filthy houses and

clothes but Hardy's discussion of the question of cleanliness anticipates Sturt's recognition that this was a particularly "touchy" subject for middle-class critics or benefactors of the poor;[63] dark colours in a cottage, Hardy found, might give it an undeserved reputation for squalor, while the calculated appearance of a white apron might do the reverse:

> "I always kip a white apron behind the door to slip on when the gentlefolk knock, for if they see a white apron they think ye be clane," said an honest woman one day, whose bedroom floors could have been scraped with as much advantage as a pigeon-loft. (p. 172)

We learn that labouring men changed their shirts once a week from a man's remark on his clean Sunday shirt that had fallen in the mud while being aired on a bush: "His wife would have got him another, but 'No,' he said, 'the shirt shall wear his week. 'Tis fresh dirt, anyhow, and starch is no more'" (p. 174). Fastidiousness would have been a weakness in a working man, as Sturt understood, and Hardy points out that untidiness often indicated a copyholder or freeholder who was not beholden to a farmer or squire and hence was not obliged to appear "decent."

A certain superficiality is probably inevitable in the kind of issue-oriented writing in which the journalists

were engaged; in their hurry to provide representative surveys of large regions they could not hope to develop much rapport with their informants, nor expect to publish longer interviews. In turning from the journalists to another group of writers about the country, the antiquarians, two contrasts are apparent: firstly, that where the journalists sought pieces of vivid testimony on current social problems the antiquarians approached informants primarily for what they could tell about past beliefs, customs, or artifacts, and secondly, that the antiquarians were often extremely local in their interests. Yet within their self-appointed geographical domains they took a catholic interest in all matters -- archaeological, historical, spiritual, technical, zoological, and botanical -- that might contribute to the record of life in their county or parish. Such authors were often clergymen, or gentlemen of independent means; many were amateur scholars in the very best sense of the terms. It must be emphasised that the term 'antiquarian' carries no pejorative overtones in my usage; by it I simply mean this breadth of scientific interest.

IV. Antiquarian Memoirs and Studies

Forty Years in a Moorland Parish: Reminiscences and Researches in Danby in Cleveland (1891, 1907),[64] by Rev. J.C. Atkinson (1814-1900), is probably the finest example of the value of the broad, complementary interests of the nineteenth-century antiquary. Atkinson's knowledge of archaeology, history, linguistics, and folklore, combined with his field research in all these topics within his pastoral area in the Yorkshire dales, makes his book much more than the volume of mellow reminiscence that might be expected from its title; in fact it makes a number of interesting theoretical suggestions that have only recently been more fully investigated by folklorists and social historians.

Rev. Atkinson spent fifty-three years in the same rural parish and from two appreciations of him published in the second edition, and from inferences drawn from his own text, it is obvious that he was tolerant, open-minded, sensitive to local manners -- he was careful, for example, to avoid visiting unannounced at meal-times -- and was consequently well thought of.

His rapport with local people is shown by his ability to record unforced and natural versions of memorates and legends concerning fairy, witch, and death beliefs. This was not achieved by chance or even through his congeniality

or clerical status (the latter may perhaps have hindered); he describes the difficulty of getting particular men to talk because of their fear of being thought superstitious or their feeling that there was something diabolical in the subject of witchcraft and animal cures. The sensitivity he shows toward their attitudes marks him as an excellent collector; for this see especially his chapter "Evidences of Latent Faith in Archaic Folk-Tales" (pp. 58-63).

An elderly woman was more forthcoming on the topic of fairies; she had heard them making butter and seen fairy-butter smeared on a gate; knew that they lived underground; had known a girl who found a fairy child; and retold the local story of the Hart Hall "Hob" -- a spirit who worked in the barn by night threshing until presented with a shirt, the medieval "hamp", as Atkinson explains in elucidating the couplet spoken in dialect by the departing Hob. It was not merely Atkinson's luck to hear these narratives; he knew what to look for: we hear his questions to the old lady designed to elicit the full story, the likely pattern of which he had in mind from his reading in Danish and Swedish folklore studies:

> Had she ever seen him, or any of the work he had done? "Seen him, saidst 'ee? Neea, naebody had ever seen him, leastwise mair nor yance. And that was how he coomed to flit." -- "How was that?" I asked. "Wheea, everybody kenned at

> sikan a mak' o' creatur as yon never tholed being spied efter." -- "And did they spy upon him?" I inquired. "Ay, marry, that did they. Yah moon-leeght neeght, when they heared his swipple (the striking part of the flail) gannan' wiv a strange quick bat (stroke) o' t' lathe fleear (on the barn floor) -- ye ken he wad dee mair i' yah neeght than a' t' men o' t' farm cou'd dee iv a deea -- yan o' t' lads gat hissel' croppen oop close anenst lathe-deear, an' leeak'd in thruff a lahtle hole i' t' boards, an' he seen a lahtle brown man, a' covered wi' hair, spangin' about wiv fleeal lahk yan wud (striking about with the flail as if he was beside himself). He'd getten a haill dess o' shaffs (a whole layer of sheaves) doon o' t' fleear, and my wo'd! ommost afore ye cou'd tell, he had tonned (turned) oot t' strae, an' sided away t' coorn, and was rife for another dess. He had nae claes on to speak of, and t' lad, he cou'd na see at he had any mak' or mander o' duds by an au'd ragg'd soort ov a sark." (pp. 54-55)

He remarks that "the usual termination of such legends" has the Hob departing because he has been spied upon rather than because of the gift of the new shirt.

But beyond his interest in traditional patterns in legends (he would also have known the work on story classification of Sabine Baring-Gould, who corresponded with him), Atkinson also considered elements of what might now be termed "performance" and how this reflected degrees of belief. He notes his informant's change in tone when speaking of what she had only <u>heard</u>: ". . .the lack of feature and detail consequent on her lack of personal interest in the subject was quite evident" (p. 54), as compared with what she <u>knew</u>:

> . . .our communicative old lady told forth her tale as of things that had happened under everybody's cognisance, and as it might be only the other day; and of which she had only just missed personal cognisance herself by coming a little too late on the scene. . . .(p. 68)

This concern on Atkinson's part with the actual degree and quality of belief is developed further in his chapter "The Hob and Other Matters, and how received in the Folk's Mind." He does not wish to suggest that his parishioners are "superstitious" but merely that their version of reality includes fairies and other beings, against which practical precautions may be taken without any necessary feelings of "dread." He offers two examples:

> The nearest approach to the feeling -- I must not say of dread, of even apprehension, so much as -- of precaution that I have ever met with was in the case of a farm-lass in Farndale, who, hearing the "gabble-ratchet" [i.e. the wild hunt] overhead, as she was coming in from the fold-yard to the house in the dusk of the evening, rushed hastily indoors, slammed the door to, bolted it, and flung her apron over her head. On being asked "What was the matter?" her answer was, "I heared t' gabble-ratchet; but I lay I've stopped it fra deeing me any ho't (hurt). (p. 70)

In the second instance two farm servants see a Jenny-wi'-t'-lant'ren":

> The man turned his jacket inside out, and the girl turned her apron; after which they proceeded placidly with their occupation, troubling themselves no more. . . .(p. 71)

His account, albeit secondhand, of cutting rowan or "witch-wood" for house protection (pp. 97-99, and see also p. 75 where it is carried in a purse), is unusually detailed; he also describes the safeguarding of dairy vessels through rowan, salt, fire and iron (p. 100).

His several examples of legends of witches in animal form, usually as hares, are full of authentic circumstantial detail and, drawing on his historical perspective, Atkinson goes on to make the interesting suggestion that the frequency of the belief in milk-stealing witches is related to the earlier practice of pasturing the cows together in the common fields where, "when the cows of perhaps thirty to forty owners were all mixed up together, dishonest milking would be much more difficult of detection" (p. 87). His comment on the ambivalent reputation of the white witch, as being thought able to harm as well as help through unspecified means, is also astute:

> . . .this jelly-fish sort of beneficence and benevolence was scarcely assumed by the devotees, or even too forcibly by the Wise Man himself, to be altogether celestial in its origin, any more than it was purely unselfish in its application and utility. (p. 108)

Atkinson gives a fine account of the role of the white witch in finding lost or stolen property, detecting witchcraft, healing and protecting livestock, and protecting his own reputation by punishing those why try to test his powers or make fun of him ("The Wise Man," pp. 103-125).

Another idea investigated is the fear of the return of the dead; he traces this theme convincingly through the custom of "telling the bees" that their master is dead (they being one of the possessions the dead might covet and return for); keeping to the "church road" when carrying a corpse to burial (again lest by failure to do so the spirit be given power to "come again"); or the need to confine suicides and murderers, expected to be restless dead, by burial at a crossroads with a thorn stake through the heart; dismemberment was also practiced and he suggests an "uncanny recognition" of this in legends of "headless ladies, and chain-rattling ghosts, ghastly bearers of cruel knives, and the like" (p. 218). His discovery of quantities of charcoal in old graves causes him to suggest this was also intended as a barrier to return, on the same principle as in southern Sweden live coals were thrown after the corpse as it was taken from the house. It might be noted here that Atkinson's interest in Swedish and Danish language and folklore was due to his research into the large Norse component in local

speech and place names. The local term "averil bread," for special biscuits served at funerals, is traced to Scandinavia. This is not to suggest that Atkinson is only speculative or philological in his chapters on "Manners and Customs"; there are also good descriptions of the actual conduct of burials and weddings.

Atkinson is unfailingly respectful in his manner of presenting his informants and their knowledge; the same can be said of Fletcher Moss (1843-1919), of Didsbury, near Manchester, who published three volumes of local history, all making some reference to the folklife of the area, and one study of major folkloric importance: Folk-Lore, Old Customs and Tales of My Neighbours (1898).[65] Moss writes in a drily humorous style; he is plain spoken and discursive. The usual keen local pride is evident -- he was an alderman, but a "low Radical" one, to use the terms of the Tories he baits. His family was old established in the neighbourhood and he was able to draw upon its oral traditions as well as enquiring among local people. He seems to have been affable and unpretentious, as emerges from his useful advice:

> To learn a tale it is often necessary to tell a tale. People will tell things to those who have their confidence, which they will flatly deny to any one who seems to them to be inquisitive, or to be a superior person trying to get something from them (p. ix).

So, while Moss's works are squarely in the genre of the community history written by the native son, he is unusual in the extent to which he became conscious of folklore as a field of study, even using a questionnaire issued by the British Association for the Advancement of Science as part of its projected Ethnographical Survey of the United Kingdom. This accounts for his arrangement of the first part of Folk-Lore, Old Customs and Tales of My Neighbours in the familiar "county folklore" style: Births, Weddings, Burials, Festivals, the Weather and Flowers, Animals; other chapters return to the more idiosyncratic selections usual in these miscellanies.

His handling of the items of folklore in the questionnaire-derived sections is brief but sometimes has the merit of preserving the informants' original words. The long sub-divided chapter on "Festivals" has some of the most detailed material, especially on festival foods for Shrove Tuesday, Collop Monday, Ash Wednesday, Simnel Sunday, Carling Sunday, Good Friday, and Easter. The traditions and attitudes he records seem particularly ancient; he quotes one abiding resentment of the changing of the calendar:

> My friend the local wise man tells me that when "my grandfeyther wur a lad th' King an' Lords awtered th' kalendar, an' tuk eleven days off poor folk, which they ne'er got back. Th' yeer used to begin March quatter, when th' bumble bees come out, an' grass an' things grow gradely, an' yon's propperest time." (p. 31)

He mentions as still current the practice of turning the cattle to pastures to sleep out at nights on Old May Day and the terms of service for farm servants being still from then to Martinmas. The harvest cycle is described, from the fires lit in the wheat fields on January 6th, to the shout given at the last load --

> "We'n sheared and shorn, we'n sent the hare to So-and-So's corn" -- mentioning some neighbour who had not finished his harvest. (p. 54)

-- and the harvest supper is remembered as it was held at his uncle's farm. Moss gives stanzas of seven traditional and modern songs; one seems to have been learned from Irish harvesters.

His personal experience is drawn on in his commentary on the mummers' play, which he seems to have taken part in or played at as a boy; he notes that a "witty actor could make many personal and political allusions that were entertaining to the company," and how "The Slasher," in the hero-combat play, was made to stand for Buonaparte:

> I remember distinctly how an old uncle, who had volunteered against the First Napoleon, frightened us almost into fits with news about Napoleon the Third and some fancied invasion of England. He said, "Boney's coming," and didn't we practise the Slasher. (p. 68)

Moss is at his best in the passages he quotes directly in dialect: the poaching stories in the chapter on the lawless "Gatley Folk," for example, or the shoemaker's version of the local oral history of Waterloo:

> Why, Sergeant Ryle o' th' Guards wur born an' buried at Gatley. 'E's tode me scores o' times as Gatley wur just like Watterloo. It was aw corn-fields wi' two farm 'ouses. Hug-em-on, which they took six times, was just sich another as th' 'aw. They fought barfoot, for their boots stuck i' th' mud. . . .(p. 225-226)

He had the gift of listening carefully as we may see by the characteristic clinching detail of the truth of a legend, in the teller's opinion, which Moss preserves at the end of a long rendering of one man's telling of the laying of the ghost known as the "Gatley Shouter":

> An' 'e prayed at 'im i' Latin too, mind yo', as weel as English, an' th' poor ghoast moans an' chunners an' gets littler an' littler till 'e fair sweals away like a sneel that's sawted. An' at last th' devil wur druv out o' 'im, an' 'e lets 'im abide as quiet as a mouse. 'E's now under yon big stone near by th' passon's gate. Yo' may see it for yosen. It's theer now. (p. 135)

A lesser collector might not have troubled to include the last two or three sentences but they are essential to the style of the legend in performance.

The quantity and variety of the folklore material in this book is, of course, exceptional for a village memoir. In addition to his emphasis on belief and custom, Moss thinks it natural that material culture should be discussed too, hence the good chapter, "Cheshire Cheese," with the local proverbs referring to good dairy practice. There are also rhymes, cures, and anecdotes, most in some way personally encountered in fieldwork or family talk. It is really a county folklore survey, albeit by an individual, and focused in one area, which maintains the personal, engagingly discursive, manner Moss had developed in his earlier local history sketches.

In Cecil Torr's (1857-1928) trilogy Small Talk at Wreyland (1918, 1921, 1923),[66] people from a Devonshire hamlet are presented through snippets of their talk, much of it selected for its unconscious humour; yet Torr's intelligence and wit prevent it from being the kind of condescending chat about the rustics that Sturt detested. The title itself is more of a self-deprecating reference to his own opinions expressed within than a judgement on what local people tell him. The book is almost impossible to categorise; it is village history, but from a non-parochial perspective since Torr travelled in Europe each year, was a classical scholar and archaeologist, and his travels and

reflections on history, politics, art and literature are a large part of the whole. His original intention, however, was to confine himself to "local matters" and to preserve what he could of the oral history of the manor of Wreyland, to which he succeeded as squire, using as resources his grandfather's full and informal letters about local events and folklore, his father's diaries, and his own memories and enquiries. Thus Torr's Small Talk mingles the genres of the country book: it has the discursive style and personal tone of the journal kept in the country; the antiquarian's concern with local history, belief, custom, work techniques; and draws the rural essayist's contrasts between the rural dwellers of both upper and labouring class and the ignorant townspeople appearing as summer visitors or jerry-builders of garish villas.

Torr was clearly fascinated by the possibility that a chain of oral transmission could maintain descriptions of historical events; in his opening pages he cites two remarkable instances of oral history that he had encountered, one being a report of the beheading of Charles I and the other the preservation of a child's view of the Great Fire of London (I, 1, 2). Innovations such as motor-cars and aeroplanes in the parish cause him to remember how old people had told him of seeing the first carts in the area;

prior to the late eighteenth century transportation had been by packhorse and he notes that sledges were still in use on steep fields (II, 1). He is also impressed by the hidden knowledge contained in old techniques now followed purely by tradition and cites a case of a stretch of road that had always been patched by curved river stones hauled from a distance; no one knew why until jagged pieces of granite extracted by blasting were substituted for the flattened stones and the repaired road subsided in the boggy soil (III, 64). This is the kind of folk knowledge admired by Sturt.

Though Torr's reflections are heterogeneous they are not haphazardly arranged but fall into brief seamless discourses about particular topics to which he brings material from his wide reading, travels, and reminiscences. Thus local supernatural beliefs are not treated on their own as some quaint aberration but are set in a much broader context which includes his own visit to the Pope and the latter's prophetic remark about Torr's future as a historian (I, 12). His frame of reference is historical as well as geographic and he compares the medieval fashion for bringing earth to be buried in from the Holy Land to his mother's zeal to procure, in some empty soda bottles, some water from the Jordan to use in baptisms (I, 10).

His theme is thus the many dimensions of human belief into which local examples fit naturally without being made to seem bizarre:

> A child was born here on 20 November 1902, and had a rupture. Some while afterwards I asked the father how the child was getting on, and the answer was -- "Oh, it be a sight better since us put'n through a tree." And I found that they had carried out the ancient rite. The father had split an ash-tree on the hill behind this house, and had wedged the hole open with two chunks of oak. Then he and his wife took the child up there at day-break; and, as the sun rose, they passed it three times through the tree, from east to west. The mother then took the child home, and the father pulled out the chunks of oak, and bandaged up the tree. As the tree-trunk healed, so would the rupture heal also.
>
> I asked him why he did it, and he seemed surprised at the question, and said -- "Why, all folk do it." I then asked him whether he thought it really did much good, and the reply was -- "Well, as much good as sloppin' water over'n in church." (I, 7)

Torr presents such examples without comment, leaving the reader to make what connections he will.

There are plenty of indications that there was no great degree of orthodox Anglican religious faith in the parish; the people only followed conservatively in their protestant traditions. In his usual mode of anecdotal example and generalization, Torr remembers:

> On a Good Friday morning I found a small girl standing on my door-step here, eating a hot-cross-bun. I asked what she was doing there, and she curtsied and said, "Please, zir, I be fasting." And generally the seasons of the Christian year were marked by buns, lamb, goose, plum-pudding, pancakes and salt-fish far more than by observances at church (II, 66).

Torr's grandfather describes the usual burning of the Pope in effigy on November 5th, but clad in a white surplice, "therefore the old women say it was intended for the Rector" (I, 17-18) -- a surplice being a sign of Romish inclinations. Torr also recalls an old lady who left the church in favour of the chapel when "a child of hers had caught its death of cold by the parson a-baptizin' of it without a-puttin' of a kettleful o' bilin' water into that stoney font" (II, 66).

The book may be read as a merely amusing collection of rustic remarks; for example, the two following, relating to Torr's visit to Rome:

> . . . I was talking to Mrs. *****, -- she was of an earlier generation than the Mrs. ***** of whom I spoke just now -- and I told her that I had been to Rome and seen the Pope. She asked me eagerly, "Well now, maister, what be he like? I reckon he be a proper tiger to fight." As a thorough-going Protestant, she knew no difference between the Devil and the Pope.
>
> Her husband always felt that a great chance had been missed when the Devil came into Widdicombe church on Sunday 21 October 1638. My grandfather pressed him as to what he would have done; and his reply was, "Dock'n, maister, dock'n -- cut the tail of'n off." (I, 12)

No doubt these were told as "good stories" within the Torr family as a benevolent squirearchy, but Torr seems interested in them for what they show of an earlier world view which incorporated such things as divine intervention, devils and angels, as tangible realities. A neighbour had asked him to have a certain tree cut down, but Torr refused. Later it was struck by lightning; he comments:

> I thought it strange, but he explained it simply:- "I'd prayed ag'in that tree."
>
> He was a very old man; and people of his generation never looked upon your actions as your own, but as the actions of a Power that directed you. (I, 8)

These are good examples of the practical use of what analysts are obliged to term "magical" principles; he cites as another example a local farmer's astonishment at his grandfather's ignorance of the need to find the shoe nail that had been extracted from a cow's hoof and stick it into a piece of bacon in order to prevent lameness in the animal (I, 9). But these local observations are juxtaposed with his recollection of the rite of scrubbing the high-altar at St. Peter's in Rome on Maundy Thursday; he sardonically describes the different styles affected by the church dignitaries taking part:

> Some evidently thought it symbolical, and merely waved their mops across the altar, hardly touching it. And others would scrub hard, and then put their heads down and look carefully through their spectacles to see what they had done, and then go on scrubbing again till they were satisfied that they had done their bit. (I, 11)

As Jack Simmons in his perceptive introduction to the 1979 edition suggests, "Torr makes us see everything as relative: Devon and England as a part of European civilization" (I, x). It is in this way that Torr's book avoids being another patronizing exhibition of curios.

Torr mentions calendar traditions such as the planting of potatoes on Good Friday, and kicking a football around after the planting (III, 102); and also the "swayling," or burning off the previous year's gorse and heather, which in his youth was always done on Maundy Thursday (II, 36), and which he suggests may be connected with the tradition of Beltane fires. The interest of the book, however, is less for these easily abstractable "items" of tradition as in its delight in quoting characteristic sentiments and attitudes: for example, the disapproval of nudity: "'Well, Mr. Torr, if this be Wreyland, us might live in savage parts'" (I, 63) (the comment of an elder at seeing the Church Lads' Brigade bathing in a stream); the reluctance to go anywhere merely for a walk: "'Well, Dartymoor be a place I never were at'" (I, 63), though Torr often rambled there;

the feeling that there was always time to spare: "'the days be long'" (I, 63). He notes "thefts are very rare here" and people are surprised when a parcel left by the roadside on a Saturday for a man to collect on Monday disappears (III, 16). People avoid signing papers out of a deep suspicion of the law:

> An old man here was asked to witness the execution of a Deed, and signed the Attestation with very great misgivings. "There now, if 't 'ad bin for anyone but you, I'd 've bin 'mazin' coy o' that. I've heerd of men a-losin' thousands by just settin' hand to paper." (III, 37)

They build their houses in the hollows, for shelter, with no regard to "views":

> A farmer here was leaning over a gate from which there is a glorious view. Seeing the view, a passerby remarked to him how glorious it was. The farmer answered, "Durn the view. I bain't lookin' at no view. I be lookin' how they dratted rabbits 'as ated up my tunnips." (II, 118)

(The question of whether the countryman had any aesthetic sensibility is a topic that occupied the aesthetes among the later school of country writers such as H.J. Massingham). These fleeting but well-chosen, representative comments from the people of Wreyland make the book not only delightful but also worthwhile as ethnography.

Rev. Sabine Baring-Gould (1834-1924) is the best known of the several English clerical writers on folklore and rural life; he produced a great number of popular books on folklore topics and, in a more belles-lettres style, on West Country rural life. With the exception of his innovative work on "story radicals," an early attempt at classifying the plots of folk narratives,[67] his main contributions to folklore studies were his folksong collections: Songs of the West (1889-1892) and A Garland of Country Song (1895).[68] That he bowdlerized the song texts in order to restore the tunes to general circulation is an issue that has been discussed elsewhere[69] and need not be entered into here; except to say that his dismissal of the original words and preference of his own poetic effusions is not merely a matter of conforming to Victorian morality but points to the fundamental fault in his folkloristic work: he is not enough concerned with particulars but writes over confidently in sweeping generalities.

Nevertheless, there is no doubt of the seriousness of his interest in folksong and he is at his best in his notes of his collecting experiences, and brief character-sketches of singers, in the chapter "The Village Bard" in his Old Country Life (1890; 5th ed. 1895);[70] another interesting account is given in his Further Reminiscences (1925),

ch. 15, "Folk Songs 1887-88."[71] Though all too brief his remarks take up important points in folksong: a singer stalks out of a concert where Baring-Gould had sung an old song -- "set by a friend to a melody he had composed for it" -- grumbling:

> He's gotten the words right, but he's not got the right tune. He should zing 'un right or not at all. (Old Country Life, p. 266)

The same concern for the "rightness" of the tune is shown by another singer bold enough to correct the formidable parson:

> He was very strict with me, and insisted on my taking down his airs correctly. "Thicky wi'n't do," he would say. "You've gotten that note not right. You mun know that I'm the master and you'm the scholar; and I wi'n't have any slurs or blunders. What is right is right, and what is wrong niver can be right to the warld's end." (Further Reminiscences, p. 198)

He mentions the repertoires of one hundred and fifty to two hundred songs claimed by some singers and a singing match in which two sang, taking turns, from sunset to sunrise without either coming to the end of his knowledge. In the following, a singer's testimony about his prowess, Baring-Gould has got the tone right, showing that he could

listen attentively to the manner as well as the matter of local talk, when it concerned a topic in which he was interested:

> Parsons [the singer] went every pay-day to a little moorland tavern, where the miners met to drink, and there he invariably got his "entertainment" for his singing. "I'd been zinging there," said he, "one evening till I got a bit fresh, and I thought 'twere time for me to be off. So I stood up to go, and then one chap, he said to me, "Got to the end o' your zongs, old man?" "Not I," said I, "not by a long ways; but I reckon it be time for me to be going." "Looky here, Jim," said he. "I'll give you a quart of ale for every fresh song you sing us to-night." Well, your honour, I sat down again, and I zinged on -- I zinged sixteen fresh songs and that chap had to pay for sixteen quarts."
>
> "Pints, surely," I said.
>
> "No, zur!" bridling up. "No, zur -- not pints, good English quarts. And then -- I hadn't come to the end o' my zongs, only I were that fuddled, I couldn't remember no more."
>
> "Sixteen quarts between feeling fresh and getting fuddled!"
>
> "Sixteen. Ask Voysey; he paid for 'n."
> (Old Country Life, pp. 271-272)

This is the kind of story, about competence in the craft of singing, and of manhood in the ability to hold one's drink, that is very familiar in oral autobiography.

Also mentioned is the Methodist intolerance of secular songs which, in one case, made the strictly brought-up singer more eager to learn them (Old Country Life, p. 272). One man and his wife sang in parts (ibid, p. 280), and in Further Reminiscences is the note that he discovered "The Elfin Knight" to have been "enacted at Christmas-time by a youth and a maiden, in Cornish farm-houses" (p. 197).[72] Notable also is his description of local "poets," one of whom always visited Baring-Gould's grandfather to "sing a copy of the verses" he had composed on any important event in the family (the Baring-Goulds were the squires of Lew Trenchard, Devon); another gave an impromptu rhymed account of a wrestling match as it was going on:

> . . . he began swinging himself from foot to foot, and to a chant -- these fellows always sing their verses -- described the match as it went on before him, versifying all the turns and incidents of the struggle, throwing in words relative to the onlookers, their names and complementary expletives. (Old Country Life, pp. 268-269)

Although he makes some useful observations, Baring-Gould's views on folksong, and singers, in general, were coloured by what has been termed "the devolutionary premise in folklore theory";[73] he was very conscious of collecting at the end of a tradition that had, to his mind, been

garbled by broadside versions and faulty memories. Consequently there is no sign that he considered the opinions of these generally illiterate singers upon the songs they sang to be worthy of much interest.

Another area in which he conducted personal investigation is that of white witchcraft, and a worthwhile chapter on this occurs in Devonshire Characters and Strange Events (1908).[74] His principal subject was Marianne Voaden who lived in a house that gradually tumbled around her and who performed both physiological and magico-religious cures; cases of bloodstopping and other cures are outlined and he gives texts of her verbal charms which invoke pseudo-Biblical acts of healing (Devonshire Characters, p. 77). Her history is repeated in better detail in Further Reminiscences, where he cites various examples of her anti-social behaviour (writing placards attacking her neighbours) which gave her an ambiguous reputation as one to be feared yet also to be resorted to for some kinds of cure.

Like most prolific writers Baring-Gould was not shy of using good material twice; neither was he too nice about details: in Old Country Life, for example, the singer James Parsons is the son of a man known as "The Singing Machine" (p. 270), but by Further Reminiscences Baring-Gould's memory has transferred the nickname to

Parsons himself (p. 197). Such are minor but disconcerting errors. His works are too numerous to be reviewed in detail here but the two volumes of Reminiscences make the most convenient starting point for the reader. In particular, Ch. 9 of Early Reminiscences[75] gives "customs, superstitions, and legends" he learned at Lew in his youth, including death warnings, scraps of farming songs, ghost stories, and anecdotes of eccentric gentry. The chapter "Devonshire Lore" in Further Reminiscences has worthwhile material on the charivari, or "Stag Hunt," Jack o' Lanterns, watching for the spirits on St. Mark's Eve, and a fascinating memorate collected from a woman containing what is, in essence, a prose version of the ghost's request for his "faith and troth" in "Sweet William's Ghost" (Child No. 77).[76] She told of how a former sweetheart who had died returned to her and demanded she give back a kerchief he had given her as a pledge:

> . . . "An' if you was to dig he up," added Mrs. Worden, when she told me the story, "I reckon you'd find thickey kerchief in the corfin." (p. 124)

Baring-Gould was a man of great energies and wide interests; his song collection was an early and important one. In comparison with his contemporary, Canon J.C.

Atkinson, his work lacks the scholarly concentration on a region, its language and tradition, yet it is relatively free of the complacency and condescension of the other prolific clerical folklorist, P.H. Ditchfield.

The writings of P.H. Ditchfield (1854-1930) Rector of Barkham, Berkshire, embody the attitudes Sturt associated with the imaginary critic of his work, the country parson: he repeats unctuous platitudes about rural life in a tone of unshakeable complacency. His works, though not discussed by John Fraser, fall neatly into his wickedly apt designation: "The Merrie England" school of writing.[77] England was merry because people knew their place, respected their betters, worked with a will for squire, church, and country; and all this was part of a divinely-appointed order in which the labourer, while earning little material reward, enjoyed the natural pleasures of the outdoor life, becoming, through its chaste influences "nature's gentleman." Ditchfield's philosophy is itself a quaint survival of an eighteenth century, high Tory vision of country life.

Ditchfield, like Baring-Gould, was a prolific author and similarly gives the impression of having written easily without much hesitation for thought. His books, of which only a sampling are mentioned here, are revisions of each other at greater or lesser depth: his survey of extant

calendar and civic customs, Old English Customs (1896), seems to have grown out of his research on the earlier Old English Sports, Pastimes and Customs (1891), which has a calendar arrangement. His two works on vernacular architecture are beautifully illustrated; Sydney R. Jones' pen and ink sketches of cottage architecture and furnishings are particularly fine in The Charm of the English Village (1908); The Cottages and The Village Life of Rural England (1912), with illustrations in colour and line by A.R. Quinton, is more grandiosely conceived as what would now be termed a "coffee table book," but the colour plates are less descriptive and Ditchfield's prose, in both works, merely prattles along, decorously tying the illustrations together. Old Village Life (1920), is a history, at a general level, of the development of the English village as an institution from prehistoric times.[78]

Ditchfield's closest approach to the depiction of individuals occurs in his Country Folk: A Pleasant Company (1923), already mentioned for its use of the "Milk Maid" figure from Overbury. The gallery of characters format gives composite portraits of the typical Squire, Parson, Labourer, Gamekeeper, Poacher, Shepherd, Village Women, and eight other characteristic kinds of rural inhabitant. These are not direct encounters with particular individuals,

however, but depend heavily on literature and history to trace the development of each type. In remarkably few cases is he drawing on personal experience; he has met a keeper while at a shooting party, and he has watched a labourer load hay; here, the authentic note appears in the labourer's sister's comment on endurance:

> I have watched Bill Maynard working in the hay harvest forking up his heaps of hay on the wagon with rhythmic strokes by hard continuous labour; and mentioning to his sister how wonderful it was to watch him, I was told, "Aye, our Bill is no shirker." (p. 130)

The most interesting piece in the book is the oral autobiographical fragment from a small farmer describing his upbringing and first employments; it is a classic example of the usual style of a labourer's reminiscences in its focus on the rates of pay, and in the phrase which closes this excerpt:

> When I went to my first place I worked a year for £ 2 10s. and my keep. When I got £ 5 for my second year's work I thought I was a man. (Country Folk, pp. 140-142)

This phrase will be found to recur widely in what will be discussed below as the "oral canon" of autobiography.

The testimony was not collected by Ditchfield, however, but quoted by a reviewer of Ditchfield's Old Village Life, Rev. Richard Lawson Gales (1862-1920), a sensitive observer who often added material from his own experience to augment his reviews.[79] Ditchfield, however, seems embarrassed at bringing his readers into such unmediated contact with the voice of a real working man and lamely, patronizingly, refers to the passage as "this amusing little monologue"; to him it is an example of how by hard work, and without repining against his lot like modern agitators, the labourer can rise to comfortable wealth.

The good vicar is serene in his conviction that he knows best for his flock; education is hardly necessary:

> You cannot with all the power of the State and a lavish expenditure of money convert a yokel into a scholar . . . . (p. 96)
>
> . . . a real yokel will never become a scholar. Let him learn "to plough and to sow, to reap and to mow," to earn good wages on the land; let him marry and rear a good family of healthy, robust children which are the backbone of England, and he will be doing good service for the country. (p. 136)

The readiness of the middle and upper classes, trained themselves to the imperial ideal of "service," to expect it also in the labouring class has been interestingly discussed by

John Fraser and Raymond Williams;[80] Ditchfield is invoking it here and convincing himself that the poor are only materially so:

> Mr. Maurice Hewlett, in his examination of the philosophy of happiness, discovered that the farm labourers are the happiest class in spite of some untoward conditions. The reason of their happiness was that they obeyed the laws of their being more than any other workers in England. Their livelihood was a way of life that suited them, and they know that, in spite of much ignorance. (pp. 96-97)

Such benighted complacency is easily mocked today and has been considered at this length only because the sentiment is a major and continuing element in rural literature. The Merrie England school continued into the 1930's and 1940's with the revivalists of the previously mentioned "Return to Husbandry" movement, such as Rolf Gardiner with his hobby farm, worked by old techniques and folk dances.[81]

In contrast with Ditchfield's hack writing Charles Fleet's Glimpses of Our Ancestors in Sussex (1882)[82] shows the best of the antiquarian temperament: a willingness to consider any source of information that would "fill up a gap or two in the history of Men and Manners in his native County." He was particularly convinced of the value of diaries as a basis for social history and lamented that the urban

orientation of modern literature was leaving undescribed the lives of whole classes of country people. Who, he asked, had described the change in the "general trader" in Sussex villages of the last hundred years?

> How rarely do we get a correct delineation of such classes as these, or, indeed, of any classes in country places. . . . So perhaps, 100 years hence our descendants will wonder what kind of creature was the agricultural labourer, or even the farmer, or small country tradesman of those days. (p. 2)

In addition to discussing some Sussex diaries he gives the short autobiography of a shepherd, John Dudeney of Rottingdean, and attempts to get beyond the conventions of pastoral writing to the reality of shepherd life. Dudeney, however, as Fleet points out, is atypical, having read books while tending his flock until the age of twenty-three when he became a schoolmaster. For further information on shepherding, therefore, Fleet quotes from a paper by Richard Lower on "Old Southdown Shepherds"; Lower had a fair ear for dialect and at least noted the <u>type</u> of stories told by shepherds: long, chiefly related to their occupation, and sometimes of things that occurred fifty or a hundred years ago. Fleet's essay on "The Sussex Sheep-Shearer" is also good on the forming of shearing companies, their customs, songs and toasts.

Most to my purpose in tracing the rise of interest in the individual lives of "common" people, however, is his inclusion in a series of "Sussex Characters' sketched from Life," of "The Sussex Cottage-Wife." Mrs. Colly, the wife, is "the type of a class that was once common in Sussex" (p. 106). Fleet believed that occupation moulded character; the shepherd's expression, for example, was "an expression moulded by generations of men (for Down Shepherds, as a rule, descend from father to son) who have looked daily on the same scene . . ." (p. 90). Thus, in calling Mrs. Colly a "type of a class" he has in mind a similar effect of heredity and occupation.

His sketch begins with her environment, the cottage interior, and explores her role in domestic life. The brick floor is uneven and damp but the walls are decorated with "gaily coloured cups and saucers, and mugs and ornaments of quaint design, or even of the artistic, in engravings illustrating the adventures of Joseph and his brethren, and other Scriptural incidents, intermixed, probably with adventures in the sporting field." (p. 106) The innermost, draught-free, corner of the huge open chimney was the man's place but the woman "never sat down," chairs were for guests, her place was being busy (p. 106).

Fleet does not give us a verbatim conversation but quotes phrases from her discourse; her children, for example, had been

> "brought up in the fear of God from a month up'ards." What they did in the month that preceded the "up'ards" we never could fathom. It was one of those mysteries of speech that went down to the grace with Mrs. Colly. (p. 107)

Fleet is most directly Sturt's precursor in what he has to say of the worth of Mrs. Colly's life. Contrasting her habits and attitudes with middle class ones he finds hers largely superior and, as Sturt would with Bettesworth, points to the unrecognized contribution of people of her class to the good of the nation:

> But she was, up to 70 years of age, a healthy, hard-working, children-loving, flower-loving, and cow-loving woman -- fond of talking, but never sitting down to talk -- fond of walking, but never "going out for a walk" -- fond of a little bit of wholesome meat, but seldom or never getting it. Altogether she was an excellent specimen of a class of women who have had much to do in the making of England's greatness, for they have brought up and sent into the world not a few hard-headed, strong-fisted men, who have done many a good day's work for themselves and their country; and we doubt if England would miss many classes more than that of which we have tried to draw a sketch -- a faint one, we know it is -- a mere passing "glimpse" -- in Mrs. Colly, the Sussex cottage-wife. (p. 111)

The sketch of Mrs. Colly, while not giving us the full sense of an individual that Sturt achieves through his concentration on language, is discerning; Mrs. Colly is more than a "type."

Walter Johnson (1867- ?) was naturalist, geologist, archaeologist and, occasionally, a folklorist; in short he cultivated the broad interests of the amateur scientist of his day. Talks with Shepherds (1925) describes his conversations with shepherds met in the course of walking tours. His primary interest was to test their knowledge of local historical traditions and thereby to draw conclusions about the accuracy of folk memory with regard to its uses in archaeology, and his book dealing with this, Folk Memory or The Continuity of British Archaeology (1908), offers an excellent assessment of the value of oral testimony which deserves to be better known to folklorists and oral historians.[83] In his enquiries on local traditions about archaeological sites he gathered much other material of folkloristic interest, including legends and cures, but it is his faithful noting of shepherds' speech, and accurate rendering of the way their stories were delivered, that are of most interest here, and the achievement for which he may be compared with Sturt.

Though Johnson makes a deferential nod to the tradition of rural writing by acknowledging his search for

the "charm and restfulness" to be found in the country, his vision is scientific rather than nostalgic. His aim is accurate reporting:

> These chapters consist primarily of faithful transcripts of notes made soon after each respective conversation, hence, if the delineations should appear tame and unsensational, the reader may, at any rate, banish any suspicion that they may have been "touched up" for the sake of present effect. (Talks, p. iii)

The types and themes of the personal experience stories he recorded are authentic and may be paralleled from oral and written autobiographies. Characteristically they concern competence in the teller's occupation, his triumphs over others who have doubted his word or advice, and sententiae or moralistic anecdotes which support a speaker's point of view. The following exemplifies the latter type of narration:

> "But I never 'ad no suit of black till I was 'bout thirty, and my father never had one at all, Sunday or wurrkday. Why, there was a rich old farmer who used to goo to Alton market, and he al'ays 'ad a draybet smock. If anybody aasked him why he didn't wear black, he used to saay: 'This 'un's mine, but that un's maybe not thine.' Ah, he did, but there's not a-many like 'im now. . . ." (Talks, p. 9)

Besides its interest as part of a narrative genre, this, of course, is also eloquent about attitudes toward appearances, credit, and the place of the black suit in contemporary rural dress.

A man's reputation for proficiency in his craft was highly prized; other men's mistakes could be quietly relished: here a new shepherd not knowing the marks by which sheep's ages are told, ignorantly sold his employer's breeding ewes:

> Well, the man said again, "You've a been and sold all your theaves, but why?" And so the man 'ad, and then he knew why his ship had fetched a good price. He was wild about it, I can tell 'ee, for it do onnerve a maan to be told such a thing as that. That's the mischief of 'aving a shepherd as doesn't know the marks." (Talks, p. 138)

Just as Sturt noticed that the topic of most interest to Bettesworth, and other village men, was the management of gardens, so Johnson observes the way that a shepherd's conversation ran on technical subjects.

Johnson also noticed styles, or routines of speaking; one shepherd's pattern of narration was of "artfully phrased grumbling," which the shepherd consciously enjoyed; another "seemed to enjoy his own sardonic quips" in an "affectation of sarcastic facetiousness" (Talks, p. 139).

Johnson's interviewing technique was sensitive, born of experience, and concerned with accuracy. He mentions

the value of referring to an association-laden object, in one case a smock, no longer worn, but likely, he felt, to lead to reminiscences from an old shepherd who remembered its qualities (Talks, p. 9). He was also patient: "All things come to those who wait patiently . . ." but most praiseworthy and unusual was his sense of the value of recording negative responses to his questioning. The following is only one of several traditions on which he had tried to get information from shepherds but failed:

> One old-world custom, that of using an arrow-head or a small celt as a bell clapper in order to serve as an amulet to protect the flock from disease, seems to have died out altogether, and in one way this information was satisfactory, for it is better to have blank nescience than to get a reply based on an imaginary state of things suggested by book or visitors. There is, I believe, an art in leading up to these subjects, and tentatively spying out the land, gracefully slipping away should the nakedness be discovered. (Talks, p. 100)

His figure "slipping away" speaks well of his tact. In short, he was an active fieldworker, not afraid to muddy his boots, or to drink rough cider with his informants, "real good stuff, with plenty of body in 'un," even though it was not always to his taste (Talks, p. 116).

A successor to Walter Johnson, in terms of a particular and almost obsessional, interest in shepherd's

knowledge and equipment, is Barclay Wills whose Shepherds of Sussex (1938)[84] provides fragments of occupational lore and oral autobiography collected from shepherds. Though Will's enthusiasm for shepherds approaches monomania, and his pastoral reflections are a little softheaded, the passages quoted from his interviews strike an authentic note; he comments on the "strangely similar characteristics found in most of the men when studied individually," which he ascribes to "hereditary traits and environments," (p. 26) and, while it may be coincidental, the forthright, independent manner of Wills's speakers is exactly the style of the one shepherd I interviewed in Dorset in the 1970's.

Wills established the form for his book by taking the advice of his informants themselves; this is a good instance of the value of establishing the parameters of an enquiry by beginning with native taxonomy and a native assessment of what is important enough about the craft to be included:

> I realized that much of the success in obtaining the information I wanted would depend on the attitude of the shepherds, and I resolved to consult one of them first. Nelson Coppard can be trusted to express his opinion without hesitation, and as we sat on an old machine frame beside a barn and discussed the various ways of recording details remembered by shepherds he showed a preference for a series of accounts of actual interviews.

> "We will begin now," said Nelson, in his quaint direct way, "you ask me what you want to know, an' I'll tell you all I can, an' you put it down: then, if't seems all right, you can do 't same to 't next one!" Between us we arranged the principal points for enquiry and subsequently I found that his idea appealed equally to other men I visited. (p. 16)

As a result of this method Wills secured a fine record of the traditional knowledge of shepherding and details of such customs as "shoeing the colt," an initiation ceremony for young men, and "Black Ram Night," the shearers' feast.

Of general value for the study of oral autobiography, however, are the examples of characteristic story types in which the information was often conveyed. Nelson Coppard, for example, lists the sequence of his jobs -- as boy, teg boy, under-shepherd -- in what will be argued in the final chapter to be a typical mode of autobiography in the oral canon (p. 54). "Learning" and "knowing" are key words in the shepherds' testimonies as Wills's presentation of parallel interviews allows us to see. Jack Cox, for example, speaks of his knowledge as follows:

> All that I had told him to do I have learned forty years ago, and every year since I have learned something fresh about sheep that I didn't know before! (p. 62)

while another, unnamed because of his stories of confrontations with local farmers, similarly emphasises "knowing":

> . . . there be some as knows, an' some as on'y thinks they knows, an' when a man as knows meets one o' t'otheruns 'e shuts up like a trap. If I'd told 'im what I thought of'im 'e might not 'a' liked it! (p. 198)

An old shepherd describes the traditional manner of education by example rather than verbal instruction:

> . . . when I wur a boy of nine I helped my father to trim sheep! Why! do you know that I wur on'y high 'nough at nine to stand an' clip a sheep's back? My father stood by me doing another, an' it diddun pay me to make a wrong cut. If I did he saw it, an' down came his hard hat on me with a heavy smack! I wur made to learn, an' in the end I wur as good as he. (p. 242)

Such phrases as "thinks they knows" and "made to learn" are still commonplace, as I can testify from my own limited fieldwork; Wills is very successful in recapturing the style, themes and language of these men's stories.

Barclay Wills is very much a "rambler"; this is to say that his writing falls into a further sub-genre of rural literature in which the author describes his walks through the countryside, people met with, legends associated with

buildings and places, and a miscellany of other details. Such rambles take in greater distances than the walk round the village favoured by the diarists and essayists discussed earlier. Rather than add to an already overlong chapter, however, it may suffice to merely note the existence of books of "rambles" as another category which often includes folklore material.[85]

One more genre of rural writing must be mentioned, however: the community history compiled by the native son. It is of importance to this study principally because it is one of the forms which the autobiographical impulse may take, for while many are too modest to feel that their own lives could be of interest they are more confident that their parish or village has something to show to posterity. Writings in this genre range from an orthodox filopietism to the retailing of a lifetime's store of local anecdotes; some of the latter type will be discussed in the following section.

V. Village Histories

Parish or village histories written as memoirs by old inhabitants can be a rich source of information for the folklorist. As a sub-genre of rural writing one of their distinguishing features is in their structure: this is often a mental perambulation of the village with each house or landmark serving as a reminder to the narrator of the people associated with it, their histories and traits of character. These parochial memoirs are often studded with anecdotes accumulated over a lifetime in the area; sometimes it seems that the telling of good stories is their authors' primary motivation for writing. In some examples of the genre the writer is convinced of the unique role in history played by his community; more commonly it is suggested that this village represented a microcosm of all human virtues and failings.

The form is traceable to the seventeenth century antiquaries and topographers[86] in such works as John Aubrey's Natural History of Wiltshire (written between 1656 and 1691), which discourses on the soils, agriculture, industries, and worthies, among many other things such as cases of witchcraft and phantoms. The antiquary William Camden is referred to as an illustrious predecessor by Richard Gough, author of the most remarkable of all village histories, "Antiquities and

Memoirs of the Parish of Myddle, County of Salop," written from 1700 to 1706. Here, Gough, sixty-six years old when he began his book, a well-educated man prominent in village affairs, set down an anecdotal oral history of the families of the parish, judiciously weighing their successes and failures and the reasons for them. The device he uses to prompt his memory and to organize his material is to list the inhabitants of each of the church pews -- which in his time belonged to individual families -- telling what he knows of each of them.

W.G. Hoskins, the editor of the best modern edition of Gough's work,[87] comments on its oral quality:

> To read Gough's pages is like listening to a relaxed session of elderly men in a village pub, when with tongues unguarded they proceed to give the inner history of their place and the people they have known. (Myddle, p. 5)

From what is often, as Hoskins says, scandalous gossip, emerges a very complete picture of the commonplace domestic life of the period; the rare value of this is stressed in a full-scale historical study of the community of Myddle, using Gough's work in conjunction with other records, by David G. Hey.[88]

The interests of social historians and folklorists are not far different and Hey's final chapter is an excellent summary of the insights to be gained from Gough's work into the "mental world" of a seventeenth century village; Hey discusses such topics as beliefs in divine intervention in human affairs, possible explanations for the absence of witchcraft references, the extent of travel that was normal, kinship and family structure, diet and recreation. Yet the folklorist, more readily than the historian, will recognize traditional styles of narrative in Gough's chronicle and it may be worth briefly mentioning the more overt elements of folk tradition to be found there.

Tellers of tall tales seem to have been tolerated with amusement in Myddle; "Bristle Bridge" was named after a tale told by a bragging old soldier who lived nearby (in a hole in the rock called the Goblin Hole, but made into a habitation):

> . . . . amongst the rest of the storyes that were told of him, one was, that hee had killed a monstrouse boar, of soe large a size that the bristles on his back were as big as pikeeavell grains [pitchfork prongs]. This story being fresh among the neighbours and the workmen that were building the said bridge, they gave it the name of Bristle Bridge, which name still continues. (Myddle, pp. 11-12)

The teller had also gained the nickname "Scoggan," after the celebrated jester whose name was also borrowed by compilers of jestbooks;[89] this nicknaming seems expressive of the local working man's sense of humour, which sized the man up as a harmless fool. Gough adapts an epitaph to "fitt" another local liar, punning on his "lying tho' dead" as he had in life (p. 76).

Gough himself seems to have looked askance at "romantick storyes" but records that the people told almost as many about "wild Humphry Kinaston," the "dissolute and ryotous" younger son of a local nobleman, as they did about "the great outlawe Robin Whood" (pp. 28-29). More to his humour, perhaps, is the clever trick of putting a charge of gunpowder into a log to detect a thief who was stealing firewood; this is a widely reported device.[90] The same thief's "diskindnesse" to his neighbours (an important theme with Gough) was also pointed up by a wise woman whom the man had consulted about the loss of his cow; the anecdote of the visit to her contains the widespread traditional element that she is able to detect the trick that the applicant would play on her:[91]

> Reece [the thief] had a cow, which was stolen away, and it is reported that hee went to a woman, whom they called the wise woman of Montgomery, to know what was become of his cow; and as hee went, hee putt a stone in his pockett, and tould a neighbour of his that was with him that he would know whether she were a wise woman or not, and whether she knew that hee had a stone in his pockett. And it is sayd, that when hee came to her, she sayd, thou hast a stone in thy pockett, but itt is not soe bigge as that stone wherewith thou didst knocke out such a neighbour's harrow tines. (p. 61)

Gough's treatment of the story shows no scepticism of the white witch's powers.

Gough's world view is staunchly protestant; he believes in divine interventions in human affairs, twice citing the adage that "illgotten estates will not last three crops" (pp. 75, 84), but condemns belief in fairies as an "idle conceit" the people were persuaded of by "superstitious monkes and fryars" (p. 37). He believes firmly in a forerunner of death, a pair of pigeons, which always appears when someone is dying at a particular farm. His memorate concerning this is full of circumstantial detail revolving around the unspoken question of whether these birds are material or spiritual in origin and nature:

> I have seene them pecking on the hemp butt as if they did feed, and for ought I know they did feed. They were pretty large pidgeons; feathers on their tayles were white, and the long feathers of theire wings. . . . (p. 47)

He continues in his thorough description and gives evidence of other deaths presaged by the birds. He also tells of the capture of a murderer whose hiding place was revealed by two ravens; again the birds seem to be considered real: " . . . they saw two ravens sitt upon a cocke of hay, pulling the hay with theire beaks, and making a hideouse and unusuall noyse . . ." (p. 72), but he ascribes the murderer's confession, that the ravens had followed him continually since the murder, to the "horror of a guilty conscience."

The anecdotes, memorates, and legends Gough relates generally have the feel of oral narrative; they have its fluency, compression, and highlighting of telling detail. The account of the supposed corpse who revived, for example, besides its detail of contemporary practice -- "according to the usuall manner hee was laide straite upon his bedde, his eyes were closed and onely one linen sheet cast over him" -- is also close to oral style in its build up of tension and replaying of the dialogue between the watchers:

> These two women sate by the fire all night, and about that time of night which wee account cock croweing they heard something give a great sigh, Alice Owen said it was Richard, butt Jane Tyldesley would not believe it. They tooke a candle and went into the chamber and cast the sheet from of his face and perceived noe alteration in him. . . . (p. 161).

As with all well-told tales they have an intense visual quality; consider this everyday scene, etched into permanence by a sudden act of violence:

> Hee had one daughter who was servant to a gentleman who lived neare Wellington, and as this young woman was holding water for her master to wash his hands in the kitchen, hee cast a little water from off his finger into her face, which her mistress, (who was present,) seeing, and conceiving it too famillier an action, shee in a rage tooke up the cleaver, and gave her such a blow on the head that shee dyed. (pp. 75-76)

There is an intensity of detail about the commonplaces of life available in such scenes; this is how hands were washed in a gentleman's house (a poorer man slipped and drowned while going to wash his face and hands "in a small deep hole of water on the backside of the house") (p. 134); and flirtations between masters and maids were perhaps common enough to enrage a jealous wife.[92]

Apparent also is Gough's taste, appropriate to a substantial village elder, for proverbs, and quotations from Chaucer and Latin authors, to add the quality of gravitas to his pronouncements; a thief overreaches himself and Gough sums him up: "But the potsherd that goes often to the well, comes home broaken att last" (p. 92). Not that this over inflates his style; he has a shrewd knack of skewering a

neighbour's reputation in the minimum of words: ". . . shee was a handsome woman but he might have had one as honest nearer home" (pp. 66-67). He shows little trust of women and his ideal in male personality and behaviour, as Sturt's "Bettesworth" would agree, is shown in this encomium: "Hee was a painfull, laboriouse man in husbandry, and although hee was a stout man of his hands, yett he was peaceable and a good neighbour" (p. 179), as the following expresses its opposite: ". . . but hee proved an idle, drunken, carelesse husband [i.e. farmer], and very quarrelsome and abusive in his drinke, which procured him many cudgelings" (p. 181). A butler is skilled in too many unproductive things and is, hence, suspect: ". . . hee had skill in fishing, fowling, hawking, hunting, makeing of setting doggs, and was somewhile keeper of Stanwardine Park: in sum hee was one att every thing and good or excellent at nothing" (p. 156). Gough's history is full of such judgements out of which a composite picture can be drawn of his attitudes, and those of the class he represents; as Hey concludes: "His was the voice of the small-propertied classes, accepting the existing hierarchy in both church and state, proclaiming the Christian virtues and denouncing the vices, and championing the hard-working, God-fearing confirmity that was preached from the pulpits" (p. 185). In keeping with these values Gough judges his

own work by the criterion of its usefulness:

> I doubt not but some persons will thinke many things that I have written are alltogaether uselesse; but I doe believe that there is nothing herein contained which may not by chance att one time or other happen to be needfull to some person or other. (p. 44)

and although his meaning lay more towards its use in discovering God's judgements on erring humanity his words have been found prophetic by social historians for whom, thanks to Gough's work, Myddle has become, in Hey's judgement, "the best documented of all the rural communities of Tudor and Stuart England" (p. 12).

The reference to the church pews and their owners as the organizing principle for this village history is probably unique, as is the latitude Gough allows himself in commentary on his neighbours, but the central idea of taking some physical structure such as the plan of the community -- who lived where, what they did -- seems a natural means of stimulating the memory and providing a pattern which inevitably contains within it an expression of the social order. This method of recall and composition is not uncommon among village histories.

Another village history which adopts the mental perambulation as a way of focusing memory is Our Sussex Parish

(1884; rev. ed. 1925),[93] by Thomas Geering (1813-1889), who invites the reader as follows:

> Will you accompany me in an imaginary walk round? . . . . Perhaps a reminiscence or two, and a little dallying by the way may here be indulged in. (pp. 1-2)

The book is not of first importance to the folklorist; though Arthur Beckett, the editor of the 1925 edition, used here, calls it "a transcript of life in a small rural town exactly as the author found it" (p. xi), there is never sufficient detail in Geering's descriptions to satisfy. His style is that of the Character writers who aimed at a witty brevity in hitting the most telling features of a human type. Nevertheless, it is an interesting record of the opinions of a successful tradesman, a shoemaker, who looks on with amusement and general satisfaction at the changes he has seen in his native place, Hailsham, in some sixty years. Above all he is pleased at the emancipation of his own class, the tradesmen, from the control of the landowning aristocracy and the clergy, their agents (pp. 54-55), and describes the improvements in the lives of the labouring poor (for example in house furnishings and leisure: a sofa or couch, oil lamps, embroidery, a clock, spectacles, a newspaper), with whom he sympathises for his father had risen from plough-boy

to shoemaker ("Our Cottage Homes," pp. 32-39).

Beckett's revised edition classifies the sketches under three headings:-- institutions: "Our Inns and Public-houses," "Our Pleasure Fair," for example; personalities: "Our Witch" (emphasising boyhood fears), "Our Nimrod and his Talking Horse" (containing an excellent anecdote of ventriloquism); and tales: among them being legends of smuggling and of the use of ghost beliefs to keep people indoors on nights when smugglers were active (pp. 239-241). Of course, as is common in the genre of parish reminiscences, the three categories may often be merged within the same sketch..

Geering makes several references to tall tales,[94] and while his memory of one is prompted by a place:

> It was here our auctioneer . . . lost his staunch pointer, "Bess." (He told the tale, so it was said, until he believed it true.) He discovered her skeleton, together with the bones of the covey, the following spring. The birds would not rise, neither would the bitch move, so, game-like, they all died there together. (p. 41)

another is brought to mind by thinking of its teller, a coachman, who told a hunting story of leaping across a sunken lane in which, passing below, was a team of four horses and a waggon load of straw

> '. . . on which lay the boy fast asleep, his mouth wide open.' This the fellow would chuckle over and declare to be true. (p. 134)

Also scattered are some worthwhile references to folksong; a smith sings his own satirical songs on local love affairs (pp. 45-46); another man is always called on to sing "The Carrion Crow and the Tailor" (a text is given), with a comrade who regularly supplied the croaks (pp. 167-168). Fragments of the songs at a harvest supper, including a catch "Bango" as part of a game of forfeits, are also given along with this finely observed, if sardonic, description of a singer's preparing himself to perform:

> . . . chief among them was the singer. He who has, or he who has not, heard him sing --
>
> Lord Bateman was a noble lord,
> A noble lord of high degree,
>
> may bless himself. It was a trial for the nerve, a subject for the eye, and a study for the mind. "Come Simmonds," says the master, "now we must have your song." The singer was waiting the call, and had swung himself round in the chair better to face the company. It was an accepted rule in those bygone days that no Sussex man could sing a song with his eyes open, and to this rule Master Simmonds was no exception. His preparation never varied. First he had twisted himself away from the table, the next to pull with both hands his somewhat long and new round-frock well above his knees, throw the left leg over the right, stroke the hair straight as he could down over the forehead,

> put his pipe between the middle fingers of the left hand, give vent to two or three ahems and haws, to clear, as he said, the passage of the wine-pipe, and off he would go, his strong lungs pulling his husky voice through all difficulties of rhyme or rhythm. his memory never failed him, and he was insistent upon the recurring chorus; his eyes were shut, and never once looked out for light. He was then in his glory: his light shone full within him. (pp. 218-219)

Geering's personal recollections often supervene in this very discursive history; writing of the curfew bell he is reminded of his boyhood dread of ghosts, which he associated with the church tower, and blamed "well-meant religious teaching" for producing in him the "fear of God" which

> . . . was early implanted in my mind, and the terror and dread of the devil was also taught at the same time, and I was held enslaved, being afraid to move about in the dark, either in or out of doors; and to be sent off to bed alone was almost more than I could endure. At that time I knew by heart all of Dr. Watts' divine and moral songs, and the thought of the wicked child who "must with devils dwell in darkness, fire, and chains," ruined the peace of that part of my young life that should have been the freest from care and sorrow. (p. 78)

The vein of anti-clericalism in the book extends to strictures against tithes as causing a loss of wealth and work to the parish; this is his later attitude as a member of

the rising mercantile class attacking all vestiges of aristocratic and ecclesiastical privilege (including the penchant of poor clergymen for making good marriages).

As a hard headed adult he quotes two stories of ghosts-that-were-no-ghosts, such as "The Paper Ghost" (pp. 179-181), in which a verse is made on the unfortunate believer and read at the family breakfast table "as a warning and a deterrent against late hours." (See also "Salt-Marsh Barn and Its Ghost," pp. 181-185, for another mistaken ghost appearance). Geering says, very practically, "It is better to clear up any ghost story" (p. 180). He does the same for the belief that the devil appears, and helps those, especially young women, who gather nuts on a Sunday, in the story of a practical joke in which a negro drummer of a nearby regiment had shown himself naked to a party of nutting girls, convincing them that the devil had indeed appeared ("The Wood Nymphs," pp. 207-214). His anecdotes are told and savoured by him with that added degree of sly pleasure that comes with having known their protagonists.

Geering's title for the original 1884 edition, Our Parish, A Medley; By One who has never lived out of it, conveys the extremely local focus which typifies the village memoir as a genre. Unlike the character writers of the seventeenth century who dealt with fictional examples of

general traits, the community historian takes delight in presenting those real individuals, in his own parish, who happen to have embodied the ideal or the universal. The writing of a history of one's native parish is often, as with Geering, an act of sincere piety towards one's ancestors. He presents the worthies of his parish, "our representative men, such as the poet, the painter, the athlete, the cricketer, and our famous pugilist" (p. xviii), with pride as if Hailsham were a self-sufficient little world -- a pleasing prospect to one of its "elite," the tradesmen.

John Ward's Moston Characters at Play (1905) and Moston Characters at Work (1911)[95] are particularly intimate, insider's descriptions of Lancashire village life in the latter half of the nineteenth century. In Ward's youth Moston had been a rural community of hand-loom weavers, a cottage industry which had since been lost to the textile mills of Manchester, as the village itself was to be submerged in that city's expansion. Ward was a Methodist lay preacher, though a remarkably broad-minded and fun-loving one, and became a leading citizen, an alderman and justice of the peace. A brief autobiography prefaces his second volume and relates his determined rise, after leaving school at thirteen -- later than usual in a working class family -- through work in local factories to the foundation of a

business with two of his brothers. He endorses the traditional working class virtue of self-reliance: "I had never had the bottom knocked out of the little grit I had in me by kind people helping me to do that which I could well do for myself" (Work, pp. 14-15).

The books were compiled from lectures he had given at "The Moston Literary and Debating Society," whose members were "men who had lived in Moston all their days, and were never tired of listening to, or telling stories of by-gone times" (Play, p. v), and consequently his stories retain their oral manner; There is a sense in which his writing is a public act, sensitive to community opinion, but not so over-awed by it as to make the work bland or apologetic. Rather his anecdotal savouring of the foibles of the "characters" is shown to be something that had always been going on orally; he was merely transferring this habit to print. He quotes the imagined permission granted him by the old people to tell what their lives had been like:

> After this assurance we need not be afraid of being misunderstood, but can say what comes to us without the least fear of vexing the memory of anyone. In fact they rather liked it while living, and shewed their appreciation of a laugh at their own expense, as was always evidenced by the rollicking tales told at their funerals. (Play, pp. 81-82)

As we see from the prominence of nicknames and practical joking in the community they were often, as he says, "rigging" each other about something:

> I have taken, what some may think, much liberty with some of the characters; but my manner of doing this is quite in accord with the manner of the people themselves. Their jesting with each other was at times far from delicate; but it was never spiteful. (Play, p. 190)

Moston Characters at Play, in particular, is a rare book in being so completely attuned to this spirit of local fun and satire; it suggests the kind of study, too infrequently made by folklorists, of joking relationships in factories or in other groups in which people have worked and played together over a long time.[96]

The intimacy of his portrait of Moston's "characters" is obtained partly through use of the "perambulation of the village" format; an unofficial census had been taken in 1841 (see the useful list of houses, families, numbers of children, occupations, in Play, pp. 9-20), and Ward, in memory, follows the path taken by the original enumerator who had also been "fond of telling stories" and so "had no difficulty in entering any house he saw fit to enter" (Play, p. 5).

As noted above, almost all the characters mentioned had nicknames and this practice, while due partly to the limited number of surnames, is largely an aspect of the teasing quality of local humour:

> There is often a considerable amount of satire in quaint country people, and they have a way of giving names to individuals that is scarce ever seen or heard of in towns. It is because their neighbour's little foibles are all known to them, and they delight in hitting off characters by some happy stroke of humour. (Play, p. 55)

The presence of a dominating personality in a family could cause all its members to become known by his title:

> Abb's children were never known in the village by their surname of Taylor; it was simply Tom ut Abb's, Jack ut Abb's, and so of the rest, even to the spaniel he kept, which was "Busy ut Abb's." (Play, p. 36)

Another family were all called "Angler" after "Th' Ou'd Angler," whose surname was never used; similarly, another family held the name "Castle" after a tiny house they had once lived in (Play, pp. 75, 90). The same sardonic wit was applied in the name "Bendigo" (after the prize fighter) given to a man who frequently quarelled with his slovenly wife, nicknamed "Tidy" (Play, pp. 70-71).

The nicknames are also explained by Ward in terms of the social values they express: "Mark Muffin" was mean enough to set his mark on a cut loaf or cake to ensure that his wife did not "make too free with the victuals in his absence" (Play, p. 27). "Billy Loaf" was said to be so engrossed in his work that he would not stop to wash his hands and so made his wife stand by to feed him, putting the bread to his mouth when he called "Loaf":

> You will understand that he had neither time to rest nor talk he was so intent on his work. The Moston people did not understand such folly, nor did they like men who had no time to play, and so they in contempt gave him the surname of "Loaf." (Play, p. 116)

One man did women's work by emptying the slop pails, while his wife was ill, thus earning the contempt of the other men who named him "th' Cock Shepsther" after a species of bird which picks up the droppings of its young and deposits them at some distance from the nest (Play, pp. 181-182).

There were local catch-phrases that alluded to commonly-known incidents, such as the boys' taunt to a local thief: "Who put th' cock under th' bed!" or the sayings attributed to the village idiot, which had become proverbial (Play, pp. 27-28, 96).[97]

The prevalence of practical joking that Ward reports is also some measure of the closeness of the community for the success of pranks often depended on a shrewd knowledge of the kind of "bait" to which a particular dupe would "rise." Thus an avid fisherman is enticed into wading in a muddy pond with a net by men who know there are no fish there (Play, pp. 33-34); two braggarts try to ride bareback on a horse and on a bull respectively, and fall into mud and thorns to the delight of spectators (Play, pp. 38-39, 186-187). A local trickster bluffs a superior high-jumper out of a contest by making a confident show of setting the pole at an impossible height (Play, pp. 101-102).[98] Beggars are wagered that they cannot eat a hat full of porridge, on pain of having what they leave dumped over their heads (Play, pp. 49-54), and a rat pie is unwittingly enjoyed by some sportsmen who are told it is a "fowl pie"; Ward is surprised that they did not recognize the difference between bird and animal bones (Play, p. 178).

Tall tales, as another form of trickery, naturally flourished in this environment. One family had been known for its tales for four generations; Ward summarizes three: the hero finds his boot uncomfortably tight and discovers his terrier bitch has whelped in it; he skewers five starlings at one shot with the ramrod from his gun; two hares

run into each other and stick fast on a ball of cobbler's wax he has thrown at the forehead of one of them (Play, pp. 33-34).[99]

Local memory also preserved real feats of strength and endurance, however; an eighty-year old man saved his hay from a coming rainstorm but he wrung "at least a quart of sweat" from his shirt afterward and his effort (he had already walked home from a race meeting) was said to have "melted his grace" and caused his death (Play, pp. 78-79). Victory in a mowing match caused the champion to alter the name of the public house he kept to "The Mower's Arms" and a new sign was painted to immortalize the scene, though it was never used for fear of the loser's rancour (Play, p. 93); there were also the usual stories of great eaters and drinkers (Play, pp. 118, 122).

It is worth noting that Ward did not record these tales in an antiquarian spirit as part of any international or even national tradition; indeed he was hardly even an enthusiast for anything he might have recognized as folklore. For him they are purely local stories about people he knew and loves to remember. He gives some attention to folk custom, mentioning "peace-egg-day," when a local lady gave a penny each to Moston children until newcomers began to take advantage and she ended the custom (Play, p. 7).

The Rush Cart ceremony is described in interesting detail; here the township displayed itself "best side out" through the elaborately stacked cartload of rushes, decorated at the front with the villagers' silver plate displayed on a white sheet and at the rear with flowers. Accompanied by morris dancers the cart was drawn through Manchester each leap year during Wakes week (Play, pp. 105-110). The local simpleton, Charlie Doe (another nickname), enacted the Fool in the procession, riding a pony or donkey and was subjected to "rude and at times to more than harmless jest" (Ward notes further that the man died from a chill after someone threw a bucket of water over him) (Play, pp. 96-97). It may not have been unusual for real fools to have been given this periodic license to enact larger than life versions of their normal "disorder"; Victor Turner and others have discussed carnivals and festivals as allowing the temporary elevation of the weakest or most disorderly elements in the social structure.[100] Other overtly folkloric topics included are ghost and fairy legends, summarized (Play, pp. 111-115), and an account of the annual rent dinner given by the squire for his tenants which includes texts of the songs "Spencer the Rover" and "The old Grey Goose" (Play, pp. 168-173).

Ward's sequel Moston Characters at Work (1911) is a disappointment in that it does not focus on crafts and

occupations so much as on the "serious" aspects of Moston life, and in particular upon Methodism. Within these limits, however, it gives an interesting account of the social life that was organized within the hegemony of the Methodist Church: brass bands, recitations, plays on Biblical incidents, are described with his usual humour.

John Ward is an example of a writer who had almost no conception of folklore as a field of study but who, from affectionate enthusiasm for describing his native community, succeeded in giving one of the truest accounts of everyday interplay and banter, and of the way individuals are preserved in local memory through anecdotes.

A village history which looks back to the eighteenth century is Old Oak: The Story of a Forest Village (1932),[101] by Rev. J.E. Linnell (1842-1919). This work was discovered in manuscript after its author's death in 1919 and was pieced together by his sons with the addition of further stories they remembered him telling. Linnell's reminiscences, and those of the older people he quotes, describe the life of his native village of Silverstone, "Silson," in Northamptonshire, during the latter eighteenth and earlier nineteenth centuries.

As a forest village, Silson bears out the reputation for lawlessness which the chroniclers Norden and Aubrey had,

in the seventeenth century, ascribed to all forest dwellers.[102] In the absence, for centuries, of a "big house" in the village, its inhabitants were of independent spirit; "Jack was as good as his master the whole parish through" (p. 3). Linnell stresses their love of fighting and poaching, but without the usual clerical disapproval, for Linnell seems to have been "without any sense of caste," "a tramp by nature," "the raciest of raconteurs" -- to quote his sons' remarks -- and "hard as any tooad," as he was called, admiringly, by the Black Country miners in his first curacy (pp. x - xiv). In short, as a native son, he maintained a rapport with local people despite having become a clergyman.

The disorderliness of the village emerges in his stories of poaching: a local lord was cursed for having deerstealers hanged (p. 9), informers are tormented (pp. 155-157), keepers are known to swear false accusations (pp. 16, 19). Politicking in the area was also fervent, involving fights and bribes (Ch. V. "Things Political"). Rough music, or "lowbelling," is described, and he notes that after the parade with metal trays, pans, and horns, and the burning of straw effigies, the demonstrators normally returned quickly to their homes, except on one occasion when a victim higher on the social scale invoked police protection and a riot ensued (pp. 101-102). The inclusion of a good

chapter on practical jokes, including the traditional "catching the owl" prank, is another indication of Linnell's rapport, since these are often either too scurrilous or too locally pointed to be told about to strangers.

The use of physical, embarassing pranks, as Stanley Brandes suggests in his study of men's culture in Andalusia,[103] is an aspect of the struggle to appear to be in control, dominant; the prank victim has obviously misinterpreted the situation and has exposed himself to ridicule. The same competitiveness was expressed in fighting; Linnell remarks that Silson was a village of fighters by tradition (Ch. X. "Of the Noble Art"), and that cricket, for example, was only a pretext for their love of fighting (p. 142). The Lord of the Whitsun Ale was chosen for his strength and boxing ability (p. 35).

A good chapter on "Village Holidays and Festivities" is given, describing the annual Feast, for which all who had left the village tried to return. A special Feast Ale was tapped on the Saturday night and Sunday visits were made by cousins and friends outside the village to share a family roast dinner, the visits to be returned when the relatives' villages held their annual feasts (p. 119). The Harvest Home is described in particularly interesting detail: after the meal the mood was initially subdued with

"pious utterances" about "bountiful Providence" but it became more lively as the beer jugs went about. Linnell comments on the familiar songs and the predictable reminiscences they led to:

> They were, for the most part, the same songs year after year -- "The Poor Old Horse," "The Fox has gone through the Town O," and "The Jolly Ploughman." Intermingled with these were war songs and old "Tragedies." A great favourite among the latter was "Charwelton" [he quotes five stanzas: a farmer's wife loves the serving man, who shoots her husband and is hung for it] . . . . It was Jack Dickson's song . . . and, when he had finished, he always went on to say that he had seen the guilty parties hanged. This would encourage others to tell of the hangings they had witnessed, for those who had never seen a public execution were classed with "fooak as had never sin nuthin' at all," and the whole company would revel in the joys of tragedy for the next hour. (p. 126)

His personal experience of harvest suppers is obvious from his remarks on the singer's property rights in the song; elsewhere he observes that the same held true for stories:

> As some had songs which no one else in the village was supposed to sing under any circumstances whatever, so others had tales which were regarded as peculiarly their own. One might be of a famous fight, another of the deeds of a daring highwayman, another of a desparate poaching affair; told and retold and handed down from generation to generation, they never varied by one iota. (p. 173)

Unlike the remarks of some other Victorian clergymen, who remained severely conscious of social distance, there is no note of condescension in Linnell's commentary. Of course this feeling of intimacy is helped by virtue of these being largely memories of his youth in the village rather than of his later years and status when he might have had to adopt a stricter attitude.

The most notable illustration of Linnell's interest in stories and sympathy with their tellers is his account of listening to the cante-fable "Mr. Fox" being told by an old woman; Linnell terms it a "ballad," but it was "recited"; the piece has generally been reported as a cante-fable, sometimes as a riddle tale.[104] The core verse is given:

> One lonely night, as I sat high,
> Instead of one there two pass'd by.
> The boughs did bend, my soul did quake,
> To see the hole that Fox did make. (p. 50)

He recalls the teller's conviction: the tragedy was very real to her, and gives her brother's comment at the end:

> "An' sarve him right!" Simon would grunt, when Sall had left him swinging "from the gallows tree so high." (p. 51)

Linnell is struck by the "ballad's" ability to create intense visual images:

> Nearly sixty years have passed since I sat on the elm-wood salt-box in the chimney corner. But even now in fancy I can hear Sall recite the grim ballad, I see the dark awesome shadows falling athwart the moonlight ride, I watch the terrified girl as she clings to the bending boughs, and I tremble lest her slightest movement should betray her presence to the villains at the foot of the tree, just as I did all those years ago. (p. 51)

Beyond this all too rare account of a listener's reaction, Linnell nicely evokes the atmosphere of his visits, with Simon sitting "on a low, flat-bottomed chair . . . . his body bent forward over the hearth" to stoke the fire, while Sall worked at her lace, with "bony fingers in the light of a tallow candle whose rays passed through a tall water-bottle and fell softly on her parchment" (p. 49).

The pair collaborated in story telling, Linnell notes in relating their version of the legend of Faust, "who to them became a "Dr. Foster" of Adderbury near Banbury" (p. 53); when Foster repented of his bargain he confessed to the rector, who assembled a troop of clergy to withstand the Devil:

> "Ah! but Old Scraaper come right enough," Simon would say at this point in the story; "but what could he do when the house wuf lined wi'in an' wi'owt wi' church parsons? He come though, didn't he, Sall?"

> "So I've heerd me mother say," was the invariable answer, and given in such tones that no one could indulge a doubt on the subject. (p. 54)

Simon believed the modern clergy to still possess these powers; he had asked the local clergyman who

> had smiled but hadn't denied his possession of them.
>
> "He 'oodn't say no, because he couldn't," he chuckled. (p. 55)

Another legend concerning the laying of a local ghost is summarized.

These excerpts are quoted at what may seem undue length because, as with many others selected in this study, they have a touch of life about them. As Herbert Halpert has noted of the great American folktale collector, Vance Randolph, one of the merits of his published tales is that they include the comments made by the tellers after the tale is "finished."[105] Less contextually-minded collectors have often recorded merely the tale and have lost important clues to attitudes contained in apparently peripheral remarks. Regrettably this book is by no means as vivid throughout; nevertheless it is an interesting combination of personal reminiscence and village history

by an unbiased observer with no moral or theoretical axes to grind.

A large number of village and local histories have been assembled by members of Women's Institutes in England; they are often rich in folklore and have the advantage of extreme local reference. A competition for "the best book compiled by a Women's Institute on old Customs, Beliefs, Stories, and Ancient Monuments, etc." was launched in Home and Country, The Women's Institute Journal in 1921; further competitions were held within counties and many compilations have been published. They are miscellanies covering the spectrum of belief and custom, legend and anecdote, folksong, children's lore, flower names, and oral history. Their weakness is a general lack of depth in contextual information, and in some cases the rephrasing of orally collected material; some also attempt to deal with an entire county and this results in a scrappy style of presentation. The best collections, however, contain extensive quotations in oral style, as in Rosalie E. Bosanquet, ed. In The Troublesome Times (1929).[106]

This Northumbrian collection, named for its section of oral history on border raids, is particularly interesting because of its limitation to a single community, the village of Cambo, and its direct presentation of informants' comments.

The collectors decided to "disregard books" and so set down "as complete an account as we could of what we considered our own customs and beliefs" (p. 10): "We write of what interests us because it touches our daily lives" (p. 137). Consequently there is an enjoyable spirit of enthusiasm and freshness about the book; it supplies the names and professions of some of the informants and its format helps create the feeling of their talking together, sharing their recollections of New Year's First-footing and mischief, or of christening beliefs and practices:

> "I've heard them say you shouldn't cut a baby's nails till it can bite them itself." -- Mrs. Thomas Hepple and Miss Shipley.
>
> "I've heard Mother say that and all, and more than Mother say it. I've heard often that." -- Mrs. Thomas Hepple.
>
> Mrs. Hedley has heard that "you shouldn't cut a baby's nails, -- not till it is christened," she thinks. "They say you mustn't take a baby into another house till it has been christened." -- Miss Catherine Hedley. (pp. 33-34)

What emerges, of course, is the diversity of tradition within even the smallest community; they are surprised to learn from each other of the variety of ways in which each family disposes of the Christmas evergreens (p. 74).

This variation is especially apparent in the local legends where there is debate over the existence of underground passages (p. 158), or as to whether it was fairies or witches that "made overfree with the corn and meal" of the miller (p. 85):

> My grandfather, who brought me up, used to tell me about the elves at Elf Hills. He used to tell me the story of the fairies at Rothley Mill; they made use of the mill at night, and cooked their food there. One day the old miller threw a sod down the chimney, and it fell into their porridge pot, and scattered the porridge all about, and they said, "What's that? Brunt and scadded! Brunt and scadded!" And they all rushed out and after him, and caught him at the stile to Rothley, and laid a hand on him, and he was lame ever after, and that was old Hodge the Miller! (p. 83)

The editor has preserved the natural way in which one story calls out another; discussion of a "warlock" -- "people daursn't owe him anything!" -- and a woman's fear that his evil eye would spoil her churning, leads Mrs. Hepple to say:

> I've heard something like that, -- my mother was servant to a woman, and, when she was churning, there was something rattling about in the churn; it was a bit of rowan tree wood, to keep the cream from being turned sour by the fairies! (p. 82)

The several accounts of a local bonesetter's cure of a rich lady in London are also good examples of the way different tellers focus on different details (pp. 111-113), as are the varying legends about the fate of the boy who informed on a local murderer (pp. 163-164).

Dorset Up Along and Down Along (1935)[107] draws on material from Women's Institutes throughout the county and thereby loses something of the community feeling of the Cambo book. More of the contributions have been rephrased but some maintain an oral style, as in this vivid memorate from a woman who had been hag-ridden:

> As I was standing by my door, (a cottage at the foot of Church Hill) I saw a woman coming down the hill who was a witch or hag. She saw me laugh at her. After I went to bed that night I felt a weight on my legs which gradually went upwards to my chest. I screamed, and my son came into the room. As he opened the door, the lump fell off, and I distinctly heard the hag walk down the stairs and out the door. (p. 107)

More dialectal is the account by an old woman of how in her youth she had foiled a sailor of his aim to kiss every maid in the village before he returned to sea:

> Well, we was a-coming home from a party, just arter Christmas 'twas, and the frost had give and made the roads a solid slush. We was wearen our pattens and I heard ahind us somethen a-creepen stealthy-like -- Bill Adams, I say to

> myself, and quick as thought I whipped off one of me pattens just as he come up and tried to put a arm round each o' us as bold as brass. But I was ready for 'en. "No you don't me Nibs," I said, and I up wi' me patten an' slashed his face till the blood ran. He did swear something awful but we didn't wait to listen, we took to our heels and never stopped till we got indoors. . . . there were two maids as how he'd never kissed. (p. 130)

Such autobiographical fragments are not common in these village miscellanies unless they illustrate, as here with the use of the pattens, some detail of past life.

There is, however, a section of personal reminiscence, "A Shepherd's Tale," including horrendous details of poverty and memorates of witchcraft, treasure found through ghost lights, and a corpse discovered by the sound of knocking, in the Wiltshire volume, Moonrakings.[108] Its title refers to the blason populaire tradition that some Wiltshire men pretended to be numskulls raking the moon from a pond when they were surprised by Excise men while retrieving smuggled spirits. Four brief autobiographical accounts by working men are given in a Sussex collection from West Wittering.[109] All contain some characteristic elements, such as comparison of the wages then and now; one voices the very common contrast between the quality of work done by machine and that done by hand:

> We all worked hard in them days. Everything was done by hand then, you know, sowin' and reapin' and hayin' an' all. There wasn't no tractors, or binders, or sowin' machines or thrashin' machines. No. But in some ways, things was better then. You didn't see so much rubbish along of the corn. (West Wittering, p. 39)

The complaint of weeds among the corn, as a sign of bad farming, can still be heard from older workers though some sixty years have elapsed since these reminiscences were recorded. Two mentioned the less personal relationship that now obtained between master and man -- an extra half-crown in place of the harvest supper and sing-song -- and weekly pay nights had also lost a certain ceremonial and familial character:

> We all used to get our wages then of a Friday night. We used to go up to the farm an' set down at a long table in the kitchen an' each of us had a big mug of home-brewed. Such ale it was too. Not like the rubbish you get now. Farmer used to brew his own. Reg'lar good stuff 'twas. You could taste the malt in it. An' he'd come round hisself an' pay each man, an' a joke or a friendly word for us all.
>
> It's all different now. I often never see the farmer when I drawed my wages. He'd send 'em down to where I was working. Or like as not, I'd find 'em in a bit of paper top o' my milkcan. (West Wittering, pp. 39-40)

The last to be mentioned in this brief sampling is It Happened in Hampshire (1936).[110] Like the Dorset and Wiltshire titles this is a broad miscellany of folklore and local history; some of the usually short items are given in dialect. A noteworthy detail is its use of the term "mummering," which was no doubt the local term, in place of the standard English "mumming." One complete hero-combat play text and two text fragments are given but perhaps more intriguing is the mention of the song "The Prick-a-li Bush" (Child 95, 'The Maid Freed from the Gallows') associated with the Twyford mummers (pp. 32-33): since there are references to this song being performed as a play elsewhere,[111] and, since another local team performed a skit upon the press gang (p. 33), this may suggest that the established categories of "ritual drama" -- the hero-combat, plough or wooing play, and sword-dance -- were not the only kinds of folk drama performed at Christmas. The more examples of other kinds of Christmas mumming there can be assembled the less obvious will it seem that the activity has anything at all to do with the change of seasons, except in the general sense of being holiday celebration and license.

This digression may indicate the most important general feature of these amateur compilations: where, as at Cambo, they "despaired at first of finding any Customs,

or "Beliefs" that were not in books" (Troublesome Times, p. 10), and therefore boldly disregarded the authorities, compilers were freed from a prescriptive sense of what "folklore" was, or should have been, and could simply set down what they knew was being done. In this respect, the Women's Institute collections are sometimes equivalent to naive autobiographies in allowing a relatively unmediated, inside view of a community's tradition.

This chapter began with George Sturt's self-questioning about the appropriate form in which to write of rural people; he sought some style which would avoid the "quaintnesses" conventionally expected. I have surveyed five modes of writing which were available to him as potential models: firstly, country journals and sketches were found to be often marked by an inconsequential tone, as though their authors were holidaying from more important matters, yet, in some cases, there were finely described encounters with individuals, or with aspects of tradition, which showed that their authors could, at times, be serious. Galleries of rural characters, the second genre examined, could also be derisive in manner; the form was originally a matter of wittily describing certain apparently fixed types of personality and occupation but this gave way, by the turn of the present century, to a more respectful interest

in describing specific individuals. Where writers also carefully transcribed longer passages of their subjects' speech some very worthwhile portraits were created. Journalists' explorations of social and economic hardship in the countryside, the third category of writing taken up, naturally suffered from limitations of space, and this, generally, precluded the detailed study of individuals, though some case-histories were presented; their deliberately shocking realism, however -- the roses figuratively ripped from cottage doors to show the misery within -- helped dispose of the complacent vision of rural peace and plenty. The fourth set of writings, the memoirs of antiquarians, was remarkable for the breadth of interests shown and, in particular, for the authors' readiness to turn to local people and folk memory for help in their researches into archaeology, history, and folklore. In such works, in general, artifacts are often given precedence over people, yet the antiquaries I have written about possessed humane qualities which gained them the trust and respect of their village neighbours, and this is reflected in the quality of the collecting they were able to do in such sensitive areas as supernatural belief. Finally, my fifth category, village history, seems to have been something of a substitute for autobiography for many of its authors. These books give insiders' views of their

communities, and are often told through a wealth of anecdotes of local characters. Through the kinds of stories selected for retention and repetition a sense emerges of traditional values; of course it must also be admitted that many of these records are doggedly historical, prim and pious.

Thus each genre has its merits and drawbacks; George Sturt chose to follow none of them completely. Since, as must be evident by now, Sturt's works are used here as the touchstone for authenticity in all writing by and about English country workmen the following chapter will examine his books more closely, paying particular attention to his effort to achieve a sympathetic yet objective and unsentimental form in which to convey the long series of surprising discoveries about differences in attitudes and traditions which he made as he grew to know Bettesworth and compared the labouring man's assumptions with his own.

III

The Originality of George Sturt

In The Bettesworth Book George Sturt adopted a manner of setting out his material which has since become a commonplace in folklore and oral history studies; he gives a record of his conversations, or interviews, quoting his informants extensively in their original words. His astonishingly accurate renderings of speech were achieved without mechanical aid, being written from memory in a journal. While not verbatim, his accounts of conversations show an intimate knowledge of local speech; indeed it might be argued that in reconstructing what he knew to be typical he was truer to the language than he might have been through the random samples captured by a tape recorder. But while this format now seems obvious to us Sturt did not arrive at it simply, for while, as I have shown, there were precursors in the genre of conversations with rural folk, we cannot be sure that Sturt modelled his response on any of them. Although Sturt is best known for his ideas expressed in Change in the Village (1912) and The Wheelwright's Shop (1923)[1] about the "organic community" -- a view of a former state of things in England in which crafts and social life were

intimately fitted to the local, and natural, environment -- it is not these ideas which will be considered here but rather the methodology of the observations from which his theories grew. It is his careful method of listening to and writing about rural people that is his original and enduring achievement.

The following account of Sturt's contribution to English folklife study, after an outline of the circumstances of his life and work, will discuss his search for an appropriate form in which to write about rural life, his discovery of a distinct working-class world view, his methods of observation and achievement of rapport, and his interest in the process of memory, leading ultimately to autobiography.

George Sturt was born the younger son of a wheelwright in Farnham, Surrey, in 1863.[2] The wheelwright business had been in the family since 1810 when his grandfather had bought it and George was to be the last Sturt to work at the trade; he gave it up in 1920. His mother's father had been a potter and farmer and both sides of his family had been long settled in the area, a circumstance which, like the wheelwright's trade, was to shape his interest in folklife and the adaptation of culture to environment. He had not intended to become a wheelwright himself but, after an education at local schools, was teaching at Farnham

Grammar School when the untimely illness and death of his father forced him to take over the running of the business at the age of twenty-one in 1884. His lack of an apprenticeship placed him in the conflicting roles of "master" and "boy" to his craftsmen; he admits that his intellect misled him by making difficult skills look easy and that no-one could put into his wrist "the knack that ought to have begun growing there five years earlier" (Wheelwright's Shop, p. 84). Other problems arose from the contradiction of his being a socialist employer of labour; what had previously been only philosophical questions of the relations between labour and capital had to be worked out in practical terms, and Ruskinian notions of profit-sharing schemes with the men proved unworkable (Wheelwright's Shop, p. 200).

His poor physical health also prevented him from gaining the full mastery of the wheelwright's craft. He suffered all his life from asthma and bronchitis and, in 1916, from a cerebral thrombosis which left him paralysed. Although he lived a further eleven years his powers of movement and speech were severely impaired, effectively putting an end to further investigative work in the manner of The Bettesworth Book and to other schemes laid wistfully in the journal such as one to study barns and other vernacular buildings (Journals, pp. 831, 841-842). Neither Sturt,

nor his two sisters, who lived with him, ever married and his brother died without issue. All of these biographical circumstances had some bearing on the themes of his writing and because the journal which he began in 1890 at the age of twenty-seven was the initial medium for almost all his published work there is an autobiographical presence in the resulting books which increases in his later works when ill health forced him in upon his own and his family's recollections. It is this depth of personal involvement in the material he describes -- whether it be the techniques of the wheelwright or conversations with Farnham people -- yet tempered by scientific objectivity, which makes his books such a valuable combination of insight, empathy, and empiricism.

I. Sturt's Journals

Sturt's early literary ambitions, and subsequent discovery of his real subject, folklife, can be seen through the two partly different selections from his journals made by Geoffrey Grigson and E.D. Mackerness.[3] Sturt had first considered fiction as a medium for his rural life writing but soon rejected it, sensing its inappropriateness. Yet a feeling that as a serious writer he should attempt novels dogged him for a considerable time; in November 1900 he noted:

> This last three days I have been trying to make up into fiction some incidents in the lives of one of our cottage neighbours. The thing seems hopeless; worthless. I am not interested in it, in that way. (Journals, p. 330)

The Sussex villagers who appear briefly in his only published novel, A Year's Exile (London: John Lane, 1898), are more convincingly drawn than its middle-class protagonists; the close attention to their speech and manner shown in the novel indicates that he had already found that his true interest lay in describing rural people, and that he was developing the technique to do so. But he had not yet gained confidence in the literary merit of his non-fiction form. In the novel a character, Mrs. Thomson (a London journalist's wife), urges the hero, a provincial doctor

sympathetically interested in the village poor, to write about these people:

> He hungered to hear their slow thought, and to see them living in rugged patience through the tremendous frost that marked the two first months of the year. And he found that to Mrs. Thomson he could speak of them; of their patient endurance; their slow and almost stupid wit; their entire innocence of analytical thought, leaving almost naked in them the passions and emotions that grow obscured in more sophisticated life; and finding her keenly sympathetic, he secretly resolved to take her advice, and write about them. (p. 21)

Sturt's dissatisfaction with current modes of fiction, however, had fortunate effects for the ethnographic value of his writing; it caused him to seek substitutes for the interest created in novels by elaborate plotting:

> These 'plots,' these occurrences and entanglements -- they are a pure weariness to me. . . . This doctoring of reality to suit the artist's ends -- well, I resent it. (Journals, p. 363)

Sturt felt that reality should be interesting enough in itself and turned to an analogy with impressionism in art which had replaced the nineteenth century vogue for the picture which told a story:

> In painting, that idealism which implied scorn of the actual has become altogether out of date; and good men find in the world about them too much beauty to permit of their dallying with their own fancies. So too, it has seemed to me, the time must come when artists in fiction too will set themselves the task of rendering not imaginary scenes and incidents and characters, but the beauties -- really so far more satisfying -- of ordinary life as it goes on around us all. . . . But when I regard those ordinary beauties of life that satisfy me and sometimes fill me with admiration, the possibility of treating them as a subject for fiction recedes out of sight, and the admiration is followed by despair -- or a conviction of helplessness rather. Sometimes, even, I think that a new art must be invented, proper to these unrecorded and intangible beauties of the commonplace. (Journals, p. 335)

The Journals show that he had been considering the difference between "showing" and "telling" in the novel for some time; in Dec. 1896 he had criticized those novelists who explain to their readers what their characters are thinking:

> They get entangled in what their characters 'think', instead of minding the sort of people that their characters are. Thought is but a very small part of character, and a very immaterial one. It is often so fortuitous too. The same thought may be shared by a thousand men all different, and maybe expressed by them all in identical terms. Yet each will have his own peculiar manner of expression; and this peculiar manner is the novelist's opportunity. Let him seize that and leave the 'thought' for the philosopher. (Journals, p. 251)

Thus it may be that the attention to Bettesworth's "own peculiar manner of expression" owes something to Sturt's interest in developing a style suitable to the kind of fiction he wished to write; and correspondingly, it seems that his practice in close observation with Bettesworth as a subject contributed to this aesthetic theory.

A further pitfall for the novelist, in Sturt's view, is that he will rely on dialogue to present character when "real people" would signify things through "gestures, flushes and blushes":

> Speech is only one out of many ways, in which a person's organic life betrays itself. And of all ways, it is perhaps (in reality) the least significant. Only the inadvertences of it matter at all. For people do not speak about their deepest or most necessary life -- with which the artist is interested. All that they can talk of is the shallow disturbance caused near the surface of them by outside forces: and it is only in the organic force that sometimes wells up into this, from underneath, that the really "choice" manifestations of life occur. (Journals, p. 352)

Though elsewhere he writes of his fascination with Bettesworth's speech for its own sake (Journals, pp. 372-375), this interest in the whole range of human communicativeness has added depth to his ethnography.

Another influence on his descriptive style may be traced to the literary exercises in the manner of Thoreau and others in which he indulged himself, "priggishly," early in the mornings at the wheelwright's shop before the day's business (Wheelwright's Shop, pp. 14-15). Sturt admired Thoreau's "close observations on natural history" which reveal "a man ever on the alert with all his faculties"; "Every moment had something good to offer him and he made it his business to seize it" (Journals, p. 57). There are many examples in the Journals of Sturt's attempts to school himself in observing and describing particular moments of weather, light or sound, with the aim of educating his sensibility to the beauty of the ordinary and commonplace (pp. 78-80). The descriptive style he aimed at was to be precise, delicate, and austere without severity (p. 80). His interest in capturing the particularity of time, place and feelings has implications for his biographical writing:

> Drizzling again after dark: and underfoot, slushy mud. Would that such conditions could find their way into biographies, for they tell! Tonight, for instance, if instead of this oozy softness, that made walking distasteful, and the damp air, sweaty under overcoats, -- if I could have walked out in dry hard clear frost, I feel that my mind would have been more sane and cheerful. (p. 66)

Here Sturt recognizes the transitory nature of attitudes and that perception is relative, influenced by a variety of changeable factors. One implication of this view is that what he records is given by him as only a tentative reading of the situation. He hated theory and dogmatism with a self-educated man's distrust of the university-educated intellectual élite. But the tentativeness in Sturt's attitude, his self-questioning as to whether he had quite understood what he had seen in a workman's behaviour or speech, is one of the things which give depth to his descriptions, for he tries to omit no detail which may be part of the whole.

The following is an example of the way in which a passage of nature description in the manner of Thoreau goes on, as though naturally, to include Bettesworth and his conversation; Sturt shows himself listening to the rain and becoming aware of other village noises, including Grover (the real name of the gardener he called 'Bettesworth') scrubbing a pail:

> Then there were three backgrounds of sound, all gentle and liquid as that of the shattering rain which was one of them. . . . Framed by all this, Grover stooped over his pail, careless of getting wet. His old earth-brown clothes belonged to the moistened busy little nook of orchard he was working in: so too did his occasional quiet chatter go well with the chatter of the warm rain.

> And so did the drift of what he said seem part of quiet rural country; of the sane English Folk who have been refreshed by mornings like this.
>
> Presently he lifted his head: "Have ye heard 'bout young Busby over here? He's gone clean off his head. They took 'n off to the asylum at Brookwood this mornin'. Got this here religion. I s'pose by all accounts he went right into't: and that's what've come of it."
>
> I suggested that religious mania was often quite curable. "Yes: I've known a many have it; and then they gets over it after a time. Get 'em away -- that's what it wants: if they can get 'em where they can dummer somethin' else into 'em, then they be alright. Wants to give 'em a change, so's to git a little more enlightenment into their minds. . . ."
> (Journals, p. 266-7)

Though Sturt comes close to indulgence in the pathetic fallacy in linking Grover so intimately with earth and rain we also see the value of that literary exercise in careful observation which gives us this finely heard speech, as well as the different sounds of raindrops, and a sense of the context of these gossiping remarks.

In the Bettesworth books Sturt limits the reporting of his own side of the conversations, though not to the minimal level of Gambier-Parry or of Georgine Tollet's County Conversations. The Journals, however, offer a few entries (11 February, 1896, 9 April 1896, 16 April 1896, pp. 239, 241-243) which show Sturt talking fluently in the

vernacular and thus suggest the easy rapport he achieved with Grover on at least some subjects and at certain levels of feeling. This is a thing which is not shown in the published books where Sturt as narrator, when quoting his own words at all, does so in standard English.

In addition to his use of dialect, Sturt, in the Journals, enters fully into the give and take of the conversation; in the passage best exemplifying these points (16 April 1896), Grover and Sturt walk into Farnham together, chatting about Grover's cut finger and a traditional cure for it. Sturt used the incident in Ch. XXII of The Bettesworth Book, pp. 203-206, and the differences between the two versions are instructive concerning Sturt's rapport with Grover and also of his method in transcribing a conversation. To allow comparison excerpts from the two versions are given in parallel texts below, the Journal entry on the left:

"I give my old finger a tidy smack 's mornin'," he began, showing it tied up clumsily with a very dirty rag. "Ah -- so they said: I see a spot o' blood."	"I give my finger a tidy smack s' mornin'," be began, showing a finger clumsily bound up with a very dirty rag. "Ah, they told me you'd cut it rather badly."

There is a large difference between the neutral, middle-class phrasing of the book version and the colloquial form Sturt records himself as having used in his journal. The journal

entry catches the idiom precisely; Sturt's usage in the passage above implies a past tense in the dialect, just as he had used it in a previous conversation where his "'I don't know as ever I see 'em,'" was translated in The Bettesworth Book into "'I don't remember ever seeing 'em'" (p. 161).

In the journal version Sturt's comments indicate his sharing in Grover's tradition but in the book he stands quizzically apart:

"I chopped my knee once," I remarked; briefly relating how I also tried "to keep on", but couldn't do it.; [I probably felt faint. 'At any rate, I could as soon have chopped my head off, as sewn it up.] "My grandfather", I continued, "always used to say a man'd never learn to be a wheelwright until he'd chopped his knee a time or two."[4]	"I chopped my knee once," I remarked, briefly relating the circumstances. I remembered feeling faint, and could as soon have chopped my leg off as sewn up the wound.

On balance it seems likely that this omission is due to Sturt's modest feeling that the book is about Bettesworth rather than himself. That Sturt can so adroitly contribute the kind of sententious advice that Grover and other old country men delight in, however, helps explain his success in maintaining and describing their conversations; he has a feel for the way they should go, the timing of comments,

the flow of subjects, and thus he can participate naturally as a member, in some respects, of this community of speakers. Elsewhere he wrote "these things do to say, too, when you meet an acquaintance. They put you en rapport with him, will start a conversation; will lead up to anecdotes."[5]

The talk goes on, the two versions showing an omission of the kind of remark by Sturt which encourages Grover's reflections:

"'Tis a dangerous place, too, says Grover. "Now these adzes -- how you sees some a usin' of 'em, gettin' of it out purty nigh as if 'twas a plane."	"'Tis a dangerous place," says Bettesworth. "Now these adzes -- how you sees some a-usin' of 'em, gettin' of it out purty nigh as if 'twas a plane . . . .
"Yes -- a pretty tool is an adze. But they be gwine out o' use pretty much now."	
"Ah, with these here machines. But I've see 'm usin' of 'em on the line, when they're settin' the chairs; then they uses a adze, an' very clean they works with 'em too, I never was much of a 'and wi' any edge tools, myself."	I've see 'em usin' of 'em on the line, when they're settin' the chairs for the sleepers. Then they uses a adze, an' very clean they works with 'em too. I never was much of a 'and with any edge tool myself. . . ."
"It takes a smart while," says I, "to learn 'ow to sharp 'em."	"'Tisn't everybody that can sharpen 'em."
"Ah; an' that's the first thing you got to do, too . . . ."	"An' that's the fust thing you got to do, too."

It will be noticed that Sturt has silently added "for the sleepers" in order to explain Bettesworth's reference to

the use of the adze by railway workers preparing cross-ties. In general, however, these parallel passages show that Sturt makes almost no modification of Grover's remarks, transferring them directly from their original form as written in his journal soon after hearing them.

As to Sturt's motivation for omitting or altering his own side of the conversation in his published works there can be several opinions. It may be that he shrank from appearing in print as a dialect speaker and retailer of folksy adages; it may be simply that he sought brevity, or wished to concentrate the reader's attention on Bettesworth. Perhaps he wished to avoid the imputation of patronizing Bettesworth, or condescending to him, by using dialect in speaking to him. The journal version is fascinating, however, for the glimpse it gives us of Sturt as an ethnographer, perhaps indulging himself a little self-consciously by slipping, as many folklorists do, into the idiom of his informant, fancying himself awhile as the old craftsman that he was not. But best of all is the sense it gives of familiarity and friendship between the two, enjoying their conversation as equal partners in it.

Sturt considered his journal "the most interesting book I shall ever write";[6] it was not simply the repository from which "schemed-out" books were compiled but, I will

suggest, the qualities of a journal as a literary medium helped shape his vision of rural life and his act of keeping a journal became important in his relationship to that life. He began the journal in 1890 at the age of twenty-seven and at first it is self-consciously the record of the Thoughts of an aspiring young man-of-letters: the first two entries in the Mackerness edition are deliberations on the ideas of Thoreau, followed by notes on Mill's "Political Economy." Delicate observations of the weather also find a place as exercises in perception and description for the would-be novelist. Within a month of the first entry, however, a new kind of material appears: Bone, one of the boys in Sturt's wheelwright's shop, had come to him asking if there were any moles in his garden, he wanted to trap one to use in a cure for his father's "fits":

> ". . . they say a mole's a good thing". "How?" "Why, you get his blood, you know -- a mole's only got three drops of blood in him: and then you let his blood drop into a wine-glass of water and drink it". So on: a long talk (while looking out timber) about moles and their ways. I couldn't help laughing; but was careful not to discourage him. "One of their neighbours had tried it", -- and so what could I say? (Journals, p. 69)

Sturt still looks a little askance at this kind of material yet transcriptions of conversations with his workers and

other rural people (leading of course to the "Bettesworth" talks), character sketches, and observations of the social life of the village -- Farnham Fair, work at harvest and hop-picking, the sounds and smells of daily life -- come to dominate the journal. In 1896, after a gap in its writing, he wrote to Bennett "I once kept a journal -- a sickly, analytic thing containing some good stuff amidst much rubbish . . ." (A Small Boy, p. viij); there seems little doubt that it was the folklife observations that Sturt found to be good and were therefore expanded. The analytic strain continued but was increasingly fuelled by the folklife interest which reoriented him from commentaries on the orthdox greats of literature to his original investigation of working class culture.

One of the features of diaries is their receptiveness to commonplace details of everyday life and their consequent value to social historians is well known. Had Sturt not kept a journal he might have been far less conscious of the range of speech, crafts, behaviour and attitudes he came in contact with on a daily basis. Because he was writing a journal and not a treatise he could utilize any chance encounter and scrap of conversation; its relevance and use could be found later. While he was obviously selective in what he noted he includes far more than any other chronicler

of rural life, and in finer detail. Further, while he was fascinated by the history of the aspects of tradition, material and verbal, that he discovered, the fact that his encounters with them were usually casual rather than elicited, gives us a sense of how things stood at the time of his writing.

The performance of most genres of folklore is marred through self-consciousness induced by the presence of an outside spectator or investigator and, on occasion, Sturt, silently watching and listening in the darkness of his garden, recorded material in natural context that could never have been observed overtly. One of the most striking examples of this is his description of children drawing water from a well at night and their making a game out of their fear of the "bogie," a frightening figure which they have obviously been told about to make them careful in using the well:

> Presently, down through this blackness, there went swinging the ruddy light of a lantern, in swift rhythmical motion: children's babble accompanied it; and swift and sharp from the cottage a woman's voice overtook it -- "Take care what you be at there!" A needful caution. They were going to the well for water: and there was a shoving and a tittering, in which the word "bogie" began to be audible.
>
> The sounds made by the descending bucket drowned other sounds for a few seconds. No attempt was made to ease the bucket down. Hooked on to the chain, it was let go, and the slow click-clack of

> the revolving windlass hurried into a kind of wooden laugh, then ceased, and the children could be heard again. One of them was saying, in a voice three parts fun and one part awe, "S'posing a bogie was to come now, if I was to get up in the apple-tree, when he was comin' up after me, I should be gettin' down." A low toned gabble followed, out of which rang a soft call, "Bo-gie, -- come!" and a third child sang lustily, "Tigly Wig the Barber, Went to shave his father." Slowly they began drawing up the bucket: a voice cries suddenly, "Look out! Here's the bogie!" There was a laugh: then an older voice, stern and determined, cried "Shut up!" A titter followed and again the bucket went clack-clacking down the well. After that the voices were more subdued, but now and again the endearing call rose up: "Bo-gie! . . . Bo-gie!" Once I heard a muttered allusion to "the Bogie Man"; but by and by the scrap of song was raised, as if to protect the party in its return from the well. First one, then another, trolled out the first two lines -- to the same folk-tune that usually expresses derision -- and at last I heard it all, not clearly enunciated, but something like this:--
>
> Tigly Wig the Barber
> Went to shave his Father.
> The razor slip and cut his lip,
> Tigly Wig the Barber![7]

Has there ever been such a sensitive rendering of the balance between fear and laughter in children's deliberately scary play?

That Sturt's garden was bordered by a lane led to his overhearing conversations of villagers passing along it. At eleven o'clock one night, after writing in his journal about a visit to Farnham Fair he went on to add a further

passage, six pages in Grigson's edition, of almost verbatim transcription of the conversation between a young man and woman in the lane.[8] Their talk seemed not to be love making, Sturt said, though admitting his ignorance of "how that process is carried on by these classes" but merely flirtation. The girl talks of her marriage prospects, of a dream she had in which the man she is talking to was at home with her, of the "cheek" of another fellow, of the sexual reputations of others in the village. But amidst this subdued banter the man made one comment that struck home to Sturt: "'I don't see the good o' livin'. Nothin' to look forward to but hard work. Trouble and hard work all your days.'" The remark lingered with Sturt and he refers back to it in his next journal entry as evidence of the pessimism bred by the blocking of the development of the natural abilities of the working class by the middle classes' demands for decorousness, enforced by Parson and Policeman. After listening to that conversation (of which I have given a mere skeleton) Sturt felt that he had been looking at the "unknown life of these village people" merely "from the outside." "I had looked at it as in the Zoo one looks at the animals, knowing nothing of the inner life going on" (Grigson, p. 158). Such self-criticisms are legion in Sturt's writing but here, perhaps because the insight was gained surreptitiously, he

must have felt more aware of the distance between the villagers' lives and his own. He may also have felt guilty at eavesdropping and records with nice irony the girl's noticing a cat that had also been stealthily present: "'Here's the cat a takin' of it all in what we bin sayin'. She bin a listenin'. I must listen off home too, 'relse I shall git a talkin' to, bein' out so late. . . .'" Change in the Village, however, mentions that his neighbours did not always share his middle-class notions of privacy and propriety; from their shouted conversations he sometimes overheard more than he wished to (pp. 23-24). But the point underlying Sturt's doubts about his ability to know the villagers fully, to see their lives from the inside, is of course that only by such covert observation can he avoid a speaker's perception of class difference which always shapes what is told him in face to face communication.

Sturt was highly sensitive to such reactions; collecting subscriptions for a "Jubilee Memorial" among cottage women, for example, he was impressed by their similarity of response, "-- all courteous, all very feminine in their manner, and frequently flushing a little, over the excitement of my visit . . ." (Grigson, p. 140), yet he cannot be sure that the unity of sentiment he thinks he perceives, that they genuinely wish to contribute to a scheme (a water

supply project) that will help their neighbours, is real or due to his pressure: "It may be that they dislike to be left out; that to me they cannot employ the weapons of refusal -- 'chaff', for instance -- that might be used against their own class."

The tentativeness with which he presents his findings, full of doubts as to his qualifications for understanding the culture of working people, already endemic in his personality, was encouraged by the journal as a medium. The portrait of "Bettesworth" gains in depth precisely through its having been recorded by means of a diary in which Bettesworth has been seen from many sides, in different circumstances, moods, and at various stages in Sturt's relationship with him. Sturt never presumes that he fully knows Bettesworth, he is always capable of being surprised by some new information that casts him in a different light. Similarly, Anais Nin, comparing her portrayal of her father in a novel with that in her diary, preferred the latter:

> . . . I ask myself about the novel I wrote, was it the truth? . . . did I deform my father? Art is a microscope, as you examine one aspect of a human being, you cannot give the whole, the entire picture. The diary is closer to the truth, because it paints my father each day anew, with changes, paradoxes, contradictions, growth, and in these oscillations lies the truth.[9]

Sturt's use of the journal form, then, giving a series of pictures taken over time, is a great advance on the static, snapshot, quality of the rustic "character" sketches that preceded him.

Because of the tentative and unfinished nature of Sturt's portraits the reader feels invited to join him in the process of analysis and may flatter himself with the illusion that he has discovered things there for himself rather than having been shown them by the author. Fraser considers that it is Sturt's ability to engage the reader directly with the material, rather than with himself as the author displaying it, that has made his works "unsuspectedly influential." The reader may forget the book, Fraser says, but carry away its central ideas as though they were his own.[10]

This effect is a tribute to Sturt's successful use of the inductive method of enquiry. He soon realized that beyond the conventional satisfactions of a diary, as a confidant, a record for future recollection, a literary exercise, there was a scientific value in recording the shaping of even his own character:

> For a true account of the formation of any person's character would be of great biological importance. There are so many questions of Education and Culture, whose answers can only be guessed at, for want of reliable observations on the effects of environment. Most biographies that I have read are silent on this one point; which yet, could it but be illuminated, would outshine all their other interests. Fiction, of late years, has made some attempts to deal with the subject; but one feels after all that the authors have to build upon untested theories; . . . . An inductive science of Culture can only be gained from numberless observations; and these should be the most attainable in autobiography. (Journals, p. 150)

This, of course, is also a statement of the principle underlying his books; from the studies of an individual's response to environment in the "Bettesworth" books, to the analysis of group sentiment in Change in the Village, to the reconstruction through reminiscence of past types of character in William Smith: Potter and Farmer; in each case Sturt's conclusions are drawn inductively from his many particular journal observations.

Finally, in terms of the possible personal value of the Journal to Sturt, it is apparent that he was a shy man, not at all the type to buttonhole passing folk in search of their opinions. He records his walking away when a maid-servant appeared from a house, "lest she might suppose me open to conversation" (Journals, p. 76); and his dislike of

being watched: "Go now to loaf in the garden awhile: (the men who usually work near there being now out of the way, I hate to be watched:-= though why should I skulk out of the way?) (p. 107). Sturt was a bachelor, living with his maiden sisters, and his social circle was limited. As a Socialist employer of labour he was at ease in neither camp. The diary became a substitute for the intellectual intercourse he lacked with others: ". . . I incline to write this diary in the shape of a letter to a close friend: and who closer than myself?" (p. 62). He was also plagued by ill health, culminating in paralysis, and the evidence suggests that the journal became a medium through which he lived vicariously. In A Small Boy in the Sixties he advanced the theory that it was literally possible, in childhood at least, to receive other people's perceptions directly, to read the environment through their eyes (p. xv).

II. The Bettesworth Books

The most radical departure in Sturt's work is his willingness to record whatever his informants wished to talk about. Because he did not impose his own assessment of what was "important," we have in the Bettesworth books the first major record of the world view of a rural labourer of this period: "I might admire the landscape, and practise my aesthetics; but he was becking in amongst the potatoes, and it is his point of view, not mine, that has survived and given its tinge to these talks" (Memoirs, p. 181). Sturt's approach to what he recorded was generally passive, and even random -- the antithesis of the use of a questionnaire advocated in contemporary manuals of folklore collection, such as Charlotte S. Burne's Handbook of Folklore (London, 1914), which set out topics on which a collector should enquire. Of course Sturt enjoyed the luxury of unlimited time; his was not a "field trip" to some exotic region but a day-to-day record of what he heard within a very small neighbourhood. Nevertheless, it was Sturt's quality of open-mindedness, or vision, that allowed him to realize the breadth of traditional culture at a time when most Folk-Lore Society members were still narrowly investigating a limited set of "survivals."

Sturt's fine ability to recreate speech supports, and perhaps inspired, his description of rural culture; his principles of editing are stated in The Bettesworth Book, pp. 14-15. It is not so much an attempt to render dialect pronunciation as a sensitivity to the way speech is put together; he gives the redundancies which a less thoughtful observer would have omitted but which are essential characteristics. The following passage, for example, thoroughly embodies the manner of narration as well as its content yet is done without description of the speaker, relying on the words alone:

> "You've heard of my mother's cousin Harry Wheeler? No? Sure you must have heard of him. I should think he was as strong a man as ever anybody heard tell of. He took my uncle once -- my Uncle Walter, you know -- and laid him on the table: and then, by a handkerchief tied round him -- round here you know (i.e., round his middle) lifted him up with his teeth!" "No! By George, did he though!" "Ah, he did! As nice a fellow as ever you need see; -- a nice good-hearted gentlemanly fellow -- only he drank so you know -- well that was the cause of his death, poor fellow: but except for that -- ah, he was a capital fellow . . . He come in once, you know, and he says to my mother 'Tilly' he says, 'Tilly' (that's her name, you know) 'Would you sooner be lousy, or have a lousy look?' She see how it was with him, you know, so she says, 'Well, I don't know, Harry.' 'Don't ye?' he says, 'well, I'd sooner be lousy; 'cause you could get rid of 'em.' I suppose he thought you couldn't get rid of the look, if you'd got it. Hi hi hi.

> He had a leather suit made once, for shooting, you know. And when he'd got this, he come into our place, -- we were little kids then -- and he says 'Well I never, Did you ever, See a monkey dressed in leather'; and I can remember how we laughed, -- we thought that was clever. (Grigson, p. 115)

Could the same narration have been tape-recorded its transcription would have shown more hesitations, mis-encodings, and attributions of speaker, but Sturt provides enough to give the sense of real speech.

He never grew complacent about his transcriptive ability, however, and frequently complains that somehow the completeness of the words and the essence of the situation eluded him. In Memoirs of a Surrey Labourer he speaks of the difficulty of forcing himself to attend to the commonplace rather than the striking; Bettesworth's Crimea memories, for example, which he had recorded for their "oddness," now seemed to Sturt to occupy a disproportionate place in the finished book. What he should have attended to, he felt, was Bettesworth's daily gossip in his last years; but this,

> . . . the commonplace of my life as well as of Bettesworth's, was allowed to pass by almost unnoticed. I let slip what I really liked, took for granted the strong life that alone made me care for the conversation, and saved only some dead litter of observation which was let fall by the living man and seemed to me odd. (p. 116)

This problem remains insoluble for those who would present life histories of individuals.

A true proportion between the more striking anecdotal material and "Our Dominant Topic" -- gardening technicalities, is discussed in The Bettesworth Book:

> Although anecdotes . . . . form the most salient feature in Bettesworth's talk, it must not be supposed that in his own mind they occupy a place of any importance. It is true that he likes a tale . . . . . [Here Sturt tells how Bettesworth has sat up all night listening to yarns of smugglers] But his true interest is that which he shares with all the other villagers -- interest in their work, and expecially in the management of their gardens . . . we dwell upon the subject, discussing it as eagerly as a game of skill. (p. 258)

Gardening talk, in Sturt's metaphor, is the soil from which Bettesworth's other stories are "heaved up," almost all of them having a close connection with his work. It is also a medium of conversational exchange at the village pub where "men compare notes, and give and take sage advice" (Memoirs, pp. 13-15). This kind of talk forms "a living tradition" that is heard "throughout the length and breadth of England," being as much part of a culture's learned expressive behaviour as the fixed forms of proverbial lore, yet where is the folklorist who has taken sufficient interest to transcribe it? It is, as Sturt says, "an interminable

repetition of technical observations . . . which on paper might have the appearance of dullest platitude;" but it must be looked at if we are to understand Bettesworth, ". . . to him it is not dull" (Bettesworth Book, pp. 260-261).

Two reflections on platitudes show Sturt's originality in his approach to rural speech; while the recording of proverbs and dites is orthodox it is much rarer to note expressions that are almost formless but yet are traditional things to say, such as the joke made on a sweltering hot day: "'Can you keep yourself warm?' he asked. 'Pretty nearly,' I answered; 'what about yourself?' 'It biles out,' he panted, indicating the sweat that was 'boiling out' of his face." He notes that such remarks follow a seasonal cycle, a fact he could confirm by the evidence in his diary, and he enjoyed his predictive ability: ". . . I know as well what will be said on or about July 11, by rustics all over the Southern Counties, as if their voices were already audible. They will affirm, 'I likes to have one mess o' beans, and then I don't want no more.' That is the normal expression, the proper seasonable opinion" (Lucy Bettesworth, pp. 161, 153). There is no condescension in Sturt's reporting of these platitudes; he took an aesthetic pleasure in them, enjoying the sense of participation in the tradition given by his knowledge of the rules for their use.

Some of Bettesworth's other interests also surprise Sturt and it is his purpose to show these contrasts between his assumptions and Bettesworth's. The interest in horses is one such: Bettesworth is astonished to find that Sturt takes little notice of horses: "'Don't ye, sir? An' I be altogether different. That's what I notices more'n anything else'" (Bettesworth Book, p. 91). Sturt noted other instances of the intense local interest in horses in his journal (Grigson, pp. 146-147). The things which do not interest Bettesworth are also stated. I have already mentioned Sturt's failure to get Bettesworth onto the topic of ghosts. Sturt found, as would W.H. Hudson in A Shepherd's Life, that his informant had "his subject" and no attempt to lead him away from it could be very successful (Bettesworth Book, p. 45). On his own topics, however, prompting could succeed; Sturt's telling of a bus-driver he had met in London and of this man's experience with horses sparked Bettesworth's interest and "the old man took up the parable" (Bettesworth Book, p. 28). Sensitivity to the informant's "subject" is vital to the writing of life history; it is pointless, after all, to extract by browbeating something that interests the researcher but which would not normally have been thought of by the narrator.

Sturt was certainly interested in folktales, even though Bettesworth was not a storyteller. He wrote in his journal of the "marvels" that comparative science was showing in folktale study and gave an appendix on tales in A Farmer's Life. Fortunately, his sensitivity to context caused him not to treat anecdotes as self-sufficient items but to provide the matrix of conversation in which they appear, showing what led up to them and what surrounds them. A version of the tall-tale theme of the "remarkable shot," for example, is given as a sample of farmers' market-day talk, and Sturt shows the transition from the price of hops, to stories of profiting by it, to a story about a story:

> But hops, if you didn't use 'em for brewing, why they wasn't worth tuppence a hunderdweight. You couldn't use 'em for anything else. . . . They could be kept, though -- and sold in scarce times; and a tale of this was told. Which tale Mulford capped: and thereby was reminded of a certain Tarrant (?) at Odiham who always capped any tale he heard.
>
> In some out-of-the-way inn farmers sat talking of sport. One of them, in some neighbour's kitchen, was called by an excited inmate -- the servant maid, perhaps -- to come quick! There was two pheasants along with the hens! They hunted for a gun: found at last an old one with two barrels but no lock. Never mind: 'twas charged: and "when I gives the word, you stick the match to it"; and both pheasants were brought down. "Yes, that was a very good shot, John," said Tarrant; "but not so good as one I made, down in Berkshire." (Here Mulford stopped his story to remind us of the great plenty of hares to be seen in Berkshire lanes in

> the winter, and to explain how Tarrant called them "hurs". Then the story proceeded.) "I was out one night with my gun, and I see a lot of hurs on the snaw all round a rick. So I crep' up close one side o' the rick, an' fired! And I killed forty hurs and the shot went all round the rick and shot meself in the ass!" Imagine the roar and the drinking when that tale was told! (Grigson, p. 143)

The note of the "capping" routine, and of the story within a story, a feature of tall tale narration, would have been lost had Sturt simply excerpted the "story." His lengthy transcription of a cheap-jack's patter is another fine example of a whole style of speech, again containing exaggeration humour:

> "Well, coom on! I'll tell you how I get them so cheap. You farmers here -- oh, I know you -- I've been here before. You're grumbling because you can't make your farms pay; and the price for your wheat isn't so much as it costs you to grow it. I know all about that; I'm a farmer myself. And I'll tell you how to make your farms pay. I've got a farm -- a few acres about a mile outside of Sheffield. And I keep four men at work there, and I make it pay. Every day about four o'clock, my four men go into Sheffield; and you know the men come out of the factories at five. And when they come out, my four men go in, and pick up little shreds of steel, scraps of iron, splinters of bone, and odd pieces of hemp, and bring them back to my farm; and they're planted out there in rows, and they coom oop clasp knives! And if that isn't a lie, I'll tell you one . . . ."
> (Grigson, p. 120)

As with his other material Sturt senses the historical value of this description: "I listened, fancying that perhaps so a cheap-jack might have carried on there, a hundred years ago" (Grigson, p. 119).

Sturt was also interested in numskull humour and suggested the history of "moon-raking" villages be investigated, being aware of at least one in his neighbourhood, Pirbright:

> Stedman was talking of a bricklayer he once knew, who was a teetotaller and, besides, extremely thin. His mates were wont to chaff him -- tell him to hold on to the scaffold for fear of being blown away: and when they saw him on Sundays going to chapel with a child clinging to either hand, they praised the children for holding their daddy down. "He lent himself to it," said Stedman: "and moreover, to make it worse for him, he came from Pirbright."
>
> I laughed, knowing how Pirbright was spoken of contemptuously as "the end of the world" . . . . (Grigson, p. 193).

Sturt's local knowledge is evident in his laughter and in the teller's assumption that he will know why it "made it worse" for the man to have come from Pirbright. Sturt gives further numskull traits of Pirbrighters: on wet days they look in the puddles to tell if it is raining and they drive fish in the canal under a bridge lest the fish get

wet. Several versions of the numskull tale of the fool who answers the cries of pigeons are given in A Farmer's Life (1922)[11] and Bettesworth, when reminded of the story, remarks how "the same thing 'appened a year or two back" to one Biggs (nephew of my idle old neighbour, a young man, half-witted and commonly known as Shiner) who, according to Bettesworth's story, varied the usual response to the pigeons by swearing at them for not knowing him (Bettesworth Book, pp. 197-198). It would be in character for Bettesworth to narrate this kind of anecdote as a reflection on another's incompetence and foolishness in implicit contrast with his own good sense.

The main theme of Bettesworth's stories is his "Excellent versatility in usefulness" (Bettesworth Book, p. 59). Sturt was correct in his statement that this kind of talk, "practical, technical, racy with anecdotes and grim fun," could be heard at any time from a gang of labourers chatting at dinner-time (p. 8). Bettesworth's story of his self-confidence in asserting that he could drive bigger horses than he had ever handled before, ". . . he says, D'ye think you could drive they two 'orses?' 'Yes,' I says, but I didn't know" (p. 31-32); his account of quitting a farmer in a dispute over hours: "Goo! I did talk to 'n. I never spoke to a master like that afore . . . . But he's

all right now when he meets me; on'y I can't work for 'n" (p. 246); of his stealing extra food for his horses (pp. 20-21); or of clever retorts (pp. 273-274), can all be paralleled from my own fieldwork. Such narratives tend to be self-justifying, persuasions to accept the speaker's opinion, yet avoiding boastfulness. Their function is the maintenance of self esteem and reputation for ability in a trade. While they may seem casual and spontaneous some have a relatively fixed form in a teller's repertoire, having been told on many occasions and, since they are so close to the teller's sense of personal worth or identity, are the kinds of story that appear in orally recorded life histories and autobiographies.

It is notable that Bettesworth tells nothing of his childhood and little about his youth. Sturt says, "Of Bettesworth's young days there is little to be told . . ." and summarizes: "It was as a boy, not twelve years old, that he began work for Farmer Barnes . . ." (p. 19). The absence of stories from the period before he began work conforms to the pattern set in the few oral autobiographies I have recorded from farmworkers since 1975. The beginning of work was the beginning of what they considered their significant life; later, the sequence of their employments, moves from farm to farm, provided some of the structure of their life histories.

It may be that the deep interest in childhood found in autobiographies such as Laurie Lee's Cider with Rosie, or Frank Kendon's The Small Years,[12] is a literary convention, one that will be discussed below as "the pastoral of childhood," but which has little closeness to the way childhood is told of by rural labourers. The lack of stories of childhood, except on a few topics, such as mischief, punishments, games, may be due to a contrast in function: narratives of working life deal with experiences held in common -- how to treat jibbing horses or skinflint employers -- whereas stories of childhood, except on topics like "school," where shared recollections can be compared, are intrinsically personal. Indeed the accomplishment of Lee's childhood autobiography is to show us the singularity of his childhood vision; but such rapt concentration on the self would be unendurable in oral narrative. So it is not surprising that the only stories Bettesworth tells of his boyhood are of pranks and mischief: the "dirty game" of "Pee-wit, More Yet!" where a blindfolded dupe is made to cry "More Yet!" as his tormentors fill his cap with muck; or another in which a "softy" holds up a sieve to "catch the owl," but instead is soused with water thrown from above (Bettesworth Book, pp. 73-74); or stealing pigeons:

> "But the best game as ever we played -- there were four or five of we boys got strings wi' crooked pins on the ends. . . . We put peas on the end o' these strings, and there we was, haulin' in the pigeons as fast as we mind to. An' all the time, there was the bailiff down the end o' the field see all our game. He come up all of a sudden -- 'You damn young rascals!' and he collared hold o' me an' let me 'ave it! The others, they went for to run; but no -- he caught two of 'em, an' as soon as he let go o' me I was off. I was the fust of 'em to git a threshin', but after all the others copped it worse 'n what I did. . . . Oh, we did have all sorts o' games. Dirty games some of 'em was, too."
> (Bettesworth Book, pp. 74-75)

Note that Bettesworth's story is of a piece with the others; he avoids the worst beating and the theme remains his ingenuity. But there is nothing introspective or idiosyncratic; any of his peers could respond with their own stories of a chase or a beating. For similar anecdotes of pranks see the autobiography of Sid Knight, Cotswold Lad.[13]

One manner of gaining insight into the values of a culture is to record statements of its members about the types of people and behaviour they admire.[14] Sturt has done this consistently with Bettesworth and can generalise, on the basis of Bettesworth's anecdotes, that "his admiration is only whole-hearted for men of his own class who are really effectual. He is always ready to talk enthusiastically of a certain 'Old Billy' who is a notable man for managing

horses . . ." (Bettesworth Book, p. 277). The death of Edmund Baxter, an older man of the village, brought a revealing tribute from Bettesworth:

> Always a good 'n for work, was Edmund. He used always to get up Sundays jest same as week-days, it didn't make no difference -- about four or five o'clock he was up, feedin' [his animals] and workin'. . . . But there, that was his way: he was reg'lar. He had his time for gettin' up an' for gwine to bed too, an' he never altered. When the time come at night he was up and off. . . . [Bettesworth notes that Baxter saved money] He never was a wasteful, 'xtravagant kind of feller. In his food, now, 'twas always wonderful plain; good, ye know, but nothin' flash about it . . . ." (p. 284)

The testimony goes on to detail Baxter's marriage at age fifty and how, when his wife died, he had married her sister, in spite of the vicar's protests: "Edmund never cared. He wanted her, an' he had her." Edmund Baxter seemed to Sturt "unexciting, almost uninteresting," but he records these details as a picture of the ideal self which Bettesworth, and others of his class, admired "even if they were not always so ready to imitate it" (p. 286).

It is difficult to over-estimate the value placed upon effectiveness at work by Bettesworth; he speaks of holidays as being "no good to we sort o' people: only upsets us. A man's never so happy, to my way o' thinkin',

as when he's goin' to his day's work reglar" (p. viii). He complains bitterly of his neighbour, Biggs, who is too lazy to work and whose wife has to "slave about" for him (pp. 169-173). But the necessity for working men to compete with each other for work is an underlying cause of Bettesworth's preoccupation. In Change in the Village Sturt shows the jealous slander with which men would attempt to protect their jobs from others (pp. 98-99).

A further consequence of the competition for work, and of the struggle to live on subsistence wages at hard outdoor work, was the determination to appear "rough" and ready to tackle any job (Change, pp. 20-21). Bettesworth tells of deliberately splashing with mud a carpenter who was fastidious about wearing clean clothes; a plumber's helper was also twitted by being made to use tools with dirty handles. Sturt comments that the men's miserable journeys towork in wet and muddy weather would have been unendurable had they admitted that anyone "had the least right to be distressed" (Memoirs, pp. 66-68). To "flinch" seems to have been a widespread term implying the cowardice and lack of endurance that working men scorned and were bound to avoid; in addition to Sturt's citations Flora Thompson has also shown the term as used in a varied set of contexts in Lark Rise to Candleford.[15] Rather than "flinch" Bettesworth refuses his mate's offer of help even though exhausted:

> 'No,' I says, 'it's my turn and I en't gwine to flinch.' 'I know you don't want to flinch,' he says, 'but I don't mind doin' of it for you.' And the foreman standin' there says, 'No, old Fred've worked pole-pullin' 'long o' me thirty year, and I never knowed 'n flinch yet.' 'No,' I says, 'and I ben't gwine to now.' (Bettesworth Book, p. 324)

This code of toughness was not confined to the men, as the essay "Some Peasant Women" in Lucy Bettesworth shows: of Sally Turner, a seventy-three year old woman who kept herself by taking in washing, Sturt observes, "Her idea was to be strong"; working class women could not afford to cultivate "nerves or squeamishness of any sort."

Informal education was calculated to breed toughness. Bettesworth had often been beaten by old carters he worked under as a youth but he approved of this, it had made him self-reliant: "'Law! ye see some poor chaps, they gits out o' work and be afraid to go away from home. If they'd had the knockin' about I've had . . .'" (Bettesworth Book, pp. 28-29). He had worked in many parts of England, and been a soldier, and was contemptuous of men who lacked the confidence to find work for themselves; I have cited in the previous chapter Bettesworth's disdain for men who had worked on the same estate all their lives. Bettesworth did not dispute the worth of formal education but, in a proverbial phrase, stressed self-reliance as one of its essential products:

> 'I don't hold with all this drillin' and soldierin'; but readin', and summin', and writin', and to know how to right yourself . . . .'(Memoirs, p. 298)

> 'If a man don't know right and wrong hisself, the pa'son en't no good; and it don't matter for a man to know more than that, and to know how to right hisself. I don't see what else you need trouble about; and I been through the world and have seen it. That's what you wants to know; and after I'd had my scholarship, I went through the world, and I knowed right from wrong and how to see myself righted, and I always got a livin'!' (Bettesworth Book, p. 293)

His concluding phrase reminds us of how closely this philosophy is framed to the conditions of working-class life; the objective of education is to fit children to work. 'Les Ollerton,' the subject of the life history study I presented as an M.A. thesis, echoed Bettesworth's sentiments almost to the letter.[16]

Yet Bettesworth was not incurious, especially with regard to practical knowledge; Sturt notes that while he never knew Bettesworth to ask questions he was always absorbing information, through observation or the gossip of others. This reflects a traditional mode of learning by example and imitation rather than through overt instruction. Gardening talk was a staple of conversational exchange and the public house was a common venue for it. Sturt, like Jefferies and Christopher Holdenby, argued against the

attacks of temperance enthusiasts for the social and intellectual value of pubs in working-class life;[17] as Bettesworth says: ". . . Saturday night and Sunday -- well, you can't bide indoors solitary, lookin' at the fire. If you do you never learns nothin'. But to go and have a glass and a pipe where there's others -- that sims to enlighten your mind" (Memoirs, p. 13). He was receptive to innovations and, showing Sturt a new technique of watering plants that he had learned from an estate gardener, he observed: "'Yes; you may always pick up something. There never was a man but what there was another one as good. . . . Or if a man don't 'appen to know so much about doin' a thing as another, still he may see a different plan o' doin' of it what's better." Sturt comments, in a remark central to his perception of Bettesworth's attitude, "Learning, you see, and knowing, mean to Bettesworth learning and knowing how to do things. . . . He admires efficiency" (Bettesworth Book, pp. 278-9).

III. Sturt and Autobiography

Sturt's final books are explorations of his family history which lead him ultimately to autobiography; The Wheelwright's Shop (1923) is "In a vague way . . . an autobiography for the years 1884 to 1891," and A Small Boy in the Sixties (1927) is, of course, a formal childhood autobiography. Yet William Smith: Potter and Farmer (1919) and A Farmer's Life (1922), while based on the reminiscences of his aunt and uncle, are also about Sturt's response to their memories and the way in which with his own imagination he "ekes out" (Farmer's Life, p. 31) and augments what they have to tell. The theme of these books is the continuity in skills, attitudes, phrases, a whole tenor of life, that he has become aware of through these reminiscences and his effort to emphasise so fully as to, literally, see the scenes his grandfather did or think the same thoughts as his uncle John Smith. In a comment on William Smith Sturt expressed the importance to himself of this feeling:

> Corrie, who has been reading "William Smith" . . . writes almost enviously of the 'continuity' of environment I have enjoyed. Indeed, it has been greater than he knows; a closer intimacy than is revealed in that book. Moreover, it has been a family intimacy, spreading through generations, and not confined wholly to my own. . . . A member of a long-settled family such as mine experiences a consciousness through other senses besides his own; and sees

> the familiar landscape, and hears the local talk, as his parents and grand-parents too saw and heard, and as no new-comer can possibly do. So it happens that the sale of my old shop . . . feels sometimes like burying a part of my living consciouness. (Journals, pp. 823-824)

So while these books provide a record of local craft traditions and social life over a period of more than a century they are also autobiographical in the sense of being the account of the growth of an individual in response to his world. Sturt learns about himself, as well as his forbears, through writing these chronicles.

Roy Pascal has suggested that "good autobiography is always more than a mere exposition to the public of something already known to the author, its writing is a process of discovery and "a new act of the man" which "alters in some degree the shape of his life, it leaves the man different."[18] Sturt is also defining aspects of himself and his depth of personal engagement with his elders' recollections also invites the reader's participation, and consequent fascination; as in the Bettesworth books, where he writes of his doubts of whether he has really understood working class attitudes, in these books he again lays open the workings of his imagination, as far as that is possible, for the reader to judge his response to these memories. On the level of the care to make an objective record this openness

is an attempt to avoid indiosyncratic distortion of the material; he is careful to note where his reactions are at variance with his uncle's, as with regard to weather:

> I stopped to look over a gate, and murmured, 'What a beautiful place.'
>
> 'Yes,' he said. And then, with a sigh, 'I wish it succeeded a little better.'
>
> The sudden contrast against my own feelings was disquieting . . . [His uncle told of crops damaged by ice]. So then farmers might never share my great delight in the weather -- any weather -- for its own sake? There were always dreadful points of profit and loss for them to consider. The unwonted realisation of this weighed on my spirits, and seemed to rob my uncle's talk of the flavour it should have had to match the beauty of his meadows and quiet fields. I didn't so much enjoy his further talk. But he had no inkling of that, and went on as if nothing had happened. (Farmer's Life, p. 100)

Sturt's subject becomes not simply his uncle, but himself thinking and writing about him; this adds both ethnographic responsibility and literary interest.

His eagerness to literally share his informant's memories -- however impossible we may consider this desire -- causes him to write about memory, and the conditions in which it is stimulated, with particular feeling. Sounds, smells, objects are all cited as stirring memory; the best-handled of these passages being his chapter "Farnborough

Recalled" in A Farmer's Life. The "smell of weeds burning in the fields seemed to wake up my uncle's brain, as certainly it did my own, to remote memories. . . . they oozed out of him, no doubt set flowing, more than either of us guessed, by the scents floating through the October air." One 'souvenir' left to him by John Smith, a tiny book bound in oak taken from a sunken ship, Sturt found particularly evocative; it could, he suggests, induce in him the same sensations it had for its previous owner:

> . . . the book was causing my brain, my feelings, to do the same things that it had caused my uncle's brain, my uncle's feelings, to do long ago. A moment or two of his very life was repeated; at least closely enough to let me experience, in my own appreciations how the world sometimes felt to John Smith . . . [Sturt enumerates the scenes of hay-making, timber-carting, ship-building that the book brought to himself, as, he assumes, it had to his uncle] giving me as it were his very eyes to look through; or actually quickening in my brain cell-motions very like his had been. For a moment, if no more, the mental activity was repeated: an old memory glistened, though in another mind. (pp. 174-175)

This is taking to an extreme the conventional wisdom that autobiography and life history afford an insider's view of culture. It is the ultimate in imaginative projection into the mind of another person. It may also be judged that

Sturt was deluding himself if, indeed, he truly believed such a transference of thought possible. What it expresses about Sturt as a recorder of oral testimony, however, is the fineness with which he attuned himself to what a person was saying. The delicate observation of his uncle's manner of talk is evidence of this -- so that he could feel himself "listening as it were to memories rather than to uttered words, feeling as if I myself had seen the coaches, taken the waggon to the Farnham clay-pits, hobnobbed with old Mr. Callaway, or what not" (p. 147).

A Farmer's Life and William Smith are different in kind from Sturt's previous works; in the Bettesworth books he had limited himself to being an editor of Bettesworth's comments, trying not to interpose himself between Bettesworth and the reader; and in Change in the Village he had presented a social and political critique, reasoning from empirical evidence. In the two "family" books, however, he writes less guardedly of his response to what he learns from his uncle and aunt about his family, the area, and its past. At times his emotional apprehension of this knowledge is expressed through visionary insights -- "a very ancient England was still hard at work" in John Smith's cowstall -- and the result seems the more disconcertingly nostalgic after the careful suppression of sentiment in the earlier books. Nevertheless, there is no change in his basic

attitudes; the books show the broadening of his awareness of the scope of folklife studies which continued throughout his life. The detailed accounts of potting and thatching are contributions to the record of what he saw as the unrecognised "real history" of England, and the attention to the yeoman farmer class his uncle belonged to marks his enlightened view that a tradition of "Englishness," or folklife, was not restricted to the poorest social groups.

The key to understanding Sturt's new style of writing in these two works, however, may lie in the "intimacy" he came to share with his uncle which caused Sturt to feel that he had been allowed "to see a little inside him." This desire to feel that one has penetrated another's thoughts so deeply must be common to ethnographers and novelists and it may be that the attempt to understand Bettesworth inspired Sturt to go further. Due to class differences, and gaps in his knowledge of Bettesworth's history, Sturt never presumes to understand him in quite such an instinctive fashion; indeed the value of his depiction of Bettesworth is in the contrasting of the labouring man's attitudes with his own. By September of 1907 we find Sturt writing in his journal in a pessimistic mood; Frederick Grover ("Bettesworth") had been dead for two years and Sturt was finding it "more and more difficult to get upon terms of camaraderie" with his working-class neighbours (Journals, p. 541). He suggests a theory

that they are separated by two kinds of brain activity, the subjective (working-class) and the objective (his own) but qualifies it with the note that "labouring men after all differ from the rest of us chiefly in the circumstances in which they labour" (p. 542). Yet the sense of a "gulf" between their minds and his seemed to widen. He noted that there had been two modes of studying labouring people; the first objectively seeking in their environment and economic conditions the formative influences on their attitudes and behaviour; the second, a "subjective" method, would "seek in the labourer himself and his emotional life the chief formative influence" -- though also "thwarted" by social and economic conditions (p. 540). The latter approach, he regretted, had hardly ever been taken; novelists, including Hardy, Philpotts, De Maupassant and Mrs. Humphrey Ward, had pretended to insight but failed in various ways. The quality lacking in the relationship of investigator and subject was that of "intimacy":

> And the reason for all this failure, as I think it, is in the want of those intimacies, which alone can reveal to one mind (the writer's mind) the character of the labourer's mind, and the activities that go on there. No-one knows the labourer. Nor is it easy to conceive such a true intimacy being set up. (Journals, p. 541)

So, although Sturt had been using his family as informants as early as December 1892, where we find him collecting information on local customs and songs from his aunt Sarah Sturt, it may be that a despair of ever being able to know labouring people intimately, coupled with his broadening idea of folklife, caused him to turn to writing of his own family.

Part One of William Smith: Potter and Farmer introduces the reader to the Smiths' farm through Sturt's childhood memories of visits to it; this section is, in effect, a preliminary sketch in the manner of his subsequent childhood autobiography, A Small Boy in the Sixties. The most important quality developed here is the ability to pass easily from evocative description of childhood sensation -- the child's vision -- to a more detached, adult, commentary on it, often linking the information given to one of the themes of Sturt's work in folklife. Of course it is not mere accident that the things he recalls from childhood bear on his mature interests; a process of selection, conscious and unconscious, must occur in autobiography and here Sturt is using the autobiographical form to investigate topics that are particularly well illuminated by it, such as how an individual assimilates folk culture and how he takes part in its process of change.

The book opens with an obvious, but well done, literary device: a journey to the farm for the annual Christmas family reunion which is figuratively a journey backwards in time. On the way the dual mode of vision, adult and child, emerges in the contrast between the factual outlining of the heath country, into which the modern influence of London was springing by railways and turnpikes, and the boy's looking out from the horse-drawn cab at a point where "an old field-gate had to be watched for, a witch without a head having been known to sit there o'nights" (p. 3). The farm and its furnishings are shown in the same way; the autobiographer providing an objective inventory which is commented upon by the strongest childhood memories:

> I didn't like that dresser, at any rate at night. Cumbered as it was with plates and dishes, a lamp, and other merely useful things, it never lent itself to play; and that wasn't the worst. Somehow it seemed to frown upon children, like the dark end of the room it stood in. . . . (p. 8)

The subjective response to an item of folklore can, of course, give valuable insights. At about the age of five or six he experienced the performance of a mummer's hero-combat play in the farmhouse kitchen and it is

interesting that his terrified perception of the mummers as "fierce strangers" who, after the play, become "safe, happy countryfolk again" (p. 32), anticipates, albeit casually, the notion of the stranger/friend dichotomy that was found central in several modern studies of mumming.[19] The singing of carols and secular songs was another Christmas entertainment at the farm and Sturt notes titles and an occasional verse; more interesting, however, is his memory of "a priggish laughter from the younger generation," himself included, at his uncle's dialect in singing "Bright Phoebus hath mounted his char-yot of day," and this laughter "may have made the singer unwilling to do more." Here is evidence, small enough but valuable, of the pressures affecting audiences' tastes and singers' repertoires.

In retrospect, Sturt is fascinated by the proposition that in childhood games and beliefs he had shared in thoughts that were hundreds of years older than himself. In what had seemed a nonsense refrain in a singing game he concludes that he had unwittingly been singing in "a broad Hampshire dialect," and in the legend heard from the carter, that at midnight on Christmas Eve the cattle knelt to worship, he and other children, telling of it "with bated breath," were "renewing in our own small persons, an emotion that may very well have been common all over England in the days of Queen

Mary" (p. 34). A similar sense of having "looked upon England not only in recent eras but in long past ones" (p. 54) comes through individuals who became for him exemplars of English, country, traits; the "Man with the Lantern" who shuffles into the farm kitchen, "smelling probably of milk and cattle," is made the apotheosis of "Old England," rather as Edward Thomas does with his character "Lob"[20]: "Old England in person, busy, countrified, kindly, and as old as the hills, had entered after the door had given its creaking signal." In such passages Sturt is in danger of confusing his childhood and adult responses. Nostalgia, however, is too vague a term for his attitude which is a compound of scientific curiosity and impulses born of his temperament and circumstances. The simple, vigorous, genial existence which the farm suggests to him was a kind of life denied to him by his sense of bearing a more complex, modern, world view, and by his ill health, paralysis having already afflicted him.

Sturt's purpose in keeping a diary -- to provide a record of the effects of education and culture on the formation of character -- has already been quoted; in A Small Boy in the Sixties, his childhood autobiography, he rounds out the record of his life by describing the formative period left out of the Journals. The book shows the world through

the eyes of a tradesman's son, an asthmatic onlooker rather than a participant in the more boisterous boyhood games, and withdrawn also for reasons of class from the less trammelled language and behaviour of the newspaper boys who worked for the family stationery business, some of whom later became wheelwrights. But that Sturt, like many autobiographers, was atypical of the external life he records, does not make his memories less interesting to the folklorist; besides his ideas on the mechanisms of memory there are vivid accounts of the importance to the child of the seasonal round, calendar observances, boys and games, and the learning of verbal traditions.

The book's structure is designed to show the broadening of his outlook from the earliest moments of consciousness -- odd details of the family shop, seen from floor level -- through the town life of Farnham, to an excursion to the seaside, and finally to his going to grammar shcool from which he dates the end of his "innocent childhood" with the discovery that he had begun to think consciously rather than in the unreflective, self-centred manner of a child. His method of recollection is by mentally revisiting places -- "Before thinking my way back into the yard . . . I would like to look round a little further at that tiny scullery . . ." -- and then describing the image that returns to him.

It is striking, but not unusual in autobiography, to note how strongly effects of sunlight seem to fix his memory of scenes: ". . . we got the sunshine in at our front doors, and very good it was to see that warm light on the wheelwright's floor, yellowish and quiet and soft over the litter of chips and shavings" (p. 60). He comments in his preface on how light pervaded his childhood; it belonged to the first of two categories of memories he distinguishes: those that were familiar and repeated and those that were exceptional and unrepeated. Of the latter category he suggests that he was participating in what he also describes in the Journal as "Group Understanding," a way of interpreting what was happening by others' behaviour and, somehow, seeing through others' eyes. He opens, but does not resolve, the question of whether such memories "largely independent of individuals, make up the half impersonal life of local and national tradition, of folk-lore, of craftsmanship . . ." (pp. xv-xvi), apparently postulating the existence of an autonomous folk memory. Though Sturt's theory is dubious it shows his interest in what is perhaps a consequence of writing autobiography -- a curiosity about other people's perceptions and about the lineaments of <u>their</u> inner lives. Easier of comprehension is his suggestion of the value of the study of individuals "if they could be shown-up against

the undying life of the little communities they belong to" (p. xvi), and A Small Boy in the Sixties is intended as a record of the environment which shaped him as an individual.

Some of his earliest memories are of food and are given in a blend of what was particular to himself -- a liking for cabbage stumps; to his family -- his mother's farmhouse tradition of hog's pudding, souse, hocks and "chidlins"; and to what he knew to be usual in the community: Shrove Tuesday fritters, salt fish for Ash Wednesday, or "the eleven o'clock 'lunch' which everybody we knew took as a regular thing" (pp. 9-10). Among other types of family traditions he recalls the finger games and teasing expressions used by adults to children (pp. 138-139, 155), but also notes ways in which they did not participate in the local country tradition: his mother's religious disapproval meant that he "never heard of fairies as if they were anything real [a reference to the realistic fairies he learned of later from Ann Smith]; or of ghosts, or spirits or omens" (p. 137). Like many middle-class children, however, he was exposed to some traditional material by way of the servant girl; he gives a vivid account of his response to her narration of the scary story of the mistress with the golden arm (pp. 141-142).[21]

At school, however, he was exposed to a wider range of local tradition from his classmates. The quality of

Sturt's noting of this material lies in his recording of his personal responses to it so that we are shown its reception in an individual's consciousness. A weather saying, for example, is absorbed with utmost gravity: "Sometimes mist clung round that Hill; and at such times, my brother taught me, Crooksbury was said to be 'in his night-cap.' I took it in, seriously. It was a thing as important to know as that twice two are four" (p. 47). Another boy retailed the saying that "a man need never be in difficulties if he had in his pocket a shilling, a knife, and a bit of string." He had looked up to him for the cleverness of this, "to my admiring eyes he looked as if he was wiser than other boys" (p. 34).

A tendency towards hero-worship is also shown in his memories of the paper-boys he accompanied in their rounds; these working class boys also introduced him to experiences -- the art of cleaning boots by spit and polish, eating bacon in the tap-room of an inn, swearing -- which he would not have encountered in his own home. Class, even if not consciously perceived by the child, distinguished types of games -- the several ways of playing marbles, for example:

> In many places a little hole was scooped out with finger-tips against a wall for the game of "Auntie" (or was it perhaps Anti?). I have never played at Auntie but have often seen little groups of excited and shouting urchins so intent on it that ordinary townsfolk had to pass round outside them on the sidewalk. If out of four or five marbles tossed all together one or more stayed in the hole it meant something that caused the players to shout and skip and wear an expression of little devils. And I have a nasty feeling that it was sheer snobbishness that kept me from playing; for was not Auntie a game for the lower orders -- the ragged and the grimy? But perhaps it was dislike of gambling. . . . In marbles the truly respectable game was "Shoot-ring" or "Ring-taw." (pp. 148-149)

Sturt also explores his own lack of competitiveness and consequent failure in the aggressive games played with tops; he preferred a hoop that could be played with alone; he writes of it as a "companion" (p. 151-152). Such accounts, and there are many more, give the inside view of what motivates the players rather than giving simply the outlines of the games; they are thus a valuable supplement to enumerative and distributional studies like those of A.B. Gomme and Iona and Peter Opie.[22] They are also pleasingly evocative and, reminded by Sturt's description, the reader may recall ". . . the season when one was raking with one's feet over all the white and green debris to find, if possible, one more chestnut for one's long string at home. Chestnuts were so beautiful, until the gloss went off" (p. 159).

The amount of attention given to traditional material in the autobiography (other chapters include "Superstitions" and "Commemorations," or calendar customs) shows that it is not an artless record of whatever struck him. It would be, as he must have known, his last book and was finished some seven months before his death, and, while, unlike the former books, it does not draw on notes and journals, it is clear that in it he wished to "use up" material he might not otherwise publish. The chapter on hop-gathering, for example, hardly "advances the plot" of the autobiography but it is a very good description of a characteristic local occupation that he had not had occasion to give before. He was, it seems, completing his record of the area as much as of his own life.

The most successful blend of acutely remembered childhood sensation and mature reflection, however, comes in "Squib-Night," a chapter on the fire festival of November 5th. There is no more vivid account of this little-studied celebration in the literature of English folklore. Sturt shows fascinating connections between mischief and masking traditions; the boys, "guys," who ran about letting off squibs, were masked and wore a costume of "paper shavings (to dangle wantonly like scalps)," suggesting the paper-strip costume of mummers. A procession, escorted by the

town band, led a van bearing the effigy of Guy Fawkes to the fire, and Sturt recalls his terror at the sight as they passed outside his father's house:

> . . . the figures -- bloody-faced Guy Fawkeses, guys with their sputtering squibs, trumpeting and drumming bandsmen, and all, were almost on our level at the window, and so much the more dreadful to cause one to shrink and shudder down out of sight. (p. 59)

Yet the account is also of a piece with his mature vision in the more analytic Change in the Village where he writes of the cowing of the villagers' exuberance by the enforcement of middle class standards of propriety; there were no "swells" about then, he says, to object to bonfires being lit in the main street of Farnham. This was "A true medieval . . . night," in which "a bit of old England had indeed come yelling back to life . . ." (pp. 54, 58).

A Small Boy in the Sixties is successful both folkloristically and as literature. Sturt avoids a common pitfall of childhood autobiography, described by Roy Pascal as "over-writing," or attributing adult judgements to the childhood self; this is a matter of style as well as ideas and Sturt is careful to keep a simple diction when narrating episodes through the child's persona.[23] As with all his writing, we are aware of his earnest ambition to render an

objective record; he lets the reader into the process of remembering and writing, admitting where he has doubts of his memory, and thus achieves an attractive sincerity appropriate to autobiography.

In this chapter I have not attempted to survey the whole of Sturt's works but simply to try to illuminate what seems to be his most original achievement: a style of writing about the rural labourer which is respectful, renders speech and context with great fidelity, and gives the reader a sense of having almost encountered individuals like Bettesworth directly. Several other writers began to make parallel approaches to describing labouring life during the period spanned by the publication of Sturt's books, from 1901 to 1927, and the following chapter will consider them. Some were clearly influenced by Sturt; Stephen Reynolds, for one, greatly admired Sturt's work and corresponded with him. John Fraser has already discussed some of these authors, including Reynolds, W.H. Hudson, R.L. Gales, E. Gambier-Parry, and Christopher Holdenby, though not from the folkloristic perspective taken here. He observes that a concern about change in patterns of rural life was widespread between 1900 and 1914, with some ninety serious books being published on the problem. In this period, Fraser suggests,

> . . . there was a marked increase both in a concern with the interior life of the labouring people and the mechanics of their relationships with other classes, and an awareness of how these things could best be conveyed to the reader. ("George Sturt," p. 193)

The method chosen by the most interesting of these writers was essentially a form of ethnography, conducted through personal fieldwork; Holdenby and Reynolds even became a farm labourer and a fisherman respectively in order to describe from the inside the realities of the working man's life.

IV

OTHER INTERPRETERS OF RURAL LIFE 1909-1967

George Sturt had defined the form and tone for writing about rural people in the "Bettesworth" books and for crafts in The Wheelwright's Shop; it is unlikely that any of the near contemporary authors to be discussed in this chapter could have missed his influence. But a manner and attitude like Sturt's is an almost inevitable outcome of personal fieldwork, or real working experience, and this is the common element which unites the writers I have chosen to discuss here.

Their books may be divided into four categories and I have grouped the authors in pairs where they seem to have confronted similar issues or adopted parallel means of description. I begin with Stephen Reynolds and Christopher Holdenby who took the path of "participant-observation" by becoming working men themselves and, effectively, amateur ethnographers. The second category shows the influence of the new attentiveness to speech and cultural differences, which was Sturt's contribution, upon two old formats: the gallery of characters, in the work of E. Gambier-Parry, and the dialect sketch, with Horace Harman. In the third

section I consider two biographies of working men, by W.H. Hudson and Crichton Porteous, and in the fourth, Walter Rose's attempt to emulate Sturt's Wheelwright's Shop but with regard to his own trade as a village carpenter. Here also I have discussed Hugh Barrett's account of his years as a student farmer which, like Rose's Village Carpenter, is an outwardly directed memoir focussing on the life around him. Finally, as worthy of a place of his own, though linked with the others by his extensive fieldwork, is Alfred Williams whose achievement as a collector of folklore even outranks Sturt's in some respects.

I. Participant Observers: Holdenby and Reynolds

One of the traits which links George Sturt with these two "amateur ethnographers" is a mutual capacity to be continually surprised by what Stephen Reynolds called "the immensity of the commonplace." Reynolds and Christopher Holdenby, as I have already mentioned, tried to describe labouring life from the inside by becoming working men themselves; their experience of the many contrasts between their middle class backgrounds and the new working class environment into which they had thrust themselves make for fascinating reporting. As a result of their "culture shock," however, they were forced to contemplate working men's

lives and culture as a whole, and as it was at the present, rather than in the way that some contemporary folklore collectors perceived it: as a fragmentary series of survivals of essentially past modes of thought and behaviour. The "county collectors" of the English Folk-Lore Society generally began with the premise that the folk tradition they would encounter was already broken into bits; their task was to gather up these shards and label them according to the approved systems of classification for comparative purposes. Holdenby and Reynolds, however, found themselves -- sink or swim -- in the middle of another culture in which they would have to learn how to live.

Stephen Reynolds and Christopher Holdenby, as well as being near contemporaries in age and writing career, were both idealistic, young middle class men, recent university graduates, when they determined to experience working life at firsthand and subsequently to write about it. There have been, of course, several moments in history when it has been fashionable to experience feelings of "alienation" and to attempt to cure them by a return to a "simpler," more "real" existence; Reynolds, at least, was wryly self-conscious about this. Holdenby's Folk of the Furrow (1913)[1] describes his time as a farm labourer somewhere in south-west England; Reynolds wrote a series of books on his life

as a fisherman at Sidmouth, Devon, beginning with A Poor Man's House in 1909.[2] Reynolds seems to have made the more sustained commitment to the experiment and his work is considerably better, in terms of its objectivity, than Holdenby's, who tends to mysticism; nevertheless there are initial similarities between the two.

Neither author glosses over the difficulties he faced in overcoming working people's suspicions of his motives; Holdenby's first chapter, "The Challenge of Silence," comes to a double explanation of the countryman's reserve: first, that it is a result of his solitary life with nature; secondly (and more credibly), that it is due to class oppression, "a reserve born of poverty, of being undervalued, of being alienated from the land . . . mere lodgers upon it" (Furrow, p. 12). Both have perceptive and amusing passages on their finding lodgings in working class homes and trying to overcome their landladies' ideas of how a "gentleman" would want to be treated. Reynolds found himself stared at by the children, who stood at the other side of the table, ". . . as if I were a wild beast behind bars which they scarcely trusted." "'Tis a gen'leman!" exclaimed the girl. "Coo'h! the boy ejaculated" (Poor Man's House, p. 11).

Holdenby describes the labouring family's diet: strong tea, cheese and pickles, potatoes, gravy, cheap cuts

of meat and bacon: "It was bacon, because I could see the bristles, though it tasted like what I imagine tallow candle to be" (p. 43). Tinned herring was a treat for Saturday night. He is struck by the small sleeping quarters, the lack of privacy, the stuffy air, and reports, as Reynolds does, that family life centres on the kitchen.

Holdenby's aim is to present the average country workman, speaking of his faults as well as virtues, rather than the most attractive "characters." Thus we get passages, rare in rural writing, describing men who are not harmoniously in tune with nature or their employers; in a gang, a faster worker is made to slow down to the others' pace: ". . . if one gets in front, the others begin to bully and shy stones and mud" (p. 73) and ". . . as the hooter goes 6 P.M. the men clear off the ground to the instant . . ." (p. 72). There was a grudging feeling of determination to give no more than necessary to the employing classes, and likewise to get away with as much as possible; this vengeful spirit motivated poaching, he noticed.[3]

He was shocked at the coarse language of working women but prissily records only its gist and hastens on to point morals about overcrowded conditions in cottages and the narrow mental horizons which cause country youth to turn so quickly to sex as a pursuit and pastime (pp. 142-149). Their religion, he regretted, was only held for what material

advantages could be wrung out in the way of blanket, bread and coal clubs; the parson was despised and distrusted: "'Beware o' the man in black, that's wot I always says,' is an expression I have heard frequently, and if one man wishes to insult a mate, he as likely greets him with, 'Lor', Bill! You looks jus' like a parson this mornin', and I'm 'anged if you'd be any better nor the rest on 'em!'" (p. 201). The only religious fervour was to be found in non-conformist chapels, though when reporting a legend of a farmer who, clutching a bundle of diseased corn, climbed a tree and cursed God, Holdenby observed there was still a superstitious belief in a vengeful deity (pp. 214-215).[4]

There are, however, also worthy characters in Holdenby's countryside. He discovered, as many others have, that the countryman "was only to be approached through the channel of work. He has a great respect for endurance and manual labour" (p. 15). The points he observes, such as the traditional mode of learning by "going along with" an older man (p. 106), and the refusal to do a job in the "wrong way" (p. 118), confirm the generality of these habits and values. Yet lacking in his account are any truly detailed descriptions of work techniques taken verbatim from craftsmen. Holdenby's praise of unacknowledged rural skills can seem inflated; a stockman is a "great sculptor" with "a passion for form and

line" in selecting rams for breeding (p. 100); so he may be, but Holdenby's overblown style fails to convince where sobriety, like Sturt's, usually does.

In short the reader becomes over-conscious of the construction of Holdenby's chapters; first a characteristic scene relating to some agricultural problem is described, then a commentary is made on it by some level-headed countryman meant to stand for the new order advocated by Holdenby -- a return to a society of independent smallholders organized co-operatively.

Holdenby's work is spoiled by his priggishness; even Fraser, who takes a more sympathetic view of him, regrets Holdenby's nature mysticism, so typical of the "spirituality" in vogue at that period.[5] Though Holdenby lived the life he is less successful in interpreting it than Sturt, or Gambier-Parry, even though they lived it only vicariously through their imaginative sympathy and close attention to the language of their informants.

Stephen Reynolds went, at twenty-five, to live with a fisherman's family in Sidmouth, south Devon in 1906, initially to recuperate from illness but afterwards to become a fisherman himself. To do so required a leap across barriers of social class, education, and even physical ability. Reynolds had received a standard middle class

education at private schools, followed by a B.Sc. at Manchester University. He had literary aspirations and studied in Paris where he was sub-editor of a literary magazine. In his education and upbringing he had internalized the snobberies of the middle class,

> Were they not, from the very start, at a "school for the sons of clergymen and gentlemen" [the College, Devizes], taught to despise the village "butties"?[6]

but the experience of living with a poor family and coming to know them intimately caused him to reappraise radically his values and changed his life. The interest of Reynolds' work lies in this confrontation of middle and working class attitudes and in the careful way in which he records the divergences between the two world views, as they struck him.

Reynolds struggled to be a useful member of a fishing crew and ultimately became an innovator in fishing techniques, a fisherman's spokesman and administrator before his premature death in 1919. Since he was not robust and, of course, knew nothing of fishing when he arrived in Sidmouth, his place in the boat was hard earned; interchanges like the following express the local scepticism of his efforts:

> It came to us over the dark water, on a previous night, when there was a thicket of us on the fishing-ground and the sea was dotted with riding-lights. "Who's got for thy third hand?" asked a distant voice in the sing-song drawl that carries for a mile over calm water.
>
> "Hast got thic chap?"
>
> "Aye!" we replied.
>
> "I reckon," sing-songed the voice, "that a chap as 'ould come out here wi'out having to, 'ould go to hell for pleasure!" (Seems So! p. 217)

He vividly describes the hardships and dangers of fishing from small boats and shows how his squeamishness over physical dirt -- "the great unwashed" being a peculiarly middle class epithet for the poor -- or rough language, comes to seem petty to him in comparison to the qualities of endurance necessary for survival as a fisherman. So impressed was he with their physical hardihood -- in such obvious contrast to his own delicacy -- that he resolved to become a recorder of their way of life:

> Astonishment at, and zest in, these Under Town lives; the discovery of so much beauty hitherto unsuspected and, indeed, not to be caught sight of without exceptional opportunity, sets one watching and waiting in order to find out the real difference of their minds from the minds of us who have been through the educational mill; also to find out where and how they have the advantage of us. For I can feel rather than see, here, the presence of a wisdom that I know nothing about, not even by hearsay, and that I

> suspect to be largely the traditional wisdom of the folk, gained from contact with hard fact, slowly accumulated and handed on through centuries -- the wisdom from which education cuts us off, which education teaches us to pooh-pooh.
>
> Such wisdom is difficult to grasp; very shy. My chance of observing it lies precisely in this: that I am neither a sky-pilot, nor a district visitor, nor a reformer, nor a philanthropist, nor any sort of "worker," useful or impertinent; but simply a sponge to absorb and, so far as can be, an understander to sympathize. It is hard entirely to share another people's life, to give oneself up to it, to be received into it. They know intuitively (their intuitions are extraordinarily acute) that one is thinking more than one gives voice to; putting two and two together; which keeps alive a lingering involuntary distrust and a certain amount, however little, of ill-grounded respectfulness. (Respectfulness is less a tribute to real or fancied superiority, than an armour to defend the poor man's private life.) Besides which, these people are necessary to, or at least their intimacy is greatly desired by, myself, whereas their own life is complete and rounded without me. I am tangential merely. They owe me nothing; I owe them much. It is I who am the client, they the patrons. (Poor Man's House, pp. 79-81)

He had become an ethnographer, though he had not the word for it; this is a classic statement of the fieldworker's obligation to the people he studies.

Of Reynolds' works the most interesting to the folklorist are A Poor Man's House and Alongshore: Where Man and the Sea face one another (1910).[7] Both are drawn from his experiences in adapting himself to the life of a

fisherman, but the first is oriented to the domestic life of fishing families while the second concentrates on the occupation itself. Of his other books, How 'Twas: Short Stories and Small Travels (1912)[8] is a collection of short fiction previously published in various periodicals; it seems to reflect an earlier stage in his development when he was still considering fiction as a medium for writing about the poor. The stories contain scraps of dialect, folk custom and belief; "May-babies," for example, revolves about change in the May Day children's quête, while "Mothers All" is based on the belief that kittens reared with a human baby will suck its life away. While there is a sound basis of observation for these stories the fictional presentation is less satisfying than the documentary style evolved in the two previous books. Seems So! A Working-Class View of Politics (1911),[9] written in collaboration with his fishing partners, is a fervent work, showing working men talking angrily about various kinds of social and economic oppression.

Particularly valuable for understanding Reynolds' work as a whole are the earlier letters he wrote to the publisher Edward Garnett, published in the Letters of Stephen Reynolds, edited by Harold Wright.[10] As George Sturt did with his journals, Reynolds used these letters as preliminary sketches for passages which later appeared

in his books. Whatever freshness and documentary intensity is in the books is due very much to the incorporation of sections, almost unchanged, from letters and journal entries that were written at the peak of new and unsettling experiences, rather than having been left for recollection through the more conventionally distorting glasses of belles lettres. The letters to Garnett were also about his struggle, very like Sturt's, to find an appropriate form in which to write this new style of realistic description of everyday life. The intensity with which he identified himself with the fishermen's lives, and his gratitude to them for accepting him, caused him to feel that he could not treat his and their experience flippantly; he dramatized his feelings to Garnett:

> I'm in a vile fix with the articles -- to find the precise narrative form I want. My pride in being a member of a drifter's crew, won't let me write like a journalist, an outsider, a novice, experiencing the thing. No I'm damned if I will! Last night I succeeded in rowing a good mile and a half with the 18 foot sweep. Back 'long I couldn't do a quarter of a mile. (Letters, 12 Jan., 1907, p. 69)

There is an element of posturing in Reynolds' occasional adoption of the dialect -- in an earlier letter he had spoken of "thoughts and impressions . . . not yet ready to

haul out of the (to most people) unintelligible dialect in which I think them" and the urbane Garnett was probably the ideal foil against whom Reynolds tried to redefine himself as a spokesman for the unheard fishermen.

Like Sturt, Reynolds rejected the example presented by Edwardian fiction as inappropriate to the life he wanted to describe and to his developing political purpose:

> I was unwilling to cut about the material, to modify the characters, in order to meet the exigencies of plot, form and so on. I felt that the life and the people were so much better than anything I could invent. Besides which, I found myself in possession of conclusions, hot for expression, which could not be incorporated at all into fiction. (Poor Man's House, p. ix)

He wished to avoid being either patronizing or philanthropic in his writing about fishermen and in this there is further resemblance to Sturt's approach; the Letters show that "Bourne's Bettesworth books" were among those which Reynolds admired (p. 122). But perhaps most strikingly comparable are his remarks on the interest of "the commonplace"; writing to Garnett concerning his progress on A Poor Man's House he said:

> I seem to be putting down such ordinary everyday sort of stuff, and hardly dare hope that what seems ordinary to me, now, won't seem so much so other people. . . . I get more and more impressed by the immensity of the commonplace, and really I can't conceive anything better to write than the commonplace really well -- in just relation. (Letters, p. 75)

To say this was to reject the orthodox view of what constituted "culture" and was thus "worth knowing." It also meant that by opening himself to new experience Reynolds had realized the existence of world views different from those of the "educated" classes.

Reynolds' comments on differences in perception between himself and the fishermen apply to many domains but in particular to their attitude to the sea as it affected their livelihood and safety. He recorded one man's reaction to a poem, "Changed Voices" by William Watson, and found the fisherman scornful of the imprecision of the poet's observation:

> "Thic chap wi' his sea-wind yesterday an' today an' tomorrow . . . Why, I've a-seed it change every hour o' the day an' night! If he was depending on the sea-wind for his living, an' his life too, come to that, an' had a parcel o' child'ern depending on him, he'd watch the wind more careful'n than that. (Alongshore, p. 4)

An anthropologist has used the same "projective device" in getting Irish villagers to comment on books written about their culture.[11] The confrontation of fisherman and poem is rather obviously "staged," but other examples of the fishermen's preoccupation with weather and the sea are observed in more natural contexts:

> "Just turned out then?" is the first question asked, should one stay in house till noon; the inference being that only bed would keep a man away. A man on the beach, as he describes himself professionally, seldom strays far on land; and then as often as not to some vantage point where he can view the sea. (Alongshore, p. 189)

Reynolds notes how, due to the changing weather, men avoid making advance plans as to when to put to sea:

> . . . a definite No is almost as rare as an unconditional Yes. "'Tisn't fit, is it?" and "Aye, if 'tis fitty," are beach decisions. (Alongshore, p. 222)

He also gives a local anecdote reflecting this occupational concern, of two fishermen brothers who tested the wind each morning by holding a lighted tallow dip outside the window: if it blew out the wind was too strong, if it did not there was not enough, so they went back to bed (Alongshore, p. 29).

Reynolds quickly grasped the principle that language holds the key to a society's world view and that to see with their eyes he had to understand the semantic bases of local speech as it contrasted with his own middle class forms. This is sometimes a considerable advance on the mere listing in glossary form of fragmentary survivals of dialect which is a commonplace device in country books and county folklore collections. Reynolds' books contain a number of dialect words and phrases, usually with the advantage that they are given and explained in their contexts of use. The term "logie" for example, meaning calm or dull, turns up in a sentence, "'Us ought to hae a catch o' herrings this here logie night'" (Alongshore, p. 13). As well, Reynolds comments on how word meanings are altered by intonation:

> For example, "You'm a fool," is playful; "You'm a fule," less so. "You're a fool," asserts the fact without blame; while "Thee't a fule," or "Thee a't a fule!" would be spoken in temper, and the second is the more emphatic. (Poor Man's House, pp. 85-86)

He also shows the terms used locally to mark gradations of social class:

> In Under Town, I notice, a gentleman is always gen'leman, a workman or tramp is man, but the fringers, the inhabitants of the neutral zone are called persons. For example: "That man what used to work for the council is driving about the gen'leman as stays with Mrs. Smith -- the person what used to keep the greengrocery shop to the top of High Street afore her took the lodging house on East Cliff." (Poor Man's House, p. 82; cf. p. 17)

Reynolds, as a stranger to the district in addition to being a "gen'leman," makes more of his learning of the dialect than does Sturt, who, as shown in the Journals, was able to fall naturally into it while speaking with Grover. The acquisition of the language was taken by Reynolds as another of the skills he had to learn to make himself a useful member of the community and he took pride in the way it drew him closer to the people. He claims that Tony Widger, his fishing partner, understood him better when he spoke in dialect and Reynolds enjoys being able to show the reader how "we" speak:

> From things very familiar or intimately a part of daily life, the definite article the is, in our dialect, clipped off. "In house," we say, instead of "in the house"; "down under cliff," instead of "under the cliff"; and even "up to station." Most of all do we say "out to beach" where people from land would say "out to the beach." "Have 'ee been out to beach?" we ask each other at breakfast. . . ." (Alongshore, p. 11)

Being given a little to mysticism he speculates that "pagans" thus made personalities of nature in this way and that Seacombe folk are "in a measure . . . pagans still." While such conclusions are unscientific his interest in codes and registers of speech shows the sensitivity of his observation.

Reynolds seems never to have considered his writing about the life of fishermen and their families to bear any relation to the subject of folklore, so, when he describes an evening of singing at Tony Widger's house it is done in the same style as the rest of his observations of everyday life. "Small sing-songs in the kitchen" had been a regular evening entertainment for Reynolds and the Widgers, the family he boarded with. He described one, noting interesting details of performance and musical style:

> When Tony sings, he throws his head back and closes his eyes so that, but for the motions of his mouth, he looks asleep, even deathlike, and is, in fact, withdrawn into himself. I think he sees his songs, as well as sings them. (Poor Man's House, pp. 155-156)

Reynolds also notes the high pitch Tony chose to sing in, a characteristic of folksong style in southern England and the lumberwoods tradition of North America. "His voice is

a high tenor. I make accompaniment an octave below, whilst Mrs. Widger -- a little nasal in tone and not infrequently adrift in tune -- supports him from above" (Poor Man's House, p. 156).

Tony began the session with "a long rigmarole that he used to recite with the mummers at Christmas time," but Reynolds quotes none of this. They sang "Sweet Evelina," "The Poor Smuggler's Boy," "The Fisher's is a Merry Life," -- which seems to be an "answer" to the farmer's praise of his occupation -- "Rolling Home," and "Spanish Ladies," Reynolds quoting a stanza or more of each. Yet his interest is not at all in "collecting" the songs but is rather in trying to understand the basis of their artistic appeal to Tony and himself. His intuitive judgements on this are perceptive:

> Tony sings with imagination: he sees, lives what he is singing. . . . However imperfect technically, Tony's songs are an expression of the life he lives, rather than an excursion into the realms of art -- into the expression of other kinds of life -- with temporarily stimulated and projected imagination. His art is perpetual creation, not repetition of a thing created once and for all. The art that is lived, howsoever imperfect, has an advantage over the most finished art that is merely repeated. (Poor Man's House, p. 159)

Here, in a couple of sentences, Reynolds drives home an essential point about folklore in performance.

It would not do to present Reynolds as an inspired analyst of folksong on the basis of this passage, the only one in his works in which he gives it sustained attention,[12] but it is another proof that authors like Reynolds, intimately involved with the people they were writing about, could hardly avoid making observations necessary to folklore science.

There are some good accounts of the work of fishing; seining mackerel from boat to shore (Alongshore, pp. 154-159), hooking mackerel, netting prawns and lobsters, and drifting for herring (Poor Man's House, pp. 61-66, 232-238, 284-291). With his literary skill Reynolds is able to give a convincing account of the feeling of being at sea in a small boat, and he is obviously keen to exhibit his new knowledge by glossing fishing terms and noting techniques, such as the older men's preference for a round lead weight, cast in a gull's egg, on a mackerel line (Poor Man's House, p. 62). Memory is also very strong, he finds, for the history of large catches:

> Hardly a big catch for all the last fifty years that he cannot recollect in all particulars -- who caught it, where and how they fished, the number of the catch, and how it sold -- once he can track it back among his crowded memories.
> (Alongshore, pp. 166-167)

Occupational beliefs are also mentioned; in particular the association made between human life and the tides:

> Fish, which are life to the fishermen, go into the nets upon the flood tide; dying fishermen go out upon the ebb -- so it is said. That sort of thing sounds impressive to a landsman, especially if he be poetical; but to a longshoreman it is crude enough. (Alongshore, p. 10)

He evokes the feeling of unrest in a community while it waits for a drowned body to appear, giving the related belief:

> "Ah! you won't see nort o' he now, not till 'er rises in the water after the seventh day. Men, they says, rises face downwards -- don' em? -- an' women face upwards. You'll see he when his time comes." (Alongshore, p. 228)

Brixham trawlermen, the commercial rivals of these small boat fishermen, are said not to trouble to land bodies caught in their trawls (Alongshore, pp. 228-229).

The quality of Reynolds' work is uneven from the folklorist's point of view. He is generally very sensitive to the way class differences are expressed and to any changes in his own anomalous position as perceived by Seacombe people; his fetching the supper beer from the jug and bottle outlet at the hotel, for example, results in

> . . . another indefinable promotion. I am not so much now "thic ther gen'leman tu Tony Widger's." I am now "Mister So-and-so" -- myself alone. (Poor Man's House, p. 292)

While deeply interested in knowing the fishermen --

> For all my elaborate education and painfully gained stock of knowledge, I find myself silenced time after time by the direct wisdom of these so-called ignorant people. . . . To live with the poor is to feel oneself in contact with a greater continuity of tradition and to share in a greater stability of life. (Poor Man's House, pp. 316-317)

-- he is prone to be "preachy," and to turn aside from direct description to a more "poetical" reflection. His are a young man's books, as compared with the greater reserve and tentativeness with which George Sturt ventures his opinions, but they are worth reading.

II. Good Listeners: Gambier-Parry and Harman

Major E. Gambier-Parry did not experience labouring life at firsthand; nevertheless his book The Spirit of the Old Folk (1913),[13] though in format a gallery of country characters, is made a work of serious perception by his use of Sturt's method of presenting informants through fairly extensive, well transcribed passages of their speech. Fraser has argued convincingly for Sturt's influence on Gambier-Parry.[14] The book describes labouring people in Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire, Gambier-Parry's native region; in fact, from his scant references to himself, we understand that he is of the local gentry and has known several of his subjects since he was a boy. Of this difference in class it is notable that, like several other writers who have come to know labourers as individuals, he acknowledges his conversion from superciliousness to respect for their lives and skills; as boys he and his brother had enjoyed dialect, but as something comic: "we aped the phraseology of those who were very certainly our betters . . ." (p. viii). Sturt too admits that at first Bettesworth "was something of a comic character in my eyes" (Bettesworth Book, p. 3). Yet so much has Gambier-Parry put this attitude behind him that, in introducing his account of "old man Young, the mole-catcher," he apologises to the reader for

the quaintness of the caricature-like portrait that he must give, since the man was like that.

One of the distinctions of the book is its sustained interest in rural skills; indeed, its organization is by various types of work, as related from an individual's experience. So we are not only given detailed accounts of work techniques such as the use of the flail, thatching, various kinds of ploughing and hedging, but are also shown the attitudes that went with them: describing the use of the breast-plough, for example, an old man spoke of the fortitude that drove it: "'It didn't take no learnin',' remarked Tripp, "We had to go at it and in good courage'" (p. 83). Likewise in the life history of "Bithie," an eighty-five year old woman, we are shown the seasonal round of women's work, and its great variety: ". . . there weren't no work as did come amiss to we 'oomans, from milkin' to chat rakin'. Us reckoned as the year begun arter Harvest Home" (p. 26). Like other women, she had worked at fruit gathering, yelming, winnowing, clat [clod] beating, dung turning, pulling docks, thistles and coutch, wurzel pulling and topping, bean setting, barley hoeing, wheat hoeing, hay-making, cheesemaking, stooking at harvest, drawing bonds and tieing: "'But there -- there was nothin' as us 'oomans didn't have a hand in, nothin'!'" (p. 27). She had kept pace with her husband at reaping and worked in a gang at

hoeing where it was essential to keep up to the gang's rate: "'You had to put your hoe forrard -- always forrard; an' not bein' used to it I couldn't kep up. But I got at it, wi' a little showin', an' I 'ouldn't take a beatin' arter that!'" (p. 30). Bithie's pride in endurance comes across very powerfully and is one of the qualities that Gambier-Parry admires in the "spirit" of such people. It is a sentiment that the Bettesworth books and others have shown to be characteristic of her class; of her mother and father and their trials with the death of one child and the seduction of another she declared, "'She never didn't give way; nor didn't father. They just went on, wi'out hump or hoot" (p. 17).

Such attitudes are, of course, the meaning of the title and the theme of the book; Gambier-Parry is attracted to these older workpeople as exemplars of the middle- and upper-class ideal of "service"; but this is not the same thing that working people praise as "endurance." Though he may not perfectly understand the implications of what is being told him his transcripts of conversations remain convincing, showing these characteristic sentiments couched in their proverbial forms. They form standard topics of discourse (and far from dying out, can all be heard today from old people) on the bumptiousness of the young --

"'They won't be told -- not they! Thinks they knows it all . . .'" (p. 283); the failure of modern farming -- "'Things have all gone back . . .'" (p. 272); or the difference between talk and successful doing: "'There's plenty o' folks as comes along wi' their long talk and says they knows; but it be all a lot o' tales -- all a lot o' tales, and nothin' else'" (p. 291). As Gambier-Parry notes, "Luke Hulle is not the only man who talks in such a strain out here. The same words are to be heard in the mouths of many" (p. 298). The last sentence should be taken literally; these commonplaces, though not lending themselves to collection and classification, tell as much about a society as more stereotyped or fixed form proverbs. Gambier-Parry's combination of accurate recording of language with detailed description of material culture makes The Spirit of the Old Folk a minor classic of English folklife.

Its quality causes his other country book, Allegories of the Land,[15] published in the previous year, 1912, to be a disappointing contrast; far less space had been given in it to the testimonies of country workpeople and their existence had been the mere starting point for his own meditations on social and political trends of the day and, mystically, on the relationship between God, man and the land.

One of the deliberate omissions in my study of the literature of rural folklife is in any general treatment of the genre of the dialect sketch. Horace Harman's Buckinghamshire Dialect (1929) and Sketches of the Bucks Countryside (1934),[16] however, show a development within this form along lines suggested by Sturt. Harman's examples of speech are not mere snippets but extensive passages, they were collected through personal fieldwork, in natural contexts, by a native of the country, and they are not intended in any sense for the supercilious or nostalgic amusement of their audience.

Harman's work is an example of the great tradition of amateur interest in the dialect and folklife of the writer's own county. Harman was a schoolmaster who had risen from an apprenticeship as a pupil teacher in a Board school; this, together with his reference to attendance at chapel services as a boy, suggests that he was not of the upper classes and helps explain the ease with which he could mix with the company at village inns. He does admit that in villages where he was known only as "the new schooulmaster" people who spoke dialect familiarly among themselves would use received pronunciation before him (Dialect, p. 5), but he overcame their reserve through his own fluency in Buckinghamshire dialect and his patient approach to gaining

his informants' confidence. Of particular relevance to the present study are the autobiographical statements of elderly farmworkers he presents in apparently authentic oral form.

Harman's major intent was to show the dialect in its natural context and he therefore reconstructs various typical conversations he encountered through interviews or by merely listening to talk in public houses. His sketches present commonplace topics like gardening, the crops, livestock, and the weather; as his editor, G. Eland, notes: "The artless and almost insipid character of the conversations is the best proof that they are unsophisticated" (Dialect, p. viii-ix). When some of the more complex folkloric performances occur, such as the telling of legends, the narratives themselves are left embedded in their conversational matrix, thus giving a good sense of the dynamic of the "storytelling event," for example, in Harman's account of an evening at a pub where, stimulated by a dark stormy night, speakers adduce legends and memorates of ghosts in a debate over their existence (Bucks Countryside, pp. 56-62).

His description of singing in pubs shows him to have been interested in singers' attitudes as well as in their texts and he quotes comments that show pride in possession of a unique repertoire (Bucks Countryside, pp. 123-124), and the local acceptance that a certain singer had a proprietary right to perform a particular song:

> As soon as my request was made, a customer referring to one of the company, said, 'There's ------- as can sing it.' 'That's -------'s song; 'tis his song!' said the latter, mentioning a person not present that evening, and there seemed to be a disinclination to render it perhaps from a motive not to trespass upon what is recognised as belonging peculiarly to another. (Bucks Countryside, p. 134)

Harman's sensitive drawing of social contexts, including an acute sense of the effect of his own presence on a situation, makes his work an advance on the "item-oriented" approach of some of his more orthodox folklorist contemporaries.

The fragments of autobiography he recorded from farm-workers conform to what I shall later claim to be typical patterns of structure and content in oral autobiography. A man's sense of what is significant in his personal history begins with his first employment; the work is the measure of the man: Will Dagley, after talking of his father's life, opens the account of his own thus:

> When I was about twelve eeurs old I went to work fur Master Law at the bottum eend a the village, and I a wurked fur him all mi life. I fust went in the yard and then drivin plough and as e gat an e took a man's pleeace. (Bucks Countryside, p. 20)

The important step of getting a man's place also figures in Mr. Tapping's life history for the sequence of employments is a common means of structuring oral autobiography among members of this society. The wage is a further measure of time and self in oral reminiscence; an unnamed man asks Harman to guess his age and then launches into personal recollections:

> "I be seventy-seven," he then said. "I fust started on the land when I was a young bo-ey lookin' after pigs at a few pence a waik. Times were hard then, mi father ony had nine shillings a waik and I remember when he got riz to ten, fur that Saturday when he come he showed mi mother a half-sovereign, the fust he had ivver had. We lived hard then . . . (Bucks Countryside, pp. 148-149)

Many characteristic topics occur in these recollections. Pride in strength and skill is apparent, the speaker proving himself the better man and having his superiority attested to by one who recognises true ability: in the following example Dagley tells of the failure of factory workers to match him in heavy work:

> "They coont carry a sack a whait -- twas too much fur em -- and that is what I could alwiz do as well as any othur man, even when e were young. I eeant very big but I can carry a sack a whait ur wuts ur beans wi anybody." (Bucks Countryside, pp. 22-23)

He goes on to tell how his master timed him at loading sacks into the barn and was duly impressed. That such anecdotes are important to an individual's self esteem and are part of genuine oral currency is suggested by the polished, formulaic quality of the following extract in which a farmer, considering Mr. Tapping as a suitor for his daughter, tests his judgement:

> Us went acrass the yard to a pig-sty whee-ur thai-ur was an ole sow wi a litter a pigs. He leeand an the rails and said, "What do ye think that sow and hur pigs be wuth?" "So and so," says I. "You ull do," says he. . . . (Bucks Countryside, p. 82)

The narrative of questions and responses continues to its climax in the farmer's offer of a large dowry with his daughter.

Self-vindicating stories of disputes with masters over some point of the teller's competence are also common in the oral reminiscences of farmworkers; William Plastow tells of his unfair dismissal (Dialect, pp. 104-105) and Tapping tells of being goaded into quitting by a master who constantly found fault with his work:

> "Next marnin he come out to me in the meddur and artur brivuttin about wi a few things, said, "You young rascal! Whatever come ovur ye eesterday to hit me in the feeace as ye did? I be a-goin to look ovur it this time, and teeak no noatice an it." "But," I says, "I eeant; I be a-gooin as e said. I eeant a-gooin to stop heeur any longur. I a had enoh a yur gooins an. Ye a bin at me fur the last fortnight and nivver left me alooan, ivverything e a done a bin wrong. I be a-gooin at the eend a nex waik."
> (Bucks Countryside, p. 86)

Such narratives of quarrels seem to be part of the story repertoire of some rural workers and come readily to them when called upon to give some account of their life histories.

Harman's sketches are convincing because, like Sturt, he does not avoid the mundane. He admits to being bored by some of the talk he hears but his concern to present the dialect naturally, causes him to set down speech verbatim including repetitions and clichés; among the latter are proverbial sentiments about work, values, and the comparison of past and present that are staples of conversation in public and private; the following, from different speakers but all land workers, are typical of themes that endure to the present:

> "When I was a young fellur, us wurked arly in the morning till leeat at night and us nivver grumbled. Us had to do it to arn a living and us alwiz had summut to ett and drink and ur waiks weeages alwiz come along. Us nivver hurt an wurk, and I know very well us were a gallus

> sight more contented wi what us got then than what they be wi what they git now-a-days." (Bucks Countryside, p. 90)
>
> "Why theeur eeeant a young fellur in the village as could goo and do the wurk the young fellurs done eeurs agoo. Well, we had to do it to live, and we done it too." (Dialect, p. 90)
>
> ". . . the young uns wunt be told. They know better than anybody else. I see a young fellur tuther day layin a hedge, but he was doin' it wrong, and it woont a done to a told him." (Dialect, p. 23)

The emphasis on work recalls Bettesworth and reflects, perhaps, an accomodation of the spirit to harsh economic conditions. In their expressions of alienation -- "But Twyvurd a cheeangd altogether since I was young. . . . I used to know ivverybody but now I know ony a few" -- they are also characteristic of old age. (Bucks Countryside, p. 149)

This is not a rich expressive culture in verbal terms when compared, for example to the Gaelic culture with its regard for proverbs and verse, but Harman praises the "fluent and terse expression" of Mr. Plastow (Bucks Countryside, p. 12) and these are the best qualities of speakers whose literary influence, if any, has been the Bible. Plastow, talking of the difference between good and bad farming, falls naturally into the Biblical idiom of "increase":

> He done his land well, so he had good returns. His yards were alwiz full a stock -- ivvery carner an it -- and his barns were alwiz full a graian [grain]. He done his feeulds well, fur his yard wuz alwiz full a dung. . . . If ye faid the land it ull faid you. You a got to treeat it like ye treeat anythink else, and then ye ull git yur returns. If ye starve it yeeur by yeeur and let it git overrun wi waids and rubbigh, then ye git very little increeas -- not much moour than what ye a put in; but dress it well and kaip it clean, then ye git the increeas. . . ." (Dialect, pp. 104, 110)

That the use of such maxims was general among rural workers, being something of a mark of membership in their community, has already been suggested in Sturt's commentary on the ubiquity of gardening talk. A further collection of maxims, recorded from another Buckinghamshire labourer, appears in G. Eland's excellent folklife study, In Bucks (1923), and the tone of reverence towards the land is the same:

> "There's things done here and there as we know, but daren't speak of, but land dare, and land will speak t' ye as 't is done by, you don't need telling about un."[17]

These proverbial themes and saws express a consistent outlook among labouring men as a group that is in favour, naturally enough, of thorough labour intensive care of crops and stock, and it is not uncommon for them to figure in their reminiscences as moral commentary on their experiences.

In sum, Harman's two books present reliable samples of the style and context of oral autobiography through accurate rendering of speech and good contextual detail.

III. Biographers of Working Men: Hudson and Porteous

In A Shepherd's Life (1910),[18] W.H. Hudson presents the reminiscences of Caleb Bawcombe, a Wiltshire shepherd, from notes taken during an intermittent acquaintanceship of nine years. As a biography it is only a limited success; the original diction and style of Bawcombe's stories is not well recorded, Hudson preferring to summarise and relate their matter in his own terms.

Hudson is best known as a writer on natural history and travel[19] and A Shepherd's Life, though ostensibly about Caleb Bawcombe, is of the genre of country books that record a naturalist's summer rambles. The shepherd recedes from our view as Hudson digresses on bird life and other people met on his walks. But to Hudson the natural history is not a digression; the shepherd is deliberately shown as being "at one" with his environment in which wild life plays a large part.

His chapter "The Shepherd as Naturalist" perhaps contains his original scheme for the book; in it he anticipates his reader's complaint that there is not enough about nature in it:

> It will appear to soem of my readers that the interesting facts about wild life, or rather about animal life, wild and domestic gathered in my talks with the old shepherd, do not amount to much. If this is all there is to show after a long life spent out of doors, or all that is best worth preserving, it is a somewhat scanty harvest, they will say. (p. 209)

Yet he has found that it is rare for men who work outdoors to make observations about animal behaviour that are not in some way useful to their work (p. 211). Bawcombe he found to be an exception in having more to tell about animals, though the reader must suspect that this reflects the shepherd's courtesy in trying to accomodate his questioner's desire for such anecdotes. Attempting to explain Bawcombe's interest in animals, Hudson expresses something that is so true of his own mode of vision that we doubt that it can be as true of Bawcombe's: "It was, I take it, because he had sympathy for the creatures he observed, that their actions had stamped themselves on his memory, because he had seen them emotionally" (p. 213). There had been a similar confusion of his own identity with that of his subject in Hudson's description of the shepherd's cottage: "I lobked for the cottage in which he had lived and thought it as perfect a home as a quiet, contemplative man who loved nature could have had" (p. 107). The ambiguous syntax aids the impression that the subject of this sentence is Hudson himself rather than the shepherd.

Hudson's fondness for the pathetic fallacy causes him to describe humans and animals in mutually interchangeable terms: thus Bawcombe's long narrow head, almost pointed ears, and coarse grey whiskers "produced a goat-like effect." His "fawn-like eyes" were "wonderfully clear, but that quality was less remarkable than the unhuman intelligence in them . . . ." (p. 36). The account, in context, is less condescending than it appears here but there are obvious fallacies in seeing people as animals, however figuratively. Later he compares the yearly round of farm labour to the cycles of animal life, implying that both are natural, instinctive, simple and healthy: ". . . . it may be said that . . . . speaking generally, the agricultural labourer is the healthiest and sanest man in the land, if not also the happiest, as some believe" (p. 42). Such sentiments, as, to judge by the qualifiers interjected in his sentence, Hudson is aware, have often led to complacency about the actual poor conditions of working-class rural life. These views also lead him unconsciously into the reactionary view that academic education is wrong for rural labourers' children; they should be outdoors, learning to "raise the mutton and pork and cultivate the potatoes and cabbage on which we all feed" (p. 7). Similarly he eulogises cottage homes, passing quickly over an admission of their darkness and

inconvenience, to exclaim over their "harmony with nature" due to weathering by "sun and wind and rain" -- that litany he invokes so fondly (p. 113). But the view of the homes is an exterior one; as a summer visitor he stays in the garden, enumerating the flowers which wrap the houses "as in a garment" (p. 113).

Hudson's adherence to this pastoral vision meant that he did not approach Bawcombe in the same open-minded spirit of enquiry with which Sturt encounters Bettesworth. Hudson chose to narrate Bawcombe's life because it fitted, or could be made to exemplify, his already established ideas about the rightness of the natural life in the open air. What prevents the book from being a total farrago like L.P. Jacks' Mad Shepherds,[20] however, is Hudson's openness with the reader about his interviews with Bawcombe and his surprise at the difference between what he expected to hear and what the shepherd wished to tell about. Bawcombe's topic was his work:

> During our frequent evening talks, often continued till a late hour, it was borne in on Caleb Bawcombe that his anecdotes of wild creatures interested me more than anything else he had to tell; but in spite of this, or because he could not always bear it in mind, the conversation almost invariably drifted back to the old subject of sheep, of which he was never tired. (p. 238).

Hudson's preferences were for Bawcombe's earliest memories of shepherding on the downs: ". . . they took one back sixty years or more, to a time when there was more wildness in the earth than now, and a nobler wild animal life" (p. 38). Bawcombe's retelling of his father's memorates were of even greater interest to Hudson because of their historical associations and because of the father's "fine character" (p. 54). Hudson's admission of his biases at least helps us evaluate his findings. While starting with a preconception, Hudson has left a record of his partial change of heart which is ethnographically worthwhile.

Hudson liked to think of himself as "an untrammelled person, familiar in both hall and cottage" (p. 112), perhaps hoping to be regarded as classless by virtue of his foreign birth. His first visit to the shepherd's home shows an attempt to deny the issue of class by ignoring it; it must have been some such motive that caused him to commit the enormity of going in uninvited and sitting down with Bawcombe at his own fireside, though, ironically, only a social superior would take such a "liberty." He reports the "busy old wife's" critical response,

> To her practical, peasant mind there was no sense in my being there. "He be a stranger to we, and we be strangers to he." (p. 37)

and Caleb was silent and enigmatic: ". . . his clear eyes showed neither annoyance nor pleasure but only their native, wild alertness" (p. 37). The "caste feeling," was overcome, Hudson tells us, through his remark on a caged canary, which led Bawcombe into a reminiscence.

Hudson was selective in what he recorded; as we have seen, he had his own ideas of what was interesting, which were not identical with Bawcombe's. Nevertheless, he discovered the necessity of a patient and somewhat passive approach. His prompts to the old man's memory would include telling what he had seen locally on his walks in the hope of "reminding him of something worth hearing in his past life" (p. 182). The method is a random one, but can produce very natural results in terms of the topics taken up and their development in sociable conversation.

Among them is an account of the first time he was trusted to help with his father's sheep; he was six. Hudson comments: ". . . now, when he is past eighty he speaks of it very feelingly as of something which happened yesterday" (p. 48). His "best memories" of his childhood relate to his mother and to two sheep-dogs; the veneration of "mother" is usual but oddly lacking is any mention of punishments by either parent. The father was "not soft or tender with his children" but talked and sang to them in the evenings;

the following song titles, some possibly devised by Hudson, are listed but no texts are given: "The Blacksmith," "The Gown of Green," "The Dawning of the Day," "Down in the Village," "The Days of Queen Elizabeth."

The burden of Caleb Bawcombe's remarks, however, lay in stories about shepherding: "The subject was so much to him, so important above all others, that he would not spare the listener even the minutest details of the shepherd's life and work" (p. 238). Another shepherd had recounted to Hudson how he had proved to a suspicious farmer that his dog never chased hares; the dog stayed still when a hare approached them but made no move without the shepherd's order -- which fooled the farmer. Bawcombe told a similar story of how he had shown his master that his dog never bit sheep (pp. 120-122).

Hudson considers that Bawcombe's dog stories were always his best because of Bawcombe's love for his dogs; we may suspect that their real theme for Bawcombe was his professional competence. Yet he had a range of other stories that was "pretty wide" (p. 242). Hudson samples them, giving Bawcombe's story of his father's great strength -- he had picked up and carried the drunk and belligerent village blacksmith -- and his memorate of a ghost experience (p. 242), this presented in dialect in a convincing version

of oral narrative style. During Bawcombé's year's sojourn in Dorset -- a place he regarded as alien and distant -- he heard the legend of the theft of the village church-bell by the Devil and of the attempt to pull it from the river with a team of white oxen; the teamster had exulted too soon and the bell had sunk back into the mud (p. 176).[21] Hudson sensitively hints that Bawcombe's telling of this legend was linked to the homesickness he had felt there:

> But in this strange, remote country, outside of "Wiltsheer," Bawcombe was in a region where anything might have happened, where the very soil and pasture were unlike that of his native country, and the mud adhered to his boots in a most unaccountable way. It was almost uncanny. (pp. 176-177)

This piece of exotic lore perhaps helped confirm his sense of his Wiltshire identity.

It is also sensitive of Hudson to remark a topic that Bawcombe would have passed over, though his wife chose to bring it forward. The story concerned the local belief that a certain farmer he had worked for was cursed with childlessness:

> [Bawcombe] with his unconquerable reticence in regard to other people's private affairs . . . would have passed it off with a few general remarks. But there was his old wife listening to us, and, womanlike, eager to

> discuss such a subject, she would not let it pass. She would tell it and not be silenced by him: they were all dead and gone -- why should I not be told if I wanted to hear it?

The story was told by them jointly but Hudson, unfortunately, found it so long that he presents it only in summary (pp. 141-146).

John Fraser has suggested that A Shepherd's Life was influenced by Sturt's example in the Bettesworth books.[22] If so Hudson has only partially followed in his wake. A Shepherd's Life lacks Sturt's commitment to understanding the working class world view; Hudson too readily assumes that he has fathomed the shepherd because of their apparently like-minded affection for animals. Against Sturt's quiet radicalism Hudson's declarations of sympathy for the labourer and his unknown life seem like posturing before the reader; he makes the case for an oral history of the unrest of the 1830's and the need to present that history from the unheard labourer's side, but this consorts oddly with his reactionary opinion that the labourer's children should receive only the kind of education that fits them for a productive, outdoor life.

He is also capable of real stupidity as in his surprise that Bawcombe's lifelong reading of the Bible

"had made no change in his rude 'Wiltsheer' speech" (p. 103). Touches of superciliousness intrude as where he presumes that the shepherd, referring to some mental characteristic in a dog which he called its "kink," would have called it "its idiosyncracy if he had known the word" (p. 196). Hudson's glossing of Bawcombe's plain English with a latinate term is a gratuitous snobbery and adds no clarification; in fact he risks, as in all his summaries, misunderstanding what Bawcombe has said by being too ready to empathise with the shepherd and interpret his "uncouthness" to the gentle reader. Sturt, on the other hand, rarely interposes himself between Bettesworth and the reader and, as Fraser has suggested, it is the enforced encounter with a real rustic which makes Sturt's work a departure from the complacent tradition of the country book and its tacit contract to supply the reader with "charm" and "repose." A Shepherd's Life is marred as ethnography and literature by its inconsistent tone; in it Hudson is a dilettante coming frustratingly close to fine life history writing then losing his track in thoughtless conventionalisms.

Despite an unpromising title, Chuckling Joe, by Crichton Porteous (1954), is a significant book for its content -- the life-history of a Derbyshire man, a small farmer, carter, and factory hand -- and for its comments

on the manner of recording Joe's oral recollections.[23] Porteous, who had worked on a farm for experience as a youth (described in his Teamsman[24]), was a journalist in 1933 when he met the man he refers to only as "Joe," through staying at his guest house. Joe was then fifty and their relationship continued more than seventeen years.

Porteous's manner of recording Joe's talk in a diary repeats Sturt's non-directive approach with Bettesworth; their conversations occurred spontaneously during walks about the neighbourhood, or at Joe's home in his retirement:

> He was certainly not effusive with me -- he never went out of his way to talk with any who stayed at The Eaves, being content with his own family -- yet after a while I gathered that he accepted me, and later found he liked having me come with him on walks. I was a goodish listener. (p. 139)

He was also present while Joe reminisced with contemporaries and was thus able to compare variant tellings of the same story by Joe and to see whether his versions of local events were assented to by others. The naturalness of the narrative context was preserved through Porteous's decision not to tell Joe that he was "putting down" these tales: "I decided that the attractiveness of his tales was in part due to their inconsequence, and the simple spontaneous way he

told them, which would probably be spoilt by any suggestion that they might make a book" (p. 14). Sturt had similarly refrained from telling Grover -- "Bettesworth" -- about The Bettesworth Book, fearing that to know he was the subject of a book might have sent him boastfully drinking about the parish. Porteous's choice to preserve spontaneity rather than "the final little exactitudes that might have been got by close questioning" (p. 14), results in a biography that is sensitive to the way stories arise naturally in discourse; though Porteous has arranged the material he warns the reader when he has moved a story out of sequence. The original choice of topics is Joe's and Porteous seeks meanings inductively in what Joe has selected to talk of. The similarity of Joe's choices among topics to those of other rural working men helps in the formulation of our sense of an oral canon ~~for~~ personal reminiscence.

Like Sturt, Porteous admits to the reader those things that surprise him about Joe's stories and attitudes. He told little about his childhood, for example, and nothing of schooling; queries about childhood games he passed off without much interest: "he replied vaguely that they were much the same as today . . ." (p. 9). This minimisation of childhood conforms to what seems to have been a broader working class view of it as an embarrassment to be got over

as quickly as possible. The only stories of childhood that figure prominently here, as in the oral canon generally, are of mischief: rigging buttons to rap window-panes, breaking glass, stealing potatoes, and in particular, of the annual license of "Mischief Night," May 29th, when ". . . after dusk the boys and youths began to collect all things movable that they could find and take them to two recognized dumping places, one at the top of the village the other in Townend . . ." (p. 16). As Joe explained, part of the fun was to observe the wrangles next morning as people reclaimed their property: some claimed more than they had lost. Also omitted from the oral canon, unless told in comic style, are memorates of courtship; this surprises Porteous:

> When Joe began courting I do not know. He was never one to talk much about women, and as a young man did not, I think, bother much with them, or surely it would have come out in his gossip sometime. (p. 57)

Here Porteous may be drawing an incorrect inference through not appreciating that the laconic style is all that the restricted code of oral reminiscence permits its users on some topics.

On the other hand are those things that Joe notices: ". . . to the end of his life whenever a horse came along,

he would turn and watch it carefully, though to the finest or most flashy-looking motor-car he was quite indifferent" (p. 69). I have already mentioned Bettesworth's astonishment that Sturt took no notice of horses. Joe admired the unsuspected knowledge of stone breakers who knew just where to tap a stone to break it along the grain, making a stronger product for road surfaces than machine-broken stone (p. 35). He had a good memory for weather as it had affected farming and a stock of maxims about the need to feed land well, "There's nowt so honest as ground" (p. 118). Porteous comments perceptively about the name "Lazy Lane," given to a local shortcut, "which seems to typify the spirit of the times: indifferent about exertion, and rather contemptuous of softness and ease" (p. 67). Similarly there was a proverb in the village that stood in place of a story of a local man's lazy sons: ". . . when there was anything unpleasant to be done . . . it got to be a saying: 'Let father do it,' and everybody understood the allusion" (p. 76). Because Porteous was working from notes and recollections of conversations with Joe he is not always able to give verbatim versions of these expressions of attitude, but it seems clear that Joe shares these values; he was always twenty minutes early for work: "I never heard him boast; it was just a simple fact. Why should one ever be late?" (p. 146).

One of the uncommon qualities in Porteous's approach to Joe's narratives is his interest in what associations or references in a conversation cause a story to be performed. General talk of disease and germs leads Joe into telling of a dirty couple who lived by rag-picking and the tricks he and the other boys had played on them, but where many editors would have given only the escapade, Porteous includes a sense of the transitions into and out of the story from the surrounding non-narrative discourse (pp. 10-11). His stories were nearly all about local people, a form of community history often stimulated by discussion of relationship, and Porteous notes that after his retirement, when Joe spent more time with his "old cronies," "many fresh tales" were recorded.

Another favourite topic was the sagacity of various animals he had known, for which Porteous almost apologises as seeming 'trivial' but is determined to include as a record of "what interested him at the time, and which he enjoyed passing on. His history would be incomplete without them" (p. 151). He tells of the abilities of his dog, then relates another man's tall tale,[25] perhaps to assert his own veracity by comparison with the other's outlandish claim:

> Aa've never knowed no dog like 'er. Oo were a masterpiece, though there were a chap on th' next farm as claimed 'e 'ad a better. Oo used ta fetch 'is cows, but one mornin' oo were a lung time an' 'e went to see what were wrong. When he got there, oo were wallin' a gap up, . . . just puttin' th' copers [top stones] on, so 'e said. (p. 28)

Porteous's habit of noting Joe's stories in a diary allowed him to compare versions over time; in one the name of the protagonist had changed in the space of three years, but in other twice-told tales details were "exactly the same, given even in almost identical words" (p. 183). The chapter "Stokehole Tales," gives a sense of the range of talk and narration at meal breaks in the woollen mill: anecdotes of smart answers given to the boss, practical jokes on workmates, mock-rueful accounts of the unreasonableness of wives, and stories of ratting with terriers.

As a whole the book offers a moderately detailed view of life in a semi-industrial Peakland village in the earlier twentieth century. Its main interest here is as further evidence, in the line of succession from George Sturt, of what may be achieved by patient listening and diligent note-taking, in coming at a realistic sense of the normal topics of oral reminiscence and self-presentation.

IV. Autobiography and Occupation: Rose and Barrett

The Village Carpenter, by Walter Rose (1937)[26] is written by a member of the third generation of Buckinghamshire carpenters who worked in the family firm for some thirty years until, prior to 1914, in a manner oddly like Sturt's failure as a manager, his father's death and his own ill-health left him unable to carry on in the business. This is not the only parallel with Sturt; indeed, the plan of the book, even to the sketches of individual workmen, seems to owe much to The Wheelwright's Shop. It shows, in short, how completely Sturt's ideas had become part of the intellectual climate of the 1930's; some themes come so patly from Rose as to seem as though he had been coached in what to say by his editor, Frank Kendon, who "watched the MS. from start to finish." There is a glibness in the way Rose uses ideas like "the colonisation of this county" or the term "folk methods"; where Sturt struggled to define them, Rose can take them as "givens."

Rose sets out to describe the character and range of work of "the village carpenter," not his own life as a carpenter, although he draws on personal experience and the anecdotes of his grandfather and others about earlier days. This distancing of the author from the life, however, must cause him to be classified among interpreters of rural life

rather than among native autobiographers. He is like an anthropologist's informant who has read the reports about his tribe and adopted them as his own opinions. He has swallowed Ruskin's ideas on Gothic art whole, for in 1921 he returned to "woodcraft" and was commissioned to carve oak fittings for a church in "the elusive spirit of the old Gothic craftsmen," being allowed the creative freedom to make this work "the expression of my soul" (p. xx). Consequently, in reading The Village Carpenter we can never feel entirely confident that its author's attitudes are as truly representative of the rural craftsman as they might have been had he not been "discovered" by enthusiasts for rural life and culture.

Of all the values discussed, conscientiousness is central; in his section on the repair of water mill wheels, for example, he says:

> . . . they had all been made by conscientious workmen who knew their job, by the class of workmen that it is a pleasure to come after. . . . And so we were very careful. We did not want a wheel to recite our faults each time it turned. (pp. 108-109)

There was a related conservatism in methods; the filing of the teeth of a pitsaw, for example (p. 6), or the miller's dressing of a mill stone: "They never changed the formation

of those serrations; it was to them a method discovered and established by millers ages before, and no one had since invented a better way of arranging them" (p. 110). Rose recalls his own learning of these craft principles from the older workmen:

> They taught me how to saw upright and square, with the time-honoured threat of "hanging a plumb-bob from my nose" when I erred. They taught me the peculiar art of sharpening a saw, the irregular teeth of which were once described as "sow and pigs." (p. 36)

Carpenters' tool-chests were "inviolable preserves of their owners" (p. 50); the tool acquired the marks of its user's personality and an employer told Rose "I have but to look into the tool basket to know the quality of the carpenter" (p. 60).

The carpenter's pride in his workmanship, and a certain blind orthodoxy, appears best in the wellerism that was used in Rose's workshop when anyone was forced to take a shortcut; it had been the whim of a local squire that his estate carpenter should place the decorative, and supporting, "jowl" on top of the upper rail of his field gates, rather than below it as usual:

> . . . for which reason the unfortunate man, for the rest of his life, was credited with hanging gates bottoms upward. "Not nice to a shaving, as John Line said, when he hung the gate bottom upward," became a stock saying of the workshop, when haste was more expedient than excellence of workmanship. (p. 74)

As Sturt had in The Wheelwright's Shop, Rose offers some portraits of his fellow workmen, but they seem not to hold the same engrossing interest to him and he is capable of complacent judgements that echo more reactionary writers; of "Johnnie," a strong but simple-minded man, he observes: "He was surely nature's child, one who had never unlearned the art of filling to perfection the little niche which had been provided for him by destiny" (p. 67). There is a similar flabbiness about the portrait of "Old Enoch," a quaint old man, given to lies about his past strength. Also described is Rose's grandfather, the founder of the business, and his values of energy and endurance are familiar from Sturt's account of his uncle John Smith in A Farmer's Life.

In several places Rose remarks that the carpenters' work brought them in intimate contact with the whole life of the village (pp. 37-38), thus nicely illustrating a contemporary intellectual interest in the idea of a lost "organic community." As Denys Thompson has described it, ". . . a society, engaged in pursuits satisfying in themselves and

relevant to human ends, whose members were finely adjusted in their relations to each other and to their environment."[27] Such sentiments, as John Fraser has demonstrated, are essentially Sturt's legacy.[28] Rose's sequel, Good Neighbours (1942),[29] seems to have been written in further exemplification of the "organic community" ideal. Though we cannot be sure that Rose's views as a writer about his tradition are the same as those he had when he was a less self-conscious member of that tradition, The Village Carpenter is a very fine account of a trade and its skills and values. It becomes a companion to The Wheelwright's Shop and displays a similar high level of technical insight and exposition.

Good Neighbours, like The Village Carpenter, is a memoir rather than a true autobiography since its attention is turned outwards to create a comprehensive account of village life. As in his earlier book, he has been stimulated by contact with outside enthusiasts for the rural past; he is a "born-again" villager discovering interest in things he had previously taken for granted: "the life of my early years has already become interesting and strange" (p. 1). As before he is prone to generalizations that may reflect the writings of D.H. Lawrence or F.R. Leavis rather than his own directly-felt experience; of labourers, for example, he writes: ". . . between them and their work there went

an intuitive sense of unison, inarticulate, yet understood by both man and animal, and these abilities were inherited rather than taught, and made proficient by lifelong experience" (p. 12). Such nods to contemporary educated opinion, however, need not distract the reader from the book's blend of personal experience and detached observation.

Some of his most uncommon information comes from old men's memories of pre-Enclosure practices, such as casting lots for rights to hay from the common holdings in the meads, and the method of sending boys to run in straight lines through mowing grass to mark out boundaries (pp. 25-26). His chapter on the "lore and cult of the pig," is the best I have seen on this standard topic. His description of the barter system, "gnawing it out," where debtors held off settlement until equal or greater indebtedness had accumulated on the other side -- the bane of tradesmen like Rose -- is also fine. A short text of a mummers' hero-combat play, with interposed description of the action, is included; it was unusual in being performed on November 24th, the eve of St. Catherine's Day, hence the term "Katterners" for the performers (pp. 131-135). It was performed like a religious duty, with no deviation of speech or gesture. Thomassing and Mayday quêtes are also described. More personally, Rose writes of the "perpetual secret fear" of consumption,

to prevent which as a boy he ate raw eggs and live garden snails (p. 138).

He is at his best, and most expressive of the craftsman's point of view, when describing the differences between the local trades. It seems difficult to overestimate the importance to a man of his trade, its effect on his self-definition, and hence its place in autobiography; Rose says, "even in my time, when a man was mentioned, we always saw him in association with his particular craft, and respected him according to his thoroughness in it" (p. 33). The possession of esoteric trade knowledge gave craftsmen a higher status than landworkers, since everyone knew something of that. His consciousness of difference is acute, extending to details of dress, smell, and gait: milkers and cowmen, for example, showed the effect of squatting on the milking stool in "a widespread walk and slight curve of the legs" (p. 17), unlike the "four-square set" of the carters, or the ploughmen's manner of walking, "a to-and-fro, sideways sway of the head and shoulders down to the pit of the stomach" (p. 11). Masoners (builders of the local "wichert," mud and straw, walls) never blacked their boots:

> Like the farm hands they wore corduroy trousers, though not so invariably tied under the knees. We -- the carpenters -- walked long distances with them, to and from the work on hand. Their clothes smelt of lime, whereas ours were said to smell of wood, though we were not conscious of it. (p. 35)

The painters, as "aristocrats," wore cloth trousers, and "when they arrived on the job, wanted everyone else to clear off and leave them to themselves" (p. 38). There was also a rivalry between carpenters and wheelwrights:

> They thought their craft superior and said so. Our retort was simply "paint and putty." Someone told me that a poor wheelwright might make a good carpenter, but that it needed an exceptionally good carpenter to make a poor wheelwright. (pp. 39-40)

The only craft for which he shows little admiration, and in which he takes no interest, is tailoring: "It seemed to me a job for which man was not intended; I never envied them, nor did I ever learn anything about their methods of work" (p. 47). His evident sense of anomaly about the tailor's work -- its unnatural physical posture, and suggestion of effeminacy -- helps explain the frequency with which tailors are the butts of comic songs and anecdotes in folk tradition.

One chapter is given over to what he learns of the unsuspected skills of "George," an older labourer who works for Rose on his smallholding and who becomes "a father-instructor figure" to him. In a remark which may owe something to Sturt, and applies hence to our subject of the shape and content of folklife autobiography, he notes:

> Only by working in common with the land-worker can his outlook on life be understood or his soul be known. To share his company at a meal under the hedgerow, through which his simple life and aspirations are revealed, is itself an education. He tells what he chooses of his life, with plenty of subtle humour. (p. 104)

The question of what the worker chooses to tell, and why, will be taken up more fully in the final chapter.

In addition to the reminiscences of men born and bred to the life of farm labour there are memoirs of middle class, often urban, men and women who spent part of their youth at farm labour. At least one, and probably more, of the "Land Girls" of the second world war has written her farming reminiscences as have several young men who were romantically attracted to the open-air life or were preparing themselves to be farmers through practical experience.[30] Reminiscences of the latter sort continue a pattern set by Reynolds and Holdenby though not necessarily

sharing their motive of sociological enquiry into the inner life of the working class; in fact the emphasis of these more recent memoirs is often on practical details of modern farming.

Since they are in the labouring life at their own choice, and temporarily, their experience and views of it are not typical of those of labourers. The more perceptive of these writers, such as Crichton Porteous, recognize that they are not fully accepted by their fellow workers and recount the various ways in which they feel themselves tested by them:

> . . . there was a feeling of antagonism. It came chiefly from Abel, but also from Old Tom. I gathered the impression that some of the antagonism was directed against myself. I was an alien, not one of them. . . . These two men were of the ancient line of labourers, as exclusive and conservative in their own way as any peer with lineage going back to the Conqueror. . . . I realised that if I hoped to get on with these two I should not have to shirk in any way. (Teamsman, p. 104)

Though they cannot present an authentic "insider's" view their wide interests and literary competence can cause their memoirs to provide other orders of ethnography. As relative strangers they comment on matters the native autobiographer would find too "commonplace" to include or

which are not admissible to his canon of subjects that can be written of. Hugh Barrett's Early to Rise: A Suffolk Morning (1967),[31] the record of his teenage as a pupil on a Suffolk farm in the 1930's, can illustrate these points.

The strangeness of farm life to a beginner, the need to learn its words, techniques, and hierarchies, gives a certain structure and momentum to all of these accounts. Barrett contrasts his own ignorance with the self-assuredness of Georgy, a local boy of his own age who became his mentor: "he had the authority which knowing how to do a thing properly gives a man: he had been at it since fourteen and had probably never had to think about how to harness a horse" (p. 32). Barrett includes a good description of words of command for horses among the elements of the "new language" he has to learn (p. 55). He learns, by experience, the power structure on the farm: the "Guv'nor," the farmer, was firmly at its peak but he would openly seek the advice of the head horseman, to whom, equally, the other men would go for advice and support (pp. 37-38). Below him in the hierarchy were the specialists: the shepherd, the threshing machine driver, and cowman; horsemen, milkroundsman, daymen, such being "chaps who could turn their hands to a lot of jobs . . . had no status worth the mention" (p. 43).

Barrett became very conscious of the anomaly of his position, as a pupil, within this traditional order: "I was the odd fish, the only person in the farm hierarchy who was not fitted into a pattern established by long precedent" (p. 36). His discovery of its rules sometimes occurred by accident; full of enthusiasm he had led a horse out of the stable and into a field in front of the head horseman:

> . . . when he joined me in the lane I saw by his face that I had done something very wrong indeed. He was dark red with rage. "Who do you think you are a-hustling out afront of me?" he said. I just hadn't understood. Our comings and goings were better ordered than I knew. It was the head horseman's privilege to leave the stable first, and -- George pointed this out to me later on -- his privilege to go into the field first. I said I was sorry and explained that I didn't know, but it took several days before we were on kindly terms again. To me the row seemed out of proportion, but then I didn't know and could not have understood just what it meant to be head horseman. (p. 86)

Through such corrections, observation, and rites of initiation Barrett was gradually accepted into the farm men's society. As a newcomer in the harvest field he underwent the ceremony of "shoeing the colt," as, to his bewilderment, he was tripped up and sat on while the soles of his boots were smartly hammered till he cried for mercy:

> Then, when they let me go and I got to my feet . . . the men stood around in a ring and, at a word from George, all shouted at the top of their voices, "He's shod! -- He's shod -- The colt is shod!" "And now," said George, "you've got to pay your footing -- a gallon of beer 'll do." (p. 113)

There are few published accounts of what it felt like to participate in these rituals; Bettesworth recalled enjoying being a "colt" in the horning ceremony at Weyhill Fair (Bettesworth Book, pp. 22-24). The harvesters on Barrett's farm also cried "Largesse!" when a stranger appeared in the field. Largesse was not considered a "tip" but a right: ". . . it could be called for in a loud voice without loss of dignity." The giver was assessed as "a decent sort of man, a gentleman, or a real gentleman" by the amount he contributed (p. 125).

Besides describing this formal initiation Barrett makes a perceptive record of the bantering and joking routines which a youngster is first subjected to but gradually learns to manipulate like the older hands:

> "Here, Harry, is that right you took har round the back of the [parish] room last dance?" Harry smirked and kicked a clod in embarrassment., "Is that right she've got pink drawers?" But Harry is learning to get best in these exchanges -- "No, mate, that ain't, she don't wear none!" Whereupon we all laugh and say: "The randy young tup!" (p. 98)

Fortunately there is nothing prissy about Barrett so that from his work we can get a more rounded picture of men's humour. He includes beliefs about aphrodisiacs such as ducks' eggs and the scent of beanflowers, giving them in their context of mock-serious advice (p. 97). The proverbial recommendation of coitus interruptus, "'Do you draw out on the hidland afore you tu'n the seed on, old mate, an' you'll be all right'," rather gives the lie to those clerical folksong collectors who held that the old men who sang songs with similar imagery had no sense of double entendre (p. 98).

While Barrett does not relate many "texts" of men's narratives he does give a sense of their style and context in routines of sociability. He describes listening to five men tell the same story, one after the other, each emphasising a special aspect of its humour: "at the end of each telling we all roared with delight" (p. 135). He also cites their favourite topics: at mealtimes in the fields talk is of "land and crops and gardens and village scandal -- and horses, of course" (p. 132). The work in progress naturally dictated stories about its opportunities or dangers: hedging allowed surreptitious ferreting, while threshing caused stories of high yields or horrible injuries (p. 151). Perennial favourites were those in which the high and mighty were brought down, the sneaky exposed, and the

know-it-all boss suffered by not taking the teller's good advice (p. 136).

Because of his intermediate position between master and men -- he "lived-in" with the farmer and went to sales with him -- Barrett was able to make shrewd observation of farmers' characteristics. His remarks on sales as social occasions are good; his master, like others, kept well-informed through gossip there:

> Within a few days of any "new" man taking on a farm he would know where he came from, what his father did, who he was married to, and whether he drank or gambled or ran after women, and -- most important -- how well-lined his breeches-pockets were. Yet I never heard him ask a direct question on such matters. (p. 104)

Gossip was turned into hard fact by ingeniously oblique questioning:

> The Suffolk man likes to know but hates to ask . . . . if you come fresh to a place in Suffolk, you will be asked questions to which the inquirer already knows the answers -- but don't forget that it is shocking bad manners to suggest you know he knows. (pp. 104-105)

He also makes the important observation, confirmed in Lark Rise to Candleford and elsewhere, that sociability was, for men, confined to public places: markets and sales for farmers, and the pub, parish room, and their gardens, for the men.[32] Women occasionally visited each other, if they lived nearby, but not men, except in cases of illness. Barrett never entered any of the cottages or neighbouring farmhouses. Men did not talk to other men's wives except to "pass the time of day": "I never even learned the first name of a single married woman in the whole time I was a pupil." This he puts down to the bawdy imputations men habitually made about conversations: "no girl walking by escaped comment and speculation, and any younger chap . . . seen talking to her would be closely questioned" (p. 98).

Two topics that lie outside the direction of this study but are too interesting to pass over are, firstly, Barrett's description of an instance of folk memory in the perpetuation of a place name solely among children. "The Red Gate" referred to a gate that had been gone for a century yet each generation of children knew the name and used it though it had fallen out of adult usage (p. 117). The other note is his record of "Old Phoebe" and "Bright Phoebe" as common terms for the sun; they were used unselfconsciously:

> At harvest time it was "Come on, old Phoebe, do the barley 'ont never git dry today," or "Bright Phoebe's bin hid up all day; doubt that'll rain afore night." (p. 42)

This would suggest that the diction of some of the more archly pastoral eighteenth century folksongs seemed neither incomprehensible nor anachronistic to even twentieth century singers.

Reasons for Barrett's acceptance among the men are to be sensed from his lively prose style and breadth of interests; his descriptions of language and behaviour are never patronizing or quaint. That he is able to write freely of the "bawdy good comradeship" (p. 40) of the men is due to the general liberalization of moral attitudes but it helps balance the pallid image of the countryman as Nature-mystic presented by the spiritual Holdenby and the upright Gambier-Parry.

V. An Ethnographer on His Home Ground: Alfred Williams

The works of Alfred Williams could be discussed under many of the headings chosen in this study. He was a working man, self-educated in literature, and ambitious to write in a number of styles; fortunately he settled on the "rural rides" manner of describing his travels, on foot and by bicycle, in his native Wiltshire. As a result of his fieldwork experience (though with Sturt and Reynolds he shared the literary advice of Edward Garnett), he developed the "rambles" format beyond the level of merely pleasing description until it became a serious attempt to define what modern folklife scholarship terms "regional personality." He was also a heroic figure in his struggle to record and write despite the twin evils of poverty and illness.

Williams is known to folklore studies primarily for his Folk-Songs of the Upper Thames (1923);[33] this collection of song texts offers perhaps the most comprehensive account of what songs were actually being sung in an English region during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In this his work is a parallel to the great collection made by Vance Randolph, Ozark Folksongs (4 vols., 1946-1950), who, as Halpert remarks, "accepted the broadest definition of folksong: a folksong was simply any song sung by the folk."[34] Williams' collecting of songs, like the rest of

his research and writing, was a determined solo effort done without the help of the English Folk Song Society, and somewhat in opposition to its more restrictive definition of folksong. Williams' biographer, Leonard Clark, refers to a letter from the folksong scholar Frank Kidson advising Williams that many of his "so-called 'folk' songs of the Upper Thames valley were no more than Victorian drawing room lyrics";[35] but Williams' intention in the collection was that the songs might complete the record, begun in three earlier prose works, of the whole way of life of his home region. Though he admits to having reluctantly refused to note down the words of "rough" (erotic and bawdy) songs that he could not have printed, the song texts that do appear in his published collection have not generally been "corrected" or "improved" by collation with others. He attests their authenticity:

> They are, emphatically, not a classic lot. Many of them are not as I should prefer to see them, but they are not my songs. I make no apologies for the musical tastes of the people; I cannot help what they liked. That is no business of mine. I want to show not what they <u>might</u> have sung, nor what they <u>ought</u> to have sung, but what, in fact, they <u>did</u> sing. And what right have I, or any one else, to condemn the taste exhibited in, or the imperfections of the old songs, and mutilate patch, polish, or correct them in deference to the wishes of those trained exclusively according to the modern ideas of poetry and music . . .? (<u>Folk-Songs</u>, p. 24)

Unlike the Folk Song Society, Williams' intention was not to "revive" folksong, "You cannot graft a dead branch on to a living body," but to provide "records of that which amused, cheered, consoled, and so profoundly affected the lives of the people of an age that has for ever passed away" (Folk-Songs, pp. 28-29). In his thoughtful introduction, which is full of the kind of insight into folksong that can only come through extensive fieldwork, Williams quotes a singer's remark that "'You can allus tell a man by the songs he sings'"; by extension of the same principle the attitudes, values, and tastes of the people of a region are reflected in their song repertory. It will be suggested below that his three other books about the area, A Wiltshire Village (1912), Villages of the White Horse (1913), and Round About the Upper Thames (1922),[36] similarly reflect what people did talk about, what they ~~said~~ of themselves in the multitude of informal interviews which Williams conducted throughout his neighbourhood. Like George Sturt he was a local man writing of his fascination with his own environment and, as we have seen, he was also akin to Sturt, and some other determined amateurs of folklore, in rejecting the narrower definitions of the field of interest held by many in the folklore studies "establishment" of the day, and in perceiving the need to present what we should now call a "contextual" account of folklife in a particular region.

Alfred Williams was born in the Wiltshire village of South Marston in 1877 and died there in 1930. His life was one of continual privation and struggle, at first for education and afterwards for the financial support necessary for him to pursue the life of a writer. His father had deserted his wife and eight children when Alfred was three and consequently Williams began work as a "half-timer" on local farms at the age of eight; he left school completely for farmwork when he was twelve. At fifteen he followed his elder brothers into the Great Western Railway foundry at Swindon where he worked until ill health, and a mounting disgust with the factory system, forced him to leave in 1914. In addition to his work as a hammerman in the factory forge, however, he had also taught himself Greek, Latin, mathematics, and English literature, and written three volumes of poetry. Later in life, after a period in India during the Great War, he learned Sanskrit and his translation Tales from the Panchatantra (1930) became his last publication. It is his three country books, however, that are of greatest interest to the folklorist, and in particular the last of these, Round About the Upper Thames, which with its description of the way of life of the area, the temperament of its people, and accounts of his folklore informants, provides necessary contextual detail for his great folksong collection.

As his introduction to Folk-Songs of the Upper Thames makes clear, by 1923 Williams had come to see all four books as complementary, making together a composite picture of the region's folklife. A fifth work, Round About the Middle Thames, or The Banks of Isis was serialized in the North Berks Herald in 1925 but, apparently, never published as a separate volume.[37] His first rural life book, A Wiltshire Village (1912) is more overtly polemical than the others, being constructed about a series of contrasts between town and country life, attitudes, and work. Like other country writers of the period he was addressing a generally perceived problem: the drift of labourers from the land into urban factories. Williams felt well qualified to judge between the two ways of life: "It has been my lot to labour in the fields and in the factory, too, to be both rural and urban . . . . (p. viii); not surprizingly he decides in favour of the country. The charge of "monotony" levelled against village life was easily dismissed: "As for monotony, let anyone come and toil in the dreary forge for a generation . . ."(p. xi), and he makes the familiar assertion that the rural life is more "natural," and that the country labourer "discovers more soul and feeling than his town confrere; . . . and he is usually more of a human being than the other, and a better man, in the true sense of the term"

(p. x). Such ideas would be elaborated into absurd claims for mystical correspondence between man and nature in the writings of Christopher Holdenby and many of the "return to husbandry" school of the 1940's, such as H.J. Massingham. Williams is more hard-headed. He does not dwell sensationally on rural poverty in his books but neither is it glossed over; his emphasis is on portraying "as much life as possible -- not its sufferings and tragedy" (Round About, p. 9). The key word "life" appeared again in his introduction to Folk-Songs of the Upper Thames:

> What I had in view was nature and life. I have tried to depict the beautiful and the actual. Above all, I wanted to describe how the people spent their days and nights, in what employments, recreations, and amusements. In a word, I wished to show how they lived. (p. 91)

(The last phrase is in the spirit of Sturt's dictum that history should attend to how people lived, not how through wars and great events they were disturbed in living). Villages of the White Horse (1913) contributes to this description of "life" by its emphasis on the variety of crafts practised in the various villages.

His stress on the diversity to be found even in a small area (of about twenty-five miles where Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire, Wiltshire, and Berkshire meet) is not

just a scholarly interest; it reflects the fact that local people, at least in Williams' time, were extremely conscious of differences between themselves and those who lived in even adjoining parishes. Williams' minute attention to local peculiarity -- in dialect, physique, or styles of humour -- is not necessarily something he learned to do for ethnographic reasons. It was, perhaps, part of his local cultural knowledge and habit of attention; it certainly appeared in what his informants talked of:

> "Now thee nawtice, if ever thee bist beyand Broad 'Inton, aal the vawk got girt yuds down thick woy."
>
> "How do you account for that, Matty?"
>
> "Aw, livin' an the chaak, e spwause, snaa. Tha's what tha ses. Tha's wher tha myeks the barley-bangers."
> (White Horse, pp. 11-12)

As might be expected, this conversation led on into examples of blason populaire:

> "Le's see, tha's where tha dunged tha monniment, to make 'e grow, down Churl woy, yun it?"
>
> "Naw tha didn't, neether. Tha dunged tha staple, tha did, at B'khampton, to make un graw as 'igh as tha tower."
> (White Horse, p. 13)

All three of Williams' country books are rich in accounts of inter-village rivalry, and occasional hostility, expressed verbally or in contests such as wrestling, cock-fighting, and back-swording (an old form of fencing in which sticks, with basket hilts, were used instead of swords).

Throughout his prefaces and introductions Williams affirms the authenticity of his portraits of individuals:

> As to the persons and "characters" that figure in the pages, I have made a point of introducing them exactly as I found them, rough and plain, frank and hearty, honest and homely; there was no need to dissemble in their case, to metamorphose them into different beings, or to dress them up in fictitious finery; I am proud of every single one of them. (White Horse, p. vii)

The note of defiance in the last phrase resembles the tone of his defence of his collection of folksongs against the "educated" criticism he expected from the reading public or folksong experts. He had scrupulously avoided a temptation to improve his song collection, in an aesthetic sense, by adding to it good songs he had heard outside the region, because this would have destroyed its authenticity as a representation of local tastes and tradition; there is little doubt that he followed the same rigorous policy with the rhymes, tales, and anecdotes of the other books.

He was, in sum, attempting to describe the totality of life in his native district and realized that to be of value his record had to be authentic. There are omissions -- "sufferings and tragedy" -- but what is presented is at least not falsified by commission. His earnestness of purpose is best shown in a passage from his preface to Round About the Upper Thames:

> I suppose that one locality is not much superior to another in the interest of its life and traditions, since that district which is most thoroughly explored usually exhibits the richest treasures, both as regards the human element and wild nature also. At the same time, no one can pretend to be the discoverer of life, but only its interpreter; and however great may be the amount with which he has succeeded in setting forth in any given locality it could be no more than an infinitesimal fraction of the whole comprised therein. (p. 10)

This is a folklore fieldworker's perspective, now accepted as self-evident by the discipline, but less so then. It also reflects his intimacy with the people and the many conversations and memories through which he discovered the remarkable "intensity of life as it was in the villages" (Folk-Songs, p. 25).

Williams was an ideal fieldworker. He fell into the fortunate category of being neither such a total

stranger as to be thought suspicious, nor so familiar or local as to preclude his being told the kind of things that he would be expected to know already. Neither were there barriers of class or accent to be overcome. His familiarity with nicknames is an index of the trust in which he was held, for these can cause social friction, and there is often a pleasant gossiping quality in what he relates of his interviews as people talk of past and present local heroes, eccentrics, and generally celebrate their neighbours' foibles.

His survey of life and tradition in some fifty villages was not mere "rambling" or happenstance but was methodical; Clark mentions a notebook Williams carried "for months on end" containing names of singers, lists of prospective informants, "and other miscellaneous information about the songs themselves" (Clark, p. 165). Williams' folklore collecting took place principally from 1912 until 1916, when he enlisted in the Army. His own evocative account of his collecting experiences, cycling in the evenings and weekends to meet singers and others, appears in his introduction to Folk-Songs of the Upper Thames.

The quality of his rapport with local people can be glimpsed at several places in his books. With Tommy Weston, for example, an eighty-five year old man who had been

ploughboy, sheepboy, carter, and bailiff, but now hard of hearing and reluctant to talk, Williams called on what sounds like a practiced piece of flattery; the man's daughter had failed to prompt him into reminiscence:

> Then she addressed her father, in a shrill voice, shouting in his ear: 'Faather, 'e wants you to tell 'e about the owld times.'
>
> 'What owld times?' he inquired, with a merry twinkle in his eye.'
>
> 'Why, the howwld times, as used to be, when you turned the windmeel, an' done the grinndin'.'
>
> 'I don' know nothin' about no owld times; I furgets it,' he replied.
>
> "Thelleky! tha's what 'e allus ses,' the daughter exclaimed disappointedly.
>
> 'Never mind, let me try,' I answered. Then, tugging hard at the collar of his coat, and pulling his ear towards my mouth, I began: 'You're the finest man in Hodson.'
>
> 'Whuh?' replied he.
>
> 'You're the finest man in Hodson,' I repeated. 'If you don't take care the recruiting sergeant will have you, yet.'
>
> 'Ha! ha! ha! He's too late bi seventy year. He ought to a come afore. Them owld times wasn't much good to nob'dy. All as thaay troubled about was manhood, an' scawtin' about.'

The girl's frustration with her father is in itself a nice vignette -- Williams is good at the interplay within old established couples -- but more important is the way that, amused and enticed by Williams' banter, the old man began to explain what he meant by "manhood" -- the rough physical competition that men delighted in and which, it will be shown below, was a preoccupation of male reminiscence and story-telling.

> All tha could think on was 'ittin' one another about, an' the rougher tha got trated the better thaay liked it. I've sin 'em grip one another, an' the blood runnin' out in strames atween ther fengers, all down ther bodies, an' thaay was jest landed them. (White Horse, p. 84)

This passage is quoted at length not only to indicate Williams' persuasiveness but also because it is evidence of his use of a non-directive style of interviewing; he seems wisely to have been content to follow the other's leads:

> 'Manhood?' said I, puzzled for the moment as to his meaning.
>
> 'Tha's it,' he repeated; 'manhood an' strength. Tha didn't trouble about much else.' (White Horse, p. 84)

As a consequence of his open-ended style of questioning, and his status as a familiar stranger -- neither too close nor too far -- we may take the narratives given in the three prose works as a very fair sampling of the usual topics of personal reminiscence among rural working men, and to a lesser extent women, in this place and time.

Yet despite the richness of his material it would be wrong to present Williams as a paragon of folkloristic reporting; his style of presentation often remains too close to the orthodoxies of the "country book" genre to allow the extended focus on the people that we would now consider necessary. In terms of influences on his concept of what a book on country life should be we are told that he read nearly all of Richard Jefferies in the summer of 1910 (Clark, p. 37); there is a good deal of natural history and admiring topographical description in Williams' books. In A Wiltshire Village -- where he was particularly unsure of the appropriate tone -- he apologises awkwardly to the reader for turning from nature to the villagers:

> But what are the villagers doing? Let us relinquish Nature a moment, and finish our study of them, then to the woods and fields again, with a clear conscience. (Wiltshire Village, p. 282)

By Round About the Upper Thomas, however, he was confident enough of the interest of a description of one of his favourite singers, Elijah Iles of Inglesham, to allow the account of a Christmas visit to the old man, with his performance of tales, songs, toasts, and a solo recitation of a mummers' play text, to stand as the concluding chapter and highpoint of the book. The account is vividly, affectionately, written; details of the old man's demeanour -- his eagerness to recite the play for Williams -- the response of the family, even details of his posture, are closely observed:

> When he had half finished the tobacco he extinguished it with the top of his thumb, replaced the pipe on the shelf, emptied his glass -- wishing good luck to everybody -- gripped a stout stick standing in the corner holding it between his legs with both hands, and sat rigid in the chair with his felt hat pulled down tight on his head, and his bushy eyebrows lowered. Then, after a few words as to the number of players, the manner in which they were dressed, and so on, he proceeded with the piece. (Round About, p. 307)

In the three books, as a whole, however, Williams prefers to create a seamless effect in which his own reflections on nature and scenery merge imperceptibly with local history, vignettes of characters, and anecdotes, some of which are retold in his authorial voice while others are recreated in an authentic though hard to read, dialect.

When the narratives are read for their themes, however, it becomes apparent that Williams has provided a very rich collection which shows distinct preoccupations: while there are supernatural legends of omens, divination, black and white witchcraft, by far the greater proportion of the narratives concern feats of strength (including prodigious eating, and singing), stories of authority figures -- farmers, squires, vicars -- their good, bad, or eccentric natures, particularly as exposed in stories of men who "stood up to" them, and stories of foolish or clever behaviour. All of these, it will be argued, hold together under old Tommy Weston's term mentioned above: they are all about "manhood" in its broad sense. They may also be classed as "occupational" narratives since most bear some relationship to competence in working life. They are certainly valuable in building up our sense of the content of an oral canon for personal reminiscence among English country workmen.

Being "tough" was the central value of the rural labourer of this period. Toughness had several dimensions; it was the physical hardihood which enabled men not to "flinch" when work or weather called on their utmost reserves of strength; it was the pride which urged some to quit employment where their ability or their word had been questioned; and it was a stubbornness -- aggressive, willful,

often obstructive -- which a shepherd quoted by Barclay Wills termed "orkardness."[38] In his study of men's folklore, Metaphors of Masculinity, Stanley Brandes shows how the themes of dominance and control are the burden of stories, pranks, skits, and many other aspects of men's life in Andalusia. It does not take from Brandes' argument, to recognize that many of the narratives he cites are international in distribution and the attitudes they express are common to men of peasant and non-peasant societies, including Williams' Upper Thames in the 1900's. The following survey of the narratives in the three books will suggest that the same themes were important to Williams' informants.

Williams' interview with a carter, described in Round About the Upper Thames, shows the typical situation in which he elicited these stories; they are, in my experience, representative of the kind of mingled personal reminiscences and localised anecdotes, loosely revolving about the theme of his occupation, that a man will tell when asked to talk, in a general way, of his life history. The carter tells of an eccentric farmer who threw an old pair of boots into the boiler among the meat and vegetables to be served to the men (Round About, p. 169); he told also of how, as a ploughboy he had been punished for lateness by thrashing or by being made to carry heavy harness throughout

the mealtime (Round About, p. 171). He also gave a series of smart retorts, in this style:

> "Mornin', James! Fine mornin', James!"
> "Fine marnin's no good wi' no bren
> cheese in the cubberd, maester,"
> James answered. (Round About, p. 170)

An anecdote, from the same man, showed the theme of "standing up to" an overbearing authority figure; a sailor, told off for crossing a local farmer's land had asked the farmer how he came by the land in the first place; when it was established that the farmer's ancestors had fought for it the sailor offers to fight him for it too: "'If thee't get off that 'oss I'll fight theee for't, but I shan't go back for nobody'" (Round About, p. 171).

But this obduracy is not only displayed by the anonymous travelling sailor -- a figure from outside the local social universe with no obligations to its power structure -- it is also admired when shown by real individuals such as the farmer who refused to get out of the road for the king (White Horse, p. 46), the gamekeeper who ordered the squire out of his own woods for disturbing the pheasants (White Horse, p. 77), and by the smallholder who, in a reversal of the situation in the travelling sailor story, ordered the mounted lord off his ground:

> So mi lord pops up 'is dooks, an ses:
> "Dost thee want a bit o' this?"
> "Aa, get off that 'oss, an thee cast
> hae as much ant as thee wants, an' a
> bit moore, too." (White Horse, p. 56)

In a similar refusal to "know his place" the old bootmaker had told the vicar he preached a poor sermon (White Horse, p. 159). Williams was told of "five brothers who 'had an envy' against a certain farmer, and went into his field one night by moonlight and mowed down five acres of beans in full bloom," to redress some wrong he had done to one of them (White Horse, p. 130). Thus we find the same underlying attitude in legends and anecdotes as in folktales.

As sailors are admired (and identified with in the fantasy of the folktale) for their independence of the local class and authority structure, so to a lesser extent are boys expected to be roguish and are given a latitude not extended to respectable working men. Consequently there are several stories in Williams' books of the tricks and retorts of clever boys. The boy alters his song when a farmer stops him singing an agricultural union song, but the next one he tries is worse (Wiltshire Village, p. 173). Another boy cannily changes a satirical rhyme about a nobleman, "As black as a rook, As black as a raven, As black as the devil, And so is Lord Craven," so that it seems to

flatter, whereupon the lord offers him a choice of two coins; not to be "covechus" the only apparently simple boy takes the smaller, but more valuable, coin (Round About, pp. 59-60).[39] In one of a number of anti-religious tales some apprentices imitate the voice of God to tell their pious master not to work them so late (Round About, p. 43); and another boy spoils the parson's pleasure at finding the Good Book in use in his house by observing that, yes, his father uses it every Sunday, to sharpen his razor on the cover (White Horse, p. 221). Another boy refers to his dog as the sheep's "devil" and when the vicar attempts to turn the occasion into an impromptu catechism the boy's witty answers lead to the conclusion that the farmer's devil is the vicar and the vicar's devil is the bishop, who is "the very owld 'un 'isself" (Round About, p. 145). Yet another clever boy saved his father his rent money by solving the paradoxical tasks set by the landlord -- to come to him "neither daylight nor dark, neither a foot nor a hossback, neither naked nor clothed" (Round About, pp. 216-217).[40] Although Williams' collection includes a mixture of purely local stories and international tale-types it is notable that the migratory traditional tales are thoroughly localized and draw no attention to themselves as being different from the others.

The obverse of cleverness is, of course, foolishness, but both are aspects of the overall preoccupation with control, with not being "bested" by another, no matter what his status. The old tale of the lost simpleton who answers the owl finds, as usual, a local hero:

> Did 'e yer about Gargey Narton? Gargey was carter, too, an' 'ad bin out somewher, an' got lost one night down Broad Town way, an' yerd the owld owl a hollain' up in the trees aboove 'is 'ed 'Whoo-oo-oo!' so a shouted out: 'Garge Narton, sir, the honestest man as ever lived.' (White Horse, p. 32)[41]

The same absurd lack of control over a superstitious imagination is mocked in the story of the village choirman who, stumbling over a donkey in the darkness, was carried off exclaiming: "'Please, Mister Devil, put me down. I'm a religious man and a Psalm-singer'" (Round About, p. 67).[42]

Other examples of cleverness talked of locally included how the old farmer taught Johnny Tarrant -- this is a thoroughly localised story -- not to steal butter; in the pattern of the comic song "Butter and Cheese"[43] the suspected thief is sat by a roaring fire until the stolen butter, concealed in his tall hat, streams down his face (White Horse, pp. 286-287); Williams told this himself, on another occasion, to the carter in Round About the

Upper Thames: ". . . the old carter grinned and said, ''A"d better bi 'aaf to a put it in 'is britches pocket'" (p. 172). Horse-trading was naturally a prominent interest; the dealer is admired for the artful ambiguity in his remark about the worn-out horse he sells: "'You'll be delighted to see him work,' said Poulton to the farmer, who paid down £25 and led the horse away" (Round About, p. 232); similarly a carter, driving his new wife to the top of the downs above Cricklade, boasted ambiguously -- having shut his eyes -- "'Everything that I see now's mine'" (Round About, p. 238).[44]

Other fool stories include that of the illiterate who forgets the shopping list he has been repeating and bursts into the shop crying "Rasm, pitch, and tar"; the drunken carter who wakes and does not know himself: "If 'tis I, then I be lost; an' if chent I, then I 'ev found a waggin an' six osses" (White Horse, p. 68), and the tale of the two local sheep-stealers who make the same reply, "I was there," to each question put by the judge, and are consequently imprisoned (Round About, p. 284).[45]

As has been noted above, the strong local blason populaire tradition reflects the competitiveness that existed between men of neighbouring villages. Classic numskull traits associated with this are one village's absurd ignorance of a common bird (the oldest man is summoned

and pronounces it a dab-chick) (White Horse, p. 172), and that of the fool persuaded to get into the pond, in his best clothes, to save a duck from drowning (White Horse, p. 13). Williams' note on the origin of the name "Liddington Pig-Diggers" suggests that a locally understood phrase, "digging for a pig," i.e. getting the purchase price of a pig by the sale of flints dug up, was "clownishly misunderstood" by an outsider (White Horse, p. 129). This element of deliberate misunderstanding seems a common feature in the development of blason populaire.[46]

The tall tale, besides being an enjoyable fantasy, is also a test of the gullibility of the hearer and to be deceived by it is to be mastered by the teller. A shepherd, showing Williams a large turnip, goes on to tell a tale:

> This is one o' the 'Amshur turmuts, ya know, one o' thaay as the owl' yeow nibbles out an' then draps a lamb aside on it, an the lamb crapes into 'n fer shelter. Tha never wants no shelters up ther aside the turmut uds. Tha gets ship as beg as donkeys, yelleky. I got some an 'em up a top ther, now, look. (White Horse, p. 54)[47]

A gamekeeper (the same keeper Haylock written of by Jerreries), tells of watching a hedgehog carry off a pheasant's eggs by rolling until they were impaled on its

spines; Williams gives a nice rendering of the circumstantial manner of tall tale narration (White Horse, p. 78).

Practical jokes have been seen as nonverbal "lies"[48] and the physical prank, like the tall tale, is a way of catching someone off guard and raising the prankster's sense of power and control over the situation at the expense of the dupe, who has temporarily lost his grip on reality. Williams describes the "funnel trick," which ended in soaked trousers for the initiate and frequently led to fights at the inns (Round About, p. 227).

Most of the narratives told to Williams by men revolve around the theme of "manhood," broadly defined. When considered more narrowly, as restricted to meaning feats of strength, we find again a rich repertoire. Some of these stories, like the following reminiscences of a mill-carter, are characteristic of a topos of oral autobiography -- the softness of the present generation in comparison with the speaker's own:

> "Ah! I've hed some thousands o' sacks o' flour an my owl' back, all an 'em two 'underd an' a quarter," he tells you. "Us used to carr' 'em up the steps as ef tha was bags o' wool; us was as 'ardy as ground twuds in them times. The men grows taller an' begger, nowadays, but they byent so strong by a purty deal, an' us didn't hae none too much to eat, neether. I've bin from one Christmas to another wiout tastin'

> a bit o' bif. Us used to cut off a slish o' bacon an aat it raw, wi' a bit o' bread, as sweet as a nut." (White Horse, p. 59)

His remark about going from one Christmas to the next without tasting beef sounds formulaic.

Other stories are part of the local anecdotal tradition celebrating strongmen; Jimmy Whorl, for example, a noted fighter, displays that quality of "orkardness" in the following account, part of Tommy Weston's discourse on "manhood":

> Jimmy Whorl, the carter, had a hand as beg agyen as mine. He was out in the ground one day wi' 'is teamm o' fower 'osses, an' a wanted 'em to "come hither," an' cause tha hoodn't do what he telled 'em, he went up to 'em, an' hit 'em ahind the yer wi' his fist, an' knocked 'em down, all fower on 'em, one aater t'other, flat on the ground; an' that's as true as I sets in this cheer. An' he was killed 'isself in the end, fightin' wi' another fella. (White Horse, pp. 84-85)

The same man had carried an iron harrow, weighing over 2 cwt, for two miles to the field where it was needed (White Horse, p. 85). Feats of strength were often wagered on, as with the man who wheeled a sack of wheat in a barrow for twenty-five miles in under twelve hours (Round About, p. 232). Sometimes they were done for display, as with the miller

who "could pick up two sacks of flour -- one under each arm -- and race about with them, and, with a half-hundred-weight hung on his thumb, reach up and write his name on the ceiling of the mill" (Round About, p. 270).[49] The stories told of these exceptional figures, however, only reflect the general preoccupation men had with proving themselves capable of work; farmers sometimes tested a man before hiring him by asking him to lift a sack of wheat from the floor while standing in an empty bushel measure. Williams adds that many labourers could do this with one hand (Round About, p. 52).

Famous strength is naturally linked with famous eating; one champion mower cut two acres of grass a day for a week and ate a quartern loaf, two pounds of bacon, and a gallon of fresh beer at each meal (Round About, p. 277). Eating feats were also wagered upon; one "Bacon Jack" gained his nickname by inadvertently carving his waistcoat to shreds while slicing a pound of raw bacon against it during a wager to eat the bacon and suck thirteen duck's eggs (White Horse, p. 9). More disreputable characters indulged in deliberately stomach-turning meals for bets; within half an hour "Ratcatcher Joe" swallowed a pint of shoe-oil, one pound of tallow candles, two pounds of boiled fat bacon, a large cow cabbage cooked with it, followed by the

greasy pot liquor and a quart of beer (Round About, p. 243).[50] The latter example is perhaps an exaggerated reflection of the generally held principle that the truly strong man will subsist on whatever he is forced to; Williams notes that "us all got to aat a peck o' dirt afore us dies," is proverbial with the villagers (Wiltshire Village, p. 184). A man prefers fat bacon but he will get by on swedes, like the father who begrudged his children the meal he had saved for the pigs:

> . . . tha ole dooman ust to zift the peg's maal an' myek zum barley-bangers an' gie to the nippers. One day ole Bob come whum yarly an' cotched 'er at it. Didn't 'e caal 'er! I've yerd my mother zaay't times: "Thee't starve my pegs to veed thay blasted young uns. Let 'em go awver that 'edge yander an' get zwedes, same as I got to, yels let 'em die." (White Horse, pp. 12-13)

The mother turned successfully to feeding the children on swedes and snails. The father's "unnaturalness" is, of course, the reason for the anecdote, but it is also another expression of the locally perceived need for hardness and fortitude.

These qualities were also shown in the various manly sports. Boots were soaked in vinegar to harden them for kicking an opponent's shins and cockfights sometimes became brawls:

> An' it didn' allus end wi cock-fightin' neither, you. Us often 'ed to pick em up [the cocks] an' run awaay wi tothers aater us. Tha ust to saay: "We byet e a cock-fightin', an' now ya got to 'ev sommat else;" an' at it tha went, else tha cut off as hard as tha was able. Ther was some gwains on at that time, thee medst depend upon't. (White Horse, p. 11)

Within the village, Williams notes, there were seldom any disputes, except among the youths, "but that is natural; a very little will kindle them to white heat" (Wiltshire Village, p. 286). But fights between separate villages were an institution: "the men of Shrivenham, Watchfield, and Highworth met and fought every week on the Sabbath" (Round About, p. 52).

The hardening of boys through physical punishment was accepted as a normal part of their training; hence the wit is admired, in the anecdote, of the boy who came to work, after the previous day's beating, with a sack across his back and told the carter that since he expected to be killed today the sack was to gather his bones in and send them home to mother (White Horse, p. 37). The teller of this had said that he didn't agree with such games as punishing a boy by taking him by the ears and throwing him over a horse to the ground (White Horse, p. 37). The belief that such rough handling bred spirit may explain

part of the popularity of the story of the boy who kills one of his tormentors who had attempted to frighten him by disguising in a cow's skin as the devil:

> "Dost mind when the owl' bwoy killed the devul, blacksmith? That was Aishbury way, was'n' it?" the carter interposes.
>
> "Aa! Tha send un up aater the coulter, as we'd a mended, bi night, an' tried to vrighten in, but tha couldn' do that; 'e was too derrin'. A 'ed to come along the grounds ther to Odstone, an' one an 'em put a cow-skin awver is 'ed, 'arns an' all, an' set an the stile under the tharnin boughs. When the owl' bwoy come up an' sid un a top o' the stile, a sed: 'Out o' the rawd, an' let I get awver'; the owl' bwoy sed agyen. No answer. Then a ses: 'If thee dossn't get out o' the rawd an' let I get awver, I'll fetch tha down wi' this coulter,' an' begad if a didn't, too, an' killed un, right anuf, an' went whum an' telled 'em all a'd bin an' killed the devul, an thaay went along wi'n an' found matey dead, wi' the cow-skin wrapped all roun' in." (White Horse, pp. 288-289).

There is a joke here, at the boy's simplicity, a moral against playing such silly tricks, and admiration for the boy's blunt determination.[51]

As a final example of the range of expressions of "manhood," it is worth noting that singing also fell within its scope. Williams' introduction to Folk-Songs of the Upper Thames describes singing matches in which the competition was not to see who could sing best but who could sing most:

> There were seldom more than two competing upon any one day. And usually there was no chance for but one of them to sing. He commonly issued a challenge to the village, or the neighbourhood, and declared himself able and willing to sing continuously for twelve hours -- from morning till night -- and to have a fresh piece each time. It consequently took two days to finish the match. (Folk-Songs, p. 15)

This was as much a physical feat as any of the others; Gabriel Zillard ". . . would unbutton his shirt-collar at six in the morning and sing for twelve or even eighteen hours, if necessary, with the perspiration streaming down his cheeks" (Folk-Songs, p. 15). W. Roy Mackenzie has described a singing match in Nova Scotia but there each man sang alternately.[52]

Proverbs encapsulated these attitudes. The chapter on the ploughing match in Round About the Upper Thames, described largely through the talk of the spectators and contestants, brings out characteristic attitudes and their sententious expression; here, two men gossip as they watch the context:

> "What do you do now, then, sonny?"
> "I be awver at Castle Aeton at it."
> "An' 'ow's young Maester ----?"
> "Aw! 'e's a larnin'. 'Evin a bit of a flash in the pan. 'E got a lot to larn yet."
> "Aa! 'E got to find that out. You can farm fer the farm, er you can farm fer the pocket. 'E's faather was a good un. 'E looked round the outside an't, 'e did."
> —(Round About, p. 159)

Later in the same book we hear a farmer using the same proverbial phrase:

> he used to declare that he earned fifteen shillings every time he went out with the hounds simply by looking round other people's farms and studying their methods. "To be a good farmer you must look round the outside of things and try to keep your workpeople satisfied." (Round About, p. 203)

In A Wiltshire Village a farmer "looked round" the boys at Michaelmas to buy them what they needed in terms of boots or clothing rather than giving them a cash bonus. The ideal here is that the farmer should be constantly attentive to every aspect of his farm.

Those masters who did not, or tried to cut corners, were mocked or figured in cautionary legends:

> When a farmer not far from here, who was accredited with keeping his beast short of food, was ploughing one day, his horse fell upon him from exhaustion, and caused a bad compound fracture of the leg. (Wiltshire Village, pp. 294-295)

Another happening that persisted in local memory, because of its power to emblematise the height of folly, was the sale by an election candidate of "fifty acres of good pasture land in order to pay for ribbons worn by his friends

and supporters" (Round About, p. 228). As metaphors, ribbons and acres of land are diametrically opposed, the former implying holiday frivolity, the latter meaning permanence and worth. As with the underfed horse, this is the kind of topic that would draw proverbial and moralizing commentary.

Williams' achievement in his three prose works is to present the same breadth of narrative tradition of the region as he does for its folksongs in Folk-Songs of the Upper Thames. The books are as valuable for their examples of personal experience, or autobiographical, narration as they are for their range of folktales, legends, and anecdotes. The ethos expressed is, naturally, the same in both the fictional and non-fictional forms. In the tales and anecdotes tramps, sailors, and boys enact the social rebellion that working men may only indulge in vicariously through these narrative fantasies. The eccentricity of the local nobility, and churchmen, is a common subject for gossip; one nobleman, known for his slovenly dress, is mistaken for a tramp by a real tramp who asks him if it's worth trying for a handout at the house (Round About, p. 67); another noble lord enjoyed disguising himself as a workman to find out people's real opinion of him (Round About, pp. 74-75). The meaning of such stories varies

with teller and context but perhaps they indicate a general sense of unease among the rural workfolk at having to deal with such unpredictable figures. The tone taken toward the clergy in the anecdotes is more patronizing and indulgent; it is hard to take seriously a man who cannot pronounce "ewe," or asks for a horse "about fourteen or fifteen feet high" (Round About, p. 185).

Some of the narratives are part of a folklore of protest against the economic and social oppression of the labourer in this period; there is a considerable number of poaching songs in Williams' song collection and it may be remembered that Richard Jefferies wrote of one of the villages in this area, which did not belong to any great estate, that "the mass of the inhabitants are the reddest of Reds."[53] Williams quotes, as a rhyme, what may be an example of "the conté-fable in decay":[54]

> The following rhyme illustrates the ancient custom of wooding in the copses before coal was available, and shows how the farmer used occasionally to hide behind the trees, waiting for the rustics in the moonlight.
>
> The Rustic appears.
>
> "By the blessing of the Lord I lay down my cord; By the blessing of the Moon I'll be back home soon.

The Farmer, leaping from behind the tree.

"By the blessing of the Sun I'll make thee run." (Round About, p. 284)

It is possible that this was also used as a children's acting game, a pursuit following the recited rhymes,[55] or even that it was performed by adults, as other cante-fables have been, as a play or "skit." Brandes has described similar skits in Andalusia where "classic confrontations" between employer and worker were comically acted on festive occasions.[56] Whatever its original form, its persistence in tradition argues that it reflects, even in this stylised way, a local perception about the way things are. Williams has also given a realistic local anecdote of a woodman caught in the same situation with more than his traditional daily allowance of firewood (Round About, p. 278). Thus the fictional and the realistic representation of life in these narratives can hardly be separated.

The purely autobiographical narratives in Williams' collection take up the common topics of oral autobiography and employ its traditional patterns. His emphasis falls on men's stories but he did not neglect women narrators. What "granny" remembers from her youth is a farmer's heavy-handed teasing about her banns being called at church (Round About, p. 213); the habit of considering a lifetime

as falling into two halves, before and after marriage, is more prominent in women's reminiscences than in men's, which is not surprising given the importance of marriage to women in this period. Deaths are also commonly formulated into fixed narratives by women, as Tennant has noticed above; here, another old woman tells of her husband's death:

> My 'usband, look, e' drapped down dead at the table yer, one Sunday a dinner-time. I was jest gone into the pantery, an' the vittals was on the table, an' I yerd a naise, an I sed: "Lar, Willum, whatever be at? You bin an' knocked the leaff o' the table down;" but a never answered ma, an' ther a was, crooched up dead, jest wher you be now, look. (White Horse, p. 53)

As I have already noted, Williams has a keen eye for the familiar joking exchanges between husbands and wives; this reflects the relaxed tone of his interviews:

> "I got a goodish spirit an' tha's what kips I up," says granny, while Thomas smiles approvingly, reaches his pipe, half burnt away, from the mantelpiece, fills it with tobacco, and lights it with a spill from the hob.
>
> "I got to master'n now, same as 'e allus 'ed," granny says, with a triumphant little laugh and a knowing wag of the head, at the same time giving her husband a playful cuff. (Round About, p. 212)

Another wife subtly deflates her husband for the boasting tone in his reminiscence:

> "Many's the time I squat in that owl' cage an' drev thaay 'osses round," the aged carter says [telling of being exposed to winter weather while operating a horse-driven threshing machine]. "Warn thees jest about fancied thiself, dissent?" his wife replies, with a sly wink and a knowing nod of the head. (Round About, p. 137)

Boastful or not, the following example of autobiographical narrative from Williams' books is the most common story type in men's reminiscences; it concerns the precocious display of ability, and courage, which establishes the man in his career:

> Ninety-three years is a long time for a mortal to remember a thing, yet old Thomas's memory extends back so far. When he was six years of age he used to run into the farmyard to watch the men at work with the oxen and horses. One day, in the presence of old farmer Archer, the men were trying to yoke a big bull to a manure cart, but, try as they might, the animal would not back into the desired position. At last young Tom became impatient and, to the amazement of the men and the delight of the farmer, cried: "Let I 'ev a try, an' see if I can wutt un in." The farmer smiled at the youngster and exclaimed: "Go on! Let the child try."

> Accordingly, young Tom, who was so tiny that a good snort of the beast might have knocked him down, took the halter, cried "Wutt back!" to the bull, and backed it into the shafts very simply and easily. Then old Archer laughed heartily at the youngster and told him to come into the stalls, and thereupon appointed him master of the bull and gave him three shillings a week in wages, which was double the amount received by the other boys who were older than he. (Round About, p. 211)

Though only summarised by Williams the traditional outline and usual details of this type of story stand out. Further examples of this autobiographical story type will be given later from men of several different societies and occupations.

The biographical and autobiographical focus of this study demands the concentration given above to the narrative aspects of Williams' country books; to do so, however, does not do justice to the breadth of his observation of regional folklife. He gives fine details of cottage furnishings, for example, commenting on the way housewives arrange flowers, china, and glassware to decorate their windows, as seen from the street (White Horse, p. 229), or listing the scriptural, pastoral, and patriotic themes of the coloured prints hanging inside (White Horse, p. 267). Diet is given considerable attention; he lists the daily meal cycle of one old couple, noting their reliance on milk, butter, and cheese, rather than meat (Round About,

p. 212). Other testimony shows the importance of bread in the diet, "barley-scawters, barley-dampers, and pot-cyeks" being made on the hearth: "'I've bin for a year an' not tasted nothin' wi' mi bread, an' very often not much o' that . . ." (White Horse, p. 31). Wild foods such as badger, squirrel, hedgehog, are mentioned, as are more desperate shifts, such as eating stillborn animals, fried mice and snails. The limits of local tolerance are shown in the account of a prank in which a man was given a roasted rat, being told it was a blackbird, and a gipsy (always a figure whose habits were beyond the pale) treated a man to a tasty stew of "house-rabbit, generally known as cat" (Round About, p. 140).

Williams recorded proverbs (White Horse, pp. 293-294), riddles, and weather proverbs (Round About, pp. 286-287), and rhymes (ibid., p. 71). Chapter 12 of A Wiltshire Village is devoted to calendar and life-cycle custom. As with all his folklore description, Williams' tolerant, amateur, sense of what was interesting and important prevented him from too narrowly categorizing and restricting what he would set down. For example, where a contemporary student of "ritual drama" might have dismissed it as a degeneration, Williams simply records that mummers sometimes performed plays, "Robin Hood," or "St. George,"

> or, with a collection of old and new songs, perambulated the town and paid visits to the villages and remote farmhouses, where they were well received and entertained. (Round About, p. 232)

This latter pattern would ally them with the "Santa Clawers" of Nova Scotia and is further evidence that the mummers' play was only a part of a much larger, though inadequately recorded, mumming complex in England.[57] He also shows how wassailing was accompanied by animal disguise in the Upper Thames villages; an effigy of an ox preceeded the wassailers from house to house (Round About, pp. 220-221). The preoccupation with "manhood" which Williams has described, through his references to back-swording and other contests of strength and endurance, causes the vaunts and battles of the mummers' hero-combat play to appear as vividly appropriate to this culture. Using Williams's contextual background an interesting case could be made for the play as being a stylized enactment of the many quarrels in men's lives.

The folklorist may properly complain that Williams rarely gives sufficient sustained attention to whatever folklife topic he takes up; nevertheless, given the inherent resistance of the country book genre to prolonged consideration of anything, whether in natural or human history, it

is remarkable how comprehensive and frequently detailed a picture of a region's folklife he has been able to provide.

One of the purposes of the preceding chapters has been to develop a sense of the culturally accepted range of topics and styles of oral narration of personal experience within the society of English country workmen. Stories of conflicts and of significant proofs of skill, for example, have figured prominently in the passages of conversation and story-telling recorded by George Sturt and others. In the final chapter an attempt will be made to define an "oral canon" of such autobiographical narratives. The purpose of this would be to assess the "representativeness" or "idiosyncrasy" of an autobiography, or life history, generated within this milieu. In the two following chapters, on those autobiographies which limit themselves to childhood, and those which encompass a whole life, respectively, I will review their general folklife content and look for evidence of their authors' use of oral rules for the style and content of narration.

V

CHILDHOOD AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

Childhood is a non-subject to many working class autobiographers. It may be dismissed in a paragraph or even when spoken of at length the whole attention of the author can be on becoming "man enough" to work. These are authentic reflections of attitudes among working class children and adults; however, there are also writers who have made the transition in their own lives from a rural and working environment to the more detached situation of some middle class profession from which they look back on childhood with a quite different view of its significance. They discover, individually, that it was in their own lifetimes that the last echoes of the old rural civilisation died away; they saw what no future generation will see. This proposition, however, as I have mentioned before, has been traced by Raymond Williams in the works of receding generations of rural authors, each convinced that in his own age occurred "the great climacteric change in rural life."[1]

These latter writers, then, have a theme: to the natural structure provided by the pattern of "growing up," which as Roy Pascal has observed gives such books a common

shape,[2] can be added the passage of social time. The passing away of personal innocence, youth and vigour may be perceived as being mirrored also in the decline of all things around them: craftsmanship, customs, community. Fortunately the best authors have not fallen prey entirely to this distorting self aggrandizement. The autobiographers chosen for detailed comment here, especially Alison Uttley, Flora Thompson, and Laurie Lee, have drawn on this sense of transition, both personal and social, to sharpen their sense of what needed to be observed and recorded.

I have also chosen, for contrast and representativeness, writers closer to the working class and oral tradition of autobiography and reminiscence. Such autobiographers are governed in their selection of incidents and style of narration more by oral modes of reminiscence than by literary ones. Their writing may lack the practiced author's ability to evoke an atmosphere or capture a mood, yet they offer truth of another order in the way they reveal what is permissible to state, even perhaps to think, within an oral canon. A working man, as Sturt has shown in Bettesworth's anecdote of the over-fastidious carpenter deliberately splashed with mud by his mates, could not afford to appear "too sensitive." My discussion of these autobiographies, then, is arranged to reflect a continuum from the most "literary" to the most "oral" in thought and style.

I. Alison Uttley: Magic in the Commonplace

Alison Uttley's upbringing on a Derbyshire hill farm in the last two decades of the nineteenth century[3] provided her with the themes and material of almost all her writing -- a large output divided between stories for children, essays on rural life, and novels. She was haunted by her childhood in an almost literal sense, being a seer of ghosts and a believer of dreams, and in all three genres of her writing the events of her childhood are described with an intense, lyrical, recall of childhood sensibility. Incidents from her childhood figure directly in the essays, where her personal participation in games, beliefs and customs forms the basis of her comments; her experience is reflected indirectly in the tales for children, where the animal characters are recognizably English villagers with the same occupations and social life she describes in her non-fiction. Her most successful use of her childhood memories, from both literary and ethnographic points of view, however, is in The Country Child (1931) and its sequel The Farm on the Hill (1941), both novels, their subject being the childhood and young adolescence of Susan Garland, a Derbyshire hill farmer's daughter.[4] They are, of course, covertly autobiographical as reference to the rural life essays will show, where the same incidents, characters, and aspects of folklife recur.

Her choice of a fictional mode for the presentation of her autobiography parallels that made by Flora Thompson and in both cases the "mask" of fiction may have "freed" the writer from an inhibiting shyness about self-revelation; certainly when Susan assumed a real mask in a game of Blind Man's Buff she "became another person, bold, bad, fearless" (Country Child, p. 102). Whatever her motivation, the result is that she is paradoxically "truer to life" in the novels than in the essays, though the latter draw on passages of first person reminiscence.[5] This is due partly to the differing conventions of each genre. In the essays she is self-consciously looking back at childhood from maturity, sifting memories, even making comparative folkloristic comments on the childlore she knew in Derbyshire. In the autobiographical novels, however, she is free to penetrate Susan's most profound thoughts. Epiphanies, like Susan's perception of the earth's movement -- "She could feel the earth moving, a great majestic motion, the fields and farm, the woods and hills were sailing away through that limpid sky" (Country Child, p. 47) -- are in the tradition of Wordsworth's The Prelude, and might have seemed out of keeping with the modest tone of her autobiographical essays; but the recurrence in her writing of this and other moments of vision shows them to be aspects of childhood experience which haunted her later years demanding

expression. More prosaically, the novelist must also establish character and setting more thoroughly than the essayist and consequently, for the folklorist, there is a greater depth of contextual detail in the novels for the folklore she describes. Compare, for example, the bald statement in Country Things that hawthorn was never taken into the house, it being a portent of death within the year,[6] with the vividly realized scene in The Country Child where Susan unwittingly breaks this taboo (p. 165). Similar comparisons can be made for the other aspects of folklore that appear in both the essays and novels.

Susan's solitary childhood and imaginative temperament cause her to fantasise that things in nature, and particularly the house and its furniture, have a kind of life and understanding. In her own voice, Uttley explains that she appreciated and shared "a companionship and a friendship with the inanimate."[7] Her fantasy has enhanced what for the folklorist are useful accounts of household furnishings; they are the more detailed because of her meditative interest in the essences of things. The minutiae of domestic life are recounted with loving regard in, for example, the chapter "Country Nights" in The Farm on the Hill: within the kitchen, the normal evening gathering place for work and entertainment, stories are told or read aloud from books while

rugs are being "pegged" or quilts are made; the surrounding talk is described as well as the physical processes. Related to this interest in objects for themselves is her commentary on the social hierarchies expressed in their particular designs. There is a hierarchy of baths, of candlesticks, milk yokes, mats and quilts, and in seating positions: the settle was for men only, the master having his own corner and servants and visitors had each their appropriate place to eat, at varying degrees of remove from the family according to their status.[8] The kitchen dresser also had socially symbolic uses as well as practical ones:

> The far end of the dresser was left empty, reserved for my father to stand against it and lay down the law. It had to be free. It was the space where the newly-baked bread was deposited from the tins, out of the draughts to cool, where the keys of the stable and barn were dropped for the night. People with news, tragic like death, stood against the dresser to proclaim their message, and there was a feeling of holiness on this spot, for the family Bible lay at this end of the dresser. It was like a pulpit in the house.[9]

Uttley's concern with the life of objects, only apparently whimsical, often leads her to make suggestive notes on their social meanings.[10]

Childhood autobiographies tend to be peculiarly records of socialisation; Uttley's delicate recall of childhood

sensibility gives excellent examples of the reception of tradition. The effectiveness of proverbs, for example, is shown in Susan's crushing sense of guilt after throwing away a crust of bread. This episode shows the link between proverb and behaviour, from her mother's warning that "'There's many a one who is beggar now, going from door to door, through leaving her good food,'" to Susan's envisioning the beggars: "This gave her a fright. Beggars sometimes came to the old Hall, pitiful creatures with broken shoes and ragged dresses," and ultimately, the "spirit of bravado" with which she throws away a crust while running home from school with other girls: "'I don't want that silly old crust,' she boasted, and they all laughed" (Country Child, p. 80). But after leaving the other children and entering the Dark Wood her conscience and superstitious fear overwhelm her and she goes back two miles to retrieve the piece of bread.[11] The passage is simply told yet very sensitive. Its autobiographical nucleus in her own sense of the sacredness of bread is shown in Carts and Candlesticks, p. 111.

God seems to have been her primary bogey, always watching her (Country Child, p. 137), and was built up as a threatening figure through sermons, moral literature, and popular iconography. Susan read The Tower of Faith,

> . . . full of short stories which the child read greedily. She was terrified by it, but she could not keep away.
>
> Death hid on every page ready to fall on the wicked, to punish the thoughtless, to confound the ungodly. The children in the book all did exactly as Susan would have done, she felt here was a mirror of herself, warning her in time of her probable, no, certain fate. There was no escape from the all-seeing eye. (Country Child, p. 71)

The preaching of fundamentalists, framed texts and pictures like that of "the Tree of Life and Death, an enormous green tree, with its roots in hell, and horrible fruit of drunkenness and many vices which Susan couldn't understand," also reinforced her fears: "Any time, too, the world might come to an end, and flare up like a piece of tissue paper, or tinder from a rotten tree" (Country Child, pp. 170, 206, 72).

We are also shown the feeding of Susan's imagination by such figures as the Man in the Moon -- "'taken up for picking sticks on Sunday, and his dog was took with him, too,'" according to Joshua and Becky, the farm servants -- and Jack Frost: ". . . she saw him, a tall thin man with pointed face and ears, running round the outside of the house, dipping his long fingers in a pointed bag to paint on the glass those delicate pictures" (Country Child, pp. 91, 97). In a further example of Uttley's fine contextual sense in the novel she recounts the performance of a weather dite:

> "Look at the feathers the Old Woman is dropping from the sky," cried Becky, as she opened the door and looked out on a world of snow.
>
> "They are not feathers, it's snow," explained Susan impatiently. Really Becky didn't know everything.
>
> "And what is snow but feathers," returned Becky triumphantly. "It's the Old Woman plucking a goose."
>
> Susan accepted it and gazed up to see the Old Woman, wide and spreading across the sky, with a goose as big as the world across her knees. (Country Child, p. 97)

While Susan is shown absorbing much traditional lore from her parents, the role of working class servants in transmitting folklore to middle class children is apparent. They were also, however, "a reading family," as Uttley remarks in Country Things in an account of their reading matter and tastes (pp. 42-53). The abiding appeal to family and servants alike of Robinson Crusoe -- "It outshone its rival Pilgrim's Progress, which was reserved for Sunday's for Robinson Crusoe had the advantage of being both a Sunday and week-day book" -- is explored in an entire chapter of The Farm on the Hill, providing interesting evidence of the imaginative impact of certain works of popular literature (pp. 36-50).

From the folklorist's viewpoint perhaps the most worthwhile result of Uttley's careful description of the

growth of Susan's imagination through her exposure to religion, literature, and oral tradition, lies in the record of Susan's personalizing and localizing the stories she encounters. The lost bride of "The Mistletoe Bough" had hidden in the very oak chest in her bedroom, and might still be there; she knew what the husks tasted like that the Prodigal Son had been forced to eat, and also how the fatted calf had tasted when stuffed with forcemeat, thyme and parsley and served with thick gravy. Every nursery rhyme had originated at her farm, she believed, and the events in the story of Red Ridinghood had taken place at the neighbouring farm, where lived a Mrs. Wolff, whom Susan suspected of eating lambs and young children (Country Child, pp. 14, 29, 134, 206). Further examples of this tendency, acknowledged by Uttley as her own, occur in the fine chapter "Listening to Tales," in Country Things, where she recalls thinking that The Babes in the Wood "perhaps happened a few years ago, in our own woods" (p. 18). This trait is not merely the idiosyncrasy of an imaginative little girl, but is a general process of folk tradition whereby tales, legends and ballads can be brought to new locations and subsequently performed in the conviction that they originated there.[12]

All of Alison Uttley's writing seems to have been impelled by the autobiographical impulse. As with many

writers her first serious book for adults, The Country Child, received her most intense feeling, her most cherished material, and displays a more satisfying unity of structure and tone than do the books which followed, all essentially sequels, and which often reworked or augmented topics she had started in The Country Child. Her work is worth reading as a whole, however, for her rare combination of simplicity of style, clarity of recall, and broad sense of the value of knowing the commonplace; her own commentary on her early writing appears in The Button-Box:

> I found a strange excitement and happiness in writing. I entered a world which existed in my mind, and I brought it to light. Everything I have ever done was vivid and clear, waiting to be remembered, hidden on shelves in my brain. I could catch the evasive scent of lavender fields and juniper hills, of kitchens and drains and a pigsty by the diningroom and a cowhouse by the door. (p. 17)

Like Sturt, and the best autobiographers, her attention to the small details captures the texture of life.

II. Flora Thompson: A Sense of Transition

The most celebrated of all rural English childhood autobiographies is Flora Thompson's trilogy Lark Rise to Candleford (1939, 1941, 1943), and justly so for it realizes the possibilities of its genre more fully than any of the others. Although Margaret Lane, in a perceptive appreciation of Flora Thompson's life and work,[13] finds the trilogy difficult to classify in standard terms, it follows the mode of fictional autobiography adopted by Alison Uttley in The Country Child. With both writers, however, the degree of fictitiousness is limited, being generally a matter of altering names, and simply provides the necessary detachment through which each could approach, and more modestly reveal, her private thoughts. Even the name "Lark Rise," though sounding improbably pastoral, was a real field name within the hamlet of Juniper Hill, Oxfordshire, which it served to disguise (Lane, p. 149).

Lane, however, has aptly characterized the qualities and range of Thompson's work:

> Her three books, Lark Rise, Over to Candleford, and Candleford Green . . . are not really novels, though fiction plays a part in them here and there. Nor are they autobiography pure and simple, for the personal element is evasive and oblique. They are better described perhaps, as social history; though that, again,

> is a misleading name to give. They are more intimate, more personal, more alive than social history is usually allowed to be, for Flora Thompson dwells on all the humble details which social historians either do not know, or else leave out. (Lane, p. 145)

Flora Thompson is more deliberately social in her focus than is the more lyrical, and individual, Alison Uttley. Lark Rise to Candleford is, in fact, a very deep work in which "Laura's" sensitive recollections of her childhood and adolescence in the last decades of the nineteenth century are carefully selected for the broader purpose of describing the changing folklife of rural England. Thompson, as H.J. Massingham wrote in his introduction to her trilogy, saw this period as a "transitional" age,[14] and her movement between older and newer generations and different kinds of community -- hamlet, village, market town -- unobtrusively displays this. Yet it is blessedly free of the more dogmatic rejection of all things modern which mars the work of Massingham himself. The sense of things passing away is drawn into the normal flow of Laura's passage into womanhood so that the social and personal changes counterpoint each other; in both realms the effect is sometimes poignant but never sentimental. One of the ways in which over-sentimentality is avoided is through her ability to create, in addition to

reflections on broader social and historical movements, a vivid surface texture of ongoing everyday life with the right tones of voice, the real turns of phrase. This, as the title of her final chapter, "Change in the Village," seems to acknowledge, was surely learned from George Sturt.

The reader can hear people talking in many passages of the trilogy. Her treatment of language can stand for her method in general: it is the assembly of a surprisingly thorough description and discussion of some facet of culture through a multitude of instances so spread out through the chapters that we are unconscious of being lectured to. This quiet manner of teaching, where examples apparently present themselves, has been noted by John Fraser as part of the effectiveness of Sturt's prose.[15] In "Men Afield," for example, we are told that "They had hundreds of proverbs and sayings and their talk was stiff with simile" (p. 49); some examples follow, but this is not the end of the matter for some three chapters later we hear the hamlet's judgement that "When Mrs. Andrews spoke, you could see the lies coming out of her mouth like steam" (p. 106); and later still she illustrates the habit of speaking in which "a proverb had always to be capped" (p. 252).

Also carefully distributed, and thus not immediately apparent, but a sign of her surprising range and depth of

focus, are her notes of sexual behaviour and attitudes -- an uncommon topic in rural literature. For Mrs. Arless, as a grandmother, to be still bearing children of her own "was regarded as bad form in the hamlet, for the saying ran 'When the young 'uns begin, 'tis time for the old 'uns to finish'" (p. 112). Coitus interruptus was practiced by one couple but when found out this was scorned, at least overtly in women's talk; yet more privately, and "in another mood they would say: 'The wife ought to have the first child and the husband the second, then there wouldn't ever be any more'" (p. 138). The women's contradictory attitudes towards bastardy are also explored: though hoping their own daughters would avoid premarital pregnancies, they "pet and fuss over" illegitimate babies:

> 'The pretty dear!' they would cry. 'How ever can anybody say such a one as him ought not to be born. Ain't he a beauty! Ain't he a size! They always say, you know, that that sort of child is the finest. An' don't you go mindin' what folks says about you, me dear. It's only the good girls, like you, that has 'em; the others is too artful!' (p. 139)

Naturally because of her sex she had access to these female attitudes and storytelling situations ("A Bit of a Tell" describes women's gossiping), but children in general were taken little notice of when talk was going on:

> .... gossips talked freely before children, evidently considering them not meant to hear as well as not to be heard, and, as every house was open to them and their own home was open to most people, there was not much that escaped their sharp ears. (p. 21)

This explains, in part, Thompson's ability to depict these situations so credibly, but more is due to the meditative temperament she has ascribed to "Laura." Laura relates a characteristic episode in which as a child she had fastened upon a scrap of comment from a couple of men about the reputation of a particular girl:

> Another memory was of a big girl, with red hair, in a bright blue frock billowing over a green field, looking for mushrooms, and a man at the gate taking his clay pipe from his mouth to whisper behind his hand to a companion: 'That gal'll tumble to bits before they get her to church if they don't look sharp.'
>
> 'Patty tumble to bits? Tumble to bits? How could she?' Laura's mother looked rather taken aback when asked, and told her little daughter she must never, never listen to men talking. (p. 269)

We can get some clue to Thompson's methods in assembling these memories and interpretations from a following paragraph in which Laura, as "writer" rather than "child," gives the comments her mother made forty years after, when reminded of

Laura's childhood perplexity. The hat had been taken round to collect for the cradle at this girl's wedding, it being the last time Laura's mother had heard of this custom, though it was formerly "quite the usual thing with that class of people" (p. 270). So, although the trilogy was not begun until 1937, when Flora Thompson was sixty, it can be surmised that many of the gaps in her understanding of the world of her childhood had been filled through family reminiscences. Laura is also shown listening to talk in her Uncle Tom's cobbler's shop, though she was not allowed to remain for the evening sessions when the young working men of the neighbourhood came in to smoke, talk, and play draughts or dominoes (p. 354). She was the kind of child who inspired confidences: ". . . I know I oughtn't to be telling you at your age, but you are such a quiet little thing . . ." (p. 344), as one woman says.

As a child and as a female Laura could not describe from firsthand experience the men's gatherings in the pub. Nevertheless, children and women could glean a fair knowledge of the sort of things that went on there via husbands' and fathers' reports, the landlady's gossip, and by calling at the back door to fill bottle or jug. Children also called at this door and the innkeeper's children could listen from the top of the stairs. Perhaps from such sources, in part,

Thompson gives a realistic account of pub conversation, story-telling, and in particular, singing. She finds three styles of song reflecting the tastes of three age groups: the young, the middle aged, and the old. The young men, or "boy chaps," as they were called until married, were not allowed much participation in talk by their elders, but "came into their own" in singing, where "they represented the novel" (p. 69). Their comic and sentimental songs of the day were usually the first heard by the listening children. The middle aged men favoured melancholy and moral longer songs (of broadside origin), and drinking or other chorus songs. Finally the oldest men, out of courtesy, were asked to sing theirs; Thompson quotes stanzas from "Lord Lovell" and "The Outlandish Knight." This tripartite division might seem too neat to be true, yet the note on Lukey, "the only bachelor of mature age in the hamlet," and his song "There's nobody coming to woo," which is "given point by Luke's own unmarried state," points to a common feature of song repertoires. John Szwed's study of a bachelor songmaker in Newfoundland has shown that bachelors may choose song as a means of "explaining" their odd status to the community.[16] Reality is also vouched for by Laura's recollection of the images brought to her mind, as a child, by the song "King Arthur":

> . . . . . .
> And what they couldn't eat that night
> The Queen next morning fried.
>
> Every time Laura heard this song she saw the queen, a gold crown on her head, her train over her arm, and her sleeves rolled up, holding the frying-pan over the fire. Of course, a queen would have fried pudding for breakfast: ordinary common people seldom had any left over to fry. (p. 71)

At its close, her account of the singing draws back to the women's perspective:

> . . . . women at their cottage doors on summer evenings would say: "They'll soon be out now. Poor old Dave's just singing his 'Outlandish Knight'." (p. 75)

She does not try to do more than indicate the matter and manner of the stories and songs men kept, for decency's sake, to the fields: "what the women spoke of with shamed voices as 'men's tales'," though "a few stray specimens leaked through the channel of eavesdropping juniors" (p. 56). But she is convincing in her account of men's attitudes to their work. Her sense of their pride in endurance, "not flinching," as I have shown above, corresponds exactly with Sturt's remarks on this trait (p. 50); it is seen, for example, in the maxim they quote to each other at harvest time: "Set yourself more than you can do and you'll do it" (p. 235).

Their gardening talk also has the tone of the familiar, but never tedious, commonplaces that Sturt noticed:

> They considered keeping the soil constantly stirred about the roots of growing things the secret of success and used the Dutch hoe a good deal for this purpose. The process was called "tickling." "Tickle up old Mother Earth and make her bear!" they would shout to each other across the plots, or salute a busy neighbour in passing with: "Just tickling her up a bit, Jack?" (p. 62)

Relations between master and man are also accurately rendered; men hated to be hurried, and the over zealous bailiff was the object of a traditional abusive gesture, carefully noted:

> as soon as his back was turned, some wag would point to it with one hand and slap his own buttocks with the other, saying, but not too loudly, "My elbow to you, you ole devil!" (p. 55)

A farmer who "does his bit by the land," however, has accordingly the respect of his men.

Lark Rise to Candleford is so richly textured in its presentation of everyday life, so comprehensive in its view of social traditions, that it seems inadequate to represent it by only the few themes I have drawn out here; there are many others of equal interest. Her notes on a variety of

folklore topics are always worthwhile, never merely decorative. Mummers, for example, rate only a sentence, yet within it lies the information that they persisted only in the larger villages and would not come to the hamlet as the potential collection would not be worthwhile (p. 230). The John Dory legend of the fingermarks on the fish's back is vividly told (p. 120), as is the personal narrative from Queenie, who baked her husband's belt in a pie for him after he had beaten her with it (p. 86), or the widespread anecdote of the retort that Job, though patient, had never had to wear baked leather breeches (p. 48). Here too is added the nice detail that "Leather breeches had disappeared in the 'eighties and were only remembered in telling that story." This is illustrative not only of the history of clothing but also of the ability of folktales to preserve details of past culture. In the domain of belief and custom, Edmund, Laura's brother, saw Queenie tell the bees when her husband died (p. 87), and the children on their way to school talked "like little old men and women" and "as soberly as little judges" about death signs, burial customs, and ghosts (pp. 319-320); there is also a fine chapter on May garlands.

Like Sturt, Thompson does not hide the narrowness of the old rural life despite the virtues and happiness she also saw in it. "Laura," like the personae adopted in their

autobiographies by several others, Uttley in particular, is conscious of feeling different from most of the other children because of her interest in learning. The traditional method of education in which children's questions are not answered (with the expectation that this will toughen them and teach them to find out for themselves), frustrates her; George Baldry, on the other hand, author of The Rabbit Skin Cap (1939), embodies this working class tradition and soon learns that "yew got to look out and prog fur yar self."[17] The neighbours disapprove of Laura's precocious habit of reading (pp. 43-44); even her own mother says she hopes Edmund will "not turn out to be clever":

> Brains were no good to a working man; they only made him discontented and saucy and lose his job. She'd seen it happen again and again. (p. 38)

It is only when Laura visits her middle-class cousins that she meets children who like school:

> The hamlet children hated school. It was prison to them, and from the very beginning they counted the years until they would be able to leave." (p. 316)

So, as with many other themes of the trilogy, the narrative thread provided by Laura's consciousness twines naturally, unobtrusively, with the issues Flora Thompson wishes to bring before the reader. It is, indeed, a superlative work of literary art and social description.

After the trilogy Flora Thompson wrote two more books: Heatherley, which continued her own story from her work at the post office until her marriage (she was dissatisfied with this and it was not published, as far as I know), and Still Glides the Stream, a novel.[18] This was also set in rural Oxfordshire, in the same late nineteenth century period, and its central figure, "Charity Finch," through whose understanding the events unfold, bears a distinct resemblance to Laura. Margaret Lane, from her study of the author's correspondence, records that Still Glides the Stream was "finished with fatigue and difficulty" a short time before Thompson's death in 1947; "she felt that she had said what she wanted to say, and would have been glad to write no more if it had not been for the earnest encouragement of her publishers" (Lane, p. 163). This tailing off of interest can be detected in the novel for the latter chapters turn away from her usual mode of detailed folklife description toward a rather thin plot. Once more, however, she has embodied social changes in characters and events; Old Hearne,

the embittered mason, is sacked because in this new age his craftsman's standards caused him to linger too long over pieces of work. This portrait may owe something to Thompson's own malcontented father, who was also a stonemason.

Of particular interest for the questions of how, why, and by whom autobiographies are written are the glimpses this book allows of Thompson as child and autobiographer. The visit by Charity Finch, a retired schoolmistress, to her native village, is transparently from Thompson's own experience. Thompson is very aware of differences in perspective: as an outsider, now, Charity "gazed long and intently upon objects which an inhabitant might have been expected to pass unseeing or with but a casual glance" (p. 6). This, of course, allows Flora Thompson to write with that doubleness of perception -- the insider's knowledge, and the outsider's sense of what needs to be interpreted -- which makes her autobiography so instructive. Charity Finch visits the few "survivors" from the old days of her own and parents' generations; the writer's method of gathering material is shown:

> When talking over old times with these, they supplied her with details she had forgotten, or had not known, and from their varying viewpoints threw crosslights on happenings already in her mind, though none of them appeared to have retained more than a few isolated impressions. (pp. 15-16)

Charity discovers her sense of detachment from the child she was, which she feels is "one not uncommon to age, looking backwards in time," (p. 16) and that as a child too, she had been apart from the ongoing life around her:

> . . . it suddenly occurred to her that the part of the child Charity had been that of a learner, an onlooker, rather than that of an actor on that bygone scene. Her then companions had been living their lives fully; hers had not properly begun. (p. 16)

This perception is perhaps common to autobiographers, most of whom have felt different enough to consider their perceptions to be of particular interest. It is especially typical, however, of middle class writers like George Sturt and Stephen Reynolds, both of whom saw their lives as bystanding compared to the more vigorous grappling with daily existence which they admired in their working class informants. Thus while Still Glides the Stream does not entirely reach the high standards of the trilogy, many additional details of folklife appear in it and it offers indirect light on the author and on the writing of Lark Rise to Candleford.

III. Laurie Lee: Lyrical Memory

Cider with Rosie (1959), is the childhood autobiography of Laurie Lee, the poet and essayist.[19] Its sentences are crafted with the care of poetry; in an essay describing its composition, "Writing Autobiography," he notes that "Technically the book was not simple. It took two years, and was written three times."[20] It represents the opposite pole to the oral canon, being in no sense limited by a local, social code of personal narrative. Its models of structure and style are those of contemporary literature. As he explains in the essay, autobiography is for him "a celebration of living and an attempt to hoard its sensations" (ibid., p. 49). Consequently, the book is a series of captures of childhood impressions, from an intensely sensuous evocation of the infant's exploration of his physical environment to his developing social understanding, describing which stage, Lee says, he became as narrator: "less a character than a presence, a listening shadow . . . recording the flavour of days, the ghosts of neighbours, the bits of winter, gossip, death" (ibid., p. 50). Its ethnographic qualities are more elusive, resisting extraction from the artistic whole; when a single episode is looked at intently it is found that very little is concretely said about a particular social act -- a carol-singing visit, for example

-- and yet out of small, apparently negligible details (the candles are carried in marmalade jars), the reader is left with a sense of how it felt to be there.

The setting is the Gloucestershire village of Slad in the 1920's, a time and place which he identifies with the crucial change in the pattern of rural life: "The end of my childhood also coincided by chance with the end of a rural tradition . . ." (ibid., pp. 49-50). Raymond Williams' remark that writers have been annexing this critical turning point for their own spot in time for centuries has already been cited; the premise of having been witness to the ending of the "traditional" way of life is a frequently-cited justification for English rural autobiographies. The linking of childhood with a lost age of simplicity and contentment is almost a structural convention of Western autobiography, as Lifson has argued,[21] and it is not surprising to find it appearing here.

As previously noted, it is invidious to select passages from this work as of particular ethnographic merit -- its effect is cumulative. Certainly it is one of only a few rural childhoods in literature to deal with the awakening of sexuality. The games of "invitation and show" (pp. 247-8, 251) played among children of eleven give way to the gang stage, of which the episode of "the Brith Wood

rape" encapsulates the bragging style of adolescent boys which covers their virginal fear of real sexual encounters (pp. 256-260).

Aspects of folk belief are handled well, being firmly embedded in the texture of events described rather than self-consciously displayed as "superstitions." Frightening figures were used by his older sisters to control him; he finds it particularly effective that in their fatherless household they were "Old Men . . . who lived in the walls, in floors and down the lavatory; who watched and judged us and were pitilessly spiteful . . .". (p. 32). There were more general bogey figures, itinerants, who terrorized the adult population also: "Albert the Devil" was a deformed, deaf-mute beggar, who was believed to have the evil eye:

> He had soft-boiled eyes of unusual power which filled every soul with disquiet. It was said he could ruin a girl with a glance and take the manhood away from a man, or scramble your brains, turn bacon green and effect other domestic disorders. So when he came to the village on a begging trip, and we heard his musical gurgle approaching, money and food was put on the tops of the walls and then people shut themselves up in their privies. (pp. 40-41)

Local ghosts are described (pp. 36-38), and the report of a death omen in the form of a bird is set realistically in the context of the curious struggle between the two

"grannies" who live only to hate each other. A man who sees two deaths on subsequent days is shunned:

> "Twice in two days," the villagers said. "He'll see the Devil next."
>
> Fred Green was avoided after that. We crossed roads when we saw him coming. No one would speak to him or look him in the eyes, and he wasn't allowed to deliver milk any more. He was sent off instead to work alone in a quarry, and it took him years to re-establish himself. (p. 124)

Though these are given as ideas he partly shared, Lee states that it is his belief that a sister who died in childhood "gave me her life" when she died suddenly and his own illness left him (p. 190).

He takes up the conventional topic of schooldays, convincingly recalling the atmosphere of bullying, rote-learning, and memorable confrontations of boys and teachers; village festivities, such as the harvest festival -- "to enter the church on Harvest morning was like crawling head first into a horn of plenty" (p. 268) -- the choir outing, and the parish tea and concert are also fully realized.

The account of the carol-singing quête is another fine blend of objective description and remembered sensation, and it is the co-presence of these two orders of information, that might be labelled "hard" and "soft," which gives the

work its particular quality, and perhaps problem, if it is to be considered as ethnography. For example, we learn several pieces of hard information: carol singing is restricted to boys, and this particular group, members of the church choir, has the right to visit the lucrative "big houses." They never see their audiences, nor expect to, not being admitted past the hall at any of the gentry's houses, with the sole exception of the squire, who comes to the door. Rival groups, "not an approved charity," shout through keyholes a more strident demand:

> Knock on the knocker!
> Ring at the Bell!
> Give us a penny for singing so well!

At a farm belonging to a man named Joseph they sing a special carol, "As Joseph was a walking," feeling that singing it there "added a spicy cheek to the night."[22] All this is hard, objective data but it is followed by a moment of epiphany:

> Everything was quiet; everywhere there was the faint crackling silence of the winter night. We started singing, and we were all moved by the words and the sudden trueness of our voices. Pure, very clear, and breathless we sang:

> As Joseph was a walking
> He heard an angel sing;
> "This night shall be the birth-time
> Of Christ the Heavenly King.
>
> He neither shall be borned
> In Housen nor in hall,
> Nor in a place of paradise
> But in an ox's stall. . . ."
>
> And 2,000 Christmasses became real to us then; the houses, the halls, the places of paradise had all been visited; the stars were bright to guide the Kings through the snow; and across the farmyard we could hear the beasts in their stalls. We were given roast apples and hot mince-pies, in our nostrils were spices like myrrh, and in our wooden box, as we headed back for the village, there were golden gifts for all. (pp. 178-179)

His report of the charged moment and their response to the carol is clearly "soft" information, subjective in the extreme, yet for him it was as much part of the event as any of the other details.

Laurie Lee's writing, like Alison Uttley's, embodies both kinds of information and while "soft" information will not explain anything without the frame of the "hard" data, it may fitfully illuminate the incommunicable: the motivations for continuance of a custom, or the sensation of belief experienced by the believer.

IV. Spike Mays: Anecdotes and Reputations

In his brief but trenchant essay "Writing Autobiography," Laurie Lee commented that "in the country personal histories are everybody's property . . ." (p. 45), referring probably to the anecdotal tradition that chronicles neighbours' divergences from community standards of behaviour, and which makes up a great proportion of oral narrative in a small community. Spike Mays' memoir of growing up in Reuben's Corner (1969),[23] an Essex hamlet, from 1907 to 1924, suggests the accuracy of Lee's remark; he gives some characterizing, anecdotal description of many of its inhabitants. The book is a nice blend of detailed, objective rendering of social and working life and more subjective recollections. Unlike Laurie Lee, who maintains the narrative persona of his child self throughout Cider with Rose, Spike Mays rarely slips fully into childhood perceptions; they are generally tempered and commented upon by the voice of his adult experience. Mays is a sophisticated author whose family's poverty in his boyhood prevented his receiving higher education, but in his middle years, after some years as a cavalry trooper, he attended university. His Five Miles from Bunkum[24] describes the same neighbourhood, is also anecdotal and partly autobiographical, but aims primarily at technical description of local occupations.

Some of the best sections in Reuben's Corner are descriptions of things not known to him at all in childhood: the manner of men's conversation in the pub, for example, which is discussed below. Seen specifically through the child's eyes, however, are his first contact with death, and later, his sexual initiation. When an aunt dies he is taken to see her as she lies in the coffin; he feels impelled to touch her (though the tradition of touching the corpse to avoid dreaming of it is not mentioned) and is upset at leaving "a little dint which did not fill up again."

> I had spoiled the face of my pretty Aunt Harriet and I thought that because of my finger-puggling God might not let her into Heaven. (p. 43)

He is tormented with dreams afterward:

> All the people I was fond of died in my dreams to leave me all alone. They floated in the sky in boxes, rejected equally by heaven and hell because of the holes I had bored in their faces with my finger. (p. 44)

A child's shock at discovering differences between practices in his own family and those of the community at large often figures in autobiography and can illustrate

norms of behaviour and points of tension. At his aunt's funeral, for example, Mays comments, in the narrative persona of the child: "Everything was wonderful until a funny man came in without knocking" (p. 40). This is the undertaker, come to screw down the coffin lid. But it is the detail of his not knocking which seems to irritate Mays. When he is older he embarrasses his mother by angrily bursting out at the village grocer and a tallyman who have entered the kitchen without knocking:

> All kinds of people barged in through the back door with never a knock. I would watch their eyes roving over our few possessions. Though not ashamed of what we had, I was sensitive and would have preferred our poverty to be hidden. . . .
>
> "Why didn't you knock at the door?" I asked the grocer. He merely laughed.
>
> "It's rude of you to ask such a question," chided my mother.
>
> "Not so rude as coming in without knocking," I replied, just managing to dodge a clout.
>
> "Children should sometimes be seen an' not heard," she replied. . . .
>
> "Grocers should be heard before they are seen in THIS house," I said angrily." (pp. 161-162)

His mother apologizes that the boy is "too sensitive," though Mays suspects she agrees with him. The incident was

clearly one of considerable personal significance and which also indicates a general change in social custom with the working-class family adopting the newer middle-class valuation of "privacy."

His earliest sexual experiences are described with some frankness and much humour. Again there is a mixture of the personal and the objective; we learn, almost statistically, that

> Many local girls had practical experience before puberty . . . sometimes with schoolboys, but more often with uncles and cousins. Nor were they in the least ashamed. Some even bragged about personal experiences, considering it their duty to inform the virginal minority who had preserved that intact and immaculate state thus far to the ripe old age of twelve years. (pp. 81-82)

Later he makes a fumbling attempt to seduce his own cousin, but is found out by his grandmother:

> She screamed for my mother, "Git 'is father to 'im. Bin a-tryin' tricks with Ellen. I 'on't hev this owd cousin-wuk. There's more'n enough of it in the village! (p. 197)

At the personal level again he is embarrassed at finding himself too young to take up the experienced Cilla's sexual offer:

> . . . . she took my hand in her hot hand, squeezed it, looked me straight in the eyes . . .
>
> "Well, we're here then!"
>
> I believe I gulped.
>
> "What are you a-lookin' like that for, then? Are ye frit? Doant you worry, bor. I dunnit afore!"
>
> I was eleven. (p. 164)

This, of course, is the kind of information rarely to be got by the outside ethnographer, and not revealed in life history interviews until a deep level of rapport has been reached. Indeed it might be argued that at such a level the "oral" and "traditional" aspects of what a person says are tenuous in the extreme, for it is the kind of confession that he has perhaps never made before, or even thought to himself. This is demonstrated in May's later pretence to a friend that it was not he who had been "scared" with Cilla but she who had been "too young" (p. 192).

The stages of Mays's sexual initiation, the games of "Mothers and Fathers," the initiatives taken by more experienced girls, parallel Laurie Lee's experience. Both authors flirt with the Eden metaphor in their chapter titles, "Stolen Fruit" (Mays), and "First Bite at the Apple" (Lee), and in the sexual episodes themselves; Mays

gives his cousin "a dutty owd kiss" while she is eating an apple, and Lee is "baptized" by Rosie's "cidrous kisses." Less predictable is the form in which both adolescent boys show their exultation at overcoming their fears of sexual intimacy; Lee "felt like a giant":

> I was bursting with power and pleasure. I sat on the chopping-block and sang "Fierce Raged the Tempest" and several other hymns of that nature. I went on singing till long after supper-time, bawling alone in the dark. (Cider, pp. 255-256)

In the same vein, Mays recalls thinking of a hymn, "All things bright and beautiful," and went home strutting and skipping, "whistling full-throat the latest popular song, "Butterflies in the Rain" (p. 201).

Mays's attention to detail makes his descriptions of occasions such as the Horkey, or harvest feast, of particular value. His careful inventory of their household furnishings and construction details of their cottage is also worthwhile (pp. 65-69). A carol-singing visit is well described and he quotes a local parody on "Come all ye faithful," which was sung where people were too mean to open the door. They were careful to sing correctly inside the houses lest word of their impiety get back to the vicar (p. 100). He is keenly aware of the real social authority

vested in the parson, claiming to have recognized this as a child. Several of his anecdotes are anti-clerical, as are some of the many rhymes cited. He gives examples of fly-leaf inscriptions, a rhymed list of local place names, military parodies, vendors' rhymes, and others. He also makes several references to singing at work, quoting two of the bawdier stanzas of "The Derby Bull," and offering other scattered remarks, as that one man's repertoire featured many songs of ships and sailors, "possibly because he . . . . had never seen the sea" (p. 127).

It was not usual for boys under eighteen to be allowed into public houses:

> This was considered to be an honour, a token of appreciation of occupational prowess in the fields or a recognition of approaching manhood. The publican turned a blind eye on these occasions. (p. 125)

Mays is honoured in this way after riding a runaway horse to a standstill. The public house does not properly belong to his childhood experience, therefore, but he offers sensible commentary on its place in men's life. Pubs were "almost exclusively the clubs of working men or male adults"; the communal quart pot expressed the pub's spirit of <u>communitas</u>, each regular patron had his own seat, "never sat in by others"

(p. 138). Mays gives a short but characteristic rendering of pub conversation; anecdotes are told of the quantities consumed by noted drinkers. The stories are not new to teller or listener:

> "Remember that fust harvest in Holden Field?"
> "Oh, ah . . . Le's hev it ag'in." (p. 123)

He includes examples of typical banter:

> Barney Chapman would walk in.
> "Ev'nin' all. Pint o' bitter, missus."
> Then seeing Cribby sitting chewing a straw: "Sign o' snow, ain't it, when yer see an owd hog chewin' straw?" (p. 124)[25]

Like other writers he affirms the dominance of work as the topic of consuming interest; Sunday noon, after church and before dinner, was "the main occasion in the week for talking about their work with friends from other farms" (p. 102).

In his excellent ethnography of a contemporary East Anglian village, Hennage, Clement Harris notes that one of the ideals of its inhabitants is to avoid being talked of, to shun any behaviour that might be classed as eccentricity.[26] I have already quoted Bettesworth's praise of Edmund Baxter, a neighbour, for being "reg'lar" in all his habits.

But Mays has an abundance of anecdotes of local "characters" who have in various ways infringed the standards of normalcy. The "Irish" remarks of Pudden Smith are celebrated (p. 129) as is the dirtiness of his brother, Wuddy:

> One day Wuddy's hand was seen to be bandaged with his red handkerchief, and he was asked why.
>
> "Oi were jest a-gittin' me shop things owter the basket on Saturday night an' cut me hand on me bill."
>
> "How was that, then?"
>
> "Jest as I were a-puttin' me hand in, a bloody grut rat jumped owter me basket. Oi clarred (clawed) me hand owt sharpish, an' dang me if I di'n't drag it straight across the blade o' me bill."
>
> "Where'd you reckon that owd rat come from, then, Wuddy?"
>
> "Owter me cottage, bor. There's scores on 'em runnin' abowt there o' noights." (p. 130)

The humour of such a story lies in the innocence of Wuddy, unaware that his listeners are laughing at him for exposing his own oddness.

The normal care not to be talked about, which simple-minded people like Wuddy are hilariously oblivious to, influences the content of oral reminiscence. The normal person, sensitive to community opinion and mindful that, as

Lee suggests, "personal histories are everybody's property," will be careful that what he tells about himself fits into the socially acceptable canon; it is the same care that makes his seed drills and plough furrows straight: "This was positive indication of craftsmanship and horsemanship, and was necessary to avoid ridicule in the pub" (p. 207). Autobiography, then, particularly when written according to oral canons, is inevitably shaped by social pressures.

V. Richard Hillyer: Angry Young Man

Country Boy: The Autobiography of Richard Hillyer (1966)[27] is the story of Hillyer's struggle for emancipation, through winning a scholarship to a university, from his south country village, "a village which imprisoned and then consumed its own children" (pp. 200-201), and the life of a farm labourer. The period is approximately 1900 to 1920. It is a relative rarity among childhood autobiographies in that it presents an insider's view of domestic life in the lowest class of rural society, the labourers, through a fully literate sensibility. Its rarity is a sad reflection on the way education in Britain has reinforced the rigid class system. Hillyer describes obstacles to his desire for education that were imposed from above -- the lack of money for a grammar school place; his fear of ridicule by the

"better class," but not very bright, farmers' sons who went there; the schoolmaster who, while seeing the boy's talents, chose not to push him forward for a scholarship: ". . . the farmers, who had to pay for their sons, would have had something to say about giving working people's children ideas above their station" (p. 83) -- as well as from within his own class: other boys derided his taste for reading and even his father thought it unnatural, wishing he would "take an interest in something, save up and buy yourself a bike. Be like the other chaps, get out a bit" (p. 143). His father, in short, held the classic working class attitude that education did no good to a boy who would have to work.

Hillyer exemplifies the truism that autobiographers tend to be exceptional people, or at least people conscious that they have an unusual story to tell. As a result of his university education the consciousness through which his childhood memories are filtered is different than it would have been had he become a farm labourer. What he writes is influenced by different canons. Accordingly, Country Boy is both the record of his search for intellectual fulfilment and, deliberately, a sociological description of his village. Thus while there is nothing "traditional" about the way he structures his narrative, or the links he makes between subjects, unlike a naive writer like George Baldry, his

superior descriptive ability and the facility of the literary artist in exploring states of mind offer information of another order. His particular skill is in the rendering of small, commonplace, social rituals such as the verbal sparring that takes place between villagers in the game of "not letting other people know your business" (p. 61). The nature of the business was unimportant, what mattered was not letting others find it out:

> People talking about you, and wishing to say something particularly praiseworthy, would add, "And they are not the sort that lets everybody know their business, either." (p. 62)

There is an excellent description of one of these wit combats, under the guise of sociable conversation, in which the village carrier tries to find out Mrs. Hillyer's destination while she procrastinates as long as possible the admission that she is off to London to visit her brother (p. 76). Later, in a well-worn phrase, Hillyer remarks of villagers "fishing about, in a humbugging kind of way" for news of a rumoured inheritance in his family, that "they didn't get much change out of us" (p. 117); and on the morning he travels to sit for his scholarship he is aware of a difference in people's manner toward him,

> as if they were not quite sure where to place me now that I was going away to sit for a scholarship. If I had just been Bob Hillyer's boy, working on a farm like everybody else, they would have stopped to worm out all the details; but this was a new situation, so they were cautious. (p. 200)

The relative roles of husband and wife in working-class marriage and family are also described. "Mother" was the manager of the household economy; her husband gave her his entire wages, and was given back a shilling which he spent on tobacco and seeds for the garden, though also managing to save for special occasions (p. 25). She was sensitive to slights directed at their poverty; Hillyer's father was quiescent: "For him life was simple, and had no worries. If he worked, and earned what money he could, Mother would see to the rest" (p. 25). It is her maxims that Hillyer remembers and quotes, expressive of her resolute independence:

> "Don't crawl to nobody," Mother would say. "Do your work, treat the gentry with respect, because that's right, they are the gentry, but don't let them wipe their shoes on you. People won't respect you for doing that. If you can't get on by honest means, don't get on by dishonest, the Lord never gave a blessing for that." (p. 103)

While individuals are, of course, infinitely variable, the division of roles Hillyer describes is borne out as traditional in many other accounts; "Mother . . . was the pivot on which all our lives turned" (p. 71).

Hillyer dwells particularly on the structure of authority in the village. "Lord Postern," to whose estate the houses and farms belonged, was at the top: "He was the boundary to everyone's thinking. You couldn't go beyond his Lordship. Except of course to One Above" (p. 33). His Lordship visited his tenants "once a year or so, particularly at election times," and the ritual is sardonically described:

> He would call at a cottage or two and be affable, not getting off his horse, but thumping with his hunting crop on the door, or the palings, which ever was handiest, until somebody came out. Generally it was a woman, the men were all at work, and she would stand in the doorway with her hands respectfully hidden under her apron, hardly daring to answer his questions with more than a plain, "Yes my Lord," or "No my Lord." (p. 18)

The detail of the respectfully hidden hands is typical of Hillyer's sensitive observation, as is his sense of the visit as a kind of performance on both sides, a "catechism" which must be "gone through." Further examples of the ritual display of social authority occur in Lord Postern's

visit to the school (p. 19), the afternoon visits to cottage homes by the Rector's wife -- "and so the stately conversation would proceed, never touching on anything at all intimate" (p. 34) -- churchgoing (p. 36), and the distribution of the St. Thomas's Day dole, in which the trustees pronounce on the fitness of clothing material bought by village women with money from the charity. The Christmas tea was a further ritual of social order and was boycotted by the stricter chapel folk as "charity" (p. 91).

The way Hillyer remembers his fear of beginning work is atypical when compared with the memoirs of working men. He suffered from the debilitating sensitiveness which Sturt, relating Bettesworth's story of the overfastidious man that the other workmen splashed with mud, commented was inadmissible in working men's society. His fear was due partly to the example of "Barky," the village halfwit and recluse, who had been brutalized by a tyrannical farmer. The farmer's burial was a subject of local legend:

> There was a great, ugly, pyramid-shaped lump of granite over his grave in the churchyard, and people said that it was there to keep him down, because he was too wicked to rest easy. . . . One very wet winter the ground sunk all round it, and some pieces fell out at the side, so that you could see into the brick-walled grave, and there was the coffin, standing on end in a pit full of water. Old people said that it was a sign of God's judgement on him (p. 50).

Hillyer's work began at haymaking time and he gives a good description of raking in a team, moving at the leader's pace and making it "a point of honour" to finish as even as they had started. Traditional disparagements of the beer provided -- "water the brewer's men washed their aprons in" -- are also given (pp. 127-130). He describes a typical "day in his life" as a boy on the farm with the kind of atmospheric detail that is the preserve of the novelist:

> It is a quarter past five in the morning; getting out of bed into the cold, damp air of the bedroom, lighting the candle with shirt tails flapping round bare legs, and huddling on cold clothes is depressing. (p. 151)

His fight with the foreman over the latter's sadistic treatment of a horse is the kind of event often narrated in oral autobiography; here, again, Hillyer's literary skill in describing it serves as a contrast with the more laconic, formulaic accounts given in oral reminiscences (p. 159). This autobiography's real congeners are novels on the theme of the difficult emergence of the young intellectual from his working class childhood; this is often the stuff of a first novel as, for example, in Border Country[28] by the literary scholar Raymond Williams, whose hero explores the problems of communication with his Welsh working class family and community after having gone away to university in England.

VI. George Baldry: Written Reminiscence in Oral Style

The Rabbit Skin Cap, "written in his old age," by George Baldry and edited by Lilias Rider Haggard, describes a boyhood and youth in the 1860's and 1870's near Bungay in Norfolk and is probably the best account ever written of an English rural working class upbringing. In terms of style and structure it is very close to oral form. Its language is richly idiomatic and reads, in many places, more like speech than written composition, and structurally, progressions and periods in Baldry's life are defined, as they tend to be in orally recorded life histories of working men, by the acquisition of useful skills and the lengths of time spent working for each of a succession of masters. These are, of course, aspects of the "oral canon" for autobiography to which I shall return in the final chapter.

Baldry's theme, as in most childhood autobiographies, is "growing up," but in his earnest concentration on the need to get childhood over with, to be a man and have a trade, he exemplifies traits that George Sturt discerned in Bettesworth and found typical of rural working people; in particular, the drive to acquire that "versatility in usefulness" that would make for ready employment. The extent to which The Rabbit Skin Cap represents working-class

values becomes very apparent if it is contrasted with accounts of middle-class childhoods like Richard Jefferies's Bevis, Kenneth Grahame's Dream Days, or Frank Kendon's The Small Years, where the transition to adulthood seems procrastinated with the implication that its coming will mean the end of an idyll.[29] There is no pastoral of childhood in Baldry's recollections and, while there is good humour, there is no nostalgia for herding pigs in the rain, filling an empty stomach with boiled swede, or being beaten with a leather strap.

George Baldry was born in 1866 one of three children of a shoemaker. His father's small wage was eked out by keeping a cow and chickens but Baldry's childhood was hungry and ragged, as he says:

> It seem, looking back to when I was a lad, that most of what I remember when I was a little nipper had to do with summat to put in my mouth, perhaps because more often than not it was over ready to be filled and there was not as much as a hen's nose full to put in it. (p. 47)

An early memory is of his helping a shepherd who paid him in swedes and of his pride in feeling that he had "begun to work for a living" (p. 40). The swedes were boiled with Norfolk dumplings, dripping and salt, "the best meal we had

had for many a day" (p. 40), making a change from skim milk and bread (p. 32), or "salt sop" which was "a few pieces of bread crumbled into a basin with small pieces of butter, lard, or dripping with hot water poured over" (p. 34). His eagerness to catch rabbits is also represented, like earning the swedes, as being urged both by hunger and the desire to be grown up and contributing to the family income; at first he is taunted with being too young to catch them (p. 26) so it is a sign of his developing ingenuity, in which his parents take covert satisfaction, when he brings home six rabbits that he has netted in a harvest field:

> When I tells him what I done he laughs and says I was darn lucky and did I bring the netting home and not get found out? . . . He laughs some more, and so do Mother, and she give him a look and say, "It's sartin shure he ought to be able to catch a rabbit now he's got his Father's trousers on." (pp. 63-64)

The boy was, of course, literally and symbolically assuming his father's trousers, they having been cut down to fit him, and the symbolism was not lost on him: "My suit was made of my Father's old corduroys and a rare man I thought myself when I had it on" (p. 28).

Parental threats and punishments are also vividly remembered: one "troshing" was so severe that he remarks

it caused him to "remember every detail of that evening to this day" (p. 53). His father administered the beatings using a leather strap and Baldry's reminiscences bear out Augustus Jessopp's observation, already cited, that fathers were a "terror" to their children whose only memories of tenderness were associated with their mothers (Arcady, p. 48). Yet he quotes his father's maxim, in regard to children and punishments, of "bending the twig while green" with qualified approval (pp. 34, 53), and in this he shares Bettesworth's opinion that some "knocking about" is good for boys (Bettesworth Book, pp. 28-29): "So there was one lesson learned, and we did not forget that dose of strap oil nor what it were given for, and maybe 'twas the better for us as the lesson was sharp" (Rabbit Skin, p. 54).

Although his mother did not beat the children herself she invoked their father as a threatening figure in addition to "the Policeman," who would take them away (pp. 26, 47). Similarly she threatened to sell both boys to the Rag-and-Bone man for a tanner if she could get it (p. 28). Being sent to school was also threatened as a punishment: "'They keep a stick for all bad boys there'" (p. 47). Once at school he learned of the all-seeing God who spied on children through His windows, the stars, and would punish them in a great pit of fire and brimstone if they quarrelled

or stole. The devil used a long fork to stir the fire and poke back those who tried to get out (p. 85). It is possible that the use of policemen and other authority figures as ad hoc bogeys may have contributed to that tendency to "quail before the first challenge of superiority . . . as though the [socially] superior person had unhuman qualities . . ." that Sturt noticed in working-class boys (Change, p. 114).

The status of "boy," as Baldry recalls it, was not pleasant and it would seem that the function of the traditional patterns of chaffing, practical joking, and outright violence directed at boys was to encourage them to stand up for themselves as "men" as soon as possible. The vexed transitional state between boy and man was referred to in taunts; Baldry worked his first harvest season at three-quarters of a man's wage and so endured "many a joke about three-quarter men getting their legs sawn off" (p. 220). His grandfather had been mocked, as Baldry was, for his small size:

> What with short vittals and hard work he grew that shambly the men called him "Hoggity-hoy, he's not a man nor yet a boy!" but he never took no notice and was soon as big as any on 'em. (p. 24)

Baldry records several traditional "put-offs" and witticisms enjoyed by men at the expense of a boy's naivety. He was often left to mind the horse outside a pub while his master went to "see a man about a dawg" and after an hour or more the boy "wondered if the dawg had runned away, but it wasn't no such thing" (p. 99). On another occasion an old sow in heat ran away and he had to chase her; when he asked the cause of her fit he was only mocked for his ignorance:

> Father laugh and tell me old sow will be better on the morrer, and I don't know yet how many beans make five.

When he persists in asking the farmer he gets a blunter reply:

> "Blame it, Bor, what du yu want to know that for? Best use the eyes in yer head."
> "Corse I'd like to know," sezs I.
> "All right," sezs he, "come here, Bor," and catched me by the back of my neck saying, "Count these," and I thought now I shall find out about these beans, and -- bang his heavy hand comes first on one ear and then on the other, and number five the toe of his boot meet the seat of my trousers and I was not stopping for number six. . . . And t'wasn't that way I finds out how many beans make five. (p. 70)

The incident is one of a number in the book in which Baldry recounts learning that it is a boy's place to keep quiet, use his eyes, and not ask questions.

This attitude to the education of boys, which to middle-class eyes may appear careless and callous, seems nevertheless to have produced the desired qualities of self-reliance and resourcefulness. Baldry's account of his earliest memories includes his precocious demonstration of ability in making things, a characteristic he exhibits with pride. At three and a half he had built some kind of play house from old bricks. The reflection he makes on the incident ties it to the theme of his developing resourcefulness:

> It was the first thing I ever remembers making and was the start of a lot else, as I've set to and made most things with my hands I've had a mind to ever since, never being one to be carried. (p. 22)

Later he decides to make a frail basket like those the men on the farm took their dinner in and succeeds after a carefully described process of trial and error. His father admires the basket and then tests the boy to see whether besides acquiring a skill he has learned the quality of tough self-interest that will be equally necessary in the competitive working-class employment situation:

> "Wonter thought it -- yew done that well. Yew'd better let me have that -- just what I want." But I sezs, "No, I ain't a-going to let anyone have it, I wants it myself," and he laughs and looks at me and sezs: "That's it, boy, you be a-feeling the ground under yer feet -- if yew can't have a thing, go out and find a way to git it -- and when yew got it -- stick to it." (p. 78)

The lesson is repeated in his narrative of how he got the method of making eel pots from "Eel Joe" in spite of the old man's attempt to keep the knowledge from him:

> When I asked him to show me how to do it he grinned at me and said:
>
> "What Bor! . . . shew you how, that 'ont du tew shew yew how to make pots, yew'll then be takin' away my livin'. Best thing yew can du is ter find out, same as I did. What's the use of having brains if yew can't use 'em. Yew got to look out and prog fur yar self. No good thinkin' folks'll carry yew, corse they 'ont. (pp. 177-178)

He learns to make the pots for himself by careful inspection of Eel Joe's followed by trial and error, just as he had learned to make the basket, braid nets, and build a boat after secretly taking its measurements with string (p. 186).

Baldry, like Bettesworth, and others who have come through this system of education, admires knowledge because it has been hard won.

> I had often wondered how wool was made into yarn and when I went hay-trussing I found out, which show how one thing will open your eyes to another all through life -- except for them who goes blind all their days, yet thinks they sees as much as the next man. May not have learnt much at school, but all my life have been out to pick up what knowledge I could and add a little more to my stock. (p. 118)

He reflects that "a man's life is all learning" (p. 82), and as on several occasions his masters cheat him of his wages he consoles himself with the thought that he has learned a skill from them: "He was a hard man and a hard drinker which made him snaisty tempered at times, but he was born and bred to his trade and a good one to learn from" (p. 209).

Although ideally boys were meant to take a respectful, subordinate position to men, in practice, to judge from Baldry's evidence, men appreciated the spirit of a boy who had the nerve to banter with them and stand up for himself. He amuses a thatcher he works for with a play on the name "Noah":

> "Ain't the fust time yew-er served a thatcher, Bor, I kin see."
> "No, that it ain't -- I sarved Noah when he thatched his ark."
> Old Bill cocked his eye at me and chuckled sayin'" "I thought by the looks on yar yew was a bit antique, but not as old as that -- of all the lies I've heard in my time that du top the lot, yew young varmint."

Baldry explains that he had meant a local farmer called Noah who had a shed he called his pony's ark (p. 222). This quality of nerve, however, helps him get employment; when a gardener doubts that Baldry is "man enough" for a job he retorts that what the gardener has been doing -- sweeping leaves -- is "ondly an old wimmen's job." He impresses the gardener with his workmanlike sweeping and is hired. But when Baldry presses his advantage the gardener reasserts his position as man over boy:

> "No, Master, " sezs I, "Yew musn't allus go by appearances"
> "So I find, boy, that 'ont du to du so at all times, but I don't want no lip from yew." (p. 119)

Real conflict, verbal or physical, figures in his relationships with several of his masters and to judge from independent oral evidence, is not an uncommon subject in the oral reminiscences of farmworkers. A carter, at odds with one of Baldry's employers advises: "If yew want to stop on it [the job] yer gotter bite yer tongue, that's a sure thing" (p. 198). One of the great moments of Baldry's early life was watching his father fight a blustering farmer who had forbidden the boys to earn swedes by helping the shepherd. Baldry avidly absorbs the traded insults:

> "Don't yer let me catch you on my fields or I'll sune put yer off."
> "What you -- stow it man, I'd go round yow like a wapsy [wasp] round a cask -- I'd soon tighten yer hoops for you, I would." (p. 42)

and much later when he has his own quarrel with a master he feeds his rage with similar phrases:

> Thinks I to myself he ain't much bigger than I was anyways, why should I be frit of him, looks more like a beer barrel on a couple of stumps, let me git a bit bigger and I'll soon go round him like a cooper round a cask, du he call names any more. (p. 91)

Swearing was a useful accomplishment; of another occasion on which he heard a fine outburst of "bad words" he remarks: "Some of it I can lay my tongue to this day, if occasion arise -- they was pearls of speech and I h'aint never forgot 'em" (p. 116).

Baldry exhibits a fine ear for language of all kinds. His diction is colloquial and reflects his culture's preference for familiar humour over originality; thus he mines a rich vein of similes, many of which involve animals: "proud as a horse" (p. 65), "like a couple of kittens after an old cat" (p. 47). Wellerisms are also savoured: "Felt about as wise as Waltham's calf which went nine miles to

suck a bull, or, as the meaning is, -- a proper fool" (p. 193). He shows himself as a boy taking in the traditional witticisms of his elders: "'Well, boy, that's the one the Cobbler threw at his wife.' I looked puzzled . . ." and gives his master's explanation of the old pun on the word "last" (p. 202). The closeness of his writing to the oral form is increased by his repetition of the same similies and proverbial phrases throughout his text -- like the lugubrious euphemism for death, "gone down to the mole country," which appears twice -- where an author less in touch with the oral tradition and more attuned to the élite literary aesthetic would feel obliged to search for "original" comparisons.

Becoming "man enough" to work was, as I have suggested, the preoccupation of Baldry's youth and is inevitably the theme of his autobiography. While the book is full of information on domestic life and a number of crafts, especially thatching, basket and fish trap weaving, brick and rake making, all described in technical detail, the emphasis is on the social relations between the boy and his parents and employers. The major ethnographic value of these recollections is in what they show of the traditional attitudes towards work and becoming a useful, independent, man. It is striking to see him attributing the consciousness of work to his early childhood self; at five years old his

father set him to work cleaning turnips for their cow, "We . . . rubbed and probed at 'em till they were all clean and thought we was rare men" (p. 27). A couple of years later he got his first job: "Up with the lark I gits, thinking now I had become a British workman . . ." (p. 65). From his proverbial reflections on work, learning and experience a composite sense of the working-class ethos of his period can be gathered; it agrees closely with Sturt's reading of Bettesworth's views and it is an almost quietist philosophy of making the best of a hard situation: "I got that which I worked for and precious little of it, but it's not for us to choose" (p. 93); ". . . we saw . . . all our labour passing away in smoke, as come to think on it much of a man's labour does during his life's work. Still, often it leave a good thing behind as well as the soot in the chimney, and that's experience" (p. 113). His proverbs "He who hides can find" and "He who has had best hold," however, express the idea of looking out for one's own interests that was also vital for survival in a competitive labour market. In one of the few passages of extended reflection he writes of his developing awareness of the conditions of life:

> I began to see it weren't no good allus leaving it to other folks. I should be left in the lurch, struggling along with never a bit of cheese to put on my bread. . . . looking back I realize it was then I began to see a man must have a trade. (p. 232)

Carpentry seems to have become his principal trade, but the final pages of his book speak of his staying on in the old home, looking after his elderly mother and running the smallholding.

One obvious difference between childhood autobiographers to be discussed in the next chapter is that the possibility for the illuminating double vision of childhood as seen from the perspective of maturity is likely to have been lost. The adult autobiographers I have selected have, in the main, not been particularly conscious of transition between two worlds, "traditional" and "modern," but have taken their experience largely for granted. Consequently their autobiographies may lack the breadth of Flora Thompson's analytic knowledge of rural culture, and will not show her ability to describe it with detached objectivity. What they know is their own craft, their village, some anecdotes and personal stories which reinforce their sense of themselves. The model they follow in presenting themselves and their experiences is an oral one. Hence their writings demand a rather careful mode of reading which is alert to patterns of association and culturally determined silences on certain matters; in fact reading them may become much like interpreting oral testimony. What they may lack in breadth of vision, however, is more than made up by the depth of authentic experience

from which they write; here, if anywhere, is the "insider's view" of his culture untraduced by literary fashions.

VI.

ADULT AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

An obvious question to pose concerning working men's autobiographies is "why were they written?" It must be admitted at the outset that their authors are in some sense atypical of their fellows, yet so too are all autobiographers. The small sample surveyed in this chapter can not hope to be regarded as representative of all the varieties of autobiographical motivation; yet some salient types can be pointed out. The spiritual autobiography, an old tradition in English autobiography, is present in The Reflections and Rhymes of an Old Miller, by James Edwin Saunders. Gaius Carley's Memoirs are a tribute to his trade as a blacksmith, a piece of craft pride. James Hawker's Journal of a poacher, like several others by poachers, is a work of self vindication and a deliberate answer to the popular stereotype of what poachers are supposed to be like. Only Fred Kitchen, a farm labourer with an intense zeal for literary education can be called a transitional figure with some knowledge of both the working and the genteel world. In a number of cases the enthusiasm of an outsider, such as Lilias Rider Haggard, editor of the anonymous I Walked By

Night, provided some degree of stimulus or direction. Generally absent from these works, however, is that sense of nostalgia for times past that seems more apparent in the childhood autobiographies, and is no doubt an inevitable consequence of thoughts from age on youth, besides being an established literary convention. Rather the tone of several of these men is of pride in having weathered the worst of times and of having proved their strength and capability. For them to admit to regret would be for them a revelation of a suspicious weakness.

These autobiographies will not be taken up in chronological order. Neither is it as easy as in the previous chapter to arrange them in order of their closeness to literary or oral canons of style; there are no "good" writers among them, if judged by purely literary standards. Fred Kitchen, however, as an aspirant to literary culture, is the least representative of the oral style in reminiscence and will therefore be discussed first; after him is placed Saunders' recollections touched by the manner of spiritual autobiography, which has its own constricting effect upon what is included. The autobiographies of poachers are treated next as forming a natural sub-division, these writers having, as I have suggested, a common concern to explain and justify themselves. Finally I have discussed

two works which are particularly close in content and style to an oral canon of personal reminiscence; these are Gaius Carley's Memoirs of . . . . a Sussex Blacksmith, and P.H. Emerson's orally recorded life history of an East Anglian labourer, Son of the Fens.

I. Fred Kitchen: Between Worlds

Fred Kitchen's Brother to the Ox (1940)[1] is perhaps the most widely known autobiography by a farm worker of this century; Raymond Williams has judged it "one of the very few direct and unmediated accounts of a rural labourer's life."[2] In the sense that it has not been arranged by an editor, as Lilias Rider Haggard has done with George Baldry's chronicle, it is certainly "direct," yet, like any autobiographer, Kitchen's sense of what his readers will expect -- "my story is a story of 'osses and farm chaps,' and ought not to take in highfalutin subjects" (p. 170) -- causes his work to be very much "mediated" by literary conventions with the effect that the authentic "inner life" of the labourer is not entirely to be found here either. The period covered in the autobiography is from 1890 to 1930, Kitchen's childhood to middle age, in the border country where Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, and Derbyshire intersect.

Fred Kitchen was the son of a cowman on a nobleman's estate in South Yorkshire and it was hoped that he could be apprenticed to a joiner and thus "lifted" out of "the rut of a farm labourer" (p. 12). He was fond of reading and drawing as a child but the death of his father before the boy was twelve ended all hopes of education and apprenticeship and he left school at thirteen to help support the family as a day-lad on a farm.

Kitchen's account of the traditional manner of education in farm work techniques agrees with those of George Baldry and others:

> A lad was never shown how to do a thing; to show him how was to spoil him. The only way to learn either ploughing, thatching, stacking, or any other skilled work, was to watch how other people did it, and then earn your skill by trial and error. . . . a lad took more notice of how a thing was done by watching someone else than he would by someone showing him just how, while the boot no doubt impressed it on his memory. (pp. 47-48)

"Boot-toe," and other kinds of "knocking about," are remembered without rancour by most men as necessary to a boy's learning.

Like others again, Kitchen tells ruefully comic stories of beatings he suffered for escapades and incompetence

but these latter are merely the complement of those he tells of his developing skills. He takes pride in his ploughing and in improving the condition of his horses, stealing extra rations for them in the manner of all horsemen (p. 139).

A particular merit of his book lies in its description of the socializing between the young men on local farms, many of whom "lived in" as he did. Their society was a matter of both rivalry over work, and entertainment through songs and stories. It was their habit to spend Sunday mornings walking about in a group to examine and criticise each other's ploughing and sowing (pp. 49, 71). All lads were "horse-proud" in those days, he says (p. 45), and he records his chagrin on taking work at a new farm to find his new plough team "the sorriest lot of horses as ever saw through a collar", (p. 139).

The living-in system, like the Scottish "bothy" tradition and the North American woods camps, brought young and older men together in the evenings with the need and the means for entertainment:

> We spent most of our nights in the stable until nine o'clock, when we had a basin of bread-and-milk, and so to bed. Sometimes other farm lads dropped in for an hour, and at other times we walked across to their stables -- there being two more farms near to ours. (pp. 59-60)

There was pressure on each to add something to the fun: "Usually one of them would bring a melodeon, and he was considered a poor gawk who couldn't knock a tune out of a mouth-organ or give a song to pass away the evening" (p. 60). Though he gives no complete texts, Kitchen does provide at least the titles of the songs that were popular among them; this shows a mix between older material -- "The Gentleman Soldier" and "The Banks of the Sweet Dundee" -- and more recent comic and sentimental music-hall pieces.

Some older men told legends of strong men, boggarts, the devil, the witch as hare, and Kitchen captures the tone of their performance:

> Every one looked very serious and credulous, and if any one had expressed a doubt about the truth of them, the whole company would have verified the truth by saying, "I've 'eered my dad tell of 'un mony a time," or "My grandfeyther ewsed to work on t' varry same plaice!" Indeed it was impossible to doubt; there were so many people who knew these people or "knew people who knew these people." (p. 62)

Probably a great deal of what was told was a matter of practical information; Kitchen says that what he remembers best about a Yorkshire strong man was "the ingenious way in which he stopped the sow from lifting the pigsty door

off its hinges [with her snout]. He nailed a scythe blade on the bottom of the door" (p. 62).

As I have noted, this was a border area between countries and "differential identity"[3] figured largely in the social interaction. Kitchen found a difference in song preference between the "rollicking Yorkies," who sang comic and bawdy songs, and the more serious Lincolnshire chaps who preferred sentimental ballads (p. 60). The distinction held true in their choice of narratives also:

> The conclusion I came to was that Yorkshire was a land of giants and blue-devils, Lincolnshire was overrun with witches and boggarts, and for proper sensible men one must go into Nottinghamshire. For which reason they were called "Nottingham Lambs." (p. 63)

This consciousness of blason populaire recurs in his account of a hiring fair and the different details of dialect and costume of "fenners," "woadies," and "Yorkeys" (p. 98).

Their local revival of the Plough Monday quête is also put down to the inspiration of the leading comic singer, "Tom fra' Bennett's," "a regular Yorkshire dale-man, always ready for a spree of any sort" (p. 64). Kitchen did not join in being considered "too much of a younker," but others "dragged the plough round the village, singing at all the big houses and such as were likely to give them

ale money." They had "a particular song for this occasion," identifiable as "All Jolly Fellows Who Follow the Plough" (p. 65). Kitchen's non-participation may also have been due to a certain prissiness, a result of a strict Methodist upbringing: ". . . it seemed to me nothing but an ale-guzzling affair" (p. 64). The other seasonal custom described is a house-visit by the Derby tup (pp. 14-15).

Kitchen remarks on the "respectability" which was the "creed" of all estate workers (p. 19), and while, he suggests, farmwork broadened his attitudes and made him less the "prig or Puritan" he might have become, the deference to authority bred by an estate childhood lingers in him. Throughout the book he apologises for "still being a farm labourer" and never making "much success of life" (p. 11); even horses were "much like human beings . . . the best found work in towns" (p. 129). Unlike Bettesworth or George Baldry he lacks confidence in the esoteric valuation of farmwork; he does not fully share his peers' self-sufficient values of competence and resourcefulness but is prone to accept the exoteric, urban middle-class view of farmwork as low in status and interest.

Unlike Richard Hillyer, who made a complete escape from the labouring life through a university education, Kitchen is only partly emancipated by virtue of his reading

and courses taught by the Workers' Education Association. He remains conservative, grateful that suburban customers on his milk round discuss the arts with him, not observing the condescension in their greeting, "Here comes our philosophical milkman" (p. 204). There is none of Hillyer's bitterness at the social system; the two writers' views of the same institution, the Christmas treat, are poles apart: Kitchen describes the Christmas tree "loaded with useful presents, such as clothes and bedding," and observes "the lords and ladies danced with the work-people and neither side knew the meaning of class distinction" (p. 12). Hillyer, on the other hand, recognizes it as a public expression of social order:

> The Christmas Tree was different, that was charity, in a way; and a few of the stricter chapel people wouldn't have anything to do with it, but nobody else cared, it was a change, and the gentry got enough out of us, so why shouldn't we get something out of them once and away? (Country Boy, p. 91)

The question of whether either social analysis is more correct, and whether one writer is closer to representing the labourer's opinion, is complicated by all the problems of the ethnographic use of autobiography. The operation of the class system was probably less repressive, or less impersonal, in Kitchen's

north than in Hillyer's south. Their literary forms are different, Kitchen writing autobiography while Hillyer writes a more discursive memoir. Hillyer is a working-class intellectual writing with the fashionable cynicism of the 1960's while Kitchen writes uncertainly, awkwardly conscious of his lack of education.

Brother to the Ox reflects its author's emergent position in terms of education and literary skill; it is in a transitional style between the orally based reminiscences like The Rabbit Skin Cap and fully literary works like Cider with Rosie or Lark Rise to Candleford that are written in accordance with an élite aesthetic. Kitchen's tender passages about his first wife, for example, are modelled on his reading (and he lists an assortment of English classics and sentimental fiction) but could not pass the acid test for oral currency of being told in a pub, as almost everything in George Baldry's book could.

If Brother to the Ox is less "direct and unmediated" than Raymond Williams suggests, it remains of considerable value to the folklorist. Kitchen's developing literary ability makes his descriptions of occasions, such as the music, songs and storytelling in the carrier's van on the way to the hiring fair, quite rich in their contextual sense. It is unfortunate that Kitchen, like many others, seems to

have had only one good book in him; his attempts at fiction, despite their rural backgrounds, are embarrassingly weak.[4]

II. James Edwin Saunders: A Pilgrim's Progress

The Reflections and Rhymes of an Old Miller, by James Edwin Saunders [1938],[5] is a simple book by a devout Wesleyan who presents his life story as an example of endurance and faith in God despite the vicissitudes of trade, such as bad harvests, American wheat, and too many mills in his area. Saunders was born in 1844 and lived at Bowden Mill, Wycombe, Buckinghamshire until 1873; the book's dust-wrapper records his death at ninety-one in 1935. The last two chapters, including the "Rhymes," religious verse, were assembled by an editor, using the diary Saunders had kept of his struggle to build up a miller's business. His idea of what an autobiography should be is conditioned by his Wesleyan faith: "my trust is to pass on the simple message of a simple man's life" (p. 9). The influence of his grandfather, "imbued with the Puritan traditions of the early Commonwealth," continued in the family, though he had died before Saunders was born, and it is striking to see the extent to which John Bunyan's The Pilgrim's Progress furnishes him with a paradigm for the interpretation of his own experience.

His childhood reading in old books such as "The History of the Bible" impressed him and provided a stock of comparisons; hence one of his earliest recollections, of a hobgoblin carved over a door, is related to this reading:

> none of the representations in our "Pilgrim's Progress" . . . were a patch on this one, with his half-score of gaping teeth of irregular lengths. (p. 11)

Later he was given a Bible as a school prize, which he describes in Bunyan's metaphor: "It was the only personal possession I possessed. It was the one staff with which I began my long pilgrimage" (p. 39). Other early memories are more naturalistic: looking up at the stars through the great chimney at his uncle's farm, where the clock was kept half an hour fast to get the servants up quicker. Kitchens and hearths are often recalled in autobiography, as here:

> I can remember it exactly, even to the back kitchen, where clean sand and fresh rushes were regularly strewn on the floor in place of a carpet, and to the brass kettles of milk which twice a day and sometimes oftener were hung to boil for the men, most of whom were hired and boarded in the house. (p. 15)

Among his boyhood memories are those of visits by mummers, once to his school and once to his home; both stress the fear children had of their "hideously masked faces." His second account of a mummers' visit shows again the readiness with which Bunyan is drawn upon for analogy:

> I remember on another occasion, one Christmas time, when they came round as usual they made a lost of noise at the shop door, and Mother went out to them. There were about ten or a dozen of the fellows, some in ordinary clothes and the rest dressed up to suit their fancy, and a little old woman in a red cloak who seemed very much frightened at the scene going on round her. The mummers were never very particular what they did, and my guileless Mother supposed the old lady was wanting to come to the shop and might come to some harm. So she half opened the door and pulled her inside, like the Gate Keeper in Bunyan's Dream; but when the rescue was effected and my father suddenly appeared, the old lady bolted out to the rest with surprisingly youthful agility. Happily these mummers are things of the past, but they used to frighten us children half out of our wits. (pp. 31-32)

Since there is no mention of a mummers' play on either occasion we may surmise that these represent further examples of the house-visit style of mumming, by a lower class disorderly element, that has until recently gone unnoticed by English folklorists.[6]

He makes the usual references to boyhood mischief -- being sent to bed with physic after stealing apples, being locked in a cellar with frogs and toads for throwing stones at birds. His reflections on education, however, show the zeal for self-improvement of the self-made man and his non-conformist milieu:

> . . . there is an easy, unobtrusive, and yet potent force in knowledge -- a sort of quiet reserve of power -- which it is difficult to acquire unless you are "to the manner born" and have had the advantages of a liberal training in childhood and youth. (p. 25)

He absorbed this rather stern, self-mortifying ethos and once forced his "shaking knees" to carry him back to what he had thought a ghost but which "turned out to be only the white face of a cow" (p. 32).

There is a good chapter on church and chapel services, described with refreshing humour. The standard anecdote of the man who wakes suddenly in the middle of the sermon and calls for beer is fastened on the clerk at the neighbouring parish church, "which I know to be true" (pp. 41-42). This humour is of course directed at the rival Anglican establishment; a vicar was nicknamed "Beelzebub" as being too fat to get into the pulpit. There are also comic reminiscences

concerning Wesleyan lay preachers, however, such as the smith who explained the "gross darkness" that "shall cover the people" as being one hundred and forty-four times as dark as natural darkness (p. 54).

The mill was handed over to him when he left school by his father. He notes the trick he devised of keeping his sails moving as if he were busy grinding even though he had nothing to grind, "since everybody prefers to deal with a man who is busy." The miller's trade provided much opportunity for gossip but he gives only a suggestion of the people who called at the mill and their anecdotes.

That this is, in intention, a religious testimony is reasserted in his account of a storm in which he expected the mill to fall, his life flashed before him and when the wind abated he "felt it to be Divine interposition," and for months afterward he was filled with a sense of radiance in nature (p. 72). After this he trusted to the Lord in the face of his problems. The autobiography as a whole lacks the fullness of folklife detail to be found in some others. It is, however, an interesting example of the influence of spiritual autobiography on a folk autobiographer.

III. Autobiographies of Poachers: Honest Rogues

The following section will discuss the autobiographies of a number of poachers and gamekeepers. The length at which I have dealt with this branch of rural autobiographies is due, in part, to a longstanding personal interest, yet poaching was an important facet of rural life, being a vital supplement to diet and wages. Furthermore, a considerable literature exists, generated by the long public and legal controversy in Britain concerning the right to hunt game.[7] This literature deserves attention as having surely influenced individual autobiographers in terms of the questions they feel obliged to answer, when speaking to the public, as a result of the stereotypes developed in at least two centuries of wrangling in the courts, parliament, the press, and through the images employed in folksongs and narratives.[8]

In literature, as Raymond Williams has observed, by the end of the nineteenth century a "minor cult" of the poacher as an "attractive and vagrant rogue" had been established.[9] Beginning in Richard Jefferies' essays, and quickly imitated by lesser writers, the poacher became a relatively harmless "Bohemian," a picturesque rogue of merely unconventional habits, though the reservation was made that this applied only to the village "character" who poached for the love of the thing and not to the crude

toughs from the town who did it for profit. Such a distinction is largely due to the romanticizing of the natural knowledge and closeness to nature of the countryman. A parallel tradition grew up which glorified the intuitive skills of the gamekeeper.

In John Watson's editing of the recollections of "Old Phil," Confessions of a Poacher [1890],[10] the poacher is excused by an appeal to natural right and the redeeming moral influence of a love of nature:

> Nature made old "Phil" a Poacher, but she made him a Sportsman and a Naturalist at the same time. I never met any man who was in closer sympathy with the wild creatures about him; and never dog or child came within his influence but what was permanently attracted by his personality. (Editorial Note)

Here, amid a general haze of sentimentality, Watson has imputed to the poacher some favourite tastes of the Victorian gentleman. Considerations of "sportsmanship" and "sympathy" do not figure in the attitudes of poachers, to judge from the autobiographies discussed below. This sentimentalizing of the poacher, however, is part of the general softening of the image of "Hodge" as a mere insensate "clod of the fields" and the beginning of the swing in the opposite direction toward the veneration of the countryman's mystical contact with the forces of nature.

As part of the cult of the poacher as an "interesting character" portraits of keepers and poachers joined the normal complement of figures to be drawn in prose sketches of village life. Some sketches, like P.H. Ditchfield's paired "Gamekeeper" and "Poacher" in Country Folk: A Pleasant Company (1923), tend toward the platitudinous; his keeper, particularly, is an idealised figure reflecting Ditchfield's valuation as a rural clergyman, and keen shot, rather than that of the villagers. The anecdotes Ditchfield retails of older poachers display their "sly discretion" and droll sense of humour; modern poachers, he fears, are "skulking creatures" who lack sportsman-like spirit.[11]

James Hawker's Journal,[12] however, is a most valuable folklife autobiography and displays an unusually high level of political consciousness; a tussle between keepers and poachers, for example, is described as "this Social Drama" (p. 14). It belongs in feeling with the autobiographies of Trade Union leaders or Labour M.P.s who look back on the formation of their political principles as a result of their experiences of working class life. Hawker, however, is still active as a poacher when writing these memoirs at the age of seventy (he was born in 1836), and vows to poach until he dies. He did achieve political office, nevertheless, as the nominee of his village Working Men's Club for a seat on the parish council and on the school board. He identifies himself proudly with the "roughs" of the village yet at the

same time enjoyed personal friendships with some of the gentry, on whose land he also poached, while maintaining bitter opposition to "the Class" of landowners in general with their lackeys the clergy and police.

The manuscript from which the Oxford edition was prepared had been entitled "The Life of a Poacher," and, from its polemical style, there is little doubt that Hawker intended it for public circulation.[13] Hawker writes aggressively, colloquially, button-holing the reader and forcing him to hear his opinions. His rhetorical ploys are oral ones -- proverbs, and the citing of "Personal Experience" as inherently more trustworthy than things heard or read.

But in addition to a general readership he has also borne in mind his local audience of neighbours in Oadby, Leicestershire, by remembering the houses in the village where past inhabitants lived (some houses being of mud and no longer standing), and memorializing some people for their qualities of character or wit:

> Charley Voss was a character. I once heard Mr. Britten say to Charles: "You don't buy much ale, but you help drink a good lot." Poor Charley had not much money to spend, but his jokes were as dry as his Throat.
>
> Joe Ludlam Still Lives, one of the most Funny men I have ever met. I se im a short time ago. "Jimmy," he says, "'ow are you going on?"

> Then he told me a man had just called him a liar. "I told him I had a pair of glasses on through which I could see a thousand miles." He said that was not true. "Yes it is," I told him. "I can see the moon and that's the truth." (p. 91)

Hawker himself is remembered as "a character" by contemporary Oadby villagers; this mode of savouring the humours of one's neighbours is, of course, part of the oral tradition of any small community, and we have seen it represented in the village histories discussed in my second chapter.

As an autobiography it shows many typical features of the oral canon. In keeping with the restricted code usual in working class reminiscences certain aspects of life, for example his marriage and family life, are hardly mentioned and the period of his childhood is characteristically compressed as though he only began to see himself as an individual or to be recognized socially as one, when he started work:

> I was born in 1836 in Daventry, Northamptonshire, of very Poor Parents. My Father was a Tailor by Trade and my Mother assisted him in his work. Times were very Bad and they found it hard to Live. At the age of six I remember my Father working in a Garrett where I Slept, until ten o'clock at night. At the age of eight I went to work in the Fields, scaring Birds for seven days a week at a wage of one shilling. This sum Bought my Mother a four Pound Loaf.

> At the age of twelve I went to work at a Boot Shop. (pp. 1-2)

This is almost the entirety of what he tells of his childhood.

In addition to the political reflections, and tightly bound in with them, his theme is his personal competence in his craft -- poaching -- and his stories are framed as proofs of his skills and the soundness of his philosophy; against drink, for example, which puts working men's money into the pockets of the brewers and makes them unfit to run when pursued by keepers. His technical advice is intended for the use of working men as a form of class warfare; as he says of himself, "I have poached more for Revenge than Gain" (p. 95).

The memorate in which he explains how he wagered he could call a hare to him and then shoot it is thoroughly oral in its tone of self-vindication:

> Now one word about calling the Hare. How many People Doubt this. I have convinced several by Proof. A Jack Hare can be called in March and April if the weather is suitable. A Doe Hare can be called at Harvest-time. When you Call a Hare in Spring, imitate the Doe. When calling at Harvest-time, imitate the young. A Jack Hare won't come at Harvest-time.
>
> . . . . . .

> I began to call. It was a Jack Hare and away he came. When he was within twenty-five yards, I stopped calling and the Hare stood up on his hind legs. I pressed the trigger and we could se the Bullett beat the soil up just round him. "Jimmy," says he, "you've missed him." Then the Hare ran about two yards and Dropped Dead. The bullett had gone strait through his Chest. I thought the young man would have went mad with Delight. "You'll believe it now, won't you?" I says. (pp. 64-66)

Other stories demonstrate his "presence of mind" in getting out of difficult situations with keepers or police, or his artful tact in mollifying an angry farmer:

> He spit and Hit his stick on the Ground. He was Red Hot. But I laughed at Him and that made Him worse. But Hasty short-tempered men are always the Best to Deal with. . . . I knew that if I Could only get him to Stay a few minutes I would humour him. You can win more by Kindness than Abuse. (p. 22)

This has all the vigour and love of characterisation of the kind of confrontation story that is a commonplace in oral reminiscence but which is incorporated here, with little alteration, as autobiography.

Similarly, other autobiographical reflections are loosely proverbial, being fragments of conversation, phrases and ideas which hang together whether spoken or written:

> You could have a Sheep's head and pluck the lot for a shilling. They was Called watch and seals. Two or three women would get one between them. With respect to a bit of meat, i never se any the First ten years of my Life, only on Sunday. (p. 71)

Hawker's Journal, then, shows quite well how oral modes of reminiscence are drawn on by men of limited literary experience when composing autobiography. As a final example, consider the manner in which he takes stock of his situation at the time of marriage; after the wedding Hawker and the bride's brother have threepence between them:

> As soon as it was opening time we had a pint of ale. Then I stood with a Brand New Wife and an Empty Pocket. I would rather start so than begin High and Come Down. (p. 82)

The emblematic quality of this situation makes it memorable and, no doubt, serviceable in conversation. It is also, in a sense, a traditional topic of reflection; the same situation is remarked on in another autobiography, now unfortunately lost to me, except that the contrary moral is drawn -- the couple decide to save their money and go home to begin work.

Equally oral in style is I Walked By Night (1935),[14] the autobiography of a Norfolk poacher, which was edited by

Lilias Rider Haggard from the author's manuscript and his answers to supplementary questions she put to him. Haggard's note on the effect of her questioning recalls Hudson's remarks about interviewing Caleb Bawcombe, and will strike a chord with any life history recorder:

> Over many months I collected what is set down in this book. It is entirely his own work, but it was not written down as it appears here, as it was in no way consecutive. It came to me in letters and on scraps of paper, in old exercise-books, on anything that was at hand when answering some random question of mine. Sometimes, like a water diviner, I hit the spring and the twig twitched; at others it was a case of "no contact." (p. viii)

The resulting work is thus a combination of autobiography, written at the subject's own volition, and life history, assembled through the agency of an editor. Despite Haggard's re-structuring it is a convincing account of a poacher's attitudes expressed in a manner that is very close to the oral style.

The outlines of the oral canon can be seen in his selection of topics; his childhood, for example, is largely characterized through stories of mischief: a school mutiny, blocking-up chimneys, making booby-traps, squirrel and cat hunts. There are memorates of significant "first times"

such as his first trapping a hare, for which he was flogged by his righteous father, and his first use of a snare (pp. 28-29). Significant, and typical, too are his omissions; his editor notes that "it was with the greatest reluctance he would tell me much of the days he spent with his much-loved first wife -- even now I do not know her name" (p. viii).

Central to the poacher's attitude is the principle that successful poaching rests upon possession of a body of knowledge and skill, acquired through arduous experience, as in any other occupation. Thus in addition to being a compendium of poaching techniques the work reveals something of traditional ways of thinking and speaking about knowledge in general. Most evident is his proprietary sense. While it was still of economic use to him he guarded his knowledge, as would any other craftsman:

> There was many a man asked me in those days what he had to lern to be a Professnial Poacher, and they mostly got the same answer. By experence he have to lern and he may lern a lot, but he want a lot of experence befor he can become a fairly successful man. In them days I was not giving away anything, but now they are passed for me it dont matter, and I will try and tell most of what I lernt.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Befor I have finished I think dear Reader you will agree that the Poacher is as clever as most other men. (p. 155)

The term "clever," as I have suggested elsewhere,[15] is intimately bound up with skill, self respect, and public reputation among rural workers; it is a "loaded term." The "King" eventually found a man whom he "seamed to take to more than any other man" and consented to teach him; his comment reveals the pride of a master craftsman in his apprentice:

> Well teach him I did, and I found him a very apt scholler, and consider him one of the Cleverest men that there is on the Job to day, and one of the best Palls. (p. 182)

He displays the usual insistence on the value of practical knowledge over theory.

It is important to realize also the extent to which an occupation furnished the social identity; this was manifest at hiring fairs where farm servants wore or carried emblems of their trade, and also in the signs of public houses used by men of particular occupations. A tendency to equate self with social niche is pronounced in working-man autobiographies, and it will be argued in the following chapter that this is a product of the division of labour and a class system; working people do not expect to be the subjects of wider interest except through their trade, the more so if it be unusual. As Fred Kitchen remarks, "I couldn't

see how anyone would be interested in a farmer joskin . . ." (Brother to the Ox, p. 244). The author of I Walked By Night considers his testimony at an end when he has described all the ways he knows of taking game:

> I have exausted my knolidge, Dear Reader, and have no more to rite, so I must bring this life Story to a close as I am thinking of bringing my Life to the same end, only I know I must make myself content to the finish. (p. 183)

The interest of his life, as he presents himself here, is in how well he performed within his social niche of "poacher."

Like most autobiographers, he is interested in the elements of fate or heredity which caused him to become what he is. As if narrating a criminal confession ballad he states that he was "Born of Honest Parents" but that he had "some latent sporting blood in me, which counted for what I was and what happened to me after" (p. 3). This "sporting" instinct he traces to his grandfather who entertained the boy with "tales of Smugling and other Outlaw tricks, it used to warm my hart to hear them" (p. 7). In illustration of the principle that tradition may skip a generation he learned other folklore material from his grandparents, including some of the songs that appear as additional local colour at chapter divisions, and the second chapter contains an

interesting record of his grandmother's cures, charms, and omens; the inclusion of these was almost certainly Rider Haggard's idea, but it is a pleasant surprise.

He is introduced to poaching through natural curiosity then confirmed in the role by the malice of neighbours and police:

> I can verry well rember in that first Job, the Policeman would often as not walk out and ask me what I had in my Pocket, and serch me befor all my other mates. You will agree that was verry humiliating to me and the stain of that sort of thing wen one is a lad stick for life. (p. 30)

Like James Hawker, this man seems to have gloried in his role as a "character," though this may be due to the perspective of age from which both write; there are many anecdotes of clever "tricks" -- ducks hidden beneath a baby in a cradle, eggs inside an accordion -- and of his taunting the police. The selection of this kind of reminiscence, which causes the self-portrait to veer towards the popular stereotype of the poacher as a charming rogue, a "Bohemian," as in Jefferies' sketch of "Oby", may be due to editorial encouragement, or to the author's own enjoyment of the stereotype.

Nevertheless, stories of poachers' exploits, many analogous to those of smugglers, were popular in the oral

tradition,[16] as Bettesworth bears witness, having "sat up all night listenin' to 'em yarnin'" about the exploits of smugglers (Bettesworth Book, p. 257), and relating to Sturt a story of some poachers' "clever trick" (Memoirs, pp. 56-57). The prominence in poachers' reminiscences of these "outlaw tricks" may be related to the "betwixt and between" position of the poacher in rural society; while his skills are as complex as those of any other craft he is forbidden to gain credit for them and is classified as a deviant by the law and "respectable" people, though in his own eyes poaching is not intrinsically criminal. As with other types of people who are socially anomalous, the role of entertainer offers itself.

In summary, this is one of the classic folklife autobiographies, offering an inside view of social conditions and class relationships in East Anglia during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The Autobiography of an English Gamekeeper, John Wilkins of Stanstead, Essex, edited by Arthur H. Byng and Stephen M. Stephens (2nd ed., 1892),[17] is a mixture of anecdotes of his personal experience as a keeper and practical advice to others in the profession. The editors' preface states that the words are "for the most part" those of John Wilkins, the writing is that of the editors.

Wilkins admits to pressure from his "biographer" to make the book "instructive" as well as anecdotal, but claims that his response has been "when an old man like myself is set down to write his life and adventures, he must be allowed to write it in his own way" (p. 151). Whatever the blend of editorial suggestion and individual penchant, the autobiography shows several characteristic features of oral personal reminiscence: the rigid distinction between public and private topics is shown in the fleeting mention of the existence of a wife, with no prior hint of courtship or wedding (p. 243); and many of the memorates are "testimonial stories" in which, in a gesture which technically absolves him from boasting, other men's praise of his skill is quoted:

> I do not wish to boast, or draw the long bow, in describing the events of my life; and, indeed, there are many gentlemen still living who can testify to the absolute truth of everything I relate in this book. (pp. 18-19)

The importance to the rural worker of a reputation for probity can hardly be overstated; the keeper's position of trust may have heightened this concern.

The skills of the keeper parallel those of the poacher and, to judge from these autobiographies, are spoken

of by keepers and poachers in similar ways. Wilkins praises cunning, for example: "Dick never ought to have been a keeper; he had no cunning about him. . . ." Dick, butt of several derogatory anecdotes, was an old soldier and too regular in his habits to alter his beat or adopt disguise. Wilkins learned his craft from his father and, at the age of nine, had informed on some men buying brass wire for snares in the village shop; Jefferies has noted the unpopularity of keepers' sons among other boys.[18]

There is an aggressive, competitive element in the boy's relationship with his father, however, which recalls that described by the thatcher, Norman Goodland, in My Father Before Me.[19] He competes in trapping with his father and an older keeper and doctors their traps to prevent them catching; this done, he explains, out of jealousy that he was not paid for the vermin he had trapped. He was sometimes thrashed unjustly and mocked by his father for being too small to make a keeper, though Wilkins says he would not "expose my father's faults while he lived" (p. 43). Wilkins took charge of a wood for the first time at fourteen or fifteen and after catching his first poacher was surprised by his father's abruptly shown solicitude, fearing that his son might have been killed; the odd, stilted style of the passage fits the awkwardness of his reaction to a new perception of his father:

> I had always thought my father a hard and stern man, with but little love for me, but knew better from that time. So I took his hand and pressed it warmly, and, having nothing to say, turned it off by a laugh. (pp. 52-53)

As I have suggested before, this authoritarian style of education, reflected on by Bettesworth, Baldry, and Kitchen, produced an avid desire for skill in those tough enough to persevere.

Wilkin's Autobiography supplies much evidence of a communal solidarity between poachers and the labouring class. Men swore alibis for each other and took up collections to pay legal defence fees and fines. The country was convenient for poachers, says Wilkins, "and dead against keepers" (p. 97). The women of one notorious village were "worse than the men -- they would take up the poker, tongs, or anything else that came handy, and fetch you down" (p. 339). As in I Walked by Night a poacher might use a female accomplice for whom he could claim to be "picking flowers" (p. 107); and some poachers disguised themselves in women's clothes -- a wife's clothes being among the few readily available disguises for the labourer.

From these records left by keepers and poachers a sense emerges of the whole situation as a serious game played out in view of the community. The public taunts

made by poachers are moves in this game, and Wilkins' noting them shows them to be more than just the bravado of certain individuals like Hawker, or the Norfolk hero:

> Master Harry used to go about the place bragging that no one could catch him; he met me in a public house, once, and taunted me to my face that I had not brains enough to take him. He said, moreover, that if ever I did he would be the death of me, but this was all mere idle talk, and so I told him at the time. (p. 104)

He also confirms that poachers' claims to have poached for excitement as much as gain were not unusual (pp. 212-213). As in all games, rules were observed:

> I was quite sure no Chesham man would hurt me, and, as a matter of fact, they never did, or attempted to. . . . if I was in a fight, they always saw fair play, and backed me on to thrash my lad. . . . It was only from strangers that I had anything to fear in the way of ill-usage. (p. 53)

His advice to other keepers is in the same spirit: "Treat them as if they were men, and not wild beasts, for as you treat them so they will treat you, to a great extent" (p. 356).

Because of the public recognition of poaching as a contest of wits and skill, ridicule was a potential weapon.

Wilkins tells how a poacher's workmates laugh and chaff him for being caught (pp. 89-90), though they will also provide him an alibi, and of an incident in which he tricked a poacher into taking some rotten eggs, then smashed them in his pocket, which again caused the man's neighbours to laugh at him as a dupe (pp. 113-116). Similar use of ridicule is seen in I Walked By Night where a policeman gains the name "Cradle" after failing to find some ducks hidden there, and another keeper has told of setting up a dead hare as a decoy and then chaffing the poacher who had tried to "kill" it: "That groom was converted by getting everyone to ask him if they had heard of the man who tried to kill a dead hare."[20]

Wilkins' autobiography, as we have seen, is largely a recital of specialist skills; very little of the inner man is revealed, a trait which will not surprise us. He is a chapel-goer and has no fear of ghosts; out of curiosity he once shot at a Will o' the Wisp or "Jock o' Lantern," but concluded that it must have been some kind of vapour: "I had never seen one of them before, but I've seen plenty since" (p. 68). The only supernatural belief Wilkins expresses concerns divine retribution foreseen in two prophetic dreams; one dreamed by himself, in which he discovered his brother-in-law's theft of a sheep (pp. 433-439),

and another dreamed by a poacher who had sworn a terrible oath that he was not guilty of snaring and who was, Wilkins implies, justly punished by the actual death that he had told of seeing in his dream (pp. 266-269).

Poachers' and keepers' autobiographies, then, share many of the patterns and concerns of other working men's chronicles; we can be grateful for the vogue of the poacher as an "interesting character" which has brought about the publication of so many of them.

IV. Gaius Carley: A Craftsman's Pride

The Memoirs of Gaius Carley A Sussex Blacksmith, Written by Himself, edited by Francis W. Steer (2nd ed., 1964),[21] offers a smith's view of his craft presented in a manner close to the oral style in language, content, and structure. Carley, born in 1888, the son of a farm bailiff at Arlington, Sussex, wrote his memoirs at the age of sixty-seven, in 1955, and gave them to Steer, the county archivist, for preservation or possible publication. The preface mentions that Steer had earlier appealed for country people to write or dictate their recollections and had published some in The Essex Review in 1950 and 1951. Carley's autobiography was published in a limited edition that was funded by an

unnamed benefactor; this allowed the work to retain the style Carley set for it since it did not so much have to conform to a publisher's sense of a marketable product. Furthermore, Steer reports that "it has not been drastically edited because that would destroy its charm."

The opening of his autobiography employs a familiar pattern: the first thing he describes, as though picturing it from a memory of childhood, is "the old fireplace, the brick oven where my Mother baked our bread and all good things to eat, enough to last a week" (p. 1). The oven figures, naturally enough, as the focus of many other people's early recollections.[22] His comments on the oven and its metal furnishings, the firing of it, and the need to retain the right heat in the bricks for baking, however, are a blacksmith's perceptions. His appreciation of skillful workmanship is apparent throughout. As a boy he admired the cleverness of the local smith and his sons; he had made whistles out of ash stick rind to play in a procession in celebration of Mafeking's relief, but "The Blacksmith's boys were clever, making them out of tin" (p. 4). The speaking tone comes out in his short sentences here: "What clever sons he had. Good musicians. Some of those sons became band masters. The old forge is a garage now" (p. 1).

His account of boyhood limits itself to the usual topics of oral reminiscence: punishments, being sent to bed before tea, which hurt "more than a good hiding," for reading "rotten stuff," "silly thrillers"; games, which he divides into night and day games, mentioning their names including "Mike, mike strike a light there are smugglers on the shore," a Sussex variant of the widespread hunting game, and bird trapping, rat snaring, and mischief at school (p. 2). Errands and thefts from the village shop are also mentioned:

> Keen as old Mrs. Brench was, we managed to whip off a buckshe bar of something sometimes. Boys were not perfect in those Victorian days. (p. 3)

He left school at twelve, having passed his examination, and started work.

Carley's chapter divisions also reflect the structure of oral reminiscence. As I have already said, narrators of oral autobiographies often use the sequence of their employments, with different masters at different farms, to organize what they have to say. Carley follows the same method: his chapter headings are "Boyhood," "Going to Work," "East Hoathly," "Becoming a Blacksmith," after which they become a series of village names reflecting his moves to new forges as an increasingly experienced man. He always notes the

distinctive type of work done at each different forge; at Kirdford, "The work was heavy horses and farm implements" (p. 34). The only other types of chapter, "What Should a Farrier Know," or "People and Events," similarly reflect the kinds of digression from the onward flow of the life's history that he might make if he were telling this orally. This structure is not just an organizational convenience; it reflects a world view: boyhood is inevitably terminated by the first job and going to work.

His recollections of his first job, on a farm, with four or five other boys -- "Six shillings a week we got for bird scaring, muck spreading, stone picking and hop pole shaving" -- stress the usual "knocking about" they received: the carters "cared more for the horses than the boys." He emphasises too the carters' obsessively straight ploughing:

> Why that headland had to be just such a size is a joke to me today. The horses had to go right to the hedge and the back horse pulling a foot or two by himself, it made him bad tempered. The old carter Jim Walters would pull and weigh the plough about himself to get it just right. What a change today and what a lesson we were tuaght by those men. . . . The old carter ploughed the furrow very straight and one of them said his ploughing was more than straight. (p. 9)

Several of the things he singles out for comment about his farm days reflect the blacksmith's perspective; in horse harness, for example, he notes the swivel: "one of the smallest and hardest things to make in the smith's trade" (p. 10); and with regard to folding sheep:

> The folds were made of wattles and hurdles, a ring on the top of each end to stop the wood from splitting when driven in the ground by the folding bar. The rings bar and sheppard crooks were made by the village Smith, lovely jobs. (p. 10)

These are things a smith would notice; he is describing the countryside as a workplace, not as a dreamy idyll, and he understands how things work because his reputation rests on ensuring that they do.

The chapter "Becoming a Blacksmith" shows him absorbing the maxims of his trade and enduring the chaffing held indispensable in any apprenticeship. He learns to allow for expansion, to understand the grain of metals, to detect the different sounds of iron and steel when rung on the anvil, and the instructions a smith could give by "tingling" the anvil with a hammer (p. 21). An essential point was to match the heat of the fire to the job at hand:

> The Guv said master your fire and guage your metal and you can make anything. If you have patience. How true he was. (p. 17)

The chaffing employed traditional witticisms and routines:

> A great art was preparing the ends of the iron for joining called shuts, another was bumping up the ends -- bumping means making the ends of the iron a little thicker to allow for the waste caused by heating, if not bumped up it would look spindly and a little thinner and a bad job. The old hands would say a rat has been at it and it looks as if it will come for you. The ends are scraped down or pointed down in a special way so as to make a neat job. The boy said you can see where it was shut, you can see where it was not was the answer. You could not make the iron work for your Grannie's old mop they would say to me. (p. 17)

He did not complete his apprenticeship, to his father's chagrin and dire warnings, but moved on to work for an edge tool maker, who, with the characteristic secrecy of the craftsman, never let Carley see the most vital part of his craft, the tempering of the long tapered ends: "This made me a bit nigley, when I had to turn the huge grindstone to sharpen the tools" (p. 20). Once he had become proficient, and knew it, he moved freely between smithing jobs.

Negotiations to get work and decisions to quit work both figure prominently here as in many oral autobiographies;

they may be termed "confrontation stories" for in them the teller re-enacts a conversation from some situation of overt or latent conflict. In my essay "'We had Words' : Narratives of Verbal Conflicts," this style of narrative is discussed more fully and the frequency of comments like Carley's "I had a row with him and packed up," is noted in several orally-recorded life histories. Besides stories of out and out quarrels with masters -- "had a rare set to" -- he also gives anecdotes which display a cheeky style of wit; he had been told that no one worked long for his new employer:

> He is a bad one to work with. This proved all wrong. He said, "So you have arrived from East Sussex." I replied, "Yes, all the wise men came from the East". He replied, "I am the head of the Christian family and you will be treated as one of the Christians, if you behave yourself. I guessed he had a sense of humour as I replied "What if I am a sinner?" He said "You won't stay here very long". A clever craftsman. (p. 26)

The story recalls George Baldry's jest that he had helped Noah thatch his Ark.

Such stories are ultimately a kind of verbal sparring over knowledge and competence. Carley tells of deflating a "horsey gentleman" who had tried to lord it over him with his veterinary terms; another farrier was shocked at Carley's temerity:

> . . . you should not have spoken to him like that, Gay, he is a big shot. I replied so am I only my waistcoat is put on the buttons different, so don't let such men take the rise out of us. (p. 54)

The working and business relationships he describes are based on the necessity of winning respect. In villages where there were several smiths some carters expected a "kickback" from the smith to ensure their patronage:

> This was not fair to a man who did his work properly and some said no-one shall pick my bones and would not do this kind of thing, then the head man would find fault with his job which sometimes he knew very little about. (p. 57).

Another kind of trial came when, as a young man of twenty four, he moved to the "out of the way" village of Kirdford where he was challenged to fight by the local youths; the sentence order in the following is odd but the gist is clear:

> As I went there as a stranger. How strange the ways of life are and was soon asked "can you fight". "Only like John Bull when I have to". Box not they. They rushed at me like a scalded cat. I soon felt a bit happier and made a few friends. (p. 36)

On the farms while shoeing he was likewise expected to drink, "The stuff got me down sometimes," but it was all part of the testing of the newcomer.

A further common style of narrative used by Carley may be called the testimonial story, in which a tribute paid him is quoted:

> He said you were a clever man to shoe him. No sir I replied I learnt the hard way. So you might have done but I took him to 3 different forges and no one could get a shoe on him leave alone four! (p. 50)

He also tells of twitting another smith who had lamed a horse by over much cutting and hot shoeing of its hoof, and of his disgust at owners who made their horses difficult by neglecting diseases. This concentration on personal reputation should not be mistaken for egotism; it is a matter of professional pride. He gives credit to those who were "clever craftsmen" and quotes their maxims:

> What a friend he was when I started in business on my own. Don't let customers find fault of your job, never mind if they do the price. He said, keep out of the Blacksmith's Arms, you can drink all the beer you want after tea in the evenings. (p. 27)

His sententious sayings are clearly traditional within the craft: "Patience the best tool of all in the smith's craft, and many a saint would have lost his patience quicker than the King of Craftsman, the village smith and farrier" (p. 65). He mentions also "the blacksmith's harvest," a trade term for a time of frost and the clamour for the smith to "rough up" horse shoes with "froast nails" or screwed studs. Despite the ideal of patience he admits "the Blacksmith was noted for bad words" (p. 58), this figures in his verses jesting about his arrival at the pearly gates with which he ends his chronicle (p. 68).

Gaius Carley's Memoirs are an example of that almost total identification of self with occupation which is so common in working-man autobiography. My selection here has emphasised his craft, but not more than he does. Of course he comments on other things; as a "stranger," moving to new villages, he notes things that strike him oddly, for example, the way people at Kirdford used "Aunt," "Uncle," and "Cousin," as a prefix to christian names, and where they spoke of salting down a pig as "having a pig indoors" (pp. 33-34). He mentions courting a maid at the big house, describes firing the anvil for a wedding, and writes a poem on his own marriage. The unremitting focus, however, is maintained on a blacksmith's life and view of things. As such it is one of the most realistic self-portrayals discussed here.

V. P.H. Emerson: "Dick Windmill," A Young Man's Life

In A Son of the Fens (1892),[23] P.H. Emerson presents the life history of "Dick Windmill," an East Anglian "masher" or marsh labourer, fisherman, wherryman, and miller. Though undated it seems to cover the period 1860 to 1890. It is unusual in being the relation of the life of a young man -- its subject is thirty-three at the book's close -- and this may be responsible for its differences of perspective and subject matter when compared with the oral or written reminiscences of older men. A darker possibility is that it is Emerson's own composition and not the orally narrated life history it appears to be. No information is given about the circumstances of its recording, the relationship between informant and transcriber, or the extent to which it has been edited. Yet it bears convincing marks of the oral style; the opening paragraph, for example, is like hearing one side of a conversation, and suggests that a question has just been posed:

> Well, bor, that would puzzle you to tell your history; 'twould puzzle me anyhow: but I'll tell you on pooh as the Ostend-mon say. (p. 1)

The text has, presumably, been constructed from notes of interviews with Dick Windmill, aided by Emerson's knowledge of local language and folklife.[24] If it is in any sense a composite then it has been done with a rare appreciation of the manner of personal experience narration. A regional expert, L.F. Newman, writing in 1945, contrasted it favourably with Lilias Rider Haggard's I Walked By Night, and called it "perhaps the best existing attempt to depict East Anglian rural conditions from the inside."[25]

The style is colloquial and sometimes rambling; the opposite of composed literary form:

> Then, another time, Jim Algate -- he lived along with his aunt, he's a bastard, -- and he knew a ground-lark's neast -- that was along his piece. (p. 4)

This spilling-over manner, especially apt for boyhood reminiscence, introduces us to the ebullient self of the narrator. Though a Primitive Methodist by faith he is also a hard drinker, between periods of teetotallism, a singer and performer on the concertina and clarinet, an assiduous ladies' man, and a fighter. It may be that this outgoing personality made him particularly amenable to relating his life story; certainly his participation in a wide range of local labour, and in particular, like many other land workers

of the region, being drawn into the seasonal fishery, makes him a representative figure.

The autobiography is structured chronologically, beginning with his earliest memories, ranging through his schooling, first job, progress in skills, courtship and marriage, to his taking over a mill, at which point he ends his chronicle. The attention to chronological sequence is not necessarily the work of an editor: in seasonal occupations it seems common for men to measure their individual advancement against these annual activities. As in his autobiography the Maine logger Fleetwood Pride[26] used the spring log-drives of his youth to measure his increase in strength and ability, so Dick Windmill records his fishing voyages, remarking of each one the place he took in the crew, advancing in responsibility from cabin boy on his first to hawseman on his last voyage. He also notes the amount earned and the duration of each trip. His sense of the responsibility of being a husband and father of five children caused him to give up going to sea (p. 324).

His recollections of early working life show what can now be seen as the usual preoccupation with acquiring competence in work and acceptance into man's estate. There are also stories of confrontation with employers (pp. 27, 47). His going to sea as a cabin boy in the seasonal herring

fishery, however, brings attention to occupational identity. His remarks suggest there was some degree of chaffing between fishermen and countrymen though many of the crew must have been both at once, as he was, for he speaks of learning "mashing" (marsh work) as his real trade. He was proud of the rig-out for sea which he bought before his second trip, "for you rig like a countryman on your first voyage. . . . I felt large when I bought my knee-boots, oilies, and sou' wester" (pp. 52-53). He remarks also on the appetite of a "countryman" he saw eat "twenty-five herrin', two big biscuits, and drink a quart of tea, for his breakfast" (p. 65), and tells of how, when a novice, he had stolen a herring and furtively ate it, half raw, below decks, not knowing that he might eat as many as he liked. This is given point by his early memory of fighting with his brothers over who should get the head, middle, or tail of the solitary herring his mother had to divide among them (p. 10).

The passages describing fishing are impressive in their knowledge of technique, the duties of crew members, and the jargon of the trade. Windmill got his desire to learn the concertina here from hearing them played during the "wet ups" and sing-songs usual in the fleet while at sea; men coming aboard from other ships to join in (p. 34). Another occasion, on land, with songs and stepdances, including

stanzas of "The Bold Princess Royal" and other song fragments, is described later in the book (pp. 224-227).

Windmill gives interesting attention to the procedure for getting work: he was always a free agent, contracting piece work rates for work in the marshes or singing on vessels for a wage and a share in the catch, termed a "dole." Important was an arrangement with a partner or "chummy," who looked out for work for both and with whom a contract to cut or dyke a farmer's piece of marsh would be undertaken (p. 196). Once a price had been agreed to it was sealed with a drink:

> "You'd better have a pint of beer before you go," he say. I pulled my hair, and say, "Thank you, sir." (pp. 105-106)

Setting the terms for gaining a berth on a fishing boat also followed a ritual, described in a set phrase: "We went below and had a yarn" (pp. 29, 56).

While his accounts of work are given in graphic detail they sometimes give an impression of having been over carefully contrived to exhibit as much of the work and words of an occupation as possible. His scenes of dyking in the marshes, or harvesting, are set pieces suggesting the dialect sketch in the over-deliberate conversation about

tools and the work process. Whether this betrays the fine hand of the editor or is due to the author's own interest in technical detail -- which is general in working men's autobiographies -- is impossible to determine. Nevertheless, the descriptions of fishing, marsh work, and harvesting are full of rarely-recorded minor points, making them of great ethnographic value.

His account of "getting" a harvest is the best example of his ability to show an occupation in all its stages, from applying to the farmer:

> So away we go, and stood in front of the door; and he see me and come out; and I touched my hat and say -- "Please, sir, I'm come to hear about the harvest." (p. 128)

to the harvest dinner and payment. The harvesters' preparations are shown, the gang with their leader, "the lord," gathered at the blacksmith's to grind their scythes and "hang" them properly. Snippets of information emerge, which build the total picture; such as that they name their scythes: "We allust call our scythes arter our fancy gels or our wives" (p. 131). From the smith's they repaired "to the Bull-dorg to wet the job till fourses time (5 p.m.)" after which they entered the field to make a beginning, the lord "cutting in" first. The ceremonial aspect of the harvest becomes apparent.

Details of belief and custom are treated as habitual elements in the occupation:

> We cut two or three shooves, and tied 'em up, just to make a beginning; and then we took off our guddles and rub-bags, and lay 'em all together, and covered 'em up with wheat so that shouldn't rain. It was unlucky to leave them rubs uncovered; if you do, that be bound to rain.
>
> There was a lot of them devilins [swifts] flying ter win'ard all that harvest. We didn't like that no-wise; they nearly allust bring rain, them warmin do. (p. 132)

An even more prosaic handling of custom occurs in his account of outfitting for a fishing voyage:

> On the Friday, we got our water-casks filled, and the coals, flares, and oil come aboard. We was nigh ready to start; but we never start to sea on a Friday, so we all went and signed at the custom house, and got a shillun' apiece. (p. 57)

While these beliefs are to some extent "displayed" here their context of use is also shown. Dialectal terms are also shown in context; thus with "funky places" -- areas of wheat beaten down by rain and hard to cut -- "It was, 'There come Mr. Funky,' all day" (p. 133). The handling of belief and custom is the more credible for its being slightly offhand.

The sequence of the harvesters' day is shown: the breaks for beer, meals brought to the field by the women, and the "shocking" at the end of the day when some men would race to see who could be first to the end of a row, assembling the shocks from the sheaves lying along the ridges (p. 138). He lists the types of food brought to the field and intimates the ribald bantering between men and women that went on at mealtimes (p. 137). Rabbits that ran out of the corn were run down and sold to the highest bidder, the whole company sharing the proceeds. The lord's power to direct is apparent: he decided when to "stop and sharp," and decided with the farmer whether to cut wheat or barley, depending on the weather, and when to cart and build stacks. Stack-making and thatching are described in the same detail. The whole account is an engaging blend of technical exposition and personal impressions:

> The next day morning, the sun rose clear, then shut up; that meant wet, the lord said, so we went carting of barley. I liked that, for some mawthers [unmarried girls] come rolling. They have big rakes, and pull the swathes into ringes, rolling the barley into one ringe, pulling two yards from the right and two yards from the left. (pp. 153-154)

While we may suspect Emerson of quietly filling out Windmill's recollections with additional detail he has achieved this with remarkable sensitivity to the oral style.

While some of the accounts of work are somewhat deliberately descriptive there is much in the book that is left implicit. Windmill's reasons for disliking the hospital where he recovers from bronchitis define by opposition his sense of what is normal and proper in a house -- small windows and probably a close atmosphere "[the hospital] looked so much like a butcher's shop -- great big windows and all that" (p. 69). Similarly, his disgust at getting only beef tea and milk there is the reaction of one raised in the working class tradition of stodgy, substantial food:

> There was no filling in that. I like to get a belly full, and not to feel as though I'd been whistling past a cookshop and licking the steam off the window. (p. 70)

Important too for the credibility of these memoirs is the tone of understatement when beliefs and customs are mentioned; things are left unsaid, as they would be by a man for whom such things are commonplace. One of his first recollections is of his mother's unease at the children's noise, perhaps quarrelling, during a storm while their father was at sea:

> . . . . me and my brother was indoors kicking up a lot of row, and the old woman she didn't like to hear it; she told us to hold our tongues because the wind was blowing and the old chap was at sea. (p. 3)

Some belief in a sympathetic relationship between the children's noise and the severity of the storm, remembered as "the May gale," can be surmised, but it is left unstated. The tradition of not sailing on a Friday has already been mentioned as a matter of normal procedure, on the same footing with details of provisioning the vessel and pay (p. 57), and the custom of putting in a garden on Good Friday comes to him as one of the chores of a newly married man: "When Good Friday come, I thought I must garden like the rest on 'em. I hadn't made no garden afore" (p. 288). His account of being a bearer at a funeral is convincing for the same reason:

> That was a bad job, too, 'cause he wouldn't stiff arter he died, and that meant there'd be another corpse there afore six months was up. They burned one light every night along with the corpse, in the upstairs room; they couldn't get him downstairs. (pp. 284-285)

It may be that Emerson coaxed some of these references from his subject but if so the fit between them and the indubitably

oral narrative elements in the work, such as the confrontation stories, is practically seamless.

Perhaps because this is a young man's chronicle Dick Windmill says more of his courtships than is usual in this sample of autobiographies. Yet he says very little, as is to be expected in accordance with the range of permissible subjects in the oral canon. The tone of these reminiscences is similarly held to the humorous, bluff style of male sociability; there is none of the more sentimental reflection which marks Fred Kitchen's attempt to move beyond the oral style into a more articulate, literary model of autobiography.

The value of Windmill's courtship stories is to show the recognized traditional stages of courtship, their place in social life, and the factors involved in the selection of a wife or husband. Although he had a childhood sweetheart with whom he played, his courtships began when he was thirteen, and already at work: "Soon after I got to Carter's I took up with Ellen Rogers, that was the first one I ever went for a walk with on a Sunday night" (p. 25). Skating parties and school treats are also occasions for courtship; lads and mawthers -- adolescents, not children -- played Kiss-in-the-Ring at the treats and, as the obsessive Victorian chronicler of the lives of working-class women,

Alfred Munby, discovered, there was enough sexual inference in such games to interest adults.[27] Windmill fights a man over a girl and is subsequently waylaid and beaten in revenge: ". . . so, think I, they're going to small-gang me. They allust hate a foreigner to come and take their gels" (p. 162). His musicianship and money earned at sea made him an attractive figure: "Then I went home as large as life, with my kit and money -- the mawthers like you better when you go to sea" (p. 74).

At least two courtships were broken off by the girl going into service but the major reason for the sequence of girls seems to have been his selectivity: "I was getting a big strapping chap then, so I begun to be a bit more pertikler with the lasses" (p. 102). Among his criteria for a wife were that she be "nice behaved" (p. 102), and should not "carry a milliner's shop on her back" (pp. 192-193). He rejected two for the latter failing: ". . . that's a sorry sop for a poor man to marry one of that sort; a poor man want a wife what can tarn her sleeves up and work" (p. 213).

As a husband the standard of ideal behaviour dictated he stay at home at night rather than visiting the pub:

> I was wery good at first. I staid in every night; but, arter a bit, I got so I used to draw out of a night, and get half a pint or two. (p. 243)

Windmill swears off drink for periods, congratulating himself for bringing his money home "'stead of letting it run away at the public-housen" (p. 368), yet twice he declares "it warn't the booze I was arter, it was the company -- I allust was fond of company" (p. 233). Windmill's ambivalence over drink and male socializing matches that of Bettesworth, similarly careful with his money but desiring the conversation, and is the crux of Richard Jefferies' sketch of the problem of drink for the labourer in "John Smith's Shanty," where the public house offers the only glow of comfort in a wretched, half-starved and chill existence. The bond with Joe, Windmill's "chummy" and working partner, aroused his wife's jealousy:

> "You're allust along with Joe; it's a wonder you don't sleep along with him." "I might, perhaps, if he were a woman." (p. 252)

but it was a necessary economic relationship:

> I went cutting a new deek for the commissioners. Joe told me on it. He allust seemed to know what jobs was a-going -- he heerd a lot at the public-housen, no doubt. (p. 196)

We learn a little of his household furnishings; the hunger for colour mentioned by Hillyer is expressed in the

coloured "gays," pictures, and Biblical illustrations he buys as decorations. He also makes "trum-mats" (rugs made of "thrums" or weavers' ends) for the floors, seven in a month. The only domestic entertainment he mentions is his wife's reading to him from "tale-books" after tea: "Onst she begin a tale, she hev' to read that right trew, if that take two o'clock of a mornin'!" (p. 374) A dominant attitude, perhaps due to his autobiography being of mid-life rather than old age, is his feeling of insecurity; his appointment as millman should make him "good for life" (p. 364), and he plans to grow corn and keep a cow or two, but all depends on his own strength: ". . . that's all right so long as my health keep good, but what's ahead on us, we dunno. What's ondone is wery onsarten" (p. 377).

Though he deals a little more than any other autobiographer discussed here with married life the sexual sphere is predictably circumscribed. A passage of banter with a girl hints that cohabitation without benefit of clergy was not unusual but the full implications of not being "passoned" are left unexplained:

> "Don't you wish you was married?" I ax. "How do you know I ain't married?" "I dunno what you are; but don't you wish you was passoned?" "No," she say directly. (p. 155)

A further implicitness may lie in his reference to the practice of sending the children to Sunday school after which he and his wife "went and had a sleep till chapel time, at half-arter two" (p. 373).

These meaningful silences in folk autobiography are matched by the use of clichés to bridge areas of awkwardness; oral recollection does not lend itself to the articulation of the fine shades of motivation and feeling that are a feature of literary autobiography. Recalling his decision to marry, for example, Windmill uses a commonplace: "I was four and twenty then, so I thought it was time to get someone to see arter me" (p. 235), and follows this with another traditional figure: "I had to get a house and buy the sticks -- a cage for the bird" (p. 236). It is, of course, a general argument here that such conventionalisms and omissions in oral autobiography do not represent a lack of ethnographic data but rather that they reveal something of what a society finds permissible to say or even possible to think. This point will be returned to in the following chapter. One further example of the use of a formula to sum up and define a complex emotional state is too intriguing to leave out: after a quarrel one of his sweethearts married someone else but later "told people she loved my little finger better than her husband's whole body" (p. 195).

Given the resonance of such a trope in folk ballads it is perhaps not surprising that it is here adopted for personal reference by a member of an oral society.

This is the end of the primary material I have chosen to survey. What remains for the final chapter is an attempt to draw together, and state as a whole, the outline of an oral canon for personal reminiscence. Prior to this, however, I have attempted to set the folkloristic approach to autobiography within the broader context of literary, anthropological, and historical interpretations and uses of personal documents; I have tried to point out the characteristic questions scholars in each discipline have asked of such materials. The last chapter, then, is intended as a synthesis of a variety of ways of thinking about reading, writing, and studying biography and autobiography.

VII

On Reading Biography and Autobiography

However apparently "unliterary" and "oral" in style an autobiography may be it has not entirely escaped being shaped by its author's concept of what is proper to autobiography as a literary genre. Except with privately printed books, editorial influence has usually also been brought to bear, to say nothing of publishers' calculations as to the marketability of the work. It is essential therefore to understand the factors operating upon a "personal document" when it appears as an autobiography and the following is thus a review of recent literary discussion of autobiography as a form; the questions posed about autobiographies by some modern literary critics are found to be in many ways identical with, or complementary to, those raised by anthropologists, social historians, and folklorists; these disciplines will also be reviewed in turn in terms of their approaches to the various kinds of writing about individual lives. Finally I will suggest the story categories which seem to form an oral canon for personal reminiscence among English rural workers.

I. Literary approaches to Autobiography

The act of writing an autobiography has not always seemed the natural or understandable thing to do that it does at the present. Literary historians have traced the rise of a modern sense of the individual to the period between approximately 1600 and 1800, by which time writers seem to be working within an established genre. Lionel Trilling in Sincerity and Authenticity, a collection of lectures on the history of these ideals, suggests that before this period a person did not have a developed sense of himself as an individual:

> he did not suppose that he might be an object of interest to his fellow men not for the reason that he had achieved something notable or been witness to great events but simply because as an individual he was of consequence.

Trilling quotes the social historian Christopher Hill's comment on the greater sense of individualism appearing in housing and furnishings in the seventeenth century:

> More rooms in better-off peasant homes, use of glass in windows. . . use of coal in grates, replacement of benches by chairs--all this made possible greater comfort and privacy for at least the upper

> half of the population. Privacy contributed to the introspection and soul-searching of radical Puritanism, to the keeping of diaries and spiritual journals.[1]

If introspection and life writing really depends on privacy it should be remembered that rural labourers were one of the last groups in English society to experience its influence. As many Victorian journalists and clergymen were shocked to discover, the sleeping quarters of some farmhouses and many labourers' cottages were no more partitioned than they had been in the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries; Richard Jefferies tells of a farmer whose principal labourer slept with him in the same bed "master and man, a custom common in old times, long since generally disused" (Life of the Fields, p. 30).

Life in the forecastle, and in the woodscamps and bunkhouses of North America, similarly cramped individual freedoms, as military barracks life still does. Cobbett's autobiography records some of the typical difficulties of trying to write in such a situation:

> I had no moment of time that I could call my own; and I had to read and to write amidst the talking, laughing, singing, whistling and brawling of at least half a score of the most thoughtless of men, and that, too, in the hours of their freedom from all control. (Progress of a Plough-Boy, p. 23)

Of course military organizations, like religious orders, have an interest in repressing private, possibly subversive thinking, and in such living arrangements where even the keeping of a notebook is viewed with suspicion it is not surprising if autobiographies from the lower ranks are few, and when written at all have been recollected in tranquility after retirement.

Wayne Shumaker's English Autobiography: Its Emergence, Materials and Form,[2] an excellent introduction to the genre, discusses specific works in which the shift in sensibility is embodied; Thomas Tusser's The Author's Life, given in verse as part of his Five Hundred Pointes of Good Husbandrie (1577), is "almost or quite unprecedented in England . . . in assuming public curiosity about the lives of private men simply as lives" (p. 17). He associates the rise of autobiography with the general movement from deductive to inductive habits of thought; before 1500:

> the impulse to subsume discrete facts under general principles and individual human beings under types seems to have been almost universal. Nor, Chaucer's Troilus and Canterbury Tales to one side, does there appear to have been any special readiness in England to value individual differences. (pp. 16-17)

The "character" literature of the seventeenth century, as we have seen, still dealt with types rather than individuals. Shumaker cites the new factors that had come about by 1800 and which contributed to the establishment of autobiography: the invention of printing and the discovery of a more varied audience; Puritanism's examination of psychic states; primitivism, which directed attention to natural impulses; a secularization of thought which led to more concern with questions of social living; and the rise of travel accounts and the novel, though the latter parallels, rather than causes, autobiographical interests, Shumaker suggests. Inductive thinking, however, "the view that Truth, instead of being already known in its essentials, could only be discovered by the slow accumulation of particulars" (p. 29), had the effect of making the lives of even the most "ordinary" of people of interest and use.

This is, of course, the idea behind Sturt's journals and a principle of contemporary social science, yet it remains doubtful if even at the present the "common" man, or woman fully accepts the proposition. Edward D. Ives has noted that one problem facing the oral historian is in convincing the "average" person that his or her story is worth telling:

> The layman's conception of history . . . has been so conditioned by the "great man/ significant event" approach that it is frequently difficult for an ordinary mortal to believe that anyone is really interested in unremarkable him.[3]

In England this tendency has been exacerbated by the rigidities of the class system. Folklife autobiographies are written by individuals who treat themselves as types, since this, they feel, is the way the world is interested in them. They are conscious that the readers expect "a labourer's view," not "Fred Bettesworth's view," and this is one reason--though there are other less factitious ones, related to the oral provenance of many of the narratives they incorporate--why their histories of themselves focus so much upon their occupations.

The fundamental question raised by autobiography, as a medium claiming sincerity and authenticity, must be "how true is it?" The answer can only be that autobiography contains different kinds of truth, many of which are only partial; some are intended by an author, others emerge despite his omissions or attempts to mislead the reader, or even to deceive himself. The relative truth of autobiography has been discussed in detail by a number of literary critics; here we shall give only a sampling of the

issues they have raised, concentrating on problems of understanding the factors that condition the form and content of folklife autobiography.

The first distortion of "truth" in any autobiography is an inevitable consequence of the enterprise Wayne Shumaker has called "the reduction of heterogeneity," in which the autobiographer selects, from the vastness of random experience, the people, events, patterns of life, he will treat as "significant." Roy Pascal compares this selection process with the creation of a story:

> autobiography is a shaping of the past. It imposes a pattern on a life, constructs out of it a coherent story (Design and Truth, p. 9).

But the story, he points out, falsifies by giving a linear narrative progression to events and impressions that may have been experienced simultaneously (Design and Truth, p. 78). Both critics cite W.H. Hudson's observation that "it is an illusion to think the few things distinctly remembered and visualised are precisely those which were most important in our life."[4] Memory is often stocked with trivial, illogical images; it is rather the investing of these with significance by the adult personality, striving

to impose a pattern through which to understand his life, which gives them a new kind of "truth" as a projection of more considered attitudes and values of the writer (Design and Truth, p. 71).

Paul Fussell in The Great War and Modern Memory[5] has discussed the use by diarists and autobiographers of "paradigms" against which their personal experience could be compared and interpreted; the paradigm enables the seeing of relationships and analogies that would not have been apparent without it. His best example is the use made by a great number of First World War writers, of all ranks and levels of literary sophistication, of Bunyan's The Pilgrim's Progress to give shape to their experience of trench warfare and enable them to communicate it. Fussell points out the impossibility in a literate, or even semi-literate society, of recording experience "without some literature leaking in" (Fussell, p. 173), and Bunyan's "Slough of Despond" and "Valley of the Shadow of Death" became not only gruesomely real to these writers but came to seem the only terms that could explain their situation:

> It is odd and wonderful that front-line experience should ape the pattern of the one book everybody knew. Or to put it perhaps more accurately, front-line experience seemed to become available for

> interpretation when it was seen how closely parts of it resembled the action of Pilgrim's Progress. (Fussell, pp. 138-9)

I have already noted the popularity of The Pilgrim's Progress and the other great English spiritual autobiography Robinson Crusoe, and how the miller, Saunders, drew on Pilgrim's Progress to convey scenes from his own life; Alison Uttley has described how both were read aloud to servants and children in her Derbyshire farmhouse. One suspects they were enjoyed more as good stories than for their religious inspiration; at least one literary scholar has recently commented on the closeness of the adventures of Bunyan's hero to the secular folktales of giants and other imaginary horrors that the book was designed to supplant.[6]

Of course no single paradigm can suffice to explain the multifariousness of life. What the literary theorist intends by "paradigm" is akin to the meaning attached to "world view" by anthropologists and "mental world" by social historians, with due sense of the cultural relativity of the "truths" perceived through these belief and value systems. The sociolinguist Basil Bernstein has noted how

> The speech system or linguistic code, itself a function of the social structure, marks out selectively for the individual what is relevant in the environment.[7]

In oral autobiography we have already seen how Sturt discovered that Bettesworth noticed different things--horses, for example-- than he did, and how Bettesworth had "his subject," which Sturt had not at first understood. Of what he recorded from Bettesworth Sturt admits:

> Its incoherencies are partly my fault; for not knowing at this time how he had travelled, nor yet expecting a kind of autobiography from the old man, I was trying to make him tell of other matters, which proved irrelevant to his subject. (Bettesworth Book, p. 45)

Another way of understanding the term paradigm is, as I have suggested elsewhere,[8] as the argument an autobiographer is implicitly or explicitly making: war is hell, the old days were hard, there was more community then, and which governs his selection of what he considers appropriate anecdotes and memorates with which to persuade his listener on reader. But again the "truth" is less to be sought in the specifics of the writer's rhetorical illustrations than in his broader argument which reflects his culture, personality, and experience.

The perspective of old age, from which the retrospective view of a life is usually taken, also inevitably distorts; the childhood sensibility is extremely difficult

to render without "over-writing," imputing adult perceptions to the child (Pascal, pp. 80-82), and the author's normally settled position may make him no longer able to understand his earlier drives, stresses, and uncertainty:

> the fact that they have reached a stable goal may bring them to depict the past as leading too inevitably to its outcome . . . . (Pascal, p. 72)

The accuracy of this observation can be borne out by considering the unsettled note at the end of the young Dick Windmill's story, "What's ondone is wery onsarten" (Son of the Fens, p. 377), in comparison with the satisfied tone of the conclusions to The Rabbit Skin Cap and I Walked By Night, or the following, from Gaius Carley:

> Such has been my life in the forge as a village blacksmith and when I lay down my pen and the ring of the anvil for the last time tells me it is my last job I thank my Creator for giving me the ability to do a man's job. (Memoirs of Gaius Carley, p. 67)

To many autobiographers this has seemed the only imaginable proper, pious conclusion -- something taken for granted in an autobiography, the ending formula -- but it is notable

to see the extent to which working-class autobiographers remain very much "in character," in their closing remarks, as members of the craft which provided their original self-justification for writing of themselves at all. As the "King of the Norfolk Poachers" says in his valediction (in a passage I have quoted before):

> I have exausted my knolidge, Dear Reader, and have no more to rite, so I must bring this life Story to a close as I am thinking of bringing my Life to the same end, only I know I must make myself content to the finish. (I Walked By Night, p. 183)

Indeed for any of these men to repine at the courses their lives had taken might have seemed to them like the despised trait of "flinching." Bettesworth's reflection on his own endurance may be recalled again:

> And the foreman standin' there says, "No, old Fred 've worked pole-pullin' 'long o' me thirty year, and I never knowed 'n flich yet." "No," I says, "and I ben't gwine to now." (Bettesworth Book, p. 324)

The process of selection is a matter of inclusion and exclusion, self-revelation and self-censorship. Shumaker's survey of typical exclusions from autobiographies

of all kinds is a reminder that some of the habits of exclusion to be noted in the "oral canon" are not limited to it, though they may be more pronounced there. He considers the treatment of parents, children, and marriage in autobiography. Parents, he finds, are generally treated in great detail, sometimes with "appalling frankness" because of their importance in childhood and also because they are often dead by the time of writing, freeing the autobiographer to be lavish in his praise or blame (Shumaker, pp. 42-43). Leslie Stephen has noted the prominence of "the sacred vision of the mother" in the childhood chapters of autobiography,[9] and in working-class recollections of family life Augustus Jessopp's remark that

> Whatever memories they have of tenderness pity, or sympathy, these all have to do with their mothers. The fathers seem to have been a terror to the rising generation and only that. (Arcady, p. 48)

is amply borne out in the written versions as well as in the oral reminiscences he was referring to. As we have seen with the thatcher, Norman Goodland, and the gamekeeper, John Wilkins, the father often imposed a strong "positional authority" which allowed no questioning of his decisions, and there was something of an aggressive, competitive edge

in a father and son relationship, especially when the son was apprenticed to his father. As with George Baldry and his father in the episode of the handmade basket, fathers may well have felt that they had to be tough with their sons to harden them to deal in a hard, competitive world. Such a strategy must have made it difficult simultaneously to express affection.

The lack of detail given about marriage is a feature of élite as well as oral autobiography:

> Marriage is usually brushed off with a gesture. Anthony Trollope says merely, "My marriage was like the marriage of other people, and of no special interest to anyone except my wife and me." . . . . romantic love is also usually treated as none of the world's business. (Shumaker, p. 42)

Children, however cherished, Shumaker suggests, may not be mentioned at all unless some disruptive incident demands telling of them, and "respect for privacy" may restrict comment on friendships, just as "modesty," or fear of apparent vanity, causes avoidance of the description of the autobiographer's personal appearance and mannerisms. Another of Shumaker's observations should be kept in mind as a general caution about interpretation: the amount of

attention given in the text to a particular relationship is often not in proportion to its actual significance for the individual:

> in the main, casual associations are likely to be spoken of at greater length than habitual ones, much as the typical family album contains chiefly photographs taken on vacations. (Shumaker, p. 42)

We certainly find more portaiture of workmates and employers than of wives in working men's chronicles.

The establishment by the author of the main subject for his autobiography, e.g. "The Progress of a Plough-boy to a Seat in Parliament," beyond the excision of what is deemed extraneous to his theme, also involves an attitude taken toward the pattern discerned in his life, and a sense of the expectations of the audience for whom he is writing. All these factors compromise the "truth" of what is told. Folklife autobiographies usually fall into the category Shumaker defines as "non-subjective" (p. 54); they are more records of things done than things thought; their attention is directed toward social life rather than inward psychic states; feelings are embodied and made implicit in actions rather than discussed through interior monologue. This style of autobiography is obviously not restricted to rural

workers but is also favoured by politicians, military officers, explorers, and other practical men. Autobiographies of the opposite tendency would be those which analyze the inner life: "The Growth of a Poet's Soul." Fortunately many folklife autobiographies contain elements of both kinds within them, though the inner feelings may have to be probed for by a sensitive reading.

The practical cast of most folklife autobiography, however, is arrived at through a number of pressures. I have already suggested the diffidence with which the "common man" thinks of the interest of his life to others of more formal education and higher social class. Fred Kitchen seems afraid of writing "above his station" -- a deferential attitude revealing his estate childhood -- and cuts short an account of a visit to a performance of Macbeth with this remark:

> But I must get back to our "'osses," for we've stayed too long in the theatre, and my story is a story of "'osses and farm chaps," and ought not to take in highfalutin subjects. (Brother to the Ox, p. 170)

It is rare to get such a direct statement of the sense of constraint on what is considered appropriate subject matter.

Like many folklife autobiographers (and the poachers are particularly sensitive to this) he is writing partly in response to the public stereotype of his occupation, tastes, and intellect, and this has the effect of both focussing and limiting his subject matter.

Kitchen, ever humbly apologetic, tells at the end of his book how he had been persuaded to write it by his wife:

> And then our Lizzie said: "Why not try writing a book? Lots of folk get their lives into print nowadays, so why not a farm labourer?"
>
> I thought a bit, and I thought a bit; for I couldn't see how anyone would be interested in a farmer joskin. . . . (p. 244)

His being a farm labourer, after seeming to him at first to disqualify him from writing, becomes his justification for bringing himself before the public. Unusual or little written of occupations, such as mole catching,[10] family and village history,[11] or simply knowledge of the "old way of life,"[12] are typical justifications made by folklife autobiographers. But it is rare for any of them to accept the proposition that a "self," any self, has an intrinsic interest.

Roy Pascal has observed the emergence in the nineteenth century of a sense of "time lost" as a particular motivation for autobiography:

> What is new in the nineteenth century is the historical consciousness that the time described has now altered, gone beyond recall. Countless autobiographies set out to describe circumstances that are altogether vanished. The fantastically rapid transformation of Western society, above all through industrialization, has affected everything -- the old community of village and small town, ties, tools, manners, religious and moral outlooks and behaviour. Over and over again men write about their childhood and youth, often for their grandchildren, to explain historical circumstances utterly remote from the experience of later generations. (Pascal, pp. 56-57)

Of course the rise of interest in folk tradition has contributed largely to this; the several west of Ireland autobiographies display a similar enough conviction -- fostered by the outside enthusiasts for their folk culture -- that "our like will not be there again," for the sentiment to have been parodied in Flann O'Brien's witty spoof autobiography The Poor Mouth,[13] in which the phrase is constantly on characters' lips and applied to the most banal situations.

Yet the sense of change, while it may be taken to maudlin extremes bearing no relation to the way in which

change was actually experienced, has a use in making an author more aware of the gap in experience and assumptions between himself and his audience, and hence encouraging him to be more extensive in his descriptions of the "commonplace." "Sure everybody knows that" is a familiar, and frustrating, response often made by folklife autobiographers to their editors when pressed as to why they have not explained the function of a "thole-pin" or the ethics of a "scoff," to make some hypothetical Newfoundland examples. As Herbert Halpert has discovered, over many years of encouraging university students to describe the folk tradition of their native communities, it is generally those things most taken for granted, and hence invisible to themselves, that outsiders will most need to know in order to understand the community culture. But this pressure from potential users of the material -- folklorists, historians, anthropologists -- imposes its own kind of distortion. Life records are often improved aesthetically and ethnographically by the addition, at editorial insistence, of what may seem to their authors to be trivialities. Though urban critics will applaud these as "richly textured details of everyday life" the demand for this information may be felt to be an almost patronizing interference with the author's original plan. There can be an uncomfortable feeling about reading

an autobiography for what literary critics normally disparage as its "sociological interest" while personally disdaining as "pious platitudes" or "bourgeois sentimentality" passages which the author may have considered his most profound statements.

The adoption of a particular attitude toward a subject matter is also sometimes swayed by exterior pressures, as in Walter Rose's writing, where he has evidently accepted the more knowledgeable opinions of his betters, the arts and crafts enthusiasts who "discovered" him as a working carpenter, as to the satisfactions of woodcarving in the Gothic spirit. Of course folklife autobiographers cannot be immune to the popular ideas of their period, and obviously it is one of the values of their works that they reflect them, but Rose's orthodox parroting of the opinions of the Return to Husbandry school represents a general danger in autobiographies stimulated by outside enthusiasts, including folklorists. Rose has used an externally-derived paradigm, based on a revivalist ethic, to "see" what he had been doing as a carpenter, as though for the first time. This is a kind of "truth" in that twentieth-century English village carpenters are now, perhaps, influenced by the ideas of John Ruskin; but Rose's philosophy is not necessarily a survival into this century of older folk attitudes to craftsmanship and the "organic community."

So far I have discussed various kinds of "untruths" created in autobiography as a result of the author's need to turn heterogeneous experience into patterned narrative. Two complementary themes recur in oral and written reminiscence which seem to be a result of the contemplation of one's life from a position of age; the first may be termed the "pastoral of childhood," and the second, the "alienation of old age." The fall from a paradisal state in childhood has been considered by Martha Ronk Lifson as an archetypal pattern which many autobiographers have found apt to picture the movement from innocence to adult experience and disillusion.[14] She is able to demonstrate some surprisingly similar passages, in recollections of childhood, which contain gardens, fruit (especially peaches), sunshine, and a sense of timelessness, and offers good reasons, related to the history of autobiography as a genre, for their presence; among them, that gardens and introspective thought have long been linked in Western literary tradition. The availability of the Christian myth to writers of all kinds is also apparent; I have cited the play with the apple symbol by Laurie Lee and Spike Mays in the chapter on childhood autobiographies. Frank Kendon, as a boy, eating wild raspberries and unripe hazelnuts in a wood, grows conscious of being late and says: "I knew

why Adam hid," (The Small Years, p. 17); and even George Baldry remembering the garden he was allowed to plant, observes: "we did not value time in them days, having just eternity to play in, as it seem to a child" (Rabbit Skin Cap, p. 30).

Yet there is a fundamental difference in tone between Baldry's account of childhood and the nostalgic, poetic evocation of its pleasures by Georgian middle-class writers like Kenneth Grahame, in Dream Days, Kendon, or even Laurie Lee, besides the élite autobiographies surveyed by Lifson. Baldry's remark on eternity is sandwiched between practical problems of keeping the hens from scratching out his seeds, which were only of wild flowers anyway since they had no money for anything more "and did not so much as know seed could be bought." Unlike the subjects of middle-class autobiographies, who seem to have wished to prolong their childhood as an endless golden summer idyll, the attention of working-class children is remembered as having been constantly turned toward becoming grown-up working men; Baldry is happier with work to do than in simply playing:

> we . . . soon had a garden full of wild flowers. I being the eldest was foreman gardener. Father says, "They can talk and make plenty of noise -- I'll set 'em some work cleaning some tarnips for the

> cow." We found up an old stump of a brush and a piece or two of stick and soon rubbed and probed at 'em till they were all clean and thought we was rare men. (Rabbit Skin Cap, p. 27)

Working-man autobiographers present childhood as an awkward time full of privations and beatings to be got over as soon as possible. In place of peaches, there might be a swede for helping the shepherd, and even that begrudged by the farmer (Rabbit Skin Cap, pp. 33-36). This is not to say that working-class autobiographies are devoid of happy memories of childhood; but the incidents related with most delight are comic misadventures, mischief and escapades as opposed to the more dreamy, imaginative, often solitary play remembered by middle-class authors. Of course this distinction may have as much to do with the different stylistic conventions of autobiography we have been discussing as with any objective, measurable differences between the ways in which children play, or remember their play; all that can be said here is that a contrast is evident in autobiography. The role of mischief stories as part of the oral canon will be returned to below.

If childhood is an Eden of warmth and fruit, old age is alienated, full of the sense that things fall apart. This is a consequence of aging and the loss of personal power

as retirement removes the individual from the network of responsibilities and the deaths of contemporaries remind him of his mortality. Porteous's subject, "Chuckling Joe," regrets the loss of the spirit of community and fun which he associates with the wadding mill where he had worked:

> "Things then werena like what they are naa. Thirty, no thirty-five years ago," (he was telling me this in 1935) "down at th' mill were like a playground. Everybody was allus playin' tricks, an' th' Old Boss were as bad as anybody. Naa it's all get as much out o' anybody as yo' con. It may be awreet for a chap as is retired, naa, but for a fellow as 'as ta keep at it, it's non like it used ta be." (Chuckling Joe, p. 93)

In his last years Joe spent much time reminiscing with his age-mates and Porteous was able to observe how

> their tales dovetailed all the time, nearly always about folk. "What became of so-and-so?" "Oh, didna you know? Oo's dead. Oo were a rum un, reet." (pp. 183-184)

Joe remarks, in a familiar phrase, "There were moor characters i' them days, than there is naa' (p. 185). These formulaically phrased laments hinge upon the feeling of lost community which is, of course, one of the main motivations

for autobiography or the village histories which substitute for it in writers such as John Ward.

These conventional sentiments, however, should be recognized for what they are: a reading of life from a perspective of age. As with the mythical Golden Age which recedes into the past ever further as it is sought, each generation seems fated to discover for itself the loss of community. Recently psychiatrists have begun to appreciate the therapeutic effects of autobiography for elderly people and a scientific literature has grown up on the use of the "life review."[15]

While literary criticism is interested in the "truth" of autobiography it is so at a different level from other disciplines. Literary critics are used to dealing with truth as a relative quality; Shumaker cites a central comment on autobiography which draws attention to the kinds of "truth" contained in the texture of autobiography even when its text is blatantly fictitious: Philip Gilbert Hamerton had remarked:

> the writer must be unconsciously revealing himself all along, merely by his way of telling things. (Shumaker, p. 50)

Pascal has cited Leslie Stephen's comment to the effect that

> distortions of the truth belong to the values of autobiography and are as revealing as the truth. (Pascal, p. 62)

and, for himself, Pascal observes that watching an author "wrestling with truth," as he tries to reconcile his early and later opinions and contradictory experiences, is "one of the joys of reading autobiographies" (Pascal, p. 75). One of Pascal's opening comments on the nature of autobiography speaks to the concept of attitude or world-view I have tried to pursue throughout this study:

> autobiographies offer an unparalleled insight into the mode of consciousness of other men. Even if what they tell us is not factually true, or only partly true, it always is true evidence of their personality. (Pascal, p. 1)

Thus to understand Bettesworth's "mode of consciousness" we must try to see the man behind his comments, however self-contradictory they may be. All four disciplines surveyed here would agree that "truth" is a much more complex and interesting subject than mere fidelity to chronology and objective details of people and places. From the literary critics' interest in the aesthetic problems of putting experience into words we now turn to the anthropologists'

concern with autobiographical texts, whether written or orally recorded, as a reflection of the society or culture to which their authors belong.

II. Anthropology and Life History

In turning to some questions raised about autobiography by anthropologists we find the expression of a greater concern with identifying the individual as a representative member of his culture. Native autobiographies were seen at first as a supplement to more general ethnological descriptions because they might reveal otherwise inaccessible aspects of culture; Paul Radin, one of the pioneers in their use, described such autobiographies memorably as offering "an inside view of . . . culture."[15] Later anthropologists interested in "culture and personality" added a larger psychological component to their analysis in order to consider such questions as the relationship between the institutions of a society and the typical kinds of personality found within it. More recently a phenomenological approach to autobiographies has focussed on their innate characteristics as records of perception and experience; attention has been placed on the difficulties of trying to penetrate an alien mode of thought. The three approaches merge to varying degrees in many anthropological studies which use native autobiographies.

Fortunately the large anthropological literature on autobiographies, "personal documents," or "life histories," has been well surveyed by L.L. Langness in The Life History in Anthropological Science, a history of trends followed in the use of the life history method; this work has recently been supplemented by Lives: An Anthropological Approach to Biography, by Langness and Gelya Frank.[17] Prior to Langness there had been several important statements of methodology which had the aim of putting life history collection and study on a more objective base in order that proper comparison of findings could be made. An early criticism of the method had been that the sympathies, interests, and personality of the investigator sometimes gave a haphazard character to the personal document produced, and that two researchers might come away with quite different material from the same informant. John Dollard's Criteria for the Life History (1935),[18] was the first statement of method, and his seven principles aimed at securing data on how culture influenced personality are still fundamental; his approach can perhaps be summed up in his phrase: "we want to know how a new person is added to the group" (Criteria, p. 277). Though he is not an anthropologist, Gordon W. Allport's The Use of Personal Documents in Psychological Science (1942)[19] goes beyond purely psychological consider-

ations in also discussing the methodology of the life history. The most comprehensive and still unsurpassed evaluation of the problems and virtues of the approach is Clyde Kluckhohn's "The Personal Document in Anthropological Science" (1945),[20] a work which should also be read as a manual of general fieldwork practice by any folklorist or ethnologist.

While I have been using the terms "autobiography" and "life history" as though they were synonymous it is necessary to consider some differences between them, even though such differences may prove to be only in degree rather than in kind. The autobiography is, of course, normally produced at the individual's volition (though often encouraged by others), while a life history is a document constructed through the collaboration of an informant and an investigator. The subject of a life history has, in theory, been selected for his representativeness of some age group, occupation, or status within his culture; his articulateness and willingness to co-operate will also have been considered; the autobiographer selects himself and may have much or little to offer. In reality, Kluckhohn remarks, anthropologists have been less scrupulous in their choice of informants:

> In many cases, there are indications that the subject or subjects were hardly "selected" at all. The ethnographer's interpreter or the old man who hung around the agency or anyone else who happened to be at hand was used, with little attention to representativeness or to bearing upon other problems. (p. 115)

The life history is generally far more structured in terms of the research interests of the collector than an autobiography could be, though, as in the case of Fred Kitchen discussed above, autobiographers sometimes have a keen perception of what their audience expects of them. Life history subjects are often guided directly or indirectly to discussing topics which the investigator sees as having general utility in the description of culture and personality: the life cycle of birth, puberty, marriage, parenthood, death, as well as the topics of work, religion, politics and social life. The autobiographer may have given no thought to some of these categories of experience or he may suppress his feelings about one or other of them as not proper to his sense of what an autobiography should reveal. A further important distinction is that life histories have in the main been collected from people to whom extended narrative introspection is not an established cultural form; as Kluckhohn has observed, this is not simply a matter of literacy:

> The existence of diaries as an approved means of self-expression and the motivations for keeping them are linked -- for our society -- with other configurations of Western culture: our special kind of "individualism," our conceptualizations of time." (p. 104)

Most Western writers of autobiographies, however "naive," operate within a shared canon of autobiographical conventions. Working in foreign languages is an additional difficulty faced by many anthropologists; the responses of the subject may have to be filtered through the consciousness and vocabulary of an interpreter, as well as those of the analyst, with a consequent loss in definition of precise shades of meaning (Kluckhohn, pp. 122-124).

Other considerations are common to life histories recorded in the exotic cultures usually studied by anthropologists and the more familiar societies studied by folklorists. A primary question is as to how the information presented in a life history is shaped by factors in the actual circumstances of performance and recording, such as the informant's attitude toward the investigator; as Kluckhohn says, if the investigator feels himself classified as "a father figure or a son figure or a white man figure" he must make allowances for this in interpreting the material

presented" (p. 122). The fieldworker must understand the motivation for co-operation of his informant, and cultivate it (p. 121).

Two recent essays by Gelya Frank and Lawrence C. Watson dealing with the "phenomenology" of the life history have focussed on the dynamics of the event itself: the telling of the narratives in responses to the questions and reactions of the interviewer.[21] My own definition of the life history, from this perspective, is that it is

> a stream of discourse recorded in an interaction between the informant and an interviewer which includes personal experience narratives and commentary by the informant on his life history.[22]

This sense of the life history, which owes much to Kluckhohn's essay, seems to be in agreement with that given by Gelya Frank, who sees it as "not a fait accompli of consciousness but. . . a form that emerges in discourse with another or oneself" (p. 86), and by Lawrence C. Watson:

> The life history is, I believe, the way a person conceptualizes the stream of experience that constitutes his life as he knows it, in accordance with the demands and expectations he and others impose on the act of relating that life. (pp. 127-128)

Frank doubts that many individuals "formulate a complete autobiography in their heads, carrying their complete life story intact from beginning to end" (p. 86), and I agree. It is my impression that, when faced with a situation which demands autobiographical narration, an informant selects, in the main, pre-formulated narratives from his repertory which he has used before, and will probably use again, in other contexts too. Allport alluded to the existence of such stories:

> The past congeals into firmly set mnemonic forms. One thinks of one's childhood as unhappy or idyllic, or uneventful, and with this leading motif in mind, specific images, events, and even certain contrasting experiences that relieved the monotony, are selected for retention. (pp. 135-136)

As he continues to say, the relative "truth" of these memories and narratives is less important than the "certain manner" in which the informant "structures and recalls his life" (Allport, p. 136).

In the relationship between subject and investigator what Gelya Frank has termed a "tacit negotiation" of the situation occurs in which each party adopts the role which he feels the event to demand of him; for example, in my own experience, the Dorset folk healer of my earlier study was

not surprised by my interest in him since it corresponded to his strong self-image of being more knowledgeable and philosophical than the average man; he compared our talks in a simile that flattered us both:

> I think you're going the right way about it because you're coming to the chaps like me and you're listening to what I've got to tell you, and I've acquired a lot of my knowledge by listening in the past to older men as well. If you want to learn anything in this world you go, like Jesus did, when he went into the temple, Jesus started the right idea look. He went into the temple didn't he, and what did he do? He sat among the learned men, didn't he. Picked their brains.[23]

A Nova Scotia farmer and former woods worker, however, felt unable to tell me about life in the woods camps because of my obvious lack of background, as a young Englishman; he remarked approximately as follows:

> Now just what are we going to do here . . .? It's no good me talking about the woods because this man, he's not going to know anything about it.

As Kluckhohn notes, informants "must somehow be able to place the investigator within their scheme of things" (p. 110), and the investigator must understand the implications

for his conduct and questions of just where he has been "placed." Clearly the informant develops his own strategy of response based on his perception of subject and purpose of the interview, the persona of the interviewer, and other variables.

Because the life history -- a text created in face to face oral interaction between recorder and teller -- is so much subject to the normal rules of conversational interaction, it seems best explicated by reference to rhetorical analysis. Frank has suggested

> It may even be said that the conventions of discourse frame the story as much as the story, presumed intact in the subject's mind, governs what will be disclosed. (p. 86)

The individual is conducting an argument in his own behalf, for his reading of events, and he selects his illustrations accordingly. Close reading of the text is necessary to uncover the kind of information being given by the informant, in spite of himself, merely by the way he argues, the associations he makes between things, the tenor of his language, even, as Kluckhohn noted, his bodily expressions (Kluckhohn, p. 108).

Kluckhohn also observed that "Every language is a system of categorizing and interpreting experience" (p. 112), and recommended that at least one long episode be recorded in the native language, rather than the investigator's, for appraisal of the "loss of content and feeling tone and other alterations forced by translation" (pp. 112-113). Now that oral testimonies can be recorded in full by tape recorder (as was not so when Kluckhohn wrote), verbatim transcription and many replayings of the tape can reveal patterns of association in word use and links made by the subject between various aspects of his experience. Of course, if the text is to be treated in this way, as bearing information in its style as well as in its content, it follows that there should be a minimum of direction by the collector. Kluckhohn had also anticipated this in his distinction between "free" and "guided" interviews (p. 125); in his advocacy of open-ended questions (p. 111); and in his warning against interrupting "the free flow of the tale and its associations" (p. 122).

The literary theorist Kenneth Burke's concept of "associational clusters" is appropriate here. He suggests we learn to read an author by noting the "associational equations" he makes; similarly, I would suggest, one discovers what something means to a life history informant by

noting the other things he associates or equates it with.

> The "symbolism" of a word, consists in the fact that no one quite uses the word in its mere dictionary sense. And the overtones of a usage are revealed "by the company it keeps" in the utterances of a given speaker or writer.[24]

As a possible illustration of Burke's point I have discussed already how in my life history study of a folk healer my informant's perception of the nature of his ability to "charm" diseases became clearer to my by comparison of the different contexts in which he considered the term "clever" to be appropriate to describe one of his abilities; though he took full credit for other farmwork skills in which he was "a clever chap," charming was different; it was not "clever" and he felt that it would be wrong of him to claim any personal credit for the power to do it.[25]

Once again, Kluckhohn has anticipated this attempt to "go beyond the manifest content of interviews"; the effort, he says, is vital, though

> The balance between seeing too little and seeing too much is a very nice one. . . . What the informant does <u>not</u> say, when and how he says what he does, may have for the

> subtleties of both cultural and psychological analysis an importance equal to that of the explicit content. (p. 146)

Close reading of this nature also demands full publication of recorded interviews. Kluckhohn suggests an ideal threefold manner of publication: one volume being the "fully digested" version, in which the life history is given in corrected, edited, and analyzed form; the second, giving the complete raw data for the benefit of further research and future reinterpretation; and the third being a topically arranged version of the raw material (pp. 152-155).

None of the works of English rural literature discussed here, even Sturt's, are as rawly unedited as the full transcript of a life history interview could be; but Sturt, and a few others, such as Pamela Tennant, intuitively understood the importance of showing where a person was boringly repetitive; Sturt says of Bettesworth's gardening precepts -- "an interminable repetition of technical observations" --

> Everybody says the same thing and takes every opportunity of saying it; and yet it is not tedious because one knows that it is a thing never to be forgotten. . . . So, every time

> we meet, the talk goes on. Yet even with the preparation for it, I dare not set down anything like all that I can remember of this kind of thing as it has been said during the last few days. It must rather be imagined, as filling in the spaces between the following fragments [he gives examples of gardening talk], and explaining some of them. (Bettesworth Book, pp. 260-261)

As Sturt realized, this kind of talk was an integral part of Bettesworth's culture, and had to be indicated, however "dull" and "platitudinous" it would seem to the reader. Similarly Kluckhohn remarks that while extensively edited life histories serve the popular interest well, "the serious student wants to know at firsthand on what subjects the Hopi did tiresomely repeat himself" (p. 97).

The variety of topics in human life on which life histories may provide information is limitless in theory, but in each individual case there are likely to be omissions due to idiosyncrasy, repression, or simply the absence of the concept in the culture. Kluckhohn suggests some of the questions normally considered: the life history may contain "new customs, beliefs, artifacts," data on the "history of the tribe," details of the environment (pp. 133-134). It may show the range of permitted variation in social behaviour, the hierarchy of values, concepts of time,

differences between overt and covert culture. Status and role behaviour may be discussed, again in terms of the ideal and the actual; how culture is acquired through instances of direct and indirect teaching may be shown; comments may appear on culture change and innovation. As a whole the study of an individual -- with comparisons made to others of the same age and status (and some in different social positions) -- should lead to knowledge of the type of personality fostered by a culture (Kluckhohn, pp. 133-39).

All such information is qualified, however, by the question of the representativeness of the informants chosen. Kluckhohn asks "What sort of Hopi or Navaho or Kwakiutl will tell his life story to a white man?" (p. 99) suggesting that they may be anything but normal members of society:

> The writer's own experience and that of some of his associates have demonstrated the difficulties of getting satisfying life histories from "average" individuals. There is something to the view that happy individuals, like happy nations, have no histories -- at least they feel themselves to have none. On the other hand, the individual who feels that his life has been full of tragedies or who feels that he has been persistently misunderstood wants to "let off steam." Likewise, a person who conceives his life to have been full of unusual adventures or accomplishments, who is proud of his history -- he also is often ready to talk. But none of these are

> "average" men or women; nor are those partially acculturated individuals who do not feel thoroughly at home in either their own or the contact culture. (Kluckhohn, p. 117)

The same considerations apply to English folklife autobiographies; Fred Kitchen, for example, is "partially acculturated," caught grotesquely between two worlds; the personae adopted by Flora Thompson and Alison Uttley, in their fictionalized autobiographies, are shy, sensitive, and a little withdrawn, as was George Sturt, to judge from his own childhood autobiography. George Baldry and the anonymous author of I Walked By Night certainly did not lead withdrawn lives, except at the time when they began to write: Baldry is in retirement as was "the King"; his editor says "What is written here was born of an old man's loneliness . . . . The life that he loved had passed him by."[26] It is very rare for a working man to write his life story while still young enough to work; the apparently orally recorded Son of the Fens is an exception.

III. Oral History and Social History

Many of the works discussed in this study could be described as examples of "oral history"; indeed an early use of the term, by Thomas Miller in 1857, has already been

cited. Folklore and oral history have much in common, from their reliance on the use of oral interviews to "create" new sources of information to their common focus on the peasant and working classes as either carriers of folk tradition or as the "human dimension" normally excluded by orthodox historiography. Oral history studies, as carried out in Britain in particular, have often had a socialist, sometimes Marxist, political orientation; writers on folklife, however, have often been conservative in their political views. The history of the oral history "movement," has been well surveyed by Paul Thompson in The Voice of The Past: Oral History, and need not be treated here; the work of some recent oral historians, successors to the rural folklife interest begun by Thomas Miller, George Sturt, Barclay Wills and others, should however be mentioned.

The "History Workshop," a group of students and teachers at Ruskin College, Oxford, has produced two volumes, Village Life and Labour (1975) and Miners, Quarrymen and Saltworkers (1977),[27] in a projected series on working class life, rural and urban, drawing on oral and autobiographical sources as well as the more usual statistical records. Raphael Samuel, general editor of the series, outlines the aims of "people's history," as being to describe "fundamental elements in social life -- work and class relations, sex roles

and family life, popular culture and education" (Village Life, p. xix), in order to "bring history closer to the central concerns of people's lives." The a priori assumption of these "socialist historians" that this will be a record of "resistance to oppression" casts doubt on the objectivity of their interpretations; nevertheless, Samuel is justified in pointing to the inherent "unarticulated bias" in the other direction contained in "the more bureaucratic type of document" ordinarily used by historians. Samuel's own essay "'Quarry Roughs': Life and Labour in Headington Quarry," is a particularly interesting study of a "micro-economy": the variety of extra jobs, exchanges, charitable folk customs, and "gathering," including poaching, which supplemented the official wage structure in an English village (Village Life, Part Four). The publications of the History Workshop are likely to be of continuing interest to folklorists.

The most consistently excellent studies in oral history have been written by George Ewart Evans of the folk-life of East Anglia. Each of Evans' books builds on the previous one; together they form a comprehensive picture of work and daily life at around the turn of the century, since he draws on the reminiscences of "people who have lived sufficiently long to be able to talk about a period of their lives that already has an unassailable claim to be treated

as historical."[28] He is also, like so many others, trying to locate the decisive moment of change from "traditional" to "modern" society in the pre First World War era. One reason for his success in eliciting such rich oral testimonies is that he understands what interests people, and what they feel able to talk of:

> Experience here and elsewhere has shown that for many people the concept of history or even the past is an abstraction with little or no meaning for them. But the history of the development of their own work has absorbing interest: it speaks to their own condition, appeals to them in a segment of life where they can respond.[29]

Another of Evans's qualities has been well assessed by Paul Thompson; Evans has the art of presenting transcribed speech in a way which, while he has supplied punctuation and silently edited, "preserves the texture of the speech" (Thompson, p. 200). Thompson's praise for Evans is simultaneously a criticism of the spurious "transcripts" presented by Ronald Blythe in Akenfield (1969), which "made an international literary success of Suffolk oral history with less careful scholarship" (Thompson, p. 79). As Thompson says, the work is a composite of life stories from several villages rather than of one, as he purports, and the census of "work in the

village" is also invented. Blythe has taken the trappings of oral history without giving its substance.

Attention to the detail of an informant's speech is indispensable to oral historians as it is to folklorists if the finer nuances of attitude are to be discerned. Thompson observes that Henry Mayhew, the great Victorian investigator of "London Labour and the London Poor,"[30] is also distinguished by the length at which he quotes his informants:

> He seems to have felt a respect for his informants which was very rare among investigators of his time. His comments show both emotional sympathy and a willingness to listen to their views. Indeed, his changing standpoint shows that he was genuinely prepared to be influenced by them. No doubt this attitude helped him to be accepted into working-class family homes and receive their life-stories and feelings. And, significantly, it was linked to an unusual concern with their exact words. (Thompson, p. 35)

Mayhew took a stenographer with him to interviews. As I have argued above, this quality of respectful attention to the man encountered, while in his presence and when preparing a record of what he said, distinguishes George Sturt from his progenitors in the various genres of writing about countrymen.

"Personal documents" can be of other kinds than simply those created in an interview. Though oral historians have made a valid political argument against a history written entirely from documents, there has been a movement among French and English historians, in the last twenty years, to rehabilitate documentary sources by reinterpreting them in the light of concepts taken from social anthropology. Hence the depositions of witnesses at trials, diaries, account books, and other writings have been searched for the world views or "mentalités," that are implicit in them. The aim of this school of historians is to write history that is better grounded in the social context. Keith Thomas's Religion and the Decline of Magic (1971),[31] a study of sixteenth and seventeenth century popular magic, astrology, and witchcraft, is the finest example of this approach. Alan Macfarlane, trained by Thomas, has shown the usefulness of models developed in studies of modern African witchcraft for understanding the social tensions that were the bases of witchcraft accusations in the county of Essex in the seventeenth century.[32] This new interest by historians in a subject matter on which folklorists have long worked, with little academic recognition, is a welcome sign of increasing eclecticism in the humanities and social sciences. Two journals, Past & Present, and Annales: Economies, Sociétés,

Civilisations, are identified particularly with this method of interpreting social history through anthropological paradigms, usually in conjunction with demographic studies.[33] To indicate something of the richness of this approach to personal documents I shall focus here on two particularly innovative reinterpretations of documentary records, both of which bring individuals from past ages before the reader in surprising detail and clarity.

In Montaillou: The Promised Land of Error (1975; trans. 1978),[34] Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie has described the everyday life of a fourteenth century French village through the records of an inquisition of a local sect of heretics. While the source might seem unpromising for revealing the mundane details of folklife, Le Roy Ladurie's method of reading the documents -- witnesses' evidence, and highly circumstantial -- is revelatory in the way he brings together parallel instances of social behaviour from throughout the records and observes culturally determined omissions and assumptions. It is an almost daunting example of the amount of information a personal document -- whether legal testimony, diary, life history, or autobiography -- can be made to yield through an attentive reading which looks beyond the level of overt content to the assumptions and mental outlook of the writer or speaker. Mention of some of the chapter headings.

will indicate this range: "Body Language and Sex," "Childhood and other ages in life," "Death in Montaillou," "Concepts of Time and Space," "Magic and the other world." The titles indicate the influence of anthropology; they are more familiar in studies of "primitive" cultures than in European history.

As an example of Le Roy Ladurie's inferential manner of reading, consider what he extracts from a scrap of a witness's testimony (the italicized portion represents the document, the rest is his interpretation):

> Belibaste fled through the fields, *without shoes for two leagues; he left some of his clothes in the bed where he had spent the night.* So he must have taken the trouble to undress before he went to bed. . . . Arnaud Sicre tells how. . . he shared a bed with Belibaste. The informer notes that Belibaste took off his shirt but not his underpants, an observation that suggests that Arnaud himself was less prudish and had taken off all his clothes. (p. 143)

With the same attention he has also combed his source to discover how the villagers conceptualized time: divisions of the night were indicated by

> visual, aural or physiological references such as *after sunset, at nightfall, at the*

> hour of the first sleep, at the hour halfway through the first sleep, at cock-crow, or when the cock had crowed three times. (p. 276)

Spatial concepts were similarly expressed in terms derived from physical perception: "'I saw Prades Tavernier reading in the rays of the sun a black book as long as my own hand'" (p. 282). Through the patient compilation of these apparently trifling details an otherwise unobtainable picture of the daily life of medieval villagers is created; he aptly designates these chapters "An archaeology of Montaillou."

Alan Macfarlane has shown a similar interest in balancing the quantitative methods of modern social history by penetrating the "mental life" and "attitudes and assumptions" of people in the past. His major study in this direction is The Family Life of Ralph Josselin, A Seventeenth Century Clergyman: An Essay in Historical Anthropology (1970).[35] Material for the discussion of Josselin's life -- he was a farmer as well as a cleric -- is assembled through a reading of his diary, which Macfarlane had earlier edited for publication. Macfarlane takes up the standard anthropological scheme of the "life cycle" -- birth, marriage, death -- which to him, as a historian, is an intriguing new method of conceptualizing an individual's life and its relationship to

parallel progressions made by others in a society; he also makes use of it in organizing his presentation of what Josselin reveals about himself. He is also impressed with the fundamental significance for understanding a society of knowledge of its family structure and kinship system (p. 105). He abstracts the following indices of kinship and friendship from sociological and anthropological studies as things he expected to be remarked upon in the diary:

> the frequency of visits: the frequency of gifts, messages, and other communications; the choice of names and the choice of godparents; the degree of interest shown in each other's affairs, for example in the death of a relative; the inheritance of property; the recruitment to ceremonies marking birth, death and marriage; aid offered in crises (illness for instance) or in finding work; kinship terminology. (p. 105)

His findings -- though I am more interested here in his questions -- often challenge previous assumptions: while the "nuclear family" is often said to be a product of industrialization, for example, the diary shows that Josselin's sense of who effectively constituted his family was quite narrow and "similar to a modern urban dweller" (p. 153); he did not even attend the weddings and funerals of his own sisters. Macfarlane assesses Josselin's feelings about the

various categories of neighbours and relatives by the way in which he records their deaths and the order in which he remembers people in his prayers:

> He prayed for "wife, children, sisters, friends, kindred, people. . . . It is especially significant that he should have put "friends" before kindred. (p. 155)

He considers the metaphors Josselin uses in describing his wife, a dead child, sin (p. 187). He also lists topics which "rarely, if ever" appear:

> . . . toilet habits, sexual relations between husband and wife, weaning methods, sleeping arrangements. We learn very little of contemporary attitudes to night and day, to animals, to the structure of time and space. . . . of the physical layout of Josselin's house, of his furniture, of the way he brought up his young children. (p. 11)

Things that <u>are</u> mentioned include "dreams, suicide, pain and death, dates of conception and dates of weaning" (p. 11); of course Macfarlane notes that it is the "unmentionable, or assumptions that are too basic or obvious to need stating, which are of paramount interest to the historian" (p. 11). Like the anthropologists and literary critics already cited he makes the point that a certain "optical illusion" is

created by a diarist's focus on the exceptional; as he says:

> Often a physical separation brings words for an emotional involvement for the first time; for instance we know far more about Josselin's relations with his children after they left home than about such ties when their presence was taken for granted. (p. 106)

And, as he has also said, if diaries were not balanced by other sources of evidence about a period, a bias toward the more methodical and introspective type of personality would be created (p. 8).

While some of Josselin's attitudes seem familiar and "modern" others are not; Macfarlane notes that "The placing of the boundaries between the physical and spiritual world often appears strangely alien to the mid-twentieth-century reader" (p. 188). The diary, as summarized by Macfarlane, is a very good example of the contemporary belief in a moral universe full of direct blessings, warnings, punishments, from God (p. 193). The weather, in particular, was God's "weapon" (p. 189), and as a farmer as well as a clergyman, Josselin watched it carefully. He believed the devil could physically appear (p. 191); that "God sometimes gives people their curses," i.e. that He allows their maledictions to take

effect; and that there was power in witchcraft (p. 192). Each journey was potentially dangerous, disease and accident seemed to lurk everywhere, anticipated or in reality; as Macfarlane notes, his manner in the journal is one of "everlasting anxiety, mixed with relief and gratitude to God" (p. 171). Macfarlane does not claim that Josselin is an entirely representative man of his time; comparison with other records is necessary; but Macfarlane's work is a striking achievement in penetrating an autobiographical text and achieving an "imaginative leap" (p. 163) into another mode of consciousness.

Macfarlane's approach is also commended in a useful essay by Bjarne Stoklund, "On Interpreting Peasant Diaries: Material Life and Collective Consciousness," (1980).[36] Stoklund reviews work in progress, largely in Denmark, utilizing daybooks, account books, and diaries of nineteenth century peasants. Questions being put to these sources include how time was distributed between occupations; how much did peasants travel; what were the recognized stages of the life cycle; how were innovations adapted to. He notes that, in general, peasant diaries record but do not reflect (reflection, and artistic description, being a mark of the new "bourgeois" style of journal keeping), but that -- as we have seen in Le Roy Ladurie and Macfarlane -- there may

still be an "indirect reflection" of "attitudes and values . . . . through the words and concepts that are used, and through the acts recorded" (p. 204).

Current work in literature, anthropology, and social history, therefore, seems to be converging into similar channels. Just as the life history in anthropology has been taken beyond the level of simply yielding details of culture traits, so a few social historians have begun to extract more than mere statistical data from personal documents; both disciplines are now attempting to describe the particular manner of thought, the assumptive worlds or mentalities, of members of past or culturally different societies. The final discipline to be reviewed in terms of the questions it has levied upon biographies and autobiographies is folklore and folklife.

IV. Folklore and Folklife and the Use of Personal Documents

Four main approaches may be discerned in the folkloristic study of personal documents. Firstly, what may be called the folklife approach parallels the earlier anthropological sense that the individual is of interest mainly in so far as the study of his life is able to reveal the culture he represents; his spiritual culture, in this view, has

tended to be passed over in favour of more quantifiable traits of material culture. The second style which, following one of its main exponents in North American folklore, Edward D. Ives, may be called "common-man biography,"[37] while interested in the broad social background an individual may reflect, is more open to the study of individual or idosyncratic elements. This approach has much in common with the third, studies of the "life and repertoire" of noted tradition bearers: where the "common man" focus would differ, however, is in its insistence that the average, unexceptional person be given as much consideration as the talented, creative, or voluble. The fourth area of folkloristic interest, more recent in development, is in personal experience narrative, and from a sociolinguistic perspective, discourse analysis. This latter focus has long been needed in life history studies where although much attention has been paid to analyzing personal narratives for their cultural and psychological content, far less consideration has been given to factors which might govern their form and subject as a consequence of their being, first and foremost, stories.

Any folklorist who has conducted personal fieldwork will have given at least some thought to the tradition bearers he has recorded from; Baring-Gould's portraits of his singers come to mind as a nineteenth-century example, but perhaps

the first programmatic statement of the need to consider the individual creator and performer of folklore, in addition to the material he transmits -- the "Folk" as well as the "Lore" -- was made by Joseph Jacobs in a paper read before the Folk-lore Society and published in its journal in 1893.[38] In this brief but cogent talk he argued against vaguely developed ideas of communal creation and for the diffusionist theory of the spread of tradition in which, as C.W. von Sydow would later point out, the role of the individual "active bearer" of folklore is critical. He also attacked a monolithic conception of folklore, pointing to the mutually conflicting opinions often held by people about behaviour in such an apparently "universal" custom as first footing: should the visitor be of dark or light complexion? (p. 233). The paper is interesting further for its suggestion that study of "the Folk of to-day" will illuminate those of the past in such matters as the role of "individual initiative" in the origin of folk material, and its manner of transmission:

> Survivals are folk-lore, but folk-lore need not be all survivals. We ought to learn valuable hints as to the spread of folk-lore by studying the Folk of to-day. (p. 237)

Most directly to my subject, and anticipating later more sophisticated studies of the world view and repertoire of tradition bearers, in his closing remark:

> It would be interesting in this connection to find out and put on record the whole folk-lore of a single person, so as to ascertain how far contradictory conceptions can co-exist in the popular mind. (p. 238)

The autobiography or life history would seem the inevitable medium for such a broadly based study and might capture some of the encounters with tradition -- hearing a song, being embarrassed at misunderstanding another's custom -- a process of selective adoption and rejection through which an individual makes his own synthesis of belief, custom, and verbal art from the variety offered by culture and further modified through personality and experience. Jacobs' suggestion seems not to have been taken up within the Folk-lore Society, however; in spirit, if not to the letter, it is more like the programme followed by George Sturt in his long and patient effort to come to know Bettesworth.

Within European folklife scholarship there was also an initial scepticism of the value of studying an idiosyncratic individual; Sigurd Erixon noted in 1937 that:

> ethnology with its method of work is hardly in a position to elucidate scientifically any other sides of human spiritual and cultural life than those applying to more than the individual. . . . The individual side remains nothing but an episode

> difficult to grasp, so long as it is not capable of assimilating itself to tradition or of creating one of its own.[39]

It is interesting to note Erixon's partial change of heart, some thirty years later, perhaps influenced in the interim by the introduction of a methodology for the life history, when he suggested that the individual now be focussed upon as "the really creative factor":

> Through his way of living, his division of time, his moves, his products and his consumption, and finally through his conception of things and cultural traditions, the individual represents certain cases which should be studied and then systematized. . . . Another method is to study life cases by means of memoirs, diaries, and account books. . . . On the whole the individual case study is one of the most important tasks in present time.[40]

Stoklund's essay on peasant diaries mentioned above is representative of the Nordic dual approach, which is to "study individuals from the outside, and through their own destiny and experiences":[41] the more purely personal aspects of what an individual reveals are augmented by attention to quantifiable aspects of his life, for example, the time studies in peasant cultures that Erixon advocates: distances

travelled, time spent on particular tasks, seasonal influences on an individual's allotment of time.[42]

Personal documents lend themselves easily to the abstraction of some single element of culture; for example, good surveys of foodways in a particular cultural milieu have been compiled from diaries and autobiographies.[43] It may be that this topical approach to the use of personal documents -- quarrying them successively for well-defined separate traits, e.g. dress, religion, folktales, will yield firmer results than broader attempts to achieve a sense of a culture as a whole.

The "common man" biography is particularly identified with Edward D. Ives; he has published three fine reconstructions, from largely oral sources, of the lives and personalities of Larry Gorman, Lawrence Doyle, and Joe Scott, all noted makers of folksongs in the lumbering region of the north eastern United States and the Maritime provinces of Canada.[44] In their focus on the personal and environmental factors that lead a person to become a singer or composer these studies are overtly folkloristic. Some of the autobiographies and biographies of "ordinary" people published in the journal Northeast Folklore, under Ives's editorship, however, could as readily be termed oral history; they embody a populist and regional spirit as well as an ethnographic one. In his

excellent fieldwork manual The Tape-Recorded Interview, Ives stresses that the selection of informants should not be limited to those who are "good talkers" or "characters":

> . . . if we believe in the non-élitist approach to art and history. . . should we depend on the loquacious only? The tape-recorded interview is the best technique we have ever had for reaching out into the great silences and making them articulate, but God forbid that we should let the glib do all the talking! . . . if we are out to record some aspect of the lives of common men and women, we should be less concerned with whether a prospective informant is articulate than with whether he has the experience we are interested in. (p. 42)

Northeast Folklore has published seven biographies and autobiographies:[45] those dealing with men are representative of the dominant regional pattern of seasonal alternation between woods work and farming. The most recent, a woman's life, describes a Maine island upbringing with details of fishing and farming. Another volume, Anna May: Eighty-two Years in New England (1979), however, is something of a departure in showing the life of a nurse, not tied (after a rural childhood) to the more "traditional" occupations. With the exception of a part of the Fleetwood Pride volume, which is a pure autobiography, all the others are life

histories orally recorded and chronologically and topically arranged by their editors. The extent of editorial intervention is a contentious issue in life history studies but Ives's technique of posing additional questions to Fleetwood Pride, and adding his oral answers -- clearly distinguished as such -- to supplement the written original, is a particularly useful device. It has been adopted to advantage by Wilfred W. Wareham in his editing of The Little Nord Easter: Reminiscences of a Placentia Bayman by Victor Butler (1975),[46] and by J.D.A. Widdowson in his edition of Rev. Aubrey Tizzard's Newfoundland reminiscences, On Sloping Ground (1979).[47] The editor as outsider asks for clarification of those points the insider would have taken for granted and left undescribed. It can be of great interest to see just where these contrasts in assumptive worlds occur and thus it should be required that an editor let the reader know which items have been stimulated by his supplementary questioning.

Studies of the personality and repertoire of individual performers of folklore are the central tradition of folkloristic interest in the individual. This is a natural development as attention has shifted from the broader problems of the diffusion of folklore, conceptualized as discrete items -- songs, tales, beliefs -- to the contextual study of folklore in performance and the relationship between

tradition and individual creativity. An early study which has often been cited as a rare example of the discussion of the individual narrator is the Russian scholar Mark Azadovskii's A Siberian Tale Teller (1926; trans. 1974).[48] With comparative references to the styles of two other narrators (both male, but one representing the bawdy strain, the other being a more austere, carefully traditional narrator), he analyses the narratives of an illiterate woman, Natal'ia Vinokurova. He discusses her personal selection from what the tradition offered her; her märchen are told with as much psychological realism as she can inject into the form (p. 34), her settings for the tales reflect her personal experiences -- she had been a servant for a time in the city, and a servant girl is often given a much larger role than would be usual in the tradition (p. 39) -- and she emphasizes the feelings of female protagonists (p. 41). Obscene elements are minimized (p. 45), and descriptions of natural scenery are made to be expressive of the mood of the hero (p. 45). Such questions about the way a creative individual may feel confined by the traditional donnee, and seek to revise its conventions, are vital ones. As a study in itself, however, Azadovskii's brief monograph lacks the depth of biographical information about Vinokurova, and of contexual description of her performance, that might have been expected, and which would certainly now be considered necessary to substantiate his conclusions.

The most detailed study yet made of a folklore performer through the life history method is Juha Pentikäinen's Oral Repertoire and World View: An Anthropological Study of Marina Takalo's Life History (1978).[49] Many of the problems raised by Azadovskii are readdressed for they stem, as with his study, from the modern reorientation in disciplinary thinking away from the idea that "stereotyped" items of folk tradition are simply memorized by performers towards the view that they are, at least in the more free form genres such as the folktale, reformulated by the performer in each telling. If this is so, of course, much more attention must be paid to the individual performer as the shaping, selecting, agent who temporarily redefines the form of a folktale for his or her community. Pentikainen applies a model of "generic competence" derived from linguistics:

> The object of study is not solely the transmission process of tradition, but in addition, the formation of tradition in a human mind. . . . The key to creating is competence. A competent tradition bearer not only reproduces formerly learned material, but also, according to mastered rules, transforms familiar elements into new wholes. (pp. 18-19)

The personal history of the performer will be just one of many cultural and social factors impinging on her choices within what the tradition offers; for example, like Azadovskii's

subject, Vinokurova, Marina Takalo's folktales were coloured by her own life experiences:

> Marina Takalo observed the world from a woman's point of view in her fairy tales, allowing her personal characteristics to be reflected in the characteristics and fates of the heroes. (p. 286)

The prominence in her repertoire of tales in which the supernatural element was stressed is also related to her personality and religious world view (p. 273).

The research questions which Pentikäinen formulated, after his initial undirected interviews with Mrs. Takalo, are conveniently summarized by him in a subsequent essay, "Life History and World View."[50] His questions relate to both the form and content of the various examples of different folklore genres in her repertoire and to the world view, or personal philosophy, which they partially embody. Pentikäinen asks how

> . . . an illiterate person makes use of oral communication to select material for her tradition repertoire and world view. . . . What are the environmental determinants. . . in the individual's world view? How does the individual's world view alter in response to the experience of her life history? What is the creative liberty of the individual?

> Is the individual conscious of the conventions of the tradition or not? In what ways was Marina Takalo's world view revealed? How had it changed in the course of her life? In what ways do the various traditional genres which she knew transmit elements of the individual's world view and personality? ("Life History and World View," p. 138)

This is clearly a very full programme of considerations. One additional observation made by Pentikäinen, in another essay, provides an extremely useful paradigm by which to understand the nature of the information contained in life histories and autobiographies: applying the "emic" -- "etic" dichotomy, developed by the linguist Kenneth Pike, Pentikäinen distinguishes between life history and autobiography:

> The difference between an autobiography and a biography rests on the same etic/emic distinction that anthropologists use in studies of culture. An autobiography is the individual's life story told by himself and interpreted in personally meaningful [emic] categories. A biography should be a person's life history told by someone else and systematically interpreted and explained in general [etic] terms.[51]

In real life, of course, the neatness of Pentikainen's distinction is not to be found; all kinds of autobiographical

and literary conventions constrain the autobiographer's emic self expression, just as the limitations in the vision of the analyst restrict the breadth of his etic view of the individual. Yet, as I have already suggested, citing Kenneth Burke's idea of the "associational equation," understanding of any kind of personal document demands that we uncover these emic categories, or individual meanings, through sustained close attention to the person's use of language and other means of expression.

Linda Dégh's People in the Tobacco Belt: Four Lives (1975),[52] containing life histories of Hungarian immigrants to Canada, is important for its method of presentation: the narrators appear through long, unedited passages, but the reader is guided by Dégh's separate descriptions of the informant and his environment, and by her analysis of the autobiographical account itself. This technique not only preserves the informant's natural flow of speech, allowing the reader to observe patterns, rhythms, and habitual associations between topics, but it also discharges the ethnographer's responsibility to give as much interpretative commentary as possible. It is an attractive fallacy to assume that a personal document "speaks for itself"; it does not. An exaggerated caution on the part of the ethnographer about

intruding his own perceptions about the narrator may disguise a failure to engage the subject and draw out the implicit meanings of the "text." Once again, Sturt set a fine example in his careful interpretation of Bettesworth to the reader; he did not impose a single reading of Bettesworth's character but neither did he shrink from the duty of at least tentatively explaining the old man's attitudes. An eloquent argument for recognizing the nature of oral "life stories," as fictional creations in their own right, with an order and form that should not be arbitrarily rearranged by an editor, has been made by Jeff Todd Titon.[53]

Studies of the personality and repertoire of folk performers are still relatively few in Anglo-American folkloristics. Roger D. Abrahams notes those which could in any sense be regarded as precedents for his A Singer and Her Songs: Almeda Riddle's Book of Ballads (1970).[54] Others have emerged since but with little apparent agreement as to methodology.[55] As Abrahams' "Afterword" to Mrs. Riddle's comments establishes, the book is a "compromise" between her idea that it should be a song book, and his, that it should reveal the aspects of her life and personality which made her become a singer and which help to determine what songs she includes in her repertoire (p. 159). Because it is her own sense, as Abrahams makes clear (p. 148), that her songs are of more interest than details of her own life, the life history she relates focusses

in an apparently "unnatural" way on songs and singing. She is also a highly "acculturated" individual who, through performances on the "folksong revival circuit" and much exposure to folklorists, has adopted certain attitudes toward her songs (an interest in their "classic" status, and a sense of comparative versions) that she would not otherwise have developed. Of her father's taste in songs, for example, she comments: "In his songs he was like Child in his collecting . . ." (p. 22). While she can hardly be considered "representative" her exegetical comments on songs, and her expression of the aesthetic and moral choices that shape her repertoire are interesting. Similar illustrations of the way singers understand, and imaginatively fill in motivations and emotions of characters in songs, can be found in Thomas G. Burton's series of brief interviews with five women singers, Some Ballad Folks (1978).[56]

Although autobiography, whether written or oral, is intrinsically a matter of telling stories about oneself remarkably little attention has been paid to the qualities of these stories as folk narrative or to the additional psychological or cultural information that might be gathered through study of their formal features. Attention has been placed rather on their overt content -- how a person became a member of his society, his personality, or how he acquired

his repertoire of folklore genres -- than on the normal contexts of performing personal experience stories, their normal range of subjects in particular societies, emic classifications and evaluations of them as good or bad, interesting or dull. This most basic, most universal type of narration, seems to have been regarded as too commonplace to merit attention, particularly while the more well defined "traditional" forms such as the fairytale remained to be recorded.

In the past twenty years, however, there has been an increasing diversification of folkloristic interest in North America towards consideration of contemporary urban and occupational folk tradition, family stories, narration among special interest groups, immigrant sagas, and general personal experience narration.[57] This movement was anticipated in Europe, particularly by Herman Bausinger and Siegfried Naumann in their respective studies of "everyday storytelling" and occupational narrative. Linda Dégh has given a brief summary of their findings: in Bausinger's case, that such traditional narrative devices as threefold repetition, dramatized dialogues, and climactic endings persist despite a superficial informality in the tales.[58] Dégh's own career reflects this general shift in attention for, after conducting distinguished studies of Märchen and their tellers in her native Hungary

she has, since moving to the United States, researched urban legends and, as discussed above, immigrant life histories.

Lawrence G. Small's study, "The Interrelationship of Work and Talk in a Newfoundland Fishing Community,"[59] looks directly at "the usual mode of everyday talk" (p. 208) and offers striking evidence from oral sources for the absolute dominance of work as the central topic of talk among Newfoundland fishermen. Small finds personal narratives to be "so embedded in everyday talk that they do not have to be requested by the researcher" (p. 104); and his sense that "the emphasis in the narratives is on work, hardship, endurance and through economic, social and cultural change, the almost overnight disappearance of a way of life. . ." (pp. 110-111) gives me confidence that I have not overstressed the prominence of the same themes in my reading of the rural English tradition, as represented in biography and autobiography. Once more I suggest that George Sturt intuitively grasped this crucial relationship between the means of livelihood and the talk it generates (see especially "Our Dominant Topic," Bettesworth Book, pp. 257-269) and it is fascinating to see the full implications of the relationship brought out by Small's more sophisticated level of analysis. Other sociolinguistic studies of personal narratives in conversational contexts are reviewed by John A. Robinson in a recent essay.[60]

The issue of the "traditionality" of the personal narrative presented initial problems for folklorists; its supposed idiosyncrasy might seem to exclude it from the collective or serial reshaping through oral transmission long regarded as intrinsic to the definition of folk material. Yet such objection to the recognition of the personal narrative as a folklore genre is a red herring that can be rather easily disposed of, for, as the sociolinguistic concept of story-telling and listening "competences" has shown, stories do not become "traditional" as a consequence of being bandied about for long enough but are already traditional when formulated in a competent narrator's mind and when communicated to a competent listener; "competence" being a matter of recognizing and following, generally unconsciously, the culture's rules governing the form and content of what it recognizes as a proper "story."

Sandra Stahl, as the first American folklorist to have written extensively on the personal narrative, has felt particularly obliged to introduce the form and defend the legitimacy of studying it.[61] She argues that a personal narrative often draws on a traditional narrative as a model for its plot; following Henry Glassie's theory of "safe creation" she shows that innovation is kept within the bounds

of the model for story structure that is locally accepted. The teller's perception of his experience is also affected by concepts he shares with his audience. Stories contain "traditional attitudes" within them as "covert cores" which tend to regenerate new stories about these matters of local interest or concern; quoting Kluckhohn, Stahl considers these attitudes as an often "unverbalized segment of a group's world view." The stories become stable items in a narrator's repertoire and will be used in various situations.

The soundness of Stahl's observations can readily be confirmed: Pierre Crépeau's collection of immigrant life stories, for example, suggests that they are modelled after the structure of folktales about visits to a land of marvels.[62] A collection of orally recorded personal testimonies from Nova Scotia fishermen -- albeit not made by a folklorist -- contains this striking comment, entirely congruent with my own fieldwork experience and reading in autobiographies: Peter Barss, the collector, revisited his informants to re-check phrases undecipherable on his tapes and was surprised at the way repetition of a phrase seemed to trigger performance of the whole story:

> After I read the preceding line or two, most of the men not only recalled the missing phrase but continued telling the story from that point on in words almost identical to those I had recorded over a year before.[63]

Clearly, personal narratives often achieve a quite fixed form and this is often borne out in life history interviews where one may sometimes sense the sudden increase in fluency as the individual moves from the puzzling situation of having to tell his life story into the more familiar process of telling a particular story about himself that he has used before and which is largely pre-formulated. Dell Hymes' term "break-through into performance" seems applicable to this phenomenon.[64]

A particularly useful essay on the personal narrative is "True Stories" by the Hungarian scholar Ilona Dobos.[65] The twelve narrative topic categories she sets out agree with many of those I had already noticed in my reading of auto-biographies, and recording of life histories, and her work confirmed my sense of what might constitute an "oral canon" of autobiographical narrative. In discussing her "true story" categories I shall make comparisons to my own sampling of English folklife biography and autobiography.

Dobos categorizes stories about childhood as the most frequent type of experience stories; these often include

merry adventures or escapades, and stories of great frights, fears and sufferings (p. 174). These traits are amply borne out in English autobiographies. Her second category is women's experiences, i.e. love, family life, insults and injuries suffered; the preponderance of male autobiographies in my sample makes this category less applicable, though stories of the sudden death of husbands were noted. Men's hero stories are strongly represented in the English material; as Dobos says:

> The narrators -- who at the same time are the central heroes -- appear as unfaltering heroes fighting for their just due. . . . These are the I-really-gave-it-to-him stories, which . . . were very popular among the servant people on the farmsteads of the big estates. (p. 177)

War adventure stories: these are absent in my sampling, apart from Gough's bragging soldier for whose tale "Bristle Bridge" was named, and Moss's returned sergeant who declared Waterloo to have been just like Gatley. Of family stories Dobos notes that "a widespread, already stereotyped legend is transformed by a family for their own use." This seems to have occurred in Baldry's case for he tells how, as a child, he had been set to watch a pot containing a sheep's head and some dumplings:

> Presently the lid lifted a bit with the steam and I peeps in and see the sheep's head going round the pot with his mouth open, like old Nick after the sinners, and only one swimmer to be seen. I thinks to myself that there old sheep ha' gone and swallowed the other four and if I don't look slipper he'll have the last at the rate he's chasing it, and what'll Mother say then, and I runs as fast as my legs can carry me, blaring:
>
> "Mother, come quick, the sheep's hid's going round the pot like old Wop and swallered four of the swimmers." (Rabbit Skin Cap, p. 49)

This widespread folktale[66] was perhaps told on Baldry as a child to the extent that he internalized it and in old age could "remember" it as a real personal experience; or, of course, he could be simply garnishing his memoirs with a good story.

Dobos's category erotic and obscene stories were rare in published English folklife autobiography, at least until recently:[67] merry, entertaining stories, however, which blend with international anecdotes and jokes, are well represented, in appropriately localized forms. Horror stories are not found, unless in the style Dobos recognizes as "pseudo-belief stories," that is stories of ghosts explained. Robber stories are represented in English materials by poaching, smuggling, and in older sources, highwayman legends.

Love dramas do not appear. Notable persons figure abundantly; Alfred Williams' books are full of the local anecdotes told about eccentric squires and clergymen. Finally, educational stories, tales with morals, are rare if an overt fable form is expected but are common if it is understood that a great deal of autobiography is implicitly moral and argumentative, being intended as an example of the way things were, or of the way a man should live.

V. An Oral Canon

In reading in these biographies and autobiographies of English rural life, I felt the need for a means to objectify my intuitive perceptions as to which writers, and which genres of rural literature, were most authentic in their portrayal of the life, folk tradition, and ethos of rural workers. As I have stated throughout, my standard for this "authenticity" has been George Sturt's recording of the opinions of the labourer Frederick Bettesworth; Sturt's observations of Bettesworth's behaviour and rendering of his speech struck the right note; they agreed with what I knew to be true of the country workmen from whom I had collected life histories some sixty years after Sturt in another southern English county, Dorset. In studying my life history transcripts and reading Sturt I became increasingly impressed by the way

a few types of incident were being given narrative form by different men, from separate regions, who, nevertheless, had similar backgrounds and work experience. Although these stories about themselves, which clearly had significance for the tellers, they were in no sense idiosyncratic but rather seemed to be a kind of story that was common currency within this rural working-class culture.

Before considering examples of each type it may be worth restating the premises of my thinking about them, which are that these narratives of the oral canon, whether occurring in autobiographies or life histories, are preformulated, relatively fixed form personal narratives selected from the teller's general repertoire. They have been constructed according to the local rules of style and content; they tend to be limited in their range of topics and attitudes by being framed to their society's standards of appropriateness. The stories are for the most part social, or sociable; in other words, they can be reciprocally exchanged with the stories of other people in the local group who probably have matching stories, of parallel experiences, of their own to tell, and which would be told in much the same way. Basil Bernstein's concept of "elaborated and restricted codes" also seems to explain very well the kind of limitation of subject and style of expression seen in these narratives. They seem to be

examples of communication within a "restricted code" where, because of the shared knowledge and expectations of tellers and audiences, the degree of elaboration of a speaker's "discrete intent" or "unique experience" need not be put into a very "verbally explicit" form. Furthermore it would seem that the speech code has an effect on the range of situations and, perhaps, feelings, that can be named and talked about:

> The speech system or linguistic code, itself a function of the social structure, marks out selectively for the individual what is relevant in the environment. (Bernstein, p. 56)

Bernstein suggests that the awareness of "self," as an entity of almost limitless possibility for individual variation, also tends to be less developed if only a restricted code is habitually used; in an elaborated code, the "self" becomes

> in its own right the object of special perceptual ability. In the case of a speaker limited to a restricted code the concept of self will tend to be refracted through the implications of the status arrangements. (Bernstein, pp. 64-65)

This seems to account very well for the habit of working man autobiographers of describing themselves primarily in terms

of their trade, and of making the sequence of their employments, rather than any personal, inward transformations, the organizing principle of their life stories.

Additionally, Pentikäinen's comment that autobiographies are organized on emic principles should be borne in mind while considering the stories of the oral canon. In reading folklife autobiography it is important to realize that the writer's selection of topics and manner of handling them is likely to be as revealing as what he describes overtly. Though the reader may never feel confident of having fully grasped the emic meanings the attempt is always rewarding. It is a paradox in the use of personal documents that the more authentic, the more "real," an individual may be as a member of a folk society, a user of a restricted code of local meanings, the less able may he or she be to muster the detachment necessary to describe that society. Flora Thompson's work is so valuable because she combines this original emic understanding of the rural culture of her childhood with the etic perspective on it which she gained later; she is thus an ideal interpreter.

Only a very few story types seem to constitute the oral canon for English rural workers. All are related ultimately to competence in the occupation or to the, usually associated, maintenance of personal reputation for strength,

efficiency, usefulness, and every other quality that is the opposite of weakness or dependence. The first and probably most common of all these narrative types is of the significant first time in which a boy proves his ability to do a man's work; the phrase "I thought I was a man then," seems to be a widespread formulaic closure in these stories. The second type of story corresponds to Dobos's category of "men's hero stories," though I prefer the term "confrontation" story: essentially it replays what is usually a verbal conflict, generally about some slight offered by an employer to a man's competence. Closely related to both types are the "testimonial" stories in which some significant other person gives due praise to the teller's abilities, and stories of some testing ordeal, such as harvest work, "conquered," as men sometimes say, through endurance. Some men are singled out for praise in stories of their particular efficiency in their work, or in accounts of how a particular skill was learned from them. Anecdotes about other men's follies or the unpredictability and eccentricity of authority figures are only the obverse of the preoccupation with personal competence; these stories also form part of the oral canon.

The types of stories apparently excluded by the canon are as important for our understanding of the culture as those it includes. As I have already suggested, the contents

of English folklife autobiographies composed in accordance with the oral canon could not be satisfactorily arranged on the basis of the rites of passage in the human life cycle. Births, deaths, marriages, and the more sentimental aspects of courtship receive scant or no attention. This general silence is probably due to the sense that the information is too personal or irrelevant to what is conceptualized as the focus of interest -- a man's career, his abilities and experiences in a particular trade. Further, as I have already argued, it may be that men are not used to telling stories on these topics and have nothing to draw upon in their narrative repertoires when writing autobiography, or when called on to say something of them in a life history. In interviewing a retired carter I found that he seemed to reach a sense of an ending of what he felt the situation demanded when, after very fluently chronicling his working life, studded with "confrontation stories," he found himself drifting into mentioning his wife's long illness and brought himself up short, saying: "Well, that's as far as you want to know." The boundary of normal men's conversation, particularly between strangers, seemed to have been reached. Similarly, childhood, for example, as a non-subject according to the oral canon, can be passed over in a single paragraph, as it is in James Hawker's Journal, p. 1.

The only way in which childhood is presented in the oral canon is through stories of mischief, frights, and sufferings. Baldry remembers his hunger (p. 47), being chased by a farmer (pp. 35-36), his father's punishments:

> Father couldn't get me according to his liking, so he reached forrard, caught me by the back of the neck and swung me into the middle of the planshard, as though I were a spinning top, and give me a troshing so I remember every detail of that evening to this day. (Rabbit Skin Cap, p. 53)

Such stories are of a kind that can be readily exchanged in conversational storytelling events where several speakers can contribute their matching or capping versions of the same theme. They are the opposite of the intensely personal moments of vision or "epiphany" that figure in works written in the literary canon, such as Allison Uttley's The Country Child or Laurie Lee's Cider with Rosie. Stories in the oral canon represent common ground, safe subjects, rather than what is idiosyncratic or might make the teller seem "odd" and "over sensitive."

An autobiographer may simply mention a wife, some way through his history, having given no previous inkling of a courtship. George Herbert, for example, a shoemaker of

Banbury, Oxfordshire, in the nineteenth century, introduces his wife to the reader purely as an adjunct to his craft:

> I got some of the best workmen in the place which I knew well to make me a pair of white satin lady's slippers with frenched edges, and another to make me a pair of natty clogs with cork soles. I also put my intended wife to learn the binding. As I was acquainted with all the best workmen and binders, I placed her under one of the best and as she was a good needlewoman she soon became one of the best of them.[68]

The reader should be cautious, however, in inferring anything about the degree of affection between husbands and wives from the basis of these autobiographies, though one trait which emerges generally is that working class marriages involved a practical and efficient division of labour.

Dick Windmill's youth may explain the unusual amount of attention he gives to stories of courtship and glimpses of married life. Yet even from him the tone is the normal laconic one; here he reflects on one of his past sweethearts:

> I only seed her betwixt my voyages. The first time I come home whe was weeding in among the wheat; the next time I come she was hay rolling; and the next time she was tying up wheat in the harvest-field. She was took ill, and died of a decline afore I come home from the herring-fishing. (Son of the Fens, p. 52)

This has a nicely meditated structure -- perhaps related to carpe diem imagery in English folksong -- but it is not over sentimental; it might pass the acid test of being said in the public house among his friends. The passage is also an example of a further widespread feature of folklife autobiography: the measurement of time by the seasonal cycle or events in personal life as opposed to the use of calendar time. Of course, these men would agree with Trollope's remark, given above, that their marriages were like those of other men and thus needed no commentary.

On this principle, details of customs, such as weddings, are passed over unless they seem uncommon to the autobiographer. S.J. Tyrell writes of the wedding of one of his sisters, where anxiety had arisen when the groom did not arrive, having missed his train; of his next sister's wedding, however, he says:

> This time everything went off happily according to plan, so I've nothing out of the ordinary to record. (Countryman's Tale, p. 229)

Where an autobiographer encounters practices unlike those he considers "normal," however, he often makes some comment; hence Victor Butler describes the game of forfeits, and the absence of liquor or dancing, at a Flat Islands, Newfoundland,

wedding where the people were of the Salvation Army faith in contrast to his own Anglican tradition.[69]

Death is also seen as a private matter and rarely discussed. The impression made on George Baldry as a child by seeing a drowned woman is an exception:

> Coming home across the bridge what should I see but two men in a boat a pulling at something in the water with boat-hooks -- something that rolled over when they touched it and a bit of black skirt which was blowing out with the air under it. I didn't see no face nor nothing, but I takes to my heels and runs home as fast as I could lay feet to ground with a cold feeling in the pit of my stomach. I said nothing to nobody, but all my days I have remembered that bit of black skirt blowing out of the muddy water, for child as I was, it was then I begun to realise what us poor humans can be druv to, when things go amiss. (Rabbit Skin Cap, p. 29)

In general, in the oral canon of autobiography, only one quite informal rite of passage is considered important, or perhaps tellable: the moment of being judged "a man" through the proof of a trade skill. Personal narratives about such occasions are the first story category in the oral canon.

1. Stories of the Significant First Time

Most commonly this story type concerns a boy's proof that he is ready to do a man's work. An oral account given by an English farm worker of the first time he proved he could thatch is paralleled closely by Victor Butler's reminiscence of his becoming a carpenter on Bell Island, Newfoundland. (Though these categories of story have been developed through analysis of purely English material it may be found that they are applicable, in some measure, to other societies). Both men's stories develop a moment of suspense as the boss silently inspects their work, and approves it:

> So, you know, by-and-by I heard the old man coming up the road, you know, walking. And he'd always whistle hymns, always did [whistles]. I thought "Blow me down, here he is" [spoken very softly as though to himself]. And d'you know, he just glanced up at the rick, like that, and walked on. Didn't say a dickybird. Well I thatched that rick.[70]

Victor Butler's story is intrinsically the same:

> Now they were clapboardin' up the entrance door on side of the street; one side was clapboarded. The other side now between the

> door and the window wasn't clapboarded. "Now," he said in the morning, "clapboard that." 'Cause, see, 'twas only about that long and he could take it off if I spoiled it. I went to work, he come along, he looked, never spoke. And, anyway, through the day I done up the height of the door. And if I do say so, it was as good or better than the other side. He come back to me and he said, "come back tomorrow morning for fifteen cents an hour." I thought I was a man then. Sixteen I was. (Nord Easter, pp. 29-30)

Butler's story had been given in response to a question from his editor, Wilfred Wareham, as to when he had considered himself a man; but the question has obviously not distorted his response, rather it seems to have been perfectly framed to elicit this well-constructed narrative which has almost certainly been told before. A Nova Scotian farmer told me of his first winter driving a yard horse in the woods and ended with exactly the same phrase: "I thought I was a man then." I remember feeling that I knew what he was going to say.[71] There were, of course, formal and semi-formal initiations into trades (Hugh Barrett experienced being "shod" as a "colt") but these informal occasions, such as the one Victor Butler describes, have been made significant by the man recalling them. As Lawrence G. Small suggests, in a striking phrase, "men felt compelled to talk about their experiences so as to legitimate their own reality" (Small, p. 110).

2. Confrontation Stories

These stories replay a verbal conflict with another worker or an employer over the teller's ability. They are narrated as memorates, perhaps from a desire for personal vindication and to enjoy a cathartic release of tension, among peers and confidants, often spouses. This type of story is by no means limited to men, or to rural or "traditional" occupations. They tend to acquire a fixed and polished form and tellers will often display a nice dramatic touch in mimicking their bosses' tones of voice or reenacting the postures struck. The climax of one oral example may indicate their usual tenor:

> "Oh," he said, "you'll have your ninepence."
> I said, "You can stick that up your arse
> if you like."[72]

Such narratives are recognizable enough as types to have generated "stories about stories": for example in George Herbert's Shoemaker's Window some fun is had at the expense of a man who goes into the familiar boasting routine about the sharp retort he had made, only to be caught out by the candour of his apprentice:

> . . . the master found fault with his work, and when he got home he was telling his wife about the fault-finding, but he, that is John, says, "I did give it him." His apprentice was there at the time he was telling her, and the apprentice said, "Why, John, I was in the lobby the whole of the time and I did not hear you speak a word." "Well, James, he says, "I must say that I said it rather inwardly." I was acquainted with the apprentice and he told me this. (Shoemaker's Window, p. 54)

The anecdote suggests that some degree of fantasy may often have been present in reports of such confrontations.

Confrontation stories, while often full of humour, are by no means insignificant to their narrators, however, since they are defences of their vital skills. They occur commonly in orally recorded life histories and in auto-biographies written within the oral canon. Another example from Victor Butler, in which he stands up to the merchant over pay, is given in his Sposin' I Dies in D' Dory (p. 65). Flora Thompson also gives evidence of the oral provenience of such self-vindicating stories in her account of Old Hearne, the mason, dismissed for being too slow and pains-taking a craftsman for his modern employer:

> . . . he talked more freely than he had been used to and with many a "he sez" and "sez I" he would relate the story of his last inter-view with his former employer to anyone he could buttonhole. Everybody in the parish

> had heard that story, though few with sympathy, for it seemed to most of his listeners but an instance of a man throwing away a good job in a fit of temper, and, to save themselves from a third or fourth recital, when they saw Hearne in the distance they would turn aside to avoid a meeting. (Still Glides, p. 29)

3. Testimonial Stories

The obverse of these challenges to a man's ability, angrily refuted in the confrontation stories, is the story of a "testimonial" given in praise of him by another worker or an employer -- men who recognize good work when they see it. Since outright boasting is not thought well of, such stories are a covert means of achieving the same effect. As an example, consider the studied nonchalance of George Herbert, the shoemaker, in the following narrative from his autobiography:

> So he [the master craftsman employer] always used to call me his genius. I did not know this till one day I was going to dinner and had to pass another workshop. It being Monday morning, one of them says, "Here's Genius. He will toss for a quart", and I said, "Who did you say?" and he said, "Genius." I said, "That's not my name," and he replied, "I never knew you by any other name since I have been here"; and one of the others said, "It is old Greenstreet: he always calls you his genius." All this

> was as nothing to me, as all that I did I learned in my trade and it came to me as a matter of course. (Shoemaker's Window, p. 16)

Once the point has been made he can afford to be properly modest. The passing reference to a Monday beer drinking custom[73] is, incidentally, not explained further; this is an example of the "emic," insiders' orientation of auto-biographies written within the oral canon.

Flora Thompson has already described the prominence among personal narratives of stories that stressed the "favourite virtue" of endurance:-

> Not to flinch from pain or hardship was their ideal. A man would say, "He says, says he, that field o' oo-ats's got to come in afore night, for there's a rain a-comin'. But we didn't flinch, not we! Got the last loo-ad under cover by mid-night. A'moost too fagged-out to walk home; but we didn't flinch. We done it!" Or, "Ole bull he comes for me, wi's head down. But I didn't flinch. I tipped off a bit o' loose rail an' went for he. 'Twas him as did th' flinchin'. He! he!" Or a woman would say, "I set up wi' my poor old mother six nights runnin'; never had me clothes off. But I didn't flinch, an' I pulled her through, for she didn't flinch neither." Or a young wife would say to the midwife after her first con-finement, "I didn't flinch, did I? Oh I do hope I didn't flinch." (Lark Rise to Candleford, p. 50)

Gambier-Parry's informant, "Bithie," gave a similar testimonial to her parents' fortitude:

> She never didn't give way; nor didn't father.
> They just went on, wi'out hump or hoot.
> (Spirit of the Old Folk, p. 17)

In the same spirit I have heard men speak of "conquering" some task difficult to learn or strenuous to perform.

4. Praise of Others for their Ability

In return, men will also tell stories which give credit to those from whom they learned particular skills. George Baldry in The Rabbit Skin Cap has something to say about each man he learned something from; after a series of anecdotes about the tricks played by Sam Deeping, a carpenter but a reprobate, he remarks:

> . . . there was a good side to Sam and he taught me a lot in his day about being a clever tradesman. (Rabbit Skin Cap, p. 240)

George Sturt gives an extended passage from Bettesworth's conversation in which he relates, with admiration, how he had watched a carter load three big elm trees onto a timber

carriage by himself, by skilful control of his horses; the following is only the latter third of Bettesworth's narrative:

> No, none o' we helped 'n. We was only gone out to see 'n do it. He never wanted no help. He didn't say much; only "Git back," or "Git up," to the hosses. When it come to gettin' the last tree up, on top o' t'other two, I never thought he could ha' done it. But he got 'n up. And he was a oldish man, too: sixty, I dessay he was. But he jest spoke to the hosses. Never used no whip, 'xcept jest to guide 'em. Didn't the old farmer go on at his own men, too! "You dam fellers call yerselves carters," he says; "a man like that's worth a dozen o' you." Well, they couldn't ha' done it. A dozen of 'em 'd ha' scrambled about, an' then not done it! Besides, their hosses wouldn't. But this feller -- the old farmer says to 'n, "I never believed you'd ha' done it." "I thought mos' likely I should," he says. But he never had much to say. (Memoirs, pp. 222-223)

I have already quoted Bettesworth's similar vein of praise for Edmund Baxter, the "reg'lar" plain living man who represented an ideal of attitudes and behaviour to Bettesworth and other working men.

5. Anecdotes of Other Men's Follies

Stories of the eccentricities of clergymen, gentry, and employers, together with fool tales and stories of successful practical jokes, fit together as showing a risible deviation from the norm of the predictable, regular behaviour, which proves a man to be competent and in control of himself. Bettesworth's disdain for "young Busby" who had "got this here religion" and had "gone clean off his head" (Journals, p. 267) reflects this attitude; as does this remark:

> A man's never so happy, to my way o' thinkin', as when he's goin' to his day's work reglar. (Bettesworth Book, p. viii)

Many autobiographers, writing of their native communities, have stressed the "characters" who were not "regular" and thus drew attention. As I have shown, Alfred Williams' three volumes of anecdotes and reminiscences collected in Wiltshire are rich in such stories, as are John Ward's two Moston Characters books. The reader of folklife autobiography must, of course, "correct" for the extent of attention paid to the exceptional as opposed to the normal as being a general feature of what makes a story worth telling.

Work and Chronology

Finally, though not a story category but rather the organizing principle by which individual stories from a life are put together by the teller, it seems characteristic of the oral canon of autobiography that the sequence of employments should prove the main measurement of the passage of time. Gaius Carley's Memoirs of. . . a Blacksmith have been discussed as an example, with his chapters divided according to the different villages in which he worked, where, in his journeyman period, he was learning new skills at each forge through the different types of work demanded. The Maine lumberjack Fleetwood Pride shows a similar measurement of personal growth against the seasonal round of his occupation:

> The following spring [1874, when he was ten] I went in on the St. John river eighteen miles from home and ten miles below Fredericton and worked for fourteen dollars a month and board hitching logs on the rafting ground at the Glazier Boom. . . . The spring I was eighteen I didn't come back up Black River but went through to Fredericton on the drive. By that time I was no longer a 140 pound boy but had become a 200 pound man, and was thought by some of the men to be the strongest man in a crew of a hundred men. ("Fleetwood Pride," pp. 13, 15)

This mode of structuring an autobiography, while partly "natural," especially in the case of journeymen craftsmen and even of farm labourers who often moved to new farms at each hiring fair, must also be due to the centrality given to the occupation in their perception of what an autobiography should be. And, of course, they are practiced in telling of themselves in relation to their workplace and their master, as the following scrap of conversation recorded by Alfred Williams, and quoted above in another context, shows: two men talk at a ploughing match:

> "What do you do now, then, sonny?"
> "I be awver at Castle Aeton at it."
> "An' 'ow's young Maester ____?"
> "Aw! 'e's a larnin'. "Evin' a bit of a flash in the pan. "E got a lot to larn yet." (Round About, p. 159)

The type of work, the quality of the farmer, are familiar oral topics and hence are readily drawn into autobiography.

It is difficult to believe that these five are the only major categories of personal narratives that are both told orally and incorporated in their autobiographies by rural English working men; possibly it will be judged that this narrow range reflects my own limited vision rather than any ethnographic reality. Yet Lawrence G. Small has estimated

that, in Newfoundland, "between 85 and 95% of talk among fishermen revolves around their work" (Small, p. 104), and work seems manifestly to be the central topic of these oral and written autobiographies. Lest this seem too bleak a conclusion let it also be remembered that in oral performance, as we can tell even from the published examples gathered here, there is often a great richness and vitality of expression.

VI. Conclusion

Undoubtedly the "oral canon" as presented here is crudely delineated and hypothetical rather than proven; yet it may have some utility in testing the authenticity of the various forms of writing which have been presented as accounts of rural English working life "from the inside." Thus, for example, Fred Kitchen, though certainly a farm worker, has not preserved the oral manner in his recollections to the extent that George Baldry or Gaius Carley have; with the loss of the original style of expression and the substitution of a standard "literary" manner we can no longer feel sure that the attitudes and values he expresses are necessarily shared with his fellows. There seem to be real differences between oral and written autobiography in terms of the subjects chosen and the feelings shown towards them.

The focus on the childhood idyll in middle-class literary autobiography, for example, is in striking contrast to the absence of childhood as a topic in working-class recollections, unless in the form of stories of escapades or privations.

In order to assemble a sufficient body of texts of personal reminiscences from country workmen I have hunted widely through the literature of the "rural tradition," from major essayists who have sketched, with greater and lesser success, individual countrymen, to the generally unnoticed old inhabitants, such as Richard Gough, John Ward, or J.E. Linnell, who have written about their communities rather than themselves, though still conveying from long personal acquaintance the character of a place and time.

In particular I have examined the work of a number of amateur investigators of folk tradition who, for the most part, worked quietly, locally, and without either the influence of or support from the established authorities of their day in the subject. Augustus Jessopp, Fletcher Moss, E. Gambier-Parry, Horace Harman, Alfred Williams, Flora Thompson, all achieved excellence in their own ways and deserve recognition in any history of the development of folklore and folklife studies in England. The most impressive example of the quality of ethnographic writing that could be achieved by a local, amateur, observer was set by George

Sturt. He looked steadily at the everyday life of his community and became more and more fascinated by what he had formerly taken for granted: the scraps of commonplace talk, craft skills, the breadth of unrecognized knowledge held by his working neighbours. Consequently he described individual labouring men, such as Bettesworth, sympathetically but without sentimentality, in a new tone of serious respect that had rarely been seen before in rural literature. In Sturt's writings the rural labourer was seen clearly and allowed to speak for himself in a way that was new, for Sturt's time, and which has not been surpassed since. While tape recorders and other mechanical aids have enhanced our ability to record the nuances of speech and behaviour they are no substitute for the quality of humanity which lives in all of George Sturt's work.

NOTES

CH. I INTRODUCTION

[1]Richard M. Dorson, The British Folklorists: A History (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968).

[2]One important statement of the revaluation in modern folkloristics of the humane style of description developed by Sturt and others occurs in an essay by Gerald L. Pocius, "George Sturt and His Village: Toward Alternative Views of English Folkloristics," in Folklore Studies in Honour of Herbert Halpert: A Festschrift, eds. Kenneth S. Goldstein and Neil V. Rosenberg (St. John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1980), pp. 283-301. I am pleased to acknowledge the benefit of many discussions with Dr. Pocius on Sturt and other writers during our years as fellow students and latterly as colleagues.

[3]The term "context" has become central to modern folkloristics and its acceptance as a concept with vital implications for methodology can be traced to a number of scholars, including Herbert Halpert and Kenneth S. Goldstein. A convenient review of the "contextual movement" in folklore studies is given by Richard M. Dorson in his Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1972), pp. 45-47.

[4]A recent essay by Halpert gives some indication of the breadth of material he has surveyed as germane to folklore and folklife studies: Herbert Halpert, "Some Remarks on the Background of Oral History Studies with a Supplementary Bibliography," Fourth Annual Meeting of the Atlantic Oral History Association, Shannon Ryan, Comp. (St. John's: Department of History, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1982), pp. 27-44.

[5]Sara Hewett, Nummits and Crummits: Devonshire Customs, Characteristics, and Folk-lore (1900; rpt. Norwood, Pa.: Norwood Editions, 1973); F.B. Kettlewell, "Trinkum-Trinkums" of Fifty Years (1927; rpt. Norwood, Pa.: Norwood Editions, 1975).

[6]William Matthews, British Autobiographies: An Annotated Bibliography of British Autobiographies Published or Written Before 1951 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1955).

[7]Edna Oakeshott, Childhood in Autobiography, Readers' Guides, Fourth Series, No. 1 (Cambridge: Published for the National Book League at the University Press, 1960).

[8]Lucien Leclaire, A General Analytical Bibliography of the Regional Novelists of the British Isles 1800-1950 (Paris: Société d'Edition "Les Belles Lettres," 1954).

[9]W.J. Keith, The Rural Tradition: A Study of the Non-Fiction Prose Writers of the English Countryside (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974).

[10]John Fraser, "George Sturt ('George Bourne') and Rural Laboring Life," Diss. University of Minnesota, 1961.

[11]Raymond Williams, The Country and the City (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).

[12]John Burnett, ed., Useful Toil: Autobiographies of Working People from the 1820's to the 1920's (London: Allen Lane, 1974); Destiny Obscure: Autobiographies of Childhood, Education and Family from the 1820's to the 1920's (London: Allen Lane, 1982); I am indebted to Dr. David Buchan for the latter reference. Useful Toil has been published in the United States by Indiana University Press, 1974, under the title Annals of Labour.

[13]Martin J. Lovelace, "The Life History of a Dorset Folk Healer: The Influence of Personality on the Modification of a Traditional Role," M.A. thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1975.

NOTES

CH. II GENRES OF RURAL WRITING

[1] The Bettesworth Book (London: Duckworth, 1901), Memoirs of a Surrey Labourer (1907; rpt. London: Duckworth, 1930); and to a lesser extent Lucy Bettesworth (London: Duckworth, 1913), present the life and opinions of Frederick Grover, who worked for Sturt as a gardener from 1892 to 1905; Sturt wrote these, and three other books, under the pen name 'George Bourne.' Hereafter cited as Bettesworth Book, Memoirs, and Lucy Bettesworth, respectively.

[2] George Sturt, A Small Boy in the Sixties (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1927), p. xi.

[3] Leslie Stephen, "Country Books," in Hours in a Library (London: Smith, Elder, 1899), III, 1975.

[4] 'John Halsham' (i.e. G. Forrester Scott), Idlehurst: A Journal Kept in the Country, 1898, 2nd ed. (New York: Dutton, 1908); Old Standards: South Country Sketches, 1913, cheaper ed. (London: John Murray, 1918). 'Halsham' published one other country life book, Lonewood Corner: A Countryman's Horizons (London: Smith, Elder, 1907), which I have not seen.

[5] Damoetas and Aegon are shepherds in Virgil's Eclogues; "the Torpids" refers to a race rowed at Oxford University in the Lent term using eight-oared clinker-built open boats.

[6] The Spectator, ed. Donald F. Bond, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965. My quotations are from this edition but for convenience of the reader I have identified them by essay numbers rather than page references.

[7]Peter H. Ditchfield, Country Folk: A Pleasant Company, 2nd ed. (London: Methuen, 1924), p. 113.

[8]Washington Irving, The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent., ed. Haskell Springer, The Complete Works of Washington Irving, Vol. 8 (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1978). Cited hereafter as Sketch Book.

[9]Washington Irving, Bracebridge Hall or The Humourists, A Medley, by Geoffrey Crayon, Gent., ed. Herbert F. Smith, The Complete Works of Washington Irving, Vol. 9 (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1977).

[10]Joseph Wright, in The English Dialect Dictionary (London: Henry Frowde, 1898-1905), II, 101, gives the following excerpt from Grose: "One kind of them differs from the domestic Dobbies, by inhabiting bridges, doing only mischief, and by frightening travellers, by jumping behind them on horseback, and squeezing them so as to impede their breathing."

Irving appears to have taken some hints from this as the basis of his version: "There is a story, among the old folk, of one that haunted a ruined mill, just by a bridge that crosses a small stream; how that late one night, as a traveller was passing on horseback, the Dobbie jumped up behind him, and grasped him so close round the body that he had no power to help himself, but expected to be squeezed to death: luckily his heels were loose, with which he plied the sides of his steed, and was carried with the wonderful instinct of a traveller's horse, straight to the village inn. . . ." (Bracebridge Hall, p. 229).

[11]Washington Irving, The Crayon Miscellany, ed. Dahlia Kirby Terrell, The Complete Works of Washington Irving (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1979), XXII, 125-168.

[12]Mary Russell Mitford, Our Village: Sketches of Rural Character and Scenery, new ed., 2nd series (London: Bohn, 1848), for "The Incendiary" and "The Mole-catcher"; Our Village (London: Macmillan, 1922), for "Violeting," and "Hannah Bint."

[13] Thomas Miller, Beauties of the Country: or, Descriptions of Rural Customs, Objects, Scenery, and the Seasons (London: John Van Voorst, 1837), Rural Sketches (London: John Van Voorst, 1839), Pictures of Country Life (London: David Bogue, 1847), Our Old Town (London: J. and C. Brown, 1857); I have only sampled Miller's large and miscellaneous output.

[14] Miller's use of the term "oral history" in 1857 predates by six years the earliest (American) usage reported by Charles T. Morrissey in "Why Call It 'Oral History'? Searching for Early Usage of a Generic Term," Oral History Review (1980), 20-48.

[15] Ann Hughes, The Diary of a Farmer's Wife, 1796-1797 (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1981); apparently the diary is authentic, though the textual history is obscure, as the preface shows.

[16] George Bourne, A Farmer's Life: With a Memoir of the Farmer's Sister (London: Jonathan Cape, 1922), pp. 128-130.

[17] The remark "nothing worse than myself" is a traditional remark of a sceptic; Bettesworth responds with it when Sturt sounds him out on the subject of ghosts: "'As I often says, I bin about all times o' the night an' I never met nothin' worse than myself" (Memoirs, p. 55). I have recorded it in a similar context in Dorset. The phrase also appeared as an informant's comment in a folklore essay submitted to me in 1978 by a Saint Mary's University student, Fred Bonnell, of Truro, Nova Scotia.

The allusion to "Tom Otter" can also be verified as a local reference; versions of the international neck riddle of the bird nesting in a hanged man's skull were localized in Lincolnshire around the gibbeted corpse of Tom, or Jack, Otter; see Roger D. Abrahams, Between the Living and the Dead, Folklore Fellows Communications, No. 225 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1980), pp. 68-71.

[18] William Howitt, The Rural Life of England, 3rd ed. (1844; rpt. Shannon: Irish University Press, 1971).

[19]William Howitt, The Boy's Country-Book: Being The Real Life of a Country Boy, Written by Himself, Exhibiting all the Amusements, Pleasures, and Pursuits of Children in the Country (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1839).

[20]For a discussion of the character writers see H.V. Routh, "London and the Development of Popular Literature," The Cambridge History of English Literature (Cambridge: The University Press, 1932), IV, 335-342. Warren D. Anderson's Theophrastus: The Character Sketches ([Kent, Ohio]: Kent State University Press, 1970), also contains a useful introduction.

[21]Sir Thomas Overbury, The Overburian Characters, ed. W.J. Paylor (Oxford: Blackwell, 1936), pp. 55-57.

[22]Douglas Bush, "Essays and Characters," in his English Literature in the Earlier Seventeenth Century 1600-1660, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), p. 213.

[23]John Earle, Microcosmography, ed. Harold Osbourne (London: University Tutorial Press, 1933), pp. 52-53.

[24]Wye Saltonstall, Picturae Loquentes; or pictures drawne forth in characters (1631), Film STC 975, P & R 21645. An edition by C.H. Wilkinson was published in 1946. Saltonstall was born into a prominent London family and spent some time at Oxford, but otherwise little is known of his career; thus we cannot guess at the original locations of the folk customs he describes.

[25]Rev. Charles L. Marson, Village Silhouettes (London: Society of SS. Peter and Paul, 1914).

[26]Walter Raymond, The Book of Crafts and Character (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1907).

[27]Walter Raymond, English Country Life (London: T.N. Foulis, 1910), Under the Spreading Chestnut Tree: A Volume of Rural Lore and Anecdote (London: Folk Press, 1928); novels include Good Souls of Cider-Land (London: G. Richards, 1901), Gossip Corner (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1907), and Love and Quiet Life: Somerset Idylls (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1894); I have seen only the second work in this list.

[28][Georgine Tollet], Country Conversations: The Humour of Old Village Life in the Midlands, 3rd ed. (London: John Murray, 1923). The earlier editions appeared in 1881 and 1886 from other publishers.

[29]Pamela Tennant, Village Notes, and Some Other Papers (London: William Heinemann, 1900). An essay entitled "Fables and Folk-lore" appears in her Shepherds' Crowns (Oxford: Blackwell, 1932), but I have not seen this volume.

30 Tennant also wrote The Earthen Vessel, A Volume Dealing with Spirit Communications Received in the Form of Book Tests (London: John Lane, 1921).

[31]John Drinkwater, Cotswold Characters (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1921).

[32]Edmund Blunden, ed., Return to Husbandry: An Annotated List of Books Dealing with the History, Philosophy and Craftsmanship of Rural England, and Intended to Suggest Alternatives to Commercialism and Mechanization. With four preliminary essays (London: J.M. Dent, 1943).

[33]Thomas Hennell, Change in the Farm (Cambridge: The University Press, 1936), The Countryman at Work (London: The Architectural Press, 1947).

[34]Wold Without End (London: Cobden-Sanderson, 1932), The Wisdom of the Fields (London: Collins, 1945), and Where Man Belongs (London: Collins, 1946), are representative of Massingham's writing; his philosophy is further expounded in Remembrance: An Autobiography (London: Batsford, 1942).

[35]H.W. Martin, ed., The Countryman's Chap-Book (London: Dennis Dobson, 1949).

[36]Ronald Blythe, Akenfield: Portrait of an English Village (1969, rpt. New York: Delta, 1970).

[37]William Cobbett, Rural Rides, ed. George Woodcock (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1967).

[38]See Cobbett's autobiography, The Progress of a Plough-Boy to a Seat in Parliament, ed. William Reitzel (London: Faber, 1933).

[39]Cobbett: Selections, ed. A.M.D. Hughes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), p. 115.

[40]William Cobbett, Cottage Economy, 17th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).

[41]William Stevenson, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Dorset: With Observations on the Means of its Improvement (London: 1812).

[42]William Marshall, Rural Economy of the West of England, 2 vols. (1796; rpt. New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1970).

[43]G.E. Fussell, The Old English Farming Books from Fitzherbert to Tull 1523 to 1730 (London: Crosby Lockwood, 1947); More Old English Farming Books from Tull to the Board of Agriculture (London: Crosby Lockwood, 1950). Fussell's excellent study drawing on such sources is The English Rural Labourer: His Home, Furniture, Clothing & Food (London: Batchworth Press, 1949).

[44]Richard Jefferies, Round About a Great Estate (1880; rpt. London: John Murray, 1925); hereafter cited as Estate.

[45]Richard Jefferies, The Toilers of the Field (London: Longmans, Green, 1892), p. 210. Hereafter cited as Toilers.

[46]Richard Jefferies, A Classic of English Farming: Hodge and His Masters, ed. Henry Williamson (1880; rpt. London: Faber, 1948); hereafter cited as Hodge.

[47]Richard Jefferies, The Open Air (1885; rpt. London: J.M. Dent, 1914).

[48]Richard Jefferies, The Life of the Fields, introd. Samuel J. Looker (1884; rpt. London: Lutterworth Press, 1947), pp. 19-42.

[49]W.J. Keith, Richard Jefferies: A Critical Study (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965), pp. 41-45.

[50]Richard Jefferies, The Gamekeeper at Home and The Amateur Poacher, introd. David Ascoli (1878, 1879; rpt. London: Oxford University Press, 1948).

[51]Richard Jefferies, Wild Life in a Southern County, introd. Desmond Hawkins (1879; rpt. Bradford-on-Avon, Wiltshire: Moonraker Press, 1978); hereafter cited as Wild Life.

[52]Stith Thompson, Motif-Index of Folk Literature (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955), Vol. 4, p. 78: J1151.1.3. The sausage rain . . . A mother in order to discredit testimony of her foolish son who has killed a man makes him believe that it has rained sausages. When he says that he killed the man on the night it rained sausages his testimony is discredited.

[53]Francis George Heath, Peasant Life in the West of England, 3rd ed. (London: Sampson, Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, 1880).

[54]Richard Heath, The English Peasant: Studies: Historical, Local, and Biographic (London: T. Fisher Unwin, [1893]).

[55]George Francis Millin, Life in Our Villages. By the Special Commissioner of the "Daily News." Being a Series of Letters written to that Paper in the Autumn of 1891 (London: Cassell, 1891).

[56]Eric Benfield, Saul's Sons (London: Chatto and Windus, 1938).

[57]Rev. Augustus Jessopp, Arcady for Better for Worse (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1887); cited afterwards as Arcady.

[58]Fraser, "George Sturt," pp. 114-120.

[59]Martin J. Lovelace, "'We Had Words': Narratives of Verbal Conflicts," Lore and Language, 3:1, pt. A (1979), 29-37.

[60]Thomas Hardy, "The Dorsetshire Labourer," in Thomas Hardy's Personal Writings, ed. Harold Orel (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1966), pp. 168-191.

[61]John Aubrey, The Natural History of Wiltshire . . . (Written between 1656 and 1691), ed. John Britton (1847; rpt. Newton Abbot, Devon: David & Charles, 1969), p. 109.

[62]Raymond Williams, The Country and the City (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), ch. 2, "A Problem of Perspective," pp. 9-12.

[63]Lucy Bettesworth, pp. 1-31, 61-84.

[64]Rev. J.C. Atkinson, Forty Years in a Moorland Parish: Reminiscences and Researches in Danby in Cleveland (1891; rpt. with Prefatory Memoir, London: Macmillan, 1907).

[65]Fletcher Moss, Folk-Lore Old Customs and Tales of my Neighbours (Didsbury and Manchester: The Author, 1898). Other works by Moss draw on a similar blend of oral and written sources; see Didsbury: Sketches, Reminiscences, and Legends (Manchester: George Falkner, Deansgate Press, 1890); Didisburye in the '45 (Manchester: Cornish, 1891); and A History of the old parish of Cheadle in Cheshire (Manchester: The Author, 1894).

[66]Cecil Torr, Small Talk at Wreyland, introd. Jack Simmons (1918, 192, 1923; rpt., 3 vols. in one, Oxford: University Press, 1979).

[67]Baring-Gould's scheme for classification of folktales, together with a small collection of tales, appeared as an appendix to William Henderson, Notes on the Folk Lore of the Northern Counties of England and the Borders (London: Longmans, Green, 1866); it was not included in the second edition of Henderson's work.

[68]S. Baring-Gould, H. Fleetwood Sheppard, and F.W. Bussell, Songs of the West: Folk Songs of Devon & Cornwall From the Mouths of the People, new and rev. ed. under the musical editorship of Cecil J. Sharp (London: Methuen [1906]); S. Baring-Gould and H. Fleetwood Sheppard, A Garland of Country Song: English Folk Songs with their Traditional Melodies (London: Methuen, 1895).

[69]Sabine Baring-Gould, Folk Songs of the West Country, ed. Gordon Hitchcock (Newton Abbot, Devon: David and Charles, 1974).

[70]S. Baring-Gould, Old Country Life, 5th ed. (London: Methuen, 1895).

[71]S. Baring-Gould, Further Reminiscenes 1864-1894, introd. Leslie Shepard (1925; rpt. Detroit: Gale, 1967).

[72]Further reference to this occurs in his Strange Survivals: Some Chapters in the History of Man (London: Methuen, 1892), pp. 225-226.

[73]Alan Dundes, "The Devolutionary Premise in Folklore Theory," in his Analytic Essays in Folklore (The Hague: Mouton, 1975), pp. 17-27.

[74]S. Baring-Gould, Devonshire Characters and Strange Events (London: John Lane, 1908).

[75]S. Baring-Gould, Early Reminiscences 1834-1864, introd. Leslie Shepard (1923; rpt. Detroit: Gale, 1967).

[76]The English and Scottish Popular Ballads, ed. Francis James Child (1882-1898; rpt. New York: Dover, 1965), II, pp. 226-234.

[77]Fraser, "George Sturt," pp. 65-72.

[78]P.H. Ditchfield, Old English Customs Extant at the Present Time: An Account of Local Observances, Festival Customs, and Ancient Ceremonies yet Surviving in Great Britain (London: George Redway, 1896); Old English Sports Pastimes and Customs (London: Methuen, 1891);

The Charm of the English Village (London: Batsford, 1908); The Cottages and Village Life of Rural England (London: J.M. Dent, 1912); Old Village Life, Or, Glimpses of Village Life Through All Ages, 2nd ed. (London: Methuen, 1921).

[79]R.L. Gales' reviews and essays are collected in Studies in Arcady, and Other Essays from a Country Parsonage, First and Second Series (London: Herbert and Daniel, 1910 and 1912); The Vanished Country Folk and Other Studies in Arcady (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent, 1914); and Old World Essays (London: Daniel O'Connor, 1921). Essays in folklore selected from these titles are republished in Dwellers in Arcady (1931; rpt. Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1968).

[80]Fraser, "George Sturt," pp. 42-59, elaborates upon Raymond Williams' comments on "the idea of service" made in the latter's Culture and Society, 1780-1950 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958).

[81]Rolf Gardiner, England Herself: Ventures in Rural Restoration (London: Faber, 1943).

[82]Charles Fleet, Glimpses of Our Ancestors in Sussex; with Sketches of Sussex Characters, Remarkable Incidents, etc., 2nd ed. (Lewes, Sussex: Farncombe, 1882).

[83]Walter Johnson, Talks with Shepherds (London: George Routledge, 1925); Folk-Memory or The Continuity of British Archaeology (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908). His Byways in British Archaeology (Cambridge: The University Press, 1912) includes essays on the siting and orientation of churches and graves, burial customs, and the lore of the horse and ox.

[84]Barclay Wills, Shepherds of Sussex (London: Skeffington, 1938).

[85]A book representative in title and content of this "rambler" style is William Dobson, Rambles by the Ribble, 1st and 2nd ser. (Preston: W. Dobson, 1877), who in describing his visit to Austwick, Yorkshire, cannot forbear relating numskull stories of the celebrated "Austwick carles" which he had been told by people in the surrounding area (pp. 44-47). 'John Trotandot' [i.e. G.P.R. Pulman] in Rambles, Roamings, and Recollections (London: Longman, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1870), set out to record "some account of 'manners and customs' fast passing away for ever." He includes a sketch of a Whitsuntide "club day" (pp. 65-67); a tale of a ghost that was no ghost, with some discussion of a white witch (pp. 130-133); and a description of an evening's fishing off Lyme Regis which shows a knowledge of dialect and fishing techniques (pp. 133-141). Such books are innately miscellaneous but frequently rewarding.

[86]The best account of these authors from a folkloristic perspective is by Richard M. Dorson in his The British Folklorists, ch. I, "The Antiquaries," pp. 1-43. Aubrey's Natural History is cited above, note 61.

[87]Richard Gough, Human Nature Displayed in the History of Myddle, introd. W.G. Hoskins (New York: October House, 1968); cited hereafter as Myddle.

[88]David G. Hey, An English Rural Community: Myddle under the Tudors and Stuarts (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1974).

[89]There were several jestbooks built around the figure of Scoggan, or Scoggin, as fool, rogue, and knave, the earliest of which may have appeared in 1565. P.M. Zall reprints a selection from a 1680 edition, entitled The Merry Jests and Witty Shifts of Scogin, in A Nest of Ninnies and Other English Jestbooks of the Seventeenth Century (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970), pp. 105-117.

[90]This traditional method of protecting a woodpile, and its consequence, is the theme of the title story in Vance Randolph's Who Blowed Up the Church House and Other Ozark Folk Tales (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), pp. 3-6. Other published accounts of it appear in I.W. Dickinson, Yorkshire Life and Character: A Craven Village Sixty Years Ago (Hull: William Andrews, The Hull Press; London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent, 1894), p. 214; Cecil Torr, Small Talk at Wreyland, I, 61; Rosalie E. Bosanquet, ed. In The Troublesome Times: The Cambo Women's Institute Book of 1922 (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Northumberland Press, 1929), p. 112 (where a wheelwright protects his stack of felloes). In 1982 Mr. Clarence Blois, farmer, of Hants Co., Nova Scotia, told me of using the same precaution to guard his woodpile; he had heard of another man doing it years before.

[91]Cf. Ernest W. Baughman, Type and Motif-Index of the Folktales of England and North America, Indiana University Folklore Series No. 20 (The Hague: Mouton, 1966), p. 114: D1812.0.2.4(a). Wizard has foreknowledge of coming of clients.

[92]Geoffrey Robinson's Hedingham Harvest: Victorian Family Life in Rural England (London: Constable, 1977), which is based on sometimes uninhibited recollections within a Lincolnshire farming family, shows that it was not uncommon for masters to assume proprietary sexual rights over their maidservants; "Masters slept with their maids. The text, 'Sleep not for ye know not when the Master cometh,' had long been, among housemaids, a tired jest," p. 28.

[93]Thomas Geering, Our Sussex Parish, ed. Arthur Beckett (London: Methuen, 1925). Beckett's edition is a selection from a longer original which had first appeared serially in a Sussex newspaper and was then published by the author in 1884 as Our Parish: A Medley; By One Who Has Never Lived Out of It.

[94]Other tall tale material appears on pp. 26 and 105; the auctioneer's tale is a version of X1215.9(ab). Hunter loses his bird dog while hunting; a year later he discovers the skeleton of the dog still pointing skeleton covey, in Baughman, Type and Motif-Index, p. 481.

[95]John Ward, Moston Characters at Play (Manchester: Charles H. Barber, 1905); Moston Characters at Work (Manchester: Charles H. Barber, 1911). Hereafter cited as Play and Work respectively.

[96]A model study of the kind suggested by the focus of Ward's book is A.E. Green's "Only Kidding: Joking Among Coal-Miners," in Language, Culture and Tradition, eds. A.E. Green and J.D.A. Widdowson, CECTAL Conference Papers Series, No. 2 (Leeds and Sheffield: Institute of Dialect and Folklife Studies, University of Leeds and C.E.C.T.A.L., University of Sheffield, 1981), pp. 47-76.

[97]For a discussion of the process by which community anecdotes become shortened into proverbial allusions to the stories, see L.G. Small, "Traditional expressions in a Newfoundland community: genre change and functional variability," Lore and Language, 2:3 (1975), 15-18.

[98]The trick is in the spirit of a number of folk-tales in which contests are won by default through an impressive bluff; see, for example, Type 1612 The Contest in Swimming. The swimmer takes a knapsack of provisions on his back. His rival is afraid and gives up, in Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson, The Types of the Folktale, FF Communications No. 184, 2nd rev. (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1973), p. 460.

[99]For the two latter tales cf. Type 1894. Man Shoots a Ramrod Full of Ducks and Type 1893A*. Two Hares Run into Each Other and are caught, in Baughman, Type and Motif-Index, p. 57.

[100]See Victor Turner, "Humility and Hierarchy," in his The Ritual Process (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1969), pp. 166-203. For a discussion of "rushbearing" as a festival see Theresa Buckland, "Wakes and Rushbearing c. 1780-1830: A Functional Analysis," Lore and Language, 3:6, pt. A (1982), 29-44.

[101]Rev. J.E. Linnell, Old Oak: The Story of a Forest Village, ed., with a memoir of the author by his sons (London: Constable, 1932).

[102]Hey, An English Rural Community: Myddle, p. 7.

[103]Stanley Brandes, Metaphors of Masculinity: Sex and Status in Andalusian Folklore, Publications of the American Folklore Society, New Series, Vol. 1 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1980), ch. 7, "Pranks and Riddles," pp.115-136.

[104]This is Type 955C. Mr. Fox. in Baughman, Type and Motif-Index, p. 22.

[105]Professor Halpert does not seem to have committed this remark to print; nevertheless it is in the spirit of his comments on Randolph's intuitive grasp of the need to provide the full context of folklore in "Vance Randolph, The Compleat Folklorist," in For Love and For Money, The Writings of Vance Randolph: An Annotated Bibliography, by Robert Cochran and Michael Luster (Batesville, Ark.: Arkansas College Folklore Archive Publications, 1979), pp. 5-17.

[106]The 1921 competition launched in Home and Country is cited in Rosalie E. Bosanquet, ed, In The Troublesome Times: The Cambo Women's Institute Book of 1922 (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Northumberland Press, 1929), p. 5; the notable group of village history and folklore collections produced as a result are those best known to folklorists. There were earlier Women's Institute collections, however, such as the Langport Women's Institute's Story of Our Village (Langport Herald, 1894), cited in R.L. Tongue, Somerset Folklore (London: The Folk-Lore Society, 1965), p. 234; but I have not been able to see this. A booklet addressed to Women's Institute groups in 1925 by Joan Wake entitled How to Compile a History and Present Day Record of Village Life is mentioned by Paul Thompson in his survey of oral history studies The Voice of the Past (Oxford University

Press, 1978), pp. 155, 238. The interest in local history and tradition among members of Women's Institutes has continued and Paul Jennings in The Living Village: A report on rural life in England and Wales based on actual village scrapbooks (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972), pp. 7-8, records that some 2,600 scrapbooks were compiled to mark the Golden Jubilee of the W.I. movement in 1965.

[107] Marianne R. Dacombe, ed. Dorset Up Along and Down Along: A Collection of History, Tradition, Folk Lore, Flower Names and Herbal Lore gathered together by Members of Women's Institutes (Gillingham, Dorset: T.H. Brickell, The Blackmore Press, 1935).

[108] Edith Olivier and Margaret K.S. Edwards, eds. Moonrakings: A Little Book of Wiltshire Stories told by Members of Women's Institutes (Warminster, Wilts.: Coates and Parker, n.d.), pp. 36-41.

[109] L.F. Ramsey, comp. The West Wittering Women's Institute Book (Chichester, Sussex: Moore and Wingham, 1930).

[110] Winifred G. Beddington and Elsa B. Christy, comps. It Happened in Hampshire: Doings, Sayings, and Interests, past and present. Collected . . . by Members of the Hampshire Federation of Women's Institutes, 4th ed. (Winchester: Hampshire Federation of Women's Institutes, 1967).

[111] See A.G. G[ilchrist], and L.E. B[roadwood], "The Prickly Bush (The Maid Freed from the Gallows) and its connection with the story of The Golden Ball," Journal of the Folk-Song Society, 5 (1914-1917), 229-239.

NOTES

CH. III THE ORIGINALITY OF GEORGE STURT

[1]George Bourne' (i.e. George Sturt), Change in the Village (1912; rpt. London: Duckworth, 1955); George Sturt, The Wheelwright's Shop (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1923). Hereafter cited respectively as Change and Wheelwright's Shop.

[2]For biographical details I have drawn mainly on the Introduction by E.D. Mackerness to his edition of The Journals of George Sturt, 1890-1927, A Selection (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967); hereafter cited as Journals.

[3]The Journals of George Sturt 'George Bourne' 1890-1902, ed. Geoffrey Grigson (London: The Cresset Press, 1941); hereafter cited as Grigson. Grigson's selection is weighted toward Sturt's country life writing and includes several pieces of folklife description omitted by the Mackerness edition cited above.

[4]Sturt quotes his grandfather's proverb again in The Wheelwright's Shop, p. 19, and notes a parallel belief, or saying, among reapers, p. 206.

[5]'George Bourne,' William Smith: Potter and Farmer 1790-1858 (London: Chatto and Windus, 1920), p. 200.

[6]The remark appears in a letter Sturt wrote to Arnold Bennett in 1908 which is quoted in Bennett's Introduction to Sturt's autobiography, A Small Boy in the Sixties (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1927), p. ix.

[7]Grigson, pp. 185-186. This a fuller version than that appearing in Change in the Village, p. 188. The rhyme is a popular children's adaptation of a music-hall song of ca. 1878; see Iona and Peter Opie, The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), pp. 13-14.

[8]Sturt also wrote to Arnold Bennett of this occasion as an example of the way he tried to enter such descriptions in his journal as quickly as possible, staying up until 12:30 to "get it down"; see A Small Boy in the Sixties, p. x.

[9]Quoted in Robert A. Fothergill's stimulating discussion of diaries, Private Chronicles: A Study of English Diaries (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 50.

[10]Fraser, "George Sturt," p. 157.

[11]'George Bourne,' A Farmer's Life, pp. 204-205. This widespread story is classified as J1811.1. Owl's hoot misunderstood by lost simpleton, in Baughman, Type and Motif Index, p. 316.

[12]Laurie Lee, Cider with Rosie (London: Hogarth Press, 1959); Frank Kendon, The Small Years (Cambridge: The University Press, 1932).

[13]Sid Knight, Cotswold Lad (London: Country Book Club, 1961), ch. 2.

[14]For this idea see Lawrence C. Watson, Self and Ideal in a Guajiro Life History (Vienna: Acta Ethnologica et Linguistica, 21, Series Americana 5, 1970).

[15]Flora Thompson, Lark Rise to Candleford (1945; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1973), p. 50.

[16]Martin J. Lovelace, "The Life History of a Dorset Folk Healer," M.A. thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1975, p. 103: "He explained the . . . sufficiency of each subject [in the 'three 'Rs']; there was 'Writing, where you can express yourself; reading, which enriches the mind; and arithmetic, which you learnt so that nobody could diddle you . . . .'" Les Ollerton's emphasis on "being treated fair" seems to match Bettesworth's. Stephen Reynolds remarked the same opinion among working men in Devon; see his Seems So! A Working-Class View of Politics (London: Macmillan, 1911), p. 310.

[17]Richard Jefferies' "John Smith's Shanty" has been discussed previously; it is partly about the need for public houses as one of the few sources of warmth and fellowship available to working men. Christopher Holdenby takes up this theme, and that of the attendant temptations of the pub, in Folk of the Furrow (London: Smith, Elder, 1913), pp. 155-169, and Victor L. Whitechurch has given a very good account of the public house as an informal labour exchange in A Downland Corner (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1912), in his chapter "The Village Inn," pp. 39-52.

[18]Roy Pascal, Design and Truth in Autobiography (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960), pp. 181, 183.

[19]See the essays by Melvin M. Firestone and James C. Faris for the "stranger" concept in relation to mumming, in Christmas Mumming in Newfoundland, eds. Herbert Halpert and G.M. Story (St. John's: University of Toronto Press for Memorial University, 1969). Sturt makes a passing reference to the "degenerate" form of the mummers' play performed by Farnham boys in Change in the Village, pp. 169-170.

[20]Edward Thomas, "Lob," The Collected Poems of Edward Thomas, ed. R.S. Thomas (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), pp. 159-167.

[21]This is a version of Type 366. The Man from the Gallows (Baughman, Type and Motif Index, p. 9).

[22] I refer, of course, to Alice Bertha Gomme, The Traditional Games of England, Scotland, and Ireland, 2 vols. (1894, 1898; rpt. New York: Dover Publications, 1964) and the two major works on children's lore and play by Iona and Peter Opie, The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren, and Children's Games in Street and Playground (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969)

[23] Pascal, Design and Truth, pp. 81-82.

NOTES

CH. IV OTHER INTERPRETERS OF RURAL LIFE

[1]'Christopher Holdenby' (i.e. Ronald George Hatton), Folk of the Furrow (London: Smith, Elder, 1913); cited hereafter as Furrow.

[2]Stephen Reynolds, A Poor Man's House (London: John Lane, 1909).

[3]This is a point of correspondence with the attitude of James Hawker, a Victorian poacher (his autobiography is discussed below), who remarked: "I have poached more for Revenge than Gain." See James Hawker's Journal: A Victorian Poacher, ed. Garth Christian (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 95.

[4]Sturt mentions the legend told "with something of a shudder" of an atheist farmer who took some of his rain spoiled grass on a prong and held it up, saying "There, God! What d'ye think o' that?" (A Farmer's Life, p. 207). Nautical versions in which a ship's captain climbs the mast to curse God are discussed by Patrick B. Mullen in "The Relationship of Legend and Folk Belief," Journal of American Folklore, 84 (1971), 408-409.

[5]Fraser, "George Sturt," p. 255.

[6]Stephen Reynolds and Bob and Tom Woolley, Seems So! A Working-Class View of Politics (London: Macmillan, 1911), p. 200.

The biographical details given above are taken from the Introduction to the Letters of Stephen Reynolds, ed. Harold Wright (Richmond: Leonard and Virginia Woolf, The Hogarth Press, 1923). After writing this section I was kindly directed by Dr. W.J. Kirwin of the Department of English, Memorial University, to J.D. Osbourne's essay, "Stephen Reynolds," The Devonshire Association: Report and

Transactions, III (Salcombe, 1979), 49-57. Osbourne's essay and his study, "Stephen Reynolds, a biographical and critical study," Diss. University of London, 1977, represent almost the only literary notice of this author, with the exception of E.W. Martin's comparison of "Stephen Reynolds and W.N.P. Barbellion" in A Countryman's Chap-Book, pp. 85-95, and Paul Thompson's appreciative note in The Voice of the Past, p. 36.

[7]Stephen Reynolds, Alongshore: Where Man and the Sea Face One Another (New York: Macmillan, 1910).

[8]Stephen Reynolds, How 'Twas: Short Stories and Small Travels (London: Macmillan, 1912).

[9]Seems So! is cited in note 6. Reynold's only comparable work, The Lower Deck (London: J.M. Dent, 1912), is described in J.D. Osbourne's essay, "Stephen Reynolds," p. 55, as "a trenchant contribution to the debate about pay and conditions in the navy."

[10]Stephen Reynolds, Letters of Stephen Reynolds, ed. Harold Wright (Richmond: Leonard and Virginia Woolf, The Hogarth Press, 1923).

[11]John C. Messenger, Inis Beag: Isle of Ireland, Case Studies in Cultural Anthropology (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969), p. 2.

[12]Other folksong references appear in A Poor Man's House, p. 312 (New Year singing), and in Alongshore, p. 103 (on a broadside: "The Bride's Return"), and p. 247 (on "The Bulldog Breed," a patriotic Navy song).

[13]Major [E.] Gambier-Parry, The Spirit of the Old Folk (London: Smith, Elder, 1913).

[14]Fraser, "George Sturt," pp. 253-254.

[15]Major [E.] Gambier Parry, Allegories of the Land (London: Smith, Elder, 1912).

[16]H[orace] Harman, Buckinghamshire Dialect, with a new preface by Stewart F. Sanderson (1929; rpt. East Ardsley, Yorkshire: S.R. Publishers, 1970; cited hereafter as Dialect; H[orace] Harman, Sketches of the Bucks Countryside (London: Blandford Press, 1934); cited hereafter as Bucks Countryside.

[17]G. Eland, In Bucks: A Second and Enlarged Edition of "Old Works and Past Days in Rural Buckinghamshire" (Aylesbury, Bucks.: G.T. DeFraine, 1923), p. 80.

[18]W.H. Hudson, A Shepherd's Life (1910; rpt. London: Dent, Everyman's Library, 1936).

[19]See W.J. Keith's chapter on Hudson in The Rural Tradition, pp. 171-189.

[20]In Mad Shepherds; And Other Human Studies (1910; rpt. London: Williams and Norgate, 1930) L.P. Jacks described "Snarley Bob," a shepherd, in ridiculously mystical terms. In his autobiography, The Confessions of an Octogenarian (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1942), p. 189, Jacks reflected that "The mad Shepherd 'Snarley Bob' is clearly, in essence, myself, though . . . I thought I was writing about a Shepherd in the neighbourhood."

[21]C401.3. Tabu: speaking while searching for treasure (Baughman, Type and Motif-Index), p. 93.

[22]Fraser, "George Sturt," pp. 231, 240.

[23]Crichton Porteous, Chuckling Joe (London: Phoenix House, 1954).

[24]Crichton Porteous, Teamsman (London: George G. Harrap, 1939).

[25]For a parallel story see Edward M. Wilson, "Folk Traditions in Westmorland," Journal of the Folklore Institute, 2:3 (1965), 282-283; Wilson remarks "The sagacity of dogs is the subject of many a tale, and as these have become exaggerated, they have led to parody."

[26]Walter Rose, The Village Carpenter, introd. Frank Kendon (Cambridge: The University Press, 1943).

[27]Denys Thompson, "A Cure for Amnesia," Scrutiny, 2:1 (1933), 7.

[28]Fraser, "George Sturt," pp. 14-20.

[29]Walter Rose, Good Neighbours: Some Recollections of an English Village and Its People (Cambridge: The University Press, 1942).

[30]E.M. Barraud's Set My Hand Upon the Plough (Worcester: Littlebury, The Worcester Press, 1946), narrates her experience as a member of the Women's Land Army; there is some interest in her account of learning farming techniques from the bluff old foreman, "Stone." J.D.U. Ward's A Woodman's Diary (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1952) gives the reminiscences of a middle-class man engaged in practical forestry; he takes an acerbic view of the democratic assertiveness of the men he worked with. Crichton Porteous's memoir of a farming apprenticeship, Teamsman, is mentioned above, note 24.

[31]Hugh Barrett, Early to Rise: A Suffolk Morning (London: Faber, 1967).

[32]On areas for male sociability see also John Beard's interesting autobiography, My Shropshire Days On Common Ways (Birmingham: Cornish Brothers, [1948]), p. 119, where he remarks that it was customary for men to sit under the hedge after work and drink the remaining ale in their bottles before going home; this became an occasion for singing.

[33]Alfred Williams, Folk-songs of the Upper Thames: With an Essay on Folk-Song Activity in the Upper Thames Neighbourhood (London: Duckworth, 1923); cited hereafter as Folk-Songs. For commentary on Williams' song collecting see the symposium, "Alfred Williams and the Folk Songs of the Upper Thames," published in Folk Music Journal, 1:5 (1969), 293-349; John R. Baldwin's essay on his 1960's survey of traditional song in Williams' fieldwork area, in which he located descendants of Williams' singers, is particularly interesting. I am grateful to Dr. David Buchan for this reference.

[34]Herbert Halpert, "Vance Randolph, The Compleat Folklorist," in For Love and For Money, The Writings of Vance Randolph, p. 12.

[35]Leonard Clark, Alfred Williams: His Life and Work (Bristol: William George's Sons, 1945), p. 94.

[36]Alfred Williams, A Wiltshire Village (London: Duckworth, 1912); Villages of the White Horse (London: Duckworth, 1913); Round About the Upper Thames (London: Duckworth, 1922); hereafter cited as Wiltshire Village, White Horse, and Round About, respectively.

[37]Clark, Alfred Williams, pp. 172-173.

[38]Barclay Wills, Shepherds of Sussex, p. 27.

[39]The humour of the farmer discomfited by the boy's progressively "worse" songs, as Dr. David Buchan points out to me, is in the spirit of the folktale Type 1735C. The Bribed Boy Sings the Wrong Song. (Baughman, Type and Motif-Index, p. 46). For a parallel to Williams' second story of the clever boy see Vance Randolph, Sticks in the Knapsack and Other Ozark Folktales (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), pp. 4-6, 137, in which the halfwit explains that if he took the more valuable coin "them damn fools wouldn't try me no more."

[40]This is "The Tasks" section of Type 875. The Clever Peasant Girl in Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson, The Types of the Folktale, pp. 293-295.

[41]I have already cited versions of this widespread anecdote recorded by George Sturt (Ch. 3, n. 11).

[42]Baughman, Type and Motif-Index, p. 315: J1785. 4.1. Man addresses colt: 'Abide, Satan! Abide! I am a righteous man and a psalm-singer.'

[43]For texts of the song "Butter and Cheese and All" see Williams, Folk-Songs, pp. 108-109, and Kenneth Peacock, Songs of the Newfoundland Outports, 3 vols. (Ottawa: National Museum of Canada, 1965), II, 251-252.

[44]Cf. Baughman, Type and Motif-Index, p. 342: K134. 6(a). Seller: 'Thee would be pleased to see him pull a load.' (The horse does not pull at all.), and ibid., p. 362: K1917.7. (new Type 859D:) 'All of these are mine,' says wooer as he strokes his whiskers. The girl thinks he is indicating the fields and live stock past which they are riding.

[45]Cf. Type 1204. Fool Keeps Repeating his Instructions in Aarne and Thompson, The Types of the Folktale, p. 375; Type 1284 Person Does Not Know Himself, ibid., p. 385; and Type 1697 'We Three; For Money,' in Baughman, Type and Motif-Index, p. 44.

[46]Several of these numskull traits cluster about the central motif J1900. Absurd disregard or ignorance of animal's nature or habits (Baughman, Type and Motif-Index, p. 318). For a survey of the field of blason populaire see J.D.A. Widdowson, "Language, Tradition and Regional Identity: Blason Populaire and Social Control," in Language, Culture and Tradition, eds. A.E. Green and J.D.A. Widdowson, CECTAL Conference Papers Series, No. 2 (Leeds and Sheffield: Institute of Dialect and Folklife Studies, University of Leeds and CECTAL, University of Sheffield, 1981), pp. 33-46.

[47]X1401.1 (a). Animal eats into great vegetable, has young while living there (Baughman, Type and Motif-Index, p. 535). Walter Joyce, in Moorside Tales and Talk (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1935), a book of anecdotes related in a club of Exmoor men, gives the text of a song, "A 'Appy-Go-Lucky Ole Chap," containing standard tall tale motifs of fortunate accidents in hunting, and notes that its singing, at a Christmas party, stimulated further tall talk including a story of a sheep and ewe lost until found in a giant turnip, pp. 38-40.

[48]Kay L. Cothran, "Talking Trash in the Okefenokee Swamp Rim, Georgia," Journal of American Folklore, 87 (1974), 340-356.

[49]The same feat is mentioned in Richard Jefferies' interview with a miller in Round About a Great Estate, pp. 170-171.

[50]For further accounts of mighty eaters see Round About, pp. 169, 223.

[51]Cf. K1682. Disguised trickster beaten by man he is trying to frighten. (Baughman, Type and Motif-Index, p. 358).

[52]W. Roy Mackenzie, "Ballad-Singing in Nova Scotia," Journal of American Folk-Lore, 22 (1909), 328.

[53]Richard Jefferies, The Amateur Poacher, p. 122.

[54]Herbert Halpert, "The Cante Fable in Decay," in Folklore in Action: Essays for Discussion in Honor of MacEdward Leach, ed. Horace P. Beck (Philadelphia: The American Folklore Society, 1962), pp. 139-150.

[55]Cf. Iona and Peter Opie, Children's Games in Street and Playground, ch. 11, "Acting Games," esp. 'Johnny Lingo,' pp. 314-317.

[56]Stanley Brandes, Metaphors of Masculinity, ch. 9, "Skits and Society," pp. 159-176. For the literary history of the farce jig, a dramatized form of the cante fable, see Charles Read Baskervill, The Elizabethan Jig and Related Song Drama (1929; rpt. New York: Dover Publications, 1965), esp. pp. 310-311.

[57]See Martin J. Lovelace, "'Santa Clawing' and 'Santa Clausing' in Shelburne Co., Nova Scotia," in A Folklore Sampler from the Maritimes, ed. Herbert Halpert (St. John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1982), pp. 205-207, and "Christmas Mumming in England: The House-Visit," in Folklore Studies in Honour of Herbert Halpert, eds. Kenneth S. Goldstein and Neil V. Rosenberg (St. John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1980), pp. 271-281.

NOTES

CH. V CHILDHOOD AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

[1]Williams, The Country and the City, p. 9.

[2]Pascal, Design and Truth in Autobiography, p. 85.

[3]Alison Uttley was born in 1884 and spent her early life at Castle Top Farm, Cromford, Derbyshire; for further biographical notes see her obituary, The Times, Saturday, May 8th, 1976, p. 14.

[4]Alison Uttley, The Country Child (London: Faber, 1931); The Farm on the Hill (1941; new ed., London: Faber, 1949); cited hereafter as Country Child and Farm.

[5]For further discussion of how an autobiographical novel may be "truer than life" see Pascal, Design and Truth in Autobiography, ch. 9; his remarks on the autobiographies of poets, as a class of writers, apply well to Uttley: "What one can expect from the imaginative writer is an unusual skill in the evocation of scenes and characters, and more delicate self-observation, especially in respect to obscure other urges, imaginings, to modes of perception and apprehension; one can expect too an artistic arrangement of the whole." (p. 133)

[6]Alison Uttley, Country Things (London: Faber, 1956), p. 134; cited hereafter as Things.

[7]Alison Uttley, Carts and Candlesticks (London: Faber, 1948), p. 28; hereafter cited as Carts.

[8]On "hierarchies" of baths see Alison Uttley's Country Hoard (London: Faber, 1943), pp. 9-15; on candlesticks, Carts, pp. 28-33; of milk yokes, Farm, pp. 106-107; for mats and quilts, Farm, pp. 14, 17-18; for seating positions: Things, p. 11, and Carts, p. 100.

[9]Alison Uttley, The Button Box, and Other Essays (London: Faber, 1968), p. 146.

[10]For a consciously ethnographic application of ideas like Uttley's, on the essences of material objects, see Gerald L. Pocius, "'Interior Motives': Rooms, Objects, and Meaning in Atlantic Canada Homes," Material History Bulletin, 15 (1982), 5-9.

[11]A versified form of this proverb stuck in the memory of another childhood autobiographer, Angus Hector MacLean, of Cape Breton, Nova Scotia; he however, had chosen it as an agreeably short "piece" to say in the obligatory school recitations:

"There were other moralistic gems such as
'Tis wilful waste brings woeful want
And I may live to say,
Oh how I wish I had the crust
Which once I threw away . . . ."

God and the Devil at Seal Cove (Halifax: Petheric Press, 1976), p. 32.

[12]For this process with regard to folktales and legends see Emelyn Elizabeth Gardner, Folklore from the Scoharie Hills, New York (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1937), ch. 5, "Folk Tales," esp. p. 151, where Aunt Jane Buell introduces her story (A-T 955 'The Robber Bridegroom') as "something which had happened on their farm in olden times . . . ." Herbert Halpert gives instances of "the Newfoundland tradition of adapting and localizing older songs" in his Preface to Newfoundland Songs and Ballads in Print 1842-1974: A Title and First-Line Index, comp., introd., Paul Mercer (St. John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1979), pp. x-xi.

[13]Margaret Lane, "Flora Thompson," The Cornhill Magazine, No. 1011 (Spring, 1957), 145-165.

[14]H.J. Massingham, "Introduction," Lark Rise to Candleford, p. 7.

[15]Fraser, "George Sturt," p. 157.

[16]John F. Szwed, "Paul E. Hall: A Newfoundland Song-Maker and His Community of Song," in Folksongs and their Makers, ed. Henry Glassie, Edward D. Ives, and John F. Szwed (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press [1970]), pp. 147-169.

[17]George Baldry, The Rabbit Skin Cap: A Tale of a Norfolk Countryman's Youth, ed. Lilias Rider Haggard (1939; rpt. Ipswich: The Boydell Press, 1974), pp. 177-178; cited hereafter as Rabbit Skin.

[18]Flora Thompson, Still Glides the Stream (London: Oxford University Press, 1948).

[19]Laurie Lee, Cider with Rosie (London: The Hogarth Press, 1959); cited as Cider hereafter.

[20]Laurie Lee, "Writing Autobiography," in his I Can't Stay Long (1975; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1977), pp. 49-53.

[21]Martha Ronk Lifson, "The Myth of the Fall: A Description of Autobiography," Genre, 12:1 (1979), 45-67.

[22]Mrs. Elizabeth Crabb, a shepherd's wife, of Upl.oders, Dorset, told me, in 1975, of the delight local carollers had taken in singing "While shepherds watched . . ." when they visited her, for her husband was often out lambing over the Christmas season.

[23]Spike Mays, Reuben's Corner (1969; rpt. London: Pan Books, 1973).

[24]Christopher Ketteridge and Spike Mays, Five Miles from Bunkum: A Village and its Crafts (London: Eyre Methuen, 1972).

[25]This is a traditional witticism: see Ronald L. Baker, "'Hogs are Playing with Sticks--Bound to be Bad Weather': Folk Belief or Proverb?" in Readings in American Folklore, ed. Jan Harold Brunvand (New York: W.W. Norton, 1979), pp. 199-202.

[26]Clement Harris, Hennage: A Social System in Miniature (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974), p. 8; and see also his remarks on "competence," p. 19, which is the opposite of eccentricity.

[27]Richard Hillyer, Country Boy: The Autobiography of Richard Hillyer (1966, rpt. London: Readers Union, 1967).

[28]Raymond Williams, Border Country (London: Chatto and Windus, 1960).

[29]Richard Jefferies, Bevis: The Story of a Boy (London: Sampson Low, 1882); Kenneth Grahame, Dream Days (New York and London: J. Lane, 1899); Frank Kendon, The Small Years (Cambridge: The University Press, 1932).

NOTES

CH. VI ADULT AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

[1]Fred Kitchen, Brother to the Ox: The Autobiography of a Farm Labourer (1940, rpt. London: Country Book Club, 1951).

[2]Williams, The Country and the City, p. 263.

[3]This concept is discussed by Richard Bauman in "Differential Identity and the Social Base of Folklore," Journal of American Folklore, 84 (1971), 31-41, where he describes a context in which "the contrasting identities of the participants are directly relevant to the structuring of the situation and to their understanding of it."

[4]Other books by Fred Kitchen include a novel, The Commoners (London: J.M. Dent [1950]), and Goslington: Portrait of a Village (London: J.M. Dent, 1965); neither matches the interest of Brother to the Ox.

[5]James Edwin Saunders, The Reflections and Rhymes of an Old Miller, ed. W. Ridley Chesterton (London: Hodder and Stoughton, [1938]).

[6]My essay, "Christmas Mumming in England: The House Visit," previously cited, discusses this tradition which is also being explored by the very active members of the Traditional Drama Research Group in England, whose work is reported in their newsletter Roomer.

[7]Studies by Douglas Hay, "Poaching and the Game Laws on Cannock Chase," in Albion's Fatal Tree: Crime and Society in Eighteenth-Century England, ed. Douglas Hay et al. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975), and E.P. Thompson, Whigs and Hunters: The Origin of the Black Act (New

York: Pantheon Books, 1975), show the importance of poaching as an issue in eighteenth century society, for it embodied larger class rivalries, between Whigs and Tories, for example, as well as commoners' resentments at the expropriation of traditional forest rights.

[8]Some valuable autobiographies of poachers which, for reasons of space, are not dealt with here include The Autobiography of a Poacher, ed. "Caractacus" [F.J. Snell] (London: John MacQueen, 1901); No. 747. Being the Autobiography of a Gipsy, ed. F.W. Carew (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent, 1891); and Daniel Baggs, Dan the Poacher or Born Twice (Ilfracombe, Devon: Arthur H. Stockwell [1956]), which also records his spiritual conversion.

[9]Williams, The Country and the City, p. 183.

[10]John Watson, ed., The Confessions of a Poacher (Edinburgh and London: T.N. Foulis, [1890]).

[11]Ditchfield, Country Folk, pp. 167-186.

[12]James Hawker, James Hawker's Journal: A Victorian Poacher, ed. Garth Christian (Oxford University Press, 1961).

[13]The history of the manuscript is told by Garth Christian in his introduction; Hawker died in 1921.

[14]I Walked By Night: Being the Life & History of King of the Norfolk Poachers Written by Himself, ed. Lilias Rider Haggard (London: Nicholson and Watson, 1935).

[15]Martin J. Lovelace, "The Life History as an Oral Narrative Genre," Canadian Ethnology Society, Papers from the Fourth Annual Congress, 1977 (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1978), p. 216.

[16]Typical anecdotes of poachers' tricks can be found in Alfred Williams, Round About the Upper Thames, p. 267; Dorset Up Along and Down Along, ed. Marianne R. Dacombe, pp. 38-39; George Ewart Evans, Ask the Fellows Who Cut the Hay, 2nd ed. (London: Faber, 1962), pp. 183-184; and Acky, also by Evans (London: Faber, 1973), p. 69, most of which deal with clever hiding places improvised by poachers, or their wives, for themselves and the game.

As smugglers were said to train their horses to obey reverse orders, so poachers trained their dogs; thus a dog could be cleared of suspicion of poaching by seeming to take no interest in game when apparently urged on by its master; for an example see John Yonge Akerman, Wiltshire Tales (London: John Russell Smith, 1853), pp. 174-175. See also the shepherd's anecdote, quoted above, recorded by W.H. Hudson in A Shepherd's Life.

[17]John Wilkins, The Autobiography of an English Gamekeeper, ed. Arthur H. Byng and Stephen M. Stephens, 2nd rev. ed. (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1892).

[18]Richard Jefferies, The Gamekeeper at Home, p. 29: ". . . the lad is not a favourite in the village, and few if any of the other boys make friends with him. He is too loyal to admit of their playing trespass--he looks down on them as a little lower in the scale."

[19]Norman Goodland, My Father Before Me (London: Hutchinson, 1953), is an interesting picture of his father's obsessive craft pride and gives the sense of a heavy duty falling on the sons to continue in the family trade.

[20]Owen James, Ten Years of Game-Keeping (London: Edward Arnold, 1909), p. 243.

[21]Gaius Carley, The Memoirs of Gaius Carley, A Sussex Blacksmith, Written by Himself, ed. Francis W. Steer, 2nd ed. (Chichester: Moore and Tillyer, 1964).

[22]For example, Daniel Baggs in Dan the Poacher or Born Twice, after mentioning his date and place of birth, humble parentage, age in relation to brothers and sisters, turns to his memories of the cottage interior and especially the fireplace, p. 11.

[23]P.H. Emerson, A Son of the Fens (London: Sampson Low, Marston, 1892).

[24]P.H. Emerson was a prolific author and a pioneer photographer. His illustrated books, such as Pictures of East Anglian Life (London: S. Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington, 1888), which apparently shows working life in the marshes, are scarce and expensive, and I have been unable to see them. A volume of prose sketches, English Idyls, 3rd ed. (London: A.G. Berry, 1924), despite a certain "stagey" quality, shows his keen ear for dialect and close attention to folk belief and narrative style. His two collections of tales and legends Tales from Welsh Wales: Founded on Fact and Current Tradition (London: D. Nutt, 1894), and Welsh Fairy-Tales and Other Stories (London: D. Nutt, 1894), while somewhat over-written are the result of personal collection, as shown by the brief notes he makes about the narrators at the end of the latter volume; as Professor Halpert remarks, this is quite an early example of such attention to the storytellers themselves.

[25]L.F. Newman, "Some Notes on Life in East Anglian Villages in the Early Part of the Nineteenth Century," Folk-Lore, 56:2 (1945), 249.

[26]Fleetwood Pride, "Fleetwood Pride 1864-1960: The Autobiography of a Maine Woodsman," eds. Edward D. Ives and David C. Smith, Northeast Folklore, 9 (1976).

[27]Derek Hudson, Munby, Man of Two Worlds: The Life and Diaries of Arthur J. Munby 1828-1910 (1972, rpt. London: Abacus, Sphere Books, 1974), pp. 103-105.

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CH. VII ON READING BIOGRAPHY AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY

[1]Lionel Trilling, Sincerity and Authenticity: The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures, 1969-1970 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), pp. 24-25.

[2]Wayne Shumaker, English Autobiography: Its Emergence, Materials, and Form (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1954), p. 5.

[3]Edward D. Ives, The Tape-Recorded Interview: A Manual for Field Workers in Folklore and Oral History (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1980), p. 41.

[4]W.H. Hudson, Far Away and Long Ago (1918; rpt. London: J.M. Dent, 1939), pp. 1-2; cited by Shumaker, p. 38; by Pascal, p. 71.

[5]Paul Fussell, The Great War and Modern Memory (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975).

[6]Roger Sharrock, "Life and Story in The Pilgrim's Progress," in The Pilgrim's Progress: Critical and Historical Views, ed. Vincent Newey (Totowa, New Jersey: Barnes and Noble, 1980), pp. 49-68.

[7]Basil Bernstein, "Elaborated and Restricted Codes: Their Social Origins and Some Consequences," American Anthropologist, 66:6, pt. 2 (1964), 56.

[8]Lovelace, "Life History as an Oral Narrative Genre," p. 215.

[9]Leslie Stephen, "Autobiography," in his Hours in a Library, new ed. (London: Smith, Elder, 1899), III, 247.

[10]Arthur Randell, Fenland Molecatcher, ed. Enid Porter (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), is informative rather than personal.

[11]S.J. Tyrell began A Countryman's Tale (London: Constable, 1973) as a family history but found himself inevitably writing a history of his village.

[12]George Padfield, The Reflections of a Dorset Countryman (Ilfracombe, Devon: Arthur H. Stockwell, 1979).

[13]'Flann O'Brien' [i.e. Brian O'Nolan], The Poor Mouth (1973; rpt. London: Picador, Pan Books, 1975).

[14]Martha Ronk Lifson, "The Myth of the Fall: A Description of Autobiography," Genre, 12:1 (1979), 45-67.

[15]See, for example, Robert N. Butler, "Successful Aging and the Role of the Life Review," in Readings in Aging and Death: Contemporary Perspectives, ed. Steven H. Zarit (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), pp. 13-19.

[16]Paul Radin, The Autobiography of a Winnebago Indian, California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology, Vol. 16, no. 7 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1920), p. 383.

[17]L.L. Langness, The Life History in Anthropological Science (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965); L.L. Langness and Gelya Frank, Lives: An Anthropological Approach to Biography (Novato, California: Chandler and Sharp Publishers, 1981).

[18]John Dollard, Criteria for the Life History: With Analyses of Six Notable Documents (1935; rpt. New York: Peter Smith, 1949).

[19]Gordon W. Allport, The Use of Personal Documents in Psychological Science (New York: Social Science Research Council Bulletin 49, 1942).

[20]Clyde Kluckhohn, "The Personal Document in Anthropological Science," in Louis Gottschalk, Clyde Kluckhohn and Robert Angell, eds., The Use of Personal Documents in History, Anthropology, and Sociology (New York: Social Science Research Council Bulletin 53, 1945), pp. 78-173.

[21]Gelya Frank, "Finding the Common Denominator: A Phenomenological Critique of the Life History Method," Ethos, 7:1 (1979), 68-94; Lawrence C. Watson, "Understanding a Life History as a Subjective Document: Hermeneutical and Phenomenological Perspectives," Ethos, 4:1 (1976), 95-131.

[22]Lovelace, "Life History as an Oral Narrative Genre," p. 213.

[23]Ibid., p. 215.

[24]Kenneth Burke, in the title essay of his The Philosophy of Literary Form: Studies in Symbolic Action, 3rd ed. (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1973), p. 35.

[25]Lovelace, "Life History as an Oral Narrative Genre," p. 216.

[26]Lilias Rider Haggard, Preface, I Walked by Night, p. vii.

[27]Samuel Raphael, ed., Village Life and Labour, History Workshop Series (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975); Samuel Raphael, ed., Miners, Quarrymen and Saltworkers, History Workshop Series (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977).

[28]George Ewart Evans, From Mouths of Men (London: Faber, 1976).

[29]George Ewart Evans, The Pattern Under the Plough: Aspects of the Folk-Life of East Anglia (London: Faber, 1966), p. 22. Other works by Evans include The Horse in the Furrow (London: Faber, 1960); The Farm and the Village (London: Faber, 1969).

[30]Henry Mayhew, London Labour and the London Poor, 4 vols (1861-1862; rpt., with a new introduction by John D. Rosenberg, New York: Dover Publications, 1968).

[31]Keith Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England (1971; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1978).

[32]Alan Macfarlane, Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England: A Regional and Comparative Study (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970).

[33]Keith Thomas, "History and Anthropology," Past and Present, No. 24 (1963), 3-24, is a good introduction to this approach.

[34]Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, Montaillou: The Promised Land of Error, trans. Barbara Bray (New York: G. Braziller, 1978).

[35]Alan Macfarlane, The Family Life of Ralph Josselin, A Seventeenth Century Clergyman: An Essay in Historical Anthropology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

[36]Bjarne Stoklund, "On Interpreting Peasant Diaries: Material Life and Collective Consciousness," Ethnologia Europaea, 11:2 (1979-1980), 191-207; I am grateful to Dr. Gerald L. Pocius for this reference.

[37]Edward D. Ives, "Common Man Biography: Some Notes by the Way," in Folklore Today: A Festschrift for Richard M. Dorson, ed. Linda Dégh, Henry Glassie, Felix J. Oinas (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1976), pp. 251-264.

[38]Joseph Jacobs, "The Folk," Folk-Lore, 4 (1893), 233-238.

[39]Sigurd Erixon, "Regional European Ethnology," Folkliv, Nos. 2-3 (1937), 92.

[40]Sigurd Erixon, "European Ethnology in Our Time," Ethnologia Europaea, 1:1 (1967), 10.

[41]Ibid., p. 10.

[42]Sigurd Erixon, "Urgent Ethnological Tasks," Ethnologia Europaea, 1:3 (1967), 167.

[43]See, for example, Eunice M. Schofield, "Working Class Food and Cooking in 1900," Folk Life, 13 (1975), 13-23; Roger D. Welsch, "'Sorry Chuck'--Pioneer Foodways," Nebraska History, 53 (1972), 99-113.

[44]Edward D. Ives, Larry Gorman: The Man Who Made the Songs (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964); Lawrence Doyle: The Farmer-Poet of Prince Edward Island, Maine Studies, No. 92 (Orono: University Press, 1971); Joe Scott: The Woodsman-Songmaker (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978).

[45]The following biographies and autobiographies have appeared in Northeast Folklore: "Fleetwood Pride 1864-1960: The Autobiography of a Maine Woodsman," ed. Edward D. Ives and David C. Smith, 9 (1967); C. Richard K. Lunt, "Jones Tracy: Tall Tale Teller from Mount Desert Island," 10 (1968); Roger E. Mitchell, "George Knox: From Man to Legend," 11 (1969); "Me and Fannie: The Oral Autobiography of Ralph Thornton of Topsfield, Maine," ed. Wayne Reuel Bean, 14 (1973); Roger E. Mitchell, ed. "'I'm a Man That Works': The Biography of Don Mitchell of Merrill, Miane," 19 (1978); Anna M. Sevigny, "Anna May: Eighty-Two Years in New England," ed. Julia A. Hunter, 20 (1979); Carl R. Griffin III and Alaric Faulkner, and including the reminiscences of Alberta Poole Rowe, "Coming of Age on Damariscove Island, Maine," 21 (1980).

[46]Victor Butler, The Little Nord Easter: Reminiscences of a Placentia Bayman, ed. Wilfred W. Wareham, MUNFLA Publications, Community Studies Series No. 1 (St. John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1975); subsequently republished by Breakwater Books, St. John's, 1980.

[47]Aubrey M. Tizzard, On Sloping Ground: Reminiscences of Outport Life in Notre Dame Bay, Newfoundland, ed. J.D.A. Widdowson, MUNFLA Publications, Community Studies Series No. 2 (St. John's, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1979).

[48]Mark Azadovskii, A Siberian Tale Teller, trans. James R. Dow (originally published as FF Communications No. 68, Helsinki, 1926), Center for Intercultural Studies in Folklore and Ethnomusicology, Monograph Series No. 2 (Austin: University of Texas, 1974).

[49]Juha Pentikäinen, Oral Repertoire and World View: An Anthropological Study of Marina Takalo's Life History, FF Communications No. 219 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1978).

[50]Juha Pentikäinen, "Life History and World View," Temenos, 13 (1979), 128-153.

[51]Juha Pentikäinen, "Life History--A Neglected Folklore Genre," in Nikolai Burlakoff, et al., eds. Folklore on Two Continents: Essays in Honor of Linda Dégh ([Bloomington, Indiana]: Trickster Press, 1980), p. 158.

[52]Linda Dégh, People in the Tobacco Belt: Four Lives, National Museum of Man Mercury Series, Canadian Centre for Folk Culture Studies Paper No. 13 (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1975).

[53]Jeff Todd Titon, "The Life Story," Journal of American Folklore, 93 (1980), 276-292.

[54]Roger D. Abrahams, ed. A Singer and Her Songs: Almeda Riddle's Book of Ballads (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1970), p. 147.

[55]John Maguire, Come Day, Go Day, God Send Sunday: The Songs and Life Story, Told in His Own Words, of John Maguire, Traditional Singer and Farmer from Co. Fermanagh, collated by Robin Morton (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973); Ron MacEachern, ed. Songs and Stories from Deep Cove, Cape Breton, As Remembered by Amby Thomas (Sydney: College of Cape Breton Press, 1979).

[56]Thomas G. Burton, Some Ballad Folks ([Johnson City]: East Tennessee State University Research Development Committee, 1978).

[57]I will indicate only a few recent essays in these fields: on urban folklore and narrative see Martin Laba, "Urban Folklore: A Behavioral Approach," Western Folklore 38:3 (1979), 158-169; on occupational folklore see Working Americans: Contemporary Approaches to Occupational Folklife, ed. Robert H. Byington, Western Folklore, 37:3 (1978), also rpt. as Smithsonian Folklife Studies, no. 3 (1978); for family stories see Margaret R. Yocom, "Family Folklore and Oral History Interviews," Western Folklore, 41:4 (1982), 251-274.

[58]Linda Dégh, "Folk Narrative," in Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction, ed. Richard M. Dorson, pp. 78-80.

[59]Lawrence G. Small, "The Interrelationship of Work and Talk in a Newfoundland Fishing Community," Diss. University of Pennsylvania, 1979.

[60]John A. Robinson, "Personal Narratives Reconsidered," Journal of American Folklore, 94 (1981), 58-85.

[61]Sandra K.D. Stahl, "The Oral Personal Narrative in its Generic Context," Fabula, 18: 1-2 (1977), 18-39; see also her "The Personal Narrative as Folklore," Journal of the Folklore Institute, 14: 1-2 (1977), 9-30

[62]Pierre Crépeau, Voyage au Pays des Merveilles: Quatre Autobiographies d'Immigrants, National Museum of Man Mercury Series, Canadian Centre for Folk Culture Studies, Paper No. 25 (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1978).

[63]Peter Barss, Images of Lunenburg County (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978), p. 13; I am grateful to James Moreira for bringing this book to my attention.

[64]Dell Hymes, "Breakthrough into Performance," in Folklore: Performance and Communication, ed. Dan Ben-Amos and Kenneth S. Goldstein (The Hague: Mouton, 1975), pp. 11-74.

[65]Ilona Dobos, "True Stories," in Studies in East European Folk Narrative, ed. Linda Degh, Publications of the American Folklore Society, Bibliographical and Special Series, Vol. 30; Indiana University Folklore Monograph Series, No. 25 (Bloomington: Folklore Institute: Indiana University, 1978), pp. 169-205.

[66]This is J1813.8. Sheep's head has eaten dumplings. in Baughman, Type and Motif Index, p. 317.

[67]With the liberalization of public attitudes there has been a tendency to the publication of franker self-portraits which include the kinds of stories of sexual exploits normally restricted to oral narration; an example is the delightfully ribald oral autobiography of George Hewins, The Dillen: Memories of a Man of Stratford-Upon-Avon, ed. Angela Hewins (1981; rpt. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).

[68]George Herbert, Shoemaker's Window: Recollections of a Midland Town before the Railway Age, ed. Christiana S. Cheney (Oxford: B.H. Blackwell, 1949), pp. 16-17.

[69]Victor Butler, Sposin' I Dies in D'Dory (St. John's: Jesperson Printing, 1977), p. 56.

[70]Lovelace, "Life History of a Dorset Folk Healer," p. 185.

[71]Field notes; interview with Clarence Blois, Upper Nine Mile River, Hants Co., Nova Scotia, July 1982.

[72]Lovelace, "'We Had Words'," p. 34.

[73] On such traditional liberties and holidays claimed by working men see Douglas A. Reid, "The Decline of Saint Monday 1766-1876," Past and Present, No. 71 (1976), 76-101.

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