ORAL TRADITION AND THE SCOTTISH COAL MINERS

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ORAL TRADITION AND THE SCOTTISH COAL MINERS

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A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

Work-based oral tradition in the Scottish mining industry developed historically. The roots of this tradition can be found in the culture of the independent collier artisan who existed prior to the industrial revolution. Through examining recent historical research and contemporary accounts, the miners' work culture can be seen as it developed from the early eighteenth century to cope with the pressures of industrial production methods and the consequent social changes.

Oral tradition is a dynamic process which fuses both conservative and innovative elements. This process allowed the miners' work culture to develop and adapt to new social and economic situations. Often, however, where tradition interfered with the production process, attempts were made to eradicate it. In this case the miners suffered the same fate as other sections of the working class. However, the miners' unique social and cultural position between industrial worker and rural dweller ensured that a vigorous and lively oral tradition was maintained. The history of the miners' work culture can be linked, with the benefit of anthropological and folkloristic research, to field studies among living and working miners in order to chart its development.

Through the accounts of present day miners of their life and work, a continuous process of tradition can be observed. How this

tradition has developed and how it exists can be seen through the study of oral narrative, song and poetry. The unbroken line of tradition can be observed in detail as it functions within one family. How the oral history and tradition of the industry is passed on through narrative, song and poetry within the family can be seen through these artistic aspects of the work culture: Artistic oral communication exists within the mining industry, and is linked to the history of the industry. The content and sometimes the form of the expression of this tradition changes as social and economic relations change. However, the process of the traditions seems as likely to continue as the industry from which it developed.

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INTRODUCTION

Since the first decade of this century the number of coal miners in Scotland has declined rapidly. Between 1947 and 1984, for example, the numbers employed in coal mining in Britain have declined from 713,000, to 203,000. In Scotland the rate of decline has been even more rapid. In 1957 there were 87,000 miners in Scotland, but by 1984 this figure had declined to 17,500. In Central Region, where there are at present 1,400 residents employed in the mining industry, the numbers have halved in ten years.

While this study has been written the threat of further contraction of the industry by the National Coal Board has led to an all-out strike. At the moment of writing, this strike has lasted for almost one whole year, making it the longest, and undoubtedly the most bitter, strike in the history of coal mining in Britain.

The solidarity displayed by the Scottish miners during the strike has been remarkable. Despite the undoubted suffering, the vast majority of Scottish mineworkers remain on strike after twelve months. This solidarity has been maintained by collective action in which whole communities have acted together. Fallin near Stirling, for example, the last mining village with its village pit in Scotland, is one of these communities. In Fallin, as in many other villages, miners have organised collective feeding, fund-raising and entertainment, and have campaigned and picketed throughout the strike.

This collective action has its precedent in a strong tradition. The history of the Scottish miner from the period of slavery is often seen as a history of struggle and hardship. Through this long and difficult history the Scottish miners have developed a vigorous and lively work-based oral tradition. This tradition undoubtedly played its part in the maintenance of solidarity.

It is in part due to this solidarity that miners have always held a fascination for the outsider. Mining was, and to a large extent still is, a physically demanding occupation. In an age where physical work is rapidly disappearing, miners are often seen in a romantic context, working as they do sometimes miles underneath the earth's surface, covered in black dust, and musty-smelling; before the days of pit-head baths they often excited curiosity in the streets on their way home from work. The close-knit, and the hereditary nature of employment, gave rise to suspicion among outsiders. Within political circles the solidarity, the determination, and the history of struggle, have led to the development of the image of the miner as a proletarian archetype. Within folkloristics, the antiquarian roots of the discipline have also led sometimes to the pre-industrial aspects of the miner's life being emphasised. Being closer to an agrarian pre-industrial lifestyle, miners, like loggers, farmworkers, cowboys, or deep-sea fishermen, lend themselves easily to this approach.

More recent studies by historians have questioned the proletarian

roots of the miner's work culture. These historians have suggested that the solidarity among miners, particularly in Scotland, was a much later development than is often assumed. This analysis has required that a distinction be made between mining as a pre-industrial occupation, and how the industry developed under capitalist production methods. The results have shown how miners maintained a relatively independent position up until perhaps the mid-nineteenth century. However, with the strident development of capitalist production, and the consequent need for large amounts of labour, the miner's independent position was changed.

Among folklorists more recent studies in occupation-based culture have been influenced by anthropological research. This has extended the scope of industrial ethnology, and, influenced by work done on primitive cultures, folklorists and anthropologists have begun using these methods to study urban industrial work groups. Since mining as an industry began before the industrial revolution, and went on to become the basis of the development of the British economy, this makes it a particularly interesting area for study in light of the developments in industrial ethnological research. For instance, the distinction between rural and urban culture is clouded in relation to mining. Moreover, the work of the recent historians of the miners, added to the research of the industrial ethnologists, raises questions as to precisely how the miners' culture developed over the period of industrialisation and into the present time.

The development of oral tradition in mining was a historical process. For this reason it is difficult initially to adopt a generic approach for its study. While the generic approach to the study of folklore among miners has produced much valuable work, it is often difficult in the case of British miners to abstract the genre from its historical context. As Britain was the first industrial nation, the industries which led the way often had roots in a pre-industrial age. Making this distinction between industrial and pre-industrial culture is of fundamental importance regarding how a particular genre is seen in context. Making this distinction is also more important in Britain than in Canada or the United States, where industrial change went along different lines. The rapid and fundamental change which took place in the cultural fabric of Scottish society during the period of industrialisation was an irreversible process. How human relationships changed during this period can often be observed through the folklore. It is difficult therefore to study any particular folklore genre without reference to the historical development. Despite this, however, the generic approach can still be of much value for an understanding of the miners' work culture as it exists today. The genre can then be seen as it exists, but against the background of the historical development of the tradition.

In social terms one of the most significant aspects of the development of industrial society was the development of the class system. An understanding of folklore in Britain must take account

of how the class system very often manifests itself in cultural rather than simply economic terms. The development of oral culture among miners has to be seen within the general development of British working class culture. Moreover, it is important to understand that a class-bound society like Britain often places a value on language, and on oral culture in general. This has led to working class language and culture being seen in a subordinate position. Similar attitudes have been observed by anthropologists in countries dominated by imperialism, where a subordinate value is placed on indigenous culture. In certain cases aspects of an indigenous culture could be considered as quaint. Very often, however, when culture interfered with economic development it was destroyed. The recent links between historians and anthropologists have allowed for a closer look into the cultural aspects of historical development in Britain. Similarly the interest in British working class life which developed with the folk revival in the nineteen fifties and sixties opened new avenues in the study of working class culture.

It is through the folklore, the artistic expressive aspects of mining life - the song, the narrative, and the poetry - that a detailed understanding of the culture can develop. With the help of modern folkloristic research it is possible to look at the whole of mining culture through the artistic expression, understand the development of the tradition, and place it within its historical context. This can be done by first examining the historical development of oral tradition among miners through historical and

contemporary written accounts. The historical development can then be linked to field studies and interviews among retired and working miners in order to chart the course of the tradition. The living tradition may be seen in typifying fashion through the study of one family of miners in order to discover the elements of the tradition which have been maintained, and those elements of the tradition which have changed. By doing this we can examine the process of tradition itself and discover how certain aspects are altered, disappear, or are retained to function in a different manner. It may well be the case that the traditional process far from being conservative (as is often believed) is in fact a fusion of conservative and innovative elements.

CHAPTER I

ASPECTS OF THE HISTORY OF THE COAL MINING INDUSTRY IN SCOTLAND

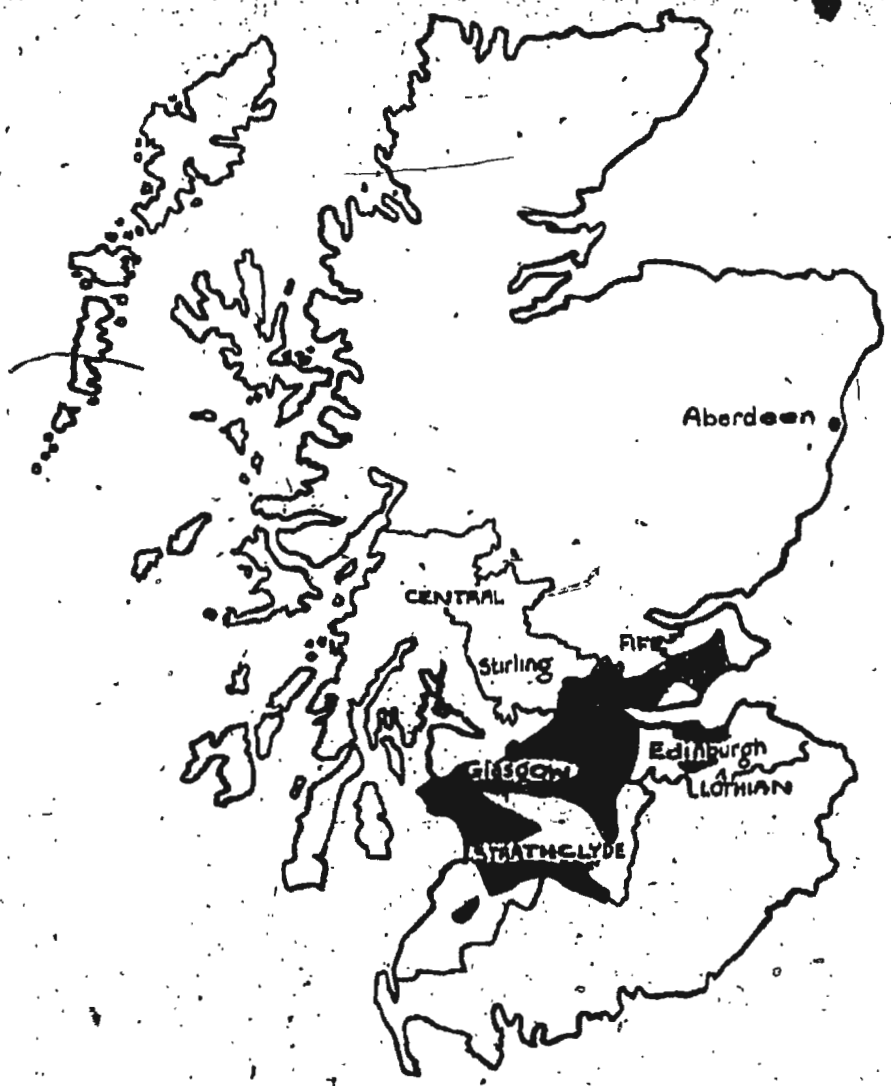
The account of the history of the Scottish coal miner given in this chapter is not intended to break new ground. There is no intention here to present a thorough or systematic analysis of the social and economic factors involved in the beginnings of the coal industry in Scotland; this task is accomplished ably elsewhere.[1] It is more the object of this study to point to aspects of the history of the miner and the mining industry as they have an effect on the development of an oral tradition among Scottish coal miners. Having made this point, however, it must be pointed out that the development of oral tradition is in itself a historical process. Moreover, if we ignore the wider historical developments we will fail to fully comprehend the part which the social and economic factors played on the development of the oral tradition. The beginnings of the coal industry in Scotland cannot be seen in isolation from the development of industrial society. Consequently the parallel developments in the structure of the social class must be seen as having had a profound effect on oral culture among the Scottish coal miners. Looked at in this way oral culture among the Scottish coal miners is seen as a distinctive, but not an isolated, part of Scottish working class culture as a whole.

Scotland, in its social composition as well as its cultural make-up, presents us with many paradoxes. One of these is that the main area of heavy industry, and consequently the main area of

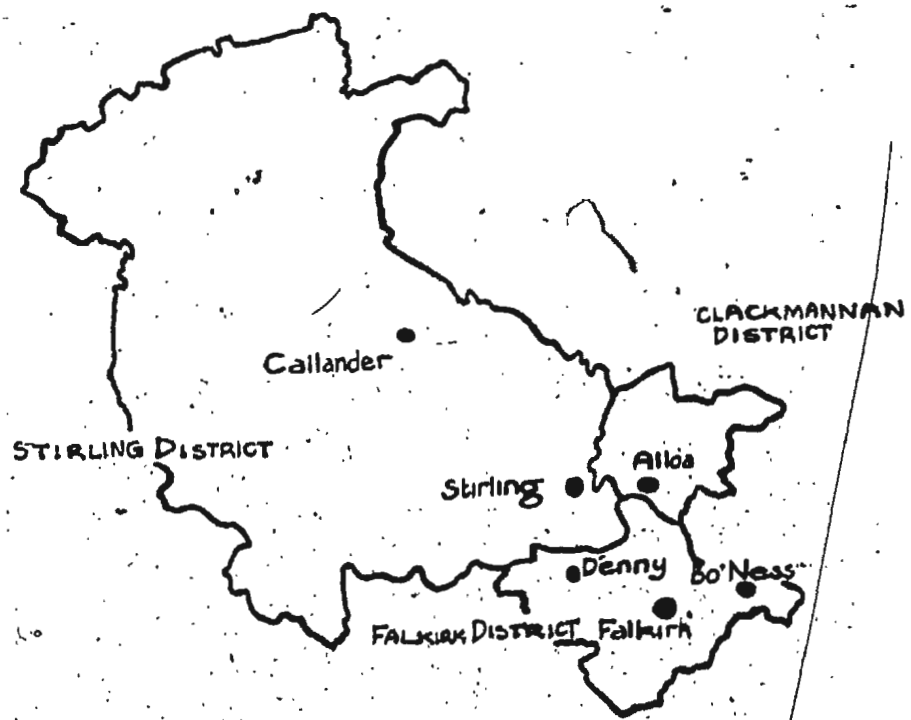
population, is found in a broad belt of land between the estuaries of the rivers Forth and Clyde, while the rest of the country is rural and sparsely populated. Not surprisingly, it is within this central belt, again roughly speaking, that we find the main concentration of the coal mining industry.

The principal areas of coal deposits in Scotland are well described by Professor Dron in his classic geological study, and it may be worth referring to this in order to discover exactly with which areas of the country we are concerned. Dron divided Scotland's coalfields into three principal areas. The first of these is the area which stretches from the River Forth in the east to south Ayrshire in the west; a strip between ten and sixteen miles wide, containing the greatest thickness of workable seams, varying from thirty-four seams of a total thickness of ninety-five feet in Midlothian, to seventeen of seventeen feet in part of Ayrshire. The second of Dron's areas includes the northern parts of Fife, and Stirlingshire, Dumbartonshire, and north-eastern parts of Lanarkshire. Workable seams in the second area range from a total thickness of six feet near Denny in Stirlingshire, to eight feet in Bo'ness in West Lothian, and twelve in Fife. The third area is taken as northern Ayrshire, Renfrewshire, west Lanarkshire and southern Dumbartonshire.[2]

Coal mining in Scotland was carried out on a very small scale up until the middle of the nineteenth century. Given the fundamental changes which took place over the period of industrial



■ Coalfields of Scotland



Central Region

change it is necessary that we distinguish between coal mining as an industrial process, and coal mining as it was carried out in the pre-industrial era. It is often reported that the Roman army of occupation used coal as a source of fuel to ward off the effects of Scotland's cold damp climate. If we take this as fact it is likely that coal was in use for domestic purposes some time before the Roman occupation. The coal gathered by the Romans and those before and after them, was that which outcropped on the edges of hillsides. It was in these areas where the gathering of coal presented few technical difficulties that the first coal mines were driven into the side of the hills. When the mining of coal actually began to take on the character of an industrial enterprise the spread was initially of an extensive rather than intensive nature. Colliery workings were generally shallow, conducted usually by levels and openings, and mines were opened and closed with comparative frequency.[3] Although colliery working tended to be a labour intensive activity the number of colliery workers in any one unit would by present day standards be small. Alan B. Campbell, in a list of nineteen Ayrshire collieries found the mean "number of men" employed to be 42.9; six collieries listed employed fewer than twenty men, and the largest had a total of 160.[4] In 1793 however the town of Dollar in Clackmannanshire had three coal works employing in all only eighteen people.[5] It also seems possible that even up until the mid-nineteenth century some pits were run on a family basis. Thomas Stewart describes what he calls his father's "little colliery" where he worked with his sister, a

neighbour, and the neighbour's two sons in the eighteen-forties and fifties.[6]

The rights to work such pits as Stewart describes were generally contracted with the landlords under whose ground the mineral lay. Many of these landlords, however, preferred to work the coal on their own behalf, and coal mining, particularly in the late eighteenth century, was considered as part of the general commercial concern of the improving landlord. Such developments by landowners were generally carried out as part of a broad scheme for development of the resources of their estates, and consequently coal was often mined as fuel for other industries such as salt distillation, and later, lime burning. The exceptions to this rule were perhaps the coal works near enough to Glasgow and Edinburgh markets to make the transportation of coal for domestic fuel profitable. Duckham sums the situation up when he describes Scotland's "typical" colliery in this early period as a level-free working (meaning it was fairly shallow) operated by a landowner or his single tacksman (lessee) situated fairly near tidal water, and in all probability closely linked to a salt works.[7]

The system of ownership of the coal rights lead us perhaps to the single most important factor relating to the history of the Scottish coal miner in the early period: the question of slavery. Unlike his English counterpart the Scottish coal miner was, up until

1799, bound in slavery to the owners of the coal. The origins of the slavery of colliers and salters (with whom the colliers shared their plight) lay not in any great long term tradition, but rather in the Scottish Parliamentary legislation which came a century and a quarter before the parliamentary union with England in 1707. In creating the institution of slavery among Scottish coal miners the parliament of that period was acting on the demands of the coal owners, who found it difficult to recruit labour for such unpleasant and hazardous work. It was the opinion of statesmen, even in this early age, that coal was a commodity valuable to the prosperity of the nation.

Further reasons for the development of slavery among colliers and salters can be traced to the attitude of sixteenth century Scottish society to the problem of vagrancy. The laws against vagrancy allowed vagrants to bind themselves for life to any employer willing to receive them, and also made it possible for pauper children to be placed in what amounted to life-long bondage. In 1606 the law approached the problem of colliery labour more directly by making it illegal for colliers and salters to move employment without testimonials from their masters, or without sufficient attestation of a reasonable cause for their moving. Moreover, any employer giving work to a coal miner or salter without sufficient testimonials was liable to a fine unless he delivered them back to their original owner within twenty-four hours. The 1606 Act also permitted coal

owners to apprehend all "Vagabonds and sturdy beggars to be put to labour". This legislation effectively put the freedom of the coal miners into the hands of their master. It was extended in 1641 to include other colliery workers "as necessary to the Owners and Masters". In 1661 another Act ratified the measures of 1606 and 1641, and significantly strengthened the law against absenteeism, poaching of labour, and "drinking & debausharie to the great offence of God and the prudence of their master". Yet another piece of legislation strengthened the powers of the coal owners when in 1672 the Scottish poor law was extended to give them a clear title over vagrants and some powers of correction. Finally in 1701 the Scottish law against imprisonment without trial was in "no wayes to be extended to Colliers and Salters".[8]

It is clear from the development of this legislation that the bonding of the coal miners took a particular form which did not state outright legal slavery. Yet, as Duckham points out, there was nothing clearer in the Scottish social history of the period than the fact that most masters assumed that their miners were bondsmen in the fullest sense, and virtually all colliers accepted the status not unlike that of a medieval serf. It may have been the case that they were bound to the coal owner either by a formal pact, or more likely, by uninterrupted labour for that magic period of a year and a day. As serfs they could be removed to other mines which belonged to their master, or they could be disposed of by

sale or by lease with a working colliery.[9]

The actual legality of the collier's bonding often followed customary practice rather than the strict letter of the law, and there were various opinions as to when the bonding became final. As has been stated, it was generally assumed that work at a particular colliery for a year and a day constituted a bond. Coal owners also laid claim to the children born of any collier or coal bearer families. Upon the payment of money known variously as "arles" or "lairgeld" at the child's baptism, it was assumed that the bond was sealed.[10] Although there were free colliers their numbers were small, and Duckham concludes that even given English imports, free labour was negligible before the mid 1770's.

Despite variations in local custom with regard to the colliers' bonding, and the questionability of the legal standing, there is little doubt in the minds of most historians that the bonding was regarded as slavery. We are told that lawyers "and colliers of the time frequently used [the term] without emotional colour".[11] Although colliers had more rights than the American negro slaves, in that they could acquire property - and some did lease the coal from the owners and work it in relative independence - their position, whether strictly definable in legal terms or not, was that of a slave.

The position of the collier under slavery varied according to

the degree of paternalism which the owner thought necessary to exercise. The colliers' position was obviously open to abuse, and indeed a number of incidents of physical abuse are recorded. Physical abuse however was not an entirely unknown feature of the eighteenth century master-servant relationship; with paternalism, physical punishment formed part of the cutomary rights and duties of the eighteenth century master. As serfs, the colliers had the right to expect their master to keep them all their days, in sickness and in old age; and to supply a coffin for their burial. In eighteenth century Alloa, for example, the Earl of Mar helped his colliers set up a school and a burial society. The motives behind such an action were not always paternalistic, and at Alloa a baillie court was set up to administer the burial and schoolmaster's fund; but also to discipline drunkards and others who broke the colliery rules. The appointment of a schoolmaster around the 1760's was made very much with an eye to discipline:

> ...the proprietor of the colliery was lucky enough to find a sergeant of the Royals, a diligent virtuous man, who not only brought the children, but even their parents, into some kind of order and discipline.[12]

Any actual punishment appears to have been irksome rather than cruel, consisting in the main of fines and stoppages from wages. Nevertheless corporal punishment was not unknown, and there are

a few recorded cases of excess.[13] Walter Pryde, who gave evidence in his old age to the Children's Employment Commission of 1841, claimed that in his youth young men and boys could be put in iron collars and fastened to the wall for disobedience. While Pryde's account may have been coloured by age, or may have related to an isolated incident, we shall see how similar incidents are re-told today as part of the oral history of the coal miners.

Perhaps more important to the development of oral tradition among coal miners was the stigma and humiliation which the position of serfdom created. The late nineteenth century historian Henry Gray Graham commented that servitude and the nature of the miners' work made them a caste "aloof from the rest of the community":

> ...their narrow and isolated life dulled all ambition, killed all energy; and inured to this lot, like their fathers they regarded it as inevitable for their children.[14]

Colliers came to be regarded as a separate "breed", "caste", or "race" apart from society at large. "The men are in general, rather of a low stature" wrote the minister of Alloa in the Statistical Account.[15] Hugh Miller, the geologist, and a prime example of the Scottish "lad o' pairts", described colliery women

at Niddry in 1824 with an evaluative tone characteristic of much nineteenth century writing concerning miners:

> ...They were marked by a peculiar type of mouth, by which I learned to distinguish them from all other females of the country. It was wide open, thick lipped, projecting equally above and below, and exactly resembled that which we find in the prints given of savages in their lowest and most degraded state.[16]

Henry Cockburn, the Whig lawyer, was like Miller influenced by the theories of moral and social progression which emanated from the Scottish Enlightment, and in 1821 he pointed back to the period of slavery when colliers were a "separate and avoided tribe", in order to measure society's progress.[17]

The social position of the collier which Miller and Cockburn observed was manifested in society through popular belief. In parts of Fife, for example, colliers were not allowed to be buried in consecrated ground. Colliers also appear in some literature surrounded by an air of mystery. Such attitudes remained in some writing which passed for serious social enquiry into the late nineteenth century, and in some cases may be seen in the early part of this century. Not surprisingly such accounts of coal miners and their life and work had a profound affect on the miners' self-image.

The image of the miner as a separate "breed" was to some extent aided by the relative isolation of many pit communities. Mining communities were in a paradoxical situation with regard to their social position, in that they were industrial by dint of their economic function, yet were generally situated in rural surroundings. For many early miners this paradox was reconciled by a social identification with the peasantry. Thomas Stewart, the Larkhall collier poet writing of life in his village during the 1840s and 50s, compared the "cringing slaves in other trades" to the miners, who were "an independent brave and industrious portion of the Scottish peasantry". Stewart also describes Larkhall in this period in terms of a rural rather than an industrial area. Neighbours of Stewart kept land on which they grew corn and potatoes as well as working at the coal.[18] Andrew Miller, the historian of Coatbridge, regarded much of the custom and belief of the colliers as being similar to that of the peasantry.[19] Hiram Sturdy, writing of his life in a Lanarkshire mining village in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, describes it in similar terms to those used by Stewart, and indicates that alternative employment in agricultural work was relatively common.[20]

The inclusion of colliers among the peasantry is perhaps not surprising when we consider the growth of the mining industry, and its place in the vanguard of industrial expansion. Colliery villages sprang up over the coal and ironstone, and heralded

the development of Scotland's most heavily industrialised areas. Despite the growth of urban areas into the nineteenth century, many colliery communities remained in a position apart from the growth of major urban centres. Many of the early miners did not live in custom-made colliery villages but were scattered throughout the countryside, living in rural hamlets or farm workers' cottages. Thomas Stewart explains how if the miners in his day wanted a social glass the most central place for them to have a get-together was at the pit headr the elders sat and drank, telling stories, while the younger men were in the nearest field throwing the hammer.[21]

Seasonal labour in agriculture, as Hiram Sturdy points out, was not unusual in such a rural environment. Work in agriculture or fishing could be alternated with work at the coal. Alan B. Campbell's analysis of the 1851 census of Lanarkshire discovered how in Dalserf parish work in coal mining went hand-in-hand with work on the land, and many miners' families had smallholdings.[22] Even in areas as close to Glasgow as nineteenth century Govan, colliers' wives could still find employment on the colliery farm. Agricultural work during the harvest season was also a common feature of life in mining communities up until our present century.[23]

The question of colliers' housing also relates to the colliers' ambiguous social position between the rural and the industrial environment. The standard form of housing in the purpose-built

colliery villages, which began appearing from the mid-nineteenth century, was that of company owned single storey cottages, of one or two rooms, formed in rows or in a square. This type of housing existed in many parts of Scotland up until the end of World War Two. Dr. John McVail, the medical officer for Stirlingshire, in a report on the housing of miners in his area in 1911, describes in detail the layout of the "typical village":

> ...one or more rows of one storey brick or stone (cottages) with out-houses and drying greens. A colliery house at the beginning of the century consisted typically of two or more apartments a "room and kitchen" with connecting door between. There are two bed places in the kitchen along one wall, and on the opposite side is the fire place perhaps with a good though small cooking range. The room has a fire place on one side and a single bed place on the other. The kitchen excluding bedplaces is about 15 feet long by 10 to 11 foot broad and nine feet high. The room is of the same width and height but is probably somewhat shorter.[24]

Most descriptions of colliers' houses, both in early colliery communities, and up to the period of government control of the industry, appear to agree on the fact that they were particularly bad. Hugh

Miller describes housing in one of the older colliery communities thus:

> It was a wretched assemblage of dingy low-roofed tile covered hovels each of which perfectly resembled all the others.[25]

R. H. Campbell, the historian of the famous Carron Iron Works, perhaps the first industrial concern of its kind anywhere in the world, describes the conditions in the company's colliery houses as degrading squalor.[26] Photographs of Carron-owned housing in the villages of Standburn and Redding in Stirlingshire around the 1930s seem to bear out Campbell's description.

The massive expansion of the coal industry up until the early part of this century meant that the quick erection of colliery houses was necessary to secure an adequate supply of cheap labour. Colliery villages were erected speedily, uniformly, and with little or no attention to social amenities. A look at the Rate Valuation Roles for Stirling County indicates the speed with which the houses were erected in the villages of Fallin and Cowie in the closing decades of the last century. Between the years 1897 and 1898, almost one hundred houses were added to the rows in Cowie, and although this year was a record, the picture as a whole indicates that houses were erected with great speed in both villages.[27]

It has been suggested that the poor state of miners' housing

is in part due to the custom which developed during the period of slavery, by which miners regarded their houses as part of their wages. The Royal Commission on Housing in Scotland in 1918 suggested that miners expected housing to be let at nominal cost:

> There is a tradition among miners that their houses are part of their wages and that rent ought to be nominal. This which they consider a free right is really the tradition of the days when they were slaves.[28]

Duckham gives further evidence to suggest that free or nominally rented housing was indeed a tradition which emananted from the late eighteenth century period.[29] Alan B. Campbell on the other hand, in his study of nineteenth century Lanarkshire miners, presents a strong case, at least as far as the Lanarkshire experience is concerned, for suggesting that tied colliery housing was largely a nineteenth century phenomenon. Campbell indicates that up until the mid-nineteenth century a significant number of miners lived in their own, or in other than colliery-owned housing. Larkhall miners, for example, had their own building society, and it is suggested that non-colliery housing was an important factor in maintaining the Scots miners' independent status.[30]

Tied colliery housing certainly presented the miner with

problems other than those of bad conditions. To take up Campbell's point, it was possible for example, for the company to use the house as an economic weapon. As well as being regarded as part of the miner's wages, and therefore a major factor in wage bargaining, housing could also be used as a weapon in disputes. Evictions during disputes were a fairly common occurence, and thus became a powerful element in the bitterness of labour relations in the industry prior to nationalisation. Paradoxically stories of evictions formed an important reference point for political and trade union activity, and played a part in maintaining the famous labour solidarity in the coal industry. Robert Smillie, the Scottish miners' trade union leader, devoted two chapters of his autobiography to stories of evictions. The impression which witnessing his first eviction had on him is recounted in particularly emotional terms:

> ...the spectacle of the miners' furniture being piled on carts, and taken away to whatever quarters they could find, or none at all, is still vivid in my memory. It seemed to me outrageous. In those young years I am afraid I found hate in my heart. My young soul blazed with anger.[31]

Smillie's interest in this area comes out also in his evidence to the Royal Commission on Labour when he describes how the coal owner's power was greatly increased by his making use of housing

as a weapon. Smillie also describes how housing could be used in a more subtle way to disrupt the even distribution of work among face workers:

> Knowing the power which it gives them, employers are rapidly increasing the number of colliery houses. I have known an employer who had a number of his houses standing empty and wished to have them filled, give orders that men who were in company houses were to have as many tubs as they wished, while the other men, who were not in employers houses, were going into the pit day after day earning almost nothing.
>
> At Fairholm, there is not a single workman in the employer's houses. The employer (after a recent strike) said that if the workmen had been in his houses he would have finished the strike before seven weeks.[32]

Smillie's reference to the attempt to manipulate work distribution is particularly important. As the miners were paid by their output, and as the limitation of the day's output required fair distribution of the workload, this was an attempt to interfere with the miners' traditional rights and customs.

As well as having an effect on traditional rights and customs,

housing also had a relationship to the social tension which built up on the industry from the mid-nineteenth century. As a significant portion of the raw labour which entered the mining industry from the mid-century was Irish, and as the new workers tended to settle in the company villages, the social division could often be seen in ethnic terms. In Lanarkshire at least, it appears that the number of Scots colliers who owned their own houses was significant. The expansion of the industry, and the development of the company villages represented an attack on the independent status which the Scots collier had enjoyed since before the emancipation acts.

The incursions into the Scots collier's independent position did not however end with housing. The exclusive position of the collier's craft status came under particularly severe pressure in this period. Despite the collier's slavery there had remained a number of areas in which those who actually cut the coal could work in relative independence. The actual cutting of the coal at the coal face was a particularly skilled job. Changes in methods of mining the coal tended to divide the number of tasks which any one collier might perform. The earliest method of mining coal in Scotland was known as "stoop and room" (generally known as "pillar and stall" in England). This method meant that a shaft was sunk and an area was then excavated to make the "room", leaving part of the coal, the "pillar" or the "stoop", to support the roof. The

effect looked at from a side elevation produced a shape approximate to that of a bell, and the pits were sometimes referred to as bell pits. This method needed little capital investment, and could generally work well where the coal was easy to get at. With the advent of the steam engine however it became possible to drain the water from pits and therefore work at much lower levels, and mine better quality coal. The mining of the better quality coal was particularly important for the development of the iron industry. The demand for more and better coal from the new heavy industries speeded up the development of the coal industry. Consequently this meant a move away from the older methods of mining.

We should however be careful not to put too much emphasis on technological development, for the mining industry, even up until the twentieth century, depended largely on manual labour. Having said this, however, important changes did take place in the actual method of mining. The "stoop and room" method mentioned above gave way to what is known as the longwall method of production as the nineteenth century progressed. The longwall method of working meant that the seam of coal was worked along a complete coal face, with tunnels leading into the coal. As the face moves forward with the excavation of the coal, only two roads are left open for access and the part from which the coal is taken is allowed to collapse.

The process is then repeated further into the coal. The longwall, or Shropshire method, after the county in England in which it originated, subsequently became the predominant method of mining in Britain. As well as increasing productivity and leaving no coal behind, the longwall method allowed thinner seams of coal to be worked. This was of greater benefit to the Scottish coalfield because of the variations in the width of seams which Professor Dron mentions, and the number of breaks in the strata.

As well as increasing productivity the longwall method had a marked effect on the working practice of the miners. Because of the increasing depth of the shaft, and the number of roads which were required, longwall working needed an increased division of labour. The number of jobs which the early collier could perform was therefore broken down into specialist tasks. The hewer was responsible for cutting the coal only, while the reddsmen or "brushers" as they later came to be called, were responsible for driving and maintaining the roads. Further divisions included those who took the coal away from the face and minded the winding gear, and those who exercised the specialist skill of sinking new shafts.

The advent of the longwall method also meant that the numbers employed had to be greater, and this factor had a marked effect in the family as a production unit in mining. Operations like those which Thomas Stewart described as his father's "little colliery"

which was run by two families, and even larger operations, such as the Earl of Mar's collieries in Alloa, where the family acted as bearers for the collier, disappeared into the nineteenth century.[33]

The family production unit also came under attack from the nineteenth century reform movement. Royal Commissions led to legislation which limited the age at which a boy could work underground, and banned women from any underground work at all. This legislation in itself represented a vast incursion into the traditional work practice of the colliers. Mr. John Blyth the mining overseer at Edgehead Colliery told the Children's Employment Commission of 1842:

> I have been underground overseer at these mines eight years, and have witnessed with regret the early ages colliers take their children below ground. The masters have no control over the colliers; or rather they never interfere with the customs of the colliers themselves.[34]

As is evident from Blyth's evidence such legislation often ran counter to the traditional work practice of the colliers. The colliers, independent position also made it difficult to enforce. Joseph Dawson of the Carron Company, who operated a number of pits in Stirlingshire, explains why, at least in the older style of pits, supervison of the law was difficult:

> After the alterations were made the females stole back again; it was difficult to prevent them as we have stair pits leading to all our working pits by which people can come and go to their work at all times that suits them.[35]

The relative lack of supervision was related to the system by which the coal hewer was paid for what he produced. The collier could to a large extent choose the hours which he worked. The bearers, principally the women and children, worked to clear the coal which the collier would cut. A good collier could cut enough coal to secure reasonable earnings in less than twelve hours, and half-days; and a five, or even four day working week, were not uncommon.[36] As with the position over housing the early Scots collier could maintain a good degree of independence with regard to his working hours.

This independent position was also related to the status which the collier felt his occupation possessed. Colliers in the early nineteenth century regarded their work as a skilled profession, much in the same way as a carpenter or an engineer. Hewers, up until the advent of the longwall method at least, formed the larger part of any colliery workforce. Particularly in the smaller collieries the hewers performed a wide variety of tasks apart from the actual getting of the coal. Experienced hewers contracted with the mine owner for any extra tasks such as the "brushing" or "redding"

of any roads, or even the complex business of sinking a new shaft. Alan B. Campbell gives a breakdown of the wages earned by the Duke of Hamilton's colliers at Avonbank and Quarter in Lanarkshire for the year 1835-36, which indicates the variation in output between experienced and less experienced colliers. More experienced colliers were able to maintain their output and their wages with great consistency. As well as output figures, Campbell's analysis demonstrates the variation in skilled tasks which the experienced collier could contract to perform. He concludes therefore that the experienced hewers constituted the "aristocracy of the mines":

> The picture which emerges of the hewers from this analysis is that they should not simply be regarded as wage labourers but rather as contractors, paid either at piece rates or by bargain-derived day wages, and engaged not only in hewing but in a variety of work necessary for the smooth functioning of the mine.[37]

The consequence of the position Campbell describes was that the miners possessed a degree of independence, craft pride, and autonomy unknown in a modern industrial situation. Campbell stresses the point that "[even]" under serfdom, the colliers' work patterns were notoriously independent. The writer of the Statistical Account for Alloa confirms the independent nature of the collier's

work habits:

> The colliers prefer working in the night time: some go into the pits between eight and nine, others again later. Those who are anxious on a particular occasion, to show a large sum on the Saturday, will continue a very long time at their work: the usual time is from ten to twelve hours.[38]

This independent nature of the collier's work pattern created obvious difficulties where any supervision was necessary. Joesph Dawson the Carron Company's works manager, and Mr. Wilson of the Clackmannan Coal Company both gave evidence to the 1844 Royal Commission on the difficulty in supervising the colliers' work.[39] A Lanarkshire collier commented specifically on the independent nature of the collier's position: "The collier is his own master and may work out as much coal as he likes, and is paid by the piece".[40]

As with many other aspects of the collier's traditional rights and customs the independent work habits came under increasing pressure as the nineteenth century progressed. Coal was the very basis of the industrial expansion and the need to keep up with the advance meant a vast increase in productivity. Statistics for coal

production however are not available before 1854, and estimates before this are, as Duckham points out, of little actual value.[41] Nevertheless we may say with some confidence that the expansion of the iron industry meant a very considerable increase in the demand for coal. The coal industry responded to meet this demand by incorporating certain technological innovations and new systems of working, among these was the system known as longwall working. Despite these changes in working systems the getting of coal remained, even up until fairly recently, a manual operation. The continuation of the largely manual element in the mining of coal, which is now referred to as conventional mining, meant that with any increase in production there also had to be an increase in labour. More significantly for this study, however, is the fact that large increases in the labour force from outside the mining community meant that there had to be incursions into the colliers' work customs, craft status, and independent position.

The historical position of the "independent collier" and the subsequent social and cultural consequences related to the demise in status are forcefully described elesewhere.[42] However, it may be necessary here to outline some of the social and cultural tensions which developed. The need for cheap industrial labour in mid-nineteenth century Britain was filled readily by those displaced by the social disjunction which was taking place at the same time on Britain's "Celtic fringe". Perhaps the main source of labour

for the mining industry in Scotland in the nineteenth century was the large influx of Irish immigrants. The Irish, who were driven to emigrate by the failure of the potato crop and the subsequent famine, came to Scotland in vast numbers between 1841 and 1851, and a steady stream continued for many decades afterwards.[43] An idea of the numbers involved in the increase of labour in the mining industry in this period can be deduced from the fact that in the early years of the nineteenth century the estimated numbers employed in coal mining were between 2000 and 2500; by 1841 Lanarkshire alone had over 7000 coal miners, and this had trebled again by 1871.[44] Some indication of how many of these new recruits were Irish is given by a witness to the Mining Commission of 1844 who stated that in recent years 4000 Irishmen had entered the mining industry in Lanarkshire, and this constituted a quarter of the total labour force.[45] The problems involved in the scale of the Irish immigration were added to the fact that the Irish were often used as blacklegs during industrial disputes. Alan B. Campbell reports of Irish being used in such a way as early as 1831 at Cuilhill near Coatbridge. The colliers in this instance struck for an advance in wages and the manager employed a dozen Irishmen who had been working in the pit as drawers, to hew coal, and placed a guard on the pit head. The Irish were also used as blacklegs in the strike of 1837.[46]

The position with regard to the influx of raw labour in the

west of Scotland was however different from the rest of the Scottish coalfield. The "Glasgow Sentinel" reported in 1862 that in Clackmannanshire the miners had a "monopoly...into which strangers rarely find entrance" whereas round Glasgow there were "hordes of miserable Irishmen ready to enter upon the most dangerous work at the lowest rate of wages and through competition the Scottish miners have become degraded and overborne".[47] The Irish incursion into the coal fields of central and eastern Scotland did however progress during the remainder of the nineteenth century. Alexander MacDonald, President of the Miners' National Association, speaking before a Parliamentary Commission in 1868, was not surprised to learn that in a small town of 4000 people, in the east of Scotland where thirty years ago there had been only one Irish family, there were now more than 700 Irish people.[48] The tensions which went with the Irish immigration also moved from west to east. In Dunfermline in 1850 a number of weavers and a journeyman flesher showed some class solidarity with the miners by mobbing and rioting and assaulting Irish colliers who were working at lower rates than the Scots colliers.[49]

From the economic base of the conflict between the Scots and the Irish colliers there emanated further cultural and religious differences. Apart from the skilled workers brought in from the north of Ireland to work in the iron industry, the majority of Irish immigrants in Scotland were Catholics, and therefore did not share

the religion of the indigenous Scots. Inevitably the economic conflict became expressed in religious terms. One pit in Airdrie for example went on strike in 1854 "until all the Roman Catholics should be expelled".[50] In a dramatic poem entitled "Scenes Underground" written by "A Tradesman" further evidence of this feeling is given when the colliers have an underground meeting:

> (Voices) Aff, aff wi' the Irish:-
>
> (Shovel) They take our bread and make us perish!
>
> (Tommy) Treach'ry's in their religion and in their creed, And I trust Romans, then say Tommy's dead
>
> (Voices) Aff wi' the ignorant beasts o' Bab'lon.[51]

How many of the Irish immigrants were actually Roman Catholics is difficult to estimate, but both Handley and A. B. Campbell, working from selected years of marriage registrations in Coatbridge and in Glasgow estimate between 78 and 80 per cent.[52] It might be safe to assume therefore, that as mining was one of the expanding industries offering work to Irish immigrants in this period, the percentage entering mining who were Catholics would be the same as in the general immigration figures.

A minority of the Irish immigrants were Protestants and shared not only the religion, but also some of the cultural characteristics

of the native Scots.' Robert Smillie, the miners' leader and later an M.P., has shown how close the cultural links were between the Protestant Irish and the native Scots. Smillie was a Protestant, born in Belfast and brought up by his grandmother from whom he learned ballads "recited in the pure 'Doric': for although she had never been in Scotland, she might, to judge by her speech, have spent every moment of her life in Ayrshire or Lanarkshire".[53] The Protestant Irish also brought with them militant Orangism which grew steadily in the industrial west of Scotland as the nineteenth century progressed. Orangism had been introduced into Scotland some time before 1807, and by 1830, although there were twelve lodges in Glasgow itself, the remainder of the lodges show no exceptional concentration in mining areas.[54] In Airdrie in Lanarkshire, in 1835 there were two lodges with fewer than sixty members, about one third of whom were Scottish. Significantly however the Scottish members of the Airdrie lodge were all either coal or ironstone miners. Orangism continued to grow in the west of Scotland, particularly in mining areas, and there remains a strong Orange presence in many Scottish mining areas up until the present time.

A further consequence of the Irish influx and the general increase in labour in the mining industry, was that it stimulated reflection on the cultural characteristics of the Scots colliers. The principal agent of the Hamilton estates for example, giving

evidence to the Royal Commission on the mining areas in 1851, like many of his contemporaries, envisaged "moral" problems being created by the massive expansion of the mining industry:

> With respect to the condition of the male collier population, which is made up of the old collier race, the Irish immigrants and the worst of the Scotch of other counties, it has till of late been to a considerable extent rude, vulgar, ignorant and savage in the extreme...and low as the state of education was amongst the aboriginal collier population during their slavery, it has since sunk still lower among the vast influx of Irish of the lowest grade from Connought [sic]....The vast accession of the Irish population mixed up as it has been, with the old collier serf population, is producing a new race or crossbreed of people far more turbulent and improvident than the former race.[55]

Couched as it was in the rhetoric of the day, the Hamilton estate agent's comments illustrate the concern with which the owners and managers viewed the problems which were encountered due to the vast increase in labour. The base of the owners' concern had little to do with altruism, their prime objective being to train the new unruly elements to a point where they accepted the routine and discipline of industrial working. At the same time, however, it was

necessary to sufficiently undermine the independent craft position which the indigenous Scots colliers had developed since their period of slavery. The development of definite moral distinctions along existing ethnic lines allowed the indigenous Scots to be praised for their thrift and their adherence to the values of self-help, while their traditional rights and customs were under severe attack.

In an article in the magazine "Nineteenth Century" Robert Haddow shows how such sentiments could enter popular writing. Haddow divides the miners into three types: "Scottish"; "Scottish Irish"; and "Irish":

> The first of these is unquestionably not only the best miner, but also the best man of the three; he has in most cases an education quite equal to that of a skilled artisan....
>
> The colliers of this stamp are for the most part sober, steady and thrifty; not infrequently they own the houses they live in...[56]

The dilution of skill within the nineteenth century mining industry went far beyond the decline in the Scots miner's status. Thomas Stewart, himself a miner, saw the problem in more practical terms when he wrote in 1893:

> One result of the increased demand for coal and iron, was, that our ranks were recruited from all corners, and consequently we had a great variety of character.

> Miners being paid by the quantity of work done, the masters ran little risk of losing anything, although he sent a brainless fool to work in the mine to the danger of his fellows' lives.[57]

For the miners themselves it was the very practical matters of safety, job security, and maintaining collective practices, rather than any moral dilution, which were the primary concerns. Keir Hardie, the miners' Trade Union leader, and himself no stranger to the values of self-help and sobriety, noted the problem in terms of the erosion of collective practices and craft status:

> Nothing angers the miner so much during a time of restriction than to find a fellow working at a stoop where the requisites are a big shovel, a strong back and a weak brain, said fellow having a few weeks before been busy in a peat bog or a tattie field and who is now producing coal enough for a man and a half.[58]

The influx of labour manifested itself in a weakness in labour organisation compared with the English county trade unions, and in a failure to develop a labour aristocracy in the Scottish coal mines beyond the mid-nineteenth century. The experienced hewer in this period could find himself replaced at any time by an Irish farm labourer, or an unemployed worker from Glasgow. The results of such organisational weakness was the failure of strikes, and a decline

in trade union membership.

The weakness in formal collective organisation resulted in the emergence of a quasi-Masonic organisation known as the Free Colliers. The Free Colliers emerged in the 1860s to fill the vacuum left by the lack of effective trade union organisation. Like the Society of Horsemen in the north-east of Scotland, the Free Colliers represented a response to the strident forces of nineteenth century capitalism. The Free Colliers and the Horsemen were however more a look back to the trade protection of a guildry system than a response in class terms. Nevertheless one cannot ignore the underlying elements in both organisations which set them in opposition to the manifestations of the emergent system. Parallels are more easily drawn between the Free Colliers and the early colliers' brotherhoods, and the name itself would seem to suggest a harking back to the independent aspects of the Scots collier's traditions. In theory the Free Colliers were open to all those employed in the industry, including owners and managers. In practice however very few other than the colliers themselves were members.

Perhaps significantly the emergence of the Free Colliers was in areas which at that point had suffered less from the Irish invasion than the western counties. The first lodge was formed at Redding near Falkirk in Stirlingshire in 1863, and the name adopted for the lodge was that of the Scottish patriot Sir William Wallace. In October of the same year of a lodge was formed at

Slamannan also in Stirlingshire, and in December the equally patriotic name of "King Robert the Bruce No 3" was adopted for the lodge at Bo'ness. In the following years the organisation spread to the west and throughout Scotland.[59]

With the advent of Free Collierism trade union activity revived.[60] However, early trade unions, particularly in the west, suffered greatly from the cultural gap between the large amounts of raw labour which entered the industry from the middle of the century, and the indigenous Scottish miners. As the Irish figured predominantly in the influx, the conflict often emerged in anti-Irish, and perhaps more significantly, anti-Catholic feeling. The advent of militant Orangism made this split more difficult to reconcile. Fred Reid writing on the early political development of the miners' leader and pioneer Labour Party M.P., Keir Hardie, stresses the difficulties which Hardie experienced in union organisation in the west of Scotland.[61]

Free Collierism was however a short lived reaction to the immediate threat posed to the Scots colliers' craft status and economic position. Although the president of the Free Colliers was for a time Alexander MacDonald, who was also the secretary of the Scottish miners' union, Free Collierism was viewed as a divisive force by the English miners' trade union leaders. MacDonald himself was later to criticise the Free Colliers for being too socially oriented, and lacking militancy, when increases in wages were being obtained

elsewhere through union action. The revitalisation of trade union activity and the winning of wage increases in the 1870s did indeed contribute to the demise of Free Collierism. Nevertheless Alan B. Campbell offers sound evidence to suggest that the Free Colliers were indeed a politically motivated organisation. Campbell also sees a direct link between the problems which the Scots colliers were facing in the mid-century, and the rise of Free Collierism.[62] Although Free Collierism was effectively dead by the end of the nineteenth century, revivalist meetings of the William Wallace lodge at Redding were taking place in 1977, and certain social functions, including a Burns supper, were held by the lodge.[63]

The rapid expansion of the mining industry from around the mid-nineteenth century, which created the social and cultural problems, represented the peak years of the Scottish mining industry. From the end of the nineteenth century the industry experienced a steady decline. The decline is particularly noticeable from after the end of World War One. The steady decline in the industry obviously meant a decline in manpower and earnings, and consequently resulted in a troubled period of labour relations. The years between the two world wars represented an almost continuous battle to maintain wage levels and regular employment. It was particularly during this period that the image of the miners as a socially homogeneous and politically radical force emerges. This was a period of heroic

labour struggles (more particularly a period of heroic defeats), and social and cultural cohesiveness in the face of hardship.

The years after World War One were indeed dismal years for the miners. By 1921 wages were down to pre-1914 levels, many pits were idle, 22,000 men were unemployed, and 45,000 only partially employed. The trade unions had suffered a bitter defeat, and were faced with a serious decline in membership. In Lanarkshire, the biggest mining county in Scotland, for example, the union announced a reduction in its fee-paying members from 47,000 to 25,000. In 1924 the coal owners agreed to an increase in wages, but in 1925, after the government's decision to return currency to the gold standard, and the subsequent fall in exports, the owners demanded a wage cut, The Miners Federation not surprisingly, rejected the owners' terms. When faced with a general strike due to the miners' alliance with the railway and transport workers, the Conservative Government intervened by offering a subsidy on wages and appointing a Royal Commission to inquire into the state of the industry. The Royal Commission under the chairmanship of Sir Herbert Samuel reported early in 1926, and recommended certain wage reductions. The Miners Federation under their redoubtable leader A.J. Cook responded with a rejection, and the slogan: "Not a penny off the pay, not a second on the day!" The scene was therefore set for one of the most famous labour conflicts in British history.

The conflict which followed, as well as leaving a landmark in British history, left a particular mark on the miners. So much so

that the 1926 General Strike is even today referred to simply as "the Strike". In the interim period while the Royal Commission was conducting its investigations the government was preparing for a confrontation with the labour movement. Despite the attempts to negotiate a settlement by the Trade Union Congress General Council, it was the government in the end which chose the timing for the conflict. A last minute attempt at negotiations was broken off by the government on May the third, when compositors on the "Daily Mail" refused to print a particularly anti-trade union editorial. The largely moderate members of the Trade Union Congress General Council were forced to call a general strike on the issue of the miners' pay. They were forced also into a situation which was not of their making, and into a fight for which they had little stomach.

The "General Strike" was not general in the sense that every worker in Britain was out on strike. However, added to the one million miners who were on strike were the transport workers, printers, building workers, iron and steel, heavy chemical, and power industries. The response was almost one hundred percent, and the massive display of solidarity gave the T.U.C. leaders little excuse to back down. The government, however, was well prepared, having used the period of the miners' wage subsidy and the Royal Commission to deploy troops in the coalfields and in the major industrial centres, and to recruit special constables. Despite this

there was little direct confrontation. Nevertheless the position was worrying to certain members of the T.U.C., and an attempt was made to negotiate a settlement behind the backs of the miners' leaders. The negotiation attempt was, however, met with a confident and well prepared government which gave no ground. After a period of nine days, throughout which the strike remained remarkably secure, the T.U.C. ordered a return to work, with nothing to show for the strike, nor any settlement of the miners' pay issue.

The miners, however, stayed out on strike alone for a total of seven months before they were forced to return to work, defeated. Considering the very real deprivation and hunger in the mining areas the solidarity among the miners was impressive. After only two weeks on strike alone, things were made more difficult by the fact that the local authorities which were administering poor relief began to feel the strain of the extra payments. Many local authorities were indignant at having to pay any relief at all to the striking miners' families, and many were forced to cut the amount of relief below the government-approved guidelines. The miners' solidarity and mass action at grass roots level forced many authorities to maintain their commitment to poor relief. In the end, however, the miners were forced back to work on the owners' terms.

The legacy of the defeat in 1926 lingers yet in mining communities,

and the deprivation left bitter memories in the coalfields. Many labour activists were victimised for their part in organising the strike, and were unable to obtain work in the industry for years afterwards. Bitter divisions also remained between the few who returned to work and those who remained out on strike; the names of families of whom one or more members returned to work can still be recalled by the older generation.

The manpower levels in the mining industry were however never again to reach the level of the late nineteenth century. The slump after World War One, and the depression through the nineteen-thirties, meant that by 1945, when the government took over the industry due to the Second World War, they inherited an industry which had been starved of capital input, and was in a severe state of decline.

Since the end of the nineteenth century the mining trade unions had campaigned for the nationalisation of the industry. The Sankey Commission Report of 1919 had lent considerable weight to the miners' claim for nationalisation. Commenting on the Sankey Commission Report the official historian of the National Union of Mineworkers, R. Page Arnot, says:

> ...the evidence put forward and the whole of the circumstances of its creation and conduct made the Sankey Commission a landmark. The main deposit

> left by Sankey was not material: it was the conviction in the minds of the colliers that private ownership was detrimental to the coal industry and ought to be abolished.[64]

The Sankey Commission's effects can be seen in the attitude of the miners between the wars, and the broad-based platform on which they fought industrial battles. It was, however, not until the advent of the post World War Two Labour Government that nationalisation became a reasonable prospect.

The Nationalisation Bill had its first reading in the House of Commons on December 1945. The Scottish miners had already drawn up a "miners' charter" listing their demands in anticipation of nationalisation. Among the demands for modernisation of the industry, training, better safety, compensation for accidents, and improved wages, there was significantly a demand for measures to end the social isolation of mining communities:

> The building of new towns and villages of a high standard and situated at places calculated to enable miners to have increased opportunities for social facilities and to break down the segregation of mineworkers and their families from the rest of the community.[65]

Nationalisation was therefore looked forward to with optimism among miners. Many miners viewed nationalisation as the beginning of worker control of industry. Instead, however, many were disappointed to find that after Vesting Day when official control of the mines passed into the hands of the state, there was little actual provision for worker control.[66] Many of the Divisional Coal Boards and the National Coal Board itself were composed of ex-owners, or those who had some control during the pre-nationalisation period. The element of control given to the trade unions was without any effective power, and some trade union leaders declined to take up what would have been extremely lucrative posts. The setting up of the Coal Board and the other nationalised industries after the Second World War in fact represented the taking into public ownership of that group of under-capitalised industries which remained of significance to the economy of the country, and the coal owners received handsome compensation for what power they gave up.

From a positive point of view, however, nationalisation did mean that capital was made available for investment, and consequently a steady improvement in safety measures occurred. Despite this fact attempts to recruit manpower to the industry were never very successful, and recruitment continued to be mainly from within mining families.

In the late nineteen-sixties the N.C.B. undertook major structural reorganisation of the mining industry. Uneconomical pits were closed down, and larger more modern units were built. This meant that added to the technological changes such as the power loading coal face, the industry needed fewer and fewer men. Between 1956 and 1970 the number of pits in Britain declined from 840 to 299, and at this very moment the trend continues, with threats of closures almost daily reported in the press. The number of men employed has declined from just under 704,000 in 1956, to just over 287,000 in 1971.[67] This decline has consequently had widespread social repercussions. Many mining communities lost their pit, the very reason for the being of the community, and the focus of community life. The social composition of many mining villages therefore changed. The change in the social make-up of the mining villages was also assisted by the increased availability of transport, and the relative increase in affluence from the nineteen-fifties.

The physical picture of mining villages also changed rapidly during the period after nationalisation. The old company housing gradually disappeared, to be replaced by municipal, or government agency funded, housing. The housing position had long been a sore point among miners, and the Sankey Commission in 1919 had lent weight to demand for better housing by concluding:

> There are houses in some districts which are a reproach to our civilisation. No judicial language is sufficiently strong or sufficiently severe to apply their condemnation.[68]

Since Sankey the miners' leaders had pressed for improvements in housing, and it was not until after 1945 that these improvements occurred with any speed. The picture in most mining communities today is that of standard municipal semi-detached housing, usually of two stories. In most of the communities there is no trace of the older style of company-built rows of single-storey cottages, although the odd example of this style can still be seen. The municipal housing when it was built also tended to situate itself away from the actual colliery, and this fact, added to the numbers of villages which are now without their own pit, changed completely the physical appearance of mining communities.

In the nineteen-sixties, coal as a source of power had become relegated to a position below oil in the fuel league. Coal production in Britain in the sixties was the lowest it had been since the eighteenth century. However, with the war and the political tension in the Middle East during the nineteen-seventies the situation was slightly altered. The dramatic rise in oil prices put coal back in a competitive position. Coal production was increased marginally by two and a half million tons, and the N.C.B.

took steps to slow down the rate of pit closures.[69] The result of this position was that the miners began to flex their industrial muscle, and at the National Union Of Mineworkers Conference in July 1971 a resolution was approved calling for a major pay increase. The campaign for the wage increase took the form of an overtime ban followed by an all-out strike, and since the miners are one hundred percent organised, this meant exactly that.[70] By January 1971 the effect on industry was beginning to be noticeable. The miners' picketing of power stations effectively halted the movement of coal to produce electric power. The Conservative government of the day gambled on the miners losing public support, and introduced restrictions on electricity consumption which put a large proportion of British industry on a three day week. A court of enquiry set up by the government gave the miners an important platform for their case, consolidated public opinion, and in the end came out as broadly supporting the miners' case. After initial rejection of the court's findings the miners accepted the recommendations in a ballot vote.

The second major conflict of the seventies occurred in 1974. Again the dispute centred on a wage increase, and again the demands went against the government's wage restrictions. Again the campaign took the form of an overtime ban followed by an all-out strike backed up with mass picketing of the power stations. The government responded by reducing the amount of electricity available

to the consumer, and the bulk of manufacturing industry was once again on short-time working. With the possibility of an all-out strike the Conservative government under Prime Minister Edward Heath announced a general election, and campaigned on the issue of "Who governs Britain?" The Heath government was defeated and a majority Labour administration under Harold Wilson allowed the miners' union and the N.C.B. to negotiate a settlement free of governmental controls. The miners had, in their own words "brought down Ted" (Edward Heath).

For many the disputes of the seventies were seen as revenge for the crushing defeat suffered under another Conservative government in 1926, and the disputes in 1971 and in 1973-74 brought forth echoes of the miners' previous struggles. However much the historians may argue that the disputes of the seventies bore little connection with the tradition of struggle, in the miners' oral culture the events did have a connection. Indeed, it might be argued that it was partly, at least, because of the way the connection was made that the miners' struggles in the seventies were successful. In the following chapters we will examine the development of oral tradition within Scottish mining and how this relates to the historical development. Special reference will be made to specific mining communities, and to the development of tradition within one mining family.

The area in which field research was carried out constitutes

more or less what is now known as the Central Region. The Central Region is a relatively modern local government administrative area which covers the old counties of Stirlingshire, Clackmannanshire, with areas of Perthshire and East Lothian. Mining within this area is an old established industry. In Dollar in Clackmannan, for example, it was reckoned that coal was being mined as early as 1650, and Clackmannanshire had a considerable mining population by the nineteenth century. In Bo'ness in East Lothian the traditions of mining are said to go back even further, to the thirteen hundreds.[71] In the south-eastern and south-western parts of Stirlingshire it is likely that coal was worked well before the Industrial Revolution. We know that coal was worked on a regular basis in Baldernock parish in Stirlingshire by the mid-eighteenth century. With the development of the famous Carron Iron Company from around the mid-eighteenth century, collieries sprang up in the south-eastern parts of Stirlingshire to supply the iron furnaces. The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries also saw coal works develop on a larger scale in Clackmannan, on the Earl of Mar's estates. Much of the development in Clackmannan was the work of the great mining engineer Robert Bald, and this work laid the foundation for the founding of the Alloa Coal Company. In the area around the town of Stirling however, the development of coal did not come until the late nineteenth century.

The communities where much of the field research for this project was done, in the vicinity of Stirling town, are relatively new communities by local standards. In relation to our general sketch of the development of coal mining this raises a number of points. Firstly, many of the communities were custom built company villages dating from the late nineteenth century. Secondly, a good proportion of the labour required was brought in from older communities, or other mining areas. The village of Fallin in particular has a large proportion of people who came originally from Lanarkshire.

Despite the fact that the communities were custom built it was by no means the case that all the colliers lived in the village company housing. The pits at Bannockburn, Polmaise 1 & 2, just outside the town of Stirling, Polmaise 3 & 4 at the village of Fallin, Manor Powis, and the village of Cowie were all within easy travelling distance from Stirling. It was the case therefore that a proportion of the colliers lived in Stirling town, mainly in the areas of the town where municipal or rented accommodation was available. The Medical Officer for Stirlingshire, John McVail, writing in 1911, noted that the percentage of miners in the area who lived in mine-attached houses was not as great as in other areas, noting at the same time that the total in mine-attached houses remained considerable.[72]

The three main pits in the vicinity of Stirling town were, up until the nineteen sixties: Manor Powis, approximately a mile and

a half north-east of the town, Polmaise 1 & 2 collieries (known as Millhall) about two miles east of the town, and Polmaise 3 & 4 collieries, about a mile and a half further on from Millhall, at the village of Fallin. There was also mining at the village of Plean about five miles east of the town, and drift mines (meaning the entrance was by sloping tunnel rather than by shaft) at the village of Cowie five or so miles from the town, and at Pirnhall about three miles to the south. It was among the miners and ex-miners from these pits that the bulk of the fieldwork was done, and for this reason it is necessary to say something of these communities.

The history of the villages of Fallin, Cowie and Plean forms the greater part of the modern history of the coal industry in the Stirling area. In 1895 Cowie was a collection of scattered houses and cottages owned by the Alloa Coal Company. The next year sixty-eight houses owned by the company had been built, and by the next year a further ninety-six were added in rows which bore the names of the founding directors of the company: Murray, Mitchell and Moubray.[73] The village grew rapidly until the outbreak of the First World War when building stopped. The pit at Cowie opened in 1894 and was reconstructed as a mine in 1952. It was subsequently closed in the early nineteen-sixties. The old rows of company-owned cottages were taken over by the N.C.B. after nationalisation, and were later replaced by the present municipal

housing owned by the Stirling District Council. The pit at Plean dated from a similar period to that at Cowie, and after a serious disaster in 1922 it was re-opened in 1930. Like Cowie the pit at Plean was a victim of the rationalisation which followed nationalisation. The two collieries at Millhall and Fallin centred on the village of Fallin itself. Fallin began life around 1905, and the houses were built on a slightly different model from the rows at Cowie and elsewhere, being two-storey buildings with one dwelling above the other. Again these houses were demolished in the period just after nationalisation, and the village was moved from its original site adjacent to the pit.[74]

Fallin is the only one of these villages which retains its pit. Millhall closed in 1958, and Manor Powis, to the north-east of Stirling, closed in the early seventies. Work in the coal industry, although at the present diminishing, remains in the area, with large operations in nearby Fife, and at Polmaise 3 & 4, and Kinniel Colliery at Bo'ness. At the time of writing however Kinniel Colliery was under threat of closure and later closed despite a campaign to avert the closure in the area. Although the pits have disappeared many miners and ex-miners still live in the villages. The Miners' Welfare Clubs are common throughout the vicinity of Stirling, although their traditional role has changed and they now compete with other social clubs and amenities. Fallin Miners' Welfare for example has its own squash courts

and sauna suite, and although frequented by miners and their families it is also used by other members of the community. Many of the welfare aspects of the Miners Welfare organisation have now been taken over by the state. However, it is worth noting that the Stirling Miners Welfare, and others too, provided free meals for the miners during the strikes in the seventies and in 1984-85.

As has already been noted many of the miners who worked in the pits around Stirling lived in the town itself, and the areas of the town in which they lived possessed at least some of the social characteristics of mining villages. Stirling Miners Welfare is situated at the Craigs, an area of the town which until the late nineteen forties would house a number of mining families. The same could be said of areas such as Bannockburn, St. Ninians, the Raploch, and the area of Stirling old town near the Castle known as the "Top of the Town". These areas would differ of course in a number of important respects from mining villages. Not the least of these differences would be the fact that they would not be exclusively populated by miners, and some variety of alternative employment would be available. The houses in these areas were also not tied to the job, which gave an added degree of independence.

The significance of the community life in the areas where miners lived will be taken up later in the study. What has been seen by some observers as the social isolation of mining communities

is often cited as the cause of the much famed solidarity of miners in the face of adversity.[74] Propositions such as the "isolated mass" theory will be examined with regard to the evidence in the oral culture of these mining communities.

[1] For the early period see Baron F. Duckham, The History of the Scottish Coal Industry, Vol: 1 1700-1815 (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1970). For a social history and a history of the trade unions see R. Page Arnot, The Scottish Miners (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1955). For a close analysis of the social history and the development of the trade unions into the nineteenth century see Alan B. Campbell, The Lanarkshire Miners: A Social History of their Trade Unions 1775-1847 (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1979).

[2] R.W. Dron, The Coalfields of Scotland (London: Blackie, 1902), pp.11-13.

[3] Duckham, p.14.

[4] Campbell, pp.28-29. Campbell gives this phrase in inverted commas as it appears to be ambiguous, in that it may refer either to the total workforce or to those who actually hewed the coal.

[5] Sir John Sinclair ed., The Statistical Account. (Edinburgh, 1791-1799), the Parish of Dollar, Vol. XV, p.756.

[6] Thomas Stewart, Among the Miners (Larkhall: W. Burns, 1893), pp.4-5.

[7] Duckham, pp.14-15.

[8]Duckham, pp.241-3. Apart from the historical works already cited, discussion on slavery among the Scottish colliers and salters can be found in T.S. Ashton and J. Sykes, The Coal Industry of the Eighteenth Century (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1939), chapter v, "The Scottish Collier-serf".

[9]Duckham, pp.243-4.

[10]Duckham, pp.246-7.

[11]Duckham, pp.252.

[12]Sinclair ed., the Parish of Alloa, Vol VIII, p.680.

[13]Duckham, pp.254-5.

[14]H.G. Graham, The Social Life of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century, 5th Ed. (1899; rpt. with introduction by Eric Linklater, London: Adam and Charles Black, 1969), pp.531-2.

[15]Sinclair, ed., the Parish of Alloa, Vol VIII, p.683.

[16]Hugh Miller, My Schools and Schoolmasters (1852; rpt., Edinburgh: Nimmo Hay and Mitchell, 1891), p.317.

[17]Henry Cockburn, Memorials of His Time (1856; rpt., Edinburgh: Robert Grant, 1951), pp.62-3.

[18]Stewart, p.11 and p.32.

[19] Andrew Millar, The Rise and Progress of Coatbridge (Glasgow: David Robertson, 1864), pp. 183-4.

[20] Hiram Sturdy, an untitled collection of notebooks dealing with his life in a small Lanarkshire mining village between the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries (National Library of Scotland DEP 279). I owe this reference Dr. Hamish Henderson of The School of Scottish Studies, Edinburgh University and Mr. Tom Law.

[21] Stewart, p.18.

[22] Campbell, p.134.

[23] P.L. Payne, "The Govan Collieries 1804-1805" Business History, 3 (1961) 75-96, and Campbell, p.164.

[24] John C. McVail, Report on the Housing of Miners in Stirlingshire and Dumbartonshire (Glasgow: Robert Mclehose, 1911), p.14.

[25] Miller, p.316.

[26] R.H. Campbell, The Carron Company (Oxford: Blackwell, 1961), p.70.

[27] Stirling County Council Rate Valuation Rolls 1897, 1898. Central Regional Council Archives.

[28]Report of the Royal Commission on the Housing of the Industrial Population, 1918, British Parliamentary Papers (1917-18), XIV para 171.

[29]Duckham, p.258.

[30]Campbell, The Lanarkshire Miners, p.133.

[31]Robert Smillie, My Life For Labour (London: Mills and Boon, 1924), p.23.

[32]Royal Commission on Labour Minutes of Evidence taken before Group A. Vols. 1 and 2, Mining. B.P.P. (1892) XXXIV. 313, p.62. As quoted in Campbell, The Lanarkshire Miners, p.229.

[33]Stewart, pp.4-5, and Sinclair, ed., the Parish of Alloa, Vol.VIII, p.683.

[34]Children's Employment Commission (Mines) 1842, B.P.P. (1842) XV. 1 Evidence, p.456.

[35]Report of the Commissioner appointed under the provision of the Act 5 and 6 Vict.c99, to inquire into the operation of that Act and into the State of the Population in the Mining districts 1844. B.P.P. (1844) XVI. 1 p.46.

[36]Baron F. Duckham, "Life and Labour in a Scottish Colliery 1698-1755," Scottish Historical Review, 47 (1968), 114.

[37]Campbell, The Lanarkshire Miners, p.28.

[38] Sinclair, ed., the Parish of Alloa, Vol. VIII, p.683.

[39] Report into the state of the Population of the Mining districts 1844, p.365 and p.368.

[40] Children's Employment Commission Appendix 1 B.P.P. (1842), XVI, 363.

[41] Duckham, A History of the Scottish Coal Industry, p.20.

[42] Campbell, The Lanarkshire Miners, passim, and Allan Campbell and Fred Reid, "The Independent Collier in Scotland," and Fred Reid, "Alexander MacDonald and the Crisis of the Independent Collier, 1872-1874," in Independent Collier, ed. Royden Harrison (Hassocks, Sussex: Harvester Press 1978), pp. 54-74 and 156-159.

[43] J.E. Handley, The Irish in Modern Scotland (Cork: Univ. of Cork Press, 1938), p.44.

[44] A. Slaven, The Development of the West of Scotland: 1750-1960 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975) p.114. As quoted in Campbell, The Lanarkshire Miners, p.101.

[45] B.P.P. (1844), XVI, 39. As quoted in Campbell, The Lanarkshire Miners, p.102.

[46] Campbell, The Lanarkshire Miners, p.181.

[47] Campbell, The Lanarkshire Miners, p.103.

[48]Handley, p.127.

[49]Scottish Records Office AD/14/50/198.

[50]Thomas Johnston, The History of the Working Classes in Scotland (1946; rpt., East Ardsley, Yorkshire: E.P. Publishing, 1974), p.335.

[51]"A Tradesman," "Scenes Underground," Mitchell Library, Glasgow. As quoted in Campbell, The Lanarkshire Miners, p.182.

[52]Campbell, The Lanarkshire Miners, p.182.

[53]Smillie, p.14.

[54]Hereward Senior, Orangism in Ireland and Britain 1795-1836 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), pp.304-5, Appendix C.

[55]Handley, p.125.

[56]Robert Haddow, "The Miners of Scotland," Nineteenth Century, Sept. 1888, p.360.

[57]Stewart, p.26.

[58]Fred Reid, "The Early Life and Political Development of James Keir Hardie 1856-1892," D.Phil. thesis Oxford University, 1968, p.76.

[59]Campbell, The Lanarkshire Miners, p.277.

[60] Campbell, The Lanarkshire Miners, p.278.

[61] Reid, "The Early Life and Political Development of James Keir Hardie 1856-1892," p.25.

[62] Campbell, The Lanarkshire Miners, p.278.

[63] The Scottish Miner, the official paper of the Scottish area of the National Union of Mineworkers, No. 241 1977, p.4.

[64] Arnot, p.146.

[65] Arnot, p.270.

[66] Vesting Day, January 1, 1947, when the control of the mines was taken over by the National Coal Board for the government.

[67] Michael P. Jackson, The Price of Coal (London: Croom Helm, 1974), pp.194-5.

[68] Arnot, p.146.

[69] Jackson, p.130.

[70] Jackson, pp.132-163, covers the basic history of the industrial struggles of the seventies.

[71] Sinclair, ed., Bo'ness, Vol XVIII, p.709.

[72] McVail, pp.12 and 14.

[73] Stirling County Rate Valuation Rolls 1894-5 and 1896-7, Central Regional Council Archives.

[74] An extreme example of viewing mining communities as a socially "isolated mass" can be found in C. Kerr and A. Segal, "The Inter-Industry Propensity to Strike: An International Comparison," in Industrial Conflict, ed. A. Kornhouser et al. (New York: McGraw Hill, 1954), pp.189-212.

CHAPTER II

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A WORK BASED ORAL TRADITION

The question of work and occupations creating expressive culture was perhaps first placed in focus by the work of anthropologists. In particular the functionalism of Bronislaw Malinowski influenced others toward in-depth contextual studies among working groups.[1] The idea that the expressive behaviour of working groups formed part of an interrelated system in which every aspect of group behaviour fitted, derived from studies of primitive cultures. Malinowski's ideas were influenced by the concept of survivals, that is, that aspects of primitive culture remained as vestigal elements among certain groups in modern society.

Raymond Firth was among the first to recognise that the heterogeneity of the urban work place need not necessarily diminish group cohesiveness, and may in fact actually strengthen some aspects of group solidarity.[2] Firth's tentative ideas were followed by many studies which investigated the various contexts and symbolic codes found in occupational settings. This led Frederick Gamst to outline the premises of industrial ethnology in both the United States and Canada. Gamst discusses behaviour and attitudes among workers, expressive symbols, in-group communications, physical and environmental arrangements, and interestingly, on and off-the-job interaction.[3]

In Britain occupational group studies have tended to come from sociologists. Sociological studies, particularly in the nineteen fifties and sixties, concentrated on traditional single occupational communities. These studies were motivated by the break-up of old single occupational communities due to the massive public housing programmes carried out during the period of post-war reconstruction. Among these one of the best known is the study of the Yorkshire mining community carried out by Dennis, Henriquies and Slaughter. However, other work in this area includes the study done at Liverpool University on the dock workers, and Tunstall and Horobin's studies on fishermen and their communities. Some studies, however, tended toward the anthropological approach, and Hollowell's study of the lorry driver and Sykes' study on navvies go some way toward an understanding of symbolic codes among working groups.[4]

In the field of folklore, interest in work groups came initially from North America. Inspired by the antiquarian interest in rural societies, initial study tended to focus on the more traditional occupations. Although folklorists studied industrial occupations these tended to be occupations which remained closer to rural agrarian society. John Lomax and Jack Thorp's works on the songs of cowboys are examples of earlier work in occupational folklore.[5] George Korson however stands out as the pioneer of the study of expressive culture among miners. Korson's studies in Pennsylvania led him to his interest in song and legend among the miners of that

area of the United States. Although perhaps influenced by the idea of enclaved communities developing distinctively in isolation, Korson's work nevertheless represents a significant milestone. Korson perceived folklore as a dynamic element in cultural adaption and change, rather than simply the vestiges of a previous age. This concept led to the view that urban as well as rural workers could devise systems of artistic interaction, and paved the way for the more modern approach to occupational folklore. Korson's later work included theoretical as well as textual material, and to some extent made the use of sociological and anthropological studies easier for folklorists. Nevertheless, concerned as he was with studying artistic expressive interaction, Korson also emphasised the distinctive nature of folkloristics.[6]

Among those who followed Korson's lead, Wayland D. Hand has done extensive work among miners on America's west coast, particularly in the area of custom and belief. Coming from a more political position Archie Green has illustrated the link between occupational culture and the labour movement. The political dimension has also influenced the work of Ewen MacColl whose Radio Ballad series for B.B.C. radio paid heroic tribute to miners, lorry drivers, and fishermen.[7]

Recent work in occupational folklore includes the scientific applied approach of Robert McCarl. In his work among fire fighters and other workers McCarl attempts to define the unified

force which underlines the shaping of expressive behaviour among workers. McCarl intends his studies to be directly beneficial to those who train workers, and his concept of "technique" suggests that the skill needed to function in any job is only a small part of what the worker needs to know. McCarl perceives "technique" as the whole of the working knowledge which the worker will need to function in his workplace, and this concept is wider than skill, in that it embraces such things as informal codes and esoteric language.[8]

In Britain little has been done from the standpoint of occupational folklore. However the work of A.E. Green among Yorkshire miners stands out and has been of great value in this study.[9] Among others worthy of mention are Lynn Davies's study among Welsh miners, and Margaret Ringwood's among Durham miners.[10]

Having outlined the historical development of the mining industry, and highlighted the areas which relate to the development of an occupation-based tradition, we intend in this chapter to chart the development of the oral tradition itself. The term "oral" is regarded here in its less literal sense, that is, relating to non-written material, rather than something which in its strictest sense is either spoken or sung. "Oral" in this sense is deemed to refer to custom and belief as well as that part of the tradition which is strictly speaking oral. Having said this we find it

necessary to make a further qualification with regard to the development of oral culture. The development of an oral tradition is a highly selective process, there being no strict rule within this process which states that material in oral circulation need necessarily be selected from existing oral culture. Indeed, oral culture may well find its origin in written sources, or in radio or television; or for that matter in the formal educational system. The criterion need only be made that it must be, or have at one point been, active in non-written culture.

As we have already stated, the development of the occupational folk tradition among the Scottish coal-miners is essentially part of a historical process. It is impossible to fully understand this tradition without also understanding its historical development. To ignore the historical context is to fail to adhere properly to the classic dictum of folkloristics which states that we must examine the text within its context. For example, the legendry "Big Hewer" tales were still in oral circulation in the nineteen-fifties for specific reasons relating to the development of the mining industry and the image of the miners themselves. The reasons why the "Big Hewer" legends remained in circulation in the fifties were completely different from the veneration of great feats of work and strength which existed in the eighteenth century. Changes in the social, economic, and cultural position of the miners have therefore brought changes in the oral tradition. The relationship between the historical process and the oral tradition is necessarily

a reciprocal relationship, the tradition being as fluid and as dynamic as the history, and we are therefore studying aprocess rather than a series of abstract situations. In terms of folkloristics this process is accurately described by R.D. Abrahams as a combination of associative and disassociative phenomena designed to resolve divergent dualisms.[11] Put in less abstract terms the process of tradition is continually altering its pattern in order to resolve the development of potential conflict. The continual adaptation of tradition in this way may go some way to explain why historians have detected the development of a distinct, vigorous, and independent popular culture among working people over the period of industrial change.[12] Many of the old ways we are told remained since they functioned to resolve newer conflicts, and newer ways served to resolve older conflicts.

The development of an occupation-based folk tradition among Scottish coal miners was not distinct or exempt from the process outlined above. In charting the historical development of oral tradition among the Scottish coal miners we hope to avoid metaphorically dragging our "Big Hewers" through two centuries, and treating the living tradition as if it passed through history unaffected by the process. Only through an understanding of the historical development of the oral tradition can we hope to understand the tradition as it has developed, and as it exists today.

We can give a good example to the importance of understanding

the historical development of the oral tradition by first stressing the often understated fact that the early Scottish coal miner, seen within his social and cultural milieu, cannot accurately be described as an industrial worker at all. This factor is essential to the understanding of tradition in the mining industry. With regard to their geographical situation, working patterns, and cultural environment, the early Scottish coal miners can be seen as having close links with the Scottish peasantry. This situation goes some way to refuting the much stated "isolated mass" theory with regard to explaining distinctive cultural characteristics in mining society in Scotland. For although during the period of slavery it might be possible to speak of culturally isolated Redfieldian folk communities of miners, it is unlikely that in practice such a situation existed. Contemporary observers of early nineteenth century colliers, some of whom, like Thomas Stewart, were miners themselves, had little doubt that miners existed as part of Scottish peasant society. Stewart described miners as "an independent brave and industrious portion of our Scottish peasantry". Stewart's description of the miners as part of the peasantry cannot simply be dismissed as a turn of phrase, for his account of mining life constantly makes reference to this point. The independent image of the Scots peasant, which found its literary reflection in Scott's character Davey Deans in The Heart of Midlothian, is emphasised by Stewart in relation to the miners. "The principal trait in the character of the Scottish miner", he stated, "is unyielding independence" unlike the "cringeing slaves of other trades, envious of the fearless independence they could not imitate".[13]

There were of course understandable reasons for the nineteenth century miner's social and cultural links with the peasantry. Mining was carried on in country areas, and many miners lived in rural communities or tenanted small-holdings. A neighbour of Thomas Stewart's in the hamlet of Hairleeshill, a mile from Larkhall in Lanarkshire, in the early 1850's would regularly thrash the corn with her daughters, and even plough their plot of land, while her husband and sons worked in the mine. Many of Stewart's other neighbours also had a barn where they kept a cow or sometimes two.[14] Similar situations were to be found in other parts of the Scottish coalfield. Mr. Johnson, the Carron Company's manager at Redding colliery in Stirlingshire, noted in his evidence to the Royal Commission of 1844 that many of his workmen kept cows, and further evidence to the same Commission stated that at Devon Colliery in Clackmannan a dozen or so of the miners kept a cow, and "almost all kept pigs and fowls, and all have gardens".[15] Even in areas as close to nineteenth century Glasgow as Govan the colliery had a farm at which the colliers' wives could find employment.[16]

The close links between the miners and the peasantry consequently extended beyond the social similarities into the areas of cultural life. Andrew Millar, the historian of Coatbridge, writing in 1864, commented on the similarity between the customs and beliefs among the peasantry and those among the colliers:

> The colliers had their superstitious ideas at that period...somewhat similar to the peasantry and other working classes. The belief in witches, fairies, ghosts and death warnings were quite popular.[17]

Millar lists a number of beliefs similar to those collected by Lynn Davies among miners in Wales, John Raven in Staffordshire, and Margaret Ringwood in Durham, and also by George Korson and Wayland Hand in the United States:

> If on proceeding to their toil in the morning they met a woman with red hair or naked feet, if a hare crossed their path, if a few magpies happened to fly past them, if they saw in meadow or hillside the fiery vapour or dancing lights known as 'Will-o'-the-Wisp', and various others too numerous to detail, any one of them was sufficient to stop the colliers from going to work.[18]

Dr. David Rorie, a folklorist working in Fife at the beginning of this century, collected similar beliefs which the Fife miners knew as "frlets". It is particularly noticeable with regard to Rorie's work how many of the beliefs related to the countryside of rural life. For example:

> The "hale" in the forefoot of a pig is where the devils entered the Gardarene swine.
>
> A man who killed a lot of pigs in his day has a good chance of seeing the devil.
>
> It is unlucky to "harry" a swallow's nest.
>
> If a swallow flies below your arm that arm will become paralysed.
>
> Swallows or crows building near a house are lucky.[19]

Andrew Millar also tells us how the early nineteenth century Lanarkshire miners told stories of "Uncle Hairey", a mysterious creature who performed great and wonderful feats: he was "a species of geni of the mine". Uncle Hairey appears to have been a benign spirit not unlike a brownie, and similar to the spirit known as "knockers" found among Cornish tin miners. Similar spirits were said to frequent mines in Staffordshire, and the belief was also exported to parts of the United States. Uncle Hairey was said to protect miners who believed in him by warning them of impending danger. Like the Cornish "knockers" and the brownies, Uncle Hairey helped the miners with their work, an old miner told Andrew Millar:

> Uncle Hairey aye wrocht for them he likit in the nicht time, and could howk as muckle coal in ae nicht as ony ten men.[20]

Alexander MacDonald, the early miners' trade union leader, was well aware of the kind of beliefs which existed among the miners. Writing in the Glasgow Sentinel in May 1868, MacDonald requested miners to send him recollections and folklore of the industry, and he commented on how in his youth "Uncle Harry", as he referred to him, had been used to keep children away from dangerous and forbidden areas in mining communities.[21]

The colliers' social customs like their beliefs also had notable overlaps with those found among the peasantry. The Scottish custom of "penny weddings" was for example common in colliery communities. Andrew Millar describes the custom in detail, the celebration lasting from the proclamation of the banns on "brookin nicht" to the "backin" of the wedding once the couple had been ceremonially "bedded". Millar notes how the "backin" of the wedding continued for several nights in "hilarious and often uproarious, mirth and dancing".[22] Evidence of the enduring nature of such customs as penny weddings in colliery communities is given by Bob Holman writing in 1952 on the life of a Fife colliery community. Holman noted that "peyin weddings" where the guests payed money at the door toward the cost of the celebration could still be remembered in that area.[23] Further evidence of this is given by Henry Grafin, a retired miner from Cowie in Stirlingshire, who reported a variant of this custom which he remembered in his own lifetime:

> ...at a wedding, if ye put a flag up at a wedding, ye got a bottle o' whisky. Ken if onaybody was gettin' married they aye stuck a flag up in the lum.
>
> Just to let everybody ken that there was somebody gettin' married. [They] aye gied a bit...it was maistly furniture ken, bit o' furniture maybe pails and buckets, aw that.[24]

The beliefs and customs which the miners held in common with the peasantry underwent particular change over the period of industrialisation, but nevertheless it is significant that many survived unchanged. The degree to which mining culture remained apparently unchanged over lengthy periods of time has been interpreted by many writers as due to the social and cultural isolation of mining communities. As has been stated above, however, it is difficult to accept that miners actually did live in cultural and social isolation. There is nevertheless some evidence to lead toward the conclusion that miners were considered social outsiders. In Fife in the eighteenth century, for example, miners were not allowed to be buried in consecrated ground.[25] And certain social prejudice remained into the present time. The theory of the "isolated mass" is however misleading. It would perhaps be more accurate to say that miners were in a liminal position between industrial worker and

and rural dweller. If this did not create actual cultural or social isolation it did make for a unique position. With regard to this position and to the resilience of tradition in the mining industry in Lanarkshire Alan B. Campbell has written:

> These aspects of the colliers' culture can perhaps be most clearly understood if the character of Lanarkshire mining villages at the time is considered. Although they provided the essential raw material for the West of Scotland's industrialisation and urbanisation, the miners themselves remained largely outside, and unaffected by the pressures before the 1830s.[26]

The ambiguous position between industrial worker and rural dweller clearly had its effect on later developments in mining culture. The feeling of distinctiveness which exists in some cases into the present time undoubtedly helped maintain a vigorous and unique culture. This is particularly noticeable in the way miners maintained traditional work practice in the face of the development of modern industrial methods. Systems of training were defined informally but strictly. Andrew Millar comments:

> ...descendants of the original colliers retain their identity, and look upon others as interlopers in the mines not belonging to the brotherhood. Trained as Scottish colliers were this feeling is not to be wondered at; for they looked upon their protection as a sort of hereditary right.[27]

Millar's evidence is borne out by the early colliers' brotherhoods. The brotherhood of colliers, with its rituals, oaths, and secret meetings, was to some extent modelled on the guildry system which existed in the boroughs prior to industrial revolution. Brothering took place on the completion of a recognised period of training, which the young collier usually completed around the age of eighteen. On completion of his training the young collier was ceremonially accepted into the brotherhood, and given the status and rites of a collier. Such rites of passage were common in the majority of trades until the advent of apprenticeships, when much of the ceremonial was retained, particularly in older trades such as printing.

The system of brothering was, like the later and more short-lived Free Colliers, an attempt to protect the skill and livelihood of colliers from outside interference. There is little doubt that the colliers regarded their position as that of a skilled workman. An experienced collier could be expected to perform a variety of tasks. These ranged from cutting coal, to driving underground roads, to sinking new shafts, and the variety of tools which the skilled collier would use is further evidence of the skills involved.[28] Added to this was the experience involved in interpreting sounds and movements in the coal, and the agility and suppleness which would allow effective movement in a confined space. This combination of physical strength and agility was something which did not come easily to the newcomer. Robert Bald, an experienced mining engineer

noted this combination of strength, agility and skill, when he stated in 1808 that coal hewing required "such constant exertion and twisting of the body that unless a person have (sic) been habituated to it from his earliest years, he cannot submit to the operation".[29] The basic requirements of strength and agility appear to have changed little from the early years of coal mining. B.L. Coombes, who wrote extensively on his life underground in the nineteen twenties and thirties, observed the difficulties involved for the late entrant to mining:

> George is willing to work and learn but he started too late....He is too clumsy, his big body set too firmly in a comfortable mould....George will always remain the man who struggles vainly to get a respectable amount on a shovel and to throw it to the exact point where he wants it.[30]

The skill involved in the miners' work was developed over a lengthy period, and the boy entering the profession would generally progress through a number of tasks before becoming a hewer. The young collier could also begin work with his father, and as the Scots colliers, even into the twentieth century, measured output strictly as a means of dividing the work equally, and keeping prices up, the boy would be allowed a proportion of his father's "darg" or day's output. The "darg" was the measured day's output for an adult collier, and is variously known as the "darrick" in Cumberland,

and "bread", "breadth", or simply "cut" in other parts of the British coalfields. The term "darg" has its origins in the early piece work systems, when the collier could leave the face when his measured amount of work was completed. The Scottish term has that particular expressive quality about it which seems to suggest the drawn-out weariness which might result from a day's work at the coalface. The word "darg" is also used by farm workers in Scotland. Similarly the word "ben", which is synonomous with the collier's right to enter the pit, and many other terms also derive from a more rural society and give further indication of the colliers' links with peasant society.[31] In the nineteenth century when the "darg" was set, this limited the output of each collier, and a man with young sons working beside him could therefore claim for a half or a quarter "darg" depending on the boy's age.

The progression of a young boy was directly linked to the "darg" in an official system of apprenticeship. Alexander MacDonald giving evidence to the 1842 Children's Employment Commission stated this specifically:

> I think the origin of this arrangment is from the older period of service, about the beginning of the century, when apprentices were taken into the collieries of Bo'ness and other collieries; and then in the west in Lanarkshire, they took them in the same way; they were a quarter of a man from 10 to 12½; they were a half a man from 12½ to 15; they were three-quarters of a man from 15 to 17; and at seventeen they obtained full man's rights.[32]

Although MacDonald stated that he thought the apprenticeship system originated from the beginning of the nineteenth century, the evidence of Alan B. Campbell among others suggests that the origins were much earlier than this.[33]

The attainment of full man's rights which MacDonald mentions not only allowed the collier to work the full "darg", but also allowed him to claim his "ben". The "ben" was a fundamental right among the Scots colliers, which allowed them to enter the pit and access to an equal share of the work. The "ben" also allowed the collier equal access to the "cleek" or winding gear which brought his coal to the surface. The young boys who put out a portion of their father's "darg" were thus referred to as a "half ben" or a "quarter ben". The origin of the term is difficult to ascertain, but it seems likely that it derives from the Scots word "ben" meaning behind or inside. In this sense of the word, claiming the "ben" was claiming a right to a turn in the line or the right to enter or go in. There is evidence to suggest that in the present day mining industry the claiming of the "ben" is used in a similar way with regard to the cage when ascending the pit. Although the original function of the "ben" in assuring equal access to the "cleek" for colliers who were further away from the pit bottom than others, or for assuring equal distribution of work is now redundant, access to the cage coming up the pit remains a contested area which requires regulation. Until quite recently, and perhaps even at present time, miners "cry their ben" when

about to leave the pit by shouting "who's last", the name of the last man at the bottom is shouted, assuring him the first place on the next run of the cage.

The use of the "ben" for ensuring that colliers were given equal access to the coal tubs or hutches is recorded in operation at Cowie pit in Stirlingshire as late as the nineteen twenties. This system known as "ben and rake" will be explained in detail in a later chapter (the "rake" simply refers to a rake or train of coal tubs).[34]

The measurement of maximum output through the "darg", and the distribution of work through the "ben", relate directly to a strong tradition of output limitation common in Scots collieries. Limitation of output in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was viewed by the miners as an important economic weapon used to keep coal prices, and consequently wages, up. Provided there was co-operation among the miners it was a relatively easy matter to limit the number of hutches per man from say 12 to 10; this was known at times as working a "wee darg". Output limitation, although a general weapon in most industrial disputes, was a system which had its best effect during normal working in the eighteenth century, when markets were sufficiently localised, and it was fairly simple to gauge the effect of local supply on demand and prices. It may well be the case that the use of output limitation was based on a customary belief which had its origins in a pre-industrial moral

principle which took little account of market forces. A. Youngson Brown reports a system in operation in the mines of Midlothian as late as 1874 known as "use and wont" which had been in operation from "time immemorial". "Use and wont" worked in a way which required that any rise in the price of coal be distributed one third to the master, one third to capital, and one third to the miners.[35] A similar belief in a customary right to wages among miners which was based on need rather than market forces was detected by J.A. Bowie in an otherwise rather crude attempt at analysing their collective psychology.[36] One nineteenth century writer saw the way Scots miners viewed the link between output and prices as being due to their knowledge of political economy. As Scots miners were better read than their English counterparts and well versed in economic theory,

> 'They see at once, by the price current in the market what is the fair portion for workmen's wages according to the circumstances of the pit and the general state of trade.[37]

Leaving aside the question of literacy, it is likely that the Scots miners' theoretical linking of output and wages had more to do with custom and a relatively weak trade union organisation, than it had with an understanding of Adam Smith. The labour historians Sidney and Beatrice Webb writing in the nineteen twenties found there was little use made of output limitation among English colliers. The Webbs' conclusion was that output limitation was not characteristic

of good trade union practice, but was common only in half-organised areas such as Ayrshire and Lanarkshire.[38]

There is little doubt that trade union organisation particularly in the west of Scotland coalfields in the nineteenth century was weak in comparison to that in the English counties. Perhaps adding weight to the Webbs' conclusion is the statement of Keir Hardie who himself experienced the tremendous difficulties involved in organising the miners of Ayrshire and Lanarkshire in this period, that over-production was at the root of the miners' problems.[39] We should nevertheless bear in mind the independent tradition which existed among a section of the Scots miners which would to some extent account for the link which they observed between output and wages. As many Scots miners up until virtually the mid-nineteenth century were more of less independent contractors, they could easily have seen the direct effect which prices could have on wages. Having made this qualification, we should however remember the history of slavery among the Scots miners, which would tend to suggest that the use of output limitation and systems such as "use and wont" did have a connection with a pre-industrial moral system based on rights and obligations rather than market forces. Under such a moral code, wages were determined by customary right rather than the use of industrial power or collective bargaining.

The belief in customary practice with regard to wages and prices was, however, not entirely unique. One leading labour historian has suggested that up until the mid-nineteenth century the rules of labour and management wage and productivity relations were defined by customary practice rather than what the market would bear.[40] This attitude among workers, which expected moral rules to govern wage bargaining can be seen clearly in the way eighteenth century workers took direct action against what they saw as profiteering in food prices. English miners were in the forefront of such agitation and they firmly believed that they had a right to expect fair prices for their food. As E.P. Thompson has pointed out:

> ...the men and women in the crowd were spurred by the belief that they were defending traditional rights and customs, and in general they were supported by a wider concensus.[41]

It would appear that the nineteenth century Scots miner's expectations on wages were based on similar precepts to those found in the eighteenth century English "crowd". At the base of such expectations was a moral feeling that customary rights and practices must be defended where they were seen to be under attack.

Customary rights and traditions also had a bearing on work practice. The number of days worked at the coal in any one week, or the number of hours spent underground, were viewed by many

miners up until as late as the 1870s, to be something they themselves could decide. Under serfdom the colliers' work patterns were notoriously independent. Hours spent in the pits in Alloa in the eighteenth century for example were decided by the colliers rather than the manager.[42] A good collier could cut his "darg" fairly quickly, and some colliers frequently worked half days despite the fact that they were encouraged to work longer. The difficulties involved in encouraging colliers to work regular hours existed well into the nineteenth century. The Report of the Royal Commission of 1844 gives a number of examples of the difficulties involved in supervising the underground worker. It appears that the miner remained essentially his own master with regard to the hours he worked. Mr. Francis Wilson for the Clackmannan Coal Company told the 1844 Commission how miners came and went in the pit without his knowledge.[43]

The attitude toward working hours extended into a perception of the working week. A four-day week, for example, was not uncommon among eighteenth and nineteenth century miners. The problem of working a four-day week was one which did not disappear overnight, and the Royal Commission on the Coal Industry in 1925 noted how such attitudes toward the working week related closely to traditional celebrations:

> ...days in which the greatest number of miners were absent were apparently determined by custom rather than any definite cause.[44]

We have already noted how the Scottish colliers' wedding celebrations could last several days, and the nineteenth century Scottish colliers took a fortnight off for the traditional New Year celebrations.[45] Not infrequently, however, absenteeism would be on a Monday after a weekend of excessive celebration, and a study of output at the nineteenth century Govan collieries near Glasgow reveals constant low output on Mondays.[46]

Such pre-industrial work patterns were of course not limited to miners. The concept of "Saint Monday" or "Blue Monday" is common throughout the industrial world. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, however, we can see clearly the difficulties involved in the development of a labour force which would accept strict working patterns. Thomas Wright "A Journeyman Engineer" writing on the "Habits and Customs of the Working Classes" noted rather ironically in 1868.

> On Monday everything is in favour of the great unwashed holding holiday. They are refreshed by the previous day; the money received on Saturday is not spent, and those among them who consign their best suits to the custody of the pawnbroker during the week are still in possession of the suits which they redeemed from limbo on Saturday night.[47]

M.D. Bernstein has also noted how irregular work patterns which were

common in the early British working class present a problem to companies involved in the third world. Mining companies in Mexico found it difficult to understand why the Mexican workers insisted on observing numerous saints days and fiestas and their willingness to work only three or four days a week if that paid for necessities and alcohol.[48] Any attempts to regulate the working week however ran counter to traditional patterns of life, and obviously had considerable effect on custom and belief.

The collier's position with regard to the hours of work or the length of the working week was linked to his ambiguous social position between rural dweller and industrial worker. This position had its own particular effect on work patterns. As we have noted the work of hewing coal was often alternated with agricultural work, and many colliers tenanted smallholdings. In areas of Fife work at the coal could be alternated with work at the fishing.[49] Workers at the Duke of Hamilton's collieries in Lanarkshire in the nineteenth century, who were not in regular enough employment at the coal, could turn their attention to "country work" in the summer.[50] The diversity of work performed by many early colliers was also an important factor in maintaining their independent status and delayed the acceptance of the role of a purely wage worker.

The early colliers' independent position was to an extent aided by the pattern of family life. As has been stated, in many cases the family was also the unit of production, with the wife and daughters

perhaps acting as bearers while the father and sons hewed the coal. Colliers who had no families, or had small families, could obtain the service of an orphan child for the cost of food and clothing.[51] The practice of employing women and children in the mines greatly worried the early Victorian social reformers. It was, however, evident that attempts to regulate the employment of women and children in the mines would have a considerable effect on the collier's economic position. This is well illustrated by a case which occurred in Stirlingshire after legislation was passed which excluded women from underground work. Joseph Dawson, the manager of the Carron Company's pits, told the 1844 Royal Commission how women had been in the pit without his knowledge:

> Three of them were down last Monday,...two of them were daughters of an old man who could do little himself.[52]

Thomas Tancred reporting to the Children's Employment Commission in 1842 was well aware that changes in the position of women and children would have a marked effect on the customary rights and practices of the colliers, particularly the traditional apprenticeship system and the measurement of the "darg":

> The rules very general amongst the colliers for stinting or limiting each others earnings have an effect on promoting younger children than would

> otherwise be taken below ground. If, however, a man has children they can draw this coal for him, and enable him to get through his "darg" in a shorter time, and with less labour than if he had to draw them himself.[53]

Although condemning the practice of child labour in the mines, the coal owners claimed that the independent nature of the collier's work prevented them from interfering with the practice. John Blyth, the mining overseer at Edgehead Colliery, told the Children's Employment Commission:

> I have been underground overseer in these mines eight years, and have witnessed with regret the early ages colliers take their children below ground. The masters have no control over the colliers; or rather they never interfere with the customs of the colliers themselves.[54]

Nineteenth century Reform legislation, whatever its motives, clearly constituted a threat to the work custom and traditions of the Scots collier. Changes in the employment of women and children were however only one part of a series of widespread and fundamental changes which affected the position of the nineteenth century colliers. The intense and widespread development of the industry placed considerable pressure on the culture as well as the social and

economic position of the Scots colliers. Their craft status became undermined by the large amounts of unskilled labour which were drafted in to facilitate the massive expansion of the industry from around the mid-nineteenth century. The Scots collier's position also suffered, with the collier's position changing from that of independent contractor, to that of wage worker. In such a position craft standards were severely affected, and consequently customary rights and practices were challenged. The attack on the independent position and craft status of the colliers posed a threat to the traditional apprenticeship system as well as the concepts of hours regarded as working hours, and what constituted a working week.

Perhaps the most concrete and noticeable example of the changes which took place in the collier's position was the influx of unskilled and non-indigenous labour into the coalfield. This influx of raw labour also created something of a paradox in social and cultural terms. Not least in the factors which created this paradox was the fact that a large proportion of the new colliers were Irish, and consequently came from a different social and cultural background from the indigenous Scots. Less noticeable, but perhaps more fundamentally significant, is the fact that the social and cultural paradox became interpreted through the terms of the Victorian values of respectability and non-respectability. The new entrant, unskilled, rough and thrown quickly into the harsh early industrial environment, living in a hastily built and grim colliery

village, was placed in contrast with the Scots miner. The Scots miner, perhaps living in his own home, literate, articulate, and having experienced a significant period of independence and relative prosperity, seemed to make an ideal model for a respectable working man. The Irish and others who settled in the new company towns became identified with what the Victorian middle class saw as the worst habits of the new industrial workers: drinking, gambling and generally living a wild and profligate existence. The differences could be seen within relatively short distances, and within communities which were almost adjacent. So as there developed "honourable men" in Larkhall, there also developed "degraded slaves" in Coatbridge.[55] The values which such terms express were perhaps as telling of the age which ascribed them as of those to whom they were directed, but nevertheless, they remained for many a reflection of some form of reality.

The divisions between the new entrant into the mining industry and the traditional Scots collier were however by no means purely abstract. A great deal of the objections to the influx of raw labour was based on purely practical reasons. Fred Reid sums up the Scots colliers' position at this time:

> ..the Scottish collier was behind his fellow in the best organised coalfields in England. In Scotland there really was no labour aristocracy among underground workers.

> The experienced hewer might be replaced at any time by some Irish farm labourer who knew nothing about coal getting...or by an unemployed workman who could take a cheap train-ride from Glasgow to find work in the pits.[56]

This is not to imply that unofficial conceptions of a labour aristocracy did not exist. However, by the time of the trade depression in the 1870s this, like many of the miner's other traditions, was under severe pressure. The conception of the miner as a skilled workman was by no means a reaction against the influx of raw labour into the industry. Peter Payne, writing of the early nineteenth century Govan collieries, concludes of mining in this period:

> The general impression given is one of technological simplicity in an industry in which skilled manpower and its organisation were all important. Coal getting was a craft, and having been bred to it a miner needed but few tools and a sensible manager and oversman to perform the task efficiently.[57]

Andrew Millar explains how the process of undermining the Scots colliers' craft position took place:

> ...it was doubtless very provoking for all who had thus served their time to see during the period of

> strikes, great numbers of above ground labourers taking their places in the pits and jump, as it were into ready made colliers. It has been said that it required years of practice ere the latter were able to accomplish the same work as though bred colliers. But the barrier was broken down; and now the calculations are that about three fourths of the mining population in the districts cannot trace their experience in the mines beyond a few years.[58]

The changes in the Scots collier's craft status, the attack upon his traditional rights and customs, and the creation of the social and cultural paradox, began in the west of Scotland (particularly, as Millar has reported, in Lanarkshire), and steadily moved east. The Glasgow Sentinel in August 1862 contrasted the mining areas of Clackmannanshire with those around Glasgow, and while noticing that the changes were cultural as well as economic, described the growing social and cultural paradox in the evaluative terms of the age. In Clackmannanshire the miners had a "monopoly...into which strangers rarely find entrance", whereas the Glasgow area had been "invaded by hordes of miserable Irishmen ready to enter upon the most dangerous work at the lowest of wages and through their competition the Scottish miners have become degraded and overbourne".[59]

The incursion into the collier's economic and cultural position due to the expansion of the industry was paralleled by industrial

society's general emphasis on work discipline. This of course affected the collier's traditional independent position with regard to days and hours worked. As the development of industrial society in Scotland was a much more rapid process than in England the consequent effect of industrial discipline on what has been called "the culture of the commonality" was greater and more traumatic.[60] As well as being a more rapid process the industrialisation of Scotland occurred significantly later than that of England. Henry Hamilton the Scottish economic historian concludes that although industrialisation in England was completed by 1850, industrialisation in the west of Scotland did not reach its peak until 1885.[61] Such rapid and fundamental change had a profound affect in human terms. This has led one prominent British historian to conclude:

> The mid-Victorian growth industries had a tradition of harshness and compulsion (until 1799 Scots miners were actually serfs), and recruited labour from the unorganised and helpless, and especially from Irish and Highland immigrants used neither to a decent income nor urban industrial life....But in the years from the 1830's to the 1880's there was little to fill the lives of Scotsmen except work and drink. Even labour organisation remained feebler and less stable than in England. If the mid-Victorian years were a gloomy age in the social life of the English poor, they were a black one in Scotland.[62]

Against this background the colliers, both the raw recruits and those bred into the industry, were to be developed into a disciplined industrial workforce.

As we have stated the colliers, even in the period of serfdom, were in many ways in a similar position to the peasantry and other pre-industrial workers with regard to their relatively independent position. In such a situation there was little demarcation between life and work. As the family in many cases was the unit of production, coal-getting may have been alternated with other tasks. However, when the question of actual wage labour arises, even at its most fundamental level, the position changes to that whereby labour is bought and sold in the same way as any other commodity. Hours spent at work therefore become the unit of measurements for that sale. Consequently a division arises between work time and leisure time: between work and life. Time itself is therefore measured in economic terms, and this gives rise to the management and the economy of time and the whole host of cultural changes which this requires.

For the early collier the division between life and work was difficult to discern. The evidence given from Thomas Stewart's life is clear indication of such a work pattern.[63] A day may well have been divided between agricultural work and fishing or mining. Having some money to spend might mean the difference between working and not working. The position was not dissimilar to that of many

wage workers in present day non-industrial societies. Such attitudes toward work are difficult to comprehend by those schooled in industrial discipline. The American managers of Mexican miners, for example, could not understand the Mexican workers' inability to save, absences while celebrating fiestas, and willingness to work only two or three days per week if that paid for necessities and enough alcohol. As Bernstein points out:

> Few employers could understand that a penniless peon, with a heritage of personal and economic oppression on the hacienda could not rise to the level of discipline expected of European or American workmen.[64]

Similar examples can be found in other western countries during the process of industrialisation. Herbert G. Gutman has described the difficulties which many immigrants to the United States who came from peasant countries found in adapting to work discipline. Orthodox Jewish immigrants could for example hold a feast lasting eight days after the birth of a son, and a Polish wedding could last between three and five days. Gutman concludes that such customs "were eventually altered, sometimes brutally" in order to enforce work discipline.[65]

In Britain the nineteenth century entrepreneur faced similar difficulties in developing and training a labour force. Consequently the need to alter pre-industrial custom and belief, and indeed, the whole pattern of life, was paramount. Entrepreneurs in the nineteenth

century could not understand why weavers or miners could absent themselves from work on Monday and Tuesday and work desperately the rest of the week to pay off tavern bills. Josiah Wedgewood had to destroy systematically the old traditions of the Potteries to make this famous pottery efficient.[66] Many early industrial concerns like the Crowly Iron Works had their own civil and penal code to induce discipline as early as 1700, and the Rev. J. Clayton's Friendly Advice to the Poor in 1755 urged them to drive out old customs which impeded work discipline.[67] There was also a failure on the part of early owners and managers to understand why the labour force was impervious to monetary incentives, and reluctant to accept the values of self-help:

> The poor know little of the motives which stimulate the higher ranks to action - pride, honour, and ambition. In general it is only hunger which can spur and goad them into labour.[68]

The initial difficulties in making pre-industrial workers accept the values of capital accumulation and self-help may to some extent relate to a reluctance on their behalf to commit themselves wholly to the position of wage worker. To become wage workers meant that they would have had to give up a large degree of control over their lives to a system they neither understood nor accepted. Such control as the individual could exercise on his own situation is not only to be seen in the reluctance to become wage workers and accept the values

of self-help or capital accumulation, or to submit to a more structured and disciplined work pattern. The wish to exercise control over one's own situation is a fundamental part of any belief system, and therefore extends to more intrinsic areas of life. At this more intrinsic level such control over the life situation is often manifested in what industrial society in its deterministic and "progress minded" way has called superstition. The early miner's belief in mine spirits (Uncle Hairey), in the omens and "friets" which made him turn home instead of tempting fate, may be seen in this light. The decision to turn home gave the individual control over his own situation: turning from home, or attending work was justified by the logic involved and in the outcome. Pressure to ignore such beliefs and to attend work on a regular basis, like the reliance on a wage system, diminished the individual's control over his own situation.

Having some control over one's own situation was also at the root of the miners' belief that holding down output increased wages. This worked well in the localised economy, where the direct effect of lower levels of supply could be seen on prices. However, as the nineteenth century developed and the market became less localised the effect of limiting supply became less easy to determine. The situation is similar to the more intrinsic aspects of the belief system in that in both cases control over the miner's situation was being taken out of his own hands. Looked at in such a way it is

not being overly economically deterministic to suggest that the changes in custom, belief, and oral culture in general, which took place over the period of industrialisation, had a direct link to the economic changes.

Looked at in this way the link between the changes in the economic system and changes in the belief system may explain the Scots miner's reliance on limitation of the "darg". One could in this case see the limitation of the "darg" as being rooted in the pre-industrial belief that any commodity, including wealth, is a finite resource. It may also be the case that the belief that wealth is a finite resource is at the root of the hungers and bursts and the improvidence which many observers have noticed among miners. There was a certain cultural gap between the early miners' trade union leaders who accepted the self help ethic, and had difficulty understanding the rank and file miners' attitude to the accumulation of wealth. Keir Hardie, himself a temperance advocate, found difficulty understanding the improvidence of many miners, and Alexander MacDonald frequently blamed miners for much of their poverty, and criticised them for dog-fighting, drinking and gambling.[69] The criticism of these aspects of the miners' culture did not exist solely within the mining community. One writer to the English Review as late as 1900 condemned the miners' improvidence and the "long tradition" by which "the miner considers himself entitled to take a day off when he wants". The writer also noted that "the

higher the wages he gets the more prone he is to absent himself from work".[70] In 1956 Dennis and his colleagues noticed in their study of a Yorkshire mining community that there were "men who hardly think of going to work if they happen to have thirty shillings in their pockets on Monday morning", indicating that such attitudes toward accumulation of wealth did not die overnight.[71] It may well be the case that such attitudes relate to the receipt of an irregular income, which would certainly apply to miners from the late nineteenth century and particularly in the nineteen thirties. With reference to a similar attitude toward working class gambling in Britain, McKibbin has argued that the "live for today" mentality relates to the conception of the future which the society holds. Working class gambling in this sense exists "in an environment where time was encapsulated, causation muddled, and the future looked after itself."[72] This theory need not be incompatible with a strong oral tradition since the tradition is necessarily a selective process. More directly applicable to oral culture among miners as a whole however (particularly when we consider the tradition of working a shorter week as well as the attitide toward the accumulation of wealth) is George Foster's theory that in close knit communities the accumulation of wealth may threaten social stability. Foster explains how such attitudes toward wealth in peasant communities are related to fundamental beliefs in the finite nature of resources. Wealth, like luck, is something which pre-industrial societies believe cannot be acquired by hard work or thrift. The accumulation of any finite

resource, including such abstract resources as good or evil, is seen as a direct threat to the equilibrium of the community. With regard to wealth Foster explains:

> Capital accumulation, which might be stimulated if costly ritual could be simplified, is just what the villager wants to prevent, since he sees it as a community threat rather than a pre-condition of economic improvement.[73]

While Foster's theory would have a more direct relevance to miners in the pre-industrial period, particularly when we consider the strong links with the peasantry, the tradition of absenteeism and the "live for today" attitude have nevertheless been observed by nearly all commentators on mining communities up to the present. It may also be worth noting how Dennis and his colleagues found a large degree of internal social control in the community which they studied, indicating, at least in this instance, that if Foster's theory were applicable to industrial society, the machinery was there for its application.[74]

Within the nineteenth century coal industry, however, it was necessary that the rhythms of peasant society, with its feast days and irregular working patterns, its fatalistic attitudes toward life, and the impeding factors in the belief system which limited capital accumulation and discouraged self-help, be completely altered.

As Edward Thompson has put it, the argument of one system of life being better than the other is not the important point. It is more important to point out that the change in the economic system required an exploitation of labour; and the resistance to the management of time, the accumulation of capital, or the acceptance of self-help among working people, must be seen as linked to the resistance to economic exploitation. Discussions as to which cultural values stood to be lost and gained must inevitably be seen within this context.

The changes when they occurred were neither total nor immediate. The history of mining folklore, or any other folklore for that matter, is that of a constantly changing process. The older collective rhythms were constantly breaking through the new economic morality and challenging the discipline of the work ethic. The evidence for this is in the way the folklore, and particularly the belief and custom, adapted to the industrial age. The maintenance of the psychic satisfaction derived from the rhythms of pre-industrial society: many of the old ways remained as they functioned to resolve newer conflicts, and newer ways served to resolve older conflicts. The process in itself was essentially dialectic.

The rapidity of the industrial change in Scotland meant that the assault on the "culture of commonality" was much harsher than in areas of England. The "vigorous and licenced popular culture" which developed in England, and which dismayed the propagandists of the industrial ethic, had a shorter period in which to flourish in Scotland

than it did in England. The cultural catharsis when it came in Scotland was, however, rapid, and had a demoralising effect. The changes in attitude required to ensure the development of a disciplined industrial workforce were wide ranging. These changes became linked inexorably to the values of the Victorian bourgeoisie, and were consequently described in qualitative terms as they related to "negative" and "positive" qualities within each individual. The all-encompassing term "character" was easily understood by the Victorians as marking the worth of the individual in relationship to the values of the society. The dominant economic group decided qualitatively what social and cultural standards were acceptable. Underlying the decisions on what constituted the correct form of social and cultural behaviour was the attitude toward the prevalent economic order and its outward manifestations particularly the work ethic. Turning up for work on time and attending regularly, were therefore, not distinct from such things as swearing, drinking, or cleanliness. The attitude of the individual to all these things in turn determined his worth in society: his "character".

Robert Bald, the great mining engineer, saw the link between economic and cultural values as early as 1832. After an outbreak of cholera in the mines he managed in Alloa he issued a pamphlet titled "Order and Cleanliness" which he had distributed to his workforce. Bald's concern with cleanliness, however, went beyond the immediate and understandable concern with health and disease,

and linked cleanliness to the notions of good "character" and "morality". Bald complained of the excessive drunkenness, particularly at funerals; his pamphlet makes his broader concern obvious:

> I now have to state that many of you, in place of turning to the paths of Righteousness under such awful Desolation and Judgements, have been Drunk from the using of Whisky in immoderate quantities, and what makes it worse, particularly at Dregies, after depositing the body of a Friend and Relation in an all devouring Grave.

The result of Bald's protestations was an attack on the collier's traditional rights and customs:

> We, therefore, from what has been stated, Forbid from this day forward your having any more Dregies after Funerals, as this custom is most unnecessary, very expensive and certainly very sinful in the way they have been conducted.

Bald went a stage further by suggesting certain "improvements" in the collier's habits and behaviour:

> We have ordered a supply of good and moderately priced wine to be kept in the Colliery Change Houses, so that on

> mournful occasions your friends can have a refreshment and avoid the very bad effects of immoderate drinking of whisky.

Bald was also concerned with the time spent on such celebrations, for some of his workmen "continued to drink whisky immoderately for two weeks".[75]

Such attempts to alter the customs and habits of the colliers were, however, often resisted by direct action. After a prayer meeting at which Bald preached the evils of drink, and suggested that colliers admonish those who committed crimes such as drunkenness, the colliers stayed away from work and output fell. The landowner, the Earl of Mar, complained to Bald, and it was decided that Bald would thereafter lease the colliery from Mar and run it on his own behalf. This constituted a case of the replacement of the old landed interest by one of the new industrial professionals, and heralded the birth of the Clackmannan Coal Company. The Clackmannan Coal Company later indicated other aspects of the new industrial morality by stating that colliers in their houses should be prohibited from keeping dogs, and any workman convicted of poaching was to be dismissed.[76]

The pre-occupation of the coal owners with drunkenness worked its way into contracts of employment. Colliers who entered the Shotts Iron Company's pits had to agree not to accept "drinking entry money or entering into combinations, or administering oaths to fellow

workmen".[77] The collier's predilection for alcohol was however linked to a whole network of customs. The wedding ceremony and the traditional days for celebration have already been discussed. There was, however, a more direct link between the colliers' work customs and alcohol. The colliers' "brothering" ceremonies were among a number of customs where alcohol formed an intrinsic part of the ceremony. John Dunlop, the Scottish temperance reformer, recorded the frequent interruption of the collier's routine for the consumption of alcohol:

> At the boring for coal as soon as a workable seam is obtained, the master bestows a gallon or two of whisky to which the workmen contribute largely. In sinking, as soon as the first coal is turned out, the dose is repeated and as all the colliers cannot get to work at once, each one has or pays his quota of drink as he enters.

From Dunlop's evidence it appears that the consumption of alcohol was linked to most tasks involved in the mining of coal:

> Whenever a room has been cut, for every pickman the overseer assigns a room to each man, when another drink is resorted to. When there is no more supervenes than can be mastered by the engines in one day's working in the week, that day is occupied in drawing water, and

> requires a dram; this is supplied by some tavern-keeper and is paid in coals. When a screen is required to be put up, this makes a day's drinking.... At new-year's day the master again bestows a bonus of liquid fire.[78]

The payment of wages on a Saturday night was usually in a public house and a recognised amount was set aside for drinking, this money, termed "usage money" frequently went beyond the amount stated.

The consumption of alcohol was perhaps more of a problem among Scottish miners than their English counterparts. This was partly due to tradition itself; however, the Malt Tax after the Union of Parliaments in 1707 meant that Scots working people were used to spirit drinking in a way in which their English counterparts were not. Miners in Staffordshire, for example, were given a beer ration when working in hot conditions, and this practice continued up until at least 1908.[79] Consumption of spirits among the Scots on the other hand greatly worried manufacturers and early social reformers. Robert Owen, often seen as the greatest of the early enlightened industrialists, made drunkenness the only crime for which dismissal operated in his cotton mill at New Lanark. Although obviously constituting a danger in a mine or any workplace, the reformers, preoccupation with workers' consumption of alcohol went beyond a feeling of direct concern with welfare. As Sidney Pollard points

out, the employer's interest in temperance, swearing, and what was generally called "morality" related to the perception of the individual's "character":

> This preoccupation...might seem to today's observer to be both impertinent and irrelevant to the worker's performance, but in fact it was critical. The worker's own ethics were such that he was not normally susceptible to the kind of inducements which his employers could provide within the new work conditions. Ambitions to rise above his own idea of "subsistence" income by dint of hard work were foreign to him. He had to be made ambitious and "respectable" either by costly provisions of material goods, like the famous gardening plots for miners...or by cheaper means of changing his attitude often falsely called his "character".[80]

Many coal owners like the mighty Bairds of Gartsherrie relied on the church, and in particular the Calvinistic influence of the Church of Scotland, to aid the development of respectable miners. They endowed churches, and allowed ministers to stay in company owned property. The Bairds also built company schools, which were founded by compulsory deductions from the colliers' and ironworkers' pay. It was stated by Alexander MacDonald that although they maintained the schools they had no say in the content of the education. As Alan B. Campbell has pointed out, however, whether or not they

had a say in the content of the education, the format was one which was aimed directly at teaching the values of self-help, industry, and respectability.[81] Robert Colls, in a study of the content of education provided by owners for miners in the North East of England, found a direct link between education and the "struggle for cultural hegemony which owners and others had waged with pitmen for nearly thirty years". The object of providing the education was, as Colls sees it, to ensure work discipline, political passivity, and social order; and the songs which the children sang appear certainly to lead in this direction, with titles like "Work hard and help yourselves", and "Oh Happy English Children". For one Northumberland minister the changes were noticeable as early as 1840, with a reduction in the "gross" features of popular culture:

> Within the last thirty years the pitmen, as a body, are doubtless greatly improved. They are more orderly, less drunken, less given to cock fighting, and other demoralising amusements. During the disturbances attendant upon strikes I believe no instance occurred of injury being done to machinery.[82]

There is no reason to doubt that the motives of the employers in Scotland were not the same as those which Colls describes in Northumberland.

Although education remained highly significant in the long-term

development of a disciplined workforce, the inducements upon the colliers to abandon their traditional rights and customs could be more directly asserted through housing and employment. the Shotts Iron Company for example, as well as firing colliers for accepting traditional drinking entry money, also made it clear that time off for weddings and funerals was not guaranteed, and strict rules were drawn up with regard to time-keeping and the cleanliness of company housing.[83] The Clackmannan Coal Company, who acquired the lease on coals at East and Wester Seardale in 1878, stated in the lease that colliers were to be prohibited from keeping dogs and dismissed if convicted of poaching.[84] The envisaged conception of "character" was, however, arbitrary, and while gardening plots were "respectable" keeping dogs or pigs were not. As late as 1911 the medical officer for Stirlingshire urged colliery firms to encourage gardening plots, "and so discourage more objectionable methods of spending leisure time".[85]

These changes, although constituting an attack on the colliers' quasi-peasant social position, and traditional practices such as poaching, and wedding and funeral customs, also had an effect on the more innocuous aspects of the colliers' culture. The Scottish miner's traditional pastime of "hainchin the bool", or "bullet playing", was restricted from around 1860. Hainchin required the players to cover a certain distance, perhaps a mile in and a mile out from the village, with a number of throws of the "bool". The man who covered the distance in the shortest number of throws

was the winner. The "bool", or "bullet", was a polished ball of hard whinstone, and weighed from ten to fourteen ounces. The player took the "bool" in his hand, and running to a line drawn on the roadway, swung his arm and threw it. We are told that a good player could cover a mile in five or six throws.[86] "Hainchin" was made illegal in 1861, although Robert Haddow reports it as still being played around 1888. The Airdrie Advertiser on the 1st of June 1861 reported that a brusher (a roadsman in the pit) and a spirit dealer were fined for contravention of the Highway Act by "Hainchin the bool" on a public road.[87] The picture appears to have been similar with regard to cock fighting. However, David Rorie, a folklorist working among Fife miners at the beginning of the century, reported that in 1914, "many game cocks are bred and matches held on the quiet".[88]

The legal suppression of such pastimes may seem a minor feature in the overall development of "character"—and "respectability" among the miners. Consequently it is difficult to view such changes as an organised and controlled effort to effect change. Indeed the length of time over which "respectability" and work discipline were introduced meant that the traditional values often interacted with those which emanated from the new ethic. Similarly it would be wrong to assume an overly direct link between the dynamic of economic life and the dynamic of cultural life. Nevertheless, the changes in both areas did not appear in isolation, but formed part of an

overall historical process. Some changes, such as those which excluded children from the degrading underground work, or relieved women from the drudgery of drawing coal, and the attempts to control the brutalising effects of alcohol abuse, appear to today's observer as undoubted improvements. Yet they were part of a whole series of changes which profoundly altered the traditional pattern of life among working people. Particularly in Scotland, with the strictures of Calvinism, and the linguistic superiority of English, which created a negative feeling for native Scots speech, these changes created an ambivalent attitude among working people toward their own culture. The changes which took place in the "culture of commonality" were therefore to create a docile and pacific working class, which accepted the qualitative superiority of the middle class values of work discipline and self-help.

Such changes in attitude did not occur overnight, but covered two, perhaps three, centuries. Traditional customs, beliefs and values were amazingly resilient against the sustained push to what Antonio Gramsci has called "bourgeois hegemony".[89] The change was never total, and never occurred in any mechanical fashion, for older collective ways continually challenged the newer economic philosophy. There is a distinct pattern of adaptation of the customs and beliefs which existed among the "lower orders" of the industrial era, to those which existed among the "lower orders" of class. Andrew Miller, describing Coatbridge miners in 1864,

understood the situation and the difficulties involved in such profound cultural change. Millar, perhaps unwittingly, gives us a remarkable insight into the views of the nineteenth century middle-class when faced with an inchoate working-class culture. After recording with delight the customary practices of the early miners, Millar exhibits a cultural superiority which must have lain at the base of many nineteenth century social studies:

> To eradicate their deep rooted prejudices and superstitious notions required time, education and moral training, and example. There were obstacles in the way of attaining this state of affairs, and they remained for a long time as before....[90]

Old habits and customs took on a new form which put them in direct opposition to capitalist values. Things like irregular work habits remained for a long time in the mining industry. What Peter Payne, writing on the nineteenth century colliers, has described as "the weekly revolt against the new discipline", developed as the century progressed. Lynn Davies, writing on the folklore of the Welsh miners, noticed how this "weekly revolt" in the nineteen thirties not only took on artistic and symbolic qualities, but also constituted a collective response:

> ...a group of workmen [would] nominate one from among them to throw his cap into a nearby tree on

> the pit-head; if it stuck in the branches they would proceed to the mine, but if it fell to the ground they would return home. Needless to say, the person appointed as thrower would often make little effort to ensure the cap remained in the tree.[91]

Jill Goldy in a similar study among miners in Fife, noted a variant which is common throughout the Scottish coalfield, where a stone or a brick is thrown in the air with the comment: "If it comes doon we'll be idle, if it doesn't we'll go tae work". E.P. Thompson has noted a similar practice among miners in Yorkshire involving throwing a penny in the air.[92] Lynn Davies noted another example of this collective response to work discipline where the miners managed to reach a consensus on taking a traditional Fair Day holiday:

> ...on a local fair day, the conversation en route for the railway station (from where the workmen's train departed), would be mainly concerned with the fair and the desire to be there. However, nobody would actually commit himself verbally to saying (and thus be guilty of influencing others to do likewise) that he was not going to the mine but to the fair instead: rather one person would suddenly remove the cork from his "jock", which contained his liquid refreshment for the day, and tip out the contents. Whereupon the action would instantly be repeated by the remainder of the company, and all would return home.[93]

Perhaps bearing out Herbert Gutman's theory, a similar example of miners pouring out their liquid refreshment as a symbolic gesture before walking away from work collectively has been found in the United States.[94] We will return to the more modern manifestations of the miners' collective response to work discipline in a later chapter. However, there are a number of examples of this type of response to the work ethic from the fieldwork done for this study. Such actions obviously indicate the strength with which work discipline holds the modern industrial worker; in mining, however, it required a collective rather than an individual appraoch to taking the day off.

The development of industrial discipline, as well as requiring a collective response, also created much that is paradoxical in working class culture. Many working people accepted the image of "character" and "respectability" as it was defined for them, while at the same time maintaining a strong class identity. Such ambiguities were more accentuated in Scotland where the speed and severity of industrial change were added to the tensions of nationalistic feeling and cultural insecurity. The outward manifestations of the cultural tensions can be seen in the problems many working class people have in the use of "correct" English. As English was the language of the classroom rather than the street, and was therefore deemed the correct speech for serious or "polite" conversation, this created further problems for those who accepted any notion of social advancement or "respectability". The

"psychic crisis" which many working people experienced through an identification with the values of "respectability", was of course not peculiar to Scotland or to the Scottish miners. As Thompson points out, many English working people experienced similar feelings.[95] Within Scotland, however, the particular cultural tensions made the demarcation lines more distinct and more difficult to cross. The restrictive nature of Scottish working class society, with its strong need for social conformity, was not wholly the product of rapid industrialisation or class society; the economic and social factors merely accentuated existing cultural paradoxes. If twentieth century novelists like Lewis Grassic Gibbon suffered from the narrow, socially restrictive, class-bound society with its reductive linguistic idioms, which always "kent his faither", and kept the individual in his "place", then the problems must have been manifest in a nineteenth century working man who aspired to "respectability".[96] Within Scottish mining society the problems created by the reduction in independent craft status, the influx of the new raw labour, and the push toward the development of "respectability" and the concern with working class "character", must be seen against this particular cultural background.

The ambivalence which the rise of class society created among working people can be seen clearly in the character of many of the miners' leaders. Alexander MacDonald led the miners with the spirit of independent collierism which almost wished away the changes

which took place in the industry. The changes which undermined the independent collier's position could in MacDonald's terms be at least partly blamed on the miners themselves and their lack of willingness to accept the values of thrift, sobriety, and self-help. Of those who followed MacDonald, Keir Hardie, although accepting a Socialist philosophy, remained firmly a believer in temperance and self-help as a panacea for the problems of working people.

There were also a number of factors peculiar to Scotland which have aided the belief in temperance, and self-help, which was accepted by MacDonald, Hardie and others. The myth of the "democratic intellect", which had its roots in the early Scottish education system, and the Calvinistic tradition of intellectual debate, played a large part in the emergence of the image of a sober articulate working man. The Calvinistic tradition of independence in both social terms, as well as in communication with God, must also take some of the credit for the belief in self-help among certain sections of the Scottish working class. The austerity of the Scottish poor law, and the amounts of money spent on relief compared with England, indicate how individualism worked in practice.[97]

The anonymous writer in the Travellers Library in 1856 certainly linked the "democratic intellect" with the acceptance of "respectability" among the Scottish miners. The writer stressed the differences between the Scots and the English miners:

> When you enter some of the Scots collier's houses you are not prepared for the choice of books you often find there. Many of them read such books as Adam Smith's "Wealth of Nations" and are fond of discussing the subjects he treats of. They also read the lives of statesmen and books of history...such men can be reasoned with about anything belonging to their calling and they very well know why wages cannot at particular times be higher than a certain standard. They see at once, by the price current in the market what is the fair portion to go to the workmen in wages ...such men will have nothing to do with the Union.... The reason that the Union is so strong in some parts of Scotland, as in Lanarkshire, is because in the latter place the pitmen are one third Irish, and others are the worst of the Scotch from other counties.[98]

If the writer's stress on the extent to which the tenets of classical economics influenced their understanding of wage rates is a little speculative, his general points are nevertheless enlightening. The articulate Scots miners whom the "traveller" describes obviously have their roots in the same independent tradition which flourished in the coalfield before the eighteen seventies. Alexander MacDonald, for example, had attended Glasgow University for a time, giving some tangible reality to the "democratic intellect" theory, and it

was through men like MacDonald that the collier's independent position was translated into defence of his craft position and economic status.

The acceptance of the image of "respectability" among sections of the working class, had its own social and cultural effects. These effects however must be seen within the context of working class society to be fully understood. As Edward Thompson points out with regard to a similar situation in England, the Methodist Church there, as well as creating sober respectable working men, also created a social structure which to some extent took over from the older community patterns which were being displaced by industrial society.[99] It was therefore not surprising that temperance and self-help were viewed by many as a genuine collective response to the disjunctive social forces which went with modern society. It would be wrong to view acceptance of the values of "character" and "respectability" as simply the acceptance of bourgeois values. The values of self-help and temperance although having direct links with economic individualism and social mobility, did nevertheless co-exist with a strong sense of class. From this point of view the skilled colliers, and the artisans who formed the backbone of mid-century British Trade Unionism, exhibited a good deal of what Antonio Gramsci has called "cultural autonomy".[100]

The complexity of the social gradations within Scottish mining in particular, and within the working class in general, became

particularly noticeable within the latter half of the nineteenth century. There were marked attempts to develop an image of the miner (or at least some sections of the mining population) as a paradigm of resepctable values. The Scottish collier, we are told was "sober", "steady", and "thrifty": and not infrequently owned his own house.[101] He read Adam Smith and Tolstoy, but not Marx; and accepted the philosophy behind the development of capitalism. The position as we have charted it, however, was perhaps more complex than this. Certainly the Scots colliers, at least before the eighteen seventies, clung to their independent artisan traditions. The position of the Scots independent collier indeed contrasted with that of the Irish and others of the "new breed" who entered the industry in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The Scot's belief in trade unionism as an answer to his economic position, for example, was said to be negative. Certainly trade union organisation in the west of Scotland toward the end of the century was, as Keir Hardie's experience testifids, relatively weak.[102] However, as Fred Reid points out, in the mining areas which grew over old weaving villages where a radical tradition existed, trade unionism found fertile soil.[103] Alan Campbell's comparative study of Coatbridge and Larkhall also reveals that the Scots miners did not entirely reject trade unionism.[104] There nevertheless developed a contrast between the image of the Scots colliers and that of the "new breed" such as the "half breed

Scottish Irishman", who we are told "seldom seeks to rise or get beyond where he is":

> He is clamorous indeed for big wages, and generally is a strong union man, whereas the Scotsman as a rule looks askance on unions and the men who manage and manipulate them.[105]

The contrast is an interesting one, for it indicates the belief among many middle-class writers that certain elements of the Scots independent traditions could be cultivated to produce a "respectable" alternative to purely politically oriented position. Kellog Durland, an American who worked among Fife miners, while doing a sociological study of their life, noted how political awareness was at a fundamental level. Durland found that although committed to the cooperative ethic, and having strong views with regard to wages, miners in Kelty were "lacking that feeling that it was the duty of labour to re-distribute the wealth of the world". Unlike working men in London who could "quote whole pages of Marx", to the Kelty miner "Karl Marx is but a name", and the Kelty miner's politics were "crude in the extreme and stated with dogmatic simplicity". Durland illustrates this point by quoting one of his workmates, in a passage remarkably like the speech as reported in Gibbon's novel Sunset Song:

> I'm no for it. Socialism says a' folk are equal, that everybody is as gude as avery other body. That's rediculus there's orra folk and folk that are no orra. Some men work hard and are deservin', but ye ken fine that some men lowse twa days a week reg'lar.[106]

We may speculate on the extent to which Durland found the type of working man he was looking for in Kelty: a steady, sober, right-thinking, non-political figure, and Durland himself often remarks how he admires the values of temperance.

Interestingly, however, the political conservatism and individualism which Durland discovered appears to have existed side by side with a strong sense of oral tradition. The language of Durland's informants appears to lend weight to this. However, Durland recalls sitting having his breakfast in the pit while one of the younger miners told the story of Margaret Erskine of Port March, "one of the lesser known legends of the district". Durland comments:

> It was a fascinating story as told in the simple homely language of the miner, and the men listened without interruption.[107]

Further evidence of the strength of oral tradition among miners in this period is indicated in the recollections of Hiram Sturdy concerning

his life in a Lanarkshire mining village.[108] Fred Reid, writing on Keir Hardie's political development, noted how Socialists like J. Bruce Glasier and William Stewart, stressed Hardie's "non-Marxist" Socialism founded on Burns, Carlyle, and "on the myths of Scottish history and folklore."[109] Certainly Robert Smillie, another miners' trade union leader, from a Protestant Irish background, had a strong sense of oral tradition:

> ...my education was not entirely neglected I used to sit for hours beside my grandmother when she was busy quilting....She could recite poetry too - especially ballads - and she would get me to repeat the verses after her until I knew them. In this way, for instance, I learned nearly the whole of Sir James the Rose, and other ballads she recited in the pure "Doric", for although she had never been in Scotland, she might to judge by her speech, have spent every moment of her life in Ayrshire or Lanarkshire.[110]

It may well be the case that it was the strength of oral tradition among the Scottish miners which led to what Durland saw as "crude" political ideas stated with "dogmatic simplicity". This position may also go some ways to explaining the question posed by one Scottish labour historian who asked why, although the Scottish

working class appear radical and militant, they have failed to produce political thinkers of any great significance.[111] There also seems to be a parallel between the Irish situation, where oral tradition plays a significant part in shaping political attitudes, and the Scots position. The strong sense of history among miners in general, and among the Scots in particular, would also appear to lend weight to this argument.

The strength of oral tradition among the Scottish colliers led to the evaluative contrasts which were made between the indigenous Scots miners and the late nineteenth century incomers. It was precisely at the period of greatest cultural tension in the industry that writers like Robert Haddow were discovering miners' games and pastimes which were by then dying. It is perhaps no accident that at the same time as discovering the Scots miners' quaintness, Haddow was making highly evaluative comments about the native miners being better than the Irish and the other incomers. Only twenty years before Haddow, Andrew Millar recording custom and belief among the Scots miners, made similar evaluative comments about the "old Scottish colliers", who in time gone by were termed the better class of workmen, but were now "a dying breed".[112] Such comments did not end in the nineteenth century, for David Rorie, collecting folklore among the Fife miners in the first decades of this century, regretted the "influx of a lower class of workmen" into the Fife coalfield, who were breaking down the old customs.[113] Such antiquarian

distinctions allowed these observers to abstract an image of the miner from history in order to praise what was gone while condemning what was seen in the present.

At times such images of mining society could be taken to the extreme, and at this level it is possible to see how the miners' industrial struggles in the present could be condemned while the past image of a proletarian archetype could be glorified. One contributor to the Spectator in 1920, who signed himself significantly "A Coal Company Director", was aware of how such abstractions could function. In the article the writer condemns the tactics of the Miners Federation to keep output down, and in particular Robert Smillie's call to "ca' canny". The writer saw this as an attempt to sap the heartiness and independence and "the former fine moral of the pitmen as a class". He went on to describe his own archetypal proletarian:

> Alert, well-built, clean shaven....he was a fine specimen of humanity....Another magnificent figure recurs to the minds eye of a burly veteran hewer, six feet high and in proportion, who could hew coal with the best young men. Though over sixty years of age he has several "follies" to get through and still has his "favoryts" among women kind. He could demolish a leg of mutton at a sitting and as for "gills" he would dispose of he would have delighted Rabelais.[114]

The "Director's" eagerness to describe his archetypal proletarian has some effect on his memory, for in a similar article in 1926 he increases the old miner's age by ten years.[115] The article, however, remains indicative of how the traditions of the independent collier could be interpreted to suit the purposes of certain writers. It is perhaps significant that the publication of the "Director's" second article was in the middle period of the miners' fiercest struggles to maintain their living standards and protect their industry.

The complex interplay of esoteric and exoteric factors in the miner's self-image meant that it was not as simple or as mechanical as the imposition of an image from above.[116] The image of the archetypal proletarian existed side by side with self-mockery. Robert Colls' detailed study of early Northumbrian mining songs illustrates this particularly well, and a recent study of self-mocking jokes and trickster tales among Fife miners illustrates how such feelings remained alive in more than one generic form.[117] The feeling of cultural communitas which can be gained from self-mockery is particularly applicable to mining. More specifically, the early North East of England music hall was famous for projecting the figure of the foolish working man, and many of the performers who did this were themselves miners. Projecting the feeling of being wise enough to comprehend the worst parts of one's own situation, and presenting this is in a self-mimicking fashion, was something which could only be fully understood at an esoteric level, and must

therefore have created an unspoken sense of community, which would defy an imposition of an outside image.

The archetypal proletarian image of the miner had perhaps its best reflection in the "Big Hewer" legends which Ewan MacColl and others collected in the British coalfield (although perhaps significantly not in Scotland) during the mid-fifties.[118] To some extent the "Big Hewer" tales reflected an admiration for "manly" manual occupations when society was creating less and less of this kind of work. Nevertheless, such legends as the Big Hewer did have some base in reality. Hewing matches and trials of strength did take place in mining. Edward Rhymer, an artículate, radical English miner, tells how in the eighteen fifties there was a hewing match every day in his area of the pit. It is, however, indicative of changing attitudes, even if we allow for Rhymer's radicalism, that such comptetitions were dying even in this early period. Rhymer tells us:

> This kind of thing which went on year after year among miners, broke down the strong man and kept down the score price in every district... In fact, it is only too true that the slavish ignorant and clumsy competition kept animal passions predominant over the better part of the miner's natures.[119]

There is no doubt that the early miners did take pride in their

work and competitions did take place. Miners at the Shotts Iron Company's pits, for example, took part in competitions to see who could bore the best hole to fire the explosives.[120] However, given the evidence of the early age at which Scots miners began to use output limitation as a means of keeping prices up, it is difficult to believe that hewing matches were ever very common. It is evident also from Rhymer's testament that the "advanced" sections of working people had enough grasp of their relationship with capitalist methods of production to understand the counter-productive nature of such competition. Many trades set output limits on their members, and in more modern studies it has been revealed how workers put unofficial checks on those workers who continually complete bonus targets.[121] Similarly the reaction of many Eastern European workers to "stakhanovite" competition (named after a pre-war Soviet hero of labour who had set a fashion for achieving astronomical personal production targets) was often violent. Andrzej Wajda's film Man of Marble illustrates how a "stakhanovite" bricklayer is handed a red hot brick to ruin his attempts to raise targets. Such actions against "stakhanovite" workers were often enshrined in oral culture. A folk rhyme records the fate of Janus Przboski a miner, who is supposed to have been battered to death by his workmates in a mine gallery after an epic feat of hewing. Similar rhymes have been recorded among miners in both the United States and in Britain.[122]

The "Big Hewer" legends nevertheless remained in oral tradition in the same way as the rhymes which condemn excessive feats of labour. The resilience of the "Big Hewer" in Britain must be seen in the light of the veneration of the physical effort and strength which can also be found in the occupational cultures of loggers, cowboys, and others in Canada and the United States. The image of the "Big Hewer" is, however, not greatly removed from the description of the miner given the "Coal Company Director" mentioned above. It may also be the case that interest in the more heroic aspects of working class life which revived in the fifties and sixties had a relationship to the general veneration of the hero-worker emanating from Easter Europe.

The pressures on the miners to conform to an image of respectability, and later to that of a proletarian archetype, had a significant effect on the miner's own self-image: Similarly the social and geographical position of mining communities between rural and urban society remained a significant influence on the oral culture. Above all the historical development of the industry over the period of industrialisation and the expansion of the industry altered fundamentally the traditions, customs and beliefs, of mining society. All these factors have had their own particular effect on the recent developments in oral culture among miners. Many of these factors will therefore be taken up in later chapters.

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CHAPTER III

THE DYNAMICS OF TRADITION

Throughout this study we have been dealing with an oral tradition which had its roots in a particular occupation. The premise on which much of our discussion has been based is that tradition, like history, is a process. In this chapter, therefore it is proposed to say something about the dynamics of this process. To do this effectively requires that we examine a number of factors relating to the concept of tradition itself, and more particularly to the concept of an occupation-based folk tradition.

The concept of tradition, although used frequently in the discipline of folkloristics, has by itself attracted little investigation. Barre Toelken has however recognised the selective process by which shared meaningful experience is transported historically through oral tradition. Toelken has isolated two elements within the traditional process which might roughly be described as the internal element and the catalystic element.[1] To understand tradition it is necessary to know how these elements work and how they interrelate. We need to know how and why any group makes a selection of material from the past which it transmits into the present and toward the future, and hence into the realm of tradition.

Because tradition looks at the present in terms of the past, and the future in terms of the present, it is considered a conservative process. However, the selective nature of tradition means that it can also be a creative process. The creative aspect of tradition is however bounded by

limits which define the nature of the range of the creativity and innovation, and allow for a sense of continuity. It is these two elements in tradition - the conservative and the innovative - which Toelken has observed, and which Jan Vansina calls the inner and outer structure of tradition. As Vansina points out, every testimony has an outer structure which may be formal or informal, and a fixed or a free text. However, there is also an internal structure which regulates the arrangement and the content. The two elements are influenced at a social as well as at a cultural level. The external structure corresponds to the values a society holds at any given point in time, and may therefore be influenced by what things are in vogue: what things are at that time considered important. There are, however, certain cultural concepts which are inherited with the testimony, and may therefore regulate its arrangement and content.[2]

Vansina explains why the more cultural or internal structure conforms to certain basic rules. The rules which govern the internal structure influence the external structure to the extent that they may have a bearing on the form, arrangement, and content. The interaction between the internal and external structures of any testimony, artifact, or text, constitutes the dynamic of the tradition. At the more intinsic cultural level historical perspective may be distorted to allow a testimony to conform. Time itself, and historical development, are in this sense defined culturally and

interact with the outer structure to create as well as continue tradition. In this sense the difference between what we might call literary history, and to borrow Buchan's phrase, history "by word of mouth," is that the latter is more often a recreation of reality (rather than purely informative) and in this way sets an example for other generations to follow.[3] Tradition is then both synchronic and diachronic: diachronic in the sense that the passing generation hands over its experience to its successors, and synchronic in so far as the achievements of individuals, or groups of individuals, are directly spread by actual human contact.[4]

A good example of the traditional dynamic in operation can be seen in Henry Glassie's study of the singer Dorrance Weir. Glassie explains that what appears to be a totally innovative form is in fact linked directly to a live oral tradition:

> ...the average singer is no more likely to re-structure a song completely than the average reader is to re-write chapters of a novel. This small degree of improvisation is very different from that which exists within an improvisational norm.[5]

In a later study Glassie takes the idea a stage further when he suggests that the traditional dynamic is at the very heart of folklore. In his study of the art of mumming in Ireland Glassie comments:

> Mumming is not a theoretical symbolic art like a medieval morality play, nor is it an empirical descriptive art like a play by Ibsen. It rises between these poles of Western thought, falsifying their purity, uniting them in mysterious imagery.[6]

Shils has suggested a similar concept in his study of the theoretical process which he calls the "consensual reception." Consensual reception unites the two elements within the traditional process, embracing past and present in one unit:

> ...sheer massive factuality present and past - has a penetrating impact on the behaviour of those who perceive it....The simple perception, or rather entry through imagination, into a massive performance touches something deep in the human mind.[7]

What both Glassie and Shils appear to be saying here is that the dynamic process of tradition creates its own meaning within each society; a meaning which can only be partially understood through the critical vocabulary generally applied to western art forms. Glassie suggests that folkloristics have an important role to play in the understanding of such meanings:

> ...folklore's tensile strength comes from bridging the academic boundary which separates the rigorous but sometimes trivial sciences from the profound but often vague humanities.[8]

The restrictions imposed by the academic boundaries which Glassie describes were themselves products of the process of the development of modern industrial society, and relate directly to the division of labour. The process by which tradition develops has, however, survived the uniformity and categorisation of these artificial divisions. Like the making of a quilt or barn, as Toelken points out, the understanding of the process goes beyond the product, the object, text, or testimony, the "mere thingness," to reflect a more socially integrated holistic age. It is for this reason that techniques which have been developed to interpret "sophisticated" art make little sense when applied to folk art. Similarly, in interpreting oral history we are faced with the problem that the testimony may contain an internal structure which may have little to do with our conceptions of historical truth or the nature of historical development.

The restrictions which certain academic disciplines sometimes impose often lead to a misunderstanding of the most basic of concepts. The concept of time within different societies may for example vary depending on the particular culture. Time within oral societies, as Vansina has pointed out, is not measured by mathematical physics, but based on ecological or sociological data; it may be related to

nature, or based on a recurrent social feature. Given a different basis for interpreting time, and although history may appear to have followed a certain pattern, there need not be any attempt to develop a notion of causality, and consequently no notion of what we know as progress.[9]

The critical vocabulary of the student of literature or history is therefore inadequate when faced with the dynamic of folk tradition. In dealing with an oral account of a historical incident the historian checks the account against evidence, or attempts to take account of the individual bias of the informant. This by itself, however, may ignore important cultural factors present within the testimony. The concept of time or historical progress may vary between the culture of the informant and that of the student. The order which governs the presentation of the text may under such circumstances go uninvestigated. It is however, this basic desire for some form of order which has in fact created the text or evidence. The meaning of the oral testimony may be misinterpreted by the student, and fundamental questions may remain unanswered.

Studying and understanding the oral process has as much to do with modern industrial society as it has to do with peasant or more traditional societies. Industrial society developed its own particular oral traditions. As we stated in an earlier chapter with regard to the development of tradition in an industrial society, it was never simply a matter of the replacement of one set of values by another. As Weintraub

has pointed out:

> Traditions are not to be viewed as intervening factors between a society and a given set of new goals, but as the prime determinants of these goals.[10]

Tradition within an industrial society is as much a process as it is within a peasant society. There was a constant interaction throughout the development of industrial society between the old pre-industrial culture and the new economic order. Older collective rhythms constantly challenged the new economic and industrial order. Social order cannot ever be totally imposed on individuals; the process is to a large extent a negotiated one. In this sense the modern British working class developed their traditions from peasant culture. The nature of the historical process meant that the acceptance of the new industrial order took two or more centuries. It may well be the case, given the nature of British class society, with its divisions marked clearly by such things as accent and speech, that the working class only accepted as much of the values of the new economic order as they needed in order to survive. The British working class may therefore have only partially accepted the culture of capitalist industrial society. Given this point, the ambivalence displayed by many working people towards the work ethic, or toward the accumulation of wealth, can perhaps be better understood.

The process of tradition is, then, essentially dialectic. There

is constant interaction between the inner and outer structure, the conservative and the innovative, the traditional and the modern. This process does not work because of a consensual acceptance by the whole society which reduces the probability of imagining any possible alternatives. Tradition within any group or society functions because it requires a perception of a quality in other men's minds, a quality which perceives beyond the assumed givens such as language. Tradition, we have suggested, contrary to popular belief, is not an intervening factor between a society and a given set of new goals, but in fact sets the determinants of the new goals. It is the perception of these prime determinants - or what we have called the inner structure of tradition - which Shils seems to suggest constitutes a quality in men's minds which allows understanding to go beyond the assumed givens such as language.[11] It is at this fundamental level of understanding that Glassie seems to suggest mumming is best understood, communicating through the properties of action and the ideas in the minds of the performers and audience, and consequently emerging between the "concrete and the abstract closes."[12] Understanding such concepts means going beyond the object of attention to embrace the whole of the culture concerned.

The interpretation of the meaning created by such activities as mumming, singing, quilting, or storytelling, and their perception within other men's minds, is essentially an intellectual activity. However, the perception of intellectual activity in western society is

not generally seen as being applicable to what are often described as "primitive" art forms. Such activities as we consider "folk" are viewed as requiring no intellectual powers in order for them to be created or understood. Indeed, they are described as simple, naive or crude. The Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci has suggested that the definition of intellectual activity which allows for folk art to be seen in such terms is in fact misplaced. Gramsci argues that the emergence of class society abstracted intellectual activity:

> ...he is a "philosopher" an artist, a man of taste, he participates in a particular conception of the world, has a consensus line of moral conducts and therefore contributes to sustain a conception of the world or to modify it, that is, to bring into being new modes of thought.[13]

Gramsci argues that during the development of industrial society the emergent bourgeoisie of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had to conquer ideologically the traditional intellectuals in order to maintain a hold on the legitimacy of ideas. With the development of the division of labour in the manufacturing process there followed a division of opinion on what constituted intellectual activity. Consequently there developed a distinct group within society which acted as the brokers for what was considered legitimate intellectual activity. Although all men are potentially intellectual in the sense of having and using intellect, only a few were

considered intellectual by social function. Intellectual activity defined thus became intrinsically linked to the development of bourgeois society. As the concept of man's social development was being defined by the philosophers of the European Enlightment, influenced by the causality of Newtonian physics, and defined within a concept of progression from "rudeness" to "sophistication" epitomised by the differences between European man and the savages of the New World, so the values of bourgeois society became reflected against Europe's indigenous savages. Accepted intellectual activity was reflected against the coarseness, cruelty, and barbarity of the "lower orders".

To state the fact that there were in fact elements of barbarity in the life of peasants or early industrial workers perhaps misses the point, and tends anyway to read history backwards. What remains significant for our purposes is that the elements of tradition which the early working class carried with them from their peasant background became defined in the same terms as the New World savages. In this sense there could be little difference between the cruelty involved in cock fighting or the "naive" but quaint values expressed in a song. Within the conception of man's social progress both were considered crude, backward, or simple.

As urban society developed within the concept of progress, so the gulf between the simplicity of country life and the sophistication of the city became more acute.[14] Within some analysis of Marx's writings the

emphasis on the idea that industrial society saved the working class from rural idiocy illustrates the pervasive nature of such philosophy.

For those who doubt the reality of the way the division between accepted values and "backward" cultures manifested itself, there exists a wealth of evidence some of which has been cited in previous chapters. However, Robert Chambers, himself a folklorist, noticed the particular culture/class divide which manifested itself as class divisions took a concrete form in the building of the New Town of Edinburgh. As Chambers points out, previous to the building of the New Town, Edinburgh was a cramped but socially integrated city where the dwellers, irrespective of rank, were huddled into tenement dwellings which clung to the castle rock. In 1773 for instance, one particular tenement in the High Street had a fishmonger's house on the ground floor, a respectable lodging house on the second floor, a landed lady - Mrs Buchan of Kelly - living above that, the "misses Elliots, milliners and mantlemakers" on the fourth floor, the rooms of the dowager Countess of Balcarres on the third floor, while the attics were occupied by "a great variety of tailors and other tradesmen."[15] Chambers was well aware of the significance of the social divide which emerged as the New Town of Edinburgh was built away from the crowded tenements. The social divide manifested itself in much more subtle ways than in housing as Chambers observed:

> The fine gentlemen who daily exhibit their foreign dresses and manners in Princes Street have no idea of the race of people who roost in the tail houses of the Lawnmarket and the West Bow and retain about them many of the primitive modes of life and habits of thought that flourished among their grandfathers.... Edinburgh is in fact two towns in more ways than one. It contains an upper and an under town - the one a sort of throughfare for the children of business and fashion, the other a den of retreat for the poor; the diseased and the ignorant.[16]

Chamber's account of Edinburgh is worth quoting in detail because he not only describes a backward country with a small emerging bourgeoisie, but also, as a student of folklore, observes an inchoate working class culture. Others who observed the emerging working class were less kind than Chambers. Generally the same language was used to describe working people as were used to describe the new world "savages". Robert Colls describes how miners in the North East of England were described in similar terms to "backward" tribes in Africa or America.[17] Hugh Miller, influenced by a similar intellectual background to Robert Chambers, described eighteenth century miners as resembling prints "given of savages in their lowest and most degraded state."[18] Such descriptions as Miller's could be dismissed as purely the scientific language of another age were it not for the fact that they reflect the notion of human progress common in the

work of some influential figures of the European Enlightenment. The Enlightenment's concept of progress was intrinsically linked with the development of urban industrial society. As Raymond Williams points out, it was ideas such as this which gave us the concept of backwardness and "rural idiocy."[19]

Not surprisingly the value laden concepts of social progress which discovered "rural idiocy" made their mark in later centuries. This same conception of backwardness can be clearly seen within some of the popular attitudes toward the industrial working class of the mid-nineteenth century, particularly the Irish working class. More significantly, however, the conception went on to fuel the images of backwardness within the later working class in general. Such images themselves entered oral culture in the stories which existed of how working people, when they obtained baths, used them to keep coal in.

Despite the fact that class society developed a notion of rudeness or backwardness to describe working class life, the process of tradition synthesised aspects of peasant culture creating a distinct but class bound culture. Among the first person to recognise the distinctive nature of working class culture was Richard Hoggart. Hoggart, describing his own grandmother's speech, noted the concrete and elemental quality derived from much older forms:

> When my grandmother spoke of someone "taking the bread from her mouth" she was not being dramatic or merely figurative; she was speaking from an unbroken and still relevant tradition, and her speech at times had something of the elemental quality of Anglo Saxon poetry....[20]

Jeremy Seabrook, writing on a similar theme to Hoggart, points out how class distinction was perceived as much in cultural terms as it was in social terms:

> They [the working class] did not derive their real beliefs and ideas from people for whom they represented nothing more than service or labour, abstractions, but fell back instead upon a very ancient peasant tradition, of which echoes are still heard to-day.[21]

As both Hoggart and Seabrook describe only the English working class experience, the peculiarities of the Scottish working class tradition remain uninvestigated. However, particular aspects of Scottish culture meant that oral culture became a focus for national identity, and therefore remained active when similar traits had disappeared in England. Moreover, the Scottish literary tradition constantly interacted with oral tradition in a way which did not occur in England. This allowed

Scots language and custom to be maintained at a literary level often to return once again to oral tradition.[22] Poets such as Burns and Fergusson drew heavily on oral culture in their work. Burns in particular continues to be venerated as the poet of the common man, at the same time as being accepted as the national bard. Burns' poems and songs therefore remain widely quoted and sung by those who know no other poet. Similarly Walter Scott continually used folk themes and motifs in his novels. While Scott tended to view the culture in an antiquarian sense, and therefore saw it more as the remnants of a past age rather than part of a living process, he nevertheless helped maintain the interest in speech, song and custom. It may well be the case that Scott, like many others of his age, looked back to peasant culture in order not to face the problems of urban industrial Scotland and the working class. Nevertheless, these writers fed oral culture in a roundabout way, and helped focus the Scots national identity creating its much studied and very particular form.

The peculiarities of the Scots literary tradition also helped maintain, albeit a little artificially, a strong tradition in spoken Scots. In the second half of the sixteenth century the Reformation brought the English bible into Scotland. As David Murison points out, the language of the bible was English, and English therefore became familiar to the people as the

language of solemnity and abstract thought, while Scots remained the language of everyday life; of the domestic, sentimental and comic.[23] Consequently, as Robert Chambers observed, Scots remained, and indeed in part still remains, the language of the working class. The values which class society placed on language were therefore more complex and more acute than in the English situation. The middle class Scot may well be able to converse in Scots while reserving English for the serious and the abstract. The working class Scot on the other hand may find the linguistic change more difficult to make, and consequently a greater part of his language will be Scots.

Basil Bernstein has argued that such bilingualism is related to class society and is therefore not uniquely the problem of the working class Scot. Bernstein suggests that the separation in what is "acceptable" speech and what is considered "bad" speech goes as deep as the constructs of the language. In Bernstein's theory there is a distinct difference between working class language and middle class speech. In middle class formal language, speech becomes an object of special perceptual activity, and a theoretical attitude is developed toward the structural possibilities of sentence organisation. This speech mode is one where structure and syntax are relatively difficult to predict for one individual, and where the formal possibilities of sentence organisation are used to clarify meaning and make it explicit. In contrast, working class speech is distinguished by rigidity of syntax and the limited and restricted use of structural

possibilities of sentence organisation. Thus working class speech elements are highly predicatable for any one speaker. It is a form of condensed speech in which certain meanings are restricted and the possibility of their elaboration reduced. The latter speech Bernstein distinguishes as "public language". Public language can occur in any social structure that maximizes identification with others at the cost of the individual differences. Groups such as adolescents (irrespective of class) army combat units, criminal sub-cultures, rural groups - and we may add miners - are noted for their use of public language as defined by Bernstein.[24]

Adding weight to Bernstein's theory Richard Hoggart comments that the reason why working class speech appears "coarse" in the eyes of the middle class observer is that the direct nature and the restricted structure define the pattern of the speech, and the speech follows the emotion. Working class speech and manners in conversation appear therefore more abrupt, and less provided with emollient phrases than those of other social groups.[25] This abruptness in working class speech also has a relationship with the oral nature of working class culture. Hoggart remarks how working class philosophy on general matters outwith their immediate life is "usually prone to be a bundle of largely unexamined and orally transmitted tags enshrining generalisations, prejudices, and half truths, and elevated

by epigramatic phrasing into the status of maxims."[26]

Donald McKelvie notices a similar trait in working class speech when he remarks how it contains few intellectual abstractions in any meaningful sense:

> At one extreme they may imply a steering away from a situation, an unwillingness or inability to think deeply about it: at the other sharing in and a feeling for the misery and despair of others.[27]

Bernstein, Hoggart, and McKelvie, clearly indicate the importance of shared experience within working class culture. The importance of assumption within working class speech is at the heart of Bernstein's concept of public speech. Similarly, the shared understanding within the use of maxims which Hoggart and McKelvie describe, represents the outer structure of a linguistic tradition which has little to say which is analytical in the accepted intellectual sense, but is based on a dense and concrete, particularly personal, existence. The communication is intended to relate what is intimate and sensory rather than any essentially political or metaphysical truths.

This aspect of working class speech is explained by Bernstein as being "particularistic" as opposed to "universalistic". As Bernstein explains:

> Universalistic meanings are those in which principles and operations are made linguistically explicit, whereas particularlistic orders of meanings are meanings in which principles and operations are linguistically implicit.[28]

Much of the meaning of a particularistic system is embedded in the context and may therefore be restricted to those who share the contextual history.[29] Ewan MacColl noticed a distinct difference in the narratives related by the managerial informants as opposed to the manual workers on construction sites while he was researching a programme for his radio ballad series. The managerial informants tended to use an extremely small area of vocal effort spectrum. There was scarcely any variation in the tempo of sentences delivered by the managerial workers, and almost all of them made constant use of the impersonal pronoun and similes and metaphors were almost totally absent. On the other hand the labourers made liberal use of both metaphors and similes, changed tense constantly and extended analogies. The labourers emphasised verbs in such a way as to give every sentence and phrase an "effort peak". MacColl concluded that the "educated" mangerial informants used words to convey information, and simultaneously, to conceal their feelings, while the labourers used language in order to reveal themselves to the listener in the course of conveying information.[30]

Pierre Bourdieu has described how the linguistic patterns observed by Bernstein and others relate to working class culture in general. Culture as defined by Bourdieu embraces both linguistic and artistic concepts. Culture is not merely a common code, or even a common catalogue of answers to recurring problems; it is a common set of previously assimilated master patterns from which, by an "art of invention", an infinite number of individual patterns directly applicable to specific situations are developed. Consequently linguistic, musical, architectural, and visually illustrative patterns are linked in a general culture, and the aesthetic applied in any given situation. The development of class society tended to define culture in a subjective manner. Consequently we distinguish between "high" culture and "popular" culture. Bourdieu notes how such subjective definitions lead to any artistic idea being viewed within narrow concepts. Working class culture and art are therefore measured against existing "high" cultural artistic criteria:

> To speak of "popular culture" suggests that the system of patterns which make up the culture (in the subjective sense) of the working class could or should, in certain circumstances that are never specified, constitute a culture (in the objective sense) by being embodied in "popular" works, giving the populace expression in accordance with the patterns of language and thought that define its culture (in the subjective sense). This amounts

> to asking the populace to take over intention and means of expression of academic culture (as the proletarian writers do whether of middle class or working class extraction) to express experience structured by patterns of culture (in the subjective sense) to which that intention and these means are essentially alien.[31]

For Bourdieu understanding working class culture means going beyond the class division to the structure of the tradition and in particular to the conservative non-innovative inner structure of the traditional process.

The internal structure of tradition contains within it the basic elements of the culture. The relationship between the internal and external structures of tradition is, as we have stated, a dialectical relationship. The external or innovative elements within tradition can therefore be, at one and the same time, critical of the internal structure and derived from it.

The distinction between the elements of the traditional process allows us to look in detail at how the inner structure itself is developed. In terms of the development of class society folklore is in the position of being at the periphery of a dominant or "high" culture. The development of folk tradition will therefore, by dint of this value structured

relationship, contain elements from the dominant or hegemonic culture. However, any folk group is distinctive in mass society in respect of its culture and traditions. There is therefore a relationship within folklore in a class society which, although reflecting a subordinate position to a dominant culture, can also allow for the maintainance of an ideological unity quite separate from the dominant ideology. This distinction is subtle, and quite different from any conception of deviant culture. Yet, the distinction can explain why many deviant groups develop folk culture.

The distinction between working class oral tradition and radical or revolutionary tradition is an important one. As E.P. Thompson has pointed out, however, contrary to the view of some sociologists, class is not a static formation - so many people standing in this or that relation to the means of production:

> Class in the Marxist tradition is (or ought to be) a historical category, describing people in a relationship over time, and the ways in which they become conscious of their relationships, separate, unite, enter into struggle, form institutions and transmit values in class ways. Hence class is an "economic" and it is also a "cultural" formation: it is impossible to give any theoretical priority to one aspect or the other.[32]

If we accept what Thompson says then it follows that although values and traditions may be transmitted in "class ways" there is "a cognitive organisation of life which corresponds to the mode of production and the historically formed class formations".

This cognitive organisation of life allows for an understanding of the "commonsense" of power which is expressed "more or less consciously" in the overreaching hegemony of the ruling class.[33] Such a system of social relations, however, conceals innumerable contrasts where people confront the necessities of existence, derive their own values and create their own culture. At times the distinct ways of life of the miner, the peasant, or the artisan, may present antagonism to the dominant cultural values. This may occur within the context of a class. In exceptional circumstances, however, people do reach out beyond the local experiences to offer a more general challenge. It is within the lyrics of the songs of the agricultural workers of the North East of Scotland, or within the miners' prolonged revolt against work discipline that we can perhaps see the best examples of how practical experience of class society is reflected in a local and non-class way. Occasionally however the local folk culture may take the form of general class opposition.[34] In Hiram Sturdy's account of his life he gives the fine example

of a procession through the mining village where the class opposition was expressed through theatre. A shackled miner was led through the village driven along by a figure in fine clothes representing the coal owner, while the colliers' wives shouted at and booed the figure of the owner.[35] More often, as Thompson points out, there is a "cut off", where the villager is wise within his own village, but accepts the inevitable organisations of the outer world: "he bitterly resists the exactions of the landowner and the moneylender but continues to believe in a just king or a righteous Tzar."[36]

Many aspects of working class tradition in Britain are therefore articulated at a purely local level. Hoggart's emphasis on the personal and the local gives the basic position:

> ...the more we try to reach the core of working class attitudes, the more surely does it appear that the core is a sense of the personal, the concrete, and the local....[37]

With regard to class consciousness at the local level some doubt may be cast on the morality of the way in which wealth is distributed and the persistent irregularities which result. On rare occasions however, the sense of "them and us" breaks through the local interpretation of the situation, and we see class opposition in its widest sense.

Folklore within a mass society can therefore exist in a state where it reflects a cultural primitiveness while at the same time presenting a form of opposition to the official and dominant culture. It would however be misleading to conclude that in its opposition to the dominant ideology folklore is an example of normative opposition to the dominant order. Moreover, while a particular tradition may contain political elements, it would be a fundamental mistake to view folklore within a mass society as necessarily exhibiting either political consciousness or radicalism. In recent writing on the folk song revival there have been attempts to link music and song from oral culture with the political radicalism of the revival. However, it is often unclear how music and song which existed in oral circulation among the essentially conservative culture of peasants or farmworkers links with the music and song of urban radicals and intellectuals, Dave Harker places the dilemma in context when he analyses the work of some leading figures in the folk song revival.[38] One may speculate as to the degree to which those radicals who embraced folk music during the nineteen fifties and sixties were conscious of the radical elements within folklore, while ignoring the paradoxical nature of tradition which can also make it conservative. We may however say that the fact that folklore in a class society is more characteristic of those groups which are excluded from participation in the power structure, makes the mantle of political radicalism fit more easily.

For Antonio Gramsci the position of folklore within a class system is dialectical. As a "conception of the world" containing a specific body of beliefs and norms folklore is a reflection of the conditions of the cultural "primitiveness" of the popular masses. Folklore nevertheless stands as a form of opposition to the dominant ideology, one which embraces rather than challenges the existing order. Folklore, according to Gramsci, is therefore found mainly within those groups which are excluded from participation in the cultural hegemony of the nation.[39] Although modern folklorists would perhaps disagree with Gramsci in that high status and powerful groups are seen to develop forms of folk culture, it is nevertheless the case that the richest oral cultures are to be found within those groups in modern society which are excluded from the position of power.

Although Gramsci addressed himself to folklore rather than the process of tradition he nevertheless understood that process.[40] Gramsci stated that

> Folklore has always been tied to the culture of the dominant class, and in its own way, has appropriated certain aspects of it, which becomes part of the preceding traditions.

However, folklore also contains positive and progressive elements. For example, folklore contains elements which challenge official bourgeois morality, " a series of innovations often creative and

progressive, determined spontaneously by new forms and conditions of life opposite to or different from ruling class morality."[41]

As a Marxist, Gramsci considered it wrong to view folklore, or the development of what he called a "common sense" philosophy, as a lower level of intellectual activity. Although folklore may appear a - historical, fragmentary and incoherent in terms of modern industrial society, it was nevertheless derived from the everyday process of living, and a result of confronting practical problems and deriving solutions. In this sense folklore is an intellectual activity.

The problem for the development of Marxism was, as Gramsci saw it, to raise the philosophy of common sense to the level of the highest philosophical thought. This development entails more than simply the replacement of one dominant philosophy by another, as some popular understandings of Marxism might interpret it. It is more the development of a single definition of intellectual activity away from the values placed on intellectual activity by bourgeois society: the unification of intellectual and popular thought, and of "high" and popular culture, giving equal value to both.[42]

Gramsci would agree with the basis of much modern folkloristic research insofar as he would accept that all knowledge is derived from man's confrontation with his everyday world. However, Gramsci does not limit himself

simply to understanding "common sense" knowledge, but would see his role as attempting to change the position to that where it is elevated in stature and purified of the sediments of bourgeois hegemony. In this sense Gramsci links his understanding of folklore to his political understanding and to the historical process. It is not simply enough in Gramsci's view to say, as the symbolic interactionists do, that the "acting person" derives shared meaning from within his group which explains his world and helps pattern his existence, and construct his customs beliefs and institutions, which are then through shared meaning integrated into social structures. This by itself tends to ignore the historical development of a class society and the consequent cultural formations which developed from it. Similarly the phenomenonological and ethnomethodological sociologists and those folklorists who have embraced these disciplines, have often looked at folklore in a - historical manner.[43] The influence of external factors such as historical forces is given a secondary place in the ethnomethodological approach which begins from the basis of explaining the individual's knowledge, or world view, as it stands in isolation. Renwick, for example, uses similar sociological theory to structurally analyse working class poetry. The emphasis in Renwick's study therefore tends to be on poetry shaped by individual experience rather than from the group or class experience.[44]

In this study there has been an attempt to illustrate how the miners, and the British working class in general, owe a great part of their culture to historical development. While this culture may have diversified at local level as it met older local cultural traditions, the factor which allows us to describe "working class" song or "working class" poetry, is the general assumption that there is also a working class culture. It is therefore natural to assume that the culture developed historically with the class. If we accept the point of view of the phenomenologists and ethnomethodologists that all knowledge is derived from the individual as he participates in society, we tend to ignore the importance of the collective tradition. In particular we ignore the dynamic process of tradition. We may learn how one individual made songs or poetry, but we fail to grasp the elements of tradition which culminated in this creative activity.

If we describe a working class culture or a working class tradition we must also say how the working class community figured in this development. With regard to many communities, particularly mining communities, we are often dealing, not only with a working class community as such, but also with an occupational community. Salaman has defined the concept of the occupational community as one where members of the community are affected by their work lives to the extent that their lives are permeated by their work relationships, interests, and values:

> members of occupational communities build their lives on their work: their work friends are their friends outside work and their out of work interests are work based.[45]

Salaman however tends toward the opinion that mining communities are a special case due to, among other factors, their geographical isolation. As we have already attempted to argue against putting too much stress on the geographical isolation of mining communities, there is no need to spend time developing this point. However, as we have stated, the particular tradition which develops from the occupation of coal mining in Scotland should not be seen as having developed from geographical isolation, but from the particular economic and social factors which developed historically with the mining industry. Salaman's definition of occupational communities does nevertheless describe accurately the social situation of many mining communities up until at least the end of World War Two. For the most part until this period the village remained the unit of production in mining. Even with the changes which occurred in the fifties and sixties with regard to pit closures and increased mobility, as A.E. Green observes, the mining village remained a mining village with or without the pit.[46]

The cultural links between the early miner and the peasant have already been discussed, and these formed part of the traditional process. For example, as with any agricultural

village there existed a high degree of interaction focussed on the work. Added to this, particularly within industrial villages, there was a highlighting of class interests. Mining communities remained definitely working class in their identification. The small managerial section often lived within the village in housing set apart from the houses of the miners. In Scotland the management housing was often referred to by the characteristically reductive term of the "dandy row".[47] Another aspect of mining culture which relates to the quasi-rural setting of the mining village is the erratic work patterns. Up until fairly recently it was common for miners to alternate mining with agricultural work when in season. As one miner explained:

> Oh, I see so-and-so's started cuttin' his hay the day, or the big fruit's on at Drumdiels Berry Park, or the Strawberry pickin's on. Noo, ye got 16/8 pence a shift for workin' in the pit, but ye didnae get that tae the following Friday. So the fella's 'd rather go and work for 10/- shilling at the hay, and that was then ten shillin's which'd gie them quite a few pints o' beer, or get them to the dancin' or the pictures.[48]

Such attitudes are reflected in oral tradition by the much quoted joke where the pit manager asks a miner with bad attendance why he only works four days a week, and the miner replies that 'it is

because he cannot live on the money he would get for working three days.

The persistence of independent work patterns, and indeed the persistence of oral culture in general in the mining industry, may well be related to the strong links between mining and rural life. As we have stated, tradition is a selective process containing both innovative and conservative elements. The traditional order is in this sense never entirely replaced, but continues with modification. Geertz has explained this process as it acted within certain peasant communities. Geertz distinguishes between the culture and the social structure of the communities, and he defines culture as the ordered system of meaningful symbols in terms of which social interaction takes place. Social structure is defined as the pattern of social interaction. On the one level there is the framework of beliefs, expressive symbols, and values, in terms of which the individuals define their world, express their feelings and make their judgements. On the other level there is the on-going process of interactive behaviour, whose persistent form Geertz calls social structure. Applying this to his research Geertz comes to a conclusion which may go some way toward explaining the persistence of folk culture among miners. As Geertz observes of his own research the discontinuity which occurs between the social structure and the culture creates a particular situation:

> In more concrete, if somewhat optimistic terms the difficulty lies in the fact that socially kampong people are urbanites, while culturally they are still folk.[49]

While socially the mining communities were never strictly speaking an "isolated mass", during the nineteen fifties and sixties their social structure moved closer to the urbanite or suburbanite pattern. Nevertheless the communities by dint of their culture remained mining communities. Mining culture, which had developed partly through its links with rural life, was therefore viewed as distinctive when set against the situation in more urban based industrial occupations.

Although the changing patterns of social and economic life meant that the social make-up of many mining communities began to alter from the end of World War Two, there nevertheless remained a considerable degree of cultural activity which related to the mining industry.

The social solidarity within mining communities is well documented. Dennis and his colleagues noted how coal mining united its workers in an experience of dark and dirty conditions, and in a history of bitter industrial battles.[50] This experience naturally had its particular local dimension, and while miners recount the national history of the industry, it is often the

local experience which matters. In Ashton, for example, Dennis found that the Ashton riots of 1893 remained alive in oral culture and became part of the community consciousness. Similarly, miners in the Central Region can still recount how the Earl of Mar kept colliers in irons for disobeying orders underground, an event which, if it actually happened, happened in the early eighteenth century.[51] In certain Fife villages it is still the case that the names of blacklegs are remembered from strikes in the nineteen twenties.

This strong sense of oral tradition also developed round the actual craft skills involved in mining. It would be true to say that a boy from a mining family was already half a miner before he began his working life. The use of the terminology of the industry provided informal education for younger boys. Most miners share the opinions of this informant:

> ...if you're startin' younger men in the pit the noo there's a difference between startin' a miner's son than startin' somebody who never was in the mining industry. Their attitude is different aw' thegither as if telt you're just a miner and that's that. But a miner's son can grow up in a mining village, a community, he knows the score, he knows the twangs, he knows the -. I mean, if your talkin' aboot different things doon the pit ken: "gie's

> owre a 'dolly'," a boy comin' frae Bridge of Allan - [a non-mining area] - and aw these places, would never - he wouldnae ken what you're talkin' aboot. But a mining son knows that, because his faither would say there's a "dolly" doon there away and get it and split it up for wood. Ken, a dolly's only a small bit of wood. Likes o' if you're gonn'y haud up a bit of wood. roof its only maybe aboot a foot high, you'd say: "gie's a dolly aboot a foot high."[52]

Understanding the esoteric terminology involved in mining is related directly to the culture in general. According to McCarl understanding terminology is part of a wider concept which he calls "technique":

> Technique reflects the "working knowledge" (what you need to know to do the work) of any work group, and as it is passed from one worker to another through initiation and instruction, it begins to reveal a pattern of interactions that is unique to that particular group and almost invisible to the outside observer.[53]

The concept of "technique" is broader than the concept of "skill", in that it relates to the on-going process of tradition. Technique

embraces both the work aspects and the social aspects of any job: "the things that a man can do with his hands and the things he knows in his head."[54] Technique then extends into both work and social relations and acting as a "good miner" is important in both contexts.

Within the British mining industry the concept of "technique" can be different at local and national level. For example terminology within the mining industry is extremely localised. While mining may unite its workers on the level of social experience, it can often create divisions at the very local level with versions of technical terms. It is for this reason that at the end of the period of great expansion in the industry at the end of the nineteenth century, John Barrowman thought it necessary to publish a glossary of mining terms.[55] Technical terms developed and carried on locally are often not transferable from pit to pit, let alone from area to area. To some extent this is true of local custom generally, for as Royden Harrison noted, colliery communities often within short distances of each other may have "distinct individual and highly developed customary patterns."[56]

To some extent the apparent paradox between local and national identifications is explicable, considering the number of variables which determine mining culture. While national tradition within the industry is significant, the local sources of tradition,

as well as family, individual, and community traditions, interact. Similarly working class tradition in general plays a large part in determining the local developments. While there may be rivalry and divisive factors within a community, there may be a general consensus in terms of class identification, and outsiders may be looked upon with suspicion. For example, in Scotland the Catholic/Protestant divide exists alongside the often quoted labour solidarity within the industry. Within modern mining communities community spirit need not necessarily be based exclusively on the mining industry. Nevertheless, the industry will have created certain distinctive traits. If we accept Bulmer's point that miners may be influenced by "ideas which antedate industrial employment", then the modern miner has a complex set of references on which to draw.[57] It is however within the dynamic of the tradition that these elements can be synthesised.

Within mining communities in the Central Region of Scotland there were always areas with large mining populations which were not exclusively mining towns. Nevertheless, as one miner commented of the town of Stirling:

> Stirling was classed as a sort o' mining community ...there have always been miners frae Stirling because when you ca' Stirling you're talkin' aboot the Raploch and St Ninians [working class areas], and the likes o' these places.[58]

Perhaps the oldest mining town in Central Region, Bo'ness was once a thriving port, with a pottery. In a study of joking relationships in Bo'ness F.K. Girling has suggested that the various social groups within the town used ridicule to define class and work boundaries. The groups divided into the "toon yins", who lived in older working class housing within the old town; "brae heid yins", managers and employers; and those in the "toons houses", who lived in the post war council housing. Girling explains:

> There appears to be an avoidance relationship between the "brae heid yins" and the "toon yins"; they rarely meet but each group expresses its hostility to the other by ridiculing those of its own members who behave in a way allegedly characteristic of the other group.[59]

Within these class/work divisions there existed sub-categories among the "toon yins" to which were attributed certain qualities. "Grangers", for example, those who inhabited an area where the workers in the old salt pans lived, and who were said to speak an unintelligible dialect, constituted one sub-group. Miners constituted another sub-group, and were said to be particularly "risible characters."[60] As we have already noted miners and salters were slaves until 1799, and it is interesting that Girling should discover that both

"Grangers" and miners were given the role of tricksters within narratives where they became simpletons who outwit and deflate the pomposity of others within the "toon yins" group and high status figures.[61] To some extent then, distinctive cultural characteristics related to mining as an occupation survived even within areas which were occupationally diverse. Moreover, the class/work boundaries were maintained by an informal system of social control.

The eighteenth century exoteric image of miners as a "race apart" obviously functioned as a pejorative distinction. Within Girling's study however it also acted in an esoteric manner to maintain a group identity. The feeling among miners that the rest of society views them with suspicion is not entirely unwarranted, yet this feeling is significant in maintaining group solidarity.

Dennis and his colleagues have pointed out how social control worked also within single occupation mining communities. Dennis noted how a miner who brought a particularly expensive brand of tobacco was given mild ridicule for being "posh".[62] Similarly there is a story told of a woman who was associating with another man while her husband was in the forces during World War One; the women in the village took this in hand and ran the man out of town.[63] These incidents illustrate that the

continuity within mining communities, like that within peasant communities in general, is bought at the expense of certain aspects of individual freedom. As Girling's study clearly indicates, even within areas of industrial diversification the cultural characteristics were maintained in this way.

The distinctive cultural tradition among coal miners emanates directly from the job of coal mining itself. Particularly important in the maintenance of the tradition is a strong sense of the history of the mining industry, and of the hardships and labour struggles which took place. As tradition is a dynamic process the variables which form this tradition have adapted over the years. Much of the specific evidence as to how this tradition operates will be given from the field research reported in the coming chapters.

Notes

[1]Barre Toelken, The Dynamics of Folklore (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979), pp.28-30.

[2]Jan Vansina, Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology, trans. H.M. Wright, (Chicago: Aldine, 1961), p.65.

[3]David Buchan, The Ballad and the Folk (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), p.1.

[4]Kazimierz Dobrowolski, "Peasant Traditional Culture," in Peasants and Peasant Societies, ed. T. Shanin (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), p.281.

[5]Henry Glassie, "Take the Night Train to Selma: An Excursion to the Outskirts of Scholarship," Journal of Popular Culture, 2 (1968), 42.

[6]Henry Glassie, All Silver and No Brass (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975), p.66.

[7]E. Shils, "Tradition," Comparative Studies in Society and History, 13 (1971), 129.

[8]Glassie, All Silver No Brass, xii.

[9]Vansina, p.104.

[10]Dov Weintraub, "Traditions and Development: Another Look at Some Still Unresolved Problems," Rural Sociology, 37 (1972), 580.

[11]Shils, p.129.

[12]Glassie, All Silver No Brass, p.66.

[13]Gramsci, p.9.

[14]Raymond Williams, The Country and the City (London: Chatto and Windus, 1973), pp.36-7.

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[16]Chambers, p.347.

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CHAPTER IV

SONG AND TRADITION IN A MINING FAMILY

To the Douglas family of Stirling tradition is an important element in maintaining the family identity. Along with the family history, family tradition contains the elements of culture which are considered significant in maintaining cohesion. In their various ways members of the Douglas family have maintained their family identity, and their identity as miners, for over three generations. Not only are the Douglas traditions related to the mining industry, but they also relate to their position in various spheres of society. In their national identity as Scots, in their political identification as Socialists, and in their religious identification as Presbyterian Protestants, the Douglas family constantly refer to tradition. Above all, it is their identity as members of the working class, and as members of the mining community, through which their traditions are most strongly reflected.

In this chapter we will examine the way the Douglas family present their traditions through song and narrative. Leading from previous chapters on tradition within the mining industry in general, and tradition as a dynamic process, this chapter will look at how this process works within one family of miners. In doing this we will be looking not only

at the Douglas tradition in mining, but also at the equally important elements which relate to their national, class and religious identities.

The members of the Douglas family interviewed consisted of the brothers George, Rab, Jock and Wullie. Wullie is technically a nephew, but as the family was a large one he is almost as old as the younger brothers and holds a comparable status. The oldest of the brothers, George, is 71. He did a number of jobs in the pits round Stirling, including working at the coal face, and ended his working life at Manor Powis colliery. He is a fine singer and maintains a lively interest in Scottish songs. He lives with his wife in a local authority housing estate in Stirling. Rab, the poet of the family, is in his early sixties; he worked at a number of jobs outwith the mining industry, and did war service in the navy before entering the mining industry in the nineteen fifties. Rab worked as a roadsman or brusher in Manor Powis colliery, and it is of some amusement in the family that Rab was trained in the pit by his nephew Wullie. Rab lives with his wife in the mining village of Plean near Stirling. Jock is the youngest of the brothers, also in his early sixties. Jock entered mining shortly after war service, and worked at a number of jobs in the pit including pit bottomer, in charge of the running of the cage, and pumpman. He moved to the Yorkshire coalfield in the nineteen sixties, but returned to Scotland due to his wife's health. Jock lives with his wife in the mining village of Cowie near Stirling.

Although both Rab and Jock were late entrants to mining, they are nevertheless steeped in the oral tradition of the industry and were important informants. Their knowledge of the industry was gained as children from older members of their family, and they must have known a great deal about mining before they themselves became miners.

Wullie entered the pit as a boy, when his father, Wull, got him his first job in the same pit - Polmaise 1 and 2 colliery or Millha'. He worked mostly as a face worker, and ended his working life as a middle manager in Manor Powis colliery. Wullie held a number of responsible positions in the pit and his technical knowledge of the industry is perhaps greater than the others. While his view of the tradition may be a little different, he is nevertheless very knowledgeable regarding the culture of the industry, and he sings with a fine tenor voice. Wullie lives with his wife in Stirling, near Stirling Miners' Welfare club, in which he plays an active role.

While other members of the family undoubtedly helped with this study it was the four brothers, the tradition bearers, who were the main informants.

Because mining within the area round the town of Stirling, unlike much of the rest of the Central Region, is a late phenomenon; the history of the Douglas family and Stirling is relatively new.

The Douglas family moved to Stirlingshire from Lanarkshire in the early 1920s. With their very particular sense of identity the older members of the family maintain a close identification with their Lanarkshire roots. The distance involved in the move from Lanarkshire may not have been very great, but the family perceive a distinct cultural difference between the two places. Indeed the family "national anthem" "The Braes o' Kirkhill" refers back to their Lanarkshire roots.

Working people in Britain up until recently travelled very little, and any moves were generally few, and for strictly economic reasons. Consequently regional identities, accent, dialect and culture, remain strong between areas with little distance involved. The Douglas family relate how they could be distinguished by their accents as "Lanarkshire men" when they moved to Stirling. A.E. Green notes how, after a period of re-organisation in the mining industry, the work force in larger collieries in Yorkshire was made up of men from other areas of the coal fields, and their various ethnic identities were made the subject of jokes and jibes.[1] Indeed, during the 1960s the National Coal Board had a glossary made up of mining terms to aid the integration of miners from one area to another, so localised is the technical vocabulary within the industry. Stressing the very local nature of such tradition is Royden Harrison's statement that cultural traditions in the mining industry were often very local indeed, and sometimes related to

one particular pit or village.[2]

The Douglases then, brought an existing family tradition in mining with them from Lanarkshire. Indeed, many of the miners in the Stirling area originally came from Lanarkshire. When the collieries at the village of Fallin - Polmaise 1 and 2, and Polmaise 3 and 4 - were opened around the beginning of this century, the workforce were recruited from Lanarkshire. As the mining industry expanded in the east of Scotland, the migration of skilled colliers was generally from west to east.

The Douglas family were late arrivals from the west. The details of their arrival are given by Jock Douglas:

> The two auld brothers I was tellin' ye aboot, they travelled earlier 'cause there was nae room in a hoose like that, young men o' twenty and that. They came through this way first. So they sent the auld man, said you've got a chances o' jobs here. So Duncan and my faither they walked here, and they got started in Fallin.

There were sixteen children in the Douglas family and the range of ages was very wide:

> Well you can imagine when you had sixteen, one of your aulder brothers could be your faither there was that much o' a distance between ages you know.[3]

The family were for the most part from collier stock on their mother's side. Not surprisingly many of their songs came from their mother:

> My mother's folk came fae aboot Penicuik way where the pits -. You know, a collier was always on the travel, especially if he needled aboot wages and so forth: if he argued the toss.[4]
>
> The auld man he must have been stupid because his father was tradesman, ken, at the nailworks in Hillside. It used to be the largest nailworks in Britain at that time...he probably wouldnae get the wages at that, so he went to the pit to get mair money...aboot 1908.[5]

The arrival of the family in Stirling was overshadowed by the father's early death from the result of a pit accident:

> The auld man wasnae here I think maybe eighteen month, he wasnae killed in the pit. He got his fingers jammed off; lost four fingers see. In thae days that would be a - nothing. It would be a matter of getting you rushed in. By the time they got him in and that, blood poisoning went there [indicates to upper arm]. He was deid within three weeks. Blood poisoning killed him.[6]

The description of the family's tragic arrival in Stirling, and the fact that the father and Duncan Douglas had walked from Lanarkshire, has a relationship to how the family perceives its history. The direct experience of hardship and its vivid memory fed into an existing radical tradition:

> ...we suckled it, we suckled it. And prior to that oor grandfather, oor grandfather 150 year ago, well when he was a young man...he was radical then too ...and my father before the First World War....It had been in the family as far as we could go back. Och, it could go back centuries, the history of the Douglases, and the Wilsons [their mother's family] fightin' for the right to worship.[7]

The feeling of belonging to a radical tradition is re-inforced by the direct individual and collective experiences of the family. The fight to gain compensation for the father's death was an important part in influencing the family radical tradition. Once again, as with the songs, it was the mother who proved an important factor in this development:

> Christ she was good. She's take us wan at a time to the political meetings, the election meetings and that..., and eh Guy Fanshaw was the Tory [Conservative] M.P. and she chased him from....Each time he got up to speak she asked a question. They chased her oot o' the place. Because each time she asked it he said:

"not true", and she said: "aye but it is true".

And she had to fight for his compensation. It was five years before she got a penny. In they day nae D.H.S.S. [Social Welfare] then, it was Parish. That left us, it left her wi' Oor Geordie, Tam, Wullie, Alec ...[calculates under his breath]. It left us wi' ten under - no workin'. The pension then was 10/- shillings for hersel', and 1/- for each child.

But even efter she got her compensation pal, you know ...she got it...Jimmy Barbour frae Plean, he was one o' the leading lights in the union then, auld Jimmy. And efter he fought it...I think she got about £490 - before she even touched a penny of it the Parish got their cut for the five year. And whereas, likes o' she was an awfy intelligent woman; clever woman, politically and otherwise, and if somebody had given her that sum she might have fixed herself up in a wee shop or something, made a living oot o' it. But they doled it oot quarterly I cannae remember noo just hoo much it was, but that's how she got it.[8]

The personal and family experiences were also related to social conditions in general. For example, when speaking of Tuberculosis, from which one of the elder Douglas brothers died,

Jock Douglas commented:

> It was the conditions that gave you that. See there used to be a stigma to it, but people kept quiet, they didnae understand that the conditions in the hoose, a' they people living in wan hoose. So this bred T.B. and did everything, poverty, misery.[9]

Jock Douglas described the way miners housing was built before 1945. He maintained that the builders worked almost without plans, and paced out the size of the houses:

> That's right, just pace oot a distance. Shove up that gable and just pace oot, and just build them in between. And that's a' they were. If you can picture them, practically every mining village, and I've been in a few in my life, one was the prototype for the rest. See its only nowadays, since the war, that we start to get places like this. Even owre intal Fife villages, they were a' just the same. Exactly like moving oot o' wan village - the environment didnae mean a dam tae ye....The only thing I missed in Cowie was, it had nae big river or burn that they could swim in.[10]

The death of the father, and the mother's fight for compensation meant that the younger children were clothed and supported on the

old system of local Parish relief. Again the memories of this are recalled to indicate the family's history of struggle which fed their radical outlook:

> Christ if ye ever lived on the Parish, that's the most degrading thing that ever happened to anybody. 'Cause they gied ye claiths. You got dressed for school maybe twice a year or that. Them bloody jerseys, ken, nae collar...,and ye got a pair o' - they were like yer faither's moleskins [pit working trousers] cordouroy. And Christ knows yer size, it was like the army: they were neither long shorts or short longs. And the boots, big pit boots, and somebody seein' you wi' them - Parish claiths! You were tagged as if you were a convict. Parish claiths!"[11]

The Douglas family concept of history is essentially an oral concept. History which was taught in school was looked upon with suspicion. This was particularly so with regard to the family's working class origins and their ethnic identity as Scots:

> In retrospect noo a lot o' the history [at school] was fooey. Only tae suit the times....We'd pass owre the Tolpuddle Martyrs in a sentence.[12] But they'd gie ye the history o' somebody that had nothing - nae use to

> ye... you would remember mair o'that what you were - what you were tellt in the hoose and that. It sank into ye then.[13]

> Ye see, ye learnt a' these dates,...when you went home to the hoose...your Mother was - and you were kinna doubtful. And then she would quote something that happened the same year that this happened. And she would turn roon and tell ye that these things - that date means nothing: "1914 War I mind when your cousin Tom joined up and he was only 16 year auld." See, and then she started to gie ye the family history of that same year. See, to you the date of the 1914 War wasn't worth thinking aboot; the date of the 1914 War was when your big cousin went away tae France and he was only 16 year auld. Joined up under age and got blown sky high aboot eight month after he went owre tae France, ye see. That was your history. Yer dates at the School were nothing to ye.[14]

As Richard Hoggart commented on the English working class, their experience is founded on a sense of the local and the personal; grounded in concrete experience.[15] Undoubtedly it was the same sense of personal experience which had the most profound effect on the Douglas family's concept of history. The

Douglas family for example illustrate their radicalism by recounting personal hardships. However, their experience of politics was also direct. The family were taken to hear Socialist speakers:

> I've seen Kirkwood and Maxton, and what do you cry them "the wild men o' the Clyde." Davey Kirkwood, Jimmy Maxton, and that Wheatley.
>
> My faither says to me: "come on, I'll take ye owre tae the corner to hear Kirkwood speakin!" I used to hear him when I must have been only aboot seven or eight. He says: "this is the man wi' the horns...." He was always sayin': "get Kirkwood and Maxton, that's the man (sic) wi' the horns." He says: "he'll clear them oot."
>
> And this is first when I went tae a political meeting to see Davey Kirkwood, tae see horns growin' oot o' his heid.[16]

The family also attended Socialist Sunday School:

> Well it was just the same as goin' tae Sunday School, but more or less you were taught the basics of Socialism. And more or less, as ye know, Christ was a Socialist in his own way. And it stuck to ye through yer life. In fact I was taken to hear the great Jummy Maxton and Campbell Stevens and them. Trailed a' owre the halls, miles intae Glasgow... and these things always stuck to ye that it was yer

basic right to have a decent living...what did ye get? An existence most times.[17]

As well as being related to personal experience the family's idea of politics is linked to national events such as the depression of the 1930s, and the 1926 General Strike and the Second World War:

Well after the 26 strike I started workin' at various things, street trader, selling, coal brickets, fruit and vegetables, workin' here on farms, and what not. And I was lucky, lucky in 1928; lucky mind you, to get back into the pit, very lucky....In these days we're talkin' aboot...1930...three million unemployed then; over it, and I was one of the lucky ones.

...there were sixteen [in the family] - twelve sons. And every one was in the mines at sometime or other. During the war there were six o' these sons in the navy...and there were two in the army, and three o' us still miners and doing Home Guard service. And that was six, eight, that prefered fighting in war than stayin' in the pit.

So to understand the bitterness and closeness of a mining community, when they get together...old Churchill used to say if you beat the Scottish miner,

or the British miner you can beat the world.[18]

A similar strong sense of identity can be seen in relation to the family's Protestantism. A number of the family are members of the Orange Order. The Orange Order in Scotland, although perhaps less militant in its anti-Roman Catholic stance than the Orange Order in Northern Ireland, nevertheless remains anti-Catholic in outlook. Other members of the family are reported to be Freemasons. Again, in Scotland Freemasonry is at times assumed to be anti-Catholic; although less strident than the Orange Order. Jock Douglas and one of his sisters are in the Orange Order, while Wullie, Rab, and George Douglas were, or had been, Freemasons. The family were however at pains to point out that any anti-Catholicism did not apply at an individual level.

A paradox seems to exist between identification with the Protestant cause and the family's Socialism. Among Socialists the Catholic/Protestant divide is viewed as a divisive element within the working class. As militant Protestantism identifies strongly with the British unionist state and the Protestant monarchy, it is seen as being a counter-productive force in the class struggle. Jock Douglas seemed to enjoy the eccentric nature of this paradox:

[I remember] Daley sayin' "the only Orange Communist

> in the place" - bluenose Communist...you got loads o' colliers that - Fallin's cried a bluenose village, politically they're practically a' left wingers.[19]

The Douglas family history, contrary to prevalent political thinking, connects their Protestantism with their radicalism. Once again the national historical event has to be linked to a personal understanding:

> ...that was one thing we got drummed into us when we were kids. "Always remember you come off Covenanting stock...and your ancestors fought at Drumclog and Louden Hill....[20]

> When you start to trace your ancestry...Clan Douglas. Wull Douglas ruled Scotland at one time, Regent o' Scotland...the time o' Mary Queen o' Scots. Thats only background o' history ye were taught in the family and at school. But the thought that any o' yer ain name, yer namesake at one time, held the crown at the tap o' the tree see. But to me it would only be a patriotic way of saying, och I'm a Scotsman. And he was William Douglas, Earl Douglas, Regent o' Scotland. But my brother was Wull Douglas machine man in the manor Powis [colliery] and I think mair o' Wull for that....[21]

> And my mother always tellt us a' her folk and that had been Covenanting. Ken, in the auld days in Scotland they had to go to the hills and that (to worship)... We didnae get that at school, it was maistly frae oor Mother and that, ken, relatives that knew auld people an' that.[22]

The oral nature of the family history is clear from these statements. Similarly the oral aspect of the tradition is evident from the family history as colliers. Once again this overlaps with a strong sense of collective suffering and struggle which relates to the identification with Socialism. Apart from the death of the father as a result of a pit accident, death and injury figure strongly in the family tradition as colliers:

> ...my uncle Geordie and a cousin o' my faither's ...were talkin' aboot hoo mony o' the family had been killed in the pits and they could go...as far back as the Blantyre Explosion [1877] just wi' listening tae her Mother talkin' see. And they coonted them up, and there have been thirteen o' oor family got killed in the pits.[23]

> Well tae take it away further back frae that, the first one in the family, in ma time was my uncle ...he was a shaftsman, a shiker, it's a Scottish word

he was a striker, and he fell doon the pit at Gateside Cambuslang and was killed.

And coming further on...the people who lived beside us, they're [our] cousins [their] son Robertson, they came fae Cowie, John Robertson, young man, eighteen years of age, was killed wi' a big piece of material in the pit.

As ye come on again my father, 1925, injured in Polmaise 3 and 4, a fall of roof debris knocked his hand off, well four fingers hanging off. He says to a bloke: "Here, take these they're nae use tae me."

I had a brother who was injured in Polmaise 1 and 2, and at that time there were no such things as ambulance conveyances. So he was brought up out o' the pit and thrown on top o' a waggon load, a motor load o' what we call gum: waste, and taken to the infirmary his ear hanging off, only tied wi' a piece o' bandage.[24]

As most males in the Douglas family married girls from mining families, it is not surprising that they could relate similar incidents. Flora Douglas, George Douglas's wife, tells how her father was entombed, and how hardboiled eggs were fed to him through a bore

hole until he could be rescued. The recounting of incidents of hardship, physical injury, and family death, acts as a strong cohesive force within the family. This shared experience of a common history of hardship and struggle within the mining community at large unites miners in a way which cannot be seen in any other industry.

The oral nature of the Douglas family tradition is seen at its best within the songs which they sing. The core group of songs known as the "family" songs are for the most part ones which the family learned from their mother. These songs have a direct relationship to the mainstream of song tradition in Scotland. The relationship between the mining industry in Scotland and folksong has never been as strong as it was in parts of North East England. As one old miner remarked when asked about mining songs: "there was mair swearing [than] singing when I was in the pit."[25] Having said this, however, there is a significant group of songs alive in oral tradition in Scotland which relate to mining.

The song tradition among miners in the North East of England tends to be the focus of any study of song among miners.[26] However, the North East English song tradition may well distort the general picture. The flourishing printing industry in North East England in the eighteenth century combined with a nineteenth

century antiquarian interest in local dialect to keep alive, and later return to oral tradition, many mining songs which would otherwise have been lost. Joseph Ritson's The Northumberland Garland (1793), John Bell's Rhymes of the Northern Bards (1812), and The Northumberland Minstrelsy published by the Newcastle Society of Antiquaries in 1882, represent three important sources for mining song in the North East of England. Added to the literary sources was the particularly popular North East music hall which flourished from the mid-nineteenth century and influenced, and was influenced by, such notable miner song writers and bards as Tommy Armstrong.[27] This strong English North Eastern tradition of mining song reaches as far as our own time with such singers as Jack Elliot of Birtley, Johnny Handle, and Bob Davenport, all from the North East.[28]

In Scotland national identity tended to take precedence over local or industrial tradition in determining the song current among miners. There are, however, two areas of song tradition important among miners in Scotland. The first of these was the song tradition which relates directly to the mining industry. Particularly important in mining songs was of course the mining disaster ballad. Among notable examples of the disaster ballad in Scotland are two songs which indicate the particular origins of this type of song. "The Moss Morran Disaster" is attributed to Bob McLeod of Cowdenbeath in Fife, known as "The Fife Miner's Poet". McLeod belongs to

a group of miner bards who used their skill to chronicle life in mining communities, and to help maintain the much discussed solidarity in these communities. Tommy Armstrong of Tyneside was another of these community bards. For example, Armstrong acted as minstrel to the Northumberland Miners leader during the strike of 1892. Similarly another bard, Burnett O'Brien, acted as "court minstrel" in a Lancashire strike in 1893, and in Pennsylvania a bard known as Con Carbon acted as minstrel to union leader John Mitchell in a strike in 1902.[29] For the most part the songs written by men like Con Carbon and Tommy Armstrong are related to the music hall tradition. Nevertheless, Armstrong's labour songs are in a more serious vein, and his "Trimdon Grange Explosion" is a classic disaster ballad.

The other illustrative Scottish disaster ballad is the "Auchengeich Disaster". The Augengeich Disaster, which happened in September 1959, is interesting from the Scottish point of view in that although the writer remains anonymous, the song was written to the older traditional tune "Lass Among the Heather". This is perhaps illustrative of the fact that while the disaster ballad was often written by miner bards, in the Scottish tradition at least, even in comparatively modern times, the broader Scottish national folk tradition in song remained important among the mining community.

The second, and perhaps the more significant, of the song

influences on the Scottish miner emanates from what one Scottish historian has described as "the cult of Burns" among the Scottish miner.[30] Although the Douglas family songs came from their mother - whose links with mining go back further than their father - when asked what their father sang the Douglases are all clear that it was mostly the songs of Scotland's national poet Robert Burns. Indeed Wullie Douglas is a singer in the classical tenor style who sings a considerable amount of Burns' songs. Similarly the miner singer from the Lothians, Geordie Hamilton, who was recorded for the School of Scottish Studies, has many Burns' songs in his repertoire. In both poetry and in songs the influence of Burns among the Scottish miners is considerable.

The reason why Burns has such an influence on the Scottish miners has however a direct link to oral tradition. An obvious relationship exists in the fact that Burns drew heavily on oral tradition for his poetry and song. The similarity in style between song material with a direct link to oral tradition, and that which has passed through the skilled hands of Burns, often leads to confusion. One of the Douglas family songs, "The Whinney Knowes", is sometimes attributed to Burns. However, the Douglases generally make the distinction between Burns' songs and other Scots songs.

Another area where Burns' influence can be seen among miners is in the general democratic philosophy which comes over in much of his work. George Douglas explains how this link is viewed:

> Well Burns to us tae was a Socialist: Burns was a Socialist. You could quote lots when you're thinking aboot Burns: "A Man's a Man for a' That", "You see yon birkie ca'ed a Lord, Wha struts and stares..." he was only a man that was lucky enough to have inherited some thing that his forefathers had it stolen aff them: the working class. And I think mostly, most mining communities do haud tae Burns for that sort o' stuff, he was a man's man.[31]

Added to the influence of democratic sentiment in Burns' work is the accessibility of much of it to people whose traditions remain close to the Scottish folk tradition. Consequently cultural nationalism looms large in understanding the popularity of Burns' work among Scottish working people. With coal miners, the strong links between oral tradition and the older peasant society also plays a part in understanding Burns' popularity. The influence of nature in Burns' poetry, drawn from the general use of nature as a theme in 18th century poetry, remains popular among agricultural and rural workers who, like miners, have to depend on the fickle forces of nature for their living. The use of the vernacular in much of his work places Burns closer to working people who may well use some form of the vernacular for every day speech. Lastly George Douglas' telling comment: "he was a man's man," perhaps explains another part of Burns' popularity among miners.

Mining in Britain remains exclusively a male occupation. Moreover, mining is an occupation which still gives out an image of spurious glamour focused on the physical effort involved in the work. This image becomes even more significant in an age where manual labour is being rapidly replaced by modern technology. This particularly male ethos may perhaps find some poetic identity in that area of Burns' work which relates to convivial male company and romantic conquests among women.

Despite the influence of Burns among miners, the group of songs considered family songs by the Douglas family do not contain a Burns song. In this respect the family make a clear distinction. The group of songs known as the family songs is small. Nevertheless, they remain significant in how they relate to the family history and tradition, and how this in turn relates to oral tradition among miners in general. Perhaps the significance of the Douglas family songs is best understood in the first instance in the value which the songs hold for the family. Undoubtedly it is the group of songs considered by the family to be "their" songs which are most important in this respect. For the most part the family songs were those learned in childhood:

> Most of the songs we sing the noo are from oor childhood; frae we were a' children, maist o' the songs.[32]

> ...that's how ye learned all yer songs [from my mother], brothers or yer....

Jock Douglas recounts how the songs were learned and what his mother would be doing as she sang:

> Oh washin' or something, cleaning the hoose, or nursing the wean. Often, maist often, sitting nursing the wean, you know, the weeest at the time. The rest o' us used to sit and listen to her. She was a frare singer ken. You hear them singing, and you heard your brothers and that. Your father got two on three jugs on a Saturday night, he'd bring in his pals and that. The auld man was a great tin whistle player, he was a good musician, but he liked the tin whistle.[33]

The songs relate to the Douglas family tradition in a number of ways. The group known as the family songs also contain songs which relate to the family experience after childhood. A distinction is made between the "old songs", those learned mainly from their mother, "Burns" songs, those from, or thought to be from, Robert Burns; and what we might call songs from general life experience:

> Oh aye, we have eh - old songs as I tellt ye are like "Bonnie Widha'" and "The Blantyre Explosion" and that. But when we say Burns songs, which is very very rife wi' oor family; very very keen Burns people. In fact we a' sing them. And another thing we usually sing, we a' sit in a wee group - "Will Your Anchor Hold"...I had six brothers in the navy ye see. And a song we sing tae...John Bunyan's "Who Would to Valour Flee.[34]

The categories of the songs are not rigid, and the main distinction made by the family is that between the "old songs", learned from their mother, and the remainder. Even this distinction can be fluid. The song "The Blantyre Explosion" for example, is one of the "old" or family songs, yet in terms of chronology it dates from a later period than say the Burns songs. "The Blantyre Explosion" is a song popular throughout the Scottish coalfield. It tells the story of the worst disaster in Scottish coal mining history, which occurred at Blantyre in Lanarkshire on the 22 of October 1877. An underground explosion killed 200 miners. Robin Morton quotes the Irish singer John Maguire as saying that when he sang the song in 1926 there were three different versions sung in the pub in Lanarkshire, and to three different tunes. The Douglas version is close to the version which Robin Morton gives from the singing of John Maguire, and which Maguire describes as the "real" version:

> By Clyde's Bonnie Banks as I lately did wander,
> Near the village of Blantyre I chanced for to roam,
> I saw a young maiden all dressed in dark mourning,
> Her name and what happened I'd like for to know.
>
> I stepped up to her said: "My wee lassie,
> Come tell the cause of your sorrow and woe;
> I hear you lamenting the loss of some loved one,
> His name and what happened I'd like for to know."

Sobbing and sighing at last she did answer:
"John Murphy kind sir is my true lover's name
Twenty-one years of age of mild good behaviour,
To work in the coal-mine from Blantyre he came."

"On the twentieth of October long will I remember,
Healthy and strong to his labour did go,
On that fatal morning without any warning,
Alang wi' twa-hunner-an'-ten he lies low."

Fathers and mothers widows and orphans,
From Stanefield to Blantyre oh long will they mourn,
Old aged parents for sons they love dearest,
From the Blantyre Explosion they'll never return.[35]

After singing this song Jock Douglas related the details of the disaster in a way which made it sound like a contemporary event:

It was coal - black damp set up the gas, and in thae days they had, they never had the safety -. Even, it would maybe have been a spark from a pick. Maybe a man houking coal and striking a stane embedded in the coal would cause a spark

> or that. And it blew the pit to hell. I'd an uncle, an auld uncle, got killed in that explosion. Hill they cried him.[36]

It is obvious from this description that the song has a meaning in everyday terms for the Douglas family. To this is added the fact that the family had a relative killed in the explosion. Although the disaster occurred in the nineteenth century the family relate to the experience as if it had a contemporary relevance. Rab Douglas recounts how his aunt's father was killed in the explosion:

> Oh she sat and explained it....I can always remember, maybe Geordie or Jock [told you] this, but I'll tell ye about the Blantyre Explosion. I always remember sittin' listenin' tae her tellin', an aunt of my faither's she was only six weeks auld when the Blantyre Explosion happened, that would be aboot 1879 I think it was. And she was the last o' the survivors' relatives, She died when she was owre seventy odd, but she was one o' the last. And a' they were gettin' was half-a-croon [two shillings and sixpence or twelve and a half pence] pension off the Blantyre Explosion fund. Aboot 1940 - eh, 1943 it was. She was only six weeks auld when her auld man was killed in the Blantyre Explosion.[37]

The family also relate the song to their history in the mining industry, and more particularly to those in the family who have died in pit accidents. The song therefore provides a powerful emotional focus for the sense of loss, and for the family's commitment in human terms to the mining industry. The experience of loss comes as close to the present time as the 1960's when one of the nephews was killed in a mining accident:

> Cis [an aunt] could go back as far as the Blantyre Explosion just wi' listenin' tae her mother talkin' see. And they coonted them up, and they've been thirteen o' oor family killed in pits.[38]

The relationship between art and concrete experience is also noticeable in a poem which Flora Douglas recites about another mining disaster. Although we will be dealing with poetry in a later chapter, this poem is included here as it relates to how songs and poetry reflect direct experience:

> They were miners in life's battle that fatal
> Tuesday night,
> Far down below the surface where there never
> shines daylight.
> They left their homes to earn their bread for wife
> and children dear,
> But little did they think that their end it was so
> near.

Twas that wee laddie called McCabe who when he saw
the Moss,
Turned back to warn his comrades their was no time
to loss.
At once they started boring to get them food and
air,
But all their work it was in vain those nineteen
perished there.

Those nineteen who have gone to rest till that
great judgement day,
May God protect their orphans and be their widows
tae.

After reading the poem Mrs. Douglas also related the story of the accident:

Standrigg pit disaster Airdrie, that was it, and I remember that happening, and the horse vans: it wasnae motor vans, it was horse vans, coffin vans we called them at that time. And I remember seeing the coffin vans, horse drawn, goin' out to what we called the Moss, out the Stirling Road, and coming back. And the driver would sign to them at Royard's Toll whether there were three or two, or one or nine....The driver went like

> that [indicates a number with her fingers] to the crowd round Royard's Toll, to tell how many they got from out the Moss.
>
> I remember, I know: "Twas that wee laddie called McCabe," he was a bit older than me, and I remember him. He finally had one leg, and he had a wooden leg, and I think he still lives to-day. And he ran from there out the Stirling Road, to Royard's tae tell the men they needed help out at the Moss, that it had caved in.
>
> Well there were 19 lost, I canny remember the names, I was just a youngster, but I still wasnae at school when I learned the thing. Because I remember my mother saying: "say Standrigg to Mrs. So-and-So."[39]

The songs and poetry also have a relationship to the family's political outlook. In this case the sense of history which these songs convey goes beyond the actual sentiment within the song. Although it is often said of the colliery disaster ballad that it contains little in the way of radical sentiment, this lack of political meaning is not always seen by the singer. As Dan Ben-Amos has pointed out, the significance of any text need not

be entirely explicit:

> The very syntactic and semantic structure of the text, the special recitative rhythm of presentation, and the time and locality in which the action happens may have symbolic implications for which the text cannot account.[40]

Hamish Henderson has written of the colliery disaster ballad "The Starlaw Disaster":

> It is clear from the ballad that although the class consciousness must have been within the labour movement in the mines, or at least in the leadership, it was not always affected by the song.[41]

Similarly the conventional literary qualities contained in the mining disaster ballad have troubled other folklorists. A.L. Lloyd speculates as to whether the fact that the disaster ballads were often composed for an outsider audience made them more conventionally literary in their presentation. Lloyd notes also that the themes were too tragic for other than ceremonious idiom.[42] It may also be the case that the seriousness of the subject matter of the disaster ballad warranted a more literary style. Within the Douglas family the songs which contain no clear expression of class consciousness within the text do have a significance in class terms. Flora

and George Douglas make this very clear:

> F.D. Yes, an awful lot, it made you want to get up and fight for better conditions.
>
> G.D. ...even to-day when we're a' gatherin' together and we get maudlin.
>
> F.D. We cry when we sing them, yes.
>
> G.D. Oh we do.
>
> F.D. Yes the tears run doon oor cheeks, when we sing them. Whether it's anger, I don't know, they're a' sung.[43]

Writing on the Bothy Ballads of the farmworkers of the North East of Scotland, Bob Munro sees a definite tie between the song and the movement of capitalist farming. Munro feels that despite the fact that the songs in themselves were not political - they attacked the farmers as individuals, but not as a class - they do have a significance with regard to the development of a class society. Munro concludes tentatively:

> Bothy Ballads are a response to bad conditions by a peasantry displaced temporarily from land tenancy. The disintegration of the peasantry and the creative period coincide.[44]

E.P. Thompson suggests one reason why the class sentiments expressed in both the Bothy Ballads and the Douglas family songs are inchoate:

> At points the culture and the values of the communities may be antagonistic to the overreaching system of domination and control. But over long periods this antagonsim may be inarticulate and inhibited. There is often a kind of "cut off": the villager is wise within his own village, but accepts the inevitable organisation of the outer world in terms of the ruler's hegemony: he bitterly resents the exactions of the landowner and moneylender but continues to believe in a just king or righteous Tzar....Only in exceptional circumstances do the people reach out from the local experience, their lived (as opposed to assumed) values, and offer a more general challenge.[45]

The Douglas family songs and poems concerning mining disasters may well have been written without ascription of direct blame in class terms. Nevertheless, over the years of singing, the songs, related to the family's experience have taken on a class meaning.

This is perhaps noticeable in another of the Douglas "family" songs "Jimmie Raeburn". Robert Ford describes "Jimmie Raeburn"

as a popular street song known all over Scotland, and sold readily in penny sheet form. According to Ford, Raeburn was a baker to trade who was sentenced to banishment for theft around 1830. Raeburn's story was told by his sweetheart, who stated that Raeburn had been "innocent as a new born babe," but his companion would not vouch for him. The Douglas family use the name "Jimmie" rather than "Jamie" through their Lanarkshire accent, and perhaps because it is a more modern pronunciation of the name. Otherwise the text is very similar to that given by Ford:

My name is Jimmie Raeburn near Glesca' I was born.
My hame and habitation I'm forced to leave with scorn;
My hame and habitation I'm forced to gang awa,
Far frae bonnie hills and dales of Caledonia.

Oh early one morning before the break o' day,
I overheard the turnkey and unto us did say:
"Arise you helpless convicts, arise ye one and a',
For this is the day that you maun stray frae Caledonia."

We all rose put on our clothes our hearts were
fu' a' grief,
Oor freens that a' stand roon the coast could
grant us no relief,
Oor freens they a' stood roon the coast their
heart's were breakin' in twa,
For to see us leave the hills and dales o'
Caledonia.

Farewell my aged parents I'm vexed for what
I've done,
Likewise my sweet young Kathleen, oh Kathleen
was her name,
Nae mair we'll wander doon the Clyde nor 'yont
the Broomielaw,
For this is the day that we must stray fae
Caledonia.

George Douglas makes an important point when he explains the song "Jimmie Raeburn":

There's another one that wasn't actually a miners' song. It was actually aboot the Glasgow weavers that during the transportation days. Well that's one of the old timers, that's actually probably classified as a rebel song. See the Glasgow

> weavers was akin to us [miners] tae, because they were transported, and hanged in fact, for fighting for their rights ye see. Just in the...way that we done.[46]

The idea that Jimmie Raeburn was transported because of radical or seditious activity is difficult to substantiate from the song itself, or from any historical evidence. The idea of Jimmie's radicalism in however common among the Douglas family. When asked if his mother explained the songs to them after she sang then Rab Douglas repleid:

> She told you why the likes o' Raeburn and a lot more men was, if they showed any resentment towards the establishment there was always a story put against ye to get you whipped away oot o' the country because you were going to be an agitator as far as their industry was concerned see. I'm no goin' tae say the Jimmie Raeburn was a miner, I canny vouch for that, in that respect, I canny remember my mother saying that. But, he came oot o' the sort of mining community areas ye see. He was one o' these men...he was agitating for men to be organised.[47]

George Douglas adds a further dimension to the song when he

explains Raeburn's background and links him to the famous 18th Century Scottish potrait painter Sir Henry Raeburn:

> And actually the family of Raeburns - you've maybe heard of Raeburn the painter , - well Jimmie Raeburn was out of his context in life he upheld the working class, and he was transported. It was one o' his songs....[48]

There appears to be no historical evidence to support the Douglas family claim about Raeburn's radicalism, or George Douglas's claim concerning the link with the famous portrait painter. Nevertheless George Douglas offers evidence of Raeburn's link with Glasgow weavers transported in the eighteenth century, to back his claim. Again, however, any link between Raeburn and the Glasgow weavers is difficult to substantiate. Sir Henry Raeburn's two sons appear to have led fairly conventional lives.[49] However, the links are significant with regard to how the Douglas family interpret the songs. Adding to a point made by Herbert Halpert regarding truth in folksong A.E. Green has suggested that the aesthetic feeling for truth in folksong is inseparably linked with a moral feeling.[50] In the case of the Douglas family the truth of Jimmie Raeburn's radical acts is linked to their own cultural values, to their own radical history, and to their Socialist politics. The truth in the song is in this case an expression of cultural values, and more specifically of moral values. The historical

evidence of truth or non-truth regarding Jimmie Raeburn's radical deeds are in this case unimportant. In a study of the ballad "The Bonny Earl of Murray" as history, Edward D. Ives notes that the re-telling of the ballad tale became something more than a recounting of history, "something that helped to make history - an expression of people's anger." Ives goes on to say how the ballad keeps popular outrage alive.[51] A similar effect has been noted of another genre, the legend, in Ireland. Seán Ó Súilleabhain found that the legends reflected society's hatred of Oliver Cromwell's deeds in Ireland, and had him ending his life violently despite the historical evidence to the contrary. Even after his death the oral accounts of history offered Cromwell no rest.[52] However, as Barre Toelken points out, world images cannot be weakened by evidence of discrepancies or reconciled by arguments.[53]

Within the Douglas family songs such as "Jimme Raeburn", and "The Blantyre Explosion", and Flora Douglas's poem "The Standrigg Pit Disaster" there is no doubt that the reality of the

events is linked to a moral feeling. As E.H. Carr points out, historical facts become historical facts because historians have deemed them so.[54] So it is with the Douglas family and their oral history. Jimmie Raeburn is a radical weaver because of the moral feeling which the family invest in the song. The fact that Jimmie Raeburn is seen as being socially out of context is interesting in that, as in many of the classical ballads, the social frame of reference appears to shift from the mundane and everyday into an imagined world of the upper class. By being related to Sir Henry, Jimmie takes on a more romantic role.

Despite the fact that Jimmie Raeburn came to his downfall from a more elevated social position, the truth within the song is given credence by the name of Raeburn. The name, and the fact that weavers were transported from Glasgow for radical activity, is evidence of the truth. Similarly with "The Blantyre Explosion" the fact that a relative of the Douglas family was killed in the explosion gives the song a more concrete reality in present day terms. "The Blantyre Explosion" for the Douglas family is not only an account of a nineteenth century pit disaster but an expression of personal loss.

It is important to many singers that a personal link is maintained with the songs they sing. This may take the form of a name, or a place name, or some other personal connection: something everyday and real, which in many cases exists beside fantasy. Cecil Sharp's dictum regarding truth in folksong illustrates this point:

> To [the singer] there is no tale like a true tale; and to heighten the sense of reality he will often lay the scene of his story in his own locality.[55]

The link between a local event and a moral truth can be seen clearly in Flora Douglas's poem when she describes the bodies being brought from the disaster. In the way Flora describes the event the poem represents more than simply a journalistic account of a tragedy, but becomes a reference point for the sense of injustice, and the shared experience of hardship and struggle within mining communities. Concrete detail is supplied by Flora having been present as a child, and having known "that wee laddie called McCabe," a line which she repeated more than once after reciting the poem. In this way the event takes on a currency and a reality regardless of any historical truth. More than this, however, the singing or retelling becomes a dramatic re-creation of the event and a re-statement of the moral values which it contains.

In another of the Douglas family songs there is a similar relationship between the song and a real family event. "Jimmie Foyers" has a particular significance for the family because their grandfather is said to have fought in the Peninsula Wars where the song is set. Evidence of Jimmie Foyers's existence is given by Rab Douglas to give credence to the song:

> Well Jimmie Foyers was actually born in the village of Lennoxtown, we stayed up there for about six year. And there's a well behind the police station in Lennoxtown yet and they ca' it Jimmie Foyers' Well.

Again, there is an element of historical accuracy in this account. We are told that one James Foyer was killed at the siege of Burgos in September 1812. He came from the village of Campsie in Stirlingshire - near Lennoxtown - and Gavin Greig mentions the existence of a Baker Brown's Well which the song alludes to.[56] As with "Jimmie Raeburn" the links with family history and the evidence of Jimmie Foyer's existence, give a meaning and a reality to the song.

The expression of historical truth within the Douglas family songs can be seen in a number of interrelated aspects of the family belief system. A prominent factor in the web of variables which determines the family identity is the sense of belonging to a particular place. In the case of the Douglas family their roots lie in Lanarkshire.

Lanarkshire influences the family identity in a number of ways. This influence is perhaps not surprising when we consider that Lanarkshire was at one time the most important coal mining area in Scotland. At one point in the nineteenth century there

were more working miners in Lanarkshire than in all other coalfields in Scotland. It was from Lanarkshire that many experienced colliers moved east to work in the pits of Fife and the Lothians and Stirlingshire. As Jock Douglas explains, the miners' move from Lanarkshire into other coalfields was sometimes greeted with suspicion:

> Then ken, funny enough there was an awfy resentment in the Fife coalfields when the Lanarkshire men went through there. Ken what they ca'ed the Lanarkshire men? West Country Eerishmen.
>
> Well that's what they cried the Lanarkshire men. See a lot o' the Fife colliers then, half time stuff. Some fished part o' the year, worked in the pit part o' the year. Well they fell oot wi' - they naturally thought that was their kingdom onyway, naebody else should come in. Because the Lanarkshire collier worked a' the year roon. They'd that ither option, tae ken, eh, fishin' for herrin' in the Forth an' that. This caused a lot a lot o' needles tae. Cause when they would be content - the colliery owner would say: "right, three days work this week," they'd go fishin' the rest o' the time.

> That's what threw up the likes o' Wullie Gallagher. Fife was pretty red even in these days. Yet maistly Lanarkshire...carried through the red feeling.[57]

Although Jock Douglas never worked in Fife, his information came from his father and father-in-law, both of whom moved from Lanarkshire to work in the Fife coalfield. It is significant also that Jock Douglas's account squares with what had happened in the move from the Lanarkshire coalfield in the nineteenth century, where increasing capitalist methods of production devalued the independent position of the Scots colliers. It appears to have been the case that as the modern mining industry developed in the east of Scotland the local miner's independent position with regard to viewing coal mining as not necessarily their only occupation also come under threat. The Laharkshire miners who moved to Fife, like Jock Douglas's father and father-in-law, were by then committed to mining as a full-time occupation.

Like many other colliers who moved from Lanarkshire the Douglas family took with them the militant Protestantism which had developed through the influx of Irish into the coalfields of the West of Scotland. The training officer at one colliery where the descendants of Lanarkshire miners make up the majority of the workforce noted his position in the colliery as a Catholic:

> I know they call this place [his office] "the Vatican", just call it the Vatican, probably because of my religion.
>
> Talking about religion this is a very staunch Protestant area this, a very stauch Protestant pit, as you can see the colour of the paint [blue]. There's a strength among Rangers fans here. There is a few Celtic supporters and other supporters, but generally the strength is on the blue side.[58]

Such feelings die hard. Indeed the School of Scottish Studies recorded a number of songs from Jock Cameron, a protestant miner all concerning the Orange cause.[59]

The Douglas family are keen to emphasis to an outsider that their Protestantism is not bigoted. Wullie Douglas explains the religious position:

> Well strangely my father wasn't in the Orange Lodge either. Oor family, they get the name of being a shower of Orange bastards which is no strictly true. Because there aboot 157 o' us in the toon...aboot half-a-dozen of us in the Orange Lodge, and there are very few in the Masonic Lodge.
>
> In fact my faither - two sayings always seem to stick in my mind. He used to say, especially when he was

> drunk, no when he was sober, when he had a drink in him: "If ever ye come across a good Catholic Wull, kill the cunt before he turns oot like the rest o' them." And then his other wan was: "see when ye get marriet, marry a cat o' yer ain kind, if she scarts it'll no fester."
>
> But my faither didnae run doon Catholics much apart from they two sayings ken. Eh, in fact there's an enormous amount o' Roman Catholics that are good friends -. I don't think you would get a Roman Catholic actually run doon the Douglases because they never interfered wi' onaybody....[60]

Jock Douglas also emphasises the lack of religious friction within mining communities:

> And there were nae question in they days aboot religion or that...they had their Orange Walks and their Hibs [Hibernians] Walk tae. But it was only for the day, and then they were a' thegither again. But if they needed anything, if they needed a loaf, they just went and chapped another neebor's door. Ye didnae ask what they were, just ask them, and if they had it ye got it. Because you would maybe in the same boat another day.[61]

The influence of the family's Lanarkshire roots is also reflected in the family songs. Blantyre of the "Blantyre Explosion" for example, is in Lanarkshire. The song known as the family "national anthem" concerns the small village in Lanarkshire where the family moved from:

Oh the Braes o' Kirkhill are a' fu' o' weans,
Some pu'in' buttercups and others thrown' stanes,
The coo coo a caufin' the roaron' o' the bull,
Pits me in rememberence o' the Braes o' Kirkhill.

If you'd like to walk yer lass I'll tell ye' whaur tae gang,
Doon by the Gorgie Burn whaur it runs alang,
If you'd like to keep her, keep her in good will,
Tak her for a ramble roon the Braes o' Kirkhill.

(Repeat first verse)

The "Braes of Kirkhill" seems to be closely related to a song found in the North East of Scotland called "The Braes o' Braenall" which celebrates a place in a similar way. The song is an affectionate tribute to their Lanarkshire childhood. Kirkhill is remembered by the family with affection:

It's a part o' Cambuslang noo but in these days it used

to be a village on its own. That was Kirkhill: A big public park there wi' natural gas in it, we used to go picnics in it. Lang afore they ever heard o' this natural gas we used to go up there wi' my mother. You could sit and boil a drum o' tea, put a match tae the rock, drum up; oh it was a great place.[62]

Another song link with Lanarkshire is in the song "Bonnie Woodha". This song is known throughout the Scottish coalfields, and has been recorded by the School of Scottish Studies from the singing of another miner, Geordie Hamilton, from the Lothians. Woodha', the place in the song, is of course in Lanarkshire, and the song obviously travelled with the Lanarkshire colliers:

Doon by yon green bushes by Calder's clear stream
Where me and my Annie sae offtimes hae been
Oh the 'oors they flew past us richt happy were we
And it's little she thocht that a sodger I'd be.

Oh the 22nd of August our regiment was lost
When a Call from the enemy our lines came across
Oh it stuck me on the foreheid and the blood trickled doon
I reeled and I staggered and I fell to the ground.

Come here cried our colonel, come here wi' great
speed
I'm afraid by that bullet young Dunsmore is deid
They brought up some bandage to bind up my head
And they carried me away to a hospital bed.

They poored out the whisky and brandy richt free
And they've turned me all over my wounds for to see
If I had my Annie to bind up my wounds
One kiss from her sweet lips would deeden the stouns.

It's when I am weary I think on lang syne
When I was a collier and worked in the mine
The tears they do trickle, and doon they do fa'
Like the roses that bloom aroon' bonnie Widha'.[63]

Apart from its reference to Lanarkshire "Bonnie Woodha'" has a special significance for the Douglas family. "Bonnie Woodha'" was the favourite song of the late Duncan Douglas, and therefore special in that it brought back memories of him:

Aye it's a lovely song. I got a wee bit sentimental there cause the auldest brother just died there. He just celebrated his Golden Wedding and he just enjoyed it, and he died just then. That was one o' his favourites. I learned it - he would learn it from my mother.

And when you all got thegither, see likes o' a wedding

or a funeral - a funeral o' a collier is just as good as a wedding. That wee man died, it would be aboot February or that. He was a great card in the pit, he was awfey wee. The rest o' them, big you know, and he was wee, but he worked at one o' the hardest jobs in the pit, he was a brusher, that's one of the toughest jobs you can get. A good brusher tae, a good worker.

He went doon the pit when he was aboot twelve and a half. He was clever, but what good was that in these days....So he had to leave school at twelve and a half and start. I think it was Bogha' he started in, that's a pit near Uddingston tae.[64]

The account of Duncan Douglas's funeral indicates how the family songs can take on a ceremonial quality. George Douglas explains:

...even today, if when we've getherin' thegither and we get maudlin...weddings or funerals. We had a wee brother tae me Duncan, he died last December. And Duncan says when I dee mind there'll be nae bloody mournin' and greetin', there'll be so much behind the bar for ye' tae drink.

If you meet my brother-in-law he'll tell ye', it was the best funeral he'd ever attended in his life. Because we carried on what he wanted. We had a party. Oh we

> cried and that, at the burial stuff. He was still dead, but that was his wish.
>
> We are a sentimental crowd, miners are, and they're crowd o' people who -. Look I've known it take their shirt off tae pawn in the pawnshops, I've known that happen to help somebody oot.[65]
>
> We were at a nephew's wedding there...a month ago. And eh, having a good time and dancin' and that, in the workmens' club....We left the younger yins tae dance away at the disco thing at night time. They're a' pretty good, maist o' them that sings an' that. And they tend tae, as everybody does when they get a wee bit bevy, they're kinda' half maudlin' half happy sort o' stuff. In fact a Douglas funeral is as good as a wedding.[66]

Family get-togethers represent events in which the sense of being part of the family is re-inforced through the singing of the songs. The songs are re-told as reference points in the family tradition, to underline the sense of belonging, and to instil the tradition in younger members.

> Oh aye, aye, aye, even we've a great-grandson that's had them sung to him in here when he comes up. You'll get him singing them just the same. And that's

> from my grannie's time. It was the natural thing that oh ye' a' sat listening. Well there were never less than three kids under school age.[67]

The experience of community life and the family's politics expanded the repertoire. The family sing the British Socialist song "The Red Flag", and "The Internationale". The Socialist songs are an integral part of the family tradition and are also sung on family occasions:

> You would remember mair o' what you were telit in the hoose and that. It came mair into ye' then. In fact aboot a fortnight ago was it?...I was goin' up the stairs, the phone rings I've a great grand nephew, the fourth Wullie - that's my grandfather's name....Well, his Billy has had a Billy just that night. Ken what they asked me to sing owre the phone? He says you're the only one that's left that knows a' the words of "The Red Flag". And I'd to sit and sing "The Red Flag" to them.[68]

Community get-togethers influenced the family's repertoire with songs from the popular and music hall traditions:

> Oh aye, the songs we were learnin', the next door neebour would be learnin' y'know. You would know a song that I wouldnae know, but you'd pick it up fae one another like this as the time went by.[69]

Mining villages, with their cramped houses in rows and squares, tended to encourage community life:

> See likes o' the good weather and that, on a Saturday night you'd sit at the doorstep in the rows, and whoever, maybe somebody wi' a wee button keyed melodion, and him [their father] wi' his tin whistle. And then they have a song, spontaneous...just a song themselves and that....Somebody'd say: "gie us a song Sanny," or "gie us a song Jimmy," just sing that was a'.[70]

The British tradition for "come as you please" sing-songs in local clubs and pubs reinforced the popular music hall traditions. In the mining village of Cowie the local landowner was powerful enough to invoke Victorian paternalism and stop any pub appearing in the village until well into this century.[71] Consequently the miners walked the few miles to the nearest pub. Jock Douglas captures the atmosphere with this description:

> See that Jeannie's that was a great night especially in the weather. That's what they cried the pub, that's no its proper name. It's just at the beginning o' Bannockburn - Muirhead's Pub the Muirhead Inn I think. But it was never anything else but Jeannie's.
>
> The big barman...ten to five, bus fu' o' Cowie colliers

an' that....He had a' the pints laid oot, the finest beer you ever tasted. You know how if beer's sittin' still it'll go flat?

Christ knows how they got into it, it was a wee room, wee'er than this [his living room], and they'd a' be crowded in there...they'd a' be singing. There was an auld bugger there wi' a box ken, a melodion; Auld Daddy Dick. It was tied up wi' chewing gum and bits o' string and paper. And Daddy would play and they'd a' sing.

And see at night Daddy would be tryin' to slip oot wi' his box, and Big Stevie, that was Muirhead that owned it, he would grab it aff him, because he paid Daddy to play... and he was 'feart Daddy would go some other place next week. So he collared the box aff him so the "resident artist" would be in next week.

Oh some comical times in it tae. Big Ben McQuade, he was Australian - Ben's deid noo tae b'Christ, and auld Dan McCormack, wi' his fiddle, Dan would play away. Aw thae yins, Burns, Irish yins, Moores, a' the good songs.[72]

The music hall also had a direct influence on the family tradition. This was particularly the case for George Douglas:

> In fact when I was a kid I was taken tae a' the theatres as a youngster. I don't know why oot o' sixteen o' us - I was the eighth oot a' sixteen. I was alway[illegible]tain' away wi' my faither and mother, back when we stayed in Newton in Lanarkshire, tae see the music hall.
>
> They used to sell them, a penny. Penny song sheets, aye, sell them on the street aye. There used to be an auld man in Glasgow...they ca'ed him the "Clincher", he made up wan aboot Peter Kearney, and while ye looked on. Just tell him yer name, and he'd gie ye a rhyme aboot yersel'. He used tae sell penny pamphlets tae.[73]

It seems to be the case that the broadside, or a form of the broadside, existed well into this century. Rab Douglas also remembers this, and as we shall see, the sheet sellers and their poetry also influenced his own rhymes:

> ...these was songs that was a' written by a local poet that probably was never heard tell o' ootside his -. Tae some auld man at one time or other got a' haud o' the auld Scottish standard songs, local songs. And there used to be a song sheet printed in Glasgow it would only cost ye' tuppence, "The Thistle Song Book", and he used to write a' these songs in the book. And it was

> auld Wullie Burnside that was the man that put them a' into book form, just the words nae music or nothing.[74]

The popular and music hall songs are distinct from the "family" songs. The family songs are usually regarded as the old songs, and are reserved for family occasions where they fulfil almost a ceremonial role. The Burns songs form another category. It is interesting that it is Wullie Douglas who should sing most of the Scottish popular songs and the Burns songs. Wullie is regarded as perhaps the most classical singer in the family. Wullie explains his position with regard to the songs:

> Well I knew plenty o' songs but likes o' mining songs I don't sing much o' them. I was in my day quite a fair tenor, and maist o' my time was taken up learning Scotch songs, or songs for Burns Suppers. That seems to be a thing that a lot o' mining people dae, despite the fact that Burns himself was a farmer.[75]

Wullie Douglas's song repertoire and style are also perceived as distinct by others in the family:

> I've sung a lot. Billy's probably got a better voice, but no a better singer, because it's like - singing, and I've done it for a number of years, all over the place. The presentation, Billy can come up and sing a beautiful song ken, but I could sing it, but it'd maybe come owre better wi' a wee bit flash, a flash singer I'd probably be.[76]

The distinction being made here is between Wullie, a singer whose model is the classical style, and George, who is clearly a singer in a more traditional style relying on the emotion from the song, and building up ornamentation in his singing. As George Douglas puts it himself: "flash".

The position with regard to style and repertoire perhaps relate to Wullie's position within the family. Although having been brought up as one of the brothers - the elders and tradition bearers within the family - and although being their contemporary in age, Wullie is actually a nephew. His repertoire includes Scottish popular songs such as "When Grannie Sang the Rowan Tree", "Dark Lochnagar", "Morag's Fairy Glen", and Burns songs such as "Afton Water", "The Braes o' Ballochmyle", and "Mary o' Argyll". Yet his repertoire also includes some of the family songs, such as "The Braes o' Kirkhill", and "My Mary" which relates to one of the traditional family names and was the name of his grandmother. When asked if the "old" songs related to actual events, or actual people, Wullie Douglas commented:

> No, I've heard them singing "Jimmie Raeburn" and "Jimmie Foyers". Strangely enough "Jimmie Foyers", I don't know it, but I've heard an auld uncle on my mother's side, and they never were miners....It was just an auld Scots song, "Jimmie Raeburn" may be mair o' a mining/type song. I've heard it often sung in the Gothenburg in Fallin when I lived there.

Similarly with regard to the mining disaster ballad Wullie comments:

> But he [his father] learned mining songs because he had seven brothers and himself that worked in the pit, 'plus his father ken. I'm fifth generation y'know. My faither like myself he used to go roon aboot singing at socials and Burns Suppers. And ye didnae learn many songs off them. Eh ken, I've heard him singing "The Blantyre Explosion" and likes o' songs "Bonnie Woodha".... But "The Blantyre Explosion" it actually bores me tae tears tae hear it gettin' sung.

Despite these comments Wullie Douglas does have two short mining songs. The first of these is a short celebration song:

> I'm going down the coal-hole Maggie
> I'm going down the hole to get the coal
> Wi' my shovel and my pick, my tally lamp and wick
> I'm going down the ole coal-hole.
>
> Get me my shovel and my pick Maggie
> I'm going down the hole to get the coal
> Wi' my shovel on my back and half-an-unce o' black
> I'm going down the ole coal-hole.

The other mining song in Wullie Douglas's repertoire is a lament for the closing of the Manor Powis colliery. Although the pit did not close when the song was written, sometime in the nineteen thirties, it did close in the early nineteen seventies:

Oh goodbye old pit of mine
For no more You'll blow lowsin' time
And our days are through digging coal from you
And goodbye old pit of mine.

A union card I'll keep as a token
In memory of you Manor Powis
I'd give up them all just to keep you
But it seems we're all on the brew.

When they close you down one morn
In the fields where you were born
Then they'll break a part of a miner's heart.
Goodbye old pit of mine.[77]

This song is sung to the tune of a navy song "Farewell Old Ship of Mine", and is similar to songs of lament for pit closures which A.L.Lloyd cites in Folksong in England.[78] It would, however, be wrong to suggest that these two songs are typical of his repertoire in general. More common in Wullie Douglas's repertoire are his Burns songs and popular Scottish songs such as those mentioned. Many of his songs were, however, learned orally and he includes a song which he learned from his mother which, although not a Burns

song is often mistaken for one:

> The lass that I loved first of a' was handsome young and fair.
> Wi' her I spent some happy nichts among the banks o' Ayr,
> Wi' her I spent some happy nichts while yon wee birnie rows.
> Whaur the echo mocks the corn-craik among the whinny knowes.
>
> We loved each other dearly, disputes we seldom had,
> As constant as a pendulum oor heartbeats always glad.
> We sought for joy and found it whaur yon birnie rows,
> Whaur the echo mocks the corn-craik among the whinny knowes.

Ailie Munro in her book The Folk Music Revival in Scotland lists this song, "The echo mocks the corncrake", as being among the most popular songs in the Scottish folksong revival, and gives four versions from singers of the revival. Although the two verses sung by Wullie Douglas differ slightly from some of the versions in Ailie Munro's book, it is nevertheless close to the version sung by Jack Foley, who learned the song orally from his grandmother. Robert Ford in Vagabond Songs and Ballads of Scotland notes that "The Corncrake Among the Whinny Knowes", is a "modern effusion" found in various

cheap song sheets. Although Wullie Douglas's two verses differ only very slightly from the version given by Ford, he himself learned the song orally. However, the popularity of the song has undoubtedly been increased by its inclusion in song sheets and collections of traditional song.[79]

It is perhaps significant that Wullie's position within the family is reflected through his more formal singing style and the differences in his song repertoire from those of the other brothers. Wullie is regarded as closer to a professional singer, and he does sing with a fine tenor voice which with training in his youth could have made him a professional singer. It is perhaps for these reasons that Wullie distances himself from the older less widely known songs which the family sing. The main part of Wullie's repertoire are songs which are widely known throughout Scotland. Indeed Wullie Douglas has sung his songs on cassette tapes for friends to take to expatriate Scots in Canada and Australia.

In general, however, the Douglas family sing songs which relate to their occupation as miners. Although the songs may not directly concern mining, they nevertheless reflect the traditions which the Douglas family feel emanate from the job-related culture. As we will see later in the study, mining requires from a worker a certain set of values which may include social values as well as work practice. The Douglas family songs are documents which reflect some of these values as the family perceive them. They were learned orally and

were passed on with the culture and values which constitute their tradition.

Notes

[1]A.E. Green, "Only Kidding...," p.59.

[2]Harrison, p.12.

[3]Personal interview with Jock Douglas, July 16 1981.

[4]Jock Douglas, July 16 1981.

[5]Jock Douglas, October 15 1981.

[6]Jock Douglas, July 16 1981.

[7]Personal interview with George Douglas, August 6 1981.

[8]Jock Douglas, July 16 1981.

[9]Jock Douglas, July 16 1981.

[10]Jock Douglas, July 16 1981.

[11]Jock Douglas, July 16 1981.

[12]The Tolpuddle Martyrs were Dorset farm labourers sentenced to transportation in 1834 for taking unlawful oaths and combining to form a trade union.

[13]Jock Douglas, October 15 1981.

[14]Personal interview with Rab Douglas, November 15 1981.

[15]Hoggart, p.33.

[16]Jock Douglas, October 15 1981.

[17]George Douglas, October 13 1981.

[18]George Douglas, October 13 1981.

[19]Jock Douglas, October 15 1981.

[20]The battles of Drumclog and Louden Hill took place during the Covenanting wars in 1678-9. The Coventanters represented a fundamental Protestantism and received support among many of the rural poor with anti-Royalist sentiments.

[21]Rab Douglas, August 31 1981.

[22]Jock Douglas, October 15 1981.

[23]Wullie Douglas, August 3 1981.

[24]George Douglas, August 6 1981.

[25]Personal interview with Robert Thompson, July 9 1981. For further information see the beginning of Ch.5.

[26]Lydia M. Fish, The Folklore of the Coal Miners of the North East of England, (Norwood, Pa.: Norwood Editions, 1975), is an example of the work done on North East England.

[27]Armstrong's major songs can be heard on Lou Killen et al., Tommy Armstrong of Tyneside, Topic, 12T122. For further information on the North East of England music hall see Colls, The Colliers Rant, Keith Gregson, Corvan: A Victorian Entertainer and his Songs, (Banbury: Kemble Press, 1983); Dave Harker, One for the Money..., and Dave Harker, George Ridley (Newcastle: Frank Graham, 1973).

[28]Jack Elliot's songs and stories can be heard on Jack Elliot of Birtly, Leader, LEA 4001. Johnny Handle has recorded a number of albums with the folk band The High Level Ranters, and Bob Davenport has also made a number of recordings of music hall, working class and mining songs.

[29]A.L. Lloyd, Folk Song in England (St. Albans, Herts.: Paladin, 1975), p.357, and Korson, Minstrels of the Mine Patch, p.7.

[30]Campbell and Reid, "The Independent Collier in Scotland," p.94.

[31]George Douglas, October 13 1981.

[32]Jock Douglas, July 16 1981.

[33]Jock Douglas, October 15 1981.

[34]George Douglas, October 13 1981.

[35]Jock Douglas, July 16 1981; and Robin Morton, Come Day, Go Day, God Send Sunday (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), p.69.

[36]Jock Douglas, July 16 1981.

[37]Rab Douglas, August 31 1981.

[38]Wullie Douglas, August 3 1981.

[39]George and Flora Douglas, August 6 1981.

[40]Dan Ben-Amos "Toward Definition of Folklore in Context," in Toward a New Perspectives in Folklore, ed. Américo Paredes and Richard Bauman (Austin: University of Texas Press for the American Folklore Society, 1972), p.11.

[41]Hamish Henderson, "A Colliery Disaster Ballad," Scottish Studies, 7 (1963), 96.

[42]Lloyd, p.321.

[43]George and Flora Douglas, August 6 1981.

[44]Bob Munro, "The Bothy Ballads," History Workshop, No. 3 (1977), p.193.

[45]Thompson, "Folklore, Anthropology and Social History," p.193.

[46]George Douglas, August 6 1981; and Robert Ford, Vagabond Songs and Ballads of Scotland, (Paisley: Alexander Gardiner, 1901), p.265.

[47]Rab Douglas, August 31 1981.

[48]George Douglas, August 6 1981.

[49]Information given by the National Gallery of Scotland.

[50]A.E. Green, "McCaffery: A Study in Variation and Function of a Ballad," Lore and Language, 1:5 (1971), 7.

[51]Edward D. Ives, "The Bonny Earl of Murray : The Ballad as History," Midwest Folklore, 9 (1959), 133.

[52]Seán Ó'Súilleabháin, "Oliver Cromwell in Irish Oral Tradition," Folklore Today, ed. Linda Degh et al. (Bloomington, Indiana : Indiana University Press, 1976), pp.473-483.

[53]Erik Erikson, Childhood and Society, 2nd ed. (New York: Norton, 1963), p.131, as quoted in Barre Toelken, "Folklore, Worldview and Communication," in Folklore, Performance and Communication, ed. Dan Ben-Amos and Kenneth S. Goldstein (The Hague: Mouton, 1975), p.276.

[54]E.H. Carr, What is History, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961), p.11.

[55]Cecil Sharp, English Folksong: Some Conclusions, (London: Simpkin and Novelloe, 1907), p.93.

[56]Rab Douglas, November 5 1981; and Patrick Shuldham-Shaw and Emily B. Lyle, The Greig-Duncan Folk Song Collection, (Aberdeen: University Press for Aberdeen University in Association with the School of Scottish Studies University of Edinburgh, 1981), I, 525.

[57]Jock Douglas, October 15 1981.

[58]Personal interview with Tom Cotter, Training Officer at Polmaise Colliery, Stirling, July 2 1981.

[59]The songs of Jock Cameron, School of Scottish Studies Archives, 934/10-14.

[60]Wullie Douglas, August 3 1981.

[61]Jock Douglas, July 16 1981.

[62]Jock Douglas, July 16 1981; and Tam Reid, "The Braes o' Braenall," on Tam Reid: King of the Bothy Ballad Singers, cassette, Heritage Sound, HRT001.

[63]Jock Douglas, July 16 1981.

[64]Jock Douglas, July 16 1981.

[65]George Douglas, August 6 1981.

[66]Jock Douglas, July 16 1981.

[67]George Douglas, August 6 1981.

[68]Jock Douglas, October 5 1981.

[69]Rab Douglas, August 31 1981.

[70]Jock Douglas, July 16 1981.

[71]Personal interview with District Councillor Henry Mulraney from the village of Cowie, Stirlingshire, June 20 1981.

[72]Jock Douglas, July 16 1981.

[73]George Douglas, October 13 1981.

[74]Rab Douglas, November 5 1981.

[75]Wullie Douglas, august 6 1981.

[76]George Douglas, August 6 1981.

[77]Wullie Douglas, October 27 1981.

[78]Lloyd, pp.373-77.

[79]Wullie Douglas, October 27 1981; and Munro The Folk Music Revival in Scotland, pp.86 and 293-307; and Ford, pp.325-7.

CHAPTER V

OCCUPATIONAL NARRATIVE AND TRADITION

In this chapter we will look at how the work based oral tradition in the mining industry is carried on through narrative. Where possible this will be done by allowing the miners to explain the situation in their own terms. However, the narratives can be divided into two main subject areas. The first of these concerns the miner's own image of himself and of his work, and the perceived attitude among non-miners toward the mining community. The second area relates to the actual work of mining coal and how this in turn affects the community.

The oral personal narrative has proved a slippery customer for folklorists to define, but if we bear in mind that tradition needs to be seen as a continuous process which encompasses not only the past, but the present and future as well, we come some way to understanding the personal narrative as folklore. Sandra Stahl has pointed out how innovation within a folklore form does not develop from nowhere. In this case the personal narrative is no different from any other folklore genre. As Sandra Stahl notes:

> We in fact might view innovation as an analytical construct that names a relatively high degree of recombination of traditional parts.[1]

It is perhaps a truism to say that nothing is totally original in life. Nevertheless, if we view tradition as a process we may assume that the degree of innovation has a fundamental relationship to the culture from which it came. This corresponds with what we described earlier as the internal structure of tradition. Bearing in mind our construct for understanding tradition, we may see innovation as a quality which may well end up forming part of a tradition. Or as Stahl has it: "today's innovation may be tomorrow's tradition."[2]

When the personal narrative is seen against other folklore genres it appears looser and less bound by formula and structure, or less prone to contain repetitive devices. These characteristics help us classify the text and slot it into a given generic area. Nevertheless, the link with living tradition must be seen as the fundamental factor in understanding any text. This does not mean that we ignore the generic classifications. There is undoubtedly a link between the personal narrative and other folklore genres. However, we do not intend attempting further sub-generic classifications here. Nevertheless, a link does exist, and theories defining personal narratives in terms linked to other genres and determining the proto-legend, or proto-memorate, or stating the links between personal narratives and the memorate or the historical legend, are undoubtedly useful. Personal narrative, then, does have a link with other folklore forms, and can also be distinguished from them. For example, Honko has shown how a memorate which is told from personal experience can

become the prototype for a legend.[3] Indeed many legends are told from the point of view of personal experience, and as modern urban legends show they need not be linked to supernatural happenings. In this sense personal narratives appear closer to the secular nature of urban legends than to what we call the belief legend. However, some form of belief remains; as anyone who is foolish enough to dispute the fact that health inspectors did not find dog remains in the local Chinese restaurant will no doubt find out.

By its very definition the personal narrative is more individual than the urban legend, and usually less well circulated. The personal narrative also develops some of its own characteristics from the personal and less formulaic nature of its structure. Personal narratives are generally less polished, usually individual, and often - although not always - are told in the first person containing a large degree of realism. The realistic element is important within the personal narrative as it is often the teller himself who creates the realism through the personal detail. The personal narrative is then distinguished from the legend by the fact that legend receives realism in terms of an already credible plot to which realistic detail may be added, while the personal narrative creates both the plot and the realistic detail.[4]

Reality, however, is to a large extent determined by culture, and it is from the culture that the structure, and the subject matter of any personal narrative will develop. To fully understand the

development of an individual's personal narratives we must first take account of his culture. Sandra Stahl again puts this concisely regarding folklore performance:

> No performance can actualize itself without some dependence on such traditional resources, but the folkloristic performance is the more distinguishable for its ready adherence to what seems to define the "essential" qualities of the performer's culture - the resources that make the culture (and its people) what it is.[5]

Up to a point then, no experience or story can be entirely individual. Individuality is always tempered by the need to communicate and the need to belong. To communicate effectively within a cultural framework requires any performer to base his performance on the elements of the cultural code. As Hymes has pointed out this does not have to be an entirely conscious decision. Leading from work done by Labov, Hymes notes how a performer may well be able to find a text culturally intelligible and be able to report this. However, he may be able to interpret the text but not analyse it, or in fact be able neither to analyse nor report on it.[6]

With regard to a work group such as miners we must take into account not only the elements of tradition which emanate from the work

itself, but also - particularly regarding the Scottish miners - their class and national identities. What we mean by this can perhaps be more clearly observed with regard to the more easily defined form of the joke. There are a number of jokes which miners tell to outsiders which illustrate various aspects of their cultural identity. The first of these concerns a miner who was out walking on the land of the local landowner. The landowner discovers the miner and asks him what he is doing, telling him that the land is his. To this the miner asks why he owns the land and how he obtained it. The landowner replies that he got it from his father. The miner then asks how the landowner's father got the land, and is told that he in turn got it from his father. This same exchange is followed through the generations of the landowner's family until they come to one ancestor, of whom the landowner replies that he had fought for it. At this the miner takes off his jacket throws it to the ground and replies: "well I'll fight you for it."[7] The implications of the joke for understanding mining culture are not hard to see. The joke posits a distinct attitude toward the unequal nature of land ownership, and of vast tracts of land being owned by one man because of his ancestors happened to be ruthless and powerful. There is a definite attempt to show that the miner understands the inequality, and is willing to fight to put it right. As a text the joke is well structured, void of unnnecessary description, and the penultimate incident where the jacket is thrown to the ground is a

concrete gesture which leads nicely to the punch-line. The meaning of this joke is unstated, its power lies in the ability to understand the nature of landownership in Scotland, and how the working class and the peasantry viewed this situation over the centuries. It reflects an image of the miner as one who would not be overawed by anyone simply because of his wealth or status. In this joke we can perhaps see why Burns' poetry - much of which contains democratic sentiments - is popular among miners.

Another joke, told sometimes as a true story, concerns a pit manager who calls in a union branch official during a strike and asks him if he can get the men back to work as the machinery is rusting. To this the miner replies that if the machinery is rusting then so is his frying pan. Again the joke is told to outsiders, and reflects an image of the miner as one who is prepared to stick out to the point of going hungry for what he believes is right. The joke tells an outsider that the miners have suffered and fought for their rights, and are prepared to do so again. Machinery may rust but men are more important than machines. In terms of understanding the significance of narratives told among miners these two jokes are important. Although the joke is a more fixed form than the narrative it nevertheless reflects the cultural attitudes of the men involved in the industry. To a miner these jokes would be understood perhaps without any need for analysis. Within them they contain some of the essential qualities of the miner's work culture which he wishes to

reflect to the outsider; in particular, the complex nature of solidarity and independence which A.E. Green has noticed in his research among miners.[8]

In the narratives in this chapter the miners themselves will explain their culture. By reading the accounts and comments it is hoped that the reader will arrive at an understanding of the work-based culture among miners.

The narratives in this chapter come mainly from working miners. For the most part they come from John McCormack and the National Union of Mineworkers Branch Committee at Polmaise Colliery, Fallin near Stirling. McCormack is in his early fifties, and has been at Polmaise all his working life, mainly at the coal face. He is tough, direct and is a very important figure in the functioning of Polmaise. McCormack's father worked at Polmaise before him, and McCormack senior is still an important figure in Fallin Miners Welfare. Like the Douglas family, McCormack senior has his roots in the Lanarkshire coalfield. The other members of the branch committee vary in ages from the late thirties to the mid-sixties.

Apart from the Douglas family other retired miners who took part in the study were Robert Thompson of Cowie, now in his eighties, who worked as a face worker at Cowie and Plean collieries, and Henry Grafin, also from Cowie, who worked as a brusher in Cowie and other

local collieries. Henry Grafin is of German parentage, and his father worked as a miner in Britain before him. Austin Connolly is a miner in his sixties who did not come from a mining background, but worked for most of his working life as a face worker in local collieries. Like Rab Douglas Austin is a poet, and his non-mining background gave an added perspective to the study.

H. Blumer made a significant observation regarding mining communities when he noted that traditional order was not replaced entirely by industrial society, since an individual is selective and will choose from elements of tradition, as well as elements of industrial life, to force certain modifications. How they do this will depend in part on the interpretations which miners make of their experiences. They interpret these experiences not simply in terms of their work situation, but from other sources such as traditional ideas that antedate industrial employment.[9] These ideas merge into what Hollowell has described as an occupational ideology. In the case of miners at least, an occupational ideology is much more than simply a set of work rules, but concerns social behaviour, and defines a self-image. As Hollowell points out:

> The self concept is socially derived and gives the individual and the group the notion of value of their work to society. The expectations a group develops in relation to the work its members do may be designated an occupational ideology. A brief definition of an

> occupational ideology is that it is a relatively stable system of beliefs and values by which the interests of the group are legitimised.[10]

An occupational ideology, then, requires conformity to a set of unwritten rules which are independent of the individual but collectively defined. It is through the occupational narratives of any group that their occupational ideology can perhaps be best understood. Jack Santino, who has made a number of studies of occupational narratives, divides the types of stories workers tell about their occupation into two rough categories:

> Occupational narratives provide insight into an index of specific challenges and problems that arise in a job. Two kinds of problems are indicated: (1) the kind of physical challenges requiring the skills a worker in that job would be expected to have, and (2) the sociological problems of responsibility, status and authority. The volume of stories in which hostility is demonstrated towards one's superiors, outsiders, or the general populace indicates that these problems are real and extensive.[11]

It is the second of Santino's definitions which will concern us first. More specifically we will look at the images which miners

have of their work and of their character, and how these are presented in their narratives. We will look particularly at the concept of a "good miner" and what qualities are deemed necessary to fulfil this.

Naturally being a "good miner" is both a social state and an occupational definition. In the first instance we will look at the image which the miner presents as a social state, and later deal with how this relates to the work itself.

The miner is well aware of the image which the population has of the mining community. The reason for the sensitivity toward outside opinion is to a large extent based on the experience of history. In an earlier chapter we dealt with the historical development of work-based culture in the mining industry. From the earliest developments of mining the outsiders, view of miners has been tinged with suspicion. In the seventeenth century in some parts of the country miners were not buried in consecrated ground. There are numerous accounts from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries where miners are described as a race apart, often in the same style of rhetoric which was used to describe the "savages" and natives of the new world. In more modern times with the advent of pit head baths the mysterious black figures with shining teeth and musty smelling clothes have disappeared from the streets of towns in mining areas. Nevertheless, the mining community is still sensitive to criticism. Perhaps these days it is their industrial militancy and social and political solidarity which

arouses the suspicion of outsiders.

To some extent a sympathetic or non-sympathetic view of mining communities divides along lines of class identification. The image of the miner as archetypal proletarian has had its effect on working class culture in general, and perhaps more particularly in middle class political circles. The image of the miner as independent, articulate and political, does, however, have a firm basis in reality. The collection of books held in Stirling University library known as the Watson Collection belonged to Jock Watson who was for many years the trade union delegate at Polmaise Colliery at Fallin near Stirling. A glance at Jock Watson's reading indicates a strong political and philosophical interest. John Watson was unusual, but nevertheless, within the mining community there were many of his generation, between the two wars, who had similar interests.

Despite the positive aspects of the cult of the archetypal proletarian empathy with miners is perhaps stronger in working class communities. In Stirling this feeling is indicated by a widely told story. George Douglas gave his particular version, although the story is told widely in the Stirling area:

> In the town o' Stirling the pits opened here in 1904 I think. And the miners came frae the colliery doon the road there. They werenae allowed to walk through the main street they'd to go all the backway. Because

> most of the mining clientele lived in the Top of the Town they ca' it the Top o' the Town yet, but it was the poor quarters, they werenae allowed to walk through the main street of Stirling at the start o' it.[12]

There are many variants of this story in Stirling; another concerns another working class area, Raploch. It is said that miners from Raploch were not allowed to walk through the established middle class area of Kings Park on their way home from work. The essence of the story remains the same, and truth or untruth is less important than how it reflects the miner's position within the wider community.

Another story told as true by George Douglas, and also found in the Sturdy manuscript as told in Lanarkshire, reflects a similar attitude:

> I was just having a laugh the other night there, where away back fifty years ago there were a tinker girl who was gettin' beat up by her father for gaun aboot wi' men. It showed you how they classified miners in these days. She said to her father: "if you don't stop beatin' [me] up I'll marry a miner and disgrace the family" [laughs] a gipsy, tinker. And that is y'know, facts.[13]

Jill Goldy notes how miners in Fife often told stories which were self-mocking, and indeed one story told of a trickster character noted how when he went to the zoo and saw the monkeys he reflected on how despite the monkeys' antics they were not so daft as to work with a pick and shovel in a pit.[14] Sykes also notes on the work culture of navvies how it was common to flaunt the characteristics for which the group were socially stigmatised.[15]

These stories show how miners are aware of their historical position as outsiders. Whether this exists or not today is less important than the fact that the miners themselves still tell these stories to outsiders.

The image of the miner as an outsider did not, however, end in the past, and miners' narratives still reflect the image. Wullie Douglas tells of an incident when he was a young man whilst coming home from his work in the service bus rather than the special bus for the pit. On the bus an old man asked him how his day had been, and made a comment on how well paid miners were. Wullie Douglas comments that he had sixteen shillings and eight pence per shift. He showed the old man his pay line, but the old man could not believe the truth:

> You get people who sit down and talk to you quite freely ken, no miners, they talk quite freely aboot the pits, and see when it comes to a point, you explain something say: "och, you're a fuckin' liar; a youse miners are a' the same."[16]

Another of Wullie Douglas's stories makes a similar point:

> It's a matter o' pride ye can talk aboot pits -. And I honestly believe that the miners are a helluva close knit community, and even to the present time eh the miners -. I don't mean that people dislike me, but they dislike miners as a community. Ken ye get people, ken, we were in oor club this mornin' eh upstairs, it's a beautiful place, lovely lounge and a wee sing-song room. Eh, I went tae the Gas to see aboot gettin' commercial rates for gas. And I explained to the manager eh, what I was in for. "Oh!" he says: "aye my daughter's been in that club, she says it's a lovely place; in fact she says its too bloody good for miners." I says: "well I'll fuckin' tell you something pal, and you can stick your commercial rates up yer arse if you like. If ever I find who yer daughter is she'll no be in the Miners Welfare again."[17]

The obvious point in telling these stories is to impress upon the outsider how the mining community is often little understood outside its own ranks. This attitude exists even within the modern mining industry.

Although the modern mining industry is highly mechanised many of the old skills are still required. However, we shall see how many of the skills required are as much social as practical. Many miners

regret the fact that mechanisation has reduced the degree of technical skill required, which has had its effect on the total conception of a good miner:

> ...there's no many miners noo ken; ken, right miners, come off mining stock. Eh, you get somebody, because, eh you've even got distinction between miners and tradesmen in the pit noo. They [tradesmen] think they're above ye. They think that if there's any dirty work tae be done; if you'r gaun tae be dirtyin' your haunds, that the miner should be doin' it. Ken what I mean, and this is the kind o' class distinction you're gettin' in the pit noo. Which the miners as far as we're concerned, it doesnae worry us, at the end o' the day, as far as we're concerned if there's any class distinction we're on the top o' them.
>
> And we've found oot also that some o' the wans that do come here they don't come off mining stock....And they're prepared to look doon their noses at ye.
>
> Whether they've been tellt this eh, in their bringing up: "Miners were trash a' their days...," and lots o' things like that I don't know...[18]

These statements seem to suggest that a good miner is born rather than trained. The perceived distinction between the tradesman and the miner indicates that the introduction of new technology created problems at the cultural as well as at the technical level. To some extent

mining remains an industry where social and work relations overlap. Consequently the degree of informal internal codes and norms is perhaps higher than in other industries. The scheme of ideas, beliefs and values which support the code of conduct, esoteric knowledge, prejudices, stereotypes, myths and ideologies, which give meaning to occurences, will go well beyond the realm of the actual work task involved. McCarl has observed how what he calls "technique" within an occupation may often embrace behaviour which is outwith the direct area of the productive task:

> Technique reflects the "working knowledge" (what you need to know to do the work) of any work group, and as it is passed from one worker to another through imitation and instruction, it begins to reveal a pattern of interactions that is unique to that particular group and almost invisible to the outsider.
>
> Technique is also a more useful term because it indicates a form of interaction with tools, environment, and other workers that connotes expertise and esoteric knowledge. At the same time it often provides a more specific referent from which work processes and patterns of behaviour can be viewed.[19]

In study of black South African miners Robert J. Gordon noted how "Weta Zomina," what he translates as "recipe knowledge", was

seen as the whole behavioural pattern needed to function well as a miner. This pattern defined relationships between fellow black workers and the whites, and included being able to drink a lot, as well as including a taboo against stealing from another black worker. The recipe knowledge was institutionalised among the black workers in the "Culture of the Brotherhood."[20] Such informal organisations were common in Scotland at times when formal labour organisations were weak, and indeed there are parallels with the Society of Horsemen among the North East farm workers at the beginning of this century, and the Free Colliers' Lodges around the 1860's, as well as other early working class organisations.

With regard to the modern British mining industry A.E. Green has suggested that an informal system of induction operates to help underground workers function well as a team. Green suggests that kidding acts in the form of an informal game system in which the object is to avoid losing your temper. This complex system may often verge on humiliating the victim, and Green includes various induction ceremonies for young men which involve forms of sexual humiliation. The intention is that the individual learns to put individual will second to the collective aims of the group, much in the same way as a recruit is inducted into an army combat unit.[21]

Whether we call it "Technique" or "recipe knowledge", and however the induction process is carried out or the code maintained, there

undoubtedly exists an informal code defining what constitutes a good miner. Morevover, what constitutes a good miner goes beyond the area of technical skill required in the miner's craft.

Being a good miner consists of what are essentially male qualities. Mining in Britain is exclusively a male domain. The coal mines act of 1842 ensured that women were not allowed to work underground - although until recently women worked at manual surface jobs, and they continue to work in colliery canteens and offices. The distinctly male nature of mining had its cognitive manifestation in the much quoted belief that meeting a woman on the way to work in the pit was a bad omen. Nevertheless, the male nature of mining manifests itself in the qualities which are seen to constitute a good miner. John Brown noted how the male ethos was passed on to young boys who at one time would wait on the surface for the miners coming off shift to be given the remains of their lunch - the "pit piece". It was said by the boys that eating the pit piece made them grow into strong men.[22] Similarly, as with the African miners, drinking alcohol often has a relationship with manliness and with being a good miner. Drinking was however condemned by many middle class observers of mining life during the Victorian period. Not surprisingly there was a substantial minority in mining communities who accepted the values of temperance. Many of those who accepted temperance were motivated by religious belief, and to a large extent they accepted the values of self help which went with temperance. Within the Scottish mining

industry those who were non-drinkers were often members of small non-conformist religious sects, and were given the somewhat pejorative title of "hallelujahs". Although comments can be heard such as, "never trust a man who doesn't drink", and one miner, when asked what miners thought of non-drinkers replied, "Their first reaction would be that he was a miserable bastard," in general there is no direct prejudice shown against those who do not conform to a "good brother" image:

> Well the society, if you look at it this way Peter, the miner in the collier's rows, and the workin' man was looked down upon in society. He shouldnae be drinkin' he should be settin' the money intae the hoose. He should be rearin' his weans wi' his money. But the same ones at the top of the tree were hob-nobbin' and have everything they wanted, and condemn the workin' man for knockin' his pan oot every day, and then gaun oot on a Friday or Saturday night for a couple a' pints.[23]

While working people were able to see through middle class moralising, and self help and temperance may not have been entirely pervasive, in-group and class solidarity did not allow for outright condemnation of deviants - at least to outside investigators. Nevertheless, there remains an interesting number of narratives told of the "hallelujahs" which tell the tale by themselves:

I remember I'd be, it was just before we got married. I worked at the brushin' [roadsman in the pit] wi' a fella' ca'ed Wullie Wilson, and another fella' ca'ed Geordie Patterson.

Geordie wasnae' the full shillin', and there were a contractor in the pit, Easton, I forget his first name, but his second name was Easton, and he finally coaxed Geordie to get into the hallelujahs.

So there was Geordie, he was giving ten pereent of his wages to the church. And the only thing that he kept up was - he was a bird fancier - he used to breed canaries, and take them to shows. He lived in Coalsnaughton; that's up in the hills just abin Tillicoultry....

Geordie was at a bird show in Alloa Town Hall, efter the show's past, oh maybe aboot forty...and they've a' got their wee cages wi' a couple o' canaries. And walkin' doon the road, well Geordie's got tae walk hame tae Coalsnaughton, there were nae buses, maybe a walk aboot four miles.

So there are half-a-dozen blokes nippin' - it's pourin' frae the heavens - this fella's nippin' in tae this pub, half-a-dozen o' them intal that pub, and they're still walkin' on and on, 'till eventually there's only Geordie

and this other fella' left. And the water runnin' oot his erse.

And the last pub before ye hit Coalsnaughton road, I think it's the Commercial Inn they ca'ed it. And there were only Geordie and this other fella'. The other fella' says: "well, I'm gaun in for a pint!" So the fella' walked off and he left Geordie. And there was Geordie staunin', he's got a big bunnet on his heid, and the watter's runnin' oot his erse. And he said: "would Jesus Christ have stood oot here? No, I'm fuckin' share he wouldnae." And he walked intae the pub and got drunk, first time in aboot three year y'know.

And then he finally lands hame at Coalsnaughton, the watter's still runnin' oot o' him; but drunk. And when he walked in the door his wife said to him: "George that's the happiest I've seen ye lookin' for three fuckin' year" [laughs].

And he landed at the pit on Monday, and this Easton says to him: "George, you don't have to tell me, I've heard all about it, you're walking in the dark again" [laughs].

This well crafted narrative indicates how if the hallelujah were

not condemned outright they nevertheless remained outwith the scope of the informal work group code. Another aspect of the code which defined the "good brother" deals with swearing:

> ...you got a' the fellas they either went tae the Church o' Scotland or the Roman Catholic Church, they werenae bad ay'know, it was the fellas that got the bug wi' Jehovahs Witnesses and the Plymouth Brethrin. Oh ye just couldnae live wi' them, ken ye werenae supposed to swear in front o' them doon the pit....

Another narrative indicates how swearing and the Hallelujahs mixed:

> 'I remember the last pit I worked in I was an oversman in a power loadin' face. A power loadin' face, it works wi' hydraulics ken. It's automatic, it's only two or three jobs that are, really take physical work.
>
> And there were an auld fella' frae Fife, Joe Foley, in fact his name was Frank Foley, but they ca'ed him Joe because he was a Communist ye see. And Joe was a single man, and again he wasnae the full shillin'. And he worked at the top o' the run, and he cleared the coal away.
>
> And auld Joe, it was his job tae clean the coal away frae the supports so's they could advance forward. And I don't know if you've met any Fife miners, but

they can all swear for twenty minutes without repeating themselves y'know. And Joe always spoke to himself, ken, he worked by himself, so he spoke to himself. And he's shovellin' away at the coal, and he's cursin' and swearin' and blasphemin'; everything was wrong. The only thing that was good was Joe Stalin and the Communist Party.

And we got a new manager and his name was McArthur, and he was a halleluyah, and he was only a wee man aboot eh, aboot five foot two. And he'd been in the pit aboot six month before he came doon the pit. And eventually when he did come doon he's got a nylon boiler suit on, a white new nylon boiler suit on, a white silk scarf, a red helmet, puttees, gloves, a walkin' stick, and a hand lamp. And he walks in this top road, and they ca'ed the section 05. And wee McArthur walks in and here was Joe shovellin' away, shovellin' coal and cursin' and swearin'. And well McArthur says: "listen sir, is it completely necessary for you to curse and swear like that. It's people like you that give miners a bad name."

So Joe turned roon and says: "whae the fuckin' hell are you talkin' tae, ye wee insignificant little bastard, wi' yer nylon boiler suit and yer white scarf." ken etc. etc.

And the wee man says: "here, dae you know who I am?" And there were a system in the pit then, ye just - in fact it still exists - ye press a button and it stops everything. So he [Joe] presses the button and it stops the conveyor, then he presses the intercom: "come in Wullie Douglas, come in Wullie Douglas," and I was only aboot twenty feet away you know, I could hear everything that was goin' on y'know.

So I pressed the button to reply I said: "what is it Joe?" Well the job I was on you're a first aid man ken so: "what is it Joe?" He said: "you'd better get yourself fuckin' up here, there's a bastard up here lost his memory" [laughs].

This was the colliery way y'know. And see when I landed up the wee manager staunin' like that you'd have thought he was going to pish himself laughin' you know.

Funny enough although he was a hallelujah he got his books oot o' that...for stealin' material. He was stealin' timber for to build huts and fences in his hoose.[25]

Oh there used to - when I was a laddie, I was workin' taking supplies into the coal face ken, that's timber trees

for the roof. And eh, it was aboot two-and-a-half feet o' coal, and the old fireman, Peter Roy was his name, was a hallelujah. Ye know Peter didnae swear. And one o' the boys says - this Jock White he worked at the top o' the run - he says: "Now Peter," he says eh, "auld Jock dropped his piece on the way doon. Will ye take it doon the wa' tae him." Ken, it was tied up wi' a bit o' string. And eh Peter's got a shot firin' cable, a safety lamp, a wee bag o' clay, a bag o' detonators. So he's crawlin' doon the wa', and every noo and then he's sayin': "my my!" he says, "there's an awfey smell o' human dirt aboot here." And he'd lift it up again and crawl doon.

And see when he got doon to the bottom the fella opened the box to see what it was, and it was a box o' human shit. And auld Peter ken he didnae swear tae. Oh he's crawlin' doon the wa' wi' it in his mooth.[26]

These stories indicate the deviant position which the hallelujah occupy in mining society. If we accept A.E. Green's theory that kidding acts to test the victim, the game being not to "flood out", or to lose one's temper, then the last story would seem to indicate the victim passed the test. To some extent the hallelujah threaten the concept of the "good brother" intrinsic to the male orientated pit

culture which requires a man to fit in as part of a homogeneous group.

The need for a cohesive working group, and the informal methods for obtaining this are noticed by those who have responsibility for training within the industry. The training officer at one colliery commented:

> If you have a weakness, a miner will find it. If you've a stutter, or if you've a weakness for girls, or a weakness for beer, or a weakness for what, you name it, fish and chips, they'll find it. And they'll catch on very quickly, and they won't give you peace.
>
> It's, it's to be friendly it's to be, to give them the impression they know you, they're well acquainted with you, when they can talk about your personal feelings in a way in which nobody else outside the pits would attempt to do.[27]

The process of acceptance requires almost de-personalisation, a loss of surface personality. An aspect of this is seen in the number of nicknames given to men in the pit. These nicknames often refer to personal traits. Men can work in a pit for years with their proper names not known:

> It was just last night we were talkin' aboot that Cody, was it, or the other day before that? Saying somebody

asked his name, George Drummond. Who was saying it? "I never kent yer name...."

If he'd says: "Cody" - "Oh Cody, oh aye." And likes o' the wee man there, if you say Alec Ross, they say: "who the fuck's Alec Ross?" If you say "Mucker", right away.

There's men worked in the pit as John said, if somebody was sayin' "have you seen a particular person?" He would say: "No, no." But if they said a particular nickname, you know right away, they're recognised.[28]

I think the very fact that men work together over a long period, they get to know each other, their backgrounds, what their preferences are you know, socially and so on. And there's kinship develops.

Part of the team, part of the unit: part of everyday life in fact.[29]

The concept of being part of the unit, the team, the kinship group, in mining, demands high moral as well as technical standards. A good miner must be able to accept a collective philosophy in regard to his work situation:

But the miners, the miners always helped wan-another ken, whit ah mean they always did that. You wouldnae

> get a miner walking by and seeing a boy stuck wi' his work. Ye maybe get an occasional like that. But ye wouldnae get a miner walking away and leaving another miner injured, ye wouldnae get that....
>
> If a miner was going oot the pit gate washed, and they were tellt there were a miner injured four mile away underground, and there were naebody there tae bring that man up, they'd go back doon there tae bring that man up. Nae payment for it; they would dae that, nae arguments aboot these kinna things.[30]

It is important that a good miner abides by these unwritten rules. A miner who does not abide by the rules is deemed not to be a miner. This particular story was told about a miner who did not come from a mining family:

> If a man, an aulder man in the pit...who wasnae fit for a particular job his attitude [the deviant miner] is - and he's been heard to say it by other miners: "Aye well he shouldnae be in the fuckin' pit, get him tae fuck oot." Noo this is where we term they're no miners, ken what I mean. You wouldnae get a miner sayin' that. Likes o' what I mean is my father was a miner, and a' thae boys faithers was miners. You wouldnae get us sayin' aboot an auld man: "if he's no fit get him tae fuck oot there." We wouldnae say that because we're miners. But he disnae come off mining stock.[31]

Holliwell noticed a similar moral code in the job culture of the lorry driver, which extended to a proper code of road manners.[32]

"Coming off mining stock" undoubtedly has its advantages in the mining industry. The overlap between social life and work within mining remains reasonably strong. Even if the village pits are disappearing the mining villages themselves remain. The family obviously can play a big part in educating a boy for the industry. This is important if we remember that being a good miner requires more than simply technique:

> O aye, that's where we learned half oor - maybe they're my two brothers and John's my faither, they were sittin' at the table, and I was still at the school. And they would say: "we hit a bad stane, a hitch in it," or something like that....And I sittin' maybe at my dinner the same time as them, and I could hear a' that. Well I kent that I was goin' tae the mining, so naturally....A miner's son in fact had an inherent knowledge before he ever came in a pit, through conversations ye had wi' brothers, uncles, faithers, and so on.
>
> But when I started in the pit ye didnae dae that, ye started straight from the school, and ye maybe had a half-day; you got away maybe two hours early from

school. The maister would let you away: "right, you're starting in the pit on Monday, aye you go and see the manager." So instead o' coming in ye came across to the pit. So instead o' seeing the manager ye saw the pit heid gaffer, a boy by the name o' Hughie Davis. And he would ask your name, and you would say to him: "I'm John McCormack." "And what's your faither's name?" "Auld Corrie." "Oh, he works in the pit, a miner, aye. You start on Monday morning, you be owre here on Monday morning at seven o' clock." See then you got yer locker and aw different things like that, and you were as happy as a Lord.[33]

If you're startin' younger men in the pit noo there's a difference between startin' a miner's son than startin' somebody who never was in the mining industry. Their attitudes is different aw-thegither as if they were tellt, you're just a miner and that's that. But a miner's son can grow up in the mining village, a community, he knows the score, he knows the twang....I mean if you're talkin' aboot different things doon the pit ken: "gie's owre a 'dolly'," a boy comin' frae Bridge of Allen [not a mining village] and aw these places, would never, he wouldnae ken what you were talkin' aboot. But a mining son knows that because his faither would

> would say there's a dolly doon there away and get it and split it up for wood. Ken, a dolly's only a small bit o' wood.[34]

Informal educational systems within the mining industry remain important even today when an official comprehensive training system exists. This informal training exists as much at the level of "recipe knowledge" or "technique" as it does with regard to direct technical training. As McCarl has observed, developing a work "technique" "is unique to that particular group and almost invisible to the outsider."[35] Everett Hughes has suggested that what McCarl calls "technique" may extend beyond the work itself into the social life:

> The interests, which the occupational group couches in a language more or less its own, are the basis of the code and policy of the occupational group. The code is the occupation's prescribed activity of the individuals within toward each other; the policy represents its relation to the community in which they operate.[36]

With regard to mining the position in terms of technique, code, recipe knowledge, or whatever we may call it, is more pronounced. The work - social life overlap, which remains significant despite changes, and the peculiar working environment in mining, together tend to reinforce the need for, and the use of, specialised and informal systems

of communication. There are some suggestions that working underground needs different senses from those which are needed in a surface occupation. One man involved in the training of miners explained the particular nature of the work thus:

> If a person wants to know what it's like to be dead, and be conscious of being dead. If you're dead you're not conscious obviously, if you're asleep you're not conscious. But they're getting an opportunity to see what like it is to be dead. In other words your senses don't function. Another sense develops. Takes twenty years to make a miner.[37]

It is also said that those who never develop that sense never leave the pit bottom. The development of the senses within the underground environment is not some mysterious process. However, it does depend on a number of factors which include a large degree of family and informal in-group education:

> It's there - it just grows - it's there. I suppose there must be similar things in other industries. You know, I don't know, a steelworks, where there is molten metal and so on, they must develop an instinct to know in fact that's going to spark oot, you know. But there is instinct there.
>
> If there's a bit of roof missing, just say the roof's

> supposed to be like that, and there's a big hole in that roof, ye ken just lookin' at it what you're going tae dae.
>
> Ye ken what's wanted, and yet if somebody asked ye what you were going tae dae sometimes ye couldnae tell them. Ye'd just start away the job and it just comes as ye gan' along ken, ye get the job done.[38]

The development of different senses within the pit extends to behavioural characteristics. Perhaps most noticeable in this respect is the amount of swearing which goes on in the pit. Most observers of the mining industry have made comment on swearing. Dennis and his colleagues suggest the swearing relates to the fact that underground is an exclusively male world.[39] Zweig, however, notes how there appears to be a surface self and an underground self:

> The unusual remark of a Bevan boy is: "How well-behaved, generous, hospitable and friendly the miners are on the top, and how rude and rough they can be at the pit bottom. Very often we cannot recognise the same men who swear and spit constantly in the pit, behaving so uncouthly and inconsistently, sometimes childishly, while on the top they behave like perfect gentlemen. It must be something in the atmosphere of the mine which makes them do so."[40]

Coombes also observed the distinction between the surface self and the underground self:

> Many of the miners feel there is something inhuman about a man who does not blaspheme at his work, although in their outside lives they act as decent folk. Even in the dread surroundings of a bad accidents I have never heard a prayer offered or suggested.[41]

The explanation for the amount of swearing underground appears to go beyond the realm of group identification. As we have already noted A.E. Green has put forward the idea that the swearing and kidding act according to game theory, in that rough verbal insults are used to test the individual, to test his ability to remain cool, to avoid "flooding out".[42] I.C. Cannon noticed similar behaviour in other occupations where particular enjoyment was gained by attempting to make people lose their equanimity: "getting them out" or "having them on."[43] Working in the pit can be oppressive to the spirit and could easily make a man sullen and deaden his sense of self. Modern mining requires a sense of collective responsibility which not only applies to the work itself but acts to counter the unsympathetic and threatening environment. The responsibility which is put on a man working underground creates pressure and tensions which may be absent in any other aspects of the miner's life. Every man within the pit is equally responsible for the safe working of the pit irrespective

of grade and status. The maintenance of safe working leads to this responsibility being maintained through language which is direct and sometimes harsh, coarse and obscene, to the outsider. Wullie Douglas's narrative concerning the berating of the new manager on his first day underground is not unusual. George Douglas tells a similar story:

> I caught the manager and the under-manager one day on a conveyor belt where they shouldn't have been. And I shouted and they jumped off. And I said: "what are ye doin' there?" And they said: "it's a'right Geordie." And I said: "it's no a'right you should be settin' an example." "We're just goin' owre there." I says: "you werenae goin' owre nae place." I says: "I saw you jump on down there, they big lights you've got on gave ye away." I says: "if it had been somebody else you'd have been bookin' him."[44]

Since nationalisation of the industry most management positions in the pit are held by men who started their working lives as miners:

> If you understand the mining system every man in the pit, including the manager, under-manager, every single man who's in the pit - apart from a few clerks - were all miners, were all boys in the pit. So even the manager, whose office is greatly respected by the people in the pit...he was still a miner. He's not a special breed out of university straight into a manager's job,

> you can't do that. He's got to be a miner, he's got to learn all the tricks of the trade. So we all speak a common language, and he knows exactly what you're up to. You speak frankly to another miner, they won't be offended, because you can speak the same frankness back to them. If a miner's lazy the rest of the men tell him: "you're bloody lazy!" McCormack's [the pit trade-union delegate] favourite saying is: "you couldn't pu' a soger off yer granny."[45]

This directness appears to be most prevalent underground, and coupled with the harsh environment it seems to create a surface personality and an underground personality:

> The same man that'll say to the gaffer: "away you fuck yoursel' I'm no' doin' that." When they come up the pit and they get a job owre in the club ; maybe as chairman o' the club, the committee, or any part o' the club that they got to dae with. And you're doin' something wrong, maybe you're smokin' when you're playin' on the billiard tables. They'll say: "Hey! no smokin', dae ye no see the notice?" And you say: "away and fuck yerself." They'll bar ye oot, and say: "don't you talk to us that way." So it's different doon the

> pit. See you never go home and talk the same way. The manager'll talk that way to you. Even this morning when I was...: "for fuck's sake you're no goin' tae claim that are ye?" I said: "aye I'm claiming it."
>
> "Well your gettin' payed fuck all here, and there's fuckin' tellin' ye." He talks that way, and all the managers talk that way, a' the way doon the pit.[46]

If the language of the pit is violent there is however a taboo against physical violence underground:

> You won't hit another man in the pit, or he won't hit you. Because if you damage him how the hell can you get him up the pit. You've got to put him over your shoulder and carry him. But that's not the reason, it's comradeship, it's not done. You can call him a bastard if you wish.[47]
>
> No, I think they've just got mair respect for one another doon the pit. A hunner' times you've heard: "I'll see you when you get to the surface boy and I'll square your tail," and that. But they get washed, they get oot o' the pit and forget a' aboot it.[48]

The unwritten code of behaviour in mining takes time to learn in its entirety. However, in mining, like many other industries, the new entrant first seeks some form of outward mark of identification which will make him part of the group. Dennis and his colleagues observed how young miners often took a pride in going out with some black on their faces.[49] In the shipyards of Clydeside it was said that the newcomers sometimes put a bit of red lead paint on their caps to identify themselves as shipyard workers. A railway worker told Graeme Salaman that he felt he was really a railway worker only when he got his uniform: "Oh, it was when I first got my uniform, after twelve months service. I remember blacking my face so that people would think I was a fireman."[50] These marks of identification are part of the rhetoric of the job; they identify a newcomer directly with the work group. Within mining it is often with the elite face workers that job identification is strongest:

> I got a job on the pit bottom. That's just doon the shaft, staunin' there puttin' hutches on to go up the cage. And then ye seen the miners coming up wi' their knee pads and black faces, ye wanted to be involved. So the first thing you made enquiries where ye got a pair o' knee pads. And it's even the same yet you know, as soon as a man goes doon the pit, an oncost laddie [non face worker], supposing he's only working a

switch on a belt, he must get a pair o' knee pads. And ye got yer pair o' knee pads, so efter a period o' time ye were on the gaffer's backs ye wanted a job doon the section. Owre the brae as we cried it, doon the hill; look doon dark as hell, nae lights there. And ye kent the men were away there for 'oors walk or twae 'oors walk.[51]

Another badge of membership of underground society was chewing tobacco. As cigarettes are not allowed underground due to the risk of fire, chewing tobacco became a substitute among miners:

Noo see the problem wi' chewing tobacco, ye didnae smoke underground, and if ye did smoke to keep you from longing for a smoke you chewed tobacco. Plus, eh, when you were spittin' out and ye didnae swallow the dust and it kept away the silicosis and the pneumoconiosis.

I chewed tobacco before I smoked, and eh by the time I went to the pit I was a confirmed chewer y'know. And the great thing in the pit is see, when a new laddie starts is: "are ye wantin' a chew son?" And the laddie 'feart tae say no so he takes a chew o' tobacco. So what they usually say is: "noo have a good chew at it son, and swallow yer first spittin', and you'll be as right as rain." Of course the silly wee innocent he did

that, and he was aboot as sick as a pig for aboot half-an-'oor. So it either killed him or cured him; he became a confirmed chewer.[52]

I remember my faither was nightshift on a coal cuttin' machine, cuttin' the run, and I was on transportin' between the pit bottom and the coal face y'know. Takin' the hutches wi' haulage rope wi' what we called a smallman clip.

I was doon the pit and started work when my faither was still at the coal face. And when I seen two or three lights comin' oot the road I said: "this'll be my faither comin." If ye were chewin', and I was 'feart to spit in case my faither kent I was chewin' tobacco and he gied me a skelp aboot the lug y'see. So I used tae - ken ye were maybe swallowin' a wee bit juice waitin' tae yer faither went by; then ye spit like hell ye see.

Ken, one day he was walkin' oot the road and he says: "here sir," and he handed me half-an-unce o' tobacco. And I thought I'd have got my heid punched for chewin' tobacco.[53]

Ken, ye were talkin' earlier aboot tobacco ye know, just like ye were talkin' aboot knee pads, what made ye a

miner see. Well young laddies on the pit bottom and that they had to get chewin', chewin' tobacco, that made them in their eyes, that was them a miner see.

Well I mind mysel' when I started in the pit a' the young fellas were chewin' tobacco, and I said: "well I'll need tae hae a go at this tae." For that reason, that made ye a big shot see. And the strippers came oot early see, and this guy, I said: "see's a bit o' tobacco." So I got a chew at this. Well if ye swallow this juice yer ill see. So I thought I was a great guy I'm chewin' this tobacco and spittin' away and so on, see. I swallowed some juice, and I never felt so ill in all my life. I came up the pit and I got a bus tae Stirling, I staggered to what they call the Shell Park, and I couldnae move another inch.[54]

Another narrative on the subject of job identification indicates that even if the young miner identified himself as a miner, this did not guarantee total acceptance, and subtle methods could be used to deflate any precocity:

It was an auld ex-miner that worked in the Miner's Welfare owre there, a boy ca'ed Bob Hutton see. And at this time you were always dyin' for a game o' snooker, and we'd two snooker tables owre there. And I can

always remember, the two o' us started at the pit thegither, a boy ca'ed Shunt Broon they ca'ed him, he started as an electrician, and I started on the pit heid as a miner. And on the first day we started in the pit we flew across tae the Miners' Welfare wi' oor pit boots on. Naebody ever wears pit boots noo, but you always took yer pit boots hame wi' ye ken, ye wore them. Right across tae auld Bob Hutton and put oor name doon for snooker. Dyin' for a game at fuckin' snooker ken.

So he looked up the book, this was on Monday at five-o-clock, he says: "you're playin' on Friday at half-past-eight." So we're sittin' there a' week watchin' snooker. Everybody was the very same. So come the Friday he shouted: "right McCormack and Brown." So we dived on and got the cue, away to play. He says: "let's see yer hauns." Showed him the hauns like that. He says: "get them washed." So we came back in these other two boys is playin' the table. I says: "Mr. Hutton" I says: "that's oor hauns." "Aye they're clean noo," he says. "Put back doon again and you'll get a game next Friday." That's what happened owre there, and thae boys'll tell ye it's true. Aye ye waited a full week for a game and when it came your turn because your hauns wusnae clean. And everybody at that time a' sat

> in the Welfare, and see your een, no the men in the pit. I'm talkin' aboot the boys just newly started in the pit, their een was that thickness wi' stoor, everybody washed their face, but no their een. So that between your een and your pit boots you were a miner.[55]

Becoming part of mining society in relatively modern times may have been marked by such unofficial symbols as knee pads or chewing tobacco, yet the older traditions in the pit to some extent remain. The miner's "ben" represented his right to enter the pit and cut his daily amount of coal: his "darg". This practice went back to pre-industrial times. Boys who entered the pit with their father were allowed to cut a half or quarter of the man's share depending on their age. The system insured an equal distribution of work, and the market price of coal could be kept steady as output could be regulated by the "ben".

In more recent times the ben remained in force for regulating the equal distribution of work between face workers. This was important since infrequent and irregular transport or technical difficulties could make a pit idle for two or three days at a time. The system operated by allowing each man to fill an equal amount of tubs or hutches. A system closest to the original working of the "ben" was described by Robert Thompson, a retired collier in his eighties from the village of Cowie in Stirlingshire. Robert Thompson described the system as

"ben-'n-rake" which he said was in operation in Cowie pit until the nineteen twenties:

R. Thompson: Ower there they werenae allowed to dae that at one time because they only filled so many hutches per day. Ye darenae fill an extra yin.

Kearney: Why was that?

R. Thompson: Just the agreement the men had.

Kearney: Between themselves, that wasn't the management that was the men?

R. Thompson: The men.

Kearney: What would they do if somebody filled more?

R. Thompson: They'd been idle, and maybe got a punch on the jaw. It was a system they had: "ben-'n-rake".

Kearney: What did that mean?

R. Thompson: Well it wrocht [worked], you get the first hutch the day I maybe get the second yin, third, fourth and so on [pointing to the others in the room] like that.

Well if we a' got what they cried the darg, the morn started away again in the same way. You was first see. But maybe the day you was maybe wan hutch short, I was

> a hutch short, they were two, and a' the rest o' the yins two. Well they were first the morn. See it was fair every wan tae get a fair share o' hutches.

Robert Thompson then related a narrative which explained an incident when an attempt was made to disrupt the system:

> There was a boy he were the ben regulator he settled any arguments, he was the ben regulator. Well there was one boy his faither wasnae workin' but he tain doon his faither's lamp see. When he went intae the face he's talkin' away as if he was talkin' tae his faither. And this boy that was the ben regulator went roon. I don't know. But he went a' roon the section looking for him, and he discovered he wasnae oot, he drew and hit the boy. He got fined for it.[56]

The system as described by Robert Thompson was broken and replaced by a simple first come first serve system, or as the colliers described it "who's last" - the man who comes behind claims the next place:

> See I could maybe hae something wrong a wee while, and you could get a hutch in front o' me. Well I'd tae get that yin made up.
>
> Efter they broke the darg - I don't know when it was they

broke it, I don't know when it was, but efter they broke the darg it was a case o' who's last they cried it ye see.

It was a' wan hoo many ye had. You would maybe say, say you was in a good place, you could maybe have fifteen hutches, I could maybe only have twelve, it didnae matter. The quicker you got filled and back.[57]

As Robert Thompson explains the miner's right to work, his "ben", was reduced from the right to an equal share to the right to a place in the line. In today's mechanised mining industry the "ben" relates to coming up from the pit after finishing a shift; the principle is that of "who's last":

Maist o' the arguments in the pit was a', even yet -. I've been in this pit for thirty-five year, and a' arguments in the pit, maistly among the men themsel', was when they came tae the pit bottom for what they term a "ben", tae go up the pit.

When ye come tae the pit bottom ye shout: "Who's last," and I'll shout: "I'm last," and you ken ye follow me. And it goes on and on. But when the tow comes doon there's always somebody diving in and eh, I'm afore you, and next thing - ken what I mean always arguments in the pit even yet.[58]

With regard to the miner's "darg" the original idea also remains in a reduced capacity:

> We term the "darg" here as a task. I mean the darg for the job. Likes o' the amount for the job. Anything above that you get extra y'know.[59]

The miners' prolonged resistance to work discipline is another aspect of traditional culture which died hard. The tradition of a collective response to taking a day off remained in the industry until recently. Various observers of mining life have speculated on the reasons for absenteeism in the industry. Dennis and his colleagues noted the "men who hardly think of going to work if they happened to have thirty shillings in their pockets on Monday mornings."[60] A.E. Green has suggested that the concept of a fair day's work among manual workers may not correlate with its managerial equivalent.[61] Within the mining industry, where team work is an essential part of the underground operation, absenteeism often required a collective response. We have already noted how Lynn Davies discovered the custom of throwing a cap in the air in order to decide on a day off for a group of men.[62] Almost every miner has had experience of throwing up the cap or throwing up a stone, and if it fell the miners had they day off:

> As far as I'm saying flinging up the hat I've seen that. Crowd o' boys no married or that. The face men canny work withoot the oncost. The facemen at the time maistly.

Aulder boys, because that was where the big money was.

Aye throw up a bunnet!...It happens noo, but when I came to the pit at first I'd guarantee that every Monday morning, the wee man'll tell you there, every Monday morning doon that fitba' park. The auld fitba' park was owre there Cody eh? I would guarantee there were sixty a side, a' miners: "what are ye idle for?" "Oh nae jam in the canteen, nae soap...," or anything like that. That's withoot a word of a lie.[63]

Another incident illustrates a variant of the collective response to taking off:

Well they were wanting the day off and they werenae wantin' tae say tae their wife they werenae gaun oot ye see. And them that had been doon early, instead o' gaun intae the baths and getting their pit claiths on, they hung aboot. Somebody else'd say: "is that a meeting this morning?" Every yin that came doon there were always mair getherin': "a meeting this morning?" 'Till it was too late, and they were all away hame. And that happened two or three times at the Plean.

That was in the nineteen fifties, because I was in Plean at the Queen's Coronation, and that was aboot fifty two.[64]

The harsh nature of pit work, and perhaps the worry about going back to a face which had been left over a weekend meant that Blue Monday was a significant custom in the mining industry. Zweig, however, suggests that the fact that mining requires teamwork, and places a heavy responsibility on the worker may also constitute a reason for having a day off; he quotes a miner as saying:

> "When I do not feel well I do not go down, because its not fair on my mates. It would be swinging on my mates."[65]

There is obviously no single answer to why absenteeism is a problem in the mining industry. The harsh nature of the environment, the feeling of letting the team down if one's health is not completely sound, the conception of what should constitute a fair working week, or indeed the long tradition of irregular work patterns, all seem to play a part. However, there is enough power in the work ethic for the issue to be sensitive when talking to outsiders:

> If it comes doon I'm no gaun and that. Nó no, that's more or less a fallacy. You've heard many stories aboot the boy gaun oot the door and chappin' the back windae and shoutin': "Are ye up Jock?"
> "Aye just the noo."
> "Too bad," they tell him the pit's idle. Or it's gaun ih and sayin':

"Where were ye?" He says:

"I was in the ootside toilet."

"Oh that's somebody shoutin' the pit's idle again."

And you get these stories that could have been true, but ye get a' these stories gaun aboot, aboot miners. Aboot the boy shuttin' his coat tail in the door, staunin' there 'till his wife got up in the mornin' [laughs]. Aye that is true, aye these stories. He didnae want tae go tae his work. He could have kicked the door and got his wife oot o' bed, but he stood there 'till his wife got up to put the kids to school in the mornin'. You got these kinna tales.[66]

The miner's wife was obviously significant in maintaining the work ethic if stories like the last one are to be believed. Another narrative which indicates this was told by a miner's wife; however the story itself is well known in the Scottish coalfields:

I'll tell ye a wee thing that, it's quite true. This uncle o' mine, his wife was a nark, and a proper nark. She was the type that would have kept him in the pit forever, ever and ever. And he gets up in the morning and - it was in the days when a man put his pit claiths on in the hoose. And she'd been up and done the necessary, and the ffre was banked up at night, so it

> was just a matter o' pokin' it up, and his piece [lunch] was made up, his tea was there for him to go oot. And she was lyin' on the thingby and he was sittin' half sleepin' and she says: "Alec, you're pittin' they boots on the wrong feet."
>
> He says: "aye, I should be pittin' on effin yours." And that was true.[67]

The considerable amount of oral narrative concerned with the industry indicates a strong oral culture. Similarly the history of the mining industry is for most miners an oral history. The stories of labour disputes and disaster remain in oral circulation long after their time. Dennis and his colleagues noticed how the nineteenth century Ashton riots remained as a significant part of the local miners' oral history a century after they occurred.[68] Zweig, writing in 1948 also noted:

> You would rationally deduce the young miner not being burdened with the past, the old grievances have little relevance for him. But unfortunately this is not true. The past has been transferred to him with his mother's milk.[69]

To some extent written accounts such as the official trade union history of the Scottish miners, R. Page Arnott's History of the Scottish Miners,

have played their part in feeding oral history. For example, an account given by Arnott taken from the evidence of the Children's Employment Commission of 1844, of an old miner who said he could remember being chained up for misbehaving when underground as a boy, has parallels still in oral circulation:

> I was sittin' wan night in the club and I was talkin' to auld Yogi Bear, auld Selkirk, this auld guy, he's deid noo. I says tae him: "when did you first go doon the pit Jimmy?"
>
> He says: "my faither got me an extension (or something) to draw off him at the face." He says: "and there were chains on the pit bottom." And he says tae his faither: "what are they for Da'?" He says: "that's where the bad boys go." And anybody that'd been giein' onay lip, any young yins ye know, that's what they manancled them there, chained them to the bottom. So he said, he tellt me and I'd nae reason to disbelieve him.[70]

This story was told by a miner in his early forties, and other miners present indicated that they believed that the chains were used to chain young boys, rather than the story being used to frighten the boy into behaving. A similar story was told by a miner from Clackmannan:

> The place was very much a mining area, the "Wee Coonty."

[Clackmannan]. The Earl o' Mar and Erskine, he was the number one ken, he used to put a neck band on his slaves, y'know, his miners, in case they ran away: "Return tae Mar and Erskine." That is fact y'know, sounds incredible."[71]

Whether written sources fed the oral tradition or not a strong sense of oral history remains intact, and accounts of hardship and struggle remain in oral circulation. In Stirlingshire accounts of the pre-nationalisation era - before 1945-- particularly those which concern contractors who contracted to the coal owners, are of particular relevance:

The contractor was the boy - there's a road there, and there's a road there, and there's a road there, and the manager'd say: "right I'm wantin' that road brushed." So the contractor would go into the manager and say: "right I'll get the men to start."
So he would come to the pit and, as Peter said, there would be aboot thirty or forty of the boys who couldnae get a job. And he would say: "go in, I'll take you, and that's what I'm going tae pay ye." And ye knew ye were gettin' done, but you were desperate for a job.
And the contractor didnae dae much work if onay, and he payed the men the money they were due in the boozer. There were nae pay pokes or pay lines.[72]

I remember before I got married, not long before I got married. Well I would never have drank in front o' my faither. [He] said to me this day: "come on I'll take ye in for a pint." And he was gaun tae the right hand side o' the Gothenburg, and it was congested. And me being no very big I says: "Holy Christ daddy, there's naebody doon there." I says: "let's go doon there."

He says: "no, no, no."

I says: "why."

He says: "that's the contractors thingby."

I says: "fuck them," y'know.

"Oh Christ son dinnae, you'll start trouble."

Noo that was auld..., auld....Who else noo, let me think? Auld..., you'll mind o' this auld...John. He used tae go doon the pit wi' white moleskins. Oh a fuckin' auld tryant. I says: "Aw fuck them." I says: "come on da'." And he stood sir, and it was as though he was tryin' tae hide fae these guys. I wanted to get fuckin' in.[73]

In fact auld...he's still living. If a man wanted something his wife paid oot the wages. See just as ye go oot the gate there son, across the road in the far away car park, owre there.

> There were a line o' hooses stood there that was for gaffers and contractors and y'know. If you did a doubler she sent doon a piece for ye, and docked a shillin' off yer wage for the fuckin' piece. Two or three slices o' chuck y'know.[74]

Besides contractors, stories are told about tyrannical managers or officials. This particular story is told about a pit worthy who confronted a particularly authoritarian manager:

> Another case o' auld Dunc's was - the manager here was ca'ed Big Baird, that was before nationalisation. And Auld Duncan was a pool leader, and they wanted mair money on the tonnage see. So a "Bradbury" at that time was ca'ed a pound. So Big Baird, oot wi' the bowler hat and that on, snapped his fingers when he wanted men, and a' this sort o' stuff.
>
> So auld Duncan was in and the agent was there, and auld Duncan was in and a' that. And you're no supposed to talk unless you're asked to talk when your case is being heard. So the manager says to the agent: "I'd like to ask Mr. Drummond himself what he is actually looking for from this agreement." So auld Duncan, he took the bunnet aff y'know and he bumped the table like this [bangs the table with his fist] and says: "a Bradbury ya' big Nazi Bastard." [laughter] He says: "a Bradbury ya big Nazi bastard."

He nearly fell aff the fuckin' chair. Auld Duncan got the sack.[75]

When I went to the colliery the gaffers; they were God, they just reigned supreme. And I remember an incident goin' for a job in the pit, and eh, away tae see the under-manager: "see Mr. Walls?"
"And eh when will he be up the pit?"
"He'll come up when he's ready son."
And eh you'd to wait, and there were aboot half a dozen others standin' beside ye y'know, a' waitin' tae see Bob Walls, for one job y'know. And he would step off the cage. And I remember goin' tae approach that man: "eh, Mr Walls, eh, I got tellt there was a job goin' in such and such." I named the particular section y'know: "I understand if I could get it." He never answered me, just kept walkin', an' brushed right by us. And the rest a' approached him and literally tugged at his sleeve, but phew! Right into the report room, and you stood like that, like idiots. So that was that.[76]

The Douglas family tell of a character, an official in the pit, whom they called "Black Jock". Black-Jock was a corrupt official who used his position to personal advantage. Although all the Douglas family interviewed said there was a character known as Black Jock in every pit community in Scotland, no evidence of this came to light. Nevertheless,

as narratives of a particular corrupt official they remain interesting:

> He was a pit official, Jock...was his name. He was an under-manager or oversman doon at Milliha', and he used to gie the blokes what we ca' beans, overtime. Beans, they would say: "are ye on the beans the night." It meant extra overtime.
>
> And he used to get the kinna selfish, especially young merrit' yins: "you're on the beans the night, quarter shift for you, lie on." And he was away seeing their wife.[77]

> There's Black Jock in every place in Scotland. Practically every pit community there's a type like that who can get himself into an official position, he uses it to seduce women or something.[78]

> He was always somebody that was a sort o' oversman, or somebody that was above the worker. And eh he would gie ye a task to do worth five shillings. He would gie ye seven bob for it, and you gie him half back.
> I met wi' one o' them mysel', and he says to me one day, he says: "are you payin' tax pal?"
> "Aye."
> "How much?"
> "I says how?"
> He says: "oh just a wee bit deal we could make."[79]

Black Jock in this case gave extra overtime without declaring it to the tax authorities, paid over the rate, and received his cut. The sexual aspect of Jock's devious activities is interesting from the point of view that Black Jock tales may well have been used to discourage men from working excessive amounts of overtime and thus breaking the unofficial code of the work group. The sexual aspect has particular relevance in an occupation such as mining which stresses the masculine image.

Maintenance of the unofficial code within the work group is often paralleled by maintenance of social solidarity within the communities. The social and political solidarity is sometimes enforced by strong but informal methods of social control. A.E.Green noted how the kidding which he describes among underground workers, and which extended into the social life of the communities, could be hurtful and humiliating in its attempt to maintain a cohesive spirit.[80] Dennis and his colleagues also commented on the way such informal sanctions could be applied within mining communities.[81] Within mining communities in Scotland, for example, the native gift for reductive comment led to separate houses for managers and pit officials in villages being termed the "dandy row." George Douglas remembers how sanctions could be applied through direct action, which he illustrated by recounting this incident from his Lanarkshire boyhood:

> Wan woman, her man went off and joined the army.
> And I remember very well, she was a fine lookin'

> woman, that's fae noo. I admired her as a woman. She took a man in wan weekend, some "fancy man." And I heard my mother relating the story many a time. The women in the village just went up and pit the windae in, bashed in, chased him doon the street starkers, and lethered hell oot o' her. One thing in a mining village they wouldnae tolerate that. Her man was away fightin'.[82]

Another incident indicates that while such action may not be as prevalent today the system for controlling deviant acts can still operate. This incident concerns a pit canteen manageress with a liking for Royalty:

> I can always remember the Queen was passin' through here tae...the Queen was passin' by there, and at that time they gin dinners in the canteen. And the manageress a wife ca'ed Mrs. White - think butter wouldnae melt in her mooth an' that: "Oh the dinners are off." She says eh: "the Queen'll be passin' by at such and such a time."
>
> So she jumped oot fae the back o' the coonter, her and her assistants went up tae the top o' the fuckin' road there. And the weans is a' lined up on the road. And a' the men in the pit were waiting for their dinner. And this auld worthy by the name o' Dunc Drummond he says:

"I'll fix that." He jumped owre the coonter: "hoo many for soup?" And dished oot the soup, steak pie and tatties; everything was there.

And when Mrs. White came back there werenae a thing in her fuckin' pots; and there were nothing in the till. [laughter] And everybody was satisfied, everybody was satisfied.[83]

It would be wrong to suggest that the system of village and pit life could not at times be cruel particularly to outsiders. Newcomers to the coalfields such as the Lithuanians who came over in the period between the two world wars, found that integration was often a slow process. The Lithuanians were described as Poles by the Scottish miners, Poles being a term which described anyone of Central European origin. This story indicates the process of Lithuanian integration:

At that time there were only eight men allowed in the cage at one time. And eh when the cage came doon a' the men on the pit bottom rushed forrit. And there were nine in the cage see, and auld Tommy [the pit bottomer] says: "you Pole off." The Pole says - ken 'cause once they're on and the gates is doon the cage canny go until he clears it. And he wasnae going to clear it until.... Although you could put nine ten or twelve on. But if somebody got hurt he was officially sacked. So if it had been a boy from Fallin he would just have let eight

go, or the ten or twelve or the fourteen go.

But his eye caught this Pole, He says: "hey you Pole off!" He says: "but I first Tommy." "I know yer first, but get fuckin' off ya Polish Bastard, yer no gaun fuckin' up there." Noo that happened tae a' the Poles every one o' them. And then if a section finished... and they were opening another section further doon. And the way it worked in the pit at that time was, the men that opened oot the section they got first chance o' a job in there. A' the rest o' the men in the pit, they just had to go to this auld section open it oot, start it up. When the section started they a' got first chance o' a job.

So this section finished, it was a' boys fae the village that started it, the Poles was a' intae their ain wee jobs and that. Haud a big meeting owre there, the union man would say: "you're needin' twenty one men."
"No I've got six Poles in it."
"Fuckin' Poles out!"
That's what happened to the Poles, the Poles got flung oot at the time. And as the years went by the Poles got married to some o' the local lassies. They started having a family, and the sons grew up, noo there are nae

> Roles: noo we're the fuckin' Poles. And if ye mention Poles you've to fight this yin and fight that yin. Everybody was one thegither. And I mean I was never involved in that mysel', because I would never dae that to whatever he was, a Pole or no'.[84]

While integration may have been a long, and at times cruel process, the solidarity among miners in labour disputes often overcame internal conflict. During this period when miners lived for the most part in company housing, evictions during labour disputes were a common occurence. Consequently the Miner's Welfare Institutes were originally set up as places where miners could lodge and fight the dispute. Similarly the Welfares were, and indeed are at this very moment, being used to feed the miners and their families on a collective basis during disputes. The narratives obviously reflect the experience of collective action during disputes which involved perhaps only one colliery:

> It was one o' the longest strikes in Britain it went on for eleven month.. A' the kids got fed owre in the Miners' Welfare there at soup kitchens, I mind o' this Snooks Wilson. The hue'n cry went up in the hall Snooks Wilson has foun' a bit beef in his soup.[85]

> There was an' auld fella' during the strike, Jock White they ca'ed this yin and they went oot and stole a sheep in the strike. The twenty six strike I'm talking aboot,

went and stole sheep. And here this night they got a lamb. The polis is roon, intae the hooses - the fermer was complainin' there were sheep gaun missing'. So here he had the sheep in the hoose to split up among the neebours. So he gets the sheep shoves it intae the cradle - every hoose had a cradle, plenty o' weans - and he put it in this cradle. The polis came in and said: "right where's the sheep, where have ye planked the sheep the night. Who's got it hidden?"

"O come on" he says, "you were seen you were there."

He says: "see this sir, owre there in that cradle lyin' as ill as hell."

He says: "I'm as innocent as that wee lamb lyin' in the cradle."

"Oh!" he says: "I'm sorry for disturbin' ye."

This particular story is listed in Aarne and Thompson's The Types of the Folktale, 1525M, Mak and the Sheep, where a sheep is dressed as a baby in a cradle so that the thief escapes detection. There are also similarities to a Middle English Folk Drama, the "Second Shepherd's Play," and the tale is well known in Germany and versions are found in Spain and in American Negro culture. It may well be the case that the story represents an attempt by economically oppressed sections of society to fool authority within a dramatic framework much in the same way as trickster tales deflate pomposity.[86]

During the Twenties and the Thirties the pawnshop played a large part in the life of many working class communities in Britain. Mining communities were no exception in this respect. As with stories concerning disputes, it is the slightly amusing aspects of the hard times which seem to remain in oral circulation. Nevertheless, relating the hard times whether in an amusing way or otherwise, acts to remind younger miners of the community experiences, and the shared history of struggle:

> Did I tell ye the story aboot Blantyre Barney. This was a card, what they'd cry an eccentric nooadays I suppose.
>
> He was skint, he liked his bevy and that [booze]. And he went intae the pawnshop, and he says tae the pawn man: "I want tae pawn that."
> And the pawn man says: "yer aff yer heid." He put doon a shillin'!
> He says: "I want tae pawn that."
> He says: "I can only gie ye elevenpence halfpenny for it." Cause ye had to pay a penny for the ticket. He says: "ye must be gaun roon the bend Barney at last."
> "Pawn that," he says.
> "What'll I put doon for that?"
> He says: "silverware". And he went oot and sold the ticket for a dollar [five shillings]. And that's true.

> And then there were another yin in Cambuslang, he went tae McGettigin's pawn shop regular. See that was the collier's regular. Friday night the good suit oot; the pawn Monday. It's a good job there no many pawns noo, but ye needed them in thae days, we were gled o' them.
>
> And this boy was a regular, as everybody was at that time. Got oot yer suit on the Friday night tae be done up for the weekend, and back in on the Monday.
>
> Well this boy was a regular McGettigin kent him, so he just used tae lift the parcel and throw it up on the top shelf: "aye right, a dollar," or whatever. Here this time it happened the boy needed the suit for a funeral on the Monday morning; but he also needed the dollar tae finance himself. So he goes intae McGettigin's, the brown parcel a' tied up: "aye right Jock." Throws up the parcel, and gies him his dollar. Ten minutes or so efter it the parcel was jumpin' aboot the top shelf - he'd pawned the cat [laughs].[87]

Another area of community life in mining communities was gambling. Studies have constantly speculated on why gambling should be so important among miners. Zweig suggests gambling represents the desire to escape the limitations of the miners' existence, the desire for self-assertion in competition and the desire for excitement.[88]

On a similar line A.E. Green suggests that gambling within mining communities is associated with the cohesive nature of the mining workforce. Because a miner works within an industry which requires a high degree of solidarity the gambling provides an outlet for the competitive instincts which are based on the secure social and work relationships.[89] McKibbin commenting on working class attitudes to gambling suggested that the "live for today" attitude behind working class gambling may well be related to irregular receipt of income. Certainly the mining industry prior to nationalisation would exhibit a good degree of irregular and unsteady employment.[90] It would be wrong to suggest that gambling at certain periods did not reach excess among certain members of the mining community, and wages often disappeared sometimes in single sessions. The favourite gambling activity in Scottish mining communities was tossing pennies:

> There were another great thing, see nearly a' pits, tossin' schools. Through the week they'd be pitchin' for enough to buy half-an-ounce o' tobacco, chowin' tobacco. And that was the shout if ye did three pair, three pair o' heids, shout: "tobacco!" ye wouldnae play anymair, as long as you had enough. But on a Friday, by Christ, a lot o' women went short o' their wages. Ken, they used to, it was just like puntin' and that addicted tae it. And if they lost,

they chased their losses, and eh, I didnae like tae see that.

I've seen managers comin' oot, especially that Cameron that was in the Manor: "I'll bastardin' jail yees if I catch ye." So he would bring the polis owre tae them. Because there were too many women gettin' beat for their pays.

It was a great thing just when ma bairns was bein' reared. And my man used to say: "I'm gaun tae the tossin' this mornin'." And I'd say: "oh when did you come on." Because the only thing he had in his pocket was his skin [pocket money]. He saw we had his hoose keepin' money comin' in, that was a' right.

Came in wan day, teemin' o' rain, and I cleaned it, and she was ironin' pound notes on the floor. And that's what happened very very seldom I did clean up. And it was pourin', and when I came hame, she says: I'll tell ye what tae dae wi' them, she pu'ed oot the iron and ironed them.[91]

There is no doubt that story telling, oral narratives, play an important part in the miner's work culture, even in the technological mining of today. It may well be that mining, despite its technology, remains an industry in which physical work can never be entirely

eliminated, and the sometimes dangerous and constantly oppressive world of the pit necessitates the moral support which reliving work experiences can give. Certainly the male ethos in mining eliminates any overt show of emotion. The responsibilities put on men in an underground environment can be heavy and the moral support given tacitly in a story telling session can therefore be important. The stories told generally relate to the occupation As one miner commented; miners may talk of sex, or money, or football underground, but in social situations they seem to talk about pits. Another miner commented on how his wife refused to go to the club with him on a Saturday night because when he was in company with other miners they talked constantly about their work. Within these narratives there is the reflection, not only of direct experience, but also of two centuries of oral tradition based on the mining industry.

Notes

[1]Sandra K.D. Stahl, "The Personal Narrative as Folklore," Journal of the Folklore Institute, 14 (1977), 10.

[2]Stahl, p.10.

[3]Lauri Honko, "Memorates and the Study of Folk Beliefs," Journal of the Folklore Institute, 1 (1964), 5-19.

[4]Sandra K.D. Stahl, "The Oral Personal Narrative in its Generic Context," Fabula, 18 (1977), 18-39.

[5]Stahl, "The Personal Narrative as Folklore," p.13.

[6]Dell Hymes, "Breakthrough Into Performance," in Folklore Performance and Communication, ed. Ben-Amos and Goldstein, p.14.

[7]This story was told to the writer by his grandfather who spent most of his working life in the pits of Ayrshire and Lanarkshire it is also quoted in Coils, p.163-4, where it is attributed to Lawrence Daly, ex-General Secretary of the National Union of Mineworkers, and a Scotsman.

[8]Green, "Only Kidding...," pp.53-67.

[9]H. Blumer, "Industrialisation and the Traditional Order," Sociology and Social Research, 48 (1964), 132.

[10]Hollowell, p.11.

[11]Jack Santino, "Characteristics of Occupational Narratives," Western Folklore, 37:3 (1978), 212.

[12]George Douglas, August 6 1981.

[13]George Douglas, August 6 1981; and Sturdy Manuscript.

[14]Goldy, p.75.

[15]Sykes, p.166.

[16]Wullie Douglas, August 3 1981.

[17]Wullie Douglas, August 3 1981.

[18]John McCormack et al., November 17 1981.

[19]McCarl, "Occupational Folklife: A Theoretical Hypothesis," p.148.

[20]Robert J. Gordon, Mines Masters and Migrants (Johannesberg: Raven Press, 1977), p.104.

[21]Green, "Only Kidding...," pp.53-57.

[22]John Brown, "The Passing of the Moudies," Scots Magazine, Sept. 1971, p.536.

[23]Rab Douglas, November 5 1981.

[24]Wullie Douglas, August 3 1981.

[25]Wullie Douglas, August 3 1981.

[26]Wullie Douglas, August 3 1981.

[27]Tom Cotter, July 2 1981.

[28]John McCormack et al., July 15 1981.

[29]John McCormack et al., July 15 1981.

[30]John McCormack et al., July 15 1981.

[31]John McCormack et al., November 17 1981.

[32]Hollowell, p.178.

[33]John McCormack et al., July 15 1981.

[34]John McCormack et al., July 15 1981.

[35]McCarl, 148.

[36]Everett Cherington Hughes, Men and Their Work (Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press, 1958), p.36.

[37]Tom Cotter, July 2 1981.

[38]John McCormack et al., July 15 1981.

[39]Dennis et al., p.216.

[40]F. Zweig, Men in Pits (London: Gollanz, 1948), p.32.

[41]B.L. Coombes, Miners' Day (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1945), p.8.

[42]Green, "Only Kidding...," pp.53-67.

[43]I.C. Cannon, "Ideology and Occupational Community: A Study of Compositors," Sociology, I (1967), 171.

[44]George Douglas, October 13 1981.

[45]Tom Cotter, July 2 1981.

[46]John McCormack et al., July 15 1981.

[47]Tom Cotter, July 2 1981.

[48]John McCormack et al., July 15 1981.

[49]Dennis et al., p.178.

[50]Graeme Salaman, "Two Occupational Communities: Examples of a Remarkable Convergence of Work and Non-Work," Sociological Review, NS 19 (1971), 391-2.

[51]John McCormack et al., July 15 1981.

[52]Wullie Douglas, August 3 1981.

[53]Wullie Douglas, August 3 1981.

[54]John McCormack et al., July 15 1981.

[55]John McCormack et al., November 17 1981.

[56]Robert Thompson, July 9 1981.

[57]Robert Thompson, July 19 1981.

[58]John McCormack et al., July 15 1981.

[59]John McCormack et al., November 17 1981.

[60]Dennis et al., p.30.

[61]Green, "Only Kidding..." pp.65-66.

[62]Davies, p.82.

[63]John McCormack et al., July 15 1981.

[64]Robert Thompson, July 9 1981.

[65]Zweig, p.7.

[66]George Douglas, October 13 1981.

[67]Mrs. Mary Douglas, October 15 1981.

[68]Dennis et al., pp.82-3.

[69]Zweig, p.19.

[70]John McCormack et al., November 17 1981.

[71]Austin Connolly, October 22 1981.

[72]John McCormack et al., July 15 1981.

[73]John McCormack et al., November 17 1981.

[74]John McCormack et al., November 17 1981.

[75]John McCormack et al., November 17 1981.

[76]Austin Connolly, October 22 1981.

[77]Jock Douglas, October 15 1981.

[78]Jock Douglas, October 15 1981.

[79]George Douglas, October 13 1981.

[80]Green, "Only Kidding...," p.59.

[81]Dennis et al., p.146.

[82]George Douglas, October 13 1981.

[83]John McCormack et al., July 15 1981.

[84]John McCormack et al., July 15 1981. For a further look at the integration of Lithuanian miners into Scottish society see Murdoch Rodgers, "The Lanarkshire Lithuanians," in Odyssey: Voices From Scotland's Recent Past, ed. Billy Kay (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1980), pp.18-25.

[85]John McCormack et al., November 17 1981.

[86]Jock Douglas, October 15 1981; and Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson, The Types of the Folktale: A Classification and Bibliography (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeaktemia 1961), 1525, p.434.

[87]Jock Douglas, October 15 1981.

[88]Zweig, p.114.

[89]Green "Only Kidding...," pp.61-2.

[90]McKibbin, 162.

[91]Jock and Mary Douglas, October 15 1981.

CHAPTER VI

FOLK POETRY AMONG MINERS

In a previous chapter we discussed the significance of the poetry of Robert Burns among the Scots miners. It is also important to recognise the importance of folk poetry within the mining industry, and how Burns' influence extended beyond his own work to influence folk poetry.

Kenneth S. Goldstein has commented on how folk poetry has only recently become an area of interest to folklorists.[1] The making of folk poetry among working people in Britain is, however, a significant activity. Roger deV. Renwick is one of the few people to have studied verse making activity among working people in Britain. In his book English Folk Poetry Renwick has defined the characteristics of working class poetry in a way which puts the poetry closer to the everyday speech of working people. Working class poetry, like traditional and local song, only rarely uses stylised modes like irony or metaphor which tend to challenge normative perception. The language does not deflect the audience attention from the referential and connotative functions of the verse. As Renwick points out, in this sense working class poetry is closer to language than traditional or elite poetry.[2]

Renwick has also noted how working class poetry relates to working class culture in general. Renwick describes the poetry as being "shared with experientially unified others in a social exchange between social equals." Implying that for the most part today's "folk"

are synonomous with the working class, Renwick recognises that folk poetry, like folk song, has a very significant social dimension;

> I suspect that not only does conventional localised verse usually come from working class poets, but that working class people tend to write such poetry as a social activity rather more than those of other classes.[3]

From Renwick's description we may assume that working class poetry is linked to other facets of working class life, particularly that part of working class speech which Bernstien has defined as the "restricted code". That is to say, that the poetry, like the speech, accepts certain implicit understandings from the audience.[4] The decoding of working class poetry therefore requires an understanding of those aspects of language and culture particular to the group. In this sense the poetry exists within a culture which expects a greater degree of group identification at the expense of individuality.

Looking at working class poetry as an art form relates very much to how the poetry is understood by working people themselves. As an art form working class poetry must be seen within the expectations of working class people. The question of artistic merit must also then be viewed against the class background. Bourdieu has pointed out how the structure and function of working class art should not be analysed with the same critical sense which we bring to what we call "high" or elite art.[5]

Working class verse-making is then essentially a social activity. Topics are usually local, and based on meaningful and actual events. The anonymous poet who wrote the poem of the Standburn Pit Disaster recited by Flora Douglas, and discussed in an earlier chapter, clearly meant the poem to reflect an immediate, direct, and culturally specific feeling. For these reasons the poem has remained, along with the song, a significant reference point within the Douglas family traditions.

Not surprisingly working class poetry plays a significant part in maintaining working class tradition.' Renwick notes significantly that the poetry is designed to be shared socially with "experientially unified others." This pre-supposes that working class poetry is in itself a traditional activity. As with the narrative, the implication is that the poetry derives its theme, structure, and presentation from aspects of tradition. R.D. Abrahams in his look at Black folk poetry, Deep Down in the Jungle, alludes to what we have earlier described as the dynamic of tradition: the dialectical relationship between the conservative and the innovative elements:

> The militating "organism" or piece of lore reflects its history in its very continuation. And it also echoes the special preoccupations of the group in which it is found. But the "organism" also acts as a generator, not only employing but also furthering, through the strength of its culturally accepted position the values implicit in its construction.[6]

In this chapter we will examine how working class poetry within the mining industry relates to tradition. We will be particularly concerned with the poetry of Rab Douglas, and the nature and traditional origins of his poetry.

Rab Douglas's poetry is clearly separated into two areas. The first of these is his individual poems, which deal with what Renwick describes as the usual topics of working class poetry:" ... local and 'real'" and based on actual people and events.[7] These individual poems are clearly thought of by Rab Douglas himself as the more serious of his poems. They stand on their own as individual texts, and deal with the type of events which Renwick describes, including disasters, events concerning those at work or in the family, or celebrations of the countryside. The other element of Rab Douglas's poetry consists of extempore verses, mostly made up of random lines concerning people within the company at the time, or rhymed events from newspapers interspersed with a simple chorus. This style is very similar to the calypso and the ceremonial poetry of black culture described by Abrahams and Bruce Jackson among others.[8] The style of verse was derived from copying the act of a popular Scottish Music Hall artist of the nineteen twenties and thirties called Charlie Kemble. In a similar way one of the poets Abrahams studied had borrowed from the act of the popular black entertainer Redd Fox. Rab Douglas is very clear about the distinction between these styles, and he explains how he perceives the distinction, and how both styles function very

much at a social level:

> See, take likes o' this instance, the wife's brother was 70 - eh aye 73 -, just about a month ago. Noo when I went into the party in Govan, uncle Bob's got to do his poetry. So I just went up. There'd be near enough to 150 in the hall, so I just stood up and did Charlie Kemble, see. But while I was doing Charlie Kemble something was running through my mind that I'll make a wee bit o' poetry up especially for George hisel' y'know, just five or six lines while I was doing the Kemble stuff y'see.[9]

The social significance of the poetry can be quite clearly seen in the adaption of the Charlie Kemble routine. The use of this particular style also indicates the strong links between popular culture and oral tradition. Kemble was a popular comedian around Scottish Music Halls. Albert Mackie describes Kemble's act in his book The Scotch Comedians as "a real show stopper. His rhymes were sometimes cruder than McGonagall's, but he always managed the rhythm".[10]

Kemble sang impromptu verses about people in the audience interspersed with the chorus: "Fal-ol-a-diddle-ol," which as Mackie says, gave him time to think. Rab Douglas explains how he became interested in Charlie Kemble:

Well I'll gie ye an instance, Auld Charlie Kemble was a well known entertainer wi' the Rothesay Royal Entertainers. And I seen Charlie Kemble fae I was aboot five year auld, and as far as my memory goes back. And every time I went and seen Charlie Kemble again it was the same auld stuff. Charlie never altered his wee thing. But noo when I go into a hall, Peter, and they ask me up to sing, they a' want the wan thing: "We'll have Charlie Kemble." Noo I don't impersonate Charlie Kemble, he gied me the inspiration to do it the way I wanted. And this is what Charlie Kemble used tae dae - the style he started off [sings]:

> Now here we're gathered in the room
> We a' come here to banish gloom
> Fol-ol-a-diddle-ol-a-day.

And that was Charlie Kemble, and this is Rab the Rhymer:

> Peter Kearney listens tae every word
> His haund's on his ear and he's got a wee red beard.
> Singing fol-ol-a-diddle-ol-a-day
> Cheerie wee chappie he's started to laugh
> He's doing a project and he thinks I'm daft
> Singing fol-ol-a-diddle-ol-a-day.11

Rab Douglas is clear as to how his Charlie Kemble routine works. As his wife put it: "He brings a' the people in that's sittin roon." Like Charlie Kemble Rab Douglas picks members of the company, and mentions aspects of their appearance:

> I'm lookin' roon at you, I'm singing aboot you, but my eyes is roamin', and I see somebody sitting owre in the corner. I know their name and its up in here [the head]. And they turn roon and say: "how is it you dae it sae quick?" Your mooth's speakin', but your mind's makin' it up.[12]

The bringing of the company together, by breaking down the initial barriers through identifying everyone in the company, is a relatively common device in popular entertainment. A.E. Green noticed how the Yorkshire poet he studied parodied the style of Robert Service, and included the names of local "worthies" in his poetry. Similarly folksongs, particularly occupation-based folksongs often take the form of naming the squad or the crew. Renwick comments on how Thomas Mercer, a blind fiddler from the East Riding of Yorkshire in the mid-nineteenth century, sang songs which brought all the company into the song by naming them.[13] Similarly evidence of naming individuals who are present at an event can be seen in many of the Irish songs which celebrate social events, and examples are also common among loggers' songs. During the 1984 miners' strike the Scottish Miner on September 1984

printed a number of poems and songs of the striking miners. Among them was a poem from a Fife miner called "Pickets' Glory" which mentions the names of the local group of miners' pickets. Among the verses this one is typical:

> Treasurer Tommy paid the price,
> Chairman Billy arrested twice,
> Frankie, Kenny, Eck as well
> Were also caught in policeman's hell
> Dennis, Tam and Michael Lee
> And don't forget there's also me,
> A mention too for a brave Danny Brown
> It took six of those bobbies to hold him down.[14]

Poems and songs such as this one help sustain the miners' unity, and preserve the solidarity of the strike. Renwick concludes of the songs of the blind Yorkshire fiddler Thomas Mercer, that his songs "contributed to the internal self-regulation of his rural society."[15] The strong emphasis on functionalism apart, the conclusion is unnecessarily mechanical. Naming those present at social events or in a work group, however, functions very much like seeing one's picture on television. It is surprising how when people see themselves on a home made video they tend to laugh at each other. Like the pictures on the video, naming individuals in songs places them in a dramatic framework which they can observe for the outside. Like the nicknaming among miners, Rab Douglas's Charlie Kemble

songs dramatise the individual's concept of self. There is a contrast between what we are, and how we are seen within the dramatic frame. As A.E.Green pointed out, naming and kidding are extremely important in the miners' work culture. Like the poet Green studied, Rab Douglas offers a benign attempt to create communitas through the mild kidding and the naming.

The other area of Rab Douglas's poetry has a more conscious and serious purpose. Again, however, the poetry is part of a working class tradition, and of the traditions common in mining communities. The themes and values of the Music Hall had a considerable influence on working class song and verse making. It is particularly significant in Scotland that the folk tradition and the popular tradition are very much interrelated. Indeed the nature of the development of Scottish poetry in general was such that in Scotland "art" poetry often derived its themes and setting from folk sources. The Dundee based newspaper the People's Journal, for example, published folk songs alongside songs which blended elements of the folk and the popular traditions. The bothy songs of the North-East of Scotland offer perhaps the clearest indication of how the folk tradition merged with the popular. The repertoire of the bothy singer would undoubtedly include songs which came from the popular tradition of the North-East of Scotland Music Hall.[16]

Perhaps the clearest link between folk poetry and Scottish

poetry in general is the work of Robert Burns. We have already mentioned the significance of Burns among the Scottish miners. However, apart from the aspects of the Scots language and the democratic philosophy, working people also find the rhyme scheme in Burns's poetry interesting. It is a standard aspect of many of the Burns Suppers, which are held to celebrate the anniversary of the poet's birth, that they often include a parody of the work of the poet. As is often said by those who propose the toast to the "Immortal Memory" at Burns Suppers, Burns was a man of the people. Unlike many other national poets Burns's work remains popular with those who perhaps know no other poetry. Goldstein notices how the formal rhyme scheme of much of Burns's poetry lends itself to recitation by those who like monologues.[17] Another significant influence on folk poetry has been the work of the Scots-Canadian poet, Robert Service. Again, Service wrote most of his work in formal rhyme schemes, and his work is parodied frequently. The folk poet A.E. Green studied parodied a Robert Service poem, and the Scottish Miner has also had parodies of some of Service's better known poems in its poetry section.[18] With both Burns and Robert Service it is often the narrative aspect of their poetry which is taken up by the folk poet. Burns's "Tam o' Shanter" is perhaps his most popular work, and offers a very fine example of narrative poetry. Similarly with Service's work it is his better narrative poems such as "The Shooting of Dan McGrew", or "The Cremation of Sam McGhie", which lend themselves to parodies by folk poets.

Rab Douglas and his brothers were exposed to both the folk and the popular traditions within their family. George Douglas tells how the family went to the Music Hall on a regular basis:

> Oh aye that was - ye see a these stars Charlie Kemble, Jack Radcliffe, Ike Friedman. In fact Jack Short; that's Jimmy Logan's father and mother, Short and Dale they ca'ed them. Wee Sam Murray that's dead. Right back tae Frank and Doris Droy a' the auld time Music Hall. In fact then I was taken tae a' the Theatres.[19]

Rab Douglas also attended the Music Hall on a regular basis:

> It used to only cost tuppence in the train fae Newton into Glasgow, and we'd get taken tae the Old Metropole, or the Panopticon. And it was always a different one every Friday night. So that we were brought up in the atmosphere of the old Variety Halls....And that was the big attraction at that time because there was nae such a thing as we'll go here, and we'll go there. It was as far as your money would allow ye tae go. And you could get intae the Metropole and that, in these days, for four pennies, and tuppence back and forrit' in the auld caur fae Cam'uslang intae Glesca', or ye went by train; for to see the shows.[20]

The Music Hall was cheap entertainment, and its local nature was able to reflect working class provincial life much more easily than the distant glamour of the Cinema. With the advent of television Variety became much more a national affair. However, local Music Hall artists would often tour very small towns, and within these areas there was always an outlet for amateur artists in pubs or concert parties. Like the miner folk poet whom A.E. Green studied, both George and Rab Douglas were performers with amateur concert parties which visited hospitals and prisons.

The Music Hall in Scotland was also important with regard to the folk tradition. The local nature of the Music Hall meant that aspects of Scots song and humour were very popular. The standard image of the Scots tenor or the Scots comedian is one dressed in Highland dress and singing songs of Burns or perhaps folk songs, or using local reference for jokes. A more direct example of how the Music Hall and the folk tradition interrelated was through broadsheet sellers. Up until the nineteen thirties, and perhaps later, broadsheet sellers were a feature of street life in Glasgow. The broadsheet seller would sell sheets and small booklets of popular Scottish songs sung by the Music Hall artists, or songs of their own composition. Rab Douglas tells of the influence of broadsheet sellers on his repertoire:

> And strangely enough I think that was mainly the reason why we got to learn the songs that we did then. My mother used to go in and there were

> these boys that sells the paper in the streets they used tae sell the song sheets priced aboot two pence.[21]

Rab and George Douglas remember one particular broadsheet seller whose act was a little unusual. George Douglas describes him first:

> They used to sell them, a penny, penny song sheets aye, sell them in the street aye. There used tae be an auld man in Glasgow...they ca'ed him the "Clincher". He made up, he rhymed, he made up. He'd make up wan aboot Peter Kearney, and while ye looked on. Just tell him yer name and he'd gie ye a rhyme aboot yersel. He used tae sell penny pamphlets tae.[22]

The "Clincher" obviously had an influence on Rab Douglas's poetry considering the style of his bespoke rhyme making. However, Rab himself remembers the broadsheet seller having more than one facet to his work:

> And he would shout oot the different titles of the songs, "The Bonnie Wells o' Wearie", and he would start off wi' "Come Owre the Stream Charlie", "The Bonnie Wells o' Wearie", "Annie Laurie", aye "Annie Laurie met Bonnie Prince [Charlie]." Y'know, and

> then [he] rhymed it out in a long line, so that everything, it was a' the titles of the song giving ye a story right frae the very start. Price the book aboot two pence. Aboot sixty or seventy songs in the one wee song sheet ye see.[23]

The popular Scottish writer Neil Munro also gives a description of the "Clincher", who was well known in Glasgow. The "Clincher" started by publicising his views about 1900, and his original intention was to put Scotland to rights. In doing this he was handicapped by what he described as: "the national bovineity of the so called British Press." "The Clincher" published his own paper which Munro describes as: "exuberant and poetic to a degree." The "Clincher's" name was Alex Petrie, and his beat was Buchanan St., Gordon St., and Hope St., which would have put him close to the Music Hall crowds.[24]

The "Clincher" was obviously very popular with working people, and his death and funeral in May 1937 merited mention in two editions of the Glasgow Evening Times, one of Scotland's most popular newspapers.[25]

If he did make bespoke songs as George Douglas remembers, then this certainly appears to have had an effect on Rab Douglas's poetry. Apart from his Charlie Kemble routine, Rab Douglas will demonstrate his ability to rhyme by making a personal poem for

his listener in the manner of the "Clincher":

> I got a surprise this morning
> When a chap came tae the door
> I answered it, and I sent oot,
> And I saw somebody I'd never seen before.
>
> He says "My name is Peter Kearney,
> I'm daeing a report on the mining class."
> I looked, and I wasnae shair, and I thought
> Oh I feel an awfey ass.
>
> He says I met your brother Geordie,
> I've been in Cowie and saw your Jock,
> And in their conversation it was of you that
> they spoke.[26]

This is hardly by any standards fine poetry. However, it is a humorous response to a situation, and it does emanate from a tradition in Scotland. It has long been the case that the Scottish poet whose work sells best in Scotland is William McGonagall. Writing of Charlie Kemble, Albert Mackie notes how "His rhymes were sometimes cruder than McGonagall's but he always managed the rhythm."[27] The mention of McGonagall is significant in terms of the tradition of humorous verse in Scotland. McGonagall was born in Dundee of Irish parents in 1830. McGonagall wrote poetry seriously. However, in accepted poetic terms his work was

undoubtedly bad. His rhymes were crude and his scansion sometimes non-existent. Hamish Henderson has speculated on whether the lack of metrical structure in McGonagall's poetry may be a cultural trait coming from his Irish background. The part of Ireland where McGonagall's parents came from produced many fine folksongs, which when read rather than sung to an air, do not scan. Henderson suggests that the lack of a sense of metre may be related to McGonagall being exposed to this type of song.[28] McGonagall also sold his poetry in the streets in much the same way as the broadsheet sellers would sell their songs. However we may accept Hamish Henderson's theory, McGonagall was not essentially a folk poet. Unlike Rab Douglas, McGonagall intended all his work to be taken seriously, and as a result was often a figure of fun. A classic example of the poetry of McGonagall can be seen in the first verse of his "The Tay Bridge Disaster" which he undoubtedly meant seriously:

> Beautiful Railway bridge of the Silvery Tay!
> Alas! I am very sorry to say
> That ninety lives have been taken away
> On the last Sabbath of 1897
> Which will be remembered for a very long time.[29]

Despite not being accepted as a serious poet, folk or otherwise, McGonagall has influenced Scottish popular tradition. For example, nonsense rhymes are in oral circulation which are attributed to McGonagall which he did not write, much in the same

way as some common sense philosophical maxims are attributed to Burns. A good example of this is the very popular rhyme attributed to McGonagall:

> As I was walking doon the road
> I met a coo; a bull b'God!

The test of the genuine McGonagall lies however in the fact that he took himself too seriously to write in the vernacular, and always used English.

McGonagall also influenced others, who took themselves less seriously, to emulate his style for comic purposes. Among those who wrote close to this style was the late Matt McGinn, who until recently, had a successful career singing his songs and reciting his poetry in folksong clubs. There have also been competitions in a Scottish national newspaper, and more recently on a radio show, to find Scotland's worst poet. The winner of the newspaper competition was one Walter McCorrisken, who bills himself as: "Scotland's worst poet." One may judge McCorrisken's claim by these lines:

> The coarsest boy I ever saw,
> When sailing doon the Broomielaw
> We as heard unto his Paw tae ca',
> "Haw gieza peaza pizza, Paw."
> His Maw, Italian, said, "Aw naw,
> It's pleeze gieza pieza pizza, Paw."[30]

McCorrisken is obviously influenced by McGonagall, and indeed the introduction to his book Cream of the Dross refers to McGonagall as the "master'." McCorrisken is in demand at festivals and social occasions to recite his bad poetry. Perhaps the best example to this genre of poetry came from the Scots cartoonist Bud Neill. Neill's poem "Winter" ranks alongside Matt McGinn's work as one of the funniest and best of the nonsense, or consciously bad style of verse:

> Winter's came, the snaw has fell
> Wee Josi's Nosis Frozis Well
> Wee Josi's Nose is Froze is Skintit,
> Winter's diabolic, Intit?

Both Neil and McGinn excel because of their command of the speech of the street, and they seem to have a finger on the pulse of the Scottish popular sense of humour. This genre demands wider attention than is given here. However, this style of popular bad verse remains appealing, and its roots can be traced as far as the broadsheet and the Music Hall.

Much of Rab Douglas's verse emanates from parts of these popular and folk traditions. His exposure to the folk tradition from his home background, his experience of the broadsheet sellers, of the Music Hall, and of the popular spontaneous comic verse tradition in Scotland, all play a part in influencing his work. Rab Douglas's poetry takes the form of a spontaneous reaction to events.

Often he does not even bother to write his verses down. When he does write them down they are often kept only as long as the event remains in currency. When asked to recite his rhymes he does so almost entirely from memory.

Rab Douglas started making rhymes very early in his life:

> Again, I can always remember, I'll need to tell you this. My mother was sittin' in the hoose wan night. My faither was aboot three year deed and ye know these wee children's competitions frae the papers, making up Limericks. But I remember sittin' doon wan night, my two eldest brothers was twins: Tam and Wull. My faither could take a drink, every wan o' us could take a drink. But my Mother always objected to any o' them comin' into the hoose wi' the smell i' drink even, see.
>
> So Tam and Wull came up tae the hoose wan night, and I can always - they'd went intae the wee pub, and I'd seen them gaun in. And they were'nae ten minutes in 'till they came up the stairs. And whenever my mother smelled the drink she gied the two o' them a tellin' off; the two o' them were married men. And I'm sittin' in the corner, ye know, never sayin' a word. And I don't know the inspiration came tae us yet, and this is what come oot frae my mind. I'd nae writin'

paper, I just lifted a bit o' auld magazine thing:

Oor Wull he had an awfay dream
When sleepin' in his bed
His body quivered wi' the fright,
And he dreamt that he was dead.

His funeral was a grand affair,
Oor Wull is noo away.
They dug a hole and put him in,
These words they heard us say:

"Oh please have mercy on his soul,
At times he did quite well,"
But instead o' Wullie going up
He went straight doon tae hell.

Noo Wull he didnae like this place,
But he couldnae,make a fuss.
He cursed it wi a' the power
O' a corporation bus.

His journey doon was very fast,
His courage stood him well.
Auld Nick was there to welcome him
Ootside the gates o' hell.

Wull he got a big surprise
As, he entered through the gates
The glasses were on the table
And the fruit was on the plates.

The banquet was aboot tae start,
And Wull he thocht it queer,
Six blondes came in, in their hands
They carried McEwan's beer.

Auld Nick he took him by the airm,
And to a chair Oor Wull was led
There sat a blonde with all her charm,
Said Wull: "Thank Christ I'm dead."

The blonde she sang a song
There came a shout,
They turned about,
They wondered what was wrong.

The voice kept calling softly,
And Wull he got a shock,
A horn was pressed against his chest,
And then Oor Wull awoke.

His wife was staunin' at his bed,
She let oot an awfay roar,
"Get up you drunken swine" she cried
"Don't lie in bed and snore".

Poor Wull's heid was very sore,
In fact it seemed to burst.
He'd drank too much the night before
He just lay there and cursed.

Noo Wull he has signed the pledge,
Nae mair he'll take the booze.
Such things can happen tae a man,
When he is on the booze.

But Wull he can't forget his dream,
He remembers it quite well.
His only wish is when he dies,
That he'll gan doon tae hell.[31]

Despite the sometimes erratic rhyme scheme there are obvious links with Burns in this poem: the use of the supernatural, the familiarity with the devil - Auld Nick -, and the witty ending. In terms of quality, however, we are far from Burns, and the motivation behind the poem comes from an attempt to lighten a domestic crisis. Most of Rab Douglas's poetry is a spontaneous reaction to events such as this. Much of it is short three or four line responses to events which were never written down:

> A lot o' stuff I was writin'....If I'd kept a' the poems and the wee stanzas, four or five verses aboot just meeting a character doon the pit. Now we'd a

fireman owre there in the Manor Powis, wee Tom Mooney, now y'know the old saying money is the root of all evil. Now the men doon the pit would be soaked tae the skin y'know. They were always [wanting] an early line to get up the pit. And Mooney was not too good at handing oot wet lines. Unless he thought the work was complete ye didnae get a wet line.

So this day I'm sittin' and the men had come up to the pit bottom and crying Mooney everything under the sun. And I just wrote on the hutch, instead o': "money is the root of all evil," I just wrote oot: "mooney is the root of all evil."

We work in the section,
O he's a devil.
No wet lines the day,
Mooney's the root of all evil.

Nae water money,
We'll never loose.
Mooney's the root of all evil
In the auld Manor Pools.

And when he read that he came up the pit and he's shoutin' the odds. Of course he took it a' in good part.[32]

Short poems like this to sanction some form of behaviour are a common occurrence in the working environment. Renwick noted this aspect of folk poetry when one of the poets he studied used a poem to sanction the bad behaviour of a young man at her place of work.[33] In a similar poem by Rab Douglas a young man is clearly given notice to watch his behaviour underground. If we remember A.E. Green's work on kidding underground this poem clearly represents another aspect of sanctioning deviant behaviour:

> Bloogy was a fightin' man,
> Seventeen years of age.
> Bloogy was a fightin' man,
> Bloogy was a' the rage.
>
> But when you get Bloogy up the pit,
> Bloogy was awfey slack.
> Bloogy was only his nickname,
> His right name was Wullie Black.
>
> Bloogy was a real - he was a heidcase. A young laddie doón the pit, he was a man the minute he went doon the pit; Bloogy was a heid case.[34]

Another poem used to sanction deviant behaviour was written about a man who was doing less than his fair share of work:

Six foot three on his own,
Big Pat M. . .n twenty stone.
There's wee Duncan there, five foot three,
Carries high weight like you and me.

But imagine carrying the big yin,
Staunin' alone.
Big Pat M. . .n,
Twenty stone.[35]

Korson noted a number of rhymes which were used in this way by miners in the United States. One in particular was used to sanction a miner who did excessive work, and therefore broke the unofficial output limit:

There's Pat Mullaly who never kept tally,
He would work a mule's work to get two men's pay.
Let's all get together and send him a letter,
The quicker the better to get him out of the way.[36]

The strong tradition of verse making in the pit is seen clearly in the pages of the Scottish Miner, the journal of the Scottish area of the National Union of Mineworkers. The Scottish Miner has over the years published a great number of poems by miners and ex-miners. Indeed in the colliery in which Rab Douglas worked another poet, Austin Connolly, and Rab both sent poetry to the journal:

> There was Austin Connolly and I at the pits, and Austin and I used to have a wee bit opposition wi' wan another. Austin could write in one poem and I would write in another.[37]

The poetry which Rab Douglas, Austin Connolly, and others wrote for the Scottish Miner tended to be either satirical or serious. Much of the poetry concerns disasters or working conditions. Rab Douglas was one of those who wrote on a very common theme in mining poetry, "blood on the coal." Rab's particular poem on this theme was printed in "Poet's Corner" in the Miner in 1958 and concerned the disasters at Lindsay and Kames collieries. This poem is a much more carefully crafted poem than some of the work which Rab repeats from memory, and in fact he did repeat this poem from memory while being interviewed and it showed certain variations. Apart from its printing in the Miner there is no other written record of the poem:

> The comrades who've left our ranks for all time
> Are remembered by the hardships they tholed
> In Muirkirk and Fife where disaster did strike
> They say that there's blood on the coal.
>
> Each week in the pits, in the bowels of the earth
> As they toiled no praise is extolled
> But disaster strikes quick and our comrades are lost
> Yes theirs is the blood on the coal.

Remember these men as at your fires you sit
The black diamonds their young lives have stole
Remember "Lindsay" and "Kames" and honour their names
Our comrades who left blood on the coal.[38]

Rab Douglas has also written on other mining disasters, among them the Valleyfield Disaster which occured in the Valleyfield Colliery in Fife on October 1939 when thirty five men were killed by an explosion:

Down in the bowels of the earth
Where lies this thing called coal
The hardy miner went to work
His hard work to thole.

But through the night there came a shout
An agonising scream
There's a fire damp explosion
In the diamond section seam.

With sudden thoughts for safety
The colliers tried to run
And Valleyfield has lost her men
Some fathers and their sons.

The death toll has been issued
Not many are alive
The diamond section claimed her toll
A toll of thirty five.

Heart broken wives and children
Stood patiently for hours
In search of news of loved ones
Who defy all nature's powers.

What must be done to change the life
Of the hardy collier breed
Increase the wages of the men
That is the crying need.

But money now can ne'er repay
That women who must yield
The loved ones who lost their lives
In the explosion at Valleyfield.[39]

These poems are interesting with regard to mining poetry, and particularly in relation to the theme of the disaster. We have suggested earlier with regard to the mining disaster ballad that the ascription of blame for a disaster and class identification may well be at the source of feeling which inspires their composition. This feeling may well be present although no direct evidence of class identification may appear in the text itself. Renwick found that in the texts which he studied on the Lofthouse Colliery disaster in Yorkshire it was a non-miner with a political background who wrote the only poem studied which saw the situation in class or political terms. The poems on the disaster written by miners of

ex-miners are generally written without any direct class identification or ascription of blame. The apparent absence of class identification fits generally with Renwick's remark on working class poetry they are:

> ...conventional interpretations that cultural norms place on experience, human impositions like "social class," which, while they have very real effects in the physical world, are not pre-determined by it as were the objective facts of the Lofthouse events.[40]

The fatalism which, Renwick suggests, determines the style of disaster poems is undoubtedly real. Nevertheless, in Rab Douglas's poems there is often a link between hardship and disaster and the economic and social relations which are seen to determine them. Rab Douglas indicates this in the poem on the Valleyfield Disaster when he states:

> What must be done to change the life
> Of the hardy collier breed
> Increase the wages of the men
> That is the crying need.[41]

The recurring theme in mining poetry of "blood on the coal" implicitly links pit disasters with the economic system rather than linking them directly to nature's powers. It is also the case that some of the poems analysed by Renwick link coal mining and mining

disasters to market forces. "What is the price of the coal?" asks one of the Lofthouse poets, Mr. Mugglestone. Another of the Lofthouse poets, Mr. Hampsey, states that "These men found the price of coal."[42] Writing on the Auchengeich Disaster, which happened in September 1959, a retired miner from Kilsyth also linked market forces with the disaster. His poem in the Scottish Miner ends:

> But the memory will never die,
> As long as time shall roll,
> Of those seven and forty miners
> Who paid the price of coal.[43]

A similar link can be seen in another poem on the same disaster, when the miner poet describes those who died as "Martyrs of labour."[44] In a poem on the Lindsay Pit Disaster a miner from the Mary Colliery again links the price of coal to the disaster:

> To those that say, "The coal is dear,"
> Perhaps to-day, have shed a tear,
> For those bereaved who are left to weep,
> When life is lost, coal's very cheap.[45]

In a version of his poem "Blood on the Coal," recited from memory, Rab Douglas also links the cost of coal to disaster:

But while you're heating yourself at the fire,
While your're keeping out of the cold,
Remember the blood and what has been done,
For that was the price of coal.[46]

As Renwick has pointed out, the themes of working class poetry reflect culturally specific phenomena based on "real" events.[47] It is not surprising therefore that hardship and accidents should be reflected in the poetry of miners. However, within the mining industry folk poetry is a significant activity. Rab Douglas relates this to a lyrical quality in the conversations among miners:

> Because when you're in conversation wi' them [miners] you'll sit and talk tae a man, you know right away there's some o' the men they're actually talkin' in rhyme to ye'. Y'know just their normal words, they're no rhymin' the words but the metre the rhythm and the voice.[48]

Considering some of the narrative we have discussed there certainly appears to be a lyrical quality in the speech. This perhaps relates to the fact that many miners still use a lot of Scots vernacular words in their speech. This perhaps relates again to the influence of Burns among miners. Moreover, as we have already stated, although miners are industrial workers they are mostly rural dwellers,

and many retain the speech rhythms of the country. As Karen Baldwin notes, much folk poetry is in fact close to everyday speech:

> Scraps of family experience, names of family members, references to their friends and to places where they lived and worked, descriptions of the things they had and the things which were done to them were worked together into rhyming stanzas meant to tell a story to evoke a strong emotion.[49]

Given the fact that folk poetry is close to everyday speech in both its subject matter and presentation it is consequently much more a social activity than "art" poetry. The folk poet does not reflect only his own experience. As T.M. Pearce points out, the folk poet has a duty to the community: [He] observes, documents, and condoles as a literary intermediary between the universal and particular for his people and the community.[50] It is for these reasons that miners write poetry on disasters and hardships. It is also for these reasons that much of the poetry is close to everyday speech and may appear crude and banal when measured against "art" poetry. As Bourdieu has noted, comparing working class culture with high art is more often than not using false guidelines. Making such comparison is asking working class poets to take over the intentions and means of academic culture, and to express experience structured by patterns of a culture which by means and intentions

is essentially alien.[51]

As a folk poet Rab Douglas reflects the emotions and concerns of the mining community in his poetry. During his war service in the navy he found himself in a community on the west coast of Scotland where many of the community had relatives on the battleship Hood which was sunk with many lives lost. Rab Douglas responded by writing a poem on the disaster much as he would have done in a mining community. The poem was printed in the local paper and used as a means of collecting for the families of those who were lost. In a similar way during the present 1984 mining dispute, perhaps the most bitter dispute in the history of the British mining industry, a large amount of poetry and song has emerged. Some of this has already been published in the Scottish Miner. The poetry which has emerged from the striking miners during the present dispute is written as a morale booster. It praises the struggles of the strikers, denounces the chairman of the National Coal Board, and names the names of many of the local activists who have taken part in the strike in various areas of Scotland. In its subject matter and style the poetry which has emerged from the strike is folk poetry in that, like the poetry and ballads on disaster, it reflects the emotions of mining communities, and for that reason is accepted by them.

NOTES

[1]Kenneth S. Goldstein, "Monologue Performance in Great Britain," Southern Folklore Quarterly, 40 (1976), 1.

[2]Roger de Veer Renwick, English Folk Poetry, p.5.

[3]Roger de Veer Renwick, "Individual Systems of Verse-Making...," p.11.

[4]Bernstein, "Social Class Language and Socialization," p.142.

[5]Bourdieu, p.352.

[6]R.D. Abrahams, Deep Down in the Jungle (Hatboro, Penn.: Folklore Associates, 1964), p.9.

[7]Renwick, "Individual Systems of Verse-Making Activity...," p.12.

[8]Abrahams, Deep Down in the Jungle, and Bruce Jackson, Get Your Ass in the Water and Swim Like Me (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974).

[9]Rab Douglas, November 5 1981.

[10]Albert D. Mackie, The Scotch Comedians (Edinburgh: Ramsay Head, 1973), p.167.

[11]Rab Douglas, August 31 1981.

[12]Rab Douglas, August 31 1981.

[13]A.E. Green, "Walter Wheeler and Dangerous Dan...," and Renwick, English Folk Poetry, p.157.

[14]Gordon Mackie. "Pickets Glory," Scottish Miner, September 1984, p.7.

[15]Renwick, English Folk Poetry, p.157.

[16]The supplement to the Peoples Journal 7 February 1931, for example, contains thirty one songs which included a number of songs from the collection of Gavin Greig as well as songs from the popular tradition.

[17]Goldstein, p.14.

[18]Scottish Miner, August 1972, p.4.

[19]George Douglas, September 13 1981.

[20]Rab Douglas, August 31 1981.

[21]Rab Douglas, August 31 1981.

[22]George Douglas, September 13 1981.

[23]Rab Douglas, August 31 1981.

[24]Neil Munro, The Brave Days (Edinburgh: Propose Press, 1931), p.230.

[25]Evening Times, 22 May 1937, p.7; and May 24 1937, p.1.

[26]Rab Douglas, August 31 1981.

[27]Mackie, p.67.

[28]Hamish Henderson, "McGonagall and the Irish Question," New Edinburgh Review, August - September 1971, pp. 38-44.

[29]William McGonagall, Poetic Gems (Dundee: David Winter, 1976), p.42.

[30]Walter McCorrisken, Cream of the Dross (Edinburgh: Albyn Press, 1979), p.5.

[31]Rab Douglas, August 31 1981.

[32]Rab Douglas, August 31 1981.

[33]Renwick, English Folk Poetry, p.166.

[34]Rab Douglas, August 31 1981.

[35]Rab Douglas, August 31 1981.

[36]Korson, Minstrels of the Mine Patch, p.232.

[37]Rab Douglas, August 31 1981.

[38]Rab Douglas, "Blood on the Coal," Scottish Miner, March 1958, p.6.

[39]Rab Douglas, August 31 1981.

[40]Renwick, English Folk Poetry, p.191.

[41]Rab Douglas, August 31 1981.

[42]Renwick, English Folk Poetry, p.207.

[43]D. Black, "The Price of Coal," Scottish Miner, November 1959, p.4.

[44]T.W. Berwick, "In Memory," Scottish Miner, November 1959, p.4.

[45]David Todd, "Echo, Lindsay Pit Disaster," Scottish Miner, June 1958, p.4.

[46]Rab Douglas, August 31 1981.

[47]Renwick, "Individual Systems of Verse-Making Activity...," pp.12-13.

[48]Rab Douglas, August 31 1981.

[49]Karen Baldwin, "Rhyming Pieces and Piecin Rhymes: Recitation Verse and Family Poem-Making," Southern Folklore Quarterly 40 (1976), 212.

[50]T.M. Pearce, "What is a Folk Poet," Western Folklore, 12 (1953), 247.

[51]Bourdieu, p.352.

CONCLUSION

The Scottish miner developed from being a bondsman in the late eighteenth century into what is sometimes seen as a representative of the vanguard of working class radicalism. Between these positions recent historical research has suggested that the miner lived a relatively independent existence, and was in fact closer to a rural artisan than an urban industrial worker.

The development of the miner from the position of skilled independent artisan to that of a wage worker had a profound affect on the miner's work culture. Despite the changes many aspects of the pre-industrial culture have remained. Aspects of work custom, particularly those regarding the perceived length of the working week, remained well into the period of industrialisation. The miners' cultural affinity with rural society can also be seen in much of the terminology still used in the industry. Terms which belonged to an era when miners worked small pits and kept small farms and maintained their independent position are still in use in today's modern mining industry. Similarly, the image of the miner as an articulate radical had its origin in the independent economic position of the early miners. The miner's feeling of distinctiveness, of standing apart from the rest of society, also had its roots in his ambivalent social position as industrial worker and rural dweller.

The change in work practices which came with industrialisation,

the consequent attack on the miner's work customs, and the influx of new labour, all went towards creating a new situation. Changes in the methods of production demanded much more of a team approach to the work. The development of company-owned villages went with the changes in working methods. Ironically, the changing methods of production and the changes in domestic life went much of the way towards creating the famous social solidarity among miners. The miner developed over a century from independent artisan to archetypal proletarian.

Culturally, however, the change was never as complete as the terms imply. For example, those who struggled to build trade union organisation among the helpless recruits to the industry in the nineteenth century found themselves up against great difficulties. Not least of these was the powerful influence of the Victorian values of self-help. The belief that the individual was responsible for his own situation created an ambivalent feeling among many miners towards collective organisation. Paradoxically this belief in self-help came to exist alongside a strong sense of class identification. There developed therefore a powerful mixture of radical individualism and class feeling.

This cultural mix developed historically. As tradition also develops, like history, as a process, it is necessary to understand these aspects of the miners history in order to understand the traditions. In Britain it is also fundamental to understand that

these traditions were class based. For folklorists above all it is necessary to understand the pejorative value which class society placed on the traditions of working people. Sometimes, where it interfered with the process of production, folk culture was eradicated. More often it developed within class culture, marginal, distinct from, but often measured with uncertainty against, prevalent middle class values.

The process by which the miners' work culture developed is a dynamic process. Some ways changed in order to meet new challenges, yet many old ways remained, sometimes altered in function. The results of this process can be seen within the views which present day miners have of their life and work. Their stock of oral narratives reveal a definite awareness of a unique culture. Many narratives indicate a feeling of being a group apart. This feeling, however, is not to be confused with any simple notion of geographical isolation, since it emanates from the history and traditions of the industry. Similarly, the tensions which exist within the social solidarity can be seen in the narratives which condemn the non-conformists, those who do not conform to the image of the good miner, and who perhaps threaten the cohesion of the group. Above all the oral narratives indicate the shared sense of history of struggle and hardship.

This feeling is revealingly exemplified within the Douglas family

and their traditions. There is undoubtedly a strong sense of a radical Scottish and Protestant past. This feeling need not necessarily be conveyed directly through the texts of the family songs, yet it exists in the feeling which they invest in the songs. Their songs are important oral documents through which they convey their particular concept of history, feeling of belonging, and sense of place. Their experience of hardship and struggle is direct and real, but it has also been learned orally and within an artistic dramatic framework. The present tradition bearers in the family in turn convey this tradition orally and artistically.

The Douglas's descriptions of song events at weddings or funerals, or the re-living of the communal life in the mining villages, with their pub and street life, indicate how the songs are regarded within the family. The meaning of the family songs and poetry is conveyed not in any distant metaphorical or symbolic way, but as a dramatic but concrete re-creation of life.

The sense of family tradition is seen alongside a definite class identification, not simply in a political sense, although they sing political songs, but more in a cultural sense. The Douglas family traditions are part of working class traditions generally. The ability to sing or recite poetry, or appear, as the Douglases often did in concert parties, formed a fundamental part of working class life between the wars.

The communal life in mining villages, the shared sense of hardship, and the feeling of distinctiveness, went toward creating a unique and lively oral tradition. This tradition developed with the history from the job of mining and its social and cultural ramifications. These traditions are changing as living patterns and the industry itself change. Nevertheless, the solidarity shown by young miners during the year-long strike between 1984-1985 surprised many who thought the collective tradition of struggle did not exist among the young. Similarly, the amount of song and poetry which emanated from the recent struggle seems to indicate that this strike, like the miners' other monumental struggles, will continue to be re-lived within oral tradition. Despite how historians tell the story of the strike, the miners themselves will tell it through their oral tradition linked to two centuries of struggle.

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