

Chapter 1

Introduction: What is dialect writing? Where is the North of England?

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1. The rationale for the volume

How do you write a dialect? This volume addresses this question from a number of different perspectives, considering many of the ways in which people have tried to write dialect (and what that might mean and why they might want to do it), over a number of centuries. All of the examples of texts considered in the book are drawn from one geographical area, for a number of reasons. This is not because this area is necessarily the best place to do it (although a case could be made that, in fact, it *is* the best place to do it, and there are certainly some long traditions of dialect writing in the area¹). Rather, it is because it can be seen as a coherent part of the English-speaking world – one which has a community of scholars who are interested in it. The area concerned is the North of England. One of the tasks of this introduction is to explain how we define what this area includes. We do this in section 3. Another task for us here is to explain what we mean by ‘dialect writing’. We do this in section 2. As we will see, neither ‘the North of England’, nor ‘dialect writing’ is an entirely straightforward thing to define. Our final task in this introduction is to say something about what each of the remaining chapters in the volume covers and how they fit in with each other. We do that mainly in section 4, although we also refer to chapters where relevant in the other sections of this introduction (we refer to the volume’s chapters using the authors’ surnames in SMALL CAPITALS).

The chapters in this volume are interested in dialect writing from a wide range of perspectives – indeed part of the point of the book is to bring together a diverse range of work on the topic, because we expect that we can all learn from each other, even if we are looking at the phenomenon using different analytical methodologies and with different primary goals in mind. The work in this book is interested both in the cultural positioning and impact of the phenomenon of dialect writing *and* in the precise mechanics of how writers produce it. It considers a wide range of types of dialect writing, from eighteenth-century literary texts to twenty-first century tweeting (so the timeframe that is covered in the volume stretches over the Late Modern and Contemporary periods in the history of English); some contributions are historical while others deal with contemporary material.

Another basic point of this book is to flag up the fact that a large amount of dialect writing exists (and has long existed), produced in a wide range of genres and ways (from poetry to humour to social studies to novels to translations of Standard English texts to locally-published pamphlets to handwritten ego-documents to reports of conversations to cartoons to material published in local newspapers to tweets, and much else as well). We hope to raise the profile of dialect writing: there is a lot out there, but much of it is not well-known, and most

of it has been very little studied. As the work that we have gathered together here shows, dialect writing is a vastly complex and intricate phenomenon which requires contributions from many disciplines to fully understand. Understanding writers' identities and intentions is crucial, but so is understanding the linguistic structure of the dialects that are being represented, and the nature of the genres that are being written in. Once we broadly understand the phenomenon, we can then see dialect writing texts as linguistic evidence in their own right: evidence of the way in which contemporary dialects are stored and interpreted by speakers (and perceived by readers), and also evidence for earlier stages of dialects (when the texts considered come from an earlier period). Typically, dialect writing is not *intended* to provide evidence to linguists, but it can offer the only evidence that is available for some non-standard varieties at certain points in time.

Given all the above, this book is intended to allow its authors to (i) reflect on some definitional characteristics that define the broad phenomenon of dialect writing, to (ii) document what dialect writing exists for certain varieties spoken in the North of England, and to (iii) set out some results from the study of specific kinds of dialect writing from the area. It raises (and in part tries to answer) a range of questions, including the following:

- what kinds of genres of dialect writing exist?
- what dialect writing exists for specific dialects at specific periods?
- who is dialect writing meant for?
- what do writers do when they do dialect writing?
- why do writers produce dialect writing?
- what attitudes towards dialect does dialect writing reveal?
- how successful is dialect writing in representing dialect variation?
- in what ways can specific repertoires of dialect features become enregistered in dialect writing?
- how useful is dialect writing as linguistic evidence?
- how and to what extent are dialect features represented in dialect writing?
- what kinds of dialect features get represented in dialect writing?
- what types of methodology can we use to investigate dialect writing?

2. What is 'dialect writing'?

The defining characteristic of dialect writing is that it intends to represent a non-standard dialect in written form, at least to some degree and in some portion of a text. We should be cautious about assuming that dialect writing is a coherent thing, and that all the texts involved have much in common, however, because there is vast diversity in dialect writing texts. A text could involve a single word or a whole book. A text could involve only small sections of dialect writing (embedded in a text which is otherwise written in Standard English), or the dialect writing could take up the whole text. It is irrelevant whether the attempt at representation of a non-standard dialect is 'successful' or 'accurate' or 'authentic' – the fundamental point is the intention to do so. Dialect writing can simply involve the use of dialect lexis, and/or it might involve the use of dialect morphology and syntax. Very commonly it involves some 'respelling', which involves abandoning the standard spelling of a word or phrase, either in an explicit attempt to represent the fact that

the dialect's phonology is different from other dialects, or just to give the impression that the language involved is not intended to be the standard. It is irrelevant whether a text is formally published or not: dialect writing can be anything that involves writing, so it includes messages on twitter and in emails, and indeed it could include any kind of writing that is written on the internet, as well as handwritten texts that are intended only for a small number of people (or even only for the writer); it also includes short slogans or phrases that have been printed on mugs or tea-towels, and the text in cartoons that might be published in newspapers or books; it can include forms of transcription of the speech of dialect speakers that are not produced by linguists (for example, by folklorists and sociologists); it includes locally-published books, pamphlets and poems; and it includes novels and short stories published by national publishers. It is irrelevant whether the intention of a text is humorous or serious, whether it intends to be 'high' literature or 'popular' literature, or whether it has no intention of being 'literature' at all. Dialect writing can be all of these things (and doubtless more). It does need to be written down, of course, so the use of dialect in broadcasting and film only counts if it is included in a script, and plays can feature dialect writing in a play script.

Dialect writing as it is understood here requires some conscious effort to represent non-standard language, and it requires an awareness that the dialect being represented is different from another dialect (typically a standard). Two implications of this are (i) that dialect writing as we mean it is only possible in languages which have a clear standard form, and (ii) that 'naive' spellings, in a language like English, by writers who do might not fully know standard spelling, and might simply use graphemes to spell words as they speak them do not count as dialect writing. We are intrigued by these implications and whether they are the right thing to say. For the moment, we will stick with the definition of 'dialect writing' as it has been set out in this paragraph. In the rest of this section, we consider something of the variation that exists in dialect writing texts, some of the characteristics that are shown by these texts, and some of the issues that we need to engage with in order to understand them. There are a number of traditions of literature that have analysed dialect writing texts, and we also acknowledge what we can of that in this section – it is certainly not the case that all the things that we say here are novel. As just one example of this, we have stressed that an awareness that the dialect being represented is different from another dialect is important, and this echoes both Blake (1981), who writes that "it is the contrast between one form of language and another ... which will categorise one form as non-standard" and Beal (2006), who points out that, once a language has been standardised, it becomes a primary norm against which anything different is judged to be deviant or different and thus viewed as a secondary norm (as, for example, CLARK discusses).

There are certainly many different genres of dialect writing, and there are major distinctions to be made about the kinds of texts that fall within our purview. It is clearly the case that texts vary in terms of the amount of dialect lexis that they use (as discussed in this volume, for example, by BRABER) and in the amount of respelling that they use (as discussed, for example, by HONEYBONE), but there are more fundamental issues to discuss if we aim to understand the range of material that falls under our definition of dialect writing. There is considerable variation in

terms of how serious or successful dialect writing is in representing a non-standard variety (and indeed in how serious and successful it intends to be). The audience for texts can vary from only the writer themselves to the entire English-reading general public. It is conventional (in part following Shorrocks 1996, who took already existing terms and gave them quite precise definitions) to distinguish between two main types of dialect writing: *literary dialect* and *dialect literature*. 'Literary dialect' refers to the kind of dialect writing that exists in texts which have non-standard forms only in direct speech (for example, in dialogue), with the surrounding text in Standard English, and which are intended for a wide, general audience of readers of English (and which we might expect to be published by national publishers and to be sold throughout the English-speaking world). 'Dialect literature' refers to the kind of dialect writing that exists in texts which use non-standard forms throughout the text, where the text is intended for an audience of speakers of the dialect represented (and which we may therefore expect to be produced and principally available in the area where the dialect is spoken). We use the term 'dialect writing'² to cover both of these types of material (and everything in between). We use this term here (although we have not insisted that other authors in the volume do so) in part because this volume includes discussions of both of the kinds of material just mentioned and in part because we recognise that the two-way distinction between 'literary dialect' and 'dialect literature' (while insightful) is too simplistic.

An example of a canonical case of literary dialect can be found in Charles Dickens' (1854) *Hard Times*. This text is relevant to our precise purposes as the novel is set in the north of England (around Coketown, a generic Northern English mill-town). Poussa (1999, 28) reports that it 'arose out of a trip to Preston' in Lancashire. It first appeared serialised in a magazine which was published in London and was aimed at a general non-localised readership. *Hard Times* includes passages like the following, from chapter 10 in 'Book the First':

He looked at her with some disappointment in his face, but with a respectful and patient conviction that she must be right in whatever she did. The expression was not lost upon her; she laid her hand lightly on his arm a moment, as if to thank him for it.

'We are such true friends, lad, and such old friends, and getting to be such old folk, now.' 'No, Rachael, thou'rt as young as ever thou wast.' 'One of us would be puzzled how to get old, Stephen, without t'other getting so too, both being alive,' she answered, laughing; 'but, any ways, we're such old friends, that t'hide a word of honest truth fro' one another would be a sin and a pity. 'Tis better not to walk too much together. 'Times, yes! 'Twould be hard, indeed, if 'twas not to be at all,' she said, with a cheerfulness she sought to communicate to him. "'Tis hard, anyways, Rachael.' 'Try to think not; and 'twill seem better.' 'I've tried a long time, and 'ta'nt got better. But thou'rt right; 'tmight mak fok talk, even of thee. Thou hast been that to me, Rachael, through so many year: thou hast done me so much good, and heartened of me in that cheering way, that thy word is a law to me. Ah lass, and a bright good law! Better than some real ones.'

Most of the text of the novel is written in Standard English, as in the first paragraph given here. Where there is direct speech, in quotation marks, however, the speech of some characters is as found in the second paragraph. Much of this is still spelt standardly and is otherwise not different from Standard English, but some dialect lexis is included (e.g. *lad*, *lass*), as is some dialect morphosyntax (e.g. *thou'rt*, *thou wast*) and there is a little respelling which is clearly intended to

represent dialect phonology (e.g. *fro* 'from', *mak* 'make', *fok* 'folk'). Only a few dialect features are represented, although some are very salient (such as the use of *thou*).

Some of the chapters in this volume investigate texts that fit quite clearly into this canonical type of literary dialect. For example, HODSON cites the following passage from one of the texts that she considers – *Letters of a Solitary Wanderer: Volume 2* by Charlotte Smith (1800).

‘There’s noot to be found there, I’ll promise you,’ said the man, who seemed to shudder at the temerity of my design, while he doubted its motives. “No, no, there’s nothing to be found there; the Priests took care of that. -- Some old rubbishy things, indeed, some folks do say, be yet in the old rambling rooms; but, for my part, I’se not go about amongst them, special of a night, if there was a bushel of gold to be got as my reward.’

‘But why not? Where is the danger?’

‘Bless you, Master,’ cried the peasant, ‘it’s easy to see you are but a stranger in this country, or you’d never ask such questions. Why, mon, the Abbey is haunted.’

This shows all the characteristics of classical literary dialect, although, as HODSON discusses, it does not necessarily give an accurate representation of Yorkshire English (which it is intended to be). This need not be seen as a ‘problem’ for literary dialect, if the intention of the use of non-standard forms is simply to represent that the speaker is not speaking Standard English – in principle anything non-standard will do (this point is also discussed by CROWLEY). Much dialect representation in literary dialect can, however, be seen as fundamentally accurate or appropriate in terms of the dialect features represented (Poussa 1999 and Wales 2017 defend Dickens as an observer of dialect, if perhaps of an antiquated form, for example). The issues of the ‘accuracy’ and ‘authenticity’ of the representation of a dialect in dialect writing are complicated ones to negotiate, and need to be seen in the light of what a writer intends for a text (see, for example, Hodson and Broadhead 2013 on the ways in which dialects are performed and such performances are perceived by speakers, and HODSON on the notion of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ dialect writers).

An example of a canonical case of dialect literature, also from the north of England, is John Collier’s (1746) *A View of the Lancashire Dialect* (this is only the first part of the original title of this work, and it has had a range of various subtitles and completely different titles during the many editions in which it has appeared – it is often referred to using the pseudonym that Collier adopted: *Tim Bobbin*).³ This work is set in South Lancashire, and was first published there, in Manchester (see Alston 1971). At this point, Manchester was a populous Lancashire market town (and what we now think of as ‘Manchester English’ had not separated itself off from Lancashire English), and as Salveson 1993 explains, Collier was born and raised in villages around it. The text starts in dialect writing (e.g. ‘Tim Bobbin enters by his sell, beawt wig; grinning on scratting his nob’) and is made up of a set of dialogues written entirely in dialect writing (with only a tiny amount of lines of Standard English in the main text), as below (taken from the 1746 edition, as transcribed and represented in the *Salamanca Corpus of English Dialect Texts*, which is a remarkable resource for finding dialect writing texts up till around 1950 from all over England – see García-Bermejo Giner, Sánchez-García and Ruano-García 2011).

Teh meh word for't, Mearey, nowt's ot's owt con cum on't, when o Mon deeols weh rascotly Fok: Boh os I'r telling the, he neamt a Felley ot wooant obeawt three Mile off on him (boh the Dule forget him, os I done) so I munt gooa back ogen, thro' Rachdaw: so I geet Nip under meh Arm ogen, on bid Justice good neet, weh o heavy Heart theaw mey be shure; on but ot eh thowt eh cou'd ashelt sell hur eh this tother Pleck, it wou'd datinly ha brokk'n.

This is 'canonical' dialect literature, with a very high proportion of respellings and other clearly non-standard forms (we count around two thirds of the words in this passage as exemplifying non-standard forms), and while the other words in the text are spelt in Standard English spelling it is clear that they are intended as part of the dialect represented (the words belong to the Lancashire dialect represented just as much as they do to Standard English, after all). The text was originally published in the area where the dialect is spoken and it is not intended to be easily comprehensible to all speakers of English. There is no scaffolding text in Standard English that forms part of the text itself. Each of the dialect features represented in the passage (and the other passages included in this introduction), and the ways in which they are represented, deserve detailed consideration, but we sadly lack the space to give them it here. Suffice it to say that many of the respellings here and elsewhere in the passage, and the dialect grammar and lexis represented, are done insightfully.

Is 'canonical' dialect literature the focus of any chapter in this volume? This already brings up the problem of assuming that there are simply two types of text. HERMESTON and MAGUIRE focus on *The Pitman's Pay*, a long poem from Tyneside (written and published there) by Thomas Wilson from the early 19th century. This text features long passages in dialect writing, like the following, which HERMESTON cites:

*He grunds the corn te myek wor breed,
He boils wor soup (yence thought a dream):
Begock! aw's often flay'd te deed
They'll myek us eat and sleep by steam!*

*A' this he diz wi' parfet ease,
(The sting o' gallin' labour pouin':
Then, hinny maisters, if ye please,
Just let him try his hand at hewin'.*

This seems more like *Tim Bobbin* than *Hard Times*, but the dialect writing section of the poem is in fact all in quotation marks, and is bookended by lengthy sections that are written in Standard English. Does this mean that the text is not dialect literature? If so, what is it? Literary dialect? (Because the non-standard forms only occur in direct speech?) That would seem like a strange way to classify the text because it has other characteristics that are associated with dialect literature (for example, there is a high level of non-standard forms and the text was first published only in the area where the dialect that it represents is spoken, in a magazine based in Newcastle upon Tyne).

If we consider a few other texts that fall under our definition of dialect writing, we can see something of the breadth of material that it covers. Dialect writing is by no means something that is tied to the distant past. Texts of these two basic types

identified above are very much still current: two from the end of the last century, representing Liverpool English, (both discussed by HONEYBONE) are Katie Flynn's (1994) *The Girl from Penny Lane*, which contains canonical literary dialect, and the 'translation' of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1990), which shows many of the classic characteristics of dialect literature. BRABER discusses contemporary texts of both types from Nottingham. New examples of such texts are always appearing, but so is much else. CLARK discusses some very short texts (of a line or so) that accompany cartoons, and it seems right to say that the text associated with cartoons is one of the most vibrant forms of dialect writing currently being published. *Viz* comic (intended for adults) has a considerable reputation in this area, and has been publishing comic strips featuring several characters which are written to represent a number of different dialects for the past several decades (see Beal 2000 for an analysis of some of this material). One example from the issue of *Viz* that is current as we are writing this introduction (dated June/July 2019) is the following dialogue from the characters *The Bacons* which features a family (Mutha, Fatha and their son Biffa Bacon) from Tyneside. This dialogue features in five panels from the strip (which continues after these panels to deliver a punchline).

Biffa: Reet then, I'm off t'school

Fatha: See yuz, son!

Mutha: Hev a nice day, Biffa!

[At the garden gate]

Fatha: Stop! Wuz're picketin' this fuckin' gate!

Mutha: One oot aall oot!

Biffa: Burra've got t'gan t'school!

Fatha: Not through *this* fuckin' picket line yuz aren't, son.

Mutha: Turn roond an' gan yem or there'll be fuckin' trubble!

Biffa: Eh?!

Mutha: Wuz divven't like *scabs* in this fuckin' family, Biffa!

Biffa: Aalreet... I divven't want nee botha. A'm gannin' back in the hoose.

Mutha: Good lad

All the text in this comic strip is in dialect writing (the words that are spelt in Standard English spelling are part of the dialect represented just as much as they are part of English), and there is a high level of accuracy in representing several aspects of dialect grammar, lexis and phonology. Such a text seems like it should count as dialect literature, but while *Viz* originated in Newcastle upon Tyne, it has been sold throughout Britain (and abroad) for decades, so the intended audience is not simply a local one who speak the dialect represented.

Furthermore, while all the texts considered so far are examples of fiction (so the descriptions 'literary dialect' and 'dialect literature' are not inappropriate), non-fiction dialect writing also exists, as in Denwood's (1944, 3) 'Editor's notes' to the November 1944 edition of the *Journal of the Lakeland Dialect Society*:

Weel fwoks, Ah's pleased ta say 'at oor Society hes anudder 'ear ov 'gud gaan' tull its credit. Oor quarterly gеддерins hev been varra int'restin, an' we've hed a gey canny lot o' fwolk tull

them as weel. Ah missed t' yan at Browton i' Forness, an' wat t' teals Ah've hard about it sen, an' t' cracks ov t' gud set – till they hed at tea-time's meead me mooth watter iver sen.

Non-fiction dialect writing also exists in journalism, as in the following extract, which is the first two paragraphs from an article headlined *Pin Money*, from the 13th December 1929 edition of the newspaper *Labour's Northern Voice*. This newspaper was published in Manchester to report on Labour activity in the north, as the local organ of the Independent Labour Party (at the time of this column the ILP was a mainstream organisation, affiliated to Labour Party, with elected MPs – see, for example, McHugh 2001, and the newspaper had considerable 'local success', see Cohen 2003). The extract is taken from Salveson (1993), who explains that the author of this piece is Hannah Mitchell, who published regularly in the newspaper under the pseudonym 'Daisy Nook', writing in Lancashire dialect (which she had become familiar with through living in Bolton, even though she grew up in Derbyshire).

Awih getting' fed up wi' bein' axed why there's nowt i' th' Northern Voice fro' 'Daisy Nook' these days. (Some on us has to wark for our livin'.) Aw tow'd ye ow were thinkin' o' standin' for th' Council again this last November.

Yo' know th' chaps i' eaw'r party say they durn't like women candidates because they have to do aw the wark for 'em. Well, that tale met do for the marines, but it won't go deawn wi' any woman as has had a packet. When yo've drafted aw your bills, written yore election address, booked yore speakers, canvassed every afternoon for a fortnight, an' gan eaw't a lot o' th' poll cards yo' feel as if yo' were doin' a bit yoreself.

NINI, BAILEY, GUO AND GRIEVE's chapter deals with dialect writing texts which are all non-fiction and which are all very recent (from 2014), and very short. They consider a corpus of tweets which are geocoded as coming from the United Kingdom and focus on spellings that represent dialect features from the North of England, such as the one given below.

Time to gerrup and work out before the derby.

There is a clear piece of dialect writing here: *gerrup* 'get up' spells T-to-R, which is a feature which is fundamentally associated with the North of England, (it is also shown in Biffa Bacon's *burra've* 'but I've'), but it is difficult to classify such texts as either one of the two categories that Shorrocks describes.

It has, in fact, long been recognised that this two-way distinction is too simple to encompass all kinds of dialect writing. Hodson (2014, 116) writes, for example, that '...the boundary between dialect literature and literary dialect can be a rather permeable one.' There are many ways in which it does not neatly encompass the kinds of texts that exist. We think that Shorrocks' basic point is right, but that it might instead be best to think about the distinctions that he describes in terms of two dimensions:

- what is the intended audience of a text?
- what proportion of the text is in nonstandard writing?

We can conceive of these two axes as providing a two-dimensional ‘dialect writing space’, within which we can situate each text, as in figure 1.1.

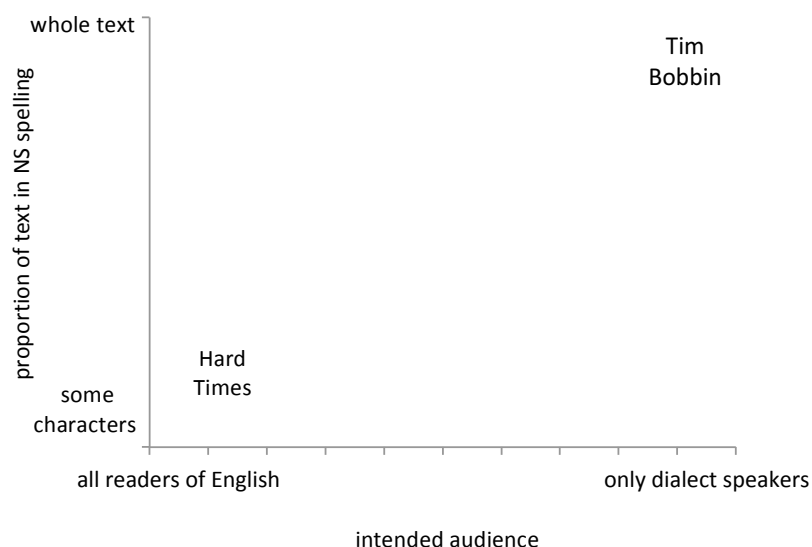


Figure 1.1: The dialect writing space

On this perspective, literary dialect and dialect literature are not completely distinct categories, but are prototypes of the extremes of difference that is possible given these two clines. They are represented in figure 1.1 by the texts *Hard Times* and *Tim Bobbin* which can be seen as exemplifying the two extremes (although, as we have seen above, maybe they don't quite do this perfectly – maybe nothing does?). In principle, we could aim to situate each text in this dialect writing space (although we need to recognise that one text might occupy multiple points in the space if different parts of it pattern differently). In fact, Shorrocks himself is well aware of the fact that the categories that he proposes are complex and that the distinction 'is not absolute' (1996, 386). The way that we have dealt with them here sets them up as strawmen somewhat, and we think that they are still useful concepts (as do many of the chapters in this book, which often use the labels 'literary dialect' and 'dialect literature' – sometimes uncommented, and sometimes pointing out that they are leaky as concepts), as long as they are understood in the way set out here.

There are further complications in understanding the nature of the texts that make up dialect writing. We should in fact likely need to recognise a third dimension if we hope to fully describe the differences that exist among texts:

- how 'published' is a text?

Some texts are only intended for the writer, some for the writer and a small audience of acquaintances and/or directly connected people, while some are informally published in pamphlets or on a website, and still others are professionally published, which will likely involve editing (see MAGUIRE and

HONEYBONE for a consideration of the role that editing can play in affecting how a text appears).

Another issue that might affect both the intention of a text and the extent to which it might reflect the dialect features that exist in dialect speakers' minds is the question of whether the writer is a speaker of the dialect themselves or not. Some of the writers mentioned above (for example, Thomas Wilson) are writing in their native dialect, and others are not (for example, Hannah Mitchell). We might expect that a native speaker will represent dialect features accurately, and a non-native speaker might not, but this is not necessarily the case: a native speaker might be a poor observer, or have little insight into how to manipulate spelling conventions (or might even *want* to represent a dialect as a thing to be ridiculed). We might expect the latter more of a non-native writer, but it could equally well be the case that they might be a subtle observer of a dialect and that they care deeply about it (and/or that they are very familiar with previous pieces of dialect writing for a variety). All of this ties in with the extent to which a piece of dialect writing could possibly be seen as 'authentic', or can be used as linguistic evidence for a variety. These are fascinatingly complex issues indeed.

Within the dialect writing space, several more-or-less distinct genres can be recognised, including some of those just exemplified (for example: tweets and non-fiction texts in 'dialect society' publications). 'Generic literary dialect' that simply uses generic features and doesn't make any real attempt to represent a dialect (see the discussion of this in HODSON's chapter, for example) might count as one of these, as might dialect poetry. Another is 'Contemporary Humorous Localised Dialect Literature' (CHLDL), the type exemplified by locally-published comic texts that have been in print for the past few decades, and which often have names like *Lern Yerself Scouse* or *Larn Yersel' Geordie* (see Honeybone and Watson 2013 and also ASPREY's, BRABER's, CROWLEY's, WATSON AND JENSEN's and HONEYBONE's chapters in this volume, and also Crowley 2012 specifically on the origins of the *Lern Yerself Scouse* volume). Another genre could be recognised in texts which conceive of themselves as 'translations' into a dialect, such as the *Gospels in Scouse* and *Alice's Adventchers in Wunderland*, both of which are mentioned in HONEYBONE's chapter.

Some of these genres have long traditions and established orthographic conventions can emerge to represent specific dialect features in them. Furthermore, specific features can cohere to become 'the features that you use to represent a specific dialect in dialect writing'. Such features can thus develop a high level of indexicality, and it has become common to refer to this process as 'enregisterment', following Agha (2003). Several of the chapters collected here discuss these kinds of issues, including ASPREY, BEAL, CLARK and COOPER, and also CROWLEY and HONEYBONE, who sound some cautious notes. Once such features have become enregistered in this way, they can become commodified, which means that short dialect writing texts can be used to sell things like tea-towels, mugs and tee-shirts in the area that the dialect is spoken, as discussed in Beal (2009) and Johnstone (2009), for example, and a few chapters in this volume, such as those by ASPREY and BRABER.

It might even be the case that sets of features could cohere to the extent that we might begin to talk of (aspects of) a standard developing for the writing of particular dialects. The existence of a standard is one of the factors that is often seen as relevant to establishing that a linguistic variety should be recognised as a

distinct language (as in, for example, Haugen 1966 and Kloss 1967), and this is a question that is relevant to our purposes. The titles of many CHLDL texts imply that the variety represented is to be seen as a separate language, which needs to be learnt by speakers of Standard English – this is typically meant as a joke, but many of the varieties considered in this volume pass several of the tests that are required to establish ‘languagehood’, one of which is highly relevant to our purposes: the existence of a tradition of published literature. The linguistic variety (or set of varieties) that these issues are most relevant to in Britain is Scots, which has a fair claim to being a distinct language from English, and – while we explicitly do not consider language in Scotland in this volume – we are clear that we can learn from the discussion of the representation of Scots in writing, in such work as Hagan (2002) and Bann and Corbett (2015). Some of these issues are discussed further by HONEYBONE.

It is not the case that all of these genres and forms of dialect writing are discussed in this book, but a good number are. The chapters included here discuss novels, cartoons, poems, ego-documents, materials produced by sociologists, ‘individual spellings’ in texts, a comparison of unedited and edited texts, and much else. Some chapters focus on one type of text (e.g., CLARK focuses on cartoons, TIMMIS focuses on sociologically-motivated transcription), others consider a range of types of texts (e.g., BRABER and ASPREY which consider both literary-dialect-type texts and dialect-literature-type texts). Some dialect writing is easily accessible (typically that which tends towards the ‘all readers of English’ pole of the ‘intended audience’ axis given in figure 1.1, and which counts as professionally published). Much other dialect writing, however, is practically hidden from general view. It might just appear in local publications that often don’t even make it into local libraries, or in magazines, or publications of dialect societies, or on the internet; very little of this kind of material is indexed or recorded.

Some of the chapters in this volume focus explicitly on the material that exists in the texts considered: HERMESTON focuses on a text as literature, considering the use of metaphor; others focus on dialect writing texts as data, investigating methodological issues and considering how linguists might analyse the representation of specific dialect features in the texts: MAGUIRE applies methods of historical phonology, NINI, BAILEY, GUO AND GRIEVE’s apply methods from computational sociolinguistics and geolinguistics, and WATSON AND JENSEN apply methods from corpus linguistics and sociolinguistics, adopting quantitative methods, as does COOPER.

This volume has not appeared in a vacuum. We have referred already in this section to several pieces of previous work which analyse some aspect of dialect writing, but we need to explicitly acknowledge other work, too, as it has shown both much of what might be interesting to consider and also often what kinds of texts exist. Both Blake (1981) and Shorrocks (1996) bemoan the fact that little work has focused on dialect writing, and while this has long been the case, and has not changed very much, there are traditions of analysis of dialect writing, including a range of highly insightful material.⁴ There are distinct traditions of discussing the use of dialect writing in direct speech in novels, such as Krapp (1926), Ives (1950), Gerson (1967) and Petyt (1970), all of which led to Blake (1981), and has since led to work such as Burkette (2001), Schneider and Wagner (2006), Hodson (2014) and Hodson (2017). There are also traditions of work which have focused

on dialect-literature-type material, in part to analyse the material in and of itself, as in Tilling (1972), in part in order to analyse it to gain insight into the structure and/or history of little-described varieties, as in Sixtus (1912) and Klein (1914), and in part to understand its connection to culture, as in Salveson (1993).⁵ Dialect writing has thus been assessed in a number of places for its potential as linguistic evidence for the dialects that it represents and their history – further work which does this includes Trudgill (1990), Ihalainen (1994), Wales (2006), and several of the chapters in Taavitsainen, Melchers & Pahta (1999) and in Hickey (2010). The chapters in these two latter volumes form important collections of work in ‘dialect writing studies’, as do the relevant pieces gathered in Williamson and Burke (1971), the first six chapters in Heselwood and Upton (2010), and the articles gathered in the (November 2000) special issue of the *Journal of Sociolinguistics* on Non-Standard Orthography – all these are highly relevant to our purposes, especially Wales (2010) which considers dialect writing from northern England, as does Shorrocks (1996, 1999). Other relevant work includes Schneider (1986, 2002) and the considerable amount of work from the Salamanca group, such as Ruano-García, Sánchez-García and García-Bermejo Giner (2015). Some work which sounds a cautious note is Preston (1982, 1985, 2000) and Macaulay (1991);⁶ and there has recently developed a clear strand of work which deals with geographical variation in spelling in social media, such as Eisenstein (2015), Kulkarni, Perozzi and Skiena (2016) and Tatman (2016).

Often previous work has a focus *only* on dialect writing in ‘literature’, or as evidence for the dialect features from the past, or as evidence for indexicality and enregisterment, or in terms of sociolinguistic variation. We see all of these as vital aspects of dialect writing studies, and it is naturally right that scholars should focus their attention on specific issues, but as we hope is clear from the discussion in this section, we think that the discussion in these traditions needs to be linked, because we can all learn from each other.

3. Where is the ‘North of England’?

This question may be easier to address than that that considered in section 2, but is also not straightforward – geographically, the fundamental question is: how far south does the north go?

Three of the borders *are* straightforward, at least relatively so. To the north, the border with Scotland represents an unambiguous political boundary, one which has been largely fixed for almost 700 years, though things are not quite so straightforward culturally or linguistically. The town of Berwick-upon-Tweed is a case in point (see Llamas 2010). Although it has been under English control since 1482, this was not completely formalised until the Wales and Berwick Act of 1746, and the town still finds itself having a foot in both countries, as exemplified by the inclusion of Berwick Rangers Football Club in the Scottish leagues. A number of linguistic studies of the Scottish-English border (Glauser 1974, Maguire et al. 2010, Maguire 2015, Watt et al. 2014) have shown that although the linguistic border between northern England Scotland more-or-less coincides with the political border, the situation is rather more complex than that with, for example, a fair amount of ‘fraying’ of isoglosses and something of a transition zone, especially south of the border and at the lowland western and eastern ends (see Figure 1.2).

The sea to the east is a definitive boundary for the North of course, and the same is true of the west coast, though it could be argued that the Isle of Man is partly in the cultural and linguistic 'North' (Barry 1984, Hamer 2007). But once we go south of Merseyside (assuming that the north extends beyond it), the Welsh border takes over the role of defining the boundary of the North of England, although again it doesn't exactly coincide with linguistic and cultural boundaries (Montgomery 2016).

As we mention above, the key question for this section – one which it may be impossible to answer – is where the border lies to the south. That is, where is the North-South divide in England?⁷ Answers to this question, in as much as they can be given at all, will vary according to the criteria we consider (and indeed who is doing the considering). Thus the political, economic, cultural, perceptual and linguistic boundaries, even when they can be identified, may not align, and physical geography is of no use to us given the lack of any significant discontinuity in the English landscape. A crucial issue is the position of the English Midlands, and whether they constitute part of the North or are a place (or places) that are completely separate and exist in their own right. Useful analyses of these issues can be found in Wales (2006), Trousdale (2012), Clark & Asprey (2013), Hickey (2015), Montgomery (2015) and Braber & Robinson (2018).

In terms of boundaries based on structural dialect features, different answers are possible depending on the nature of the dialects examined and the features considered. In the traditional dialects of England, as documented in the *Survey of English Dialects* (SED; Orton & Dieth 1962-71), there is evidence of a significant divide between 'far northern' dialects and the rest, along a line (actually another transition zone) from the River Ribble in north Lancashire to the River Humber between Yorkshire and Lincolnshire. This now famous 'Ribble-Humber Line' (see Wakelin 1972, 102-104; and also Cooper, this volume, where it is called the 'Humber-Lune/Ribble Line'; and Wales 2006, who also calls it the 'Ribble-(Calder-Aire)-Humber Line'), which involves quite a few phonological isoglosses, appears to be of long standing, but it hardly serves as a useful definition of the limits of the North in England today, distinguishing as it does Cumberland, Durham, north Lancashire Northumberland, north and east Yorkshire and Westmorland from areas to the south, including most of Lancashire and south Yorkshire, as well as Manchester, Merseyside and the north Midlands.

Two other well-known phonological isoglosses that split northern and southern locations in England are the FOOT-STRUT and TRAP-BATH lines (Chambers & Trudgill 1980: 127-142). The first of these divides locations to the north which have retained a single vowel (e.g. [ʊ]) in both the FOOT and STRUT lexical sets (Wells 1982, 131-133) from those which have a split between [ʊ] in FOOT and [ʌ] in STRUT. The second divides locations to the north which have a short vowel (e.g. [a]) in both the TRAP and BATH lexical sets (Wells 1982, 129-130, 133-135) from those to the south which have a long vowel in BATH (e.g. [ɑ:]). Although these two isoglosses have somewhat different distributions, they both follow a course from the Wash in the east in the south-west Midlands in the west, and group much of the English Midlands with the northern counties. These two features have the advantage that they are still relevant today (many of the isoglosses that defined the Ribble-Humber Line having disappeared with the decline of the traditional features that defined them) and relate to well recognised shibboleths of Northern English

speech (Wales 2006, 29). Figure 1.2 illustrates the distributions of this and the other dialect boundaries discussed above. Of course, relying on small numbers of isoglosses to distinguish the North from the South is potentially misleading, and dialectometrical analyses of large numbers of linguistic features offer a more objective way of addressing the question, albeit one which has not yet revealed an obvious North-South linguistic divide (see Goebel 1997, Maguire et al. 2010, and Shackleton 2007 for examples).

Looking at the North-South divide from a perceptual dialectology perspective gives results which are similar in some ways but which also suggest that the southern limit of the North is imagined differently by different people and may be impossible to define objectively. Montgomery (2015) analyses perceptions in a range of northern locations and found, perhaps not surprisingly, that participants from northerly locations such as Carlisle and Hexham place the boundary further north than participants from more southerly locations such as Crewe and Hull. Most of Montgomery's participants placed the boundary somewhere between the Ribble-Humber Line in the north and the Wash-Severn Line in the south, though quite a few included parts of East Anglia and the south-east Midlands in the North. It is clear that some people consider the English Midlands to be partly or wholly in the North, and this is consistent with at least some of the linguistic criteria that have been considered by previous researchers (for example, the FOOT-STRUT and TRAP-BATH lines).

Given the uncertainty about the southern boundary of the North, and the inclusion in it, at least under some circumstances, of the Midlands, we take a broad definition of the 'North' of England for the purposes of this volume, as indicated in Figure 1.2,⁸ which shows the understanding of 'the North of England' that is adopted in this volume (taking in all or most of the darker-shaded areas and the unshaded area between them, including the 'Humber-Ribble' area, which is included for reference).

Dialects from the area have been the subject of a number of classic studies (e.g., Wright 1892, Orton 1933, Hedevid 1967, Shorrocks 1998), and have recently been the subject of considerable academic interest, including a sustained loose collaboration in research involving a substantial group of scholars at universities both in the area and elsewhere in the world. This is shown by the successful and ongoing series of 'Northern Englishes Workshops', which have been held at the universities of Lancaster (2006), Edinburgh (2007), Salford (2008), Sheffield (2010), Nottingham Trent (2012), Lancaster (2014), Edinburgh (2016) and Newcastle upon Tyne in (2018), and by the publication of such volumes as Wales (2006), Hickey (2015) and Beal & Hancil (2017).

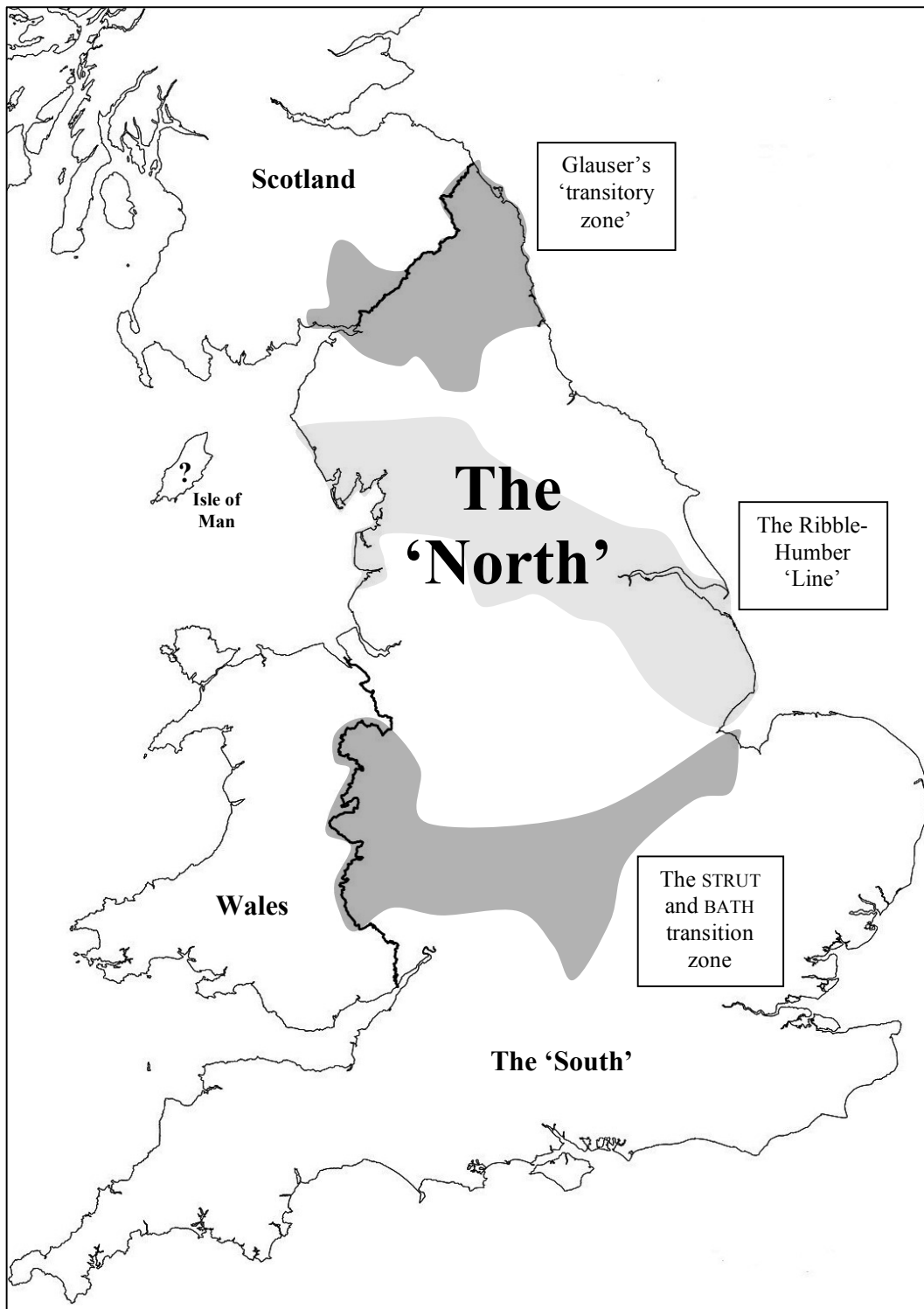


Figure 1.2: The North of England.

4. The contents of the volume

We considered whether we should organise the chapters in the volume into thematic parts, but we have decided not to. There are many ways in which the chapters relate to each other (in terms of area covered, type of writing covered, aspect of language covered, whether they focus on the effect and intention of the phenomenon overall, or on the specific features represented, or on the extent to which texts can be used as evidence for otherwise unattested stages of a variety *etc.*), and any one grouping of the chapters would exaggerate the importance of one of these kinds of links and would down-play the others. We have therefore simply ordered the chapters by alphabetical order of (first-named author's) surname. There are indeed many links between the chapters, and we have tried to flag these up with cross-references at appropriate points in the chapters. All texts were subject to a process of reviewing and cross-reading (involving other authors in the volume), and we hope that this has strengthened the chapters themselves and the links between them.⁹ We encourage any reader of any chapter to consider reading other chapters, too.

It is worth being explicit about the areas covered in the book. If we split 'the North' into the sub-areas that are commonly identified, we can say that dialects and dialect writing from the North-East are discussed by BEAL, MAGUIRE, HERMESTON, and in small part by WATSON & JENSEN; those from Yorkshire are discussed by COOPER and HODSON; those from the North-West are discussed by TIMMIS, CROWLEY, HONEYBONE and in large part WATSON & JENSEN; those from the East Midlands are discussed by BRABER; and those from the West Midlands are discussed by ASPREY and CLARK; NINI, BAILEY, GUO & GRIEVE's chapter covers the whole of the north. All of these areas fall into the 'North of England' in its broadest extent, as discussed in section 3, and in a sense this coverage means that all areas of the North are represented in the volume. In a different sense, it would be absurd to say that all areas of the north of England are covered here. For example, the North-West is 'covered' in the volume, but there is a lot on Liverpool and very little on Manchester. This is unfortunate but unavoidable, of course, as no one book could cover every identifiable area in the North of England. The book is not intended as a comprehensive handbook covering everything about dialect writing from all varieties in the North, so there will of necessity be lacunae. We hope that more work will emerge to fill the gaps. In the rest of this section, we say a little about the precise contents of each chapter.

ASPREY's chapter describes and discusses several pieces of dialect writing from the Black Country (the area to the immediate west of the City of Birmingham, in the West Midlands), dating from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, considering both the extent to which certain dialect features are represented in this work and also what this might tell us about the indexicality of these features and the extent to which this indexicality and the features themselves might have changed over time.

BEAL's chapter examines evidence of dialect (especially at the lexical level) in the personal writings of the renowned eighteenth century Tyneside engraver and naturalist, Thomas Bewick. Her analysis of these ego-documents reveals a complex interaction between personal identity and linguistic enregisterment of 'the North' and its relationship with Scotland and Scots, and flags up the importance that ego-documents can have for historical dialectology.

BRABER's chapter describes and discusses several pieces of twentieth-century dialect writing (of both the 'literary dialect' and 'dialect literature' type) from Nottingham and the nearby area (in the East Midlands), showing both what kinds of dialect writing exists for this area and whether a wide number of specific dialect features are represented in the texts, and whether different types of texts pattern differently this this regard.

CLARK's chapter focuses on dialect writing in late twentieth-century cartoons from Staffordshire (in the West Midlands), considering a few texts in detail, and focusing on the extent to which such texts can be interpreted through the lens of the Bakhtinian concept of double-voicing, as examples of the burlesque and carnivalesque, and as demonstrations of sociocultural identity, also considering them in connection with the notions of enregisterment and indexicality.

COOPER's chapter examines the process of enregisterment of 'Yorkshire' dialect. Yorkshire is a linguistically diverse county, being split, for example, by the traditional Ribble-Humber isogloss bundle, which might suggest that there is no one 'Yorkshire' dialect. But Cooper finds evidence of ongoing enregisterment of 'Yorkshire' based on shared features and features from the more populous West Riding of the county, indicating a change from nineteenth-century dialect-specific representations which involves 'deregisterment' of traditional local features.

CROWLEY's chapter focuses closely on the dialect writing that has been produced in Liverpool English (and overtly addresses the extent to which it has been conceived of as 'Scouse'), tracing the beginnings of what can be seen as dialect writing in the variety from the mid-to-late nineteenth century, considering the development of it in the 1950s and 1960s, and explaining the continuing publication in Scouse in the twenty-first century, focusing on issues of indexicality and enregisterment, and the relationship between dialect writing and 'standard language ideology'.

HERMESTON's chapter looks at metaphor in the early nineteenth-century Tyneside dialect poem *The Pitman's Pay* by Thomas Wilson. He finds that Wilson uses a wide array of metaphors in the poem, though most of these depend on local knowledge, especially of mining. Hermeston finds Wilson's use of metaphor suggestive of a wider literary context for traditional dialect literature which is frequently both celebratory and self-limiting

HODSON's chapter focuses on texts from the early nineteenth century that fit well with the definition of 'literary dialect', examining for the first time how a number of novels from this period represent Yorkshire dialects, and considering the extent to which these texts represent dialect features which were found in those varieties versus the extent to which they represent features which are essentially 'generic', 'literary' dialect features which are not actually tied to a specific variety.

HONEYBONE's chapter explores the issues that arise when we consider the extent to which dialect writing can and does represent phonological dialect features, investigating first a set of general issues that constrain dialect writing in general and respellings at the phonological level in particular, and then focusing on extracts from three pieces of dialect writing representing Liverpool English from the second half of the twentieth century, and presenting a quantitative account of the types of respellings found in them and the extent to which they relate to phonological dialect features.

MAGUIRE'S chapter illustrates how we might go about using traditional dialect-literature-type texts for understanding the historical phonology of Northern English dialects and the kinds of results that can be achieved from a rigorous analysis of the spellings and rhymes they provide. Examining Thomas Wilson's early nineteenth-century *The Pitman's Pay* (the same text considered by HERMESTON), he shows that the author has encoded complex aspects of the phonology of Tyneside English in the poem and that these give us a detailed insight into its historical phonology that are not available from later sources.

NINI, BAILEY, GUO & GRIEVE'S chapter analyses non-standard spellings on the social media platform Twitter, examining the geographical pattern of spellings that are indicative of phonological features of northern English dialects on the basis of a very large set of data (1.8 billion words). Their analysis reveals that users of Twitter employ non-standard spellings to represent their dialects and identities, and that online media provide a vast new source of information for studying dialect variation.

TIMMIS'S chapter describes a unique corpus of early twentieth-century dialect writing from Bolton. This corpus, which was produced as a result of a programme of social observation, consists of descriptions of local events and conversations, often written in dialect writing rather than using Standard English orthography. Timmis discusses some of the key aspects of the dialect represented in the corpus, comparing them to features recorded in later surveys.

WATSON & JENSEN'S chapter focuses on one piece of dialect writing representing Liverpool English from the 1960s (and briefly discusses another which represents Tyneside English), adopting a quantitative methodology which links to the methods and tools used in sociophonetics, and showing how the digitisation of a dialect writing text can in principle allow for the detailed investigation of a set of potential respellings for specific phonological dialect features, and acknowledging that this works insightfully for the Liverpool English text, but throws up complications for the Tyneside text, due to differing respelling practices.

The chapters of the volume have a lot in common, but there are also a lot of differences between them. Some focus on the interpretation of the phenomenon of dialect writing (e.g. CLARK, CROWLEY and HERMESTON), while most of the others focus on interpreting the structural dialect features that are represented in them. Among the latter type or work, some focus on lexis (e.g. BEAL and a good portion of BRABER), some on morphological features (e.g. ASPREY), and several others focus on phonological features (e.g. NINI, BAILEY, GUO AND GRIEVE, HONEYBONE, MAGUIRE, and WATSON AND JENSEN). Some chapters present new or novel corpora or set of texts (e.g. BEAL, HODSON and TIMMIS); some others present novel analysis of texts that are known from previous work in dialect writing studies.

5. Envoi: tara, tata, tarrah, ta-tah, tsarah, taraa, tarrar

One book can't cover *all* types of dialect writing, nor can one book consider all approaches that we need to take in order to understand the phenomenon, nor can one book cover *all* areas of the north of England, but we hope that any reader of this volume who is interested either in dialect writing or in dialects of English from the North of England (or both) will find something of interest in its pages. The chapters gathered here certainly further our knowledge of what kind of dialect writing exists for the varieties considered, and of the ways in which particular

pieces of dialect writing go about representing specific dialect features, and of the ways in which such texts can provide sometimes otherwise non-existent evidence for the varieties that they represent. We think that they also advance our understanding of dialect writing as a phenomenon in all of its complicated and multi-faceted glory (as something which can be everything from 'old-fashioned' to 'edgy', as shown in some of the texts exemplified in this introduction). We hope that this volume will stimulate further work in all the areas that it encompasses, from the understanding of social practice to the structural analysis of texts, and everything in between.

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¹ Shorrocks (1996, 390), for example, writes that “[t]he most substantial traditions of writing in non-standard English are those in the North of England”.

² We do not pretend that we invented the term, of course (see, for example, Krapp 1926 and Hagan 2002), but we do think that it is the most useful one to use.

³ This text may, in fact, have stopped being canonical dialect literature quite soon after it was first published, as it was latterly published in editions from London, and various introductions (written in Standard English) and glossaries have been added in the text’s many editions, showing that the text was intended for a wide audience, not (just?) those who know the dialect represented. Wales (2017) shows (following Easson 1976) that Dickens, in fact, made use of *Tim Bobbin* when writing the dialect portions of *Hard Times*, which again shows that the text was read by a general audience. In fact, Salveson (1993) argues (perhaps contentiously) that *Tim Bobbin* was never really read by an audience of dialect speakers when it was first published. This flags up the complications in using the canonical definition of ‘dialect literature’ – a point that we return to below.

⁴ One immense lacuna in our discussion here is that we do not at all consider work on dialect writing in languages other than English (apart, perhaps, from a few tentative comments about writing in Scots). We know that there is such work, such as Berlinger (1983) and Strand (2019), indeed we suspect that there is a vast amount of it, and we are confident that similar issues to those considered here are discussed in it, and that such cross-linguistically relevant considerations should be brought together. There is also work which takes an explicitly ‘English Literature’ approach to dialect writing in English, such as Redling (2006). There are clear connections from such work to some of the chapters in this volume, such as those by CLARK and HERMESTON, but we know that there will be much more work of this type that we could learn from (and vice versa). In addition to this, we are aware that there is work on the psycholinguistics of spelling which is also highly relevant to our purposes, as it can show which spelling conventions are psychologically real for speakers (and thus which conventions might be usable in dialect respelling). We have not been able to interact with such work, but we know that cross-fertilisation with it could prove fruitful. Finally, work on dialect writing should also engage with material that focuses on the system behind English spelling (and its development) in general, such as the material gathered in Cook and Ryan (2016).

⁵ There is also some work which aims to gather together (early) material which discusses ‘dialects of England’, including descriptions of pieces of dialect writing, such as Smith (1839), Skeat and Nodal (1877) and Alston (1971).

⁶ The caution is partly about the use of eye-dialect, especially in cases where non-dialect speakers such as folklorists and sociolinguists are producing written forms that represent non-standard dialects. The status of eye-dialect in dialect writing is controversial and complex (for a more positive view, see HONEYBONE’S chapter in this volume).

⁷ This assumes that there is one, of course. Wales (2000, 2006) shows in detail how a wide range of approaches to dividing England into parts (on political, cultural and social lines) do fundamentally recognise this kind of bipartite divide.

⁸ Base map reproduced from Ordnance Survey map data by permission of the Ordnance Survey © Crown copyright 2001.

⁹ We are grateful for the many comments that we have received on this introduction, which have substantially improved it. We do not think that all the authors in the volume would agree with everything that we have written here, however, and any errors in it are, of course, our own.