It is now nearly ten years since my *Lancashire: a social history 1558–1939* was published, and a still longer period has elapsed since I wrote the contribution on Lancashire and Cheshire between 1750 and 1950 for volume 1 of the *Cambridge Social History of Britain*, which eventually appeared in 1990.¹ It is both salutary and rewarding to have the opportunity to reflect on the efflorescent historiography which has dealt with the last two centuries of the history of this region over the intervening years: its extent and richness are indicated in the bibliography which follows. Lancashire, in particular, has continued to be a cynosure of attention, especially the district around Manchester where the cotton industry took root from the late eighteenth century and where (arguably) the first industrial society took distinctive form. Old debates have continued or been revitalized in new or subtly different forms, incipient ones have ramified, and new concerns have emerged and generated controversies of their own. Some are rooted in the region in its own right, others pursue broader controversies in contexts within the two counties; and the bibliography omits some important works which include material from the region as part of more

¹ The chapter in question was originally written in 1982, but there were long publication delays.
general syntheses of English, British, or international comparative history.\(^2\)

I have concentrated on substantial, footnoted contributions in refereed journals or publications of similar standing, and this has entailed the omission of a lot of short articles in local journals, some of which (especially in the *Lancashire Local Historian*) are well researched and make a useful contribution; but, as will become clear, there is a daunting array of material according to my chosen criteria, without extending them further. A major contribution has been made by an excellent new journal, the *Manchester Region History Review*, which has greatly expanded coverage of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (especially) in readable and accessible form, while helping the writers of theses and dissertations to get their work into print. The *Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society* have been revitalized, with more and higher-quality coverage of the modern period than hitherto, and the *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* have continued to offer ample scope for historians covering the last two centuries, with a geographical bias towards south-west Lancashire which balances the Manchester-oriented remit of the Antiquarian Society. Meanwhile the Chetham Society has also been revived, with regular offerings appearing once again, and it forms a route into print for some of the best theses on regional topics. *North-West Labour History* has had a chequered career but seems to have settled into providing a regular diet of solid articles interspersed with some more ephemeral material, and some of its themed issues have addressed topics which have been neglected elsewhere; while the publications of Lancaster University’s Centre for North-West Regional Studies continue to make useful contributions. Unpublished theses are omitted from the bibliography which follows, but the importance and value of some of the best should be recognized, and some will be footnoted when I pursue themes in the historiography below. The attached bibliography lists items in alphabetical order by author or (in one or two cases) by the title of a thematic publication. Such items will not be footnoted in what follows: footnotes will refer

\(^2\) e.g. N. Kirk, *Labour and society in Britain and the USA* (2 vols, Aldershot, 1994).
But the modern history of the two counties cannot be pursued solely through the regional journals and local publications, and attentive perusers of the bibliography will note that work of major importance has been published not only outside the region in London, Oxford, Cambridge, Leicester, and Keele, but also beyond the British Isles. Keele University Press has been particularly friendly to the regional and local history of Lancashire, helping to fill the place vacated by Manchester University Press's abandonment, indeed repudiation, of a field of publishing which had been central to the making of its reputation. Closer to home, the revival of Liverpool University Press is also becoming important. But the conscientious historian pursuing regional and local themes in these counties needs to pay heed to the contents pages of, for example, the *International Review of Social History* (edited from Amsterdam) and (from the United States) *Albion*, the *Journal of British Studies*, and the *Journal of Economic History*. Such international publications need to be consulted alongside the local offerings of enterprising little publishers such as George Kelsall at Littleborough and Lancashire County Books at Preston. The latter's activities are in suspension as I write owing to the implications of government cuts in county council finances and autonomy, but the determination of the county council to resume a publishing programme as soon as possible deserves the highest praise. Lancashire County Books's support for the publication of worthwhile history books in accessible format and at

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3 T. Wyke, *A checklist of theses on the history of Lancashire* (Manchester, n.d.); U. R. Lawler, *North-west theses and dissertations 1950–1978* (Lancaster, 1981); W. R. Clark and L. C. Kirtley (comp.), *North-west theses and dissertations 1979–84* (Lancaster, 1988), provide regional listings of theses. The Institute of Historical Research publishes annual listings of research theses completed and in progress, which are now indexed by place as well as by author. Extensive collections of M.A. dissertations on North-Western themes, some very thoroughly researched in primary sources, are available at North-Western higher education institutions, with the largest collections being at the University of Lancaster and Manchester Metropolitan University.
reasonable prices is reminiscent of established practice in much of western Europe, where regional and provincial governments (not to mention savings banks and similar entities) have long sustained a record of subsidizing regional and local history publishing as part of a general cultural remit whose scale has been unthinkable here. It would be good if the parsimonious and narrowly utilitarian cultures of local government and business which have generally prevailed in this country could be changed, and Lancashire County Books has looked like a very positive first step. Meanwhile, annual bibliographies by subject can be found most fully and usefully in *Northern History* (which publishes surprisingly little on the modern history of these counties, and has yet to discover either *Manchester Region History Review* or *North-West Labour History*), *Economic History Review*, and *Urban History*, each of which offers a presentation and layout which facilitates the research of people with particular themes and places in mind.

Local historians need to keep abreast of relevant trends in the historiography, however tied they may be to a particular place and/or special interest. In order to do history properly in relation to a locality, or family, or business, or occupation, or institution, it is necessary to be aware of context: current ideas in the discipline, approaches adopted by other people when confronted by similar issues and problems, and work done and in progress on the area, county, or region surrounding one's own, or indeed in similar kinds of place elsewhere. The importation of transferable ideas from other disciplines or cultures, with a view to testing their validity in a spirit of critical but open-minded experimentation, is one way of importing new life and opening out new angles of vision in local studies. Comparative studies have a great deal to offer here.4

History should be a collaborative enterprise, then, borrowing and lending across disciplines, trying out new theories and ideas, sometimes rejecting them, sometimes embracing them, more often cautiously accepting the

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provisional validity of aspects of them. Good history does not simply tell a story or describe a phenomenon in a vacuum: it should respect and refer to the cognate fruits of others’ labours, be aware of relevant theories, arguments, and parallel activities, and build overtly on the work of others wherever it is useful and appropriate. Some of the books which might otherwise have been on the list that follows have been omitted because of failure to meet these criteria.  

This (necessarily incomplete) bibliography of books and articles dealing with modern Lancashire and Cheshire and published since the mid-1980s is designed to help readers to follow up developments in the disciplines of history over an essentially arbitrary geographical area which reflects the Historic Society’s inherited remit. Why put the old counties of Lancashire and Cheshire together for these purposes? What kind of identity, beyond the coincidental territorial agenda of this and other learned societies, can this combination of traditional administrative areas claim? The societies themselves (the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society, the Record Society, the Chetham Society, as well as the Historic Society) arose out of particular nineteenth-century historical contexts and conjunctures: they, and their labels, were not inevitable.  

Raising this issue leads us into problems of regional and other levels of identity and perception which have themselves engendered discussion in recent historiography.

Questions of regional identity in the English context have exercised the minds of several recent writers on the North of England or on parts of that shape on the ground, imagined construct, or heuristic device. Dellheim on Victorian ways of imagining the North, Musgrove’s strange and misguided book on the North of England since the Romans (which identifies shifting political frontiers but fails to establish a social core for a regional identity which to him is based on other factors).

5 Problems of deciding inclusion in and exclusion from the bibliography were compounded by the existence of works with some content relating directly to the two counties, but without a dominant emphasis on them.


Yorkshire rather than the North-West), Helen Jewell’s search for the roots of ‘Northern consciousness’ in geology and prehistory, Rob Shields’s chapter on myths and representations of the North (both in the context of debate over a ‘north–south divide’), Hill, Williams, and Holt on sport and northern identities, Russell’s exploration of Yorkshireness in the context of cricket, the collection of essays edited by Colls and Lancaster on Geordie identities, Marshall on locality and identity in Low and High Furness: all reflect a recent concern to explore the relationships between senses of place and senses of identity. What geographical entities do people attach themselves to and identify with, under what circumstances, for what purposes, and with what results? Posing such questions immediately leads to reflection upon the validity of focusing academic attention on two contiguous counties which may or may not have significant things in common or command the shared allegiances of those who live in them. Does the combination of Lancashire and Cheshire have a regional identity to which people can attach themselves in ways which command historical as well as historiographical consequences? Or is it merely an inert shape carved out of the map for the administrative convenience of bureaucrats and historians of a certain cast of mind? Can imagined regions—and this is not one, in the sense of creating, for example, a celebratory literature or a ceremonial regime—be assimilated to pieces of jigsaw on the ground? If so, how can such a task be performed? There is a burgeoning agenda for further

research here, which is capable of embracing perceptions of local identity and could helpfully make use of diaries and autobiographies to this end.

Regions with meanings for their inhabitants come in smaller packages in England than on the European continent, and it is difficult to extend them beyond individual counties, although East Anglia and the West Country might be candidates for viable larger agglomerations. On the European continent regions such as the Basque Country, Catalonia, Provence, or Brittany have deep-rooted cultural and indeed political identities which engender positive attachments among their established inhabitants, while kingdoms and principalities which have been submerged in larger nations are capable of sustaining similar sentiments, especially when enshrined in a German provincial government system which recognizes these identities. Within England—as opposed to the United Kingdom, whose component nations raise issues which are beyond the scope of this paper—the county is the likeliest candidate for such historically-validated regional status; but it is hard to sustain as a basis for popular regional consciousness, while groupings of counties (the usual modus operandi) to form larger ‘regions’ do not seem to gel, as the difficulty experienced by historians in writing convincingly about ‘the North’ and ‘northernness’ suggests.14

The county itself is highly problematic for these purposes, smaller though it is than the pays of continental Europe: it may have formed a satisfying basis for affirmations of collective identity for the seventeenth-century gentry, although the depth and meaning of such allegiances are now being brought into question,15 and it certainly formed a point of contact for exiles (especially in London) in the nineteenth century,16 but it is hard to find widely shared attachment to the county among residents seeking a focus for the celebration of a shared geographical culture. Russell argues persuasively

14 Above, nn. 8–10.
15 Ann Hughes, Politics, society and civil war in Warwickshire, 1620–1660 (Cambridge, 1987).
for a widely agreed set of literary representations of generic Yorkshire character in the first half of the twentieth century, and perhaps a similar exercise might bear fruit for Lancashire, but its meaning and status would still be debatable. County government, whether through the Justices of the Peace until 1889 or the new elected county councils thereafter, seems not to have canalized such positive feelings, at least until the threat of change through local government reorganization appeared around 1970 and came to pass in 1974; but such conclusions must be provisional until a study of the rhetoric of county government and county occasions has been made.17 Here, as with other county-level binding elements such as cricket or learned societies, a sense of identity was more likely to be the preserve of those with sufficient resources and cultural capital, and a broad enough action-space, to raise their eyes beyond the local community and the individual town which marked the horizons of most people for most purposes. The most difficult aspects of constructing my book on Lancashire involved attempts to generalize about the county as a whole, and especially about generic characteristics which might be shared by its inhabitants: Lancashire humour, Lancashire values, Lancashire customs, and so on. It was an easier and more comfortable exercise to deconstruct, to divide the county up into areas which could be compared and contrasted, than to pull it together into a convincing social unit; and this remains a problem, which applies to Cheshire as well. How do we get beyond the generalities of works like Arthur Mee’s *The King’s England: Lancashire* (1936)? Like other popular celebrations it tells us of the county’s ‘matchless race of pioneers’ and its role as ‘the cradle of our prosperity’, praises Lancastrians as ‘a brave and generous folk, honest as the day, dependable, sticking it when trouble comes, tenacious of their rights’, while at the same time deconstructing the county into its component parts of ‘toil and poetry, drabness and beauty’ and recognizing the social diversity within the

administrative boundary. The myths of collective identity do need to be analysed, of course, but the relationship between their roots, their propagation, their reception, and their impact, like the question of just whose property they were, will remain elusive.\(^{18}\)

Smaller economic regions within counties, or indeed transcending county boundaries, may have been more conducive to the development of popular loyalties and consciously shared identities. Thus the notion of a ‘Manchester region’, pulling together those places whose economies were dominated by the various ramifications of the cotton industry at the junction between Pennines and plain which makes Manchester a gateway city, may be more viable than the county itself. As presented through the *Manchester Region History Review* this turns out to be a somewhat amorphous, taken-for-granted concept, but more could be done with it. A ‘Manchester region’ might be presented as one of the regional entities Langton identified as being newly created or highlighted by the early industrialization process, pulled together by natural resources, transport systems, and distribution patterns, and articulating themselves through hierarchical urban systems in which towns and their migration fields drew together whole countrysides in symbiotic relationships and common enterprise.\(^{19}\) We might identify this (basically) economic construct, as it developed into the railway age, with the Lancashire of Patrick Joyce’s *Visions of the people*, perhaps the most stimulating, controversial, and difficult book on parts and aspects of this region to appear over the last decade. Joyce ascribes a distinctive popular political culture to Lancashire in the course of a wider argument about whether class analysis is the best approach to understanding how a regional society worked between 1840 and 1914. We shall return to these issues, but here we should point out that the area actually treated is not the county as a whole, but the


cotton spinning and weaving centres which constitute that version of the county which is most readily recognized as such in the outside world. There is more to Lancashire than this, as the most schematic reference to the contrasting societies and landscapes of the south-western coalfield, or Liverpool, or the rural north, or industrial Furness, would confirm. There is a recurrent danger of ‘reading off’ the characteristics of a whole county—or region, if a version of the ‘North-West’ is at stake—from the ascribed attributes of part of it. The same problem applies emphatically to Cheshire. The industrial regions of the industrial revolution created their own new identities, or pointed up emergent ones; and these were no respecters of the older administrative boundaries.

The question of what identities people do recognize and identify with between the local and the national (or imperial) is at the heart of much recent work. This brings us back to the problem of why, and for what purposes, Lancashire and Cheshire should be aggregated, especially as ‘the North-West’. An alternative North-West is available, after all, which would combine the old counties of Lancashire, Cumberland, and Westmorland in a satisfying geographical entity, bounded by natural features as well as administrative conventions and looking outwards to the Irish Sea and the Atlantic. I teach, and sometimes write, on the basis of this North-West; but I would not presume to argue that its inhabitants have any stronger sense of regional consciousness about this agglomeration than about Lancashire and Cheshire or, indeed, a combination of all four pre-1974 counties. Different conventions are, and have been, adopted for different statistics-gathering exercises, and we need always to bear in mind the artificiality of presenting statistics which are gathered for administrative entities which embrace within themselves contrasting economies and ways of life. What does this kind of averaging or aggregating really tell us? And it works even less well for the reconstruction of feelings about places and spaces. One of the salutary lessons of another difficult and important book by

20 For a greater North-West extending from Cheshire to the Scottish border, and with a bigger economy than those of four whole E.U. countries, Guardian, 21 Aug. 1996. Thanks to Mike Winstanley for this reference.
Patrick Joyce, *Democratic subjects*, is that of the fragility and subjectivity of even the individual identities out of which social relations are constructed. Working from diary and autobiography evidence, Joyce examines how the dialect poet Edwin Waugh and the politician John Bright perceived, presented, and reinvented themselves according to the circumstances of the unfolding of their lives, within a framework of experience in which Rochdale was prominent but not all-determining. Joyce would, no doubt, quarrel with some of the words used in even this most schematic of outlines, and the exposition is unnecessarily difficult; but the book repays the considerable effort of careful reading if only to highlight the problems of individual identity which underlie the attempts to present and discuss collective identities in which local and regional historians, like it or not, engage.

All these problems in the current historiography need to be borne in mind when we approach Phillips and Smith’s synthesis of Lancashire and Cheshire history since 1540, the only book-length attempt to pull this version of North-West England together and present an overview of its history. I have already had my say about this book’s coverage of the last two centuries in an earlier issue of this journal, and it would not be appropriate to reiterate the criticisms here, although it should be stressed that their substance applies overwhelmingly to the later period. But one of the generic problems I identify with this work is that it does not address these problems of regional identity. It does not justify its geographical terms of reference, which include (sensibly on many assumptions) the part of north-west Derbyshire most influenced by the Manchester economy, but exclude Lancashire north of Morecambe Bay (Furness and Cartmel, or Lonsdale north of the Sands). It assumes that a shape on the ground, defined almost entirely in administrative terms, has its own self-evident validity, an assumption which follows the remit of the editors of the series to which it contributes.

22 J. V. Beckett tackled this problem in the introduction to his book on the east Midlands in the same series, so serious discussion of it has not been proscribed.
Within that framework, however, I am more exercised by a related problem, which also reflects detachment from current historiographical concerns: the failure to address or incorporate consideration of the historical controversies and debates which are the very stuff of history as I understand it. Instead we are offered what the author clearly regards as a consensual view of history, although it is actually highly coloured by his own assumptions and prejudices, which would be better made explicit than assumed to be common sense. It does provide quarries of statistics, some more reliable than others, and it does offer some helpful descriptions of particular industries and their geographical distribution. Alternative sets of priorities, and absorbing debates, are ignored, and this does no service to the reader. It assumes that history is about the accumulation of knowledge and the classifying of data, without acknowledging any problems about this enterprise beyond the technical. We do not need to embrace all of the scepticism of Michel Foucault about these practices and their own historical roots to be cautious about such a project. We do need to pay heed, whether working at regional or local level, to the moving frontiers of a historical discipline which advances through debate; and the most disappointing aspect of this book for me is the failure of its modern history section to do so.

Where, then, have the frontiers been moving over the last few years on issues relating to the history of places in Lancashire and Cheshire? To begin with geographical coverage within the region, the most impressive developments have involved the social history of Liverpool, a city whose historical treatment has tended to focus on a narrow range of themes involving the economic history of shipping lines, the vicissitudes of dock labour, the activities of Victorian local government (with special reference to public health), and the relationship between ethnicity, sectarianism, and popular politics. There remains plenty of life in these topics, and it has been manifest over the last few years in new treatments of and approaches to the two last-named; but an encouraging set of new initiatives has emerged, looking especially at social

structure and social conflict, and at the ‘history of everyday life’ and the survival strategies of the poor. These trends have been particularly well exemplified in John Belchem’s edited collection of essays, *Popular politics, riot and labour*, which performed sterling service above all in reassessing Liverpool’s social structure in all its half-hidden complexity, and in revaluing the strength, agenda, and context of Chartism in Liverpool. Belchem’s own paper on Scouse language and identity is eagerly awaited. Sam Davies’s very substantial book on the Liverpool Labour Party in the early decades of the twentieth century should also be singled out, especially for its attention to gender, which the continuing work of Pat Ayers also highlights. This is a theme which deserves sustained attention in this distinctive if not ‘exceptional’ urban setting.

Manchester has also undergone a range of cultural and political reassessments. Books by Hewitt and Pickering have looked in depth at Chartism and the post-Chartist transition in the city for the first time, and Pickering in particular has re-emphasized Manchester’s position as a Chartist stronghold, which has otherwise been treated sceptically in recent years. Alan Kidd’s synthesis of the city’s history not only provides an accessible introduction to developments and debates, but also draws on his own research to continue the long-running reassessment of the political, religious, and cultural outlook of the Manchester middle classes which has transformed old stereotypes into nuanced portraits. There have been other contributions in this vein, including reinterpretations of economic and political ideas in the 1820s by Turner and a particularly stimulating piece by Simon Gunn, and more would be welcomed on other urban middle-class experiences in the two counties, with Liverpool especially crying out for attention. There is a general need for work on this theme in the twentieth century. Peter Taylor’s holistic examination of political and social conflict in Bolton during the second quarter of the nineteenth century looks seriously at the middle classes, too, and so does John Garrard’s article on the changing fortunes of urban élites in Victorian and Edwardian Lancashire.

Work on both Liverpool and Manchester has paid particular heed to issues involving ethnicity, especially regarding the social and political characteristics of Irish
communities; and here again we have seen the deconstruction and reassessment of simplistic stereotypes and assumptions. Lowe's big book pulls together many of the research findings of the 1970s (in a far from simplistic way: this is when the work of serious reappraisal began), and Fielding has been prominent in challenging received ideas about the Manchester Irish. There has also been a welcome surge of interest in Liverpool's Black and Chinese communities, and articles continue to appear on aspects of Manchester Jewry. There is no shortage of new reading on these themes.

Outside Liverpool and Manchester the social problems and political conflicts of the cotton towns have continued to receive most attention, with more heed being paid to spinning than to weaving centres, although Preston, with its mixed economy, has been particularly well served in several thematic dimensions, as has Bolton, owing partly to the excellence of its twentieth-century archive holdings. Lancaster and Blackpool, in their contrasting ways, have also attracted disproportionate attention, and this highlights the need for further research on the smaller seaports and on the less idiosyncratic of the Lancashire seaside resorts.24 Southport and Morecambe, especially, are ripe for research projects which ask why, with access to the same demand flows, they developed so differently from Blackpool itself. A small amount of additional work has been done on the mining and heavy industrial towns of central and south-west Lancashire, with the focus mainly on housing and occupational structures, but there is room for substantial research projects here; and the weaving towns of north-east Lancashire, as well as the county's rural areas, have not sustained the momentum which was being generated during the 1970s. Cheshire has been very quiet indeed, although a new collection of essays on Victorian Chester edited by Roger

Swift suggests that University College, Chester, is beginning to make its presence felt here.

Moving on from geographical to other kinds of thematic coverage, we can emphasize the persistence and continuing development of older concerns involving the cotton industry, class, labour relations, and living standards, before highlighting newer preoccupations which emphasize gender, popular culture, consumerism, and an emergent genre of environmental history, as well as the interest in race and ethnicity which was mentioned above in the context of Liverpool and Manchester. We begin with the cotton industry, whose fortunes were so important to the wider economic, social, cultural, and political life of so much of the region for most of the last two centuries.

The cotton industry has been spectacularly well served recently by Mary Rose’s collection of specially commissioned essays, which takes a fresh look at all aspects of the rise and decline of the industry since 1700, including technology, fashion and design, and the life-styles of the work-force. This is an up-to-date portrayal of the cotton industry ‘in the round’, and it includes an assessment of the state of play in the long-running and still stimulating debate on the reasons for and significance of the decline of the cotton industry in the twentieth century. This was also addressed by an earlier collection of essays under Rose’s editorship, by a collection of articles in Textile History in 1993, and, for the post-World War Two period, by the lively and controversial scholarship of Singleton. The impact of the First World War has been a particular bone of contention in this debate, but in general twentieth-century wars have been imperfectly integrated into the wider historiography of the region, and attention needs to be paid to this. Moorhouse’s vivid and moving discussion of the impact of war deaths and mourning rituals in Bury gives an idea of what might and should be done. The analysis of changing patterns of world trade and their impact on the regional economy is also a theme which should not be left to historians of the cotton industry and the slave trade. My own book on Lancashire looked more at the social history of the county in its own right than at Lancashire and the wider world, and this latter theme would make an excellent complementary volume, building on (especially) the work of
Perhaps one of the shared experiences which pulled together a regional identity for the counties studied here was participation in an Irish Sea and Atlantic economy during this period, although alongside the outward-looking aspects of these activities must be charted the development of deep-rooted, insular, local societies whose dependence on long-distance overseas trade for their livelihoods was a paradox; and one which brought long-term retribution for manufacturers who were more concerned with what their neighbours were doing than with the threats to their livelihoods which were emerging in China and Japan. Meanwhile, we should not forget the other major contribution to the history of the cotton industry, Timmins’s magisterial transformation of our understanding of the pace and pattern of the decline of hand-loom weaving, which shows the weavers to have been far more resilient over a much wider area than had previously been thought, and explains these findings in economic and demographic terms. This is essential reading, outdating all previous scholarship on this issue, although it will be left to others to assess the implications of these economic and demographic changes for popular politics and popular culture, which Timmins defined as being outside his remit.

Class and class conflict, which emerged as a set of core issues in the 1970s, have continued to generate controversy on academic battlefields within the region, reflecting and sometimes initiating struggles on broader fronts. Patrick Joyce, in *Visions of the people*, poses questions about the extent to which questions of class identities and relations should be at the core of understanding the workings of society and politics. He argues, in a difficult book which does not lend itself to encapsulation, that questions of language and systems of thought are more important than economic arrangements or identities as wage-earners or profit-makers in affecting political outlooks and social expectations. Using a range of contemporary sources he posits the emergence in the Victorian cotton towns of a broad popular outlook which

emphasized fairness, decency, mutual assistance, and uncondescending friendliness, tinctured with religious influences from the Sunday schools (on which more work is needed), and pulling together social strands which extended beyond wage-labour to construct a popular culture which was capable of transcending, and having a deeper meaning than, class identities as such. But Joyce retreats from this position—indeed, he repudiates it—in the more recent Democratic subjects. Here he moves more firmly into arguing for the formative influence of language (broadly interpreted) rather than economic systems as the key to how people lived their lives, and at times he comes close to embracing the notion that there is no reality we can apprehend beyond language.

This development of the ‘linguistic turn’ responds to a broader current in social history, which has been particularly important in interpreting Chartism. Kirk has reacted forcefully against this trend in articles which use regional material to reassert the central importance of class as interpreted by (especially) E. P. Thompson. Meanwhile older debates on Chartism within the region persist in (to some extent) new guises. The saga initiated by Foster on the alleged emergence of a class-conscious proletariat in the Oldham of the Chartist years rumbles on, finding its most recent expression in the argument between Winstanley and Gadian. Winstanley argues for continuity in the popular attachment to a liberalism which pursued a democratic politics while accepting a capitalist economic order (though neither passively nor uncritically), while Gadian challenges this revisionist reading by seeking to reassert the primacy of class, less effectively than Kirk and in an article innocent of new evidence. Nobody seems yet to be agreed on how we should view the social and economic structure of Oldham: there is no shortage of alternative readings. Joyce might argue that this no longer matters, or even that this shows the naïvety of attempts to reconstruct social structures as if they were real entities, but I suggest that there are realities beyond language and that it requires a sheltered experience of life not to

26 J. Foster, Class struggle in the industrial revolution (London, 1974).
apprehend this. The recent decline in studies of workplace conflict from a trade union perspective reflects a fashion of the times, however, although McIvor’s work on employers’ organizations introduces an important set of themes.

Relatedly, another highly politicized set of issues, the controversy over the standard of living of the working class in the industrial revolution, has faded from the limelight in its older form, as the fragility and narrowness of attempts to measure living standards through the reconstruction of price and wage series based on adult male wage-rates have become apparent, and the need to examine family experiences in the round has led to changes of agenda. Brown’s essay in econometric history may turn out to be the last of the genre at regional level. It retreats from the easy optimism of Lindert and Williamson, which set the agenda for the 1980s, and looks more critically at a wider range of variables, without solving the innate problems of this kind of quantitative and mathematical history, which depends on the sophisticated manipulation of unreliable data subjectively selected. A particularly promising development has been the work of Horrell and Humphries, which has looked at family budgets (a large number of them from Lancashire) to reconstruct the changing contribution of women and children to working-class family incomes, with results which (at very least) deflate some of the claims of the optimists.

Interest has switched to thematic studies of aspects of living standards, broadly defined. Housing is prominent here, and Morgan’s excellent contributions on Preston should be highlighted, along with Timmins’s chapter on the two-up and two-down house in Crosby’s collection of essays. Self-help and mutual assistance organizations, which had an important impact on that most neglected aspect of living standards, personal security, have also generated interest, with valuable contributions on Friendly Societies and the Co-operative movement. There is scope for lively debate on the latter

theme, with relevance for a broader agenda of popular culture and popular politics, as historians try to tease out how far Co-op membership was motivated by the financial instrumentality of maximizing the dividend on purchases, and how far by enduring ideals of building a fairer society and advancing towards the Holy Grail of the Co-operative Commonwealth. Another aspect of living standards which has received innovative attention is the experience of migration. Pooley and D'Cruze's imaginative study of the movements of Benjamin Shaw and his relatives uses autobiographical material to reveal the complexity of migratory movements in ways which go far beyond the most creative use of the census enumerators' books, while offering indications of the motives for migration which can only be deduced, at several removes and on questionable assumptions, from conventional quantitative sources. Indeed, this article usefully prioritizes qualitative evidence and the contribution which evidence from individual lives can make to historical understanding. Looking in related ways at issues such as family strategies, housing, and collective arrangements to protect against crises and provide a measure of security (a theme which should embrace trade unions) should be central to further developments in the study of living standards. So should public health, viewed in the context of a burgeoning interest in what might be labelled environmental history which looks at humanity's impact on landscapes and ecosystems and the consequences for health, life expectancy, and the quality of life. We should anticipate, and encourage, important developments in this field.

More familiarly, gender is also a dimension of growing importance in the region's historiography, and the work of Horrell and Humphries, mentioned above, is part of this

pattern. The main focus has been on working-class women and gender relations in both home and workplace. The use of oral history has been particularly helpful in uncovering hidden aspects of women’s lives in the private sphere. Murfin on domestic leisure, Roberts on changes in family relationships and women’s domestic roles between 1940 and 1970, Tebbutt’s rehabilitation of ‘gossip’ (moving from the home into the street and looking at reputation-guarding and information exchange as part of working-class survival strategies), and Ayers’s continuing work on women in Liverpool all attest to the importance of this research methodology in shedding new light on hitherto obscure lives and issues. These and other contributions are building up an enhanced view of living standards as the ‘history of everyday life’, with women’s and children’s roles emphatically included in a three-dimensional picture. We need work on middle- and upper-class women, families, and domestic material culture, including the role of domestic service, within the region; work on gender has concentrated disproportionately on the working class. The other great theme on the gender front, indeed, has been the old but enduring and polyfaceted debate over the social and demographic implications of women’s employment outside the home, and especially in cotton factories. It is now clear that married women’s factory work did not in any direct sense ‘cause’ higher rates of infant mortality: the comparative figures for different kinds of urban economy within the North-West show no significant pattern, although this may not be the whole story. Public health, housing standards, and nursing practices (which were not necessarily correlated with factory work) seem to have been more important as influences on infant mortality, although it does seem that factory environments were conducive to the

spread of contraceptive knowledge and perhaps to the diffusion of information about abortifacients. There is ample room for further research on these and related themes.

Aspects of the social history of popular culture also stand out among novel and developing themes in the historiography of the two counties. This applies especially to organized and increasingly commercialized phenomena such as the music hall and sport, and Jack Williams's holistic approach to the social history of cricket, which sets the sport firmly in a range of social contexts (gender included), has been particularly rewarding. More work is needed on domestic leisure, following Murfin's lead, and on the relationship between religion, popular politics, and popular culture (again, Williams has been successfully innovative in looking closely at relationships between cricket and denominational religion). Religion generally has been out of fashion in thematic studies, despite its obvious importance, which has been reinforced by Mark Smith's interestingly controversial reassessment of the strength of the Church of England in the Oldham and Saddleworth of the industrial revolution. Smith has sought to rehabilitate the dynamism, adaptability, and influence of the Anglicans here, in opposition to an entrenched orthodoxy, and his work may prove to be the harbinger of a more general reinterpretation. Elements of consumer choice may not have been absent from religious behaviour, and shopping and consumerism have recently become visible themes in the historiography of the North-West, with studies of retailing, holidays, food supplies, markets, and items of popular diet featuring prominently alongside the work on the Co-op which has already been mentioned. An abundance of topics cries out for further work, alongside such older but currently neglected (though not quite ignored) themes as education and electoral politics. But there is no shortage of innovative work in progress on novel and rewarding topics.

This does not exhaust the cornucopia of recent and current research on (especially) Lancashire themes. There is, for

example, important work in progress on crime and policing, another topic with considerable contemporary resonance.\textsuperscript{32} What is clear is that, in spite of constraints on time and resources in higher education, and widespread severe problems in finding time for historical research among education and other professionals generally, published research on themes in modern history in the region covered by this Society’s remit has been daunting in its scale, scope, and fecundity. The task of updating \textit{Lancashire: a social history} to take account of this spate of revisions, novel arguments and evidence, and innovatory research themes and approaches would be both stimulating and overwhelming. In the absence of such an initiative, this article has charted some of the new territory and drawn attention to some of the provisional revisions of the old. It is encouraging to be able to report that the task has been so substantial and that so much of the new material is so well researched and thought-provoking.

\textbf{SOME RECENT WORKS}


\textsuperscript{32} The University of Lancaster Centre for Social History’s E.S.R.C.-funded research project on crime, migration, and social change in North-West England and the Basque Country, 1840–1970, is beginning to bear fruit, alongside Andy Davies’s work on juvenile gangs in Salford, Manchester, and Glasgow under the same research initiative. Simon Stevenson of the University of Queensland is working on the crime statistics in Victorian Lancashire, Pete King of Nene College is examining juvenile crime in early industrial Lancashire, and John Archer of Edge Hill College and Harvey Osborne of the University of Lancaster are working on poaching in the nineteenth-century North-West.
Recent Work: Since Late Eighteenth Century

H. M. Boot, ‘How skilled were Lancashire cotton factory workers in 1832?’ Econ. H.R., XLVIII (1995).
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A. Crosby (ed.), Lancashire local studies in honour of Diana Winterbotham (Preston, 1993).
C. R. J. Currie and C. P. Lewis (eds), English county histories: a guide (Stroud, 1994).
A. Davies and S. Fielding (eds), Workers’ worlds: cultures and communities in Manchester and Salford, 1880–1939 (Milton Keynes, 1992).
S. Davies, Liverpool Labour: social and political influences on the development of the Labour Party in Liverpool, 1900–1939 (Keele, 1996).
D. A. Farnie, John Rylands of Manchester (Manchester, 1993).


A. Fowler and T. Wyke (eds), *The barefoot aristocrats* (Littleborough, 1987).


R. Holt (ed.), *Sport and the working class in modern Britain* [four chapters] (Manchester, 1990).
P. Hudson and W. R. Lee (eds), *Women’s work and the family economy* [chapter by Ayers on Liverpool] (Manchester, 1990).
Recent Work: Since Late Eighteenth Century


P. Joyce, *Democratic subjects* (Cambridge, 1994).


M. McKenna, ‘The suburbanization of the working-class population of Liverpool between the wars’, *Social History*, XVI (1991).


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A. Murphy, *From the Empire to the Rialto: racism and reaction in Liverpool 1918–48* (Liverpool, 1995).


*North-West Labour History*, special issue on women: work, culture and community, XII (1987).


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R. Poole, *The Lancashire wakes holidays* (Preston, 1994).


J. Richards, *Stars in their eyes: Lancashire stars of stage, screen and radio* (Preston, 1994).


P. Richardson, ‘The structure of capital during the industrial revolution revisited: two case studies from the cotton textile industry’, *Econ. H.R.*, XLII (1989).


P. Starkey, *I will not fight [Conscientious objectors]* (Liverpool, 1993).


