

Introduction

How Dialect Works in Victorian Literature

NORTH AND SOUTH

SCENE--*Small town in manufacturing district.*

SWELL (just arrived--stranger to locality--addresses rustic): Aw say, can you direct me to the "White Lion"?

RUSTIC: Aw should think aw could. Aw've drunk mony a quart there; an' if yo've no objection aw've none, for it's rather warm. Bu' that's nowt to do wi' wot yo' axt me. Yo' mun goo straight past th' "Co-op.," an' yo'll be there i' no toime.

SWELL (puzzled): But--aw--where's the "Co-op.," and--aw--what is it like?

RUSTIC (amazed): Well, aw'll goo to Owdham! An' dunnot yo' ralley know wot a "Co-op.'s" like?

SWELL: Fact! Never saw one in my life.

RUSTIC (more in sorrow than in anger): Ther's a deal o' wark for th' Skoo Board fort' do yet. (To Swell.) Well, meisther, aw'st ha' fort' tak' yo' bi th' hond an' show yo' th' pleck mysel. Aw wonder at yo'r folk areno' feert o' yo' gettin' lost. Come on! (*Exeunt omnes.*)

This humorous dialogue between a northern "rustic" and a southern "swell," published in the 10 July 1875 issue of Manchester's *Ben Brierley's Journal*, is the familiar form of a classic joke based on a cultural or linguistic misunderstanding. In this version, it seems as though North and South are about to be brought together over "mony a quart" at the local pub, until the Londoner displays not only his unfamiliarity with the geography of southeast Lancashire--we might imagine the "small town" is Rochdale, where the famous Co-operative was founded by working men in 1844--but also his ignorance of cultural, social, and political significance of Co-operatives and their birthplace. "Ther's a deal o' wark for th' Skoo Board fort' do yet," laments the Lancastrian. The School Board has their work cut out for them if the populace remains

this uneducated; the history of the Rochdale Pioneers and the Co-operative movement should be as rudimentary as the three R's.

The irony of the “rustic”'s lament, of course, is that the form of his speech, an orthographical representation of a nonstandard variety of English, reveals what the southern “swell” would likely view as uneducated or at the very least provincial. By the 1870s, the use of Standard English to signal prestige and education was well-established.¹ As Richard W. Bailey and Lynda Mugglestone have shown, in nineteenth-century Britain, Standard English came to be regarded as not only the desired norm, but also as the “proper” and “correct” way to speak; in direct correlation, other dialects and their speakers came to be viewed not only as nonstandard but substandard. Schools were called upon to “correct” the “faults” of regional and class accents and dialects. Yet here is this “rustic,” expressing his dismay at the failures of “Skoo Board.”

The joke, however, is not on the “rustic” who values his knowledge of the Co-operative movement over an ability to speak so-called “refined” English. The Lancastrian is proud of his county's progressive thinking and industriousness, and this pride is figured in not only what he says but also how he says it. For him, and his local audience, the Lancashire dialect is the embodiment of those qualities. As philologists such as the Reverend William Gaskell, George Milner, and John H. Nodal argued, this variety of English is not “vulgar” or “corrupt.” For example, the Northerner's elision of the glide /l/ is a regular grammatical feature of the dialect and his use of “aks” and

¹ Tony Fairman (2000) argues for the use of the terms open/schooled and vulgar/refined over standard/nonstandard, in part because the latter pair were not in use in the nineteenth century. I have chosen to use standard and nonstandard, even though they are anachronisms, because the open/schooled binary is more appropriate for discussing letter writing, whereas I am discussing the representation of spoken dialogue, and because the terms vulgar/refined could mean different things for the Victorians, making that dichotomy troublesome as well.

“pleck” for “ask” and “place” are not malapropisms but rather legitimate dialect forms of those words, based in Anglo-Saxon no less.² This unassuming six-line dialogue, situated amongst other humorous dialogues, epigrams and verse, does a tremendous amount of cultural work. It valorizes local dialect as much as it does local values; the local dialect out performs the national “standard” just as the views of the “rustic” trump those of the “swell.”

“Working Dialect” argues that the effort to upstage Standard English and its increasing power is at work in a variety of nineteenth-century British texts, from local journals to canonical novels, from North to South, from working- to middle-class readers. Though the abundance of grammar and elocution guides would suggest that many speakers were clamoring to acquire the phonology, morphology, and grammar of the standard, not everyone subscribed to the prescriptivist views that would relegate nonstandard dialects to the linguistic and literary margins. As we shall see, however, the relationship between dialect, class, and prestige was not an easy one. To begin with, nineteenth-century language attitudes were complicated. Nonstandard dialects could be simultaneously deemed “vulgar” and “authentic” depending on the speaker, interlocutor, or context. A linguistic feature that was considered a remnant of Anglo-Saxon in the mouth of a Lancashire weaver might be judged as “slovenly” speech in the mouth of a Londoner. For the editors of *A Glossary of the Lancashire Dialect* (1875), for example, the word *afeard* is a legitimate English word, derived from the Anglo-Saxon *afaeran*, ‘to frighten,’ and used by the writers of the Anglo Saxon bible, Chaucer, and Shakespeare. Whereas, according to Walton Burgess in his *Never Too Late To Learn! Five Hundred Mistakes of Daily Occurrence in Speaking, Pronouncing, and Writing the English*

² *Aks*, often spelled *ax*, and *pleck* are from the Old English *acsian* and *plæc*, respectively.

Language, Corrected (1856), the use of *afeard* for *afraid* is a “mistake.” Burgess warns, “Never say kiver for cover; afeard for afraid; or debbuty for deputy; which are three very common mistakes among the citizens of London” (59).

These disparate attitudes towards *afeard* reflect how pressures to conform to an “educated” standard clashed with expectations to remain “authentic,” that is, true to one’s roots. Speakers of all classes understood that they could and would be judged by the way they spoke. The upper-working and lower-middle classes had the most at stake and, especially in the days before compulsory education, many turned to conduct manuals and pronunciation and grammar guides to aid in their “self improvement” and social mobility.³ However, upper- and middle-class males in London could “patter flash,” or pepper their speech with lexis derived from cant and slang, without fear of their linguistic “slumming” doing any real damage to their reputations or class standing, whereas a young middle-class London woman might find such language would label her as “fast.” A working-class woman in the North, on the other hand, might find that her local dialect offered her a kind of protection and respectability. Just what features were deemed acceptable was yet another complication; dropping a few flash terms into one’s lexicon might be acceptable, whereas dropping an /h/ was not. Nor, apparently, was substituting the perfect form of a verb for the past, especially in the post-Education Act 1890s. A piece titled “Mistakes in Grammar” in the 1 March 1890 issue of *Ben Brierley’s Journal* asks, “What shall be said of the woman who says ‘I done it’? She has certainly placed

³ The first Education Act was passed in 1870 but attendance between the ages of five and ten was not made compulsory until the second Education Act was passed in 1880. Mugglestone documents that “Five times as many works on elocution appeared between the years 1760 and 1800 than had done so in the years before 1760, and this tendency did not abate with the coming nineteenth century” (TP 3). Circulation of such manuals was equally impressive. For example, by its fortieth edition *Poor Letter H. Its Use and Abuse* had sold over 40,000 copies (TP 3).

herself between the horns of a dilemma. Her hearers will infer either that her early education was neglected, or that she associated with uneducated people during her childhood” (71).

“Working Dialect” aims to tease out these complications and contradictions through an interdisciplinary analysis of nonstandard dialect as it appears in Victorian texts. This project is literary criticism inflected by both historical and modern sociolinguistics; it brings the insights of one discipline to bear on the other to interrogate and revalue dialect’s role in Victorian literature. Like the relationship between dialect, class, and prestige, the marriage of linguistics and literary criticism is not always an easy one. For example, I have had to make decisions regarding whose terminology to use. Although all varieties of English are dialects, including standard varieties, and therefore “dialect” in linguistic terms is somewhat of a misnomer, in literary criticism “dialect” is used as shorthand for nonstandard dialect. In keeping with literary critical conventions, I use the term *dialect* throughout the dissertation to refer to nonstandard dialect. I have chosen my case studies with the eye (or ear) of a literary critic; mine is not a quantitative study of dialectal features in the texts I analyze but rather an explication of particular passages, chosen for what they can tell us about the text itself and about Victorian literature and culture. Similarly, my extensive archival work has not led to discoveries about how the people actually spoke in the Victorian period, nor was it meant to; it does, however, contribute to the study of dialect literature as a vital feature of nineteenth-century culture.

The texts I examine comprise both working- and middle-class attempts to represent the speech and culture of the rural and industrial labourers of the North, as well

as the servant class and independent entrepreneurs of London. In some cases, as in the works of the Lancashire dialect writers Ben Brierley (1825-1896) and Edwin Waugh (1817-1890), the subject of Chapter 2, the speech represented on the page is the writer's home language, the language they grew up speaking. In other cases, as in the works of Elizabeth Gaskell (1810-1865), George Eliot (1819-1880), Charles Dickens (1812-1870), and Henry Mayhew (1812-1887), whose works are the focus of the other three chapters, the writers were familiar with the dialects they captured on the page through both literary conventions of representing speech and their own keen listening. In drawing this contrast in class and linguistic competency, I do not mean to suggest that Brierley and Waugh were necessarily more accurate and authentic in their portrayal of working-class characters and their speech than their middle-class colleagues. To my mind, questions of accuracy and authenticity have too long preoccupied literary criticism, a problem I delve into more deeply below.

While the various representations of working-class voices I examine are neither as accurate nor authentic as they often claimed or aspired to be, they reveal not only the importance nineteenth-century philologists placed on preserving nonstandard varieties of English but also the fascination for linguistic variation that writers and readers of all classes had. As the pressure to speak Standard English grew, so did the appeal of nonstandard dialect, if only on the printed page. Fear that variations of the English tongue might be lost in the wake of the march of intellect fueled written dialect's allure. Captured in the pages of literature, the nation's dialects might survive relatively unscathed from either education's ironing out or migration's potentially polluting effects. The resulting textual specimens, pinned and mounted on the page, may not have been

authentic or even accurate but they both captivated audiences and often ameliorated dialect's character. Dialect drew readers in and brought them closer to both familiar and unfamiliar characters. The works I discuss in chapters 1 and 4 introduced readers to worlds they would otherwise not know, while those I explore in chapters 2 and 3 gave readers access to their own worlds and to versions of themselves that they could use to make sense of and construct their identities in their quickly changing linguistic and social landscapes. Throughout this dissertation I have chosen specific scenes that feature direct dialogue in dialect, and with the tools of close reading, illuminate the various functions of dialect in Victorian literature and culture.

In his 1996 study of nineteenth-century English, Richard W. Bailey documents the dramatic transformation the English language underwent with that century's vast cultural changes: the increase in population, dispersion of English speakers, increase in bilingualism, extension of literacy, emergence of English teaching, exaltation of Standard English, enlargement of history, growth of communication, spread of democracy, and ownership of information contributed to changes not only in lexicon, syntax, morphology and phonology but also people's attitudes toward these changes. For example, Bailey points out that efforts to regulate and standardize English coexisted with "a fascination with the colloquial" (183). In her account of the rise of Standard English as a status symbol, Lynda Mugglestone (2003) focuses on phonological features and their changing social meaning, how accent became the "dominant social construct of the age" (211). Rife with paradox, however, language attitudes in the nineteenth century were anything but straightforward. For example, as Mugglestone shows, women were simultaneously cast as villains and heroines, blamed for passing on errors in speech in the nursery yet

called upon to be “guardians of the language” (159; 144), elite groups set the standard for proper speech yet the aristocracy continued to drop their g’s (131-2), and more “stalwart individuals” retained their regional accents despite their public school educations (232).

For all the nineteenth-century talk about talking proper, there seemed to be a lot of disagreement about what was considered acceptable English. Writing two decades before the *Oxford English Dictionary* (begun in 1857), in October of 1834, a reviewer for the *Westminster Review* asserts that dictionaries and grammars are not the authorities on the English language that we would have them to be: “dictionaries contain only selections *from* the language;--the number of words in them by no means rendering them worthy to be considered collections *of* the language;--and [...] the English of grammars and schools is likewise but a chosen portion of an existing whole” (“Variations of the English Tongue” 335). “It is in England alone,” the reviewer continues, “and by means of an investigation of the idioms, dialects, provincialisms, and vulgarisms which are used by its various classes of inhabitants, that the language of England can be correctly understood, or its fullness and energy rightly valued” (335-6). It is not only the received standard that counts as English--the idioms, dialects, provincialisms, and vulgarisms must be included. And what’s more, the language is better for them. In fact, this reviewer argues, “the changes of a language, especially those which are made by the refining and mollifying of old words for the more easy and graceful sound, are gradual corruptions of it” (340). Upending the prescriptivists’ argument that nonstandard varieties of English are the corrupting force, the reviewer claims that Standard English is largely a collection of corruptions of Anglo-Saxon. He even comes to the defense of *afeard*, showing that it is unfairly “condemned as incorrect” due to a “misapprehension of [its] origin” (349).

According to the author, *afeard* is not a corruption of *afraid* but rather a separate word--the former is derived from the Anglo-Saxon *afferde* while the latter is from the French *effrayer* (349). Pointing out the terms' disparate etymology is a clever strategy; it was not uncommon for patriotic Victorian philologists to contend that nonstandard dialects were more purely English than those "standard" varieties that were polluted by Norman French.

Two decades later, in a review of Burgess's *Never Too Late To Learn!* (1856) in the 29 August 1857 issue of *Household Words*, the novelist James Payn (1830-1898) takes humorous issue with the very need for such usage guides. "We [...] under the influence of excitement," Payn jokes, "are too apt to give vent to our feelings in expressions which Horne Tooke and Lindley Murray would equally reprobate; such as, 'It's me--just open the door;' or, 'It's them--say we are not at home'" ("Our P's and Q's" 204). Of course, the Victorians were, as we are today, guilty of these "mistakes," and here Payn pokes fun at the pedants who would have us use the nominative case, "I," rather than the accusative, "me," because that is how Latin works. As for errors in pronunciation, the reviewer is dubious that such mistakes are uttered: "241. 'Rinse your mouth; pronounce rinse, as it is written,--never reense.' Who ever does pronounce it reense? cries the astonished reader. Thousands of fairly educated persons, is the reply; and even, 'Wrench your mouth,' observed a fashionable dentist once to the author of this little volume" (204). And what about those troublesome pairs--kiver for cover; afeard for afraid; or debbuty for deputy--that the citizens of London are particularly guilty? "Is this a fact or a malicious scandal?" asks Payn, "Does the Lord Mayor talk like this? Do the aldermen? The sheriffs? The debbuty sheriffs? Does the recorder?" (204). "This

‘Never Too Late to Learn’,” Payn concludes, “seems sometimes to raise ungrammatical ghosts for the mere fun of laying them, and to exhibit the ignorance of our fairly educated classes through the medium of a magnifier” (205). Payn, writing from the perspective (and social status) of a middle-class novelist, can take a much lighter view of what constitutes “mistakes” in English usage and who makes them than a philologist anxious to demonstrate the long history of regional word usage. But what each of these examples shows is that nineteenth-century language attitudes were multivalent and actively debated. Literary criticism of the Victorian novel tends to ignore these debates, taking it for granted that Standard English was the prestige norm to which Victorian speakers aspired. Such a view has led to a rather narrow field for interpreting direct dialogue written in dialect.

Norman Page’s pioneering study *Speech in the English Novel* (1973) opened the door to this variety of literary criticism. His survey of thirty novelists’ varying uses of both standard and nonstandard dialect in their dialogue closely examined how speech reflects characters’ identities. Since then scholars have narrowed the field to focus on specific time periods or varieties of English, including N.F. Blake’s *Non-Standard Language in English Literature* (1981) and Raymond Chapman’s *Forms of Speech in Victorian Fiction* (1994). Each of these critics discusses how authors use both standard and nonstandard dialects for comic effect, to increase verisimilitude, as shorthand to indicate a character’s social position and/or the region of England from which they hail, or to illustrate their villainy or virtue. The problem with most literary criticism that discusses the use of nonstandard dialect, however, is that it misses many of the nuances of character speech. Blake, for example, comments on the differences in the speech of

characters in George Eliot's *Adam Bede* (1859), but offers no explanation as to why, beyond his comment that Eliot's "intention in *Adam Bede* was artistic rather than strictly linguistic," and that "[t]here is no attempt at consistency or uniformity in the representation of dialect" (154). I agree that there is little consistency or uniformity in Eliot's representation of dialect in *Adam Bede*, but I would argue that the differences in character speech are quite purposeful. Through her rendering of character speech, Eliot illustrates not only class and cultural differences between characters but also how shifts in characters' speech can have social meaning.

Page and Chapman do recognize nuances: both comment on changes in register, depending upon the level of emotion in a character's speech. Both cite *Adam Bede*'s change in register when speaking with his mother: "whenever he wished to be especially kind to his mother, he fell into his strongest native accent and dialect, with which at other times his speech was less deeply tinged" (74; vol. 1, bk. 1, ch. 4). Chapman calls Adam's shift in register an "intensifying of dialect in emotion" (63), while Page writes that it "signal[s] an increase in emotional pressure, since dialect is associated with childhood or with one's most intimate relationships and informal moods" (72). Chapman and Page are not wrong that a speaker's mother tongue can surface in times of emotional intensity--any sociolinguist would tell you that--but to equate dialect only with emotion, childhood, and informal moods seems limiting, not to mention condescending. In moments of "solemnity," Page argues, Standard English is the most appropriate and effective variety of speech: "Adam's speech [...] displays a quality to which that of many Victorian lower-class heroines and heroes is prone: its approximation to the standard language varies in

relation to the intensity and solemnity of the moment” (127). As we shall see, however, this is not always the case.

According to most critics, the speech of characters is “elevated” toward the standard not only in serious moments and formal settings but also in relation to the characters’ virtuousness. Susan Ferguson is perhaps the first literary critic to recognize the narrative reasons for diverging from this Victorian convention. In “Drawing Fictional Lines: Dialect and Narrative in the Victorian Novel” (1998), she coins the term “ficto-linguistics” to describe the “systems of language that appear in novels and *both* deviate from accepted or expected socio-linguistic patterns *and* indicate identifiable patterns congruent to other aspects of the fictional world” (3). She uses Charles Dickens’s *Bleak House* as an example. The speech of the virtuous poor characters Jo and Charley is not elevated. Instead, Ferguson claims, Dickens establishes “characters in a metanarrative system” in which the consistent differences between speech styles are more important than the speech styles themselves. For example, “the precision of Sir Leicester’s speech even when he is incapacitated contrasts strongly with the consistently slurred speech of his healthy but indolent cousin” (8). I think in the case of *Bleak House*, Ferguson is absolutely right, that there is a narrative system functioning in that novel above or beyond the sociolinguistic system of nineteenth-century English language attitudes. But Ferguson grants Standard English too much power, as if its hegemony forced Victorian authors to circumvent it by fabricating speech variation. Rather than eliminating the sociolinguistic system to explain what appear to be inconsistencies in character speech, the treatment of dialect in nineteenth-century literature needs to acknowledge both the uniqueness of each author’s methods of using dialect and the larger socio-cultural context

of the times. Therefore, we need the insights of historical and modern sociolinguistics to make sense of these complexities.

Among the few literary critics that employ sociolinguistics in their work is Patricia Howell Michaelson. In her study of women and language in late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century England, *Speaking Volumes: Women, Reading, and Speech in the Age of Austen* (2002), Michaelson draws upon recent work in language and gender, a subfield of sociolinguistics, to conduct conversational analysis within the pages of literary texts. She points out that “eighteenth-century authors were very well aware of the rules governing conversational interactions” and though literary texts “cannot tell us how women ‘really’ spoke during the Regency period” she argues that “we can at least examine the ways in which conversations were reported and the significance of various representational strategies” (10; 16; 11). Michaelson is not interested in locating unmonitored or authentic speech. Nor am I. On the contrary, we are both interested in how represented speech is constructed and interpreted. For Michaelson, this focus on constructedness is tied to her argument that novels took the place of conversation manuals and served as models for women in constructing their own characters through their speech. For my purposes, this focus on constructedness emphasizes the extent to which class and gender identities were imagined, constructed, and performed in Victorian writing through direct dialogue in dialect. For example, in case of the dialect writers of the North, sketches and short stories, with their multiple layers of narration, served as a space for their authors to negotiate their complex subject positions and for their readers to construct their identities.

As I argue throughout the dissertation, the concept of constructedness is a key to understanding how dialect worked in nineteenth-century writing. Any attempt to locate a true or authentic working-class voice in these texts would be futile. We should not, however, discount the importance of the *idea of authenticity* in identity formation. Recent scholarship in sociolinguistics shows us that although authenticity is an ideological construct, it is nonetheless central to the way in which speakers and writers construct their identities through language.⁴ As Nikolas Coupland explains, recent conversations in sociolinguistics regarding authenticity involve a “shift away from static conceptions of social identity to the dynamics of social identification, and from language seen as behavior towards social meaning enacted in discourse” (427). One of the aims of this dissertation is to encourage a similar shift in our conversations regarding nineteenth-century categories of class. We should interpret language not as behavior emanating from static identities but rather as enactments of social meaning performed through a dynamic identification with multiple social categories. The voices that emerge from nineteenth-century writing in dialect may not be authentic, but they carry powerful social meaning.

“Working Dialect” calls for a reevaluation of nonstandard varieties of nineteenth-century English in Victorian literature and a reassessment of some of the terms literary critics use to talk about language in the nineteenth century. This dissertation examines four aspects of dialect--vulgarity, authenticity, knowingness, and theatricality--each of which is striking for its ability to give readerly pleasure. The texts I examine act as a kind of pre-phonographic repository, however constructed, of the cacophony of voices the Victorians heard. As Ivan Kreilkamp has shown, in Victorian Britain, the voice of the

⁴ See, for example, the series of papers that initiated the conversation at the NWAV 31 (New Ways of Analyzing Variation) conference at Stanford in 2002: Bucholtz; Coupland; Eckert.

oral storyteller was perceived to be fading away, but, rather than being supplanted by modern print culture, “the much-lamented storyteller came into being as a fiction within the very medium that is accused of having killed him off” (2). The voices I examine have the added dimension of being rendered in dialect. Contact between speakers of different dialects was not new to the nineteenth century--indeed, Caxton describes the difficulty a London merchant encounters when trying to order eggs in Kent--but with advances in transportation and increased migration, the nineteenth century did see an acceleration in this contact. Garnering knowledge about the various dialects of England, for some Britons, was a way to show sophistication, and narrators and characters who spoke in dialect could instruct with both the content and the form of their speech. Dialect writing can recast vulgarity as authenticity to bestow both readerly pleasure and readerly knowingness.

Recent work in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century studies has uncovered the semantic range the term *vulgar* had for the British. For example, Janet Sorensen (2004) has shown that for some late-eighteenth-century Britons *vulgar* not only meant ‘of the people’ but also connoted British national culture (435). What’s more, Francis Grose’s *Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* (1785), Sorensen shows, not only redefines and relabels as “vulgar” what earlier canting dictionaries deemed purely criminal, it also lauds the language of the “common people” for its freedom of expression (446). The contributors to the collected volume *Victorian Vulgarity: Taste in Verbal and Visual Culture* (2009) find that for Victorians “vulgarity signified aggressive social aspirations behind material accumulation” (2). Beth Newman shows how as social climbers or *arrivistes* began to adopt refined language in an attempt to emulate their social betters,

that language began to be recast as vulgar and a more “plain and blunt” way of speaking became “the new elegance” (24). The terms go topsy-turvy; what is “vulgar” in the sense of ‘of the people’ becomes refined. What each of these studies reveals is not only that *vulgar* was not necessarily a dirty word but also that there is something “authentic” about plain speaking. To speak plainly and bluntly was a way of performing authenticity, a way of saying, “I’m not trying to be something I’m not.”

I have already discussed some of the complexities of the term *authenticity*. Both Victorian philologists and twentieth-century linguists have sought authentic speech. Victorian philologists attempted to trace the lineage of the English language and the English people; they defined authenticity as specific to lexicon and phonology whose roots could be found in Anglo-Saxon and extended this idea to speakers of various dialects. For present day sociolinguists, the quest for authenticity lies in attempts to access unmonitored speech, that which is as “natural” and unmediated as possible. I discuss above the importance of the idea of authenticity in identity formation. Here, I would like to add that a presumed authenticity was a source of pleasure for readers in its ability to bring them closer to characters. Whether or not an author’s rendering of character speech was accurate matters little. To wonder at accuracy is to miss the point; it is what the speech indexes for readers that matters.⁵

What a character knows is often conveyed in the novel through direct thought, indirect thought, or free indirect discourse. In this dissertation I examine the ways in

⁵ Linguistic indexicality is the concept that the form of a speaker’s utterance indexes, or points to, social categories and, therefore, marks the speaker as belonging to those social categories. For example, the realization of the linguistic feature of word-initial /h/ deletion, (*'ouse* for *house*) marks a speaker as being from a particular class and/or region of England. Upon hearing such an utterance, an interlocutor is able to categorize a speaker and draw conclusions, consciously or unconsciously, about the speaker’s social position and the speaker’s character. In other words, *how* something is spoken can carry more social meaning than *what* is said.

which what characters know is conveyed through direct dialogue, through not only what they say but how they say it. Novels convey a kind of double knowingness: what characters know and what readers know. Often what readers know depends upon how much narrators want to tell us; we may know more than the characters and revel in our cleverness. A knowing character can evoke this sort of revelatory reaction as well, especially, I would argue, if the character is a speaker of dialect. Because dialect is marked phonetically, it offers readers an opportunity to imitate characters' speech and its attendant indexicality. Our "rustic" from *Ben Brierley's Journal*, for example, shares a knowingness about the Co-operative movement with readers. His Lancashire dialect at once distances him from the uninformed London "swell" and brings him closer to readers who not only know better but who also either speak or at least understand his dialect. "Well, meister," the "rustic" tells the "swell," "aw'st ha' fort' tak' yo' bi th' hond an' show yo' th' pleck mysel." Unlike the hapless Londoner, readers needn't be taken by the hand; they are as knowing as the Lancashire man.

This exchange between the "rustic" and the "swell" also illustrates the way in which direct dialogue in dialect lends itself to theatrical performance, whether at home, in the chapel, or on the public stage. The stage directions of this mini dialogue indicate that it was meant to be read aloud, and it was likely read in many a chimney corner and performed at many a penny reading. In longer works, dialogue in dialect frequently stops the action of the plot; long passages in dialect are often interpolated tales or dialogues that were easily excerpted, reprinted, and adapted. Dialect scenes from novels were often reprinted for use in both public and parlor readings, as I discuss in Chapter 3 in regard to the afterlife of Dickens's Sam Weller. In the fourth chapter, I explore the afterlife of

Mayhew's informants, or "characters," who literally migrate onto the stage in the form of Mayhew's performances of *London Labour and the London Poor*. Each of these theatrical aspects of dialect were precursors to the late-Victorian music hall, where the Cockney comic vied for attention with the canny Scotsman, sentimental Irishman, and tight-fisted Northerner.

This dissertation is organized in two parts. The first two chapters focus on rural and industrial labourers in the North of England, speakers of the regional dialects of Lancashire and Derbyshire. Chapters three and four look to the South, to the servant class and independent entrepreneurs of London and their working-class dialects. This wider set of examples allows for a closer look at the impact of the industrial revolution in both the rural and burgeoning urban centers of the North and the long-standing culturally diverse urban center, London. It also allows for a more comprehensive and diverse examination of language attitudes across the country. Most previous studies have taken the perspective of one or the other, but putting the North and South in dialogue with each other, though it may not result in "mony a quart" shared down the pub, can illuminate some of the seeming contradictory and curious ways dialect works in Victorian literature.

The first chapter of this dissertation "'Some knowledge o' th' proper way o' speaking': The Local Prestige of Regional Dialects in *Mary Barton* and *Adam Bede*," explores the way in which Elizabeth Gaskell and George Eliot use dialect not only to index working-class and regional authenticity, but also to signal the local prestige of regional dialects. Rather than simply suggesting that Gaskell and Eliot construct characters through their dialogue, I show that the authors represent their characters as fashioning themselves linguistically. I argue that the minor characters, Job Legh and

Mrs. Poyser, emerge as major figures through their positions as authentic speakers of regional dialects and linguistically-expressed ties to local community. I then explore the cross-class conflict and gender dynamics at play through the linguistic style-shifting of the novels' female protagonists and argue that their potential for heroine-ship is located in their use of regional dialects.

Chapter two, ““Talk gradely, an’ then we con understand yo’: Narrative and the Lancashire Dialect,” examines the narrative works of two of Lancashire’s most beloved dialect writers, Ben Brierley and Edwin Waugh, and the works of their middle-class social network, the Manchester Literary Club, in particular, the *Papers of the Manchester Literary Club* from 1876 to 1896 and the Club’s *A Glossary of the Lancashire Dialect* (1875). Through their manipulation and negotiation of the county’s linguistic and cultural traditions, I argue, Waugh and Brierley not only broaden the range of uses of dialect in literature, they make the traditions of Lancashire’s rural past relevant for Lancashire’s industrial present. The writers’ textual and linguistic performance of “authentic Lancashire man,” I suggest, was integral to the construction of working-class Lancashire identity and to the success of the middle-class project to rewrite the county’s literary history.

In chapter three, “Some Write Well, But He Writes Weller: *Pickwick Papers* and the New Cockney,” I show how through the canny Sam Weller Dickens redefines the Cockney character. Sam, through his knowingness and verbal agility, endows the Cockney dialect with cultural capital and recasts what it could index for readers. In the narrative world of *Pickwick Papers*, I argue, direct dialogue outshines other narrative modes and the Cockney dialect upstages Standard English. Indeed, so popular did Weller

become that “flash” young men imitated his dress and mode of speaking; their speech became inflected with “Wellerisms.”

The final chapter, “Pattering Hintellects: Working-Class Voices in Henry Mayhew’s Investigative Journalism,” considers non-fictional representations of working-class London speakers. In part one, I show how Mayhew’s use of literary techniques in his letters to the *Morning Chronicle* (1849-50) construct his informants as the intelligent, self-reflective subjects of their own narratives, despite their mediation by this middle-class journalist. In part two, I examine how Mayhew represents the verbal agility of patterers in *London Labour and the London Poor* and how his literary techniques capture both the pleasures of voice and the pleasures of invention. Finally, I explore Mayhew’s public readings of *London Labour and the London Poor* and show how Mayhew’s movement from “lecture” to “personation” in these performances created a new genre of public reading.

This project aims to amplify the nonstandard voices of Victorian literature in order to parse the paradoxes and complexities attendant to them. The importance of dialect in Victorian literature should not be underestimated. In listening intently to the accents of class, gender, and region across genre and across the landscape of England, “Working Dialect” challenges critical assumptions about how class, gender, and regional identities were imagined, constructed, and performed in nineteenth-century England and in the pages of its literature.

Chapter 1

“Some knowledge o’ th’ proper way o’ speaking”:

The Local Prestige of Regional Dialects in *Mary Barton* and *Adam Bede*

In a 1859 letter to George Eliot, Elizabeth Gaskell wrote, “Since I came up from Manchester to London I have had the greatest compliment paid me I ever had in my life, I have been suspected of having written ‘Adam Bede’” (*Letters of Mrs. Gaskell* 559). That Eliot’s first novel should be misattributed to Gaskell is not terribly surprising. *Adam Bede* (1859) and Gaskell’s first novel, *Mary Barton* (1848), share striking similarities. Both novels are set in the provinces, *Mary Barton* in Lancashire and *Adam Bede* in Derbyshire. Both novels feature women characters whose romance plots have them deciding between noble working-class heroes and middle- or upper-class rakes; Mary is wooed by both her childhood sweetheart Jem Wilson and the mill owner’s son Harry Carson, while Hetty of *Adam Bede* is pursued by both the novel’s artisan hero and the future squire Arthur Donnithorne.

But perhaps most striking of the novels’ similarities is their authors’ use of dialect in rendering the speech of their characters. Of course, the use of dialect is not unique to the work of Gaskell and Eliot; indeed, dialect speakers abound in the works of their contemporaries. In many Victorian novels, however, it is the minor characters alone who are represented as speaking dialects: Joseph in Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* (1847) or John Browdie in Charles Dickens’s *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838-39), who both speak

varieties of the Yorkshire dialect, for example, or Mrs. Yolland in Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone* (1868), whose "Yorkshire language" is translated into "the English language" by the narrator (125; ch. 15). What makes *Mary Barton* and *Adam Bede* exceptional is that both minor and major characters, even the eponymous heroine and hero, are represented as speaking the dialects of their home counties, Lancashire and Derbyshire, respectively.

Critics have commented on the authors' interest in and extensive use of dialects, but what they fail to notice is the way in which Gaskell and Eliot use dialects as authorial tools to represent positive attributes, such as wit, wisdom, virtue, respectability, and loyalty. To illustrate this latter quality, Gaskell, for example, represents her heroine as using Lancashire dialect terms at times when Mary's allegiance to her working-class Manchester community is especially important to her--often when it is at risk. Mary's use of local dialect at such times not only shows her loyalty to her local community, it also reflects the local prestige associated with regional dialects that largely goes unnoticed by outsiders.⁶ Standard English may have been the prestige dialect for many speakers in Victorian England, especially those of the middle-classes, but Gaskell and Eliot were well aware of the way in which the local prestige of the Lancashire and Derbyshire dialects functioned in their communities and both illustrate this in the pages of their novels.

Some critics of *Mary Barton* seem to ignore entirely the idea that dialect could signal virtue for Gaskell and read the speech of the novel's heroine as Standard English, a "concession to novel-convention," as Kathleen Tillotson calls the practice of elevating

⁶ I use "local prestige" rather than "covert prestige," because the latter suggests the primacy of Standard English as the carrier of "overt prestige," when in local communities it may be nonstandard dialects, as I will argue later in this chapter, that carry the overt prestige.

the speech of characters. Tillotson remarks that “Mary alone of the working-class characters usually speaks ordinary English, not dialect” (213-14). Similarly, Raymond Chapman suggests that Mary speaks Standard English due to her “virtue and importance in the plot” (60). Neither of these assessments is entirely accurate, however, for there are other quite virtuous characters in *Mary Barton* who are not represented as speaking Standard English--the upwardly-mobile Jem Wilson, for example--and other less-than-virtuous characters who are represented as speaking Standard English, including Mary’s “fallen” aunt Esther. Gaskell does not bow to novelistic convention; on the contrary, she breaks it and instead creates a fictional community of speakers whose voices differ from one another, but all of which exhibit markers of the Lancashire dialect.

In both *Mary Barton* and *Adam Bede*, linguistic variation exists not only between different characters but also within the speech of individual characters. For example, as I touch on in the Introduction, Eliot represents Adam’s speech style as shifting during an exchange with his mother, Lisbeth Bede:

Donna thee sit up, mother,’ said Adam in a gentle tone. He had worked off his anger now, and whenever he wished to be especially kind to his mother, he fell into his strongest native accent and dialect, with which at other times his speech was less deeply tinged. ‘I’ll see to father when he comes home; maybe he wanna come at all to-night. I shall be easier if thee’t i’ bed.’ (74; vol. 1, bk. 1, ch. 4)

Prior to “working off his anger,” Adam speaks to his mother, Lisbeth, not with the contracted modals, *donna* and *wonna*, that she consistently uses, but with the standard contractions, *don’t* and *haven’t*. To show his kindness to his mother, Eliot represents

Adam using his home language, and to be sure his change in speech is not lost on readers, she has her narrator make his intentions clear. The significance of this shift in Adam's speech style is not only that Eliot recognized nuances in speech and represented them in her writing but also that she endowed her characters with linguistic agency. Though linguistic variation often functions below the level of consciousness, as when a speaker's home language emerges in times of emotional duress, in the case of the representation of characters' speech in *Mary Barton* and *Adam Bede*, Gaskell and Eliot make conscious decisions to mark their characters' speech in ways that in turn show the characters' conscious decisions. The above quotation from *Adam Bede*, for example, not only shows Eliot's intentions, it also illustrates the linguistic agency behind Adam's decision to use the modals *donna* and *wonna* "whenever he wished to be especially kind to his mother."

In this chapter, I will show that this linguistic agency in the speech of characters goes beyond shifts between formal and informal register to include the construction of identity. In other words, rather than simply suggesting that Gaskell and Eliot construct characters through direct dialogue, I will show that the authors represent their characters as fashioning themselves linguistically. I argue that characters are represented as performing⁷ their identities through speech and that these identities are related to their connections to their local communities. I will begin by discussing the debates surrounding English usage and consider contemporary reviews of *Mary Barton* and *Adam Bede* to explore how Gaskell's and Eliot's contemporaries responded to their use of

⁷ I use the term "performing" in terms of the concept of linguistic performativity, which draws on speech act theory to argue that speakers both create and cite social categories through their speech. In other words, when a speaker produces an utterance she or he is both citing a performance of a social category, such as gender or class, that has gone before and is also creating a new performance from which the conception of those social categories is further constructed and perpetuated.

dialects. Second, I will show how minor characters emerge as major figures through their linguistically-expressed ties to local community. Finally, I will explore the cross-class conflict and gender dynamics at play through characters' linguistic style-shifting.

What is the “Proper” Way of Speaking?

As I discuss in the Introduction, there was much debate in nineteenth-century England about what was acceptable English. Talking “proper” was semantically ambiguous term; its meaning could change dramatically depending on the speaker, interlocutor, and linguistic, social, and geographic context. Both Gaskell and Eliot were well aware of the prestige that local dialects held in their respective regions; for them, regional dialects could signify the same positive qualities indexed by Standard English: intelligence, wisdom, virtue, etc. In this chapter, using the insights of modern sociolinguistics, I will explore how Gaskell and Eliot construct and convey this local prestige in *Mary Barton* and *Adam Bede*. I will show that the characters of these novels are portrayed as participating in alternative linguistic markets, markets in which a different sort of linguistic currency is honored.

This concept of linguistic markets from which I draw was developed by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, who argues that speakers participate in an economy of social exchanges where they engage in a production of self to maximize their value. In other words, speakers shape their linguistic personae based upon what is valued in the linguistic market. Upwardly mobile speakers in Victorian London, for example, might be careful about not dropping their /h/s at the beginning of words, such as *horse* or *house*. But, as sociolinguist Penelope Eckert points out, Bourdieu “speak[s] of only one market-- the market controlled by global elites, whose linguistic variety comes to be known as the

legitimate or standard language” (*Linguistic Variation as Social Practice* 13-14). There are alternative markets, however, in which the norm is constituted by “forms other than the global standard” (18). Eckert argues that

While formal style certainly involves greater attention to speech, and while speakers have to pay careful attention when they’re speaking in the most extremely standard end of their stylistic repertoire, there is every reason to believe that a similar effort is required at the extremely non-standard end of their repertoire as well. One might consider that the two ends of the continuum require effort motivated by different—and even conflicting—orientations, and that people have to work to ensure their participation in either market. (18)

Assuming an across-the-board avoidance of linguistic forms marked for region and class, then, is too narrow a view. Speakers in Victorian London might be equally careful to say “’orse” rather than “horse,” depending on the linguistic market in which they are participating.

The expectations of local markets are largely ignored by members of global⁸ markets, and criticism of the Victorian novel reflects this. As I mention above, criticism has given much attention to characters’ relation to the global market and the way in which authors were obliged to “elevate” the speech of their virtuous characters toward the global prestige dialect, Standard English. Again, I aim to shift the focus away from the dominance of Standard English and the global market and toward the value of nonstandard English in local markets. I argue that the way in which Gaskell and Eliot

⁸ My use of “global” follows that of Bourdieu and Eckert; it connotes “mainstream,” rather than the conventional sense of “worldwide.”

represent their characters' speech taps into both first- and second-order indexicality; their speech both points to a particular region (first order) and is imbued with social meaning (second order), and that that social meaning must be read in terms of the close-knit social networks of their local communities. One of the goals of this chapter is to bring to light the local prestige of regional dialects and to explain how what might be considered covert prestige is uncovered for a national audience.

Both Gaskell and Eliot were masters at using direct discourse in creating their narrative worlds; while they may not have been linguists or even amateur dialectologists, they had keen ears for language. Gaskell observed speech through her humanitarian work in working-class Manchester, where she mingled with speakers of not only the urban variety of the Lancashire dialect, but also speakers who migrated to Manchester from the countryside of Lancashire and from other counties, such as Buckinghamshire to the south and Cumberland to the north. Her husband, the Reverend William Gaskell, too, was a great observer of dialects—he was known to leave the first-class car on the train to join the Lancashire workmen in third class in order to hear “the true Lancashire dialect” (Chadwick 210)—and, as I discuss in more detail below, wife and husband collaborated in their work on dialects. Eliot, as she writes in a letter to William Allingham, “was born and bred in Warwickshire, and heard the Leicestershire, North Staffordshire and Derbyshire dialects during visits made in [her] childhood and youth” (*Letters*, vol. 4, 347). And it was the observation of her father and his brothers' speech when they “revert[ed] to the dialect of [their] native district, Derbyshire” (*Letters*, vol. 3, 427) that was the source of the “Loamshire” dialect in *Adam Bede*. She was keenly aware of subtle differences in dialects, which is evidenced by her remarks that “dialect, like other living

things, tends to become mongrel, especially in the central fertile and manufacturing region attractive to migration: and hence the Midland talk presents less interesting relics of elder grammar than the more northerly dialects” (*Letters*, vol. 4, 347) and her discussion of language use among English peasants in “The Natural History of German Life” (1856) where she laments the loss of dialect among many a farmer’s daughter (274). In addition, as Blake points out, she had read Max Müller’s *Lectures on the Science of Language*, further evidence that she “was genuinely interested in philological matters” (153). Such keen observation in which both Gaskell and Eliot participated is translated into the careful transcription of their characters’ voices in *Mary Barton* and *Adam Bede*. And this attention to provincial dialects and their local prestige was not lost on readers.

Contemporary reviews of *Mary Barton* and *Adam Bede* highlight their authors’ use of dialect in positive terms. Most reviews of *Mary Barton* comment on the ability of the novel’s dialect to enhance its “graphic power” (*British Quarterly Review* 131) and marvel at its author’s accuracy: “We believe that [the dialogues] approach very nearly, both in tone and style, to the conversations actually carried on in the dingy cottages of Lancashire” (*Edinburgh Review* 403). Reviewers of *Adam Bede* have similar reactions to Eliot’s skillful use of dialect, and one such reviewer is even able to pinpoint the regions from which the characters hail through their speech:

The author has chosen to conceal from us the exact situation of Hayslope, by locating it in that large county, ‘Loamshire,’ a region which may be taken to comprise the Midland Counties. We feel assured, however, that Hayslope may be found by a diligent seeker in the northern part of

Leicestershire, bordering on Derbyshire, and that the village of Snowfield, placed by our author in the centre of a mining district in ‘Stonyshire,’ is actually situate in the bleakest part of Derbyshire.... To any one who has lived in the Midland Counties, the dialect of the inhabitants of those villages resounds as the familiar language of childhood. (*Westminster Review* 270)

The dialects of the Midland Counties “resound” in the pages of *Adam Bede* as do those of Lancashire in *Mary Barton*. The aural quality of these novels lends itself to verisimilitude, but perhaps more surprisingly, the authors’ use of dialect is credited with creating concern for the laboring classes, as a reviewer of *Mary Barton* remarks:

The writer engages our interest in [the labouring classes], by leading us amongst them, and making us spectators of their pleasures and their cares. You feel immediately that you are amongst real operatives, and their dialect is so faithfully reported, as to assure us that the study of the people has been a work of love and time. (*Eclectic Review* 54)

This “faithful” representation of characters’ speech brings readers closer to those characters in the sense that readers can imagine they are listening to actual conversations and thereby allows them to develop care and concern for those characters. As a reviewer for *Atlantic Monthly* put it, in commenting on *Adam Bede*’s “unaffected Saxon style,” “the reader at once feels happy and at home among [the characters]” (522). The characters’ speech, rather than distancing readers who do not belong to their respective communities, as one might suspect, has quite the opposite effect. One way in which such an effect is accomplished is through the authors’ prose, and reviewer comments reveal

this: the dialect of *Mary Barton* is described as “a work of love and time” and that of *Adam Bede* is described as “the home-talk of shrewd and hearty men and women,” that is “managed with skill, and show[s] the writer’s own thorough appreciation of a quiet, country life” (*North American Review* 547-8). Critics appreciate the care and concern for the residents, culture, and language of the provincial counties that Gaskell and Eliot show in their novels. But Gaskell and Eliot’s use of dialects accomplishes more; it also lends legitimacy to the language of the novels’ characters.

Simply putting provincial dialects in the mouths of their major characters contributes to the legitimacy of those dialects, but Gaskell and Eliot do more than this. In *Mary Barton*, Gaskell employs footnotes written by her philologist husband for Lancashire dialect words to show their etymological roots. Rather than view regional dialects as “corrupt” varieties of “pure” English, William Gaskell, and other philologists, viewed them as remnants of Anglo-Saxon. In his *Two Lectures on the Lancashire Dialect* (1854), William Gaskell argues for the legitimacy of the dialect of his home county:

There are many forms of speech and peculiarities of pronunciation in Lancashire that would yet sound strange, and, to use a Lancashire expression, strangely ‘potter’ a southern; but these are often not, as some ignorantly suppose, mere vulgar corruptions of modern English, but genuine relics of the old mother tongue. They are bits of the old granite, which have perhaps been polished into smoother forms, but lost in the process a good deal of their original strength. (14)

William Gaskell's rhetoric here is effective. With his concession to the "smoother forms" of Standard English, he placates his audience, while simultaneously interpellating them to his point of view by classifying dissenting views as "ignorant" and appealing to their patriotism by referring to the "old mother tongue." But, perhaps, most effective is his legitimizing use of a Lancashire dialect term in a stream of Standard English. He follows his use of "potter" with the suggestion that, though perhaps rougher to the non-Lancastrian ear, such words have more expressive "strength." Or, as he puts it earlier in his lecture, "Old words, like some old fruits, are dying out from amongst us, and their places are being fast taken by others, more showy and attractive, but not always by any means so racy and full-flavoured" (5). This semantic succulence, to continue the metaphor, reaches a level of expression unmatched by Standard English; when translated into Standard English for a global audience, the Lancashire dialect loses some of its expressive power.

Elizabeth Gaskell shared her husband's views regarding regional dialects and used similar strategies in arguing that they are not only legitimate, but also superior to Standard English in some contexts. In a letter to Walter Savage Landor, she describes the expressive qualities of the Warwickshire dialect word *unked*: "I can't find any other word to express the exact feeling of strange unusual desolate discomfort, and I sometimes 'potter' and 'mither' people by using it" (*Letters of Mrs. Gaskell* 292). Here, Gaskell claims that for her, the dialect word *unked* is so nuanced it has no synonym in Standard English. Indeed, it takes three Standard English adjectives in modification of *discomfort* to even approach the meaning of *unked*.⁹ She follows her description of *unked* with the

⁹ Interestingly, *strange*, *unusual*, *desolate*, and *discomfort* are derived from French or Latin. The juxtaposition of these inadequate Latinates with the incomparable Anglo-Saxon *unked* reflects both the

words *potter* and *mither*, further suggesting that their Standard English approximates, ‘trouble’ and ‘perplex’ are insufficient for conveying her meaning.

Gaskell uses a similar strategy in *Mary Barton* when her narrator describes the Lancashire dialect word *dazed*: “Jane Wilson was (to use her own expression, so expressive to a Lancashire ear) ‘dazed,’ that is to say, bewildered, lost in the confusion of terrifying and distressing thoughts; incapable of concentrating her mind” (86-7; vol. 2, ch. 6). Not only does the narrator comment on the word’s expressiveness, she also goes on to gloss the term with three very descriptive definitions. Again, considerable explication is required to convey the meaning of a Lancashire dialect word, suggesting that such words exceed Standard English lexicon in their expressive ability. This connotative precision of Lancashire dialect words seems especially important for expressing physical and emotional states, which are so often ineffable. Many of the lexical items footnoted in *Mary Barton* are such terms: *nesh*, ‘tender’ (6; vol. 1, ch. 1); *frabbit*, ‘peevisish’ (50; vol. 1, ch. 4); *gloppened*, ‘amazed, frightened’ (171; vol. 1, ch. 9); *clem*, ‘starve with hunger’ (51; vol. 1, ch. 4); and *dree*, from the Anglo-Saxon *dreogan*, ‘to suffer, endure’ (165; vol. 1, ch. 9), to name but a few. Initially meaningless to many readers, over the course of the novel, these words become semantically ample. *Clem*, for example, is first introduced in a Lancashire song sung by Margaret Jennings called “The Oldham Weaver”: “To be--clemmed, an do th’ best as yo con” (51; vol. 1, ch. 4). Its meaning in this context is likely not transparent to many readers, but paired with its footnote, “‘Clem’, to starve with hunger. ‘Hard is the choice, when the valiant must eat

nationalism and nostalgia that informed the Victorian championing of provincial dialects. Many oppositions might be constructed from this linguistic contrast: English/French; domestic/foreign; Anglo-Saxon/Norman; North/South; working-class/middle-class; etc. For my purposes, the most useful opposition remains that of the local/global, for this distinction allows me to consider all of the above formations in terms of the linguistic construction of self.

their arms or *clem*.' –Ben Jonson" (51; vol. 1, ch. 4), this once empty signifier begins to take on meaning. The comic line from Ben Jonson's *Every Man Out of His Humor* stands in stark contrast to the definition, 'to starve with hunger' and this juxtaposition informs how "The Oldham Weaver" might be interpreted; the definition emphasizes the weavers very real material conditions, giving both the song and the word *clem* a serious tone. The semantic strengthening of *clem* continues with the word's repetition throughout the novel; it is used in increasingly grave situations, as the Bartons and Wilsons witness their friends and families die from want of food. The word *clem*, then, comes to carry a meaning beyond 'starve with hunger'; it signifies the experience unique to the poverty-stricken working classes of the industrial North, and more specifically the working-class characters of *Mary Barton*.

But it is not just the semantic strength of Lancashire dialect words that is illustrated in the novel; other words, such as *dree*, show semantic multivalence. First, the term is used as an adjective to denote, as the footnote explains, 'long and tedious': "it were dree work" (165; vol.1, ch. 9), "It's very dree work, waiting" (228; vol. 1, ch. 12). Later it takes on new meaning when Alice very poignantly uses the word to describe the silence of deafness: "the fields seemed so dree and still; and at first I could na' make out what was wanting; and then it struck me it were th' song o' the birds" (189; vol.1, ch. 10). Finally, Jane Wilson uses it to denote 'suffer' or 'endure' when lamenting the arrest of her son, Jem: "am I to leave him now to dree all the cruel slander they'll put upon him?" (125; vol. 2, ch. 8). Gaskell's prose imbues the word *dree* with three quite different denotations and connotations. Though the uses of *dree* in the first and last quotations are glossed "long and tedious" and "A.S. [Anglo-Saxon] 'dreogan', to suffer,

endure,” respectively, Alice’s use does not seem to fit either of these definitions; her use suggests neither tediousness nor suffering, but rather dolefulness or cheerlessness. These varying uses of *dree* further show both the expressive power of Lancashire dialect words and also their ability to claim semantic space.

Along with championing Lancashire lexicon, Gaskell legitimizes the use of its phonology and morphology. The Lancashire pronunciation *cowd* for the Standard English *cold*, for example, is glossed as deriving from the Teutonic *kaud* and the Dutch *koud* (88; vol. 1, ch. 6). Similarly, the Lancashire morphology of *cotched*, which takes the regular past tense ending *-ed* for the irregular Standard English *caught*, is glossed, though its context makes its meaning transparent (136; vol. 1, ch. 8). Perhaps the most surprising and powerful of Gaskell’s glosses is her valorization of the much-maligned double negative. For its usage by Mary’s father, John Barton, in “I’ll not speak of it no more,” Gaskell notes, “A similar use of the double negative is not unfrequent in Chaucer; as in the ‘Miller’s Tale’: ‘That of no wife toke he non offering / For curtesie, he sayd, he n’old non.’” (157; vol. 1, ch. 9). Prior to the rise of prescriptive grammar in the eighteenth century this type of multiple negation¹⁰ was considered to have emphatic properties: “[I]f we examine the history of the language, we perceive, that, since the date of the authorized translation of the Bible,—the finest example of English,—the alterations that have taken place have been, generally, for the worse. The double negative has been abandoned, to the great injury of strength of expression” (*London Review* 379-80). Citing Chaucer’s “frequent” use of the double negative allows the grammatical construction to be viewed in terms of emphasis rather than in terms of

¹⁰ The prescriptive grammar rule that two negatives make a positive is based on a rule of Latin grammar and was erroneously applied to English during the eighteenth century. Two of the eighteenth-century’s most influential grammarians, Robert Lowth and Lindley Murray, promoted the rule.

“correctness.” In this way, the double negative is ameliorated; its expressive properties and precision supersede any proscriptions against its use.

Gaskell’s etymological and grammatical footnotes seem to have served their purpose. In a review of *Mary Barton* in *Eclectic Review*, the author comments: “The notes show us the derivations of the terms that are too often regarded as vulgar corruptions of our English, but which are genuine portions of those old tongues, for a thousand years preserved here, of which our English itself is compounded” (54). In the first four editions of *Mary Barton*, Gaskell lets the novel’s prose and footnotes do the rhetorical work of legitimizing Lancashire speech, but to the fifth edition, her husband’s *Two Lectures on the Lancashire Dialect*, with its persuasive prose, was added as an appendix.

Rather than provide explanatory footnotes to gloss unfamiliar Derbyshire dialect terms, Eliot has her narrator gloss them within her narration or lets context approximate their meaning. She also relies on phonology and syntax to represent the dialects, and while she doesn’t employ explanatory footnotes tying their use to revered authors or venerable Anglo-Saxons, their use by the novel’s noble hero goes a long way toward validating their use. But Eliot goes further and puts words critical of the local dialect in the mouth of the superficial and ridiculous Mr. Casson: “They’re cur’ous talkers i’ this country, sir; the gentry’s hard work to hunderstand ’em. I was brought hup among the gentry, sir, an’ got the turn o’ their tongue when I was a bye” (20; vol. 1, bk. 1, ch. 2).¹¹ It is evident, however, that Mr. Casson, though he was brought “hup” amongst the gentry, has not in fact “got the turn o’ their tongue”; he only perceives that he has, and his

¹¹ In “Grammatical Fair Ones,” Mugglestone points to Casson’s speech as a reflection of the moral structure Eliot sets up in her novels, which is based on attitudes toward language usage; those who place too much credence in the social value of Standard English are often also the least moral of the characters.

hypercorrection towards /h/-insertion betrays this. Juxtaposed with a narrator whose wisdom seems boundless and who is not above using regional dialect terms herself, Mr. Casson seems all the more ridiculous and his remarks all the more egregious. To feel the way Mr. Casson feels toward the local dialect, then, is to be a ‘soft,’ to use a Loamshire term, one who is incapable of reading the positive qualities of dialects.¹²

In contrast to the portrayal of Mr. Casson is that of Mrs. Poyser, a dialect speaker whose wisdom, wit, and character drew much praise from reviewers:

[Mrs. Poyser] is the very sunlight by which we read the story of ‘Adam Bede:’ we are glad to have heard something about the other personages, but we thirst to *know* Mrs. Poyser. We would willingly set out on a journey to Hayslope in hopes of finding her, but for the fear that Donnithorne, like ‘George Eliot,’ may be an illusory name. (*Edinburgh Review* 229)

The review goes on to compare Mrs. Poyser’s conversation, which he describes as “full of sentences, yet never sententious, and full of the wisdom that is not preached, but seems to drop with the ease of a summer shower to fertilise more barren minds” to the maxims of George Herbert. “Take any of George Herbert’s sayings at random,” the reviewer suggests, “Read these sentences, and such as these, and then meditate on Mrs. Poyser’s superiority” (229).

The superiority of Mrs. Poyser’s sentences relies, I would argue, on the expressive power and precision of her dialect. It is worth quoting her at length to show

¹² Eliot made clear her feelings toward those who might balk at her heavy use of dialect in *Adam Bede*: “one is not bound to respect the lazy obtuseness or snobbish ignorance of people who do not care to know more of their native tongue than the vocabulary of the drawing-room and the newspaper” (qtd. in Skeat viii).

the density of her marked speech and to allow for a feel of her prosody. In this scene she is reminding her husband that her knowledge of farm economy surpasses that of other farmers' wives:

What's it sinnify what Chowne's wife likes? – a poor soft thing, wi' no more head-piece nor a sparrow. She'd take a big cullender to strain her lard wi', and then wonder as the scratchins run through. I've seen enough of her to know as I'll niver take a servant from her house again – all hugger-mugger – and you'd niver know, when you went in, whether it was Monday or Friday, the wash draggin' on to th' end o' the week; and as for her cheese, I know well enough it rose like a loaf in a tin last year. An' then she talks o' the weather bein' i' fault, as there's folks 'ud stand on their heads and then say the fault was i' their boots. (26-27; vol. 2, bk. 2, ch. 18)

This passage is brimming with aphorisms that are rich with descriptive and creative metaphor based on farm life. Common sayings are transformed into clever and humorous commentary: “bird brain” becomes “poor soft thing, wi' no more head-piece nor a sparrow” and “She hasn't the sense to come in out of the rain” becomes “She'd take a big cullender to strain her lard wi', and then wonder as the scratchins run through.” Her pronunciations of *signify* (“sinnify”) and *colander* are not *mispronunciations* or malapropisms, but rather legitimate regional pronunciations. Her elision of phonemes in the words *with*, *the*, *of*, *and*, *in* and *would*, and the way in which she “drops her gs” from the ends of progressive participles lends credence to her assertions rather than detract

from them.¹³ Such pronunciations might be viewed as inarticulate, imprecise, and a reflection of a slovenly and vulgar character, but in the mouth of Mrs. Poyser they carry no such connotations. The content of Mrs. Poyser's speech aids in dispelling potential negative associations with its form; she displays her impeccable work ethic and superior knowledge of farm economy, concerns that reflect both her moral propriety and intellect. In this way, Eliot deftly weaves Mrs. Poyser's characterization with the way she uses language—form and content complement each other to re-characterize dialect and its speakers in the minds of outsiders.

In some ways, Mrs. Poyser fulfills the role of comic truth-teller, in the tradition of Sancho Panza, and not surprisingly, a reviewer for *North American Review* likens her to that very character: “[T]he sententious wisdom of worthy Mrs. Poyser is set forth in proverbs worthy of Sancho Panza” (548). But when the context of this comment is considered, Mrs. Poyser's role seems to take on a significance that exceeds that of a comic character:

The sweet face and eloquent words of Dinah win positive admiration, and the sententious wisdom of worthy Mrs. Poyser is set forth in proverbs worthy of Sancho Panza. For pretty Hester we feel less sympathy than if she had shown some slight inclination to struggle with her fate and agree with the author in consigning her to quiet rest after her brief smiles and tears have passed. (548)

The reviewer's assessment of Mrs. Poyser is sandwiched between that of the competing heroines Dinah and Hetty, as if she were also competing for that title. This reviewer is

¹³ Of course, Mrs. Poyser does not actually drop her gs; her pronunciation features the alveolar nasal [n] rather than the more standard velar nasal [ŋ].

not alone in his estimation of Mrs. Poyser; she leaves such an impression on a reviewer for *Edinburgh Review* that though, as he concedes, she “is not the heroine of the story,” he “feel[s] her to be of more importance to us than all the other characters” (229) and he dedicates seven pages to a discussion of her linguistic skills.

The speech of the pious Dinah and the tragic Hetty is far less marked for class and region than that of Mrs. Poyser. Could this be why Mrs. Poyser emerges as a major figure in contemporary reviews, despite her minor status? Though Dinah is described by reviewer for *North American Review* as “eloquent” and by the narrator of *Adam Bede* as having a remarkable ability to “master her audience” (167; vol. 1, bk. 1, ch. 8), it is not she, with her formal text-like speech, but Mrs. Poyser whose words are quoted in contemporary reviews. As Kathleen Watson points out, modern readers do not find the character of Dinah any more compelling than readers of the mid-nineteenth century. She quotes Joan Bennett who describes the way Dinah speaks as a “self-conscious and irritating mode of speech” and W. J. Harvey as commenting that “[Dinah] is always more convincing in what she does rather than what she says” (283). The problem with Dinah’s speech, Watson concludes, is that Eliot’s depiction of it is more artistic than realistic, which “reduces the depth of character” (294). In contrast, the realist depiction of Mrs. Poyser’s speech gives depth to her character, and it is both what she says and how she says it that makes her one of the novel’s most memorable characters. It is her speech that allows Mrs. Poyser to emerge as a central figure despite her minor status.

Spoken in a Major Key

In this section, I will explore the speech of minor characters who emerge as major figures: Mrs. Poyser in *Adam Bede*, and Job Legh in *Mary Barton*. Just how and why do

these minor characters command such narrative space and attention? Through both the form and content of their speech, I will argue, Mrs. Poyser and Job Legh come to represent “real” or “authentic” members of their local communities and this status affords them both local authority and narrative space. To clarify what I mean by this, I will again turn to modern sociolinguistics and touch on an important study that informs my work, Milroy and Milroy’s study of three working-class speech communities in Belfast (carried out between October 1975 and July 1977). Through this study, Lesley and James Milroy showed that “a close-knit, territorially based network functions as a conservative force, resisting pressures for change originating from outside the network” and that “Close-knit networks...have the capacity to maintain and even enforce local conventions and norms – including linguistic norms – and can provide a means of opposing dominant institutional values and standardized linguistic norms” (“Social Network and Social Class” 5). In other words, for members of both dense and multiplex social networks in working-class communities, the hegemonic force of the local dialect can equal that of Standard English in mainstream linguistic markets.¹⁴ In such speech communities, certain speakers emerge as “authentic,” those who best represent the norms of local community. Though an “Authentic Speaker,” as Eckert (2003) points out, is an ideological construct, the idea of such a speaker is nevertheless central to speech communities. Authentic speakers are viewed as “naturally” producing an “untainted” form of local dialect and lay linguistic claim to representing a “real” member of said community. Such speakers come to

¹⁴ According to Lesley Milroy’s Social Network Theory, a close-knit network is both dense and multiplex. In other words, a speaker in a dense network will have ties to other speakers who share those same ties with each other (e.g. Casie has close ties with Jenny, Angie, and Elspeth, and Jenny, Angie, and Elspeth all have close ties with each other). In addition, these speakers associate with each other in multiple ways; they share in both work and leisure activities. In contrast to such networks are low-density networks, in which, for example, Jenny, Angie, and Elspeth would not have close ties with each other, and uniplex networks, in which, for example, Casie and Jenny would associate with each other only in the workplace.

embody the values of their communities and their speech acts as a badge certifying them to represent and enforce said values.

Mrs. Poyser is such a speaker. Her speech marks her as an authentic speaker of the Hayslope dialect and endows her with the authority to both stand for the values and stand up for the welfare of her community. The way in which she repulses Squire Donnithorne's request that Hall Farm supply the Chase with dairy products illustrates this. Her clever use of rhetoric that simultaneously acknowledges social hierarchy; "I know there's them as is born t' own the land, and them as is born to sweat on't," yet asserts her own subjectivity; "but I'll not make a martyr o' myself, and wear myself to skin and bone, and worret myself as if I was a churn wi' butter a-coming in't, for no landlord in England, not if he was King George himself," (333; vol. 2, bk. 4, ch. 32) is all the more effective for being rendered in dialect. Not only is it more believable for its physical details, such as the narrator's note that Mrs. Poyser "paused to gasp a little" (333; vol. 2, bk. 4, ch. 32), it also links her to the land of which she speaks. Both the content and form of her speech suggest that her position as one who was "born to sweat" on the land lends her credibility to speak on the economics of farm life. Her use of the pronoun "them," rather than the more standard "those," "worret," which the OED notes is "a vulgar alteration of *worry*," and a-affixing, "a-coming," mark her as an authentic and reliable member of the local community of working people.

The Squire, in contrast, is out of touch with the realities of daily farm life and his use of Standard English reflects this—what he suggests will be to their "mutual advantage" (330; vol. 2, bk. 4, ch. 32), is to his advantage only, and a short-term advantage at that. Mrs. Poyser's actions serve to highlight the Squire's failure to fulfill

his role as benevolent landlord and she, therefore, usurps his position as champion of the people who work his land. Her “outbreak was discussed in all the farmhouses,” and renders the news that “‘Bony’ was come back from Egypt...comparatively insipid” (342; vol. 2, bk. 4, ch. 33). The concerns of the local supercede those of the global, as “the repulse of the French in Italy was nothing compared to Mrs. Poyser’s repulse of the old Squire” (342; vol. 2, bk. 4, ch. 33). The narrator may be gently ironizing Mrs. Poyser’s heroism here, but the narrative results remain the same; Mrs. Poyser emerges as a major figure.

In Job Legh, we find a character similar to Mrs. Poyser. He enters the narrative as a comic character--an eccentric old man whose primary characteristic is his interest in entomology--but as the narrative progresses, he emerges as a major figure and comes to represent the values and norms of his local community. Job Legh is *Mary Barton*’s authentic speaker; he is the “real” member of his speech community, and his status as such allows him to usurp John Barton’s role as a central male character. Though John Barton has the potential to achieve the status of authentic speaker at the narrative’s opening, as he begins to orient himself with non-local institutions, he also begins to lose credibility as a “real” member of his local community. And while I agree with Gallagher’s assessment that “Barton’s tragic heroism gains poignancy from his working-class dialect” (66), I would suggest that his use of dialect is not enough to save him from descending into minor status. Though Barton’s language is still marked for local dialect, it is less marked than that of Job Legh, and his use of biblical language and sweeping dramatic speeches further removes him from the realm of realism and the status of authentic speaker. Job’s speech, in contrast, possesses the qualities needed for both

narrative realism and linguistic authenticity, and these qualities afford him the status of the novel's moral center. He may use the "technical names" (58; vol. 1, ch. 5) of the insects he collects, but they only pepper his otherwise "purely" Lancastrian speech, and he may have the most logical and pragmatic suggestions for Barton to relay to Parliament, but he expresses them in his plain way of speaking, between puffs of his pipe (135; vol. 1, ch. 8).

Gallagher points to the "matter-of-fact sparseness" of Job Legh's speech, but reads it as exemplary of the "domesticity" that "dominates" his narratives (79). Where Gallagher reads a tension between genres, the domestic novel and melodrama, I see an additional tension between linguistic markets, local and global. Job Legh's narratives stress both his domestic and local orientation. One such narrative relates Job Legh's experience in London, which comes on the heels of and nicely contrasts with John Barton's global tale of his delegation's rejection by Parliament. Job's story, though ostensibly about London, shifts the conversation from the public, political, and global to the private, domestic, and local. Barton's narrative is riddled with accounts of the negative reception he received in London, including his being struck by a policeman, who cannot say his "a's and i's properly" (156; vol. 1, ch. 9) and ends with his refusal to describe his experience at Parliament. In contrast, Job's ends with his and Jennings's return to Manchester and illustrates that the closer to home they get, the kindlier the care they receive from members of the communities they pass through. By the time they reach a region of England where "folk began to have some knowledge o' th' proper way o' speaking," they are invited into the home of a woman who "afore yo' could say Jack Robinson, she'd a pan on th' fire, and bread and cheese on th' table...she fed th' poor

babby as gently and softly, and spoke to it as tenderly as its own poor mother could ha' done" (165, 167; vol. 1, ch. 9). Whereas Barton's narrative leaves his audience standing dismayed, petition in hand, outside the gates of Parliament, Job's narrative brings his audience home to the comfort of Lancashire. Their contrasting narratives exemplify the connection between the use of dialect and ties to local community. Gaskell makes this connection explicit by juxtaposing Barton's cruel treatment by the London policeman (156; vol. 1, ch. 9) with Job's kind treatment by Lancashire folk (167; vol. 1, ch. 9). In the narrative community of *Mary Barton*, speakers of the Lancashire dialect are compassionate and trustworthy, while speakers of Southern metropolitan varieties are not. Their respective ways of speaking index contrasting characteristics and reflect opposite orientations to the local.

As the narrative progresses, we see not only a shift in Barton's orientation from local to global, we see a shift in the way his speech is represented. At the novel's opening, Barton claims a considerable amount of narrative space and his position as central figure correlates to the direct dialogue that dominates the way in which he is presented. Prior to his involvement with the Trades' Union, Barton's allegiances are with his friends and family and Gaskell is able to illustrate Barton's merit through his speech; she allows Barton to perform his characteristics linguistically. In comforting Mary after the death of her mother, for example, the tenderness and concern in Barton's words speak for themselves. In this scene, both the content and form of Barton's speech reflect his concern for the local. He illustrates his dedication to caring for his daughter by telling her, "Child, we must be all to one another, now *she* is gone," and insisting, "Thou must not fret thyself ill, that's the first thing I ask. Thou must leave me and go to bed now,

like a good girl as thou art” (29; vol. 1, ch. 3). Barton’s repeated use of *thou* and *thy* is also telling, especially in contrast to Mary’s use of *you*. While the second person singular pronouns were once used in Standard English to signal intimacy between speakers, they fell out of use in Standard English during the seventeenth century (Barber 165). By the nineteenth century, such a distinction survived only in regional dialects or among Quakers. Barton’s use of them, then, indexes both the intimacy of the moment and his status as authentic Lancashire dialect speaker.

The further away Barton moves from the concerns of the local, however, the less trustworthy he becomes, and his speech can no longer manage this kind of social and narrative work. To garner sympathy from readers, the narrator must intrusively step in to persuade us that Barton has “a ready kind of rough Lancashire eloquence” (267; vol. 1, ch. 15); his eloquence cannot speak for itself. She goes on to explain that his speech “was very stirring to men similarly circumstanced, who liked to hear their feelings put into words” (267; vol. 1, ch. 15). The inclusion of such an explanation suggests that Barton’s speech will not have the same effect on readers. By the time Barton’s narrative comes to a close, Job Legh must translate Barton’s “wildly” expressed words into the biblical language he might have used in his more eloquent days. The words, “but oh, man! forgive me the trespass I have done!” are echoed by Job, “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us,” “as if,” the narrator tells us, “the words were suggested by those John Barton had used” (268; vol. 2, ch. 18). Here sympathy is garnered not through Barton’s eloquence, but by his lack of it. His plain way of speaking does more to redeem him than his former speeches could.

That it is Job Legh who must translate for Barton shows the extent to which Job takes on the role as the novel's moral center. Indeed, it seems as though Job and Barton are on opposite trajectories and when Barton is absent from the narrative Job even usurps his role as caregiver to Mary: "Never fear for Mary!" he tells a worried Jem Wilson, "I'll watch o'er her, as though she was my own poor girl" (220; vol. 2, ch. 16). Job's view of Barton's absence expresses the precedence he gives and believes should be given by others to the local. "To my mind," Job tells Jem, "John Barton would be more in the way of his duty, looking after his daughter, than delegating it up and down the country, looking after every one's business but his own" (220; vol. 2, ch. 16). Job's disapproving statement reflects what Milroy and Milroy demonstrate about close-knit social networks and their capacity to maintain and enforce local norms. His status as authentic speaker affords Job the position to make such judgments.

Through his loyalty to local community and his performance of authentic Lancastrian, Job comes to represent the community itself. During his confession to murdering Harry Carson, it is Job Legh from whom Barton pleads forgiveness, though Harry's father stands nearby: "I did not know what I was doing, Job Legh, God knows I didn't" (268; vol. 2, ch. 18). Here, Job Legh and God sit on either side of the semi-colon, further suggesting the former's role as moral center and Barton's need to be forgiven not only by Harry's father, but also by this local community. When Carson counters Barton's "but oh, man! forgive me the trespass I have done" with "Let my trespasses be unforgiven, so that I may have vengeance for my son's murder" (268; vol. 2, ch. 18), it shows that speakers of Standard English are not at the moral center of this narrative world. And that Barton calls Carson "man," while he utters the name of Job Legh in the

same breath as that of God, illustrates that Barton recognizes the conflicting orientations toward the local that the two men present and Barton's need to be once more accepted into the fold of his local community.

Solidarity with local community is not the only linguistic performance available to speakers, however. As Lesley Milroy points out, both *the solidarity factor* and *the status factor* influence speakers' participation in linguistic markets (*Language and Social Networks* 195). She points to a correlation between network ties and attitudinal factors. Those who have close-knit social ties, such as the characters I discuss above, tend also to adhere more to "local team" values and are more influenced by the solidarity factor. In contrast, those who have loose-knit social ties are likely to also reject "local team" values and to be more influenced by the status factor (140). In other words, a change in network status alone is not enough to explain language variation; though a disintegration of close-knit ties might influence a "drift" toward prestige norms, a simple desire for upward mobility may be enough to affect the same change (196). Gaskell and Eliot, of course, would not have used these terms to describe the nuances they observed in the speech of Lancastrians and Derbyshirians. But they recognized the power these linguistic nuances and put them to work in developing their characters.

Linguistic Style-Shifting

In this section, I explore the representation of speech of linguistically liminal characters whose variation in speech reflects the influences of their social networks and language attitudes. I argue that these characters are represented as participating in

linguistic style-shifting¹⁵ which shows their closeness to or distance from their local communities at different times and in varying contexts. Style, as Eckert defines it, and as I will use the term, is “a clustering of linguistic resources, and an association of that clustering with social meaning” (“Style and Social Meaning” 212). Speakers access lexical, phonological, and syntactic features that are associated with other social practices, such as dress and demeanor, as a part of linguistic self-fashioning. An important part of every speaker’s repertoire, style-shifting not only indicates a shift in register, from formal to informal, for example, it is also a way for speakers to construct their identities through speech. I will argue that variations in characters’ speech in *Mary Barton* and *Adam Bede* are far from authorial inconsistencies, but rather self-conscious linguistic modifications on the part of their authors. These linguistic modifications are an important part of not only character development but also plot progression and overall narrative construction, and Gaskell and Eliot manipulate them to make both narrative and social statements.

In the narrative world of *Mary Barton* the middle-classes and the working-classes represent opposing orientations to the local area, and the way in which Gaskell represents the relative variation of their speech can be read as reflecting Penny Eckert’s findings that language use correlates with relationships to local and global markets. The middle-class characters are represented as speaking Standard English exclusively. Conversely, the speech of working-class characters exhibits the distinctiveness and variability associated with local groups and “essential to the workings of the vernacular,” as Eckert put it

¹⁵ Linguists often distinguish between style-shifting, alternations in register, and code-switching, alternations in languages or dialects. I use style-shifting to encompass both terms, as code-switching is often used as a form of shifting register and in linguistic self-fashioning.

(*Linguistic Variation as Social Practice* 23). A similar distinction can be observed between the wealthy landowners and the working people of *Adam Bede*. The young squire, Arthur Donnithorne, who fancies himself the future benevolent landlord of the Donnithorne property, “the model of an English gentleman” (230; vol. 1, bk. 1, ch. 12), dishonors one of Eliot’s potential heroines, Hetty, who works as a dairymaid for the Poyser’s. Though vacillating in his principles, he never strays from his Standard English speech, while, not surprisingly, there is notable variation in the speech of working-class characters. But some characters’ class status does not always line up with their allegiances, and their language use reflects this.

Taking the insights of modern sociolinguistics into consideration allows us to examine the direct speech of characters in terms of authorial exploitation of meaningful language variation rather than authorial oversights or concessions. The speech of Mary Barton, for example, more closely resembles Standard English than some of the other working-class characters, including her father and close friend Margaret Jennings, but this is not simply an example of the Victorian convention of elevating the speech of virtuous heroines. Mary’s speech reflects both her social network ties and her desire for upward mobility and her shifts in style are influenced by both the solidarity and status factors. Though Mary retains her close-knit ties through her friendships with Margaret, Alice Wilson, and Job Jegh, her kinship ties are weakened due to the death of her mother and her father’s increasing alienation from the local community.

The influence of the status factor on Mary begins early in the narrative when her aunt Esther plants the dangerous suggestion in young Mary’s imagination that she will one day “ma[k]e a lady of [her]” (9-10; vol. 1, ch. 1). Esther’s consistent use of Standard

English reflects her orientation toward the upper- and middle classes and her desire for upward mobility, which undoubtedly leaves an impression on Mary. Later in the narrative, Mary finds work as a seamstress at Miss Simmonds', which could be read in a sociolinguistic framework as her development of uniplex ties with the middle classes. In the social milieu of Miss Simmonds' she not only hears the speech of the middle-class clients, but also emulates their speech as part of fashioning herself linguistically. To complicate matters, Mary is flattered by the attentions paid to her by the middle-class Harry Carson, attentions, incidentally, that are made possible only by her daily walks to and from Miss Simmonds.' "Mary," the narrator tells us, "hoped to meet him every day in her walks, blushed when she heard his name, and tried to think of him as her future husband, and above all, tried to think of herself as his future wife" (63; vol. 1, ch. 5). I needn't go into great detail about the lack of avenues of upward mobility for women in nineteenth-century Britain; it has long been established that for most women, marriage was the only avenue, and the tradition of proficiency in home-making was supplanted by proficiency in the leisure arts, or "female accomplishments," in order to increase young women's chances of marrying up.

Eliot remarks on this change in *The Natural History of German Life* when she explains how "in England half a century ago...the daughters of even substantial farmers" spent their time "spinning their future table linen, and looking after every saving in butter and eggs that might enable them to add to the little stock of plate and china which they were laying in against their marriage" (31). They were instructed in and concerned with farmhouse duties and domestic economy, skills appropriate and important for a farmer's wife, such as those at which the capable Mrs. Poyser is so adept. In contrast, farmers'

daughters of the mid-nineteenth-century, Eliot observes, carry on “sentimental correspondence” and learn to play the piano instead of learning important farm-oriented skills, and “though [they] may still drop their *h*’s, their vowels are studiously narrow” (31). That the farmers’ daughters’ vowels are “studiously narrow” is an indication that female accomplishments include learning to speak “properly.” With their sights set on marrying up, Mary Barton and *Adam Bede*’s Hetty Sorrel “study their vowels,” so to speak, and fashion themselves linguistically into what they believe will make fitting wives for the factory-owning Harry Carson and the land-owning Arthur Donnithorne, respectively. Their narrative realities are reflective of the sociolinguistic realities of nineteenth-century England that are still observable in the twenty-first century.

Modern sociolinguist studies (e.g., Wolfram 1969; Trudgill 1972) have shown that women are often found to use more prestige forms than men of their same socioeconomic class. In her groundbreaking 1975 work, *Language and Woman’s Place*, Robin Lakoff suggests that this is because “A woman’s reputation and position in society depend almost wholly on the impression she makes upon others” (57). Eckert frames this concept in terms of symbolic capital: “While men can justify and define their status on the basis of their accomplishments, possessions, or institutional roles, women must justify and define theirs on the basis of their overall character and the kinds of relations they maintain with others” (“The Good Woman” 167). Peter Trudgill suggests that women use more standard forms due to their lack of access to the marketplace, or as Eckert puts it, “women’s relative lack of access to advancement through actions in the marketplace constrains them to seek advancement through symbolic means” (168). But, as Eckert points out, not all women speak “properly” (168). How can we explain this discrepancy?

Eckert argues that symbolic capital is important to women at either end of the standard to nonstandard continuum. In other words, “[a]t the upper end of the status hierarchy, women use more standard grammar than men; at the lower end, women use more nonstandard grammar than men” (168). The idea, then, that women are a homogenous group who are collectively “proper” is a false one, and data show this (Nichols 1978; Cheshire 1982; Eckert 2000). Eckert comments that many of her colleagues ignore the latter formulation, and again, I think this reflects the assumption that speakers, especially women, will want to use Standard English if they are able to, an assumption that seems to be pervasive even among linguists, and even when data present them with the paradox that women are both linguistically conservative and linguistically innovative. Eckert suggests that we shift the focus away from viewing the primary difference between men and women as one of “properness” and instead consider that the “primary difference is that women are scrutinized on the basis of appearances” (168). If we do that, we have to ask, “what appearances are women trying to achieve.... If a woman wants to show that she is a loyal working-class woman, she has to do Very Working-Class” (168). Of course, Mary Barton’s speech is not “Very Working-Class” but her speech does vary in its proximity to “Very Working-Class” depending on narrative situation and which facet of her identity Gaskell would like to convey to readers.

In the scene in which Mary confronts Harry Carson, she is represented as style-shifting from Standard English to nonstandard English. Interestingly, this scene is the first in which Mary is represented as using a lexical item from the Lancashire dialect. This may come as somewhat of a surprise, for it might be expected that Mary would be represented as attempting to speak toward the standard in order to impress her bourgeois

beau—such style-shifting would certainly coincide with her desire to be made a lady. But when the context of their conversation is considered, Mary’s use of a dialect term becomes clearer. At this point in the narrative, Mary’s heart has been “unveiled” to her and she discovers that it is her childhood friend, the working-class Jem Wilson, whom she loves, not Harry Carson, and she is therefore attempting to end her communication with the latter. When Mary “humbly begs [Harry Carson’s] pardon” for unintentionally leading him “to think too much of [her],” Carson assumes she is coquetting and mocks her by echoing back her standard speech: “You’re a darling little rascal to go on in this way! ‘Humbly begging my pardon if you’ve made me think too much of you.’ As if you didn’t know I think of you from morning to night. But you want to be told it again and again, do you?” (211; vol. 1, ch. 11). In her reply Mary shifts into the Lancashire dialect: “‘No, indeed, sir, I don’t. I would far liefer* that you should say you will never think of me again, than that you should speak of me in this way....’ *‘Liefer’, rather. ‘Yet had I *levre* unwist for sorrow die.’ –Chaucer, *Troilus and Creseide*” (211; vol. 1, ch. 11). This use of *liefer* indexes Mary as in solidarity with the local community and, accordingly, her heart’s allegiance to the working-class Jem Wilson.

What is especially striking about Gaskell’s footnoting here is that by this point in the narrative *liefer* has already been used by another character, Alice Wilson, the elderly aunt of Jem Wilson, in the fourth chapter. In footnoting Mary’s usage of *liefer* in chapter eleven but not Alice’s usage in chapter four, Gaskell not only legitimizes the Lancashire dialect term, but also calls extra attention to Mary’s solidarity with the local community. In the third edition of *Mary Barton*, published in 1849 with an expansion of footnotes, Gaskell adds a second footnote for *liefer* to mark Alice’s use of the term in chapter four.

This double footnoting is one of only four occurrences of Gaskell footnoting a second use of a dialect term or grammatical construction; the others are *dree*, *gloppened*, *frabbit*, and *at after*. For the vast majority of Lancashire dialect terms, Gaskell footnotes only their first occurrences, and for three of the four that she repeats, she seems to have done so because the words are different parts of speech or to point out a semantic nuance.¹⁶ But for *liefer* both instances have the same meaning, ‘rather.’ For Alice’s use of *liefer*, Gaskell cites Chaucer’s *Monk Tale* (45; vol. 1, ch. 4) and for Mary’s, she cites Chaucer’s *Troilus and Creseide*. In juxtaposing the Chaucerian footnotes--the monk is a virtuous character, while Creseide is a fallen woman--Gaskell gives the footnotes even further salience and, ironically, establishes Mary’s virtue. Dismayed at Mary’s rejection of him, Harry attempts to persuade her with promises of marriage, though he had thought they “could be happy enough without marriage” (213; vol. 1, ch. 11). Mary retorts, “if I had loved you before, I don’t think I should have loved you now you have told me you meant to ruin me; for that’s the plain English of not meaning to marry me till just this minute. I said I was sorry, and humbly begged your pardon; that was before I knew what you were. Now I scorn you, sir, for plotting to ruin a poor girl” (214; vol. 1, ch. 11). Unlike the Trojan Creseide, who as a fallen woman is easily seduced by the Greek Diomedes, Mary “scorns” such behavior, both proving her status as virtuous heroine and displaying her loyalty to Jem Wilson and her local community.

It is at such times, when Mary’s status in the local community is at risk, that she is represented as using Lancashire dialect terms and phonology. For example, when Mrs. Wilson is angry with her, Mary uses the Lancashire pronunciation *mun*, whereas she is

¹⁶ For example, *dree* is glossed as both an adjective ‘long and tedious’ and a verb ‘to suffer, endure’; *gloppened* is glossed as both ‘amazed’ and ‘terrified’; and *frabbit* as both ‘peevish’ and ‘ill-tempered’.

represented as using the standard pronunciation *must* throughout the rest of the novel (41; vol. 2, ch. 3). Similarly, Mary's speech changes dramatically between speaking with Sally Leadbitter, the "vulgar-minded" (138; vol. 1, ch. 8), young seamstress who facilitates the flirtation between Mary and Harry Carson and her close friend Margaret. In one such scene, Mary has a distressing encounter with Sally who attempts to deliver to Mary a love note from Harry Carson. Throughout their entire exchange, Mary is represented as speaking Standard English, but as soon as Margaret arrives, and the door is closed on the saucy Sally, we witness a shift in Mary's speech style:

'Margaret,' said Mary, who had been closely observing her friend, 'thou'rt very blind to-night, artn't thou? Is it wi' crying? Your eyes are so swollen and red.'

'Yes, dear! but not crying for sorrow. Han ye heard where I was last night?' (144; vol. 1, ch. 8)

This passage marks one of the very few instances in the novel of Mary using the nonstandard forms of the second-person pronoun and the *-t* inflectional ending of *to be*. While it is true that this is a very intimate moment between the two women and Gaskell, therefore, might have chosen to have Mary use these "informal" forms, the linguistic data offered by the novel does not support this interpretation. This is not the only intimate exchange in which the two women engage and Mary does not continue using the *thou* forms during this conversation. Additionally, Margaret is represented as using the nonstandard *han*, while Mary uses the standard form *have* just a few lines earlier. Mary's reintroducing standard forms and the juxtaposition of Margaret's and Mary's forms of *have* suggest that Mary's sudden and temporary shift into a style more marked for

working-class Manchester speech is a way to further distance herself from Sally, and again, to show her solidarity with her local community.

Mary is uneasy about having Margaret meet Sally, for the two young women are both her peers but represent conflicting sides of her linguistic persona. Margaret is the peer who has the most working-class Manchester authenticity; she is represented as consistently speaking in the Lancashire dialect and performs working-class Lancashire songs at the Manchester Mechanics' Institute, a working-class organization that held classes, lectures, and entertainment. Margaret acts as a temper to Mary's tendencies toward middle-class identification and its attendant trappings. On the evening that Mary is introduced to Margaret at old Alice's, she spends an inordinate time "dressing herself...she thought it worth while to consider what gown to put on," for she wished to make "an impression" on "this strange girl" she was about to meet (44; vol. 1, ch. 4). Once Mary arrives at Alice's, however, she is ashamed of the attention she is paid: "Margaret could hardly take her eyes off her, and Mary put down her long black lashes with a sort of dislike of the very observation she had taken such pains to secure" (44; vol. 1, ch. 4). While with Margaret, Mary's ties to the local community are strengthened and this is shown in the way she speaks.

While it is true that Sally is also working class, it should be considered that her alliances are firmly with the middle-class mill owners. Her position as paid go-between for Harry Carson in his dubious courtship of Mary shows this alliance and allows her to identify with the middle classes and imagine herself as above her station. Similarly, her work at Miss Simmonds', as it does for Mary, puts her in contact with middle-class clients, but it has a stronger and more lasting effect on her than it does on Mary. While

Mary comes to realize where her true loyalties lie, Sally continues to dream of vicarious upward mobility. Upon Mary's return from Jem Wilson's Liverpool trial for Harry Carson's murder, Sally is astounded that Mary was not more concerned about her appearance while being cross-examined--Mary refused to borrow Sally's black watered scarf for the occasion--and scoffs at her for aiming so low socially: "Oh--I forgot. You were all for that stupid James Wilson. Well! if I've ever the luck to go witness on a trial, see if I don't pick up a better beau than the prisoner. I'll aim at a lawyer's clerk, but I'll not take less than a turnkey" (254; vol. 2, ch. 17). While both Mary and Sally are concerned with how they are perceived via their appearance, the young women come to orient themselves toward opposite social groups.

Mary's linguistic struggle with local/global loyalties is all the more vivid against the backdrop of her "fallen" aunt Esther's consistent use of Standard English. Even when Esther poses as a mechanic's wife in order to converse with Mary, she still maintains her Standard English speech. In "over-acting her part" as virtuous wife (62; vol. 2, ch. 4), Esther assures Mary that she is not hungry, "Oh! Mary, my dear! don't talk about eating. We've the best of every thing, and plenty of it, for my husband is in good work. I'd such a supper before I came out. I could not touch a morsel if you had it" (61; vol. 2, ch. 4). Out of shame and fear that Mary might detect the truth about what became of her, she overcompensates in both what she says and how she says it. But in the narrative world of *Mary Barton* it is dialect that signals virtue, while Standard English is spoken by the novel's least virtuous characters. Esther's performance, her consistent adherence to global linguistic norms, though intended to index "virtuous mechanic's wife," instead marks her as irredeemably fallen and permanently exiled from the local.

This paradox reflects the incongruity between perception and practice. As I discuss above, though sociolinguistic data prove otherwise, women are often perceived and expected to adhere to global prestige norms. Esther seems to misinterpret the prestige norms needed to index virtue in her former local community. Esther's social network ties are too diffuse and uniplex; she can no longer connect with Mary, which is evidenced by the way in which the two misinterpret each other throughout the scene. But neither can Esther connect to readers. The narrator, then, must intervene on her behalf and assure us of her inner turmoil. We are told that "all the time poor Esther was swallowing her sobs," and that "she longed to open her wretched, wretched heart" (62; vol. 2, ch. 4). In this way, Gaskell is able to garner sympathy for the tragic Esther, while maintaining her moral stance--it is simply impossible for a prostitute to index virtue in the narrative world of *Mary Barton*. This narrative move also allows Gaskell to maintain the importance of local prestige norms that she works so hard to build throughout the novel, norms that her heroine finally comes to adhere to. We might even call *Mary Barton* a linguistic bildungsroman, for by the narrative's end Mary is comfortably settled in the position of dialect-speaking heroine.

Like Mary, *Adam Bede*'s Hetty Sorrel is well aware of the linguistic expectations placed on young women, but her machinations are more conscious and calculating than Mary's. While Mary is portrayed as naively and innocently struggling with her linguistic identity, Hetty is portrayed as self-consciously adjusting her speech in hopes of talking her way out of Hayslope. Though the honorable artisan Adam Bede has expressed an interest in marrying her, Hetty sees him as "a poor man" and since her "dreams were all of luxuries" (182; vol. 1, bk. 1, ch. 9), she can not consider marrying him. Instead, she

fancies that Arthur, the future squire, will “want to marry her, and make a lady of her” (280; vol. 1, bk. 1, ch. 15) and lavish her with the luxuries she desires. And Hetty’s use of language around her two suitors differs as much as her intentions toward them.

Though the narrator implies that Hetty does not speak Standard English when she describes how “While Arthur gazed into Hetty’s dark beseeching eyes, it made no difference to him what sort of English she spoke” (245; vol. 1, bk. 1, ch. 12), aside from a single instance of a-affixing, “Aunt doesn’t like me to go a-walking only when I’m going somewhere” (157; vol. 1, bk. 1, ch. 7) and a few signs of elision, ’em, o’, Hetty’s speech is relatively standard. It is interesting to note that this single instance of a-affixing occurs during the initial scene of Arthur Donnithorne’s courtship of Hetty, before she is fully cognizant of his attentions. At this point in the narrative Hetty already has thoughts of upward mobility--she is learning tent-stitch and lace-mending from Mrs. Best’s lady’s maid, Mrs. Pomfret,--but Arthur’s attentions toward her mark a change in both the earnestness of her aspirations and the way she fashions herself linguistically. The narrator tells us that “for the last few weeks a new influence had come over Hetty...[she] had become aware that Mr Arthur Donnithorne would take a good deal of trouble for the chance of seeing her” (183; vol. 1, bk. 1, ch. 9). She also begins to take notice of her use of language. When she and Arthur meet alone for the first time in the Chase, Hetty is self-conscious and cautious about the way she speaks. Arthur asks her if she should like to become a lady’s maid and she responds very carefully, “I should like to be one very much indeed,” but is still wary of how she is perceived: “Hetty spoke more audibly now, but still rather tremulously; she thought, perhaps she seemed as stupid to Captain Donnithorne as Luke Britton [a neighboring farmer’s son] did to her” (243; vol. 1, bk. 1,

ch. 12). Hetty understands that people are judged by the way they speak and worries that her speech will leave a negative impression on Arthur; if she is not able to avoid those markers that would linguistically associate her with the class of farmers, Luke Britton and the like, how could Arthur possibly view her as marriageable?

Hetty is much less careful with her speech when she is conversing with Adam. She can be, for she does not view him as her superior and she is not concerned about winning his heart. When the two of them pick currants together in the Poysers' garden, Hetty style-shifts into a dialect more marked for class and region and allows the elisions that commonly occur in informal speech to pepper her utterances:

‘That’ll do,’ said Hetty, after a little while. ‘Aunt wants me to leave some on the trees. I’ll take ’em in now.’

‘It’s very well I came to carry the basket,’ said Adam, ‘for it ’ud ha’ been too heavy for your little arms.’

‘No; I could ha’ carried it with both hands.’ (89-90; vol. 2, bk. 2, ch. 20)

Hetty not only elides the interdental fricative in *them* but also echoes Adam’s “ha” for *have*, showing her comfort with Adam. Both the content and form of Hetty’s speech also illustrate how little she accepts Adam as a suitor. Had it been Arthur who offered to assist her in carrying the basket, we might imagine that Hetty would have replied differently; she would not have insisted that she “could ha’ carried it with both hands,” but rather would have thanked him in the most polite variety of English she could muster. Indeed, the easy way of speaking Hetty uses with Adam contrasts greatly with the near hypercorrect speech she uses with Arthur. With Arthur, even when speaking “hastily” for fear her feelings might be misconstrued, she is careful to fully enunciate her syllables.

When Arthur suggests that the gardener, Mr. Craig, accompanies her on her walk home, she insists, “I’m sure he doesn’t; I’m sure he never did; I wouldn’t let him; I don’t like him” (244; vol. 1, bk. 1, ch. 12). Her phrases are the short and simple SVO constructions one might expect from a speaker vexed by an unwelcome innuendo, but they are decidedly standard, even schooled.

When compared to the speech of Molly, one of Hetty’s fellow dairymaids, Hetty’s speech seems all the more schooled. In the scene in which Mrs. Poyser suggests that her request to spin is really an excuse to “go and sit with half-a-dozen men,” Molly exclaims, “I’m sure I donna want t’ go wi’ the whittaws, on’y we allays used to comb the wool for’n at Mester Ottley’s; an’ so I just axed ye. I donna want to set eyes on the whittaws again; I wish I may never stir if I do” (136; vol. 1, bk. 1, ch. 6). Marked by nonstandard modals, elided syllables, and the dialectical *axed* for *asked*, Molly’s speech is illustrative of the speech of a young Derbyshire woman of her socioeconomic status. Though both women are similarly positioned regionally and socioeconomically, and similarly distressed about being misconstrued, their interlocutors could not be more different, nor could the linguistic stakes of their conversations. These interchanges represent the constraints of two different linguistic markets: global and local. And according to these constraints, Hetty uses Standard English in her response to Arthur as a way to increase her symbolic capital in that market. Her use of Standard English acts to distance her linguistically from both her romantic and socioeconomic proximity to the very local Mr. Craig.

The way in which Hetty uses language is proactive; she emulates the speech of her betters, just as she emulates their dress in the privacy of her room, in hopes of

fashioning herself into a fitting wife for the future Squire of Donnithorne Arms. It is not until all hope of upward mobility, or mobility in any form, is gone that Hetty is represented as consistently using her local dialect. Hetty's speech shows the most markers of dialect when she confesses to Dinah in the confines of her jail cell: the double negative, "O Dinah, won't nobody do anything for me?" (158; vol. 3, bk. 5, ch. 45); nonstandard syntax, "there might somebody find it" (163; vol. 3, bk. 5, ch. 45); elision of *should*, "But then, the other folks 'ud come to know it at last" (163; vol. 3, bk. 5, ch. 45); and nonstandard subject-verb agreement, "get a long way off before folks was up" (165; vol. 3, bk. 5, ch. 45). It could be rightly argued that in such a time of duress, Hetty's speech would exhibit the features of her home language, but I would also suggest that representing her speech in such a way shows Hetty's attempt to realign herself with the local community and Eliot's attempt to garner sympathy from the reader by showing that Hetty indeed has a conscience. She is not able to redeem herself entirely, however; her crimes are too damning.

Hetty, like John Barton, needs a moral listener to hear her confession, but unlike Job Legh, whose dialect speech constructs him as the novel's moral center, Hetty's confessor is Dinah, whose biblical speech marks her as such. Indeed, Dinah's speech sounds like a text even when she is not preaching. For example, in her narrative about her hometown, Snowfield, to Mr. Irwine she uses words such as "thereby" and "wherein," (161; vol. 1, bk. 1, ch. 8) which are not generally used in speech. Dinah's text-like speech reflects her immersion in Methodism and illustrates her virtuous character while simultaneously showing her distance from the local community of Hayslope. Dinah refuses to take root there, despite the pleas of the Poysers and the

Bedes, and travels back to the bleak town of Snowfield. While it might be argued that if Dinah were drawn to Snowfield, she might feel local ties there and would perhaps speak in the dialect of that region, this is not the case. The reason she feels compelled to go to Snowfield is to care for the needy—she feels a moral and religious obligation to serve the people of Snowfield, but she lacks the close-knit ties that influence speakers to adhere to local linguistic norms. Dinah’s itinerant nature prevents her from developing strong first-order network ties. She goes where she is needed, a sort of mobile moral center, dispensing virtue and forgiveness, for example, to the repentant, though irredeemable, Hetty.

It is not until Dinah gives up preaching and settles into life in Hayslope that her speech begins to show signs of the local dialect. In the final chapter of the novel, after six years of marriage to Adam, Dinah has taken on the regional dialect forms of the second person pronouns and their corresponding verb conjugations. As Dinah, her two children, and their uncle Seth walk out to meet Adam, she says to Seth of her youngest, “Better take him on thy arm, Seth. He’s troublesome to thee so” (328; vol. 3, bk. 6, epilogue). And when inquiring after Arthur to Adam, “Didst find him greatly altered?” (330; vol. 3, bk. 6, epilogue). As I mention above, by the nineteenth century, the use of second person singular pronouns to signal intimacy survived only in regional dialects or among Quakers. Dinah’s use of these pronouns therefore not only shows intimacy with her new family, it also shows intimacy with her local community. Eliot could have signaled Dinah’s intimacy with her family in ways other than local dialect markers, but she chose to mark her speech as regional. To claim the position as heroine of a regional novel, then, Dinah must be represented as truly belonging. Her use of regional dialect

markers makes a powerful statement about her loyalty and connectedness. No longer is Dinah the itinerant preacher, the mobile source of virtue; instead she has become the novel's virtuous dialect-speaking heroine.

Though both their narratives end with their achieving the status of novel's heroine, Dinah's idyllic ending contrasts with Mary's exile. Mary and her new family, the Wilsons, emigrate to Canada to start new lives and forge new social networks, but their loyalties to Lancashire remain. The last line of *Mary Barton* is an exclamation from Mary: "'Dear Job Legh!' said Mary, softly and seriously" (312; vol 2, ch. 21). In calling out "Dear Job Legh!", Mary is conjuring all that he represents: the traditions of her hometown, her still strong ties to the local community that she has lost. Though these novels differ in who is exiled from their local communities--in *Adam Bede* it is the guilty who are transported--both express the importance of those communities and illustrate the way in which local prestige functions within them. In their first efforts as novelists, Gaskell and Eliot manage to reveal the covert prestige of local dialects for a national audience. They give their readers "some knowledge o' th' proper way o' speaking" that goes beyond what is expected in the mainstream markets and in so doing make statements both narrative and linguistic.

Both Gaskell and Eliot take provincial dialect speakers beyond their long comic tradition and make them the moral centers of their novels. In the next chapter I explore the work of Lancashire dialect writers Edwin Waugh (1817-1890) and Ben Brierley (1825-1896). They, too, expanded the uses of dialect in fiction, but unlike Gaskell and Eliot, Waugh and Brierley were native speakers of the dialect in which they wrote. These writers' poetry, sketches, and stories helped shape nineteenth-century perceptions of

Lancashire dialect and character. And, as we shall see, a closer look at their narrative works can help literary critics complicate not only our view of nineteenth-century language attitudes but also our notions of nineteenth-century conceptions of class.

Chapter 2

“Talk gradely, an’ then we con understand yo”:

The Narrative Possibilities of the Lancashire Dialect

As I discuss in the previous chapter, the Lancashire dialect was championed by two of Manchester’s eminent residents, Elizabeth Gaskell and her husband, the Reverend William Gaskell. Both Elizabeth’s novel *Mary Barton* (1848) and William’s *Two Lectures on the Lancashire Dialect* (1854) attempt to legitimize this dialect by giving it a history, emphasizing and supplying evidence for its Anglo-Saxon roots and citing great English writers, such as Chaucer, as having used forms that, though lost in Standard English centuries before, were still in use among Lancashire dialect speakers in the nineteenth century. Although the Gaskells are the best known advocates of the Lancashire dialect, they were by no means the only advocates. In this chapter, I explore the writings of Lancashire dialect writers Edwin Waugh (1817-1890) and Ben Brierley (1825-1896), who were among the most active promoters of the Lancashire dialect and Lancashire culture. As Vicinus (1974) has established, during the nineteenth century the working-class writers of the North attempted to create a distinctive working-class voice to represent themselves.¹⁷ In mid- to late-nineteenth-century Lancashire, this voice was distinctly dialectical, and Waugh and Brierley were instrumental in both its promotion and construction.

¹⁷ See also Hollingworth (1977), Maidment (1987), Joyce (1991), and McCauley (2001).

Unlike the middle-class Gaskell and Eliot, the Rochdale-born Waugh and Failsworth-born Brierley both grew up in working-class families and wrote predominantly in dialect for both working- and middle-class audiences. Waugh, the son of a shoemaker, worked as a journeyman printer before becoming the Assistant Secretary to the Lancashire Public School Association and moving to Manchester in 1847, where he eventually carved out his career as a dialect reader and writer. Brierley worked as a hand-loom weaver, like his father before him, before moving to Manchester in 1862 and making a tenuous living from his writing, public readings, and his periodical, *Ben Brierley's Journal* (1869-1891). Though Waugh and Brierley effectively transcended their working-class status by breaking into the local literary world, they never lost sight of their working-class roots; the working-class culture of Lancashire became the center of their works and the cornerstone of their literary reputations. Each tried his hand at writing poetry and prose in Standard English, but they were lauded and are now best remembered for their work written in the dialect of southeast Lancashire, their native speech.

Waugh, who was often referred to as “the Lancashire Burns,” first garnered attention as a writer when his poem “Come Whoam to thi Childer an’ Me” was published in the *Manchester Spectator* in 1856. The poem, the speaker of which is a woman describing the comforts of home to her absent husband, “was an instant success in Lancashire” (“Death of Edwin Waugh”) and went on to become “the most famous dialect poem of the century” (Zlotnick 199). The poem’s sentimentality was parodied by some, including Waugh’s friend Brierley,¹⁸ but its homely image of Lancashire was cherished

¹⁸ The speaker of Brierley’s “Go tak thi Ragged Childer and Flit” is a woman who berates her husband for stranding her at home with his children from a previous marriage.

by many and it was frequently reprinted in such places as calendars, church bulletins, temperance pamphlets, anthologies, and newspapers (Vicinus, *Industrial Muse* 210). Brierley first drew attention as a writer with his narrative piece “A Day Out, or a Summer Ramble in Daisy Nook”, which, though narrated in Standard English, showcases the Lancashire dialect in its dialogue. “A Day Out” appeared in the *Manchester Spectator* in 1859 and was described by fellow Lancashire dialect writer Samuel Bamford (1788-1872) as “sufficient proof of his power as a writer, whilst his orthography of the Lancashire dialect is as good as any I have read, since I could read” (*Ab-o’th’-Yate Sketches* xviii). Indeed Brierley was often praised for his ability to represent the speech of Lancashire weavers, or “to give forcible expression to such in their own native tongue and peculiar way,” as fellow Failsworth-born writer Sim Schofield (1852-1929) put it in a letter to the *Manchester Guardian* (9).

Waugh and Brierley did more than simply create characters who spoke the Lancashire dialect; their work both reflected back and helped create the Northern working-class identity, an identity for which a local variety of language was a key component. The comments of one of Waugh’s contemporaries illustrate the importance of the Lancashire dialect to Waugh’s success as a writer:

[H]e has followed the bent of his natural talent; he has availed himself of a special gift, and when one tries to imagine what “Owd Pinder” and “Come Whoam to thi Childer an’ Me” would be like if transformed into the language of “cultured” England it can hardly be denied that the poet was well justified in the course he pursued. (“Death of Edwin Waugh”)

For Gaskell and Eliot, though they expressed annoyance with the necessity of editing for intelligibility the dialogue in regional dialects in their first two novels, reaching a wider circle of readers took precedence over representing the dialect speakers of the North and Midlands--indeed their subsequent novels feature dialect speakers far less predominantly than *Mary Barton* (1848) and *Adam Bede* (1859). Gaskell and Eliot were not a part of the working-class writers' project that was so central for Waugh and Brierley; they were middle-class writers, writing for a middle-class audience, with the goal of proving that the respectable working classes were not so different from the middle classes. In contrast, Waugh and Brierley are wont to point out the differences between the middle and working classes, endowing the latter with superior characteristics, such as common sense, family loyalty, hard work, and stoicism. In this way, they both flatter their audience of working-class readers and help construct an ideal image of working-class respectability based in Lancashire traditions.

Though they spoke to and for the working classes, Waugh and Brierley were part of a largely middle-class social network from whom they both drew support and lent authenticity as "representative Lancashire men." This influential network was the Manchester Literary Club, a group central to the movement to establish their county and Northern culture on a national level and integral to the fostering and promotion of the Lancashire dialect. Waugh and Brierley founded the Club in 1862 with fellow working-class writers Richard Rome Bealey and Charles Hardwick, and the middle-class businessmen Joseph Chatwood and John Page. From its very inception, the Manchester Literary Club reflected a local patriotism that crossed class lines, but over the years its membership came to comprise more businessmen than working-class writers and its

leadership was consistently middle class; the Club's presidents during the nineteenth century were Joseph Chatwood, an architect, John H. Nodal, a journalist and editor of the *Manchester City News*, and George Milner, a successful Manchester merchant. Tensions between the classes are palpable in the writings of Waugh and Brierley and of the middle-class leadership of the Club even as they work together to promote their county. The Club's representative dialect writers were expected to embody an "authentic" Lancashire, manifest in both their speech and appearance, that would stand for all that was good in Lancashire's past and present. In this chapter, in addition to exploring the narrative works of Waugh and Brierley, I examine the works of their social network, in particular, the *Papers of the Manchester Literary Club* from 1876 to 1896, and the Club's *A Glossary of the Lancashire Dialect* (1875). I show how the writings negotiate tradition for use in the present, and argue that, though the narratives of both Waugh and Brierley broaden the range of uses of dialect in literature, Brierley's narratives go further in making the traditions of Lancashire past relevant for Lancashire's industrial present.

To Elevate and Refine

The names of Waugh and Brierley are often mentioned in concert as representing the best in Lancashire dialect writing and as proof of the virtues of the Lancashire dialect. The *Salford Chronicle* christened them "living prophets of the tongue" (11 March 1876) and in a letter to the *Manchester Weekly Courier* Thomas M. Freeman wrote, "The mention of these names naturally leads one to think of that dialect of the County Palantine which they sought to elevate and refine" (*Papers of the Manchester Literary Club* vol. 22, 501). Freeman's choice of words is telling; his assertion is not that Waugh and Brierley altered or edited the dialect to "elevate" it to the level of Standard English or

“refine” it to meet prescriptive standards, but rather that Waugh and Brierley sought to “elevate” the Lancashire dialect in the minds of those prejudiced against it and to “refine” the Lancashire dialect by using its “purest” forms, those closest to its Anglo-Saxon roots. Here Freeman evokes the familiar linguistic opposition of the unadulterated tongue of the North versus the Norman-tainted speech of the South, and appropriates the prescriptivists’ rhetoric to serve his own purposes. Where prescriptivists would use the terms “refine” and “pure” to judge varieties of English in relation to Standard English, advocates of the Lancashire dialect use them to describe varieties of English unadulterated by French and Latin. The Lancashire dialect, according to the Lancashire advocates, is more purely English than those of the South.

Nineteenth-century language theory lent itself to the notion that not only were the regional dialects of the North more purely English but so were the people who spoke them. Indeed, as Simmons (1992) documents, it was the study of Anglo-Saxon that led Victorians to identify themselves as Teutonic. She explains that during the nineteenth century, “the affinity between languages was taken as an affinity between races,” and that the Victorians’ cultural heritage was considered as traceable as their linguistic heritage (210). Although, as Wales (2006) shows, from a Southern perspective, the North was viewed as another “country” and was “rarely seen as essential to ‘Englishness’ and national identity” (28), from a Northern perspective, the North was the seat of traditional, pre-Norman Englishness. “England, by synecdoche,” Wales explains, “is the land of the ‘soft’ South, thatched cottages, *luncheon* and bowler hats, not blackened back-to-backs, *dinner* and flat caps; the English language is Southern English, and middle class to boot” (28).

The push to locate and define traditional Englishness in language was mobilized by eminent Mancunians to counteract this view that the culture and language of the South is synecdochical for the nation. As part of a larger movement to put their city on the national map, the Manchester Literary Club sponsored a number of projects both philological and literary in nature. In 1877 the Club published a *Bibliography of Lancashire and Cheshire*, a catalogue of the district's literary offerings for that year, "indicative of its intellectual status and the tendencies of its culture" (*Papers of the Manchester Literary Club* vol. 3 263-264), and indisputable evidence that the district was remarkable for more than just cotton manufacturing. Five years later the Club began publishing its own journal, the *Manchester Quarterly*, with the goal of "giving expression to the present tendencies of intellectual life of Lancashire and to garner their results" (vol. 1, iii). Here editor William Axon argues for Lancashire's contemporary relevance, but this relevance was often bolstered with rhetoric about traditional Lancashire and its authentically English past, leading some to create false literary genealogies. In arguing for the importance of the idiomatic language of the people and the literature that captures it, for example, Waugh draws comparisons between the language and culture of Chaucer and that of nineteenth-century Lancashire folk: "The language in which the commanding genius of Chaucer wrought five hundred years ago, and which was the common language of London in those days, is, even in its most idiomatic part, very much the same as that used in the country parts of Lancashire at this hour" (*Lancashire Sketches* 44). The language of Chaucer, of course, is the language of the South, but Waugh claims it for the North.¹⁹ According to Waugh, due to Norman influence, the South has lost much of its

¹⁹ As Wales (2006) points out, the dialect of the *Reeve's Tale* is Northern, but Chaucer's work was written predominantly in a Southern dialect.

traditional Englishness, both in language and culture, while the North has remained relatively unadulterated. Chaucer is not the only literary luminary called into service; a 22 November 1873 piece in the *Manchester Critic* explained, “many of the words still in local use here, though perhaps lost elsewhere, are to be found in Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, and other authors” (“The Lancashire Dialect”).

Wordsworth, too, is evoked, but as a foil to Lancashire dialect poetry. In his essay “On the Dialect of Lancashire Considered as a Vehicle of Poetry” (1875), Manchester Literary Club president George Milner suggests that because the Lancashire dialect is naturally more expressive than Standard English, it is not only more appropriate but also superior for use in lyric verse. At a crucial moment in his essay, he proves his point by translating one of Wordsworth’s “Lucy” poems, “She dwelt among th’ untrodden ways,” into the vernacular, replacing the Latinate *difference*, with “some simple Celtic or Saxon root-word which shall carry the idea as in a transparent crystal; not strangle it with convolutions” (26). In Milner’s translation, Wordsworth’s “But she is in her grave, and, oh, / The difference to me!” becomes “But hoo’s i’th’ yearth, an’ oh, it’s browt / Another day to me!” (25-26).²⁰ The Lancashire term *hoo*, “she,” is a remnant of the Old English third-person feminine pronoun *heo*. And while Wordsworth’s *grave* is also derived from Old English *græf*, it is commonly used in Standard English. The Lancashire pronunciation of *earth*, “yearth,” on the other hand, with its pre-vocalic /j/ sound, marks the line as distinctly Lancastrian. Milner’s choice of “browt,” the Lancashire pronunciation of *brought* serves a similar purpose, with its broad vowel; the Lancashire

²⁰ In a revised version of this essay, published as part of the introduction to Waugh’s *Poems and Songs* (1890), Milner translates this line as, “But hoo’s i’th greawnd, an’ oh, it’s browt / Another day to me!” (xxii).

dialect, Milner explains, “is emphatically a broad-chested speech. What are called ‘head-notes’ are infrequent” (31).

But even more than that, Milner argues, “it’s browt / Another day to me” is a superior and especially poetic form for expressing loss. To a Lancastrian’s ear, the line echoes “a simple and expressive Lancashire phrase, which is thus used--‘Ah, th’art weel off now; but if ever tha loses thi owd mother, *it’ll be another day* for thee, mi lad!’” (26). This line especially, Milner suggests, “shows how very near poetic style is to much of our dialectal homeliness” (26). Milner turns Wordsworth’s own argument regarding the artificial and “corrupt” diction of poetry against him; for Milner, Wordsworth’s diction, too, “thrust[s] out of sight the plain humanities of nature by a motley masquerade of tricks, quaintness, hieroglyphics, and enigmas” (Wordsworth 242). According to Milner, the idiomatic speech of Lancashire folk is closer still to the true language of men and, therefore, more fitting for modern poetry. In this way, Milner at once claims a space for Lancashire dialect writers in national literary culture and for Lancashire culture in the national imagination.

Forays by the Manchester Literary Club in the fields of philology and lexicography had similar goals. In 1875 the Club published its much-anticipated *A Glossary of the Lancashire Dialect*, a nearly three-hundred-page undertaking that was held in high regard by contemporaries.²¹ Unlike previous collections of Lancashire

²¹ In response to a progress report by Nodal, the *Manchester Critic* wrote: “It appears that the Committee are anxious to make the collection as comprehensive as possible, and they do not wish to render it a *Dryasdust* affair, but a work to interest the general reader, as well as one of value to the scholar. We feel sure that our readers will be much gratified to know that so valuable a collection has been commenced, and we can conscientiously say that Mr. Nodal’s report bears internal evidence of diligence, philosophical method, and fine discrimination, and warrants the anticipation of a contribution to local and general literature, as acceptable to the scholar as honourable to the compilers and editors” (22 November 1873). A review in the *Salford Chronicle* also comments on the *Glossary*’s style and accuracy, comparing its

dialect terms that dealt with only specific areas of Lancashire,²² the Club's *Glossary* attempted to consider the whole of the dialect in one collection. The editors, George Milner and John H. Nodal, take pains to assure readers of the *Glossary*'s accuracy and inclusivity by boasting the Club's "peculiar facilities for its adequate execution. It not only numbers amongst its members the chief writers in the dialect, but also residents in, or representatives from, all parts of the county" (vii). Here, the editors are careful to include reference to "all parts of the county" so that southeast Lancashire is not assumed to take precedence, but the statement belies another of their biases, their interest in the written word. The editors draw their dialectical evidence largely from literary sources, ranging from the Old English poem "Daniel" (c. 680) to the Middle English "Sir Gawain and Green Knight" (1360) and *Canterbury Tales* (1380), to the Early Modern English works of Spenser and Shakespeare, to the nineteenth-century English of their own Waugh and Brierley.²³

Writers of fiction figure prominently in the editors' discussion of their methodology as well: "The illustrations are arranged in chronological order. The passage from Anglo-Saxon (*i.e.*, First English), Middle English, and modern authors are followed by examples in the Lancashire dialect from the works of county writers; and when not obtainable from books an example is given, wherever practicable, of the current colloquial usage of the word" (ix). Precedence is given to examples from books, and actual speech is included only when literary examples are not available. The entry for

entertainment value to that of Samuel Johnson's dictionary and citing "the care and labour which have been bestowed on this interesting compilation" (11 March 1876).

²² For example, J. P. Morris's *Glossary of Words and Phrases of Furness*, John Ashworth's *Words in Use in Rossendale*, and *A List of South Lancashire Words*, compiled by John Jackson.

²³ Waugh especially features prominently in the *Glossary*'s bibliography with sixteen titles. Samuel Bamford and Ben Brierley are the next most represented with three titles each.

afeard, ‘afraid, frightened, terrified,’ for example, begins with an example from an Anglo-Saxon version of the Bible, followed by quotations from Hampole, Chaucer, Lydgate, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Ben Jonson. A parenthetical note regarding Samuel Johnson’s dictionary follows: “Dr. Johnson (1755) said the word *afeard* ‘is now obsolete: the last author whom I have found using it is Sedley.’ He died about 1728” (5).²⁴ This note is followed by a quotation of dialogue from Dickens’s *Little Dorrit*, and finally examples of colloquial use from 1875: “Get on wi’ thee, mon; what arto *feard* on?” and “Aw’m noan *afeard* on thee” (5).

The linguistic evidence slips between literary quotation and lexicographic authority, which the editors simultaneously challenge, and actual speech.²⁵ Unlike modern sociolinguists, who go to great lengths to capture actual speech in the field, the editors of the *Glossary* do not favor lexical forms gathered in the field over their fictional counterparts. One reason for this discrepancy in methodologies, of course, is that modern sociolinguists have the benefit of tape recorders, but more than that, I would suggest, the Manchester Literary Club wanted to tap into England’s literary tradition, and the written form of the dialect was one that they could control. Actual speech is messy, unpredictable, and varying. To complicate matters, the Lancashire dialect, along with all other dialects of English aside from Standard English, was without a standardized orthography. The *Glossary* editors admit that orthography is “one of the chief difficulties of a glossarist” and explain that “the words have been given, whenever practicable, in the

²⁴ The inclusion of Johnson’s entry is a strategic move. By simultaneously recognizing the influence of Johnson’s dictionary while providing evidence that contradicts his findings—*afread* is not “obsolete” it has simply fallen out of use in Standard English—the editors reinforce the importance of the Manchester Literary Club’s project; the field of philology suffers if provincial dialects are not considered by lexicographers.

²⁵ Strand (2006) finds a similar blurring of “the line between literal and literary subjects” in the work of American dialectologists (129).

spelling adopted by the most trustworthy of the county writers, among whom Mr. Edwin Waugh stands pre-eminent, on account not only of his genius and knowledge, but of his minute observation and scholarly study of the dialect” (ix). Using Waugh’s orthography at once gives the editors a certain amount of control of the dialect’s representation and claims a space for Waugh alongside Chaucer et al in English literary tradition.

Furthermore, such an endorsement not only gives precedence to the written word, it stamps Waugh’s orthography as representative of “authentic” Lancashire speech. It is, after all, by “minute observation and scholarly study” that Waugh is able to represent the dialect in such a “trustworthy” and accurate manner. Waugh could be counted on not only to record speech accurately, he was trusted to record the appropriate variety of speech.

Much of the rhetoric surrounding the importance of the *Glossary*, and indeed the importance of Waugh and Brierley, reveals an anxiety about standards of purity and authenticity; it highlights the need to capture a quickly-disappearing “pure” or “authentic” Lancashire dialect, one spoken by “former generations of the older order” (*Papers of the Manchester Literary Club* vol. 16, 459). A review of the *Glossary* in the *Salford Chronicle* is careful to distinguish between what is considered the authentic dialect of the rural areas and “the insipid smooth talk of every day life of our large towns.” He explains:

The immigrants from the rural districts to our large centers, failing to render themselves intelligible to their new neighbours, intercourse on both sides has to be carried on divested of all words containing delicate shades of thought, or idiomatic expressions bearing the overflow of humour or

point of wit. Under such unpropitious circumstances the *patois*²⁶ gets forgotten, no field being found for its exercise, and the language of the common people, unless renewed from the resources of literature, degenerates into a mongrel emasculated lingo serviceable only for the physical wants of the people. (“The Lancashire Dialect”)

Here the language of the city is described as a sort of pidgin, with the distinctive features of the Lancashire dialect falling out of use for the sake of intelligibility. Whether or not the language of the city actually was a pidgin is inconsequential; what matters is that it was imagined as a “mongrel” speech and came to index industrialization and the factory, while the speech of the country came to index tradition and the handloom. As Vicinus points out, “The spoken dialect belonged to the past and to the country in the minds of many city dwellers who themselves spoke a dialect altered by contact with a wide variety of class, geographical and occupational accents” (190). Rural speakers of the dialect were imagined as carriers of the county’s traditional culture and language. In an 1885 testimonial for Ben Brierley, George Milner assured his audience that he was “never disposed to defend a corrupt or debased form of the Lancashire dialect, but when written and spoken as it ought to be and still is in some of the secluded valleys, it is not a dialect to be either despised or ashamed of” (“Mr. Ben Brierley”). Milner’s comments reflect both the codification and reification of authentic Lancashire dialect; by the 1880s, the Lancashire dialect, as it “ought to be” spoken had to be sought out in “secluded valleys”. Not just any variety of Lancashire speech would do. Therefore, in transforming a spoken

²⁶ The reviewer is using *patois* as it was formerly: “a regional dialect; a variety of language specific to a particular area, nationality, etc., which is considered to differ from the standard or orthodox version” (OED).

language into a glossary of written words, it is hardly surprising that literary examples should become the proper image of Lancashire culture.

As Milner suggests, not all speech of past Lancashire was considered equal. Even the past had to be revised. In the introduction to the 1892 edition of Waugh's collected works, Milner described Waugh's representation of the Lancashire dialect as "the purest form of Lancashire Folk-speech—much purer, for instance, than that of John Collier, which was adulterated by importations from Cheshire on the one hand and from Yorkshire on the other" (xiv). Here, it is not the Norman-tainted speech of the South nor the "mongrel" speech of the cities, but other Northern varieties of English that are somehow the adulterating linguistic force. Milner's definition of the Lancashire dialect is a narrow one, indeed, and his assertion may come as somewhat as a surprise, for John Collier (1708-1796), whose pen name was Tim Bobbin, was often referred to as "the Father of Lancashire dialect writing." Though Waugh and Brierley are often described as carrying out the tradition he began--Waugh even devotes several chapters of his *Lancashire Sketches* in narrating his search for Collier's grave--there are fundamental differences in the authors' treatment of the Lancashire dialect and culture. In his major work, "Tummus and Meary" (1746), for example, Collier relies on crude humor, both violent and sexual, and stereotypes of the comic rural figure. Both the form and content of Collier's representation of Lancashire speech was troubling to the Lancashire advocates; it was neither linguistically nor morally pure. So while Waugh, Brierley, and their social network relied on the past to bolster their status in the present, they had to be careful about how this past was framed.

The Uses of Tradition

It is a common trope for Waugh and Brierley to lead their readers into the rural past. Brierley begins his first “Merriton” story, “The Boggart of Fairy Bridge,” by taking his readers on a ramble to a village that seems fictional, almost romantic, surely too good to be true. Yet, Brierley, though he anticipates his readers’ doubts, assures them that such a village once existed:

Do you know Merriton, reader? Not at all? You shake your head as if you doubted there being such a place. Oh, well, have your own ‘know,’ as a Merritonian would have said; call me a dreamer, if you like, but I would not part with my recollections of what Merriton was thirty years ago for as much of your flimsy modern philosophy as it were possible to cram beneath the most capacious of beavers. [...] Yes; give me back Merriton thirty years ago, and take all my share of modern frippery in return. Take away my broad cloth, my ‘elastic sides,’ and ‘fast life,’ and restore me my corduroys, my clogs, my cold turnip, and contentment. (5-6)

Here Brierley speaks of both tangible items and abstractions that represent dichotomously modern and idyllic Lancashire, the latter holding sway over Brierley’s sensibilities.

Indeed, a ramble in the countryside was more than merely a momentary escape from the smoke-clogged air of industrial Manchester; it was a means of connecting with the county’s traditional language and culture. As Vicinus points out, “The traveller-persona was a necessary intermediary, taking urban readers back to an authentic dialect and a traditional way of life” (191). We get a glimpse of such a persona in *Mary Barton*’s important representative of Lancashire’s culture, Alice Wilson. As a rural immigrant to

Manchester and a carrier of tradition, she spends entire days “in the fields, gathering wild herbs for drinks and medicine,” and has “a considerable knowledge of hedge and field simples” (16). Though, as I point out in the previous chapter, Mary Barton calls out the name of Job Legh, evoking her ties to her local community of Manchester, there is no indication that she will carry on the rural traditions so important to Alice Wilson. In the narrative world of *Mary Barton*, these traditions die with Alice. Gaskell represents the mixing of cultures and dialects that took place in industrial Manchester, and shows her characters’ desire to escape momentarily from the grime of the city; the novel opens with the Bartons and Wilsons on a country ramble. But the interest in preserving and protecting rural traditions does not have the presence in *Mary Barton* that it does in the narratives of Waugh and Brierley twenty years and more later.

In Waugh’s “Owd Cronies,” which like most of his tales is set in the past, Christmas Eve 1800, the character of Jone o’ Gavelock²⁷ tells the embedded tale of how he and his wife instruct King George III and Queen Charlotte on the proper way to make “porritch” (267). Milner called the tale, which was popularly known as “The Lancashire Volunteers,” “an inimitable story for public reading” (“Prefatory Note” vi), and it is not difficult to discern why. Not only is it rendered entirely in the Lancashire dialect, the most popular style of speech for local public readings, it also valorizes the traditions of the county. The story validates the wholesomeness of traditional Lancashire cookery and challenges the notion that London is the cultural center of the nation. Jone does not style-shift into a London accent, even when quoting the King: “Well, th’ king kept lookin’ at these childer of ours, an’ he said, ‘I’ll tell tho what, Jone, thou’s a lot o’ th’ finest, fresh-

²⁷ This appellation is likely a reference to the famous Lancashire character “Jone o’ Grinfelt” who appeared in numerous dialect poems, beginning in 1790s and continuing throughout the nineteenth century. “Jone” represented the proverbial wise common man and was often evoked as a symbol of protest.

colour't childer 'at ever clapt e'en on. Mine are o' as yollo' as marigowds. What dun yo feed 'em on?" (267). It could be argued that by having Jone speak exclusively in the Lancashire dialect Waugh is suggesting a man of Jone's status would be incapable of speaking Standard English. However, I would suggest that Jone's speech can be interpreted as an example of how the Lancashire dialect, along with its customs, is being held up as the norm, thereby challenging the hegemony of Standard English and the South.

Throughout England, Victorians witnessed their language changing, and one of the most salient differences was often between generations of speakers. Think of the "studiously narrow" vowels of farmers' daughters in Eliot's commentary. Though Mary Barton and Hetty Sorrel fashion themselves linguistically, with differing results, they are not represented as disapproving of their parents' or guardians' speech. Still one can hardly imagine Lisbeth Bede instructing Dinah the way in which Brierley's Margit Bradley, of his tale "The Bride of Cherry Tree Cottage," instructs her daughter, Betty, in childcare. Lisbeth's speech, especially her repetition of "an'" (and) at the beginning of phrases, (e.g. "An' to think as he might ha' Mary Burge, an' he took partners, an' be a big man wi' workmen under him [...]") (47.) constructs her as not only of the older generation, but also uneducated, unsophisticated, and, at times, almost foolish. The speech of Margit Bradley, in contrast, constructs her character as of the older generation, but also as wise, knowledgeable, and sharp. In this tale, Southern-influenced conventions of motherhood are challenged by traditional practices of the rural North. "The Bride," Mrs. George Henry Woodpate (née Betty Bradley) becomes a stranger to her village and

parents after marrying the young squire. Her parents finally attempt an uninvited visit when they discover the birth of their grandson in the paper.

When they arrive at Thistledown Hall they find that their daughter has adopted the ways of the landed gentry, and she affects Standard English to match her new stilted formal behavior. Mrs. Woodpate's constant refrains regarding her parents' language during their visit are "how vulgar," and "how rude." She attempts to instruct them in language use, but in the end her parents instruct her in child care, dismissing the wet nurse and encouraging her to breast feed her sickly child. Her language remains standard and, to her, her parents' language remains "rude," but it carries wisdom: "Thou's bin too mich of a lady," Margit tells her daughter, "If thou be proud, be proud ut thou'rt a woman—a gradely woman, an' not a painted buzzart. Poo' that fine dress off, an' put a common un on; an' when that little craythur's gotten round a bit, as I see he will now, I'll show thee how t' put a clout on; for I dunno' think thou's larnt yet" (215). ["You've been too much of a lady. If you'll be proud, be proud that you are a woman—a decent woman, and not a painted butterfly. Pull off that fine dress and put on a common one; and when that little creature comes around, as I see he will now, I'll show you how to put a cloth on, for I do not think you've learned how yet."]²⁸ Not only does Margit instruct her daughter in domestic arts, she does so in an expressive and agile manner. There is none of the unsophisticated repetition we see in Lisbeth Bede's speech. Instead we see

²⁸ Here I have provided the Standard English translation for a passage in the Lancashire dialect, as I do in other places where the dialect is especially difficult for readers to interpret, or in cases where a precise translation is especially trenchant for my argument. In other places, I have left the Lancashire dialect for readers to translate themselves, so that they might experience the text without Standard English mediation. *A Glossary of the Lancashire Dialect* defines *clout* as 'a piece of cloth used for domestic purposes.' In this context it is likely a diaper or a cloth for breastfeeding.

repetition for rhetorical effect: “If thou be proud, be proud ut thou’rt a woman—a gradely woman.”

And juxtaposed with the speech of Mr. Woodpate, which is standard but bereft of wisdom, or even sense, the Lancashire dialect, and its attendant culture, rises even higher above that of the upper classes. Upon hearing of his son’s “indisposition” Mr. Woodpate looks alternately “vacant” and “staggered” then stammers, “But, however, my dear, I’m right glad the young scamp’s all right; and now we’ll have a little fowl for dinner, eh! father; what say you? I was on the moors early this morning, had some good sport as late as the season’s got, and now I’m pretty sharp set for a good tuck-out of something. Nothing like fresh air and exercise for slackening a man’s waistcoat” (219-20). The aptly named Mr. Woodpate behaves as though he is a distracted child interested in frivolous pursuits and his speech reflects this with its jumpy prosody and upper-class slang terms. The language of Brierley’s characters in this tale reflects their values, and those of the traditional Lancashire folk emerge as superior.

Of course this sort of attack on the upper-classes is not specific to Lancashire dialect writing; the domestic novel has a long history of valorizing the values of the middle classes over those of the aristocracy and the gentry. But rather than inscribe themselves into familiar middle-class narratives, Lancashire dialect writers rewrite the narratives to highlight the virtues of the Northern working classes. In *Reading Popular Prints* Brian Maidment comments on a tale published in *Chambers’ Miscellany of Useful and Entertaining Tracts* (1847) called “Women’s Trials in Humble Life – The Story of Peggy Dickson,” which relays a familiar tale of a young woman who makes a poor choice in marriage. Poor Peggy Dickson survives the trials of a drunken and abusive

husband who squanders the resources she brought to the marriage and leaves her a starving widow. In the end, she is rescued by a wealthy uncle, but as Maidment points out, “the narrative acknowledges its own fictive closure by pointing out that few readers will have rich uncles to rescue them from hastily made marriages” (122). This tale might be read as a working-class version of a familiar middle-class narrative: from Eliza Heywood’s multiply-retold narratives in the *Female Spectator*, to Anne Brontë’s *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, to Charles Dickens’s *David Copperfield*, the story that instructs the reader through its heroine’s or hero’s mistakes is one that reoccurs throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Waugh’s “Besom Ben” stories, which like many of Waugh’s narratives are set in the rural past, challenge this reoccurring construction. Unlike both the unsavory Mr. Dickson and the vacuous Mr. Woodpate, Ben feels deeply his connection to his wife and children and expresses true feeling when hearing of the loss of another’s. Scenes of Ben doting on his children and enjoying the beauty of his moorland home and garden assure the reader of his tenderness and caring. One scene, during which Ben, as a prank, has foolishly sent his donkey Dimple up to the top room of a mill in place of a bag of wool, begins comically enough, but soon begins to read like a masculine answer to Waugh’s famous poem, “Come whoam to thi childer an’ me”. This sentimental poem, as I mention above, was the piece that made Waugh famous, but was criticized by his contemporaries for not addressing why the errant husband has stayed away so long.²⁹ The scene with Ben and his mill-stranded donkey, seems to potentially answer this question:

²⁹ cf. Vicinus (*Industrial Muse* 212).

But Ben began to think of the little cottage on Lobden moor, where Betty and the children were waiting for him; and the thought made him desperate. [...] And he could hear his children playing about the hearth, and prattling over their ‘porritch,’ and then crying for their ‘mam’ to let them stop up till their ‘dad’ came home.³⁰ Ben could not stand this any longer. It woke up new mettle within him, and for a few minutes broke the spell that had begun to paralyse his spirits. It was high time to get his jackass out of the mill, for,—goblins or no goblins,—he durst not go home without it. (29-30)

Whether or not Waugh was attempting to show the perspective of the husband in this story, which was published ten years after his famous poem, I cannot say, but the scene does exemplify a sort of masculinity that was not often associated with the working classes of the North. In this way, Waugh is constructing a domesticity that is decidedly masculine. And rather than call it “domestic,” its French origins ringing of the middle-class South, he chooses a good and solid Anglo-Saxon term, “homely.”

The term *homely* appears repeatedly in both Waugh’s and Brierley’s dialect writings and in their surrounding rhetoric. Brierley, for example, speaks of “homely hospitality” in both “A Day Out” and “Bunk-Ho.” In “The Hermit Cobbler” and “The Town of Heywood and its Neighbourhood,” Waugh mentions “homely comfort.” An obituary for Waugh reads, “At that period [the 1850s] the Lancashire dialect was regarded as uncouth and vulgar, and a form of speech that should be left entirely to the

³⁰ This line especially echoes the language of the poem, specifically the third stanza: “An’ Dick, too, aw’d sich wark wi’ him, / Afore aw could get him up stairs; / Thae tow’d him thae’d bring him a drum, / He said, when he’re sayin’ his prayers; / Then he looked i’ my face, an’ he said, / “Has th’ boggarts taen houd o’ my dad?” / An’ he cried till his e’en were quite red; - / He likes thee some weel, does yon lad!” (*Poems and Songs* 5).

“common people.” But Waugh saw in it a rugged beauty and a homely charm which he thought well worth developing” (“Death of Edwin Waugh”). Another obituary for Waugh claims that “the poet’s name will be handed down to posterity and remembered as long as Lancashire can appreciate humour racy of the soil and songs which reveal the truth and tenderness of homely life” (*Papers of the Manchester Literary Club*, vol. 16, 462).³¹ Here we see not only another example of “homely,” not domestic, life, but also the suggestion that positive attributes, in this case the ever popular humor, are characteristic, or racy, of the Lancashire soil.

This metonymic link between character and land might be used strategically to further distance the conceptions of “homely” and “domestic”. Zlotnick (1991) argues that the distinctive male voice of the dialect tradition silenced working-class women, refusing to recognize their labor, “in its adherence to the ideology of domesticity” (9). While it is true that we see little of Betty’s labor in Waugh’s Besom Ben tales—we see her feeding the hens and stirring the fire but little else—I would suggest that the obscuring of women’s domestic labor in Lancashire dialect writing has less to do with adherence to the ideology of domesticity and more to do with the desire to construct a concept of domesticity that is unique to the county of Lancashire. This sort of construction is present in the description of Besom Ben’s home, which is infused with language that suggests he and his wife’s particular domestic, or homely, bliss is dependent upon their moorland setting:

Nature had fallen in love with it, and she was quietly drawing it into
exquisite harmony with the surrounding scene. The rich hues of the

³¹ These are just a few examples of the many references to “homely” I came across while researching this chapter. Other references include: “homely pictures,” “homely things,” “homely language,” “homely modes of expression,” etc.

moorland seemed to have crept over it in subtle tones, deepened and mellowed by stains of the weather. The lower part of the walls was cushioned with bright, mossy emerald, and little lichens and tufts of grass sprouted prettily all round the foundation line, and tiny flowerets peeped out here and there, even from between the grey stones of those humble walls,—like angels encamped about the besom-maker's lonely dwelling. (196)

Besom Ben's wife, Betty, is characterized by her domesticity, but it is a domesticity that is aided and nurtured by the very soil upon which they live, not the culture that, as Brierley says, they could “give a fig for”.³² Such a construction allows the Lancashire advocates to disassociate themselves from the middle-classes while still claiming the respectability that is often associated with that class. It also allows for the additional construction of a sort of respectability that is not centered around feminine responsibility. Indeed, in discussions of the virtues of Lancashire tradition, it is the Lancashire *man* who is most often called to service; he can both “smooth the pillow of affliction with the gentleness of a mother” and display acts of “bravery not to be found on a battlefield” (Brierley, *ibid.* 206). He usurps the place of guardian of respectability and stands as a metonym for all that is good in Lancashire.

The Representative Lancashire Man

Such an image of tender yet courageous masculinity could not be more different from the one constructed by Collier in his character “Tummus.” The bawdy and foolish

³² In his “Some Phases of Lancashire Life” (1890) Brierley contrasts working-class and middle-class culture, ending with the exclamation, “I say a fig for your culture. Take it into the drawing-room, and breathe its essence into the ears of the simpering madam whose hardest work is toying with an ugly pet dog” (206).

clown was not the image Waugh, Brierley, and their social network were keen to promote. At a 17 March 1885 meeting of the Manchester Literary Club held in his honor, as that Saturday's edition of the *Manchester City News* reported, Brierley explained, "It will ever be a source of satisfaction to me to think that in all that I have written I have striven to rescue the Lancashire character from the erroneous conceptions of Tim Bobbin" ("Mr. Ben Brierley" 3). The "character" Brierley constructs in his narratives both reflected and helped create the figure of the "representative Lancashire man," a conception evoked repeatedly in the discourse of the Manchester Literary Club as "authentic" and "typical" as well as "representative." Each of these terms were key for the Lancashire advocates: "authentic" connotes a genuineness reminiscent of the rhetoric around traditional Englishness; "typical" suggests that this ideal model of Lancashire masculinity is quite common among the county's men; and "representative" signals the importance of such a model in standing for all that is traditional and respectable in the county. For the remainder of the chapter, I will use "representative Lancashire man" to encapsulate all three conceptions.

Both Waugh and Brierley were described by their social network as representative Lancashire men, and this designation reflects the vexed relationship the writers had with both their middle-class supporters and their own personas.³³ The middle-class leaders of the Manchester Literary Club were wont to attribute the writers' positive qualities to their nature and their natural surroundings. Brierley's honesty and unpretentiousness are evoked in such a way in 1884 by friend J. Fox Turner:

When Owd Ben tells us that his name is Ben Brierley and he comes 'fra'
Failsworth, the elective baptismal and local affinities all seem to the

³³ cf. Vicinus (1984) for a discussion of Waugh's struggle with his persona.

manner born. His name, his ‘nut,’ are redolent of the soil of the County Palatine; and from the foundations of this world and earlier, when Nature was arranging the travellers on her circuits, Ben Brierley was allotted to Failsworth. A thorny quickset hedgy surname that of Brierley—we think of the hard sloe-trees or the branches of the prickly plum. [...] If a marlock potter were to take a handful of marl [...] out of the potter’s wheel would emerge the roughly-rubicund, symmetry-defying lineaments of Owd Ben—a face nevertheless attractive, because of its simplicity and staunch loyalty; over which the flitting shadows of simulation or pretence never play. (qtd. in *Papers of the Manchester Literary Club*, vol. 22, 490)

Both Brierley’s name and ‘nut’, or core, are infused with characteristics, according to Fox, unique to the county of Lancashire and in consequence of his being a product of it. Even his countenance expresses the naturalness and authenticity of the county, with its freedom from simulation or pretence.

At times, however, the rhetoric of their social network belies the paradox lurking beneath such representations. Milner, for example, remembers Waugh “affect[ing] huge sticks, of which he had an immense collection, and he liked to throw a shepherd’s plaid over his shoulders. [...] He was fond of clothing himself in honest homespun of the thickest texture, and of wearing huge broad-soled boots, guiltless of polish” (“Introduction” xxxviii-xxxix). Even Waugh’s clothes were “honest” and “guiltless”, an extension of his homespun persona. But Milner’s choice of words reveals the constructedness of Waugh’s persona: he *affected* huge sticks, *liked to throw* a shepherd’s plaid over his shoulders, and was *fond of clothing himself* in honest homespun. These

phrases all connote agency on Waugh's part and a consciousness on both of their parts that Waugh's persona was a performance. And therein lies the central paradox: How can one perform authenticity? The word *performance* denotes design and repetition, while *authentic* denotes nature and originality. Yet Waugh and Brierley were expected to provide proof of their authenticity, and by extension, the credibility of the Club and the superior attributes of Lancashire's working classes.

The site of much of this performance of authenticity was the writers' speech. It is worth noting that Fox quotes Brierley as using the dialectal "fra." Though Waugh and Brierley often quote themselves as speaking Standard English, their middle-class supporters often quote them as speaking in the Lancashire dialect. This is not to say that Waugh and Brierley did not embrace their linguistic roots, for indeed they did, as I discuss below, but it does provide further evidence of their social network's influence on the construction of the representative Lancashire man and the pressure the writers must have felt to provide both visible and audible proof of their authenticity. As Wales (2006) points out, the self-made men of the North found themselves in liminal positions; "between clear social identities" (143). These men ran the double risk of social exclusion and betrayal of their roots, and this position is reflected in their negotiation of their linguistic styles; they sometimes represent themselves as speaking Standard English, at other times Lancashire dialect. It was important for these writers to show that they had a command of what was considered by the vast majority of the nation as the language of the educated, Standard English. Yet, their fame and reputation relied heavily on their ability to represent the Lancashire common man, and their middle-class peers were wont to characterize them as such. Though, as I will show, Brierley was more comfortable

with his liminal position and went further in constructing an image of Lancashire that was relevant for the present, both writers used their speech to tap into the positive image of traditional Lancashire and fashion themselves linguistically as representative Lancashire men. As Beetham (2006) points out, Brierley believed self-improvement and a commitment to the Lancashire dialect were not mutually exclusive, but rather “crucially linked” (77). Unlike Mrs. Linnaeus Banks’s Jabez Clegg, the protagonist of *The Manchester Man* (1876), who “loses” his dialect speech when he transcends his class status,³⁴ both Brierley and Waugh continued to use and identify with the Lancashire dialect, albeit not without complication.

In a memorial notice in the *Manchester Weekly Times*, Waugh is described in relation to his use of language:

In speaking of Edwin Waugh as a typical Lancashire man we refer to the undoubted fact that his best work is distinctly and essentially local, both in substance and form. [...] You could not talk for two minutes with Waugh without discovering that he was a Lancashire man, and those who were familiar with the niceties of district distinctions had no difficulty in guessing the particular part of the county to which he originally belonged.

(*Papers of the Manchester Literary Club*, vol. 16, 459-60).

Given that one could pinpoint the “particular part of the county” from which Waugh hailed within two minutes, we might conjecture that Waugh did not adopt Standard English as his primary dialect or, at the very least, that he did not adopt the metropolitan standard accent--he hailed from Rochda’ and his speech attested to that. Waugh’s diary,

³⁴ Of course, speakers do not “lose” their dialects, but rather retain them, while learning and adopting new ones.

however, reveals his vexed relationship with his hometown, his working-class roots, and the variety of speech associated with them. The entries tell of Waugh's engagement with what might be called high literary culture: his time spent with his Latin grammar; conversaciones at the Salford Literary and Mechanical Institution; Emerson's 1847 lectures at the Manchester Athenaeum and the "beauty and force of [Emerson's] language" (*Diary* 21). But Waugh writes with equal reverence and admiration about his mother, who, though she was one of the "poorest," was also one of the "cleanest and most industrious women in the land" (32), and about a former handloom weaver who, though he "could hardly write his own name," owned a flourishing magazine shop (7).

Perhaps the most telling of entries, however, are those that concern his wife, Mary Ann (née Hill), from whom he was estranged. During the summer of 1849 Waugh was living in Manchester and working for the Lancashire Public School Association, while Mary Ann remained in Rochdale with her family. In an entry dated 22 July 1849, Waugh recounts an altercation he has with his wife during a visit he makes to Rochdale: "She demeaned herself towards me with an unfeeling rudeness that turned my stomach, and let loose her vituperative tongue ["before folk" inserted] in a way that disgusted me, and filled me with smothered indignation and sorrowful hopelessness" (80). Waugh's choice of words here reflects not only his sorrow at his wife's "unfeeling rudeness" but also a desire to distance himself linguistically from his roots. His use of the Latinate *demeaned* and *vituperative* followed by "before folk," inserted and with quotation marks, distinguishes his hyper-standard language from the colloquial and homely speech that characterizes Lancashire folk. In a similar entry, dated 2 December 1847, Waugh writes, "my stomach turned inside out by the unwomanly and [word smudged] conduct of mon

femme [sic]" (24). This time Waugh chooses the French language to create linguistic distance between himself and his wife--his use of the ironic "mon femme" to denote her "unwomanly" conduct is at once acerbic and divisive. It is unlikely that Mary Ann, whom Waugh derides for having no education and "no wish" for any (32), would have such terms in her linguistic repertoire. While it is his wife's conduct that Waugh cites as the explicit cause of his complaints, the language he chooses to express said complaints--Latin borrowings and French terms--constructs him as both her social and linguistic better.

These entries predate Waugh's success as a dialect writer by almost ten years; Waugh eventually came to embrace his linguistic heritage, but only after he had established himself within the literary intelligentsia of Manchester. In *Lancashire Sketches*, Waugh quotes himself as style-shifting into the Lancashire dialect when conversing with the locals, usually when they first do not respond kindly to his Standard English:

After a fruitless attempt at enlightening him thereon in ordinary English I took to the dialect, and, in the country fashion, described my genealogy on the mother's side. I was instantly comprehended; for he stopped me short with,—

'Why, then, aw'll be sunken iv yo are not gron'son to "Billy wi' th' Pipes at th' Biggins!"'

'Yo han it neaw,' said I. (66)

We might imagine that the middle-class leadership, quite ironically, had a similar reaction to Waugh's use of Standard English—they certainly had a lukewarm response to

Waugh's Standard-English literary offerings. The Club was keen to have Waugh fit the mold of the representative Lancashire man, even though he effectively transcended his class by educating himself—he even learned Latin—and working in highly literate occupations, as both a compositor and a secretary for the Lancashire Public School Association. Waugh used his personas strategically, if never completely comfortably, to afford himself popularity and credibility both on stage during his public readings and off.³⁵

To perform “representative Lancashire man,” one must choose the appropriate variety of speech, one marked by masculinity. The gendered binary of the feminine speech of the South and the middle classes versus the masculine speech of the Northern working-classes was often evoked by the Lancashire advocates.³⁶ Brierley argued:

The main features of the Lancashire idiom are its ruggedness, and its contrast with the smooth speech, not always grammatical, nor pointed, of our drawing-rooms; and to exterminate the character that cherishes it, by depriving it of the originality that attaches to it, would be a social misfortune. It is essential to the variety and vitality of civilized life as the seasons are to the fructification of the earth. (“The Lancashire Dialect.”

409)

Here Brierley contrasts masculine ruggedness of the Lancashire dialect with the feminized smoothness of Standard English, spoken by the middle classes of the South *and* the North. Brierley is careful to anticipate any argument that would frame the

³⁵ Sales of Waugh's printed works were often fueled by his public performances.

³⁶ One especially interesting paper given at the Manchester Literary Club on 4 March 1878 conjectures that words “absorbed by the English, to their almost complete exclusion from the French language” are those that have a “bold, manly character” (Leonard D. Ardill, “Obsolete French Words” 202).

dichotomy in terms of grammatical correctness, articulateness, or civility; he is quick to point out that drawing-room speech is not always “grammatically correct, nor pointed” and ties the Lancashire dialect to “civilized life.” Brierley redefines “proper” speech for his own use and proves that dialect and civility are not antithetical. Indeed, correct and proper speech, as defined by Brierley and his social network, is antithetical to “polite” speech, which is marked as both middle class and effeminate. Later in this lecture, Brierley suggests that the “strong masculine nature of the dialect helps us to preserve [its] character; without which I am afraid we might descend to the use of weak-tea English, as expressionless as the face without its central adornment or a landscape without mountains” (410). The image of a “simpering madam,” to borrow Brierley’s words, is conjured here and this characterization was used by the Lancashire advocates to counter the idea that the Standard English of the middle classes indexed civility and respectability.

In Waugh’s “Shaving, Please?”, for example, Nice Tommy, “the polite village barber,” (235) is represented as speaking Standard English exclusively; his name, occupation and speech all mark him as middle class and effeminate. In this story, it is Tommy who is the bumbling comic character; he nicks the dialect speaker Tulip’s chin not once but twice and replies, “Thank you,” to nearly everything, whether it makes good linguistic sense to or not. For example, when Tulip responds to Tommy’s observation that “it is some time since I shaved you before, sir!” with “Ay, it is; an’ thou wouldn’t ha’ shaved me now if I could ha’ gotten onybody else to do it!” Tommy replies, “Thank you!...Let me see, aren’t you cousin to the sexton at the old church?” (236). To add insult to injury, Tulip replies, “Never thee mind whether I am or not!”, to which Tommy’s

singular reply is, “Thank you!” Tommy’s constant refrain could be read as his failure to perform “polite” English—he relies on “Thank you” to index politeness, but his results in his being read as foolish. Tulip’s response to Tommy’s linguistic ineptitude illustrates this:

“Look at these shoon o’ mine!”

“Yes; they’re a fine pair! Thank you!”

“Ay; but thou’ll give o’er thankin’ me if thou gets a crack with ’em.”

(236).

Later Tulip advises Tommy to mind his work, not his speech: “Let’s have less o’ thi ornamental talk; an’ get for’ad wi’ thi shavin’. Thou’rt not one o’ those chaps that can manage two jobs at once” (237). It is clear from this exchange that the type of self-improvement valued by Lancashire men does not involve “improving” one’s speech, at least not toward Standard English. Waugh’s depiction of Tulip is not without caricature, however. Tulip’s violent reactions to Tommy’s attempts at conversation, not to mention his comic name, evoke the familiar clownish portrayals of Lancashire folk in the works of Tim Bobbin. Though, as Vicinus points out, Waugh “widen[ed] the range of acceptable subject matter for dialect writing” (*The Ambiguities of Self-Help* 43), he does not go as far as Brierley, who uses Lancashire dialect in fresh ways that are relevant for the present, even though he plays the role of the handloom weaver, a symbol of the past.

Brierley’s negotiation of his linguistic personas was in part played out in the space of his alter ego, Ab-o’th’-Yate. “Owd Ab,” as he was affectionately called, was a handloom weaver, like Brierley himself before his foray into literature, whose approach to issues was meant to reflect the point of view of the working man. Many of Ab’s

stories were published in *Ben Brierley's Journal* and, Beetham points out, “the regular monologues written in the persona of Ab came to define the *Journal* and were its most distinctive and popular feature” (“Ben Brierley’s Journal” 80). Indeed, Ab became so popular in his own right that some readers did not realize that he and Brierley were one and the same. The editor of *Ab-o’-th’-Yate Sketches and Other Short Stories* (1896), James Dronsfield, remembers an encounter he had with one such reader:

I was much amused some time ago when talking with a man who was stranger to me, about the merits of Lancashire authors. He was inclined to be rather critical. He was an admirer he said, of Edwin Waugh’s songs [...]. He also admired Ben Brierley’s songs [...] but he wound up his enthusiasm by saying—‘Yo’ may talk abeawt Edwin Waugh and Ben Brierley! but, for real Lancashire wit and humour, ‘Ab-o’th’-Yate’ bangs ’em boath.’ He was not aware that ‘Owd Ab’ and ‘Ben’ were synonymous. To place ‘Owd Ab’ at the head of his contemporaries in this fashion was rather a flattering compliment to Ben Brierley. (vii)

To place ‘Owd Ab’ at the head of his contemporaries is also to place the Lancashire dialect, and the qualities it indexes, ahead of Standard English. This is a point I will not belabor here—as I discussed it at length in the previous chapter—but it is important to note the fundamental difference between narratives published under the name Brierley and those published under *Ab-o’th’-Yate*. While Brierley’s stories and sketches are replete with dialogue in the Lancashire dialect they are narrated in Standard English. In contrast, the majority of Ab’s narratives are told entirely in the Lancashire dialect.³⁷ As I

³⁷ As Vicinus points out, *Ab-o’th’-Yate in Yankeeland* is largely narrated in Standard English; only letters from Ab to his wife are represented in the Lancashire dialect.

discuss further in a later section, these differences in narration result in disparate images of Lancashire. Though Waugh's Besom Ben character and Brierley's Ab are often mentioned in concert as representing the authors' alter egos, only Ab represents the Lancashire man of the present. Waugh's Besom Ben stories are set thirty years in the past—and a rural past to boot—while Ab's tales are decidedly modern. Ab may be a handloom weaver—a profession that had died out by the 1850s—but his stories are all set in the present and his commentaries are germane to contemporary issues concerning the working-classes of the county.

Defying Literary Tradition

In 1936, when asked if she thought dialect was a drawback, the Lancashire film star Gracie Fields (1898-1979) replied, "From my own experience—no! I say this with emphasis, because without my dialect my performances would not be and would never have been so funny" (qtd. in *A Lancashire Garland* xxv). Fields adds that she would "run miles" to see the Music Hall performer George Formby, Senior (1875-1921), whose "quaint, quivering dialect," she credits with making him "the successful comedian he was" (xxvi). Though regional dialects, as I have shown, have expressive qualities that exceed that of humor, when their positive attributes are considered, the ability of Northern dialects to bring a smile to an interlocutor's face is what is commonly offered up as evidence. "How many Lancashire men," to again quote Gracie Fields, "going to London, make friends because people love to hear their dialect?" (xxvi). Dialects, and Northern varieties especially, seem to have the ability to both humor and comfort audiences of both insiders and outsiders. Yet, an outsider Fields is not—she is

Lancastrian. Nevertheless, her assessment of the Lancashire dialect is limited to its humor and “quaintness.”

Fields’s and subsequent generations are the inheritors of a long-standing perception of Northern dialects as capable of little else but exciting humor in audiences that, though not originating in the nineteenth century, was perpetuated, quite ironically, by that century’s advocates of regional dialects. Even when commending Brierley for his honest portrayals of Lancashire folk, fellow Failsworth-born writer Sim Schofield falls back on familiar terms: “He learned from his own personal experience and daily contact with his class how to depict the *quaint* ways and droll *humour* of the hand-loom weavers, and to give forcible expression to such in their own native tongue and peculiar way” (emphasis added *Papers of the Manchester Literary Club*, vol. 22, 505). Brierley himself falls into a similar pattern in his lecture on the Lancashire dialect, given to the Manchester Literary Club in 1883. After commenting on the dialect’s “ruggedness,” he goes on to discuss popular novels and what makes them so:

The most popular of our novels owe their popularity to the dialect speaking characters. What would Scott’s *Antiquary* have been with the quaint philosophizings of Jonathan Oldbuck? [...] How often would we have re-read the *Pickwick Papers* of Dickens had it not been for the presence of the pair of Wellers? How could we have laughed by the way in travelling with Martin Chuzzlewit, if we had not dropped in to see Mrs. Gamp and her friends? (“The Lancashire Dialect” 409)

Here Brierley's comments support the notion that dialect is the main attraction of many a narrative, but his comments also reinforce the stereotypes that dialect equates with quaintness and humour and is spoken only by minor characters.

Yet, as I mention above, Brierley asserts that he has endeavored to thwart stereotypes in his own work. In his "Some Phases of Lancashire Life", Brierley ponders how outsiders have "got it into their heads that the natives of Lancashire are only a degree removed from brute creation." "It cannot be," Brierley continues, "from personal contact with them, or from any deep study of their character" (205). Indeed, it is likely that the idea "got into their heads" via persistent caricatures. Brierley would like to assure the nation that for every fictional clown and brute put forth in pages of literature there is a factual scholar and civilized man who stands in the flesh. Brierley illustrates the various ways in which the Lancashire man has improved himself over the years. He offers as evidence a "number of youths" who "pursued their studies within the sound of the looms," and went on to become millowners, a retired superintendent of police, a Town Councillor; the Thorley family, who became eminent musicians and violin makers; and John Wolfenden, who "was reputed to be the greatest mathematician of his time" (208, 209).³⁸ Brierley quotes the latter at length, further illustrating the importance of language to Lancashire identity. Wolfenden may have been the greatest mathematician of his time, but he was also a representative Lancashire man. At the death-bed of the father of one of his pupils, whom he tutored gratuitously, Wolfenden claims the status of martyr and saint for the poverty-stricken dying man: "For t' lift one poor mite of a bein' more helpless than he wur; to do unto others more than he'd done for him he's clemmed

³⁸ It is not surprising that Brierley chooses handloom weavers to valorize; as I mention above, Brierley was a handloom weaver himself, but even more than that the handloom weaver came to represent, as Vicinus (1975) points out, "all that was valued from the past and was disappearing" (49).

hissel' to death. You may turn up your e'en, an' look shocked; but what I tell yo's true. Jo's bin clemmed to death" (209). Most interesting of Wolfenden's homily is his use of the Lancashire dialect word *clem*, which, as I show in the previous chapter, has a special resonance. *Clem*'s effects are twofold: it elevates the man's starvation to the status of martyrdom and, as a distinct marker of Lancashire speech, indexes the speaker as a representative Lancashire man. Wolfenden's forthrightness, canniness, and tenderness—he “can smooth the pillow of affliction with the gentleness of a mother” (206)—further defies negative constructions of Lancashire masculinity.

During his 21 March 1885 testimonial, after denouncing Tim Bobbin, Brierley defends his characterization of Lancashire folk:

In my literary creations I have not marshalled a lot of dummies before the public. There is not one that is upholstered—not one in whose composition the presence of the least stuffing can be detected. (Hear, hear.) They are men and women as I have know them in life—never been set up for angels, nor degraded by being posed as bigger fools than can be found elsewhere. (“Mr. Ben Brierley”)

Here Brierley strategically stresses the hyper-realism of his portrayals. Indeed, it would hardly do for the Lancashire advocates to have the representation of Lancashire culture dismissed as artificial. In an 1883 lecture to the Manchester Literary Club Brierley even goes so far as to claim he is simply “the setter” of his observations of actual Lancashire speech. “I must beg you to understand,” he explains, “that these sayings are not purely my own invention” (“The Lancashire Dialect” 404). Conscious that examples taken from his own narrative works might be construed as fabrications and more exemplary of his

own creativity than of the wit and wisdom of the Lancashire man, Brierley assures his audience of Manchester intelligentsia that rural working-class folk of Lancashire are the true authors of a language so rich in metaphor.

Brierley was keenly aware of the social standing of the Lancashire dialect and its speakers. As I mention at the close of the previous chapter, the Lancashire dialect was not as popular with Victorian readers as was Lowland Scots. In his “Goosegrove ‘Penny Readings,’” published under the pseudonym Sylvanus Sunshine in the November 1871 issue of *Ben Brierley’s Journal*, Brierley reveals the double standard of placing the Scots dialect above that of Lancashire. When the town’s new “puritanical” clergyman, the Reverend Stiltford Priggins, takes charge of the program, “all humorous selections, and especially the Lancashire pieces were struck out, and very tedious ones substituted” (294). The Reverend then changes the structure of admission fees, doing away with the “threepenny” seats because, as Brierley explains, “the snobbery of Goosegrove would not hear of any intermediate class. The step from themselves to the lower order must be an abrupt one; so we had sixpenny ‘grands’ and penny ‘commons’” (294). In a final blow to the local flavor of the readings, the Reverend assigns the position of chairman to “Mayor Macksarkin,” an Aberdeen man whose taste in entertainment runs in the vein of “strong national feeling” (294). Brierley quotes the Mayor’s Scots dialect at length; his first words to the audience are ones condemning the Lancashire dialect:

It has been remarked by many people that I hae met, that on the twa privous occasions we have had oor muckle o’ the Lancashire dialect. Noo I may tell ye that I am apoused to a dialect, an’ mair especially the Lancasheere; an’ by my ain adveighs the committee hae resoalved to hae

no mair dialuctal readings given on this platforom. Iverything must be in proaper Henglish, sic as is written by our Scoatts, oor Burnses, an' oor Shaksperes; mair parteclarly the first twa. The same spirit shall gueide us in the selaction of the music,—nae 'Cam hame to thy childer an' a';' 'The deil's i' this bonnet sae braw;' nor ither Lancasheere sangs o' the same ilk; but we'll hae sic classical sangs as—

'Doon i' the glen by the lown o' the trees,

Lies o weel-thecket bield, like a bike for the bees.'

and—

'I coft a stane o'haselock woo',

To mak'a coat for Johnny o't.' (295)

In Brierley's representation, the Mayor not only disapproves of the Lancashire dialect, he cites two of Waugh's most popular songs as the main offenders, "Come Whoam to Thi Childer an' Me" [Come Home to Your Children and Me] and "The Dule's i' this Bonnet o' Mine." [The Devil's in this Bonnet of Mine]. The Mayor would rather hear his countrymen, Scott and Burns, as well as England's most revered author, Shakespeare, because of their "proaper Henglish"--while his *h*-insertion belies his own anxiety about and deviation from England's perceived standard. Brierley has one of the "pennies" in the audience respond to the mayor's recitation of James Mayne's "Maggy Maclane" (1835) and Burns's "The Cardin' O't," (1795) with the question, "Dun yo' co' that English?" [Do you call that English?] (295). "The sangs are British classics," the mayor answers, "an' every Briton ought to understand his ain language." Another penny replies, "Talk gradely, an' then we con understandd yo'," a fitting response that includes the

Lancashire dialect term *gradely*, defined by *A Glossary of the Lancashire Dialect* as ‘decent, becoming, proper, good, right’. The audience members’ retorts question the premise that the Scots dialect is in any way better suited to represent Britain than their own “gradely” Lancashire variety. In this way, Brierley challenges the preference shown to the Scots dialect and its literature over that of Lancashire. Why, Brierley asks, via his defiant audience, is Burns any more deserving of national esteem than Lancashire’s own Waugh?

Following the Scottish portion of the program, the Reverend Stiltford Priggins, a “Cambridge Scholar,” treats the audience to a Shakespearian reading, “Othello’s Apology,” his rendition of which could not be more removed from the animated readings of the likes of Brierley or Waugh, with “his personal bearing being so stiffly precise as to provoke the suggestion that his movements were regulated by a kind of intellectual clock-work” (295). Stiltford Priggins’s very name, with its double reference to the formally pompous, and his “waxy appearance” mark him as a comic character, but when he begins to recite from *Othello*, it becomes exceedingly clear that the joke is on him: “Mowest powtent, gwave, and wevewend Seignyaws. / My vewy nowble and appvoved good mawstaws [...]” (295). Laden with /r/-/w/ substitution, Priggins’s speech echoes that of Thackeray’s upper-class “Snobs” (1848), Dickens’s Lord Mutanhead (*The Pickwick Papers* 1836-7), and other satirized mouthpieces and imitators of the aristocracy from Victorian fiction.³⁹

³⁹ *The Pickwick Papers*, incidentally, was the piece of fiction that first stirred Brierley’s interest in becoming a writer (*Papers of the Manchester Literary Club*, vol. 22, 496). While Lord Mutanhead is a member of the aristocracy, the Rev. Priggins is obviously middle class; his speech marks him as both ridiculous and pretentious. Raymond Chapman (1994) remarks that by the 1870s such markers of aristocratic speech had become hallmarks of “middle-class affectation” (173).

The recitation's humor, however, is lost on the middle-class "gloves" in the audience, who "went into ecstasies of delight" (295). Brierley's commentary on their reaction is telling: "They were evidently entering upon a new era of Penny Readings, since they had been favoured with eloquence so masterly; but whether they were not more captivated by the gentleman's hair and whiskers, and to the unlearned ear the insufferable drawl that had marked his delivery, than they were with his general interpretation of the great dramatist, may safely be left for less pretentious neighbors to settle" (295). This particular story reveals the underlying class tensions of the time between those who paid 6d. and those who paid 1d., whom Brierley steadfastly considered his true followers. The very obviousness of the satire, however, softens any danger that his middle-class readers might feel offended; Brierley's savvy middle-class readers would not identify with the pretentious "gloves," who interpret Priggins' "insufferable drawl" as "masterly eloquence." Rather, readers of all classes who located an "authentic" Lancashire in the dialect readings that were so unceremoniously stricken from the program would identify with their "less pretentious neighbors," who read the comic scene accurately. Despite what Brierley ironically calls their "unlearned ears," the working-class "pennies" in the audience "appeared for some moments to be held under the spell of indecision, and seemed to ask each other by their looks as to whether the reading they had listened to with such extraordinary patience was intended to be sentimental, pathetic, or comic" (295). After ruminating on the matter, they decide on the latter and burst into applause, "intermingled with a considerable dash of merriment" (295). In this way, Brierley portrays the working-class Lancashire folk as astute and

discerning observers of both the nuances and indexicality of speech and the distinctions of genre.

As Brierley so boldly argued in that March 1885 meeting of the Manchester Literary club, his depiction of working-class characters could not be more different from those of Tim Bobbin (John Collier). In Collier's *Tummus and Meary*, as Hollingworth points out, a great distance is "established between the reader and the narrator Tummus, who naively reveals his lack of common sense and his gullibility in his dialogue with Meary" ("The Beginnings of the Regional Novel" 6). As it is clear to both the narrator and the reader that Priggins's rendition of Shakespeare is comic, the "pennies" are aligned with them, rather than distanced from them, as in Collier's works. The way in which Collier casts the Lancashire dialect is anything but flattering to Tummus or to actual speakers of the dialect. "[Tummus's] use of dialectal language," Hollingworth explains, "is one of the devices by which this distance is created. Not only does Tummus lack common sense, he lacks an intelligible means of communication, and can become even more pathetically amusing to those who 'speak much better English'" (6). In Brierley's "Goosegrove," however, the use of the Lancashire dialect brings outsiders closer to the "pennies" in the audience, as it simultaneously recasts what is thought of as "much better English."

Portraying the working classes as prepared to interpret the penny reading as sentimental or pathetic illustrates that their taste in entertainment goes beyond the comic—they laugh because the form Priggins's speech is incongruous with its solemn content, not because they do not recognize other genres. Brierley's portrayal further supports the notion that the Lancashire folk are not accurately represented by the rude

variety of comedy found in *Tim Bobbin*, a notion he suggests outright in one of his lectures to the Manchester Literary Club: “The idea of the adaptability of the dialect to pathetic description does not appear to have been entertained by our earlier Lancashire writers. It is certain that *Tim Bobbin* never attempted it; [...] But since that time the sentimental has entered much into our social life; and there are now scraps of pathos to be picked up here and there that, like bits of humour, only require to be arranged in a form of setting” (“The Lancashire Dialect” 407). Again, Brierley asserts that he is merely the setter, not the author, of pathetic narrative and dialogue rendered in the Lancashire dialect; he makes it clear that the Lancashire man is capable of sentimental and pathetic thought. His words indicate that he is interested in representing contemporary Lancashire, as he observes it day to day.

For the remainder of this section, I will further explore the way in which Brierley makes Lancashire tradition and dialect relevant for the present, analyzing both the content and form of both his and Waugh’s narratives. Though Waugh’s “The Lancashire Volunteers” and Brierley’s “Ab-o’th’-Yate in London” are similar in that their intradiegetic narrators are sent to London and report back their experiences to a Lancashire audience, they differ in remarkable ways. First, as I mention above, Waugh’s “Owd Cronies,” in which “The Lancashire Volunteers” is embedded, is set in the distant past, the year 1800. The story is brimming with nostalgia; indeed, the narration begins not in 1800, but in Lancashire ancient past: “Ancient Lancashire was a comparatively roadless wild; and its sparse population—scattered about in quaint hamlets and isolated farm-nooks—were a rough, bold, and independent race, clinging tenaciously to the language, manners, and traditions of their fore-elders; and despising all the rest of the

world, of which they knew next to nothing” (196). This hyper-nostalgia plays on the language of cultural and linguistic purity so important to Waugh and his admirers, conjuring a time before the invasion of the Normans and their contaminating customs and language. The actual narrative does not begin until chapter two—the preface and chapter one are more of a history lesson—and the favorite embedded tale “The Lancashire Volunteers,” does not appear until chapter eight, the story’s final chapter. The form of “Owd Cronies” is reminiscent of Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, with sundry storytellers exchanging yarns and insults about each other’s abilities at narration, and two of the chapters boast epigraphs from the father of English literature himself.⁴⁰ These formal similarities are matched by the stories’ content; both tales deride and defy pretension in a comic fashion.

Waugh’s tale, though valorizing of the Northern traditions, still relies on nostalgia and comedy for effect, while Brierley’s narrative, told in a series of letters from Ab to his wife, Sarah, takes place in the present and, though quite humorous at times, introduces the dimension of pathos in making its political statements. In Ab’s fifth letter to his wife, “Hyde Park. In the Streets. Lost,” his commentary on church music, London’s poor, and clothing manufacturing constructs him as a representative Lancashire man. Clearly, he is a shrewd observer of what is deemed beautiful and unjust. Upon witnessing the social set take a turn around “Rotton Row,” Ab protests:

Would this be goin’ on if every loom wur stopt, an’ every tool laid by?
[...] that dress ut’s just wiped th’ slutch off th’ nose o’ mi clog has had
tears on it! Aw con see th’ spots neaw, an’ crumbs o’ dry bread han fo’ en

⁴⁰ Chapter seven begins with a stanza from the *Tale of Sir Thopas* and chapter eight begins with a stanza from the *Cook’s Tale*.

on it o'er th' makkin, an' happen while it wur bein' woven childer wur
watchin' for th' cutmark, so as they could ha' summat t' ate when it wur
finished [...]. (71)

[Would this be going on if every loom were stopped, and every tool laid
aside? . . . that dress that has just wiped the dirt off the nose of my clog
has had tears on it! I can see the spots now, and crumbs of dry bread have
fallen on it while it was being made, and perhaps while it was being
woven children were watching for the cutmark, so they might have
something to eat when it was finished. . . .]

There is not the least bit of the comic here, and the imagery of the “finery” wiping the
grime of Ab’s clog is at once poignant, pointed, and elegant.

In Waugh’s “The Lancashire Volunteers,” the North is shown as literally feeding
the nation, but it is done through comic analogy, while Brierley’s Ab depicts the actual
people and the material objects that are both literal and symbolic representations of the
classes. The woman’s dress at once symbolizes her class standing (and corresponding
obliviousness) and the literal workers of the North who constructed it. The clog, a
wooden-soled shoe, is the distinctive symbolic image of the Northern working classes,
but describing the dress as wiping the “slutch” of its nose puts the two material objects in
contact and makes class and regional inequalities tangible. That it is Ab alone that
notices the physical contact speaks to the obliviousness of the women to either the
“slutch” or “tears” or starvation that mark her dress, and Ab’s keen awareness of
economic disparity.

Indeed, Ab is so impassioned by the display of feckless frippery in “Rotton Row” that he doesn’t realize he has begun to express his views aloud. When passers by begin gathering about him and one exclaims, “Some great man in cog!”, Ab mishears him, not recognizing the clipping of “incognito” and thinks the man says “in clogs” until he “yerd it whispered agen by others. What wur th’ meeanin’ on’t aw dunno’ know. They han sich queer words i’ Lunnon” (72-73). The auditory begin to conjecture as to who the “great man” might be: “P’waps Tom Carwlyle!” and “Mo’ pwobably John Bwight!” (73). The humour in this passage is undeniable, but for the Lancashire audience it is at once humorous and flattering. Again we see the /w/-intrusion that signals humour, this time in the speech of upper-class Southerners, flattering Lancastrians who are using “much better English.” Additionally, for Ab, a handloom weaver, to be mistaken for Thomas Carlyle or John Bright is quite a compliment; the latter is all the more fitting, for Bright hailed from Rochdale—the birthplace of Waugh—and was instrumental in the formation of the Anti-Corn Law League. The mistaken designation of Ab as a “great man in clogs” is an accurate one, then, for though it is unlikely that Bright would have worn clogs—he owned a mill rather than worked in one—he is still representative of the North and its interests. One might argue, as I think Brierley does, that Ab, a handloom weaver, is a better representative of Lancashire, its traditions, language, and its interests; a great man in clogs, indeed.

Although Waugh, as we have seen, promoted the Lancashire dialect, most of his stories are mediated by a third-person narrator who narrates in Standard English. A few of Waugh’s tales are formatted as if they were written for the stage, but, even in these cases, the stage directions are given in Standard English. In other words, all of Waugh’s

tales are framed in some way by Standard English, as if Waugh believed that his readers needed an intermediary who could introduce them to various, nearly forgotten features of Lancashire's past. We might ask what difference it makes that Waugh's Besom Ben is narrated and Brierley's Ab narrates himself. Recall Ben's poignant musings on his wife and children and their worry over his absence. The third-person extradiegetic narrator tells us what Ben is feeling rather than allowing Ben to express it in his own words. A few pages later, we get a glimpse of Ben's feelings as told by himself, but the mode in which they are expressed detracts from their poignancy: "Eh dear! eh dear! . . . An' I remember him cryin' . . . Ay, an' another time . . . An' our Billy cried . . . An' our Betty flote me . . ." (33). We've seen that dialect can convey pathos, but what Ben's rambling speech conveys, with its frequent ellipses, "Eh, dear o' me"s, and phrases beginning with "An'" (and), is that Ben is not terribly articulate. Ben is upset at this point in the narrative, and his staccato speech is meant to reflect this, but juxtaposed with the narrator's sophisticated style it is rendered slightly comic. While the emotional register of Ben's speech might evoke pathos, it is not left unmediated to do narrative work on its own.

Waugh creates an odd disjuncture, whereby the framing narrator seems to live in the Victorian present with its educated speech, moralisms, and sentimentality, while Besom Ben lives in a past that lies just beyond the actual experience of living people. And while Ben lives a simple life, he is still a spokesperson for values most admired by Waugh's Victorian readers, rather than by his ostensible contemporaries, who might have preferred the more ribald "Tummus and Meary." Like Scott's novels, Waugh's short stories offer a constructed past that reflects the values and concerns of the present.

Waugh's persistent framing of Ben with Standard English narration adds to the nostalgia of the Besom Ben tales; the narrator acts as a guide for the reader of Lancashire's industrial present to a simpler rural past, a time before migration and universal education changed the linguistic landscape of Lancashire. The reader is, therefore, distanced from Ben temporally, narratively, and linguistically. Not only do the narrator and reader know better than Ben--we discern imminent trouble that Ben is blind to--they use much "better" English. Implicitly, Waugh is able to convey both the strengths of the family-oriented Ben, and what his readers have lost in a present-day world that is materially better off but less rooted in its past. Ironically, Waugh's repeated preference for a lost countryside highlights the central dilemma faced by every nineteenth-century dialect writer, namely how to be true to a perceived authentic dialect drawn from the past while still expressing current values.

Finally, when Ben is given a voice with which to narrate, he shows that he is not adept at metaphor as, say the representative Lancashire man, and his interlocutor, his childhood friend Randal, is quick to point this out to him. When Ben explains that "Sneck wur hearkenin' at th' lock-hole; an' as Billy flounder't up an' deawn i'th inside, like a bloint bull in a wasp-neest", Randal cries, "Stop, Ben! Not a bull in a wasp-neest. It wouldn't howd it, mon" (299). Ben goes on to use the simile of Billy and his wife stumbling about in the dark "like two rattons [rats] in a pepper-box," which provokes a similar response from Randal: "Theer thae art again. Who ever yerd o' rattons in a pepper-box?" (300). When Ben becomes frustrated with Randal's interruptions, he asks that Randal "Let me get done wi' my tale, for God's sake!" Randal complies, but not without reservation, "Well, on witho, then," he replies, "an' blunder at it thi own road"

(300). Ben's metaphors are certainly comic in their ridiculousness, but Randal interprets them as "blunders" and sees fit to correct him.

In contrast to Ben, Brierley's Ab is capable of wielding a pointed and colorful metaphor; while in London, for example, he describes care-worn and dust-ridden working women as looking "as if they'd hired the'rsel's eaut for mops" (23). Because Ab narrates himself, absent is the sense that he is incapable of expressive linguistic feats or elaborate narration. Rather than create distance between character and reader, as Waugh does with his Besom Ben stories, Brierley puts us in Ab's shoes, or more appropriately, his clogs. The reader sometimes understands situations that Ab himself does not, but, even though Ab runs into his own fair share of trouble, the joke is never entirely on him. In his letter home, "Eating a Bootjack," Ab has trouble getting a meal in a London hotel because he misinterprets the waiter's suggestion that he consult the "bill of fare" as a request for payment. Such a miscommunication is, of course, a source of humor. But alongside this humor is a strong pride in Lancashire culture and values. The waiter is as unfamiliar with "frog-i'th'-holes" [beef dumplings] as Ab is with the bill of fare. Later in the letter, Ab is made the source of fun by two Londoners and the hotel waiter because he is not familiar with claret, champagne, and ice cream. These items are all imports from the continent and are not only unknown to the working classes of Lancashire but also unimportant to them. Ab's letters home place emphasis on what is valued in the North rather than poke fun at provincial ignorance.

Brierley, perhaps less ambitious than Waugh, succeeds in the difficult art of constructing a complex, modern dialect speaker. Not only able to narrate his own tales, Ab is also able to represent characters' voices in different dialects, including Standard

English, proving that he was in command of that nationally important dialect, but not giving it precedence over his native tongue. Ab's relationship to the Lancashire dialect is illustrated during his visit to London, where he encounters a Lancashire friend, Sam, whose amorous designs on a London lady lead him to masquerade as a well-to-do soldier, complete with Standard English speech. In "Going to the Play," Sam convinces Ab, too, to pass himself off as a soldier, a "Lieutenant Abrams," so that he might accompany the young lady's chaperone-aunt to the theater, and, though Ab complies, he is uncomfortable with ruse, clothes, speech, and all. When Ab sees himself dressed in finery, he explains that

aw couldno' talk gradely Lancashire English if aw'd bin pounced to it!

After aw'd squozzen mi feet into a pair o' boots ut aw could see mi face in, aw coe'd misel' finished off, an' aw looked at mi poor owd clogs ut hung the'r ears so mournful i'th' corner, like two owd friends ut one's gotten too preaud to spake to, an' aw gan way to three or four tears. (85)

[I could not talk proper Lancashire English if I had been kicked into doing it! After I had squeezed my feet into a pair of boots in which I could see my face, I called myself finished off, and I looked at my poor old clogs that hung their ears so mournfully in the corner, like two old friends to whom one's become too proud to speak, and I gave way to three or four tears.]

Here Ab comments on the relationship between his clothes and language and his identity; seeing himself dressed as a swell momentarily inhibits his ability to speak "gradely." This realization, coupled with the sight of his clogs, personified to represent his

Lancashire speech community, brings tears to his eyes. Ab soon recovers, however, and during dinner with the young lady and her aunt--though Sam “began a-talkin’ as fine as a pa’son”--Ab regains his Lancashire speech (88). When asked what he’d like from the table, Ab replies, “Aw’d as lief have a buttercake an’ a scallion as owt. If yo’n no scallions, a two-thre o’ those t’other yarbs ’ud do as weel” (91). His response that he’d take a few herbs if they had no spring onions causes some confusion, and Sam must ameliorate the situation in terms fashionable Londoners will understand. Ab narrates:

Th’ owd lady begged mi pardon again, an’ aw forgan her a second time.

Then Sam put his motty in an’ said--

[The old lady begged my pardon again, and I forgave her a second time.

Then Sam put his word in and said--]

“My gallant friend has been so much in contact with the enemy, that his language has become tainted with their’s. That is the reason you don’t understand him. *Scallion* is Abyssinian for *love*, and *yarbs* is the native word for *dear*. I told you that Lieutenant Abrams was well up in matters of gallantry, as you’ll find before he leaves for his seat in Lancashire.” (91-92)

Of course, *scallion* and *yarbs* are English words, borrowed from Anglo-French during the Middle English period. The joke here is on the London ladies, who do not recognize their own language. My point here is not that the London ladies would necessarily recognize both words as part of Standard English, for only the former, *scallion*, was still in mainstream use by the nineteenth century. What I am suggesting is that Brierley is taking to task those who know *only* Standard English, the people of that same ilk George Eliot

chastises in her 1872 letter to philologist Walter William Skeat. Of those who might balk at her heavy use of the Derbyshire dialect in *Adam Bede* she writes: “one is not bound to respect the lazy obtuseness or snobbish ignorance of people who do not care to know more of their native tongue than the vocabulary of the drawing-room and the newspaper” (qtd. in Skeat viii). Through his alter-ego, Brierley not only broadens the uses of Lancashire dialect to include pathos and sentimentality, he effectively challenges the superiority of Standard English and the class and region it represents and valorizes the speech and character of the Lancashire man.

While the Lancashire dialect had the benefit of philology, not to mention the Manchester Literary Club, to aid in its legitimization, the Cockney dialect of London had no such support. In the following chapter, I explore the representation of the Cockney dialect in Dickens’s *Pickwick Papers* (1836-37). Comedy is central to *Pickwick Papers*, as it is the Cockney stereotype. However, as I will show, the character of Sam Weller, *Pickwick*’s Cockney hero, stands apart from the usual depictions of working-class Londoners in 1830s literature.

Chapter 3

“Some Write Well, But He Writes Weller”:

Pickwick Papers and the New Cockney

Who caus'd the smiles of rich and poor?
Who made a hit so slow, but sure?
And rose the worth of literature?

Sam Weller.

--“Sam Weller’s Adventures!”, from
The London Singer’s Magazine (1838-9)

In his 1912 study of Cockney life, the novelist Edwin Pugh (1874-1939) transcribes a conversation he claims to have overheard outside an inn in the London suburbs between “an aged gaffer” from Lancashire and “the average Cockney.” “You poor Cockneys don’t know what it is to have a home, you don’t,” the Lancashire man explains, “You haven’t got what I call any proper pride in your birthplace” (72). The Cockney’s lack of “proper pride” in his birthplace seems pitiable to the Lancashire man whose regional pride so strongly informs his identity: “You’d as lief be born in Houndsditch as Camden Town” (72), he tells the Cockney, using the Lancashire dialect word *lief*,⁴¹ though he has lived in London since his youth. “And as for sticking up for Camberwell,” he continues, “say, against Peckham, as a Salford man could stick up for Salford against Owdham...! Fact is, as I said afore, you don’t know what it is to have a home” (72). The aged gaffer’s ties to Lancashire, or more specifically, Salford, though attenuated, are still manifest in his point of view and in his speech. The “poor Cockney,” on the other hand, has no such ties: “‘Ome!,” he exclaims, “Did you say ‘ome’? I’ve

⁴¹ *lief*, adv. soon, in the sense of willing or preferably. *A Glossary of the Lancashire Dialect* (1875).

had forty bloomin' 'omes" (73). For him, "'ome" is wherever he hangs his hat, and as for his birthplace, he claims he was born in "Little 'Ell, Somers Town. Maxim Street, I think" (73), yet Little Hell and Somerstown are separate boroughs, located in different areas of the city. Not only is the Cockney not able to "stick up for" his home borough, he's not even sure where it is. He places little importance on the place of his birth, and though his *h* deletion marks him as hailing from London, it does not carry the same meaning, the same cultural capital as the Lancashire man's use of *lief*.

As we have seen, dialect could be quite useful for authors and readers in helping them cope with their rapidly changing social and linguistic environments. In Lancashire, rural varieties of the dialect—those sought out and captured in "secluded valleys"—were codified in the pages of literature, where they helped Lancastirans make sense of their industrial present. In *Mary Barton* and *Adam Bede*, the Lancashire and Derbyshire dialects lend themselves to be used not only for character development but also for narrative structure. In these novels we see the power of the idea of the authentic speaker at work; the former novel's Job Legh and the latter's Mrs. Poyser emerge as major figures and act as the novels' moral centers; their use of their respective region's traditional dialect not only lends them authenticity but also conjures for readers an ideal rural past, unsullied by industrialization and the railways. While the countryside was being transformed by the growth of industrial towns and devoured by the "Great Land Serpent," the railways, London was experiencing its own radical changes. Between the years of 1800 and 1850, for example, London's population doubled, while its streets experienced the chaos of incessant demolition and construction. Though, as Raymond Williams has shown, each generation has its own idea of "Old England" and what decade

was marked by the most radical of changes, the 1830s stands out as one especially fraught with change. The success of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway (1830) sparked a twenty-year boom in railway construction that effectively changed the way goods were transported and how people traveled. In London the railways increased the already rapid and dramatic changes to the city's population and landscape. But could Londoners draw on the sources of dialect to make sense of their changing world the way that residents of the provinces could? And, if so, which dialects would they call to service? Certainly not the much-maligned Cockney dialect.⁴² Or so it would seem.

While Dickens is perhaps the uncontested master of capturing voices, and especially those of Londoners, those voices are for the most part neither rural nor “authentic.” Indeed, Dickens is best known for his representation of urban speech of London, from the malapropisms of Mrs. Gamp and the “flash” cockneyisms of the Artful Dodger to the failed attempts at genteel speech of the Micawbers. And though his work as a parliamentary reporter (1828-33) honed his already keen ear for voices, most critics agree that Dickens was more interested in characterization than he was in philology. This is not say, however, that Dickens was wholly uninterested in regional and social variation or in accuracy. While I wouldn't go so far as to call Dickens a “sociolinguist,” as Patricia Poussa (1999) does, I find that Q. D. Leavis's (1970) remark about Dickens's “artificial use of dialect” goes too far in the opposite direction (116). Dickens may not have written treatises or lectured on the expressiveness and legitimacy of the regional and social dialects he represented, or contributed to the *English Dialect Dictionary*—he didn't even

⁴² Scholars, most notably Richard W. Bailey (1996) and Lynda Mugglestone (2003), have shown just how stigmatized linguistic features affiliated with Cockney speech became in nineteenth-century Britain. Even more so than speakers of provincial varieties, who might be forgiven for their ignorance of the metropolitan standard, speakers of the Cockney dialect were viewed as “slovenly” and “vulgar,” unwilling or unable to learn “correct” and “proper” English.

employ etymological footnotes, as did Gaskell—but he did understand the social indexicality of speech and, as we shall see, transformed how readers approached the Cockney character and dialect.

By June 1836, when Dickens was writing the fourth number of *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club* (April 1836 - November 1837), he was able to express his dismay at the demise of “the celebrated coaches” and the old inns that once served as their headquarters, “but which have now degenerated into little more than the abiding and booking places of country wagons” (90; no. 4, ch. 10). Dickens sets *Pickwick* less than a decade in the past—the action of the narrative takes place between May 1827 and October 1828—but the narrator, with the nostalgia of only nine years, describes the inns as “ancient hostelries” that must be sought out in “obscurer quarters” and in “secluded nooks,” where “some half dozen [...] have preserved their external features unchanged,” having “escaped alike the rage for public improvement, and the encroachments of private speculation” (90; no. 4, ch. 10). Although Dickens indulges in the kind of social criticism abundant in his later novels in *The Pickwick Papers*, especially in the form of satirizing the legal system, the novel is more heavily steeped in nostalgia than it is in critique, as it harkens back to a simpler, more innocent time, or one that was imagined as such. The language of the above passage, for example, echoes that used by the Lancashire advocates in describing the “secluded valleys” in which provincial dialects were sought out, the inns “still standing with a kind of gloomy sturdiness, amidst the modern innovations which surround them” (90; no. 4, ch. 10). Set in a time before the railways made coaches and the inns that served them obsolete, the world of *Pickwick* can depict the White Hart Inn as marked by a kind of bustling activity. And when we

encounter the novel's most popular character, Mr. Sam Weller, in the courtyard of the White Hart early on that July morning in 1827, he is busy shining boots for the inn's many guests.

Sam, not only the most popular but also the most voluble character in the novel, is not a speaker of a dying rural dialect but rather a modern urban variety of English, Cockney, and he is not so much wise as he is a wisecracker. To the chambermaid's request, for example, "Number twenty-two wants his boots," Sam replies, "Ask number twenty-two, vether he'll have 'em now, or vait till he gets 'em" (91; no. 4, ch. 10). As I will discuss in Part III, the multitude of jest books published under his name attests to Sam's comedic popularity.⁴³ But Sam was far more than a mere "stand-up comedian," as Patricia Ingham (2008) characterizes him ("The Language of Dickens" 129). With Sam, Dickens gives the figure of the Cockney, and the variety of speech associated with him, a kind of knowingness that was particularly appealing to his readers in the 1830s. Sam marks a transition in the social meaning of Cockney character and Cockney speech.

Before Sam Weller, literary Cockneys were typically those bumbling London sportsmen of so many caricatures who blundered their way into the countryside, aiming their rifles at cats and crows. The objects of ridicule from both country folk and the bourgeoisie of the metropolis, these tradesmen turned sportsmen were depicted as out of their geographical and cultural element. Sam, with his physical, mental, and verbal dexterity, couldn't be more different from these maladroit and dimwitted city folk. In fact, in one of the many *Pickwick* plagiarisms, *The Pickwick Comic Almanack* (1838), Sam makes the Cockney sportsman the butt of one of his humorous aphorisms: "I should

⁴³ For example: *Sam Weller. A Journal of Wit and Humour* (1837); *Sam Weller's Scrap Sheet* (1837); *Sam Weller's Pickwick Jest-Book* (1838); *The Pickwick Comic Almanack: Containing Sam Weller's Diary of Fun and Pastime* (1838); *Sam Weller's Budget of Recitations* (1838).

think not, Sir,' said Sam, 'as the Chaffinch said to the Cockney Sportsman, that fired three times without hitting on him'" (5).

In the early part of the nineteenth century, writers and illustrators alike found a profitable vein of representing a two-dimensional Cockney figure. Dickens, still finding his way at the start of his writing career, tried his hand at sketching a different variety, yet still rather flat, Cockney character in his series of essays for London periodicals, later bound as *Sketches by 'Boz'* (1836). At least one reviewer of *Sketches* felt the "fault of the book is the caricature of Cockneyism, of which there is too much. This broad, commonplace sort of thing is unworthy of the author, whose best powers are exercised obviously with great facility on the less hacknied subjects. He shows his strength in bringing out the meaning and interest of objects which would altogether escape the observation of ordinary minds" (*Examiner*, 28 February 1836). Boz's Cockneys are not the sportsmen of so many engravings but rather the working people of London--the cab-drivers and cads who abuse their customers, the charwomen who quarrel in the middle of the street, or the laborers who find recreation only in fighting and "leaning against posts" ("Omnibuses," "The Last Cab-Driver," "Seven Dials"). Readers would have recognized their "types" from, for example, George Cruikshank's *Scraps and Sketches* (1828-32) and *My Sketch Book* (1834-6), and Robert Seymour's *Humorous Sketches* (1834-6). Such types are the object of Boz's observations and the source of readers' amusement only; they do not emerge as the subjects of their own narratives and therefore remain caricatures.

Sam Weller, on the other hand, emerges as not only a round character but also, as many would argue, *Pickwick's* hero. Later in the century, Sam's canny Cockney becomes its own stereotype in the figure of the late-nineteenth-century music-hall

Cockney, but prior to this codification of characteristics, we might view Sam as anything but the “common-place sort of thing” of so many caricatures. On the contrary, Dickens reveals a “meaning and interest” in his Cockney character that was new to the pages of literature. And this is Dickens’s achievement. Dickens may not be entirely accurate in his representation of Cockney speech, but he gives Cockney its linguistic character for the next hundred years. While critics tend to point to the ways in which *Pickwick* looks back to a pre-Railway past or emphasize its universal appeal,⁴⁴ I would like to examine the ways in which the novel is Janus-faced--engaged in looking both forward and back--and ways in which Sam’s character is particularly English. Monod (1968) calls the creation of Sam’s character “Dickens’ greatest triumph in *Pickwick*” and considers Sam “one of the undying figures of literature” (111; 114). He attributes Sam’s longevity to his “universal” appeal: he suggests that Sam’s and his father Tony’s attitude is that of “happy human beings who have never learned doubt” and that that attitude “certainly belongs to the cockney,” but also to the Parisian *gavroche* or *titi*, and “in fact, to every time and country” (112). Although a wide appeal is part of what keeps audiences laughing, I would like to nuance and particularize Sam’s contribution rather than generalize it. The character of Sam Weller is particularly attractive to readers fascinated by and fond of urban life. And while Dickens’s Sam is in some ways indebted to Shakespeare’s Falstaff and Cervantes’s Sancho Panza-- many a critic has drawn the latter comparison--Sam’s particular kind of knowingness is not universal and timeless but rather particularly

⁴⁴ For example, some argue that the novel owes much to the comedic works of the eighteenth century and view it either as its “culmination” (Henkle 117) or as a sanitized version of the more bawdy scenes of Fielding, Smollett, or Sterne (Marcus 1965; 22-24). Frederick Karl (1964) argues that *Pickwick* is nostalgic for “picturesque open roads, amiable villages uncontaminated by smoke, rocking coaches not yet in competition with railroads,” an England that is both “pre-industrial” and “asexual” (115). A.E. Dyson describes the novel as “idyllic” and “timeless” (18).

English, working class, and Victorian. This chapter examines how Dickens accomplished this feat. Part I traces the origins of *Pickwick* and argues that for a novel so ostensibly steeped in nostalgia it is remarkably forward looking. Part II examines the Cockney character and the Cockney dialect in early-nineteenth-century Britain and argues that Sam is *Pickwick's* Cockney hero. Part III explores the afterlife of Sam Weller, just how and why Sam takes on a life of his own beyond the pages of *Pickwick*.

From Hapless Comic to Knowing Educator: The Evolution of *Pickwick*

Unlike Dickens's other novels, *The Pickwick Papers* was not developed from the writer's own ideas, but rather was initiated by illustrator Robert Seymour (1798-1836), who needed a humorous text to accompany his caricatures of Cockney sportsmen, or "Nimrod Club." However, Dickens's text soon outshone its accompanying illustrations: the first number contained four etchings and twenty-four pages of text, but subsequent numbers featured only two etchings and thirty-two pages of text. Some attribute Seymour's suicide (after completing numbers I and II) in part to his being eclipsed by this young writer's "commentary." Dickens was not keen to contribute to the genre, as he explains in the Preface to the 1867 edition of *Pickwick*: "I objected, on consideration, [...] that the idea [caricaturing Cockney sportsmen] was not novel, and had been already much used" (763). Indeed, readers for nearly two decades had enjoyed these figures of fun, such as Mr. Jonquil and his friend Jay, the subjects of a verse narrative, "embellished" with sixteen hand-colored engravings, called *The Cockney Sportsmen* (1822). This pair of "cockneys, one day, / From Barbican went out a sporting," which includes mistaking a cat for a hare, as well as shooting at various farm animals and, most embarrassingly, a weathervane. They nearly drown in a ditch, are chased by a farmer,

and tossed about by a bull, before “hobbling” back to town. The closing stanza of the final vignette serves as both a joke for more genteel readers and as a caution to would-be nimrods: “After all their disasters, / They find they want plasters, / To cure all their bruises and pains; / But the doctor with pill, / And his most profound skill, / Will never recover their brains.”

The adventures of the witless Jonquil and Jay sold for 1s 6d in 1822. In the following decade, Seymour would find success with 3d plates depicting discrete scenes of Cockney life, sporting and social caricatures mocking their failed attempts at gentility. When these plates were reprinted in volume form in 1841, the commentary of “Crowquill,” Alfred Henry Forrester (1804-72), accompanied them, but from 1834 to 1836, the plates had only short captions: for example, a sportsman assures a frightened farmer, “You needn’t be afeared Sir, I aint a haming at you,” or a dustman informs a group of belligerent crossing-sweeper, “I shant fight with fistesses its vulgar; but if he’s a mind for any thing like a gemman, heres my card!!!” I will address the representation of Cockney speech in Part II of this chapter; here I would just like to give the reader a sense of the type of caricatures Seymour was known for: images of Cockneys who are out of their social and geographical element.

When Chapman and Hall approached Dickens to write the text for Seymour’s latest series of Cockney misadventures in late March 1836, another Nimrod club of sorts was already circulating in the periodical press: that of Robert Surtees’s *Jorrocks’s Jaunts and Jollities*, a series of stories published in the *New Sporting Magazine* from July 1831 through September 1834.⁴⁵ The original of Surtees’s text was accompanied by color

⁴⁵ Full title: *Jorrocks’s Jaunts and Jollities: The Hunting, Shooting, Racing, Driving, Sailing, Eccentric, and Extravagant Exploits of that Renowned Sporting Citizen, Mr. John Jorrocks.*

plates by Phiz (Hablôt K. Brown) but the illustrations of Henry Aiken and W. Heath also accompanied later editions. Unlike gentlemanly Pickwick, the hero of Surtees's adventures, John Jorrocks, is a London grocer, a "cit," as Surtees refers to him, who like other "smoke-dried cits, pent up all the week, [...] fly from their shops to enjoy a day's sport on a Saturday" (2-3).⁴⁶ Edward Wagenknecht goes so far as to characterize Jorrocks as "a savage compared to Pickwick" (199). One of the key aspects that distinguishes Pickwick from Jorrocks is language; the former is represented as speaking a studied kind of Standard English, while the latter speaks a free and easy sort of Cockney dialect. In this regard Jorrocks more closely resembles Sam Weller but, as we shall see, Sam is in a class all his own and his character moves *Pickwick* away from the sporting club genre. The only remnant of that genre to survive in *Pickwick* is Mr. Winkle, yet even he is more gentleman than shopkeeper, the son of a wealthy Birmingham man of industry. Winkle is certainly not the novel's hero; Dickens eventually gives Winkle his own romance plot, but in the early numbers the Winkle episodes seem forced. Indeed, Dickens readily concedes that he "put in Mr Winkle expressly for the use of Mr Seymour" (764).

As the young writer developed his craft, he became increasingly uninterested in treading well-covered ground, and it would seem that audiences were not keen to tread it with him--sales of *Pickwick*'s first number were short of the desired mark, so circulation was cut from 1,000 copies to 500 copies between the first and second numbers. Sales increased only after the introduction of Sam Weller in the fourth number, increasing steadily from 14,000 copies for Number 7 to 29,000 by Number 18, and reaching 40,000

⁴⁶ OED: *cit*: 1. a. Short for citizen; usually applied, more or less contemptuously, to a townsman or 'cockney' as distinguished from a countryman, or to a tradesman or shopkeeper as distinguished from a gentleman; Johnson says 'A pert low townsman; a pragmatical trader'.

for Numbers 19 and 20. With the character of Sam Weller, Dickens had touched a responsive chord in his readers: whereas the comedy of the sporting figures rests in their haplessness, the comedy of Sam Weller rests in his knowingness. Walter Dexter and J.W.T. Ley (1936) credit a 9 July 1836 review of Number 4 in the *Literary Gazette* for saving *Pickwick*, explaining that “it was the first paper to recognize Sam Weller as a force to reckon with” and to quote the character at length (80). In their review of Number 4, for example, the *Literary Gazette* reprints the scene where readers are introduced to Sam at the White Hart.

Reviews of subsequent numbers repeat this practice: the 13 August 1836 review of Number 5 reprints Sam’s election tale, even after first recommending the “Bagman’s Story” to readers, and the review of Number 6 reprints one of Sam’s soon-to-be famous Wellerisms, “He wants you partickler; and no one else’ll do, as the Devil’s private secretary said, ven he fetched away Doctor Faustus” (147; no. 6, ch. 15), as well as Sam’s description to Pickwick of lower-class London, a passage I will discuss at length in the following section. “We hope Boz will stick to Mr. Weller,” remarks the reviewer, “whose facetious character he is working out very humorously” (10 Sept 1836). At last, in their review of Number 8, the *Literary Gazette* reprints a portion of *Pickwick* not containing any reference to Mr. Weller, “The Old Man’s Tale About the Queer Client,” from Chapter 21. Immediately after this excerpt, however, the reviewer writes, “But we must add a little of our favourite character, Sam Weller; he is going along Whitechapel” (12 Nov 1836). Readers are then treated to not one but two scenes featuring Sam, the second being the humorous dialogue between him and his father about “widders” that takes place in Chapter 23.

Kathleen Tillotson (1957) suggests that Dickens decided to develop the character of Sam Weller in response to both the surge in sales and the recommendation of William Jerdan to “develop” his character “to the utmost” (66). Whatever Dickens’s reasons, the result is a character that outshone *Pickwick*’s eponymous hero and who captivated a nation. Contemporary reviews differ somewhat in their estimation of Boz’s skills at drawing his characters; some consider them “caricatures”--even Pickwick and Sam--while others find the pair to be “truly excellent characters.”⁴⁷ Most agree, however, that Sam is the highlight of the novel if not its “preeminent achievement,” as John Forster asserts in *The Life of Charles Dickens* (1872). It is Pickwick and the other members of his club--Tracy Tupman, the Lothario, Augustus Snodgrass, the poet, and Nathaniel Winkle, the would-be sportsman--who provide the physical humor; who fall victim to pitfalls and pratfalls. Sam, on the other hand, is shrewdly aware of his surroundings; it is the canny Cockney that steers the Pickwickians clear of trouble and sets things to rights when they go awry.

In regard to character interiority, Pickwick certainly trumps Weller--we seldom hear Sam’s thoughts, whereas we are often privy to Pickwick’s--and yet Sam still manages to emerge as the most memorable and most loved character in the novel. In a glowing review of Numbers 1-12 in the *Eclectic Review*, for example, it is not Pickwick’s

⁴⁷ An April 1840 review in *Fraser’s Magazine* describes Pickwick as “a mere butt for caricature,” while Sam, and Jingle, are described as “given only caricature parts to play.” In his July 1837 review for the *London and Westminster Review*, Charles Buller finds the characters “so vaguely drawn, that they can hardly be said to have any character at all.” In contrast, Thomas Henry Lister, writing for the *Edinburgh Review*, describes Pickwick and Sam as “truly excellent characters,” whereas their companions have “peculiarities rather than characters” (October 1838). The April 1837 *Eclectic Review* is perhaps most generous, calling many of the characters “master-pieces,” and reserving for the Sam the title of “prime character of the whole book,” both “admirably conceived” and “admirably sustained” (342). Yet the reviewer still finds Pickwick’s companions--Tupman, Winkle, and Snodgrass--to be interchangeable, and Pickwick himself to be inconsistent (343).

trouble with Mrs. Bardell and his fate after the trial that concerns the reviewer, but rather Sam's romance plot:

We know not what may be the fate reserved for honest Sam, in the remaining eight numbers, which are to complete the work, but we trust it will be such as to keep up the interest with which he inspires the reader. [...] A crisis is evidently coming in Sam's fate, for he has just fallen in love with a good-looking well-behaved servant-maid at Mr. Nupkins's, and has actually dispatched his first valentine to her. What may be the result it is impossible to say, for that which turned the brain of Solomon cannot be without danger to that of Sam Weller. (342)

It is the character of Sam that inspires, and even though we readers are treated to very little of Sam's romance plot, it is that which preoccupies this reviewer. Number 12, issued in March of 1837, and the part undoubtedly foremost on this reviewer's mind, contains Chapters 32 and 33--the highlights of each are Sam composing his valentine and the trial of Bardell v. Pickwick respectively--and so it would be expected that Sam's fate might also be foremost in his mind, but why not that of Pickwick also? The reviewer makes no mention of Pickwick's fate whatsoever, and the excerpt reprinted from Chapter 33 is Sam's testimony, for as the reviewer explains, "The next and last scene must be from Sam's evidence in a court of justice" (351). Whereas Sam's evidence, as well as his dialogue with his father while composing his valentine, are excerpted in their entirety, and he is lauded for his shrewdness, Pickwick's "Note Book" gets no such attention--the reviewer finds its frequent mention in *Pickwick* "a nuisance" (343)--and Pickwick is criticized for being "weak-minded" (344). It is not my intention to pit the two against

each other à la Weller v. Pickwick, but I would like to suggest, that Sam's knowingness was more attractive to contemporary readers, as it is to us, than Pickwick's naiveté. Moreover, through the character of Sam Weller, in *Pickwick Papers* direct dialogue wins out over other narrative modes, plain speaking defeats studied speech, and the Cockney dialect trumps Standard English.

The origins of Sam Weller have been the subject of much debate. Some contemporary reviewers suggested that readers could find Sam's origins in Samuel Beazley's 1822 farce *The Boarding House*, which featured a character by the name of Simon Spatterdash, made popular by the comic actor Samuel Vale (aka Sam Valer). Sam Vale, through his performances of Simon Spatterdash, became known for such sayings as, "I know the world,' as the monkey said when he cut off his tail," and even adopted them into his own daily speech. The similarity of the names Sam Valer and Sam Weller coupled with their shared penchant for making peculiar comparisons led many to believe Weller was derivative of Valer. In an 1883 pamphlet entitled, "On the Origin of Sam Weller,"⁴⁸ however, the author argues that "Sam Valerisms" are no way on par with Sam Wellerisms. "Boz, with his admirable humour, may have borrowed an idea," the author explains, "but certainly made no slavish use of it" (5). Similarly, in *Wellerisms*, an 1886 collection of quotations of Sam and his father, Tony Weller, from both *Pickwick* and *Master Humphrey's Clock* (1840-41), Charles Kent provides an even greater defense of Dickens's creative powers, arguing that Dickens derived Sam's name from a popular commentator on Shakespeare, Samuel Weller Singer, that "Sam Weller as a humorous character" was "drawn from Dickens's own inner consciousness," and that Simon

⁴⁸ Full title: "On the Origin of Sam Weller, and the Real Cause of the Success of the *Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club*, by a Lover of Charles Dickens's Works. Together with a Facsimile Reprint of the Beauties of Pickwick, Collected and Arranged by Sam Weller."

Spatterdash is but the “seed-germ of that finished masterpiece [...] the inimitable Sam Weller” (xiv). According to Kent, Sam Weller adopted the form of comic apophthegms made familiar by Sam Vale, such as “I’m down upon you as the extinguisher said to the rushlight” and “I’m all over in a perspiration as the mutton chop said to the gridiron,” but adapted them “to his own facetious purposes” and “immensely improved upon it” (vii-viii).

Others cite real people, not characters, as the true originators of Wellerisms. In Volume 1 of the *Dickensian* (1905), Sir William H. Bailey claims such “similar comparative jocularities” are common among both London workmen and rural artisans (32). Bailey cites Lincolnshire farmers as saying such things as, “Like Peggy Pow’s pig that died of hunger with his nose in the trough,” and Yorkshiremen as saying, “She is like Natterin’ Nan of Bradford, who said that nobody at the top of the earth but me and the Lord knows what I have to put up with,” and goes on to suggest that Dickens gleaned the “germs of Sam’s philosophy” from the working folk of Rochester (32). Eight years later, Edwin Pugh (1913) takes issue with claims that Weller sprang from Vale, arguing that Wellerisms were “the commonest form of current wit during the first part of the nineteenth century,” citing examples from other sources, including Sir Walter Scott’s *Rob Roy* (1818), in which Andrew Fairservice says, “Ower mony maisters—as the paddock said to the harrow when every tooth gae her a tig.” (88). However, the form of these incongruous comparisons did not originate with Sam, his supposed predecessor, or even Scott--folklorists have traced Wellerisms as far back as ancient Greece--but it was Dickens, through his character of Sam Weller, who made them not only familiar but a

veritable Victorian sensation.⁴⁹

Daniel Pollack-Pelzner has commented on the infectious quality of Wellerisms, suggesting that character speech in *Pickwick* is a kind of circulating library from which readers can borrow language. He points to an 1850 article in *Fraser's Magazine* that addresses the way in which Wellerisms have permeated every-day speech. Much to the dismay of the "old school," the author remarks, "we talk *slang* unwittingly" (699). Precisely what constitutes "slang" for the Fraser's reviewer is unclear, but he does say that "instead of seeking the 'well of English undefiled' by Twickenham, we draw at haphazard from the muddy stream that has washed Mile End" (699). *Pickwick* itself demonstrates how Sam's speech takes over the narrative; from the moment Sam is introduced to readers in Chapter 10, he asserts himself as not only a remarkable character, but also as a narrator and a language innovator.

When *Pickwick's* quasi-villain Jingle inquires of Sam where he might find Doctor's Commons, Sam not only tells him precisely where it is--demonstrating his GPS-like knowledge of London--but also leads into a narrative about his father's adventure in marriage licenses. He begins, "Paul's Church-yard, Sir; low archway on the carriage-side, bookseller's at one corner, hot-el on the other, and two porters in the middle as touts for licences" (92; no. 4, ch. 10). One of these porters, according to Sam, cajoled his father into walking "arter him, like a tame monkey behind a horgan" and taking a license to marry a woman he hadn't even been courting. "Beg your pardon, Sir," explains Sam at his narrative's end, "but vhen I gets on this here grievance, I runs on like a new barrow

⁴⁹ Florence Baer explains that the form is "readily recognizable: ' _____,' as _____ said, when (as, and) (s)he _____." I.e., a quotation, speaker named or otherwise identified, and a clause or phrase which puts the quotation in a new light or an incongruous setting, the total effect being ironic" (173). She cites studies that find the form in Classical Greek, sixteenth-century German and Italian, and even African languages.

with the vheel greased” (93; no. 4, ch. 10). Sam then departs, leaving Jingle and Miss Rachael Wardle to discuss their own marriage license and to adopt his diction:

‘The licence!’ said Rachael, blushing.

‘The licence,’ repeated Mr Jingle --

‘In hurry, post-haste for a licence,

In hurry, ding dong I come back.’

‘How you run on,’ said Rachael.

‘Run on -- nothing to the hours, days, weeks, months, years, when we’re united -- *run* on -- they’ll fly on -- bolt -- mizzle -- steam engine -- thousand-horse power -- nothing to it.’ (93; no. 4, ch. 10)

Both Rachael and Jingle pick up the phrasal verb *run on* from Sam’s speech, the latter running with it and making it his own: the result is a strange combination of speech influenced by the popular theatre, telegraphy, “proper” English, and slang.⁵⁰ I could run on here on the subject of Jingle’s and Sam’s differing relationship to Cockney speech, but I will delve more deeply into that subject in the next section; here I will just once again comment on the modern, urban variety of speech that Sam Weller made so popular-- speech not from the suburb of fashion and distinction, Twickenham, but rather from the Cockney’s haunt, the East End. As John Bowen points out, although Wellerisms “both stem from and feed into oral tradition,” it is not that of “a timeless folk, but of the working and lower-middle classes of pre-Victorian London” (69). Sam is not the sage of

⁵⁰ Jingle sings two bars of a song from Kane O’Hara’s *Tom Thumb*, a popular burletta adapted from Henry Fielding play of the same name. Ivan Kreilkamp suggests that Jingle’s speech is “telegraphic,” with its short phrases and copious dashes. The slang word *mizzle*, ‘To go away suddenly; to vanish, disappear’ (OED), is cited in Moncrieff’s *Tom and Jerry* (1821), his stage adaptation of Egan’s *Life in London* (1821). Interestingly, Grose’s *Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* (1823) defines *mizzle* as ‘to elope, to run off,’ and marks it as *cant*.

Britain's rural past, but neither is he yet another version of the cheeky servant of the eighteenth-century farce nor the devoted servant of eighteenth-century sentimentalism.

Let us return for a moment to the scene at the White Hart's Inn and take a closer look at Sam's response to the chambermaid's admonition that "Number twenty-two wants his boots":

'Come, don't be a fool, Sam,' said the girl, coaxingly, 'the gentleman wants his boots directly.'

'Well, you *are* a nice young 'ooman for a musical party, you are,' said the boot-cleaner. 'Look at these here boots -- eleven pair o' boots; and one shoe as b'longs to number six, with the wooden leg. The eleven boots is to be called at half-past eight and the shoe at nine. Who's number twenty-two, that's to put all the others out? No, no; reg'lar rotation, as Jack Ketch said, ven he tied the men up. Sorry to keep you a waitin', Sir, but I'll attend to you directly.' (91; no. 4, ch. 10)

Sam's retort displays an irreverence that readers would have recognized from eighteenth-century portrayals of sassy servants; it is also a nod to pre-Victorian popular culture--many a broadsheet and popular romance featured the famous hangman Jack Ketch. Other Wellerisms also feature rather grim imagery, as Pollack-Pelzner has pointed out. For example: "He wants you partickler; and no one else'll do, as the Devil's private secretary said, ven he fetched away Doctor Faustus" (147; no. 6, ch. 15); "Now, gen'l'men, "fall on," as the English said to the French when they fixed bagginets" (194 no. 7, ch. 19); and "Business first, pleasure arterwards, as King Richard the Third said ven he stabbed the t'other king in the Tower, afore he smothered the babbies" (256 no. 9, ch. 25). While

some critics suggest that such comparisons would have been beyond Sam's knowledge-- how could a man of his class be acquainted with the literature of Goethe, Marlowe, and Shakespeare, or have any knowledge of history?--Baer contends that these and other Wellerisms make reference not to high culture, or even to history, but to street entertainment, further establishing Sam as a working-class character who knows his way around London.⁵¹ Working-class Londoners would have been familiar with the portable peep show and penny theater performances of "The Devil and Doctor Faustus" and with the pantomimes of the Battle of Waterloo, as well as famous performances of Edward Kean as Richard III (Baer 175, 177). It is the wisdom of the street, as it is the language of the street, and not that of traditional rural culture, that characterizes *Pickwick Papers*. Indeed, for all its characters' perambulations about the countryside, the novel is particularly urban.

In much the same way that Dickens refused to retread the familiar ground of Cockney caricature, he similarly refused to travel down the well-trodden path of rural nostalgia. Instead he creates a peculiar kind of urban sophistication via Sam Weller's knowingness. The city streets that young Dickens traversed, absorbed and brought to life in *Sketches by Boz*, are resurrected in *Pickwick*.⁵² Like a nod to his readers, Dickens implies, you, reader, are as knowing as Sam and as I. We, too, understand the city. Even when it seems Dickens is headed toward nostalgia, for example, when in the opening of

⁵¹ Abraham Hayward, for example, writes in the *Quarterly Review*: "They [the Wellers] both talk a language and employ allusions utterly irreconcilable (*sic*) with their habits and station. [...] [W]e constantly detect both [Sam] and his father in the nice and even critical use of words and images borrowed from sources wholly inaccessible to them" (October 1837).

⁵² Deborah Epstein Nord (1995) credits "Boz" with reinventing the urban sketch. Comparing *Sketches by Boz* with early urban sketches by Pierce Egan, Charles Lamb, Thomas De Quincey, and Leigh Hunt, Nord argues that "Boz's urban vision [...] fostered a sense of familiarity and knowability rather than of remoteness and alien spectacle" (50). Rosemarie Bodenheimer (2007) takes Nord's argument a step further and challenges the familiar critical view of Dickens as flâneur, pointing out that Dickens's narrators inhabit the city, not simply observe it with the ironic distance of flâneurie (177).

Chapter 16 readers ride alongside Pickwick and Sam in a coach as it “rolls swiftly past the fields and orchards which skirt the road,” we are instead led into the streets of London. The scene begins familiarly enough, “groups of women and children, piling the fruit in sieves, or gathering the scattered ears of corn, pause for an instant from their labour, and shading the sun-burnt face with a still browner hand, gaze upon the passengers with curious eyes” (158; no. 6, ch. 16). The passage continues on in this way, with readers’ interaction with the field labourers remaining purely visual: the reaper “look[s] at the vehicle as it whirls past” and “rough cart-horses bestow a sleepy glance upon the smart coach team” (158; no. 6, ch. 16). “You cast a look behind you,” the narrator explains, “as you turn a corner of the road. The women and children have resumed their labour, the reaper once more stoops to his work, the cart-horses have moved on, and all are again in motion” (158; no. 6, ch. 16).

The entire scene is characterized by a profound muteness; as the narrator says of the laborers’ wagon, it “is perceptible only to the eye, but strikes with no harsh sound upon the ear” (158; no. 6, ch. 16). Indeed, the only voice represented from the peasants is that of the cart-horse, or more precisely, what we might expect the cart-horse’s “sleepy glance” to communicate: “It’s all very fine to look at, but slow going, over a heavy field, is better than warm work like that, upon a dusty road, after all” (158; no. 6, ch. 16). Even the cart-horse expresses a desire for the kind of rural simplicity that so defines “Old England.” Why is the anthropomorphized horse, or rather his glance, given mode of expression here? And why in such homely yet still standard terms?

For practical purposes, Dickens may have chosen to keep the peasants mute so as not to risk revealing his inexperience in rendering rural speech; he was still learning his

craft and was well-versed with the speech of the city of London but not that of the country. The result is that the peasants are not given the space to express themselves that Sam is given. It is as if rural speech does not carry the same weight here as it does in other contexts. What happens when Pickwick finally breaks the silence of the scene with the remark, “Delightful prospect, Sam,” is all the more telling. Instead of reveling in the scene that so affected the middle-class observers, Sam turns the conversation back to London, to the “queer sights” around the arches of Waterloo Bridge, and eventually tells his oft-reprinted anecdote about the “twopenny rope”:

‘Sights, Sir,’ resumed Mr Weller, ‘as ’ud penetrate your benevolent heart, and come out on the other side. You don’t see the re’lar wagrants there; trust ’em, they knows better than that. Young beggars, male and female, as hasn’t made a rise in their profession, takes up their quarters there sometimes; but it’s generally the worn-out, starving, houseless creeturs as rolls themselves up in the dark corners o’ them lonesome places—poor creeturs as an’t up to the twopenny rope.’ (159; no. 6, ch. 16)

Quite a different variety of “sights” are described by Mr. Weller; instead of noble field laborers who pause momentarily from their work to watch a passing coach, we witness “young beggars” who can’t find work, and instead of a “stout urchin [...] scrambl[ing] over the side of the basket” with “kicks and screams [of] delight” we witness “worn-out, starving, houseless creeturs” rolling themselves up in “dark corners” (158; 159; no. 6, ch. 16).

As if anticipating Henry Mayhew’s system of classifying London labour and the London poor, Sam discerns and categorizes three distinct types of beggar in his

description of the “unfurnished lodgings” under Waterloo Bridge: “reg’lar wagrants,” “young beggars [...] as hasn’t made a rise in their profession,” and “the worn-out, starving, houseless creeturs” (159; no. 6, ch. 16). The “reg’lar wagrants” avoid the area; it is only those who have yet to make their way up the begging ladder or those who are “worn out” by the “profession.” These are not the cheerful, jolly beggars of Pierce Egan’s *Life in London* (1821) who would bring smiles to readers’ faces, but rather those whose condition in life “’ud penetrate your benevolent heart, and come out the other side” (159; no. 6, ch. 16). Although Sam is often lauded for his wit and humour, here he displays proto-sociological awareness and the ability to evoke pathos. This scene also troubles any possibility of rural nostalgia. Just as his example of the two-penny rope reminds us of the brutality of urban life, so too does his response to vagrants challenge any easy rural nostalgia. By this time in the novel, the reader has become accustomed to Sam’s shrewd understanding of all social classes; nevertheless, it is striking that he chooses to contrast the rural scene with London’s homeless. It is as if the young Dickens were reminding his readers that the rich polyphony of London voices comprises all classes, including the very poorest.

Sam differs dramatically from the Cockney Hazlitt describes in “On Londoners and Country People” (1823) as knowing only what London shows him.⁵³ Sam does not direct the conversation to London because that city is all he knows. On the contrary, Sam assures Pickwick that his past employment as a carrier’s boy, waggoner’s boy, and stable boy has afforded him knowledge beyond the “chimney-pots and bricks and mortar” that

⁵³ In “On Londoners and Country People,” Hazlitt wrote: “The true Cockney has never travelled beyond the purlieus of the Metropolis, either in the body or in the spirit. Primrose-hill is the Ultima Thule of his romantic desires; Greenwich Park stands him in stead of the vales of Arcady. Time and space are lost to him. He is confined to one spot and to the present moment” (154).

Pickwick assumes have made up the landscape of his life. As Sam says to the magistrate when he asks him where he lives, “Vare-ever I can” (257; no. 9, ch. 25). But by this, Sam is not suggesting that he is a vagabond but rather that he is so canny, capable, and adaptable, that he can feel at home wherever he is. Sam is by no means Hazlitt’s “pert, raw, ignorant, conceited, ridiculous, shallow, contemptible” (156) Cockney; he may be a bit pert, especially when he is introduced to readers as the “Boots” at the White Hart Inn, but he is certainly not raw, ignorant, conceited, ridiculous, shallow, or contemptible. On the contrary, Sam is “an experienced traveller” for whom quite anywhere is “as much at home as if he had been born on the land” (290; no. 10, ch. 28). Dickens seems to be playing up to his readers that if they know the city they can be at home anywhere, just as Sam is; he is equally at ease in the country as he is the city, in the courtroom as in the pub. In the course of his “rambling life,” as Pickwick calls it, Sam has not only learned to adapt to his surroundings, he has become a keen observer of them.

It comes as no surprise, then, that Sam takes charge of the narrative in this scene; he steers the conversation away from the idyllic as if steering the coach out of the countryside, and once the coach arrives at its destination, Sam takes charge of Pickwick’s plans for the evening:

‘Now Sam,’ said Mr. Pickwick, ‘the first thing to be done is to--’

‘Order dinner, Sir,’ interposed Mr. Weller. ‘It’s wery late, Sir.’

‘Ah, so it is,’ said Mr. Pickwick, looking at his watch. ‘You are right,

Sam.’ (160; no. 6, ch. 16)

Sam is always right. Sam’s brand of knowingness comes to characterize the music-hall Cockney of the Victorian era, a brand of knowingness perceived as “distinctive” of the

Cockney and “objectionable” to the middle class, as Peter Bailey (1998) points out. Does this knowingness become objectionable only after becoming a hallmark of the music-hall scene? Why is it not objectionable when embodied by Sam Weller? Baer suggests that the structure of the Wellerism curtails any potential cheekiness on Sam’s part through indirection, “by ascribing a remark to another person in another context, thus relieving the speaker of any responsibility for what might possibly offend” (174). Certainly, Sam’s dual role as Pickwick’s servant and educator requires some sort of negotiating so that he doesn’t overstep his bounds, and I agree that the structure of the Wellerism provides the means of this negotiation; it resembles, as Baer calls it a “safety valve” (182). For example, after suggesting that Mr. Pickwick order dinner, Sam continues to give orders, but he is careful to employ what linguists would call negative politeness strategies: ““And if I might advise, Sir,’ added Mr. Weller, ‘I’d just have a good night’s rest arterwards, and not begin inquiring arter this here deep ’un ’till the mornin’. There’s nothin’ so refreshin’ as sleep, Sir, as the servant-girl said afore she drank the egg-cup-full o’ laudanum.’” (160; no. 6, ch. 16). Here Sam uses modals (*might* and *would*) and hedges (“And if I might” and *just*) as well as repeating “Sir,” and capping things off with a Wellerism, deflecting the sentiment onto a servant-girl.

And yet the reference to that servant-girl’s desire and/or need to take laudanum echoes back to Sam’s talk of “poor creeturs” and “dark corners” and implies that all is not bright and cheerful in the world of the servant classes. Sam’s remark might be construed as irreverent if it weren’t for his master’s benevolent heart and for the exchange that follows:

‘I think you are right, Sam,’ said Mr. Pickwick. ‘But I must first ascertain that he [Jingle] is in the house, and not likely to go away.’

‘Leave that to me, Sir,’ said Sam. ‘Let me order you a snug little dinner, and make my inquiries below while it’s a getting ready; I could worm ev’ry secret out o’ the boots’s heart, in five minutes.’

‘Do so,’ said Mr. Pickwick: and Mr. Weller at once retired. (160; no. 6, ch. 16)

Pickwick reasserts his position as master with contradictory “But” and imperative “Do so,” while Sam takes his place as servant in offering up his services with “Leave that to me, Sir” and “Let me order you a snug little dinner.” However, there remains some play in this exchange regarding who is in charge of the situation. “Leave that to me,” after all, is also an imperative, and followed by Sam’s assertion that he can get the job done better than his master, the phrase loses some of its potential deference. What’s more, Sam’s ordering his master “a snug little dinner” is not an act of servitude, but rather a cover for gathering intelligence; Sam will “worm ev’ry secret out o’ the boots’s heart” while the dinner is “a getting ready.” Sam uses his canniness and his class position to his advantage and demonstrates that he is the more capable of the pair; Pickwick would make little headway with the staff and just might misinterpret any information he managed to extract.

Sam’s liminal position--between servant and educator--is mirrored in the way his character embodies both nostalgia and modernity. His devotedness to Pickwick harkens back to the previous century and a “simpler” time when there was less class mobility and, in the fictional world of *Pickwick*, less chance of being duped by a swindler-actor

masquerading as a gentleman. Jingle represents a different sort of Cockney--one who affects gentility and Standard English. He is vulgar not because he speaks "vulgarily," though he does use slang occasionally, but because he does not know his station. Sam, on the other hand, may transpose his /v/s and /w/s but he is never a pretender to gentlemanliness. He may hop from occupation to occupation and even suggest that he may "be a gen'lm'n" himself one day, but he doesn't threaten to do so by sidling up to a gentlewoman (159; no. 6, ch. 16). No, Sam's aspirations in that quarter are humble, "a summer-house in the back garden" and "a pipe in [his] mouth," and his romantic interests are aimed squarely at a woman in his own servant class (159; no. 6, ch. 16). If anything, we might think of Sam as a gentleman by proxy; it is Pickwick's back garden in which Sam takes up residence.

On the other side of the coin, however, we have Sam as Pickwick's educator, a role made possible by Sam's class status and one that marks the novel with modernity. Readers of all classes are invited to revel in Sam's knowingness. As Rosemarie Bodenheimer points out, throughout his writing, Dickens regularly allows readers "to be more knowing than the characters who are being duped before our eyes" (33). Readers "smile at dupers," Bodenheimer suggests, while "our hearts beat--and our impatience rises--for the duped" (33). In the case of *Pickwick*, however, readers don't so much smile at Jingle, the duper, as they smile with Sam, the un-dupable.⁵⁴ "For Dickens," Bodenheimer argues, "knowingness is at once corrupt and essential to survival; the

⁵⁴ Sam is able to see through Jingle's schemes and is fooled only once, by Job Trotter, Jingle's servant, in Chapter 16. It is curious that Sam is fooled at all, but we might consider Job's manipulation of Sam as a breaking of a servants' code, a sort of "honour among servants" that he uses and abuses. After all, it is not Job's feigned tears that convince Sam, but rather his appeals to servant-master loyalty. Indeed, Sam chastises Job for crying: "Tears never yet wound up a clock, or worked a steam ingin'. [...] just put that bit of pink gingham into your pocket. 'T'a'n't so handsome that you need keep waving it about, as if you was a tight-rope dancer" (164; no. 6, ch. 16).

tension between the two is rarely resolved in his art” (33). I would suggest that in the figure of Sam Weller, that tension is resolved. Sam’s survival skills are based in a knowledge of the streets, but he has not been corrupted by them. On the contrary, he is exceedingly trustworthy and loyal; indeed, on more than one occasion the Pickwickians trust Sam with their lives. And readers trust Sam to not lead us astray. Through Sam, we are made privy to the plot of *Pickwick*, the streets of London and the language of the streets.

Sam Weller’s Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue

We have seen that readers and reviewers alike took great pleasure in reading the words of Sam Weller. But why? Why would so many readers want to read Cockney, that vulgar tongue of the streets? Victorian readers were keen to read direct dialogue, as Ivan Kreilkamp (2005) has shown, but why Cockney? According to Kreilkamp, the characters of Jingle and Sam “open[] up the novel to a new kind of writing that offers the effect of a transcription of voice in all its impropriety, ungrammaticality, and energy” and “*Pickwick* inaugurates the phonographic history of Victorian fiction in a vocal explosion that presents itself as an escape from an oppressive print history” (77). Kreilkamp points to Dickens’s stenographic experience as ushering in a change from the Johnsonian style of “turn[ing] speech into elegant standard written English” to the “infus[ion of] writing with all the immediacy of the moment of oral utterance” (77). In *Pickwick Papers*, however, it is not just colloquial style that reigns, it is nonstandard English. Yet critics haven’t asked why it is important that Sam is a speaker of the Cockney dialect. Readers of *Pickwick*, I would argue, were not just keen on dialogue, they were keen on Cockney.

Sam's knowingness, of the city of London especially, is embodied in both the content and form of his speech. Cockney, especially as spoken by Sam, has a kind of cultural capital.

Janet Sorensen (2004) has shown how in the late eighteenth century, the once criminally-cast language of cant was recoded as "vulgar," or of "the people," and revalued as "signs of British national culture" (435). Francis Grose's *Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* (1785), Sorensen shows, not only redefines and relabels as "vulgar" what earlier canting dictionaries deemed purely criminal, it also lauds the language of the "common people" for its freedom of expression (446). Grose writes in his preface to the first edition: "the freedom of thought and speech arising from, and privileged by, our constitution, gives a force and poignancy to the expressions of our common people, not to be found under arbitrary governments, where the ebullitions of vulgar wit are checked by the fear of the bastinado, or of a lodging during pleasure in some gaol or castle" (v-vi). Grose's assertion that the language of the "common people" possesses "a force and poignancy" resembles those of the Lancashire advocates who argued for the Lancashire dialect's superior expressive qualities. Grose never goes so far as to claim the vulgar tongue's superiority over Standard English, but he does remark that the abundance of "vulgar allusions and cant expressions" in the "common conversation and periodical publications" makes a dictionary of this kind "extremely useful, if not absolutely necessary, not only to foreigners, but even to natives resident at a distance from the Metropolis, or who do not mix in the busy world" (vi).

Knowledge of the Metropolis required knowledge of the language of the streets; to be knowing, "flash," or "down" with the city's lexicon was a desirable trait, especially

among fashionable young men.⁵⁵ As “custom” and “tradition” became increasingly associated with the rural and the feminine, Sorensen argues, urban masculinity became increasingly defined by the innovative and fleeting (448). In 1811, Grose’s original glossary of cant and vulgar terms was supplemented with “buckish slang” and “university wit” in the form of *Lexicon Balatronicum*, and in 1823 Pierce Egan published yet another edition of Grose’s *Classical Dictionary*, to which he added sporting slang, some of which would have been familiar to readers via his *Boxiana* (1818-24) and *Life in London* (1821). Perhaps, then, readers of *Pickwick Papers* were not speaking slang “unwittingly” after all. The speech of Sam Weller, like the language captured in Grose’s dictionary and the sporting slang made popular by Pierce Egan in the 1820s, represents an urban sophistication that is both desirable and imitable. Sam makes Cockney safe for and appealing to readers of all classes; he educates us in the ways of the city--its streets, its inhabitants, and its speech.

Wellerisms are often lumped together with Gampese, the humorous speech of Mrs. Gamp of Dickens’s *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843-4), but Mrs. Gamp’s speech is marked by malapropisms whereas Sam’s is not. The speech of Mrs. Gamp and Sam Weller is memorable but not for the same reasons. Sam is not one to make mistakes, linguistic or otherwise; we laugh *with* Sam not *at* him. While Dickens represents the speech of some other Cockney characters with eye dialect, he does not represent Sam’s speech in this manner.⁵⁶ For example, Mrs. Raddle speaks of “observashuns” and a coachman

⁵⁵ In Present Day English, *down*, as in ‘with it,’ is attributed to African-American Vernacular English, but it seems to have been used in this sense much earlier: Grose’s dictionary defines the word as ‘Aware of a thing. Knowing it’.

⁵⁶ Even orthography that might look like eye dialect is meant to illustrate a difference in pronunciation between Standard English and Cockney. For example, “wot” represents the difference between /hw/ and /w/ (Mugglestone, *Talking Proper* 187-88). Similarly, spellings with *oo* for standard *u* are intended to show the loss of RP /j/ (Gerson 203).

complains of an “irrepairabel” loss (330; no. 11, ch. 31; 399; no. 13, ch. 36). The pronunciation of each of these words is not changed by their nonstandard orthography. Instead, these misspellings signal the ignorance of the speakers. And though Mrs. Raddle and other characters in *Pickwick Papers*, including another Sam, the cabman whom Pickwick gets into a scuffle in the first number, are represented as speaking a Cockney dialect--marked especially by v/w inversion--Sam’s speech stands out, and not only because of his Wellerisms. Pickwick’s brief encounter with Sam the cabman is reminiscent of Boz’s *Sketches*; this Sam is not given the narrative space or voice to be anything more than a sketch. What is more, this Sam is belligerent and not the keen observer that our Sam is; he misinterprets Pickwick’s harmless writing in his notebook and takes him for an informer. It is difficult to imagine the canny Sam Weller making such a mistake. What’s more, Sam the cabman does not speak with the linguistic energy of Mr. Weller. Indeed, when telling his tall tale about how he keeps his horse out for three weeks, his speech is both disingenuous and repetitive: “we bears him [the horse] up werry tight, and takes him in werry short, so as he can’t werry well fall down” (6; no. 1, ch. 2). We might assume that Dickens, especially in this early number of the serial, still working in the mode of *Sketches by Boz*, chose as many words beginning with *v* as possible so that he might transpose them with a *w*. Certainly, that is the feeling one gets after reading this passage; the linguistic feature upstages the cabman. The contrast between the speech of these two Sams is remarkable; Sam Weller commands this linguistic feature, it does not command him.

When Sam Weller encounters the Cockney constable Mr. Grummer, the linguistic prowess of the former seems all the more remarkable. By this time in narrative, Dickens

has become an extraordinarily skillful creator of linguistically rich situations. This scene is yet another predicament from which Sam must extricate his master; Pickwick is suspected of intending to duel a Mr. Magnus over the honor of a Miss Witherfield and is placed under arrest. Mr. Grummer presents Pickwick to the magistrate, Mr. Nupkins, thus: "This here's Pickvick, your wash-up" (256; no. 9, ch. 25). Grummer's speech has the Cockney feature of v/w transposition, but his "wash-up" for "worship" is a malapropism. Upon hearing Grummer's less than inspiring introduction, Sam "elbowing himself into the front rank" interposes with his own version:

'Beg your pardon, Sir, but this here officer o' yourn in the gambooge tops, 'ull never earn a decent livin' as a master o' the ceremonies any vere. This here, Sir,' continued Mr Weller, thrusting Grummer aside, and addressing the Magistrate with pleasant familiarity -- 'This here is S. Pickvick, Esquire; this here's Mr. Tupman; that 'ere's Mr. Snodgrass; and funder on, next him on the t'other side, Mr. Winkle -- all wery nice genl'm'n, Sir as you'll be wery happy to have the acquaintance on; so sooner you commits these here officers o' yourn to the tread-mill for a month or two, the sooner we shall begin to be on a pleasant understanding. Business first, pleasure arterwards, as King Richard the Third said ven he stabbed the t'other king in the Tower, afore he smothered the babbies.'

(256; no. 9, ch. 25)

Sam seems doubly affronted by Grummer's lackluster introduction: not only by the insufficient respect paid to his master and his companions, but also by the dull and inaccurate manner in which he speaks. Grummer, according to Sam, will never "earn a

decent livin' as a master o' ceremonies any vere." Not only does Sam's introduction of the gentlemen express their worthiness, it is also varied: for example, "This here is"; "this here's"; "that 'ere's"; and "and further on, next him on the t'other side." Sam then quips that it is Mr. Nupkin's officers who should be committed to the treadmill--a cheeky remark that he quickly follows with a face-saving Wellerism, but also one that condemns the officers for their lack of legal and linguistic competence. Sam seems to be arguing, may the best speaker win. And he does win in one respect; he wins over the special constables with his humour. When Sam tells Mr. Jinks that his name has "Two L's, old feller," an "unfortunate" special laughs, "whereupon the magistrate threatened to commit him, instantly," for it is, as the narrator explains, "a dangerous thing laughing at the wrong man, in these cases" (257-58; no. 9, ch. 25). To each of Mr. Nupkin's inquiries, Sam responds with quiet defiance. He fears not the taking down of his name and address; he ensures that his name is spelled correctly, with "Two L's," and when the magistrate instructs Mr. Jinks to "Put down" that Sam lives "Vare-ever I can," Sam remarks, "Score it under" (257; no. 9, ch. 25). The final blow to Mr. Nupkin's authority is Sam's response to his being committed as "a vagabond": "'This is a wery impartial country for justice,' said Sam. 'There ain't a magistrate going, as don't commit himself, twice as often as he commits other people'" (257; no. 9, ch. 25). At this remark another special bursts into laughter, "and then tried to look so supernaturally solemn, that the magistrate detected him immediately" (257; no. 9, ch. 25). Not one to be ridiculed or upstaged, Mr. Nupkins flies into a rage, accusing Mr. Grummer of poor judgment in selecting constables and accusing the constable of drunkenness. Laughing at the wrong man is dangerous indeed.

Sam's wordsmithery instills Cockney with tremendous value. Through Dickens's representation of the dialect and his beloved character's deft use of it, the dialect becomes cultural capital. In Dickens's hands, the Cockney dialect is both readable and imitable. He introduces the Pickwickians and readers to urban mores, ranging from the secret ingredients of piemen to the language of the streets. When the Pickwickians make the acquaintance of two young medical students, Bob Sawyer and Benjamin Allen, Sam introduces into his master's vocabulary the term *sawbones*: "What's a Sawbones?" inquired Mr. Pickwick, not quite certain whether it was a live animal, or something to eat. 'What! don't you know what a Sawbones is, Sir?' enquired Mr. Weller; 'I thought every body know'd as a Sawbones was a Surgeon'" (307; no. 11, ch. 29). Not one to adopt what he certainly considers slang, Pickwick smiles at Sam's creative appellation and responds, "Oh, a Surgeon, eh?" (307; no. 11, ch. 29). When Sam goes on to explain that the two young men "ain't reg'lar thorough-bred Sawbones; they're only in trainin'," Pickwick translates, "In other words they're Medical Students, I suppose?" (307; no. 11, ch. 29). In fact, Pickwick often repeats what Sam has just said, but in his studied, standard way, as if he is correcting Sam or acting as interpreter for readers who aren't fly to the lingo.⁵⁷ Sam's "hex-traordinary," for example, gets parroted back to him in a sort of parental admonishment: "It is, no doubt, a very extraordinary circumstance, indeed," said Mr Pickwick. 'But brush my hat, Sam, for I hear Mr. Winkle calling me to breakfast'" (128; no. 5, ch. 13). And in another instance, Pickwick even "edits" one of

⁵⁷ Like *down*, the term *fly* is often associated with African-American English. Grose's dictionary defines *fly* as 'Knowing. Acquainted with another's meaning or proceeding.'

Sam's tales, "The Parish Clerk," and presents it in his own style of storytelling. In the end, however, Sam seems savvy, Pickwick seems square.⁵⁸

When Pickwick hears that Bob Sawyer and Ben Allen are medical students, he begins to pontificate on the general quality of young men in that profession: "They are fine fellows; very fine fellows, with judgments matured by observation and reflection; and tastes refined by reading and study" (307; no. 11, ch. 29). Sam, on the other hand, uses his keen sense of observation and characterizes the pair according to precisely what he sees:

'They're a smokin' cigars by the kitchen fire,' said Sam.

'Ah!' observed Mr. Pickwick, rubbing his hands, 'overflowing with kindly feelings and animal spirits. Just what I like to see!'

'And one on 'em,' said Sam, not noticing his master's interruption, 'one on 'em's got his legs on the table, and is a drinkin' brandy neat, vile the tother one -- him in the barnacles -- has got a barrel o' oysters atween his knees, vich he's a openin' like steam, and as fast as he eats 'em, he takes a aim vith the shells at young dropsy, who's a settin' down fast asleep, in the chimbley corner.'

'Eccentricities of genius, Sam,' said Mr. Pickwick. 'You may retire.'

(307-8; no. 11, ch. 29)

Sam attempts to point out to his master the lack of judgment, maturity, and refined taste of the young medical students but, based on his preconceived notions of what learned

⁵⁸ Here I mean "square" in both the modern sense of the word, 'out of touch' or 'old-fashioned' (OED) and the early-nineteenth-century sense, 'fair, upright, honest'. According to Grose, the terms *square* and *flat* were used to describe an honest man or "an easy dupe," as opposed to someone who is *cross* or *sharp*. So, for example, Jingle and Job Trotter, both "sharp coves," would consider Pickwick a "square cove" or "prime flat".

men must be, Pickwick interprets their actions -- intemperance, gluttony, and slovenly table manners -- as “eccentricities of genius.” Sam may “drop his g’s,” transpose his /v/s and /w/s, elide his interdental fricatives, use the “vulgar” term *barnacles* for ‘spectacles’ and the dialectal *chimbley* for ‘chimney’ -- all offenses against the English language in the eyes (or ears) of many -- but he correctly assesses the men’s behavior, just as readers correctly interpret the scene.

When we take into consideration Sam’s powers of observation coupled with the popularity of his narratives, it is all the more curious, then, that Dickens would chose to have Pickwick “edit” one of Sam’s tales. But in Chapter 17, Dickens does just that. When Pickwick is bound to his chambers for two days with a bout of rheumatism, Sam entertains him with “anecdote and conversation” on the first, but Pickwick requests his writing-desk, and pen and ink, on the second. On the third day, Pickwick sends for his friends, Mr. Wardle and Mr. Trundle. “The invitation,” the narrator explains, “was most willingly accepted; and when they were seated over their wine, Mr Pickwick with sundry blushes, produced the following little tale, as having been ‘edited’ by himself, during his recent indisposition, from his notes of Mr Weller’s unsophisticated recital” (173; no. 6, ch. 17). Given how often Mr. Weller’s other “unsophisticated recitals” were reprinted and plagiarized, Dickens’s decision to translate Sam’s infectious storytelling into Pickwick’s prose seems curious. The first line of the tale, however, sheds some light on the mystery:

‘Once upon a time, in a very small country town, at a considerable distance from London, there lived a little man named Nathaniel Pipkin, who was the parish clerk of the little town, and lived in a little house in the

little high street, within ten minutes' walk of the little church; and who was to be found every day from nine till four, teaching a little learning to the little boys.' (173; no. 6, ch. 17)

Not only does Pickwick begin with what is perhaps the oldest, most old-fashioned opening in the history of storytelling, his diction is simplistic, repetitive, and downright dull; he repeats the word *little* no less than seven times in the first sentence alone. Even more damning than this, however, is the tale's lack of dialogue; it is not until the final two pages of the seven-page narrative that the reader is treated to the voices of the characters. One cannot help wonder what one is missing in having the story told by Pickwick instead of by Sam. In a kind of dialectic of storytelling, Pickwick's lackluster rendition of Sam's tale renders Sam's narrative powers all the more impressive. At this point in *Pickwick*, readers have had seven chapters with which to grow fond of Sam Weller, his stories, and his variety of Cockney speech; they've heard him recount his father's run-in with the porters (Chapter 10), his father's experience during "election-time" (Chapter 13), and his educating Pickwick on the poorest classes of London (Chapter 16).

"The Parish Clerk" is often classified as one of the novel's interpolated tales, such as "The Bagman's Story" or "A Madman's Manuscript," which critics and reviewers alike consider inferior to the main plot. Robert Lougy (1970) argues that, with its comic tone and its comic hero, "The Parish Clerk" stands apart from the other tales and their gothic elements. What's more, Lougy argues that Pickwick writes the tales himself, that "Pickwick is no more the 'editor' of this tale than Dickens is the 'editor' of *The Pickwick Papers*" (101). While I agree that, as Steven Marcus (1972) puts it, this moment "is a

wonderful bit of play” where Pickwick is to Sam as Dickens is to Pickwick, I would not go so far as to say that Pickwick is the author of this tale (196). Lougy suggests that “The Parish Clerk” marks a moment of particular self-reflexiveness on the part of Pickwick, that he invents the tale as a way to reflect on his own mishaps in the previous chapter. Nathaniel Pipkin is duped by Maria Lobbs and her cousins, and is found in a compromising position, hiding in a bedroom closet. In the previous chapter, Pickwick is duped by Jingle and Job Trotter and found in a similarly compromising position, hiding behind the door of a ladies’ boarding house. And while I agree that there are parallels with the main plot in this interpolated tale, making it a less discrete tale than the others, I would suggest that without Sam’s powers of observation, Pickwick may not have made these connections. Sam continues his education of Pickwick with his tale of Nathaniel Pipkin’s deception, assuring Pickwick that he is not alone in being duped--Sam, after all, was also taken in by Job. In this way, Sam allows them both, master and servant, to save face. Pickwick may have “demanded his writing-desk, and pen and ink, and was deeply engaged during the whole day,” as Lougy reminds us, but he does this only after Sam “endeavoured to amuse his master by anecdote and conversation” (173; no. 6, ch. 17). Furthermore, that the tale is comic is all the more evidence that it originates with Sam; one can almost delight in imagining how he might have told it. Pickwick may have deemed Sam’s version “unsophisticated” and unsuitable for the ears of Wardle and Trundle, but readers know better. It was not “The Parish Clerk” that was reprinted, recited, and reproduced.

Sam Weller was the star of many a *Pickwick* reproduction and adaptation. One of the most popular excerpts was “Sam Weller’s Valentine,” a conversation between Sam

and his father, Tony Weller, that takes place in Chapter 32 of *Pickwick Papers*. This comic scene is reprinted in *Wellerisms*, as well as in collections for public and private readings and books of dialogues, is advertised as being performed in several newspapers, and even shows up in a magic lantern show.⁵⁹ In it, Sam composes the valentine to the pretty housemaid, Mary, that so concerns the writer for the *Eclectic Review*. The text is not reproduced for readers; instead, it is performed by Sam, with frequent interruptions and commentary from his father, who assumes a role of perhaps undeserved authority-- though Tony is the elder Weller, he is also the less literate of the pair. The narrator emphasizes this comic contradiction by consistently referring to the father as "Mr. Weller" and the son by his Christian name. Sam's reading the valentine aloud to his father allows for several humorous moments that could not be conveyed if the text of the valentine were simply reproduced, such as Sam struggling to read blotted words:

"Lovely creetur i feel myself a dammed" --.'

'That ain't proper,' said Mr. Weller, taking his pipe from his mouth.

'No; it ain't dammed,' observed Sam, holding the letter up to the light,

'it's "shamed," there's a blot there -- "I feel myself ashamed."'

'Wery good,' said Mr. Weller. 'Go on.'

"Feel myself ashamed, and completely cir -- " I forget wot this here word is,' said Sam, scratching his head with the pen, in vain attempts to remember.

⁵⁹ See, for example, *Frost's New Book of Dialogues* (1872); *Public and Parlor Readings: For the Use of Dramatic and Reading Clubs, and for Public, Social, and School Entertainment* (1875); *Five Humorous Sketches for "The Pickwick Papers." Illustrated by Seventy Original Lantern Slides from Scenes Portrayed by Mr. E.H. and Miss E.M. Lucas* (n.d.). And to name just a few newspaper advertisements: "A Night With Charles Dickens," *Bristol Mercury*, 1 March 1856; "Amateur Readings" and "Penny Readings," *Ipswich Journal*, 29 December 1860 and 12 November 1864; "Literary Institute," *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle*, 14 January 1865; "The Last Penny Readings of the Season," *North Wales Chronicle*, 4 May 1867.

‘Why don’t you look at it, then?’ inquired Mr. Weller.

‘So I *am* a lookin’ at it,’ replied Sam, ‘but there’s another blot: here’s a “c,” and a “i,” and a “d”.’

‘Circumvented, p’raps.’ suggested Mr. Weller.

‘No it ain’t that,’ said Sam, ‘circumscribed, that’s it.’

‘That ain’t as good a word as circumvented, Sammy,’ said Mr. Weller gravely.

‘Think not?’ said Sam.

‘Nothin’ like it,’ replied his father.

‘But don’t you think it means more?’ inquired Sam.

‘Vell p’raps it is a more tenderer word,’ said Mr. Weller, after a few moments’ reflection. ‘Go on, Sammy.’

“‘Feel myself ashamed and completely circumscribed in a dressin’ of you, for you *are* a nice gal and nothin’ but it.” (343; no. 12, ch. 32)

It is important to note again that Sam is not guilty of malapropisms; he has trouble reading his writing due to ink blots, caused by his admitted lack of experience in penmanship, and not because he chooses the wrong words, or even because he misspells them. Sam and his father agree, for example, that “dammed” is not “proper,” either semantically or morally, but it is not the word Sam chose in the first place. Similarly, though some critics suggest that Sam and Tony Weller do not understand the meaning of the words *circumscribed* and *circumvented* and are simply making failed attempts at

educated diction,⁶⁰ I would suggest that the Wellers know precisely what they mean by each word they choose.

In his essay, “Sam Weller’s Valentine,” J. Hillis Miller (1995) initially suggests that Dickens is condescending to the uneducated lower classes in this scene; “one word does not mean more than the other. It means something different” (121; n.8). As he proceeds with his analysis, however, Hillis Miller comes around to the idea that “Perhaps Dickens is not so condescending to the lower classes after all,” that Sam is circumscribed or “written around” by the conventions of language, courtship, and valentine writing, and that “‘circumscribed’ is uncannily the right word after all, a much better word than ‘circumwented’” (121; n.8). I would add that Mr. Weller senior, having just admonished his son for becoming entangled in affairs of the heart, would prefer the word “circumwented,” for its multiple meanings. Tony Weller not only feels that Sam is ‘entrapped in conduct or speech’ (OED), he also fears that his son himself might be circumvented by marriage. To circumvent is ‘to surround or encompass by hostile stratagem,’ or perhaps even more fitting, ‘to get the better of by craft or fraud’ (OED), both quite accurate assessments for Mr. Weller’s feelings on marriage. Sam’s “a dressin’” is similarly trenchant with its double entendre of “addressing” and “dressing,” or its rhyme “undressing.” Far from portraying any ignorance of the part of the Wellers, this passage celebrates their mastery at word play.

By depicting Sam reading his valentine to his father rather than reproducing the text, Dickens circumvents, or ‘evades’, the problem of representing Sam’s orthography; doing so would make it necessary to either stifle Sam’s lively Cockney with standard English orthography or spell the words as Sam pronounces them. The former choice

⁶⁰ See, for example, Malcolm Andrews, “Dickens, Comedy And Disintegration.”

would deaden the vitality of Sam's spoken voice, while the latter runs the risk of undermining his credibility, for once his words are transcribed onto paper, they cease being phonological representations and become misspellings. Sam's performing the letter aloud maintains both his canniness and the verbal energy of the narrative. Where Cockney is concerned, dialogue takes precedence. The text of other letters and invitations are represented, such as Tracy Tupman's letter to Pickwick in Chapter 11, Dodson and Fogg's letter to Pickwick in Chapter 18, both in Standard English, and Mr. Weller's letter to his son in Chapter 51. Mr. Weller's letter, however, maintains an oral quality because it is dictated to a paid scribe, a practice not uncommon in the days before universal education. Presenting the letters in these disparate ways allows Dickens to show that Sam is literate and that his father is not, but it also gives Dickens additional opportunities to play with language. The first line of Tony Weller's letter, for example, mocks the conventions of letter writing: "I am wery sorry to have the plessure of bein a Bear of ill news" (554; no. 18, ch. 51). Here the stock openers, "I am very sorry to have to be the bearer of ill news" and "It gives me great pleasure to inform you" are spliced, which shows their semantic emptiness. As the letter continues, it illustrates the tension between written and spoken, schooled and open English:

'your Mother in law cort cold consekens of imprudently settin too long on the damp grass in the rain a hearin of a shepherd who warnt able to leave off till late at night owen to his havin vound his-self up vith brandy and vater and not being able to stop his-self till he got a little sober which took a many hours to do' (555; no. 18, ch. 51)

The letter has no punctuation and its orthography has an oral quality, both of which are common features of working-class writing, and attempts at literate style fall short of the mark and unnecessarily complicate the letter's meaning; "consekens of imprudently" could have been put simply, "from."

The practice of letter writing, of translating one's thoughts and sentiments into the conventions of that style of communication, it would seem, convolutes their meaning. Mr. Weller is in the difficult position of needing a scribe to take down his words but finding the results less than satisfactory. It is unclear exactly what elements of the letter are the embellishments of the scribe and which are taken verbatim from Mr. Weller's speech, but what is clear is that he is displeased with at least some of the scribe's choices in orthography, which is illustrated when he interferes with the scribe's transcription:

'by the vay your father says that if you vill come and see me Sammy he vill take it as a wery great favor for I am wery lonely Samivel N. B he *vill* have it spelt that vay vich I say ant right and as there is sich a many things to settle he is sure your guvner wont object of course he vill not Sammy for I knows him better so he sends his dooty in which I join and am Samivel infernally yours' (555; no. 18, ch. 51)

Nota bene, the scribe writes, "he *vill* have it [Samivel] spelt that vay vich I say ant right." Throughout the letter, the scribe, who is barely literate himself, spells words more or less as Mr. Weller, and perhaps he himself, pronounces them, but balks when it comes to spelling Samuel with a "v". Studies of pauper letters show that names are consistently spelled correctly, even when much of the rest of the letter is riddled with misspellings, so the scribe's insistence (in Latin no less) that Mr. Weller's spelling "ant right," adds

verisimilitude to the letter's existing humour.⁶¹ But it also causes further confusion. Sam's initial reaction to the letter is one of perplexity: "'Wot an incomprehensible letter,' said Sam; 'who's to know wot it means vith all this he-ing and I-ing! It ain't my father's writin' 'cept this here signater in print letters; that's his'" (555; no. 18, ch. 51).⁶² The shifting back and forth of pronouns not only renders the letter difficult to comprehend, it also depicts the struggle between Mr. Weller and the scribe--the latter who wants to adhere to letter-writing conventions and the former who desires to inject his voice into the genre. Mr. Weller's interruptions cause the scribe to inject his own voice; "he *vill* have it spelt that vay vich I say ant right," has a conversational energy that is lacking, or rather stifled, by the formality of the rest of the letter. As Sam says, "The gen'lm'n as wrote it, was a tellin' all about the misfortun' in a proper vay, and then my father comes a lookin' over him, and complicates the whole concern by puttin' his oar in. That's just the wery sort o' thing he'd do' (555; no. 18, ch. 51). That's just the very sort of thing both Sam and Tony do throughout the narrative; they put their verbal oars in the sea of the literate style of the Pickwickians.

The tension between the oral and the written in *Pickwick* is echoed in the discord between standard and nonstandard, or the refined and the vulgar.⁶³ Although Sam seems to side with conventions of the written when he calls the scribe's method of conveying news "proper," he is not privileging the one over the other so much as acknowledging the usefulness of templates and commenting on the appropriateness of certain styles for particular contexts. For example, although Sam may gently tease the Pickwickians for

⁶¹ See, for example, Tony Fairman (2000).

⁶² The reader learns in Chapter 36 that Mr. Weller "always prints," as Sam explains, "'cos he learnt writin' from the large bills in the bookin' offices" (392; no. 13, ch. 36).

⁶³ Tony Fairman prefers the terms refined and vulgar because, as he points out, standard and nonstandard would not have been used in the nineteenth century (65).

their naïvete in certain matters, he never derides them for their verbal style; it is fitting for their social position. The Bath footmen, who emulate the fashionable speech of their masters, on the other hand, are open game for Sam's mocking. After making the acquaintance of one of their party, Mr. John Smauker, Sam is invited to the Bath footmen's "swarry"--their orthographical attempt at *soirée*. Sam finds it strange that he should receive a letter at all: "'Wery odd that,' said Sam, 'I'm afreed there must be somethin' the matter, for I don't recollect any gen'lm'n in my circle of acquaintance as is capable o' writin' one'" (392; no. 13, ch. 36). That the epistle is "wrote on gilt-edged paper" and "sealed in bronze vaz vith a top of a door key" causes even more concern, so "with a very grave face, [he] slowly read as follows:

'A select company of the Bath footmen presents their compliments to Mr. Weller, and requests the pleasure of his company this evening, to a friendly swarry, consisting of a boiled leg of mutton with the usual trimmings. The swarry to be on table at half past nine o' clock punctually.'

This was inclosed in another note, which ran thus --

'Mr. John Smauker, the gentleman who had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Weller at the house of their mutual acquaintance, Mr. Bantam, a few days since, begs to inclose Mr. Weller the herewith invitation. If Mr. Weller will call on Mr. John Smauker at nine o'clock, Mr. John Smauker will have the pleasure of introducing Mr. Weller.

(Signed)

'JOHN SMAUKER'

(393; no. 13, ch. 36)

Unlike Tony Weller's letter to his son, Mr. John Smauker's note is "signed" and written by his own hand; however, it and its accompanying invitation further illustrate the tension between the written and the oral, the refined and the vulgar. Indeed, the opposites collide with comic results. The envelope is addressed to "blank Weller, Esq." but in the left hand corner the words "'airy bell," directing the bearer to ring the bell at the servant's quarters, belie the fallacy of that appellation, and the French term, *soirée*, ends up misspelled, boiled, and placed on the table. Pronouns, too, seem to be a problem for Mr. Smauker, as they are for Tony Weller and his scribe, except that the footman seems afraid to use them. The resulting cavalcade of proper names, though meant to signal prestige, renders the note both stylistically awkward and ridiculous.

It is worth noting that the only language that befuddles our knowing Sam Weller is that which is unnecessarily formal and complicated, usually French, Latinate, or Greek-derived words that have perfectly suitable English equivalents. When Mr. John Smauker, for example, asks Sam if he found the waters of the chalybeate springs unpleasant because he disliked the "killibeate taste," Sam responds, "I don't know much about that 'ere [...] I thought they'd a wery strong flavour o' warm flat irons" (394; no. 13, ch. 36). When Mr. John Smauker explains that, "That *is* the killibeate, Mr. Weller," Sam retorts, "Well, if it is, it's a wery inexpressive word, that's all" (394; no. 13, ch. 36). Similarly, when one of Dodson and Fogg's clerks, Mr. Jackson, tells Sam, "Here's a subpoena for you, Mr Weller," Sam responds, "What's that in English?" (319; no. 11, ch. 30). These assertions that non-Anglo-Saxon words are "inexpressive" and not "English" echo those of the Lancashire advocates, as mentioned above and in the previous chapter. Sam may not recognize the Greek-derived "killibeate," but it matters not, for his

description of the waters' taste as "warm flat irons," is more expressive and descriptive. Sam's concrete yet metaphoric description trumps Mr. John Smauker's accurate yet semantically empty one. Sam, like Ab-o'th'-Yate in "Eating a Bootjack," is portrayed not as ignorant but rather as truly English, a citizen of the nation who speaks the language of the nation. That Londoners were clamoring to acquire the language of the City streets is illustrated by Grose's definition for *Half Flash and Half Foolish*: "This phrase is applied, in a sarcastic manner, to those persons who have a *smattering* of the cant language, and also pretend to a knowledge of life, which they do not possess. The family of *half flash and half foolish* are very numerous in London" (n.p.). Much like the Bath footmen who pretend to a knowledge of upper-class life, which they do not possess, and are met with ridicule, pretenders to the kind of urban sophistication and knowingness that Sam possesses are mocked by those who are "down." In and beyond the pages of *Pickwick*, Sam sold Cockney to scores of readers.

The Afterlife of Sam Weller

Of all Dickens's works, *Pickwick Papers* was by far the most plagiarized and imitated.⁶⁴ And among the *Pickwick* characters, Sam Weller has by far the longest and most far-reaching afterlife. *Pickwick*'s loyal servant takes on a life of his own beyond the pages of the novel, from upstaging the *Pickwickians* on stage, to singing comic songs in the music hall, to editing his own comic almanacks, jest books, and songsters, and even penning political commentaries.⁶⁵ In *Pickwick Papers*, Dickens transformed familiar caricatures, such as the cantankerous cad or the bumbling sportsman, into Sam Weller the canny Cockney; in imitations, however, Sam becomes the author of his own

⁶⁴ In fact, *Pickwick Papers* was the most plagiarized work of its time (James 1963: 47).

⁶⁵ See, for example, "Mr. Samuel Weller's Sentiments on the New Poor Law." *Cleave's Penny Gazette*, 16 December 1837.

transformation. Consider, for example, of Sam's jab at Cockney sportsmen in *The Pickwick Comic Almanack* (1838): "I should think not, Sir," said Sam, "as the Chaffinch said to the Cockney Sportsman, that fired three times without hitting on him" (5). As Louis James (1970) and Mary Teresa McGowan (1975) point out, most of these imitations do not have the depth and nuance of Dickens's creation--some even condescend to the canny Cockney--but they still succeed in further complicating, and in some cases ameliorating, the social meaning of Cockney character and Cockney speech.

One popular song, "Sam Weller's Adventures!", which appeared in *The London Singer's Magazine and Reciter's Album* (1838-9), not only claims that Sam "caus'd the smiles of the rich and poor" and "made a hit" of *Pickwick*, but also that he "rose the worth of literature." His name certainly raised the sales of literature, leading many a publisher to add the words "Sam Weller" to titles of materials that had little or nothing to do with the character. *Sam Weller's Favorite Song Book*, for example, is a collection of comic songs, only one of which is related to its namesake, though only tenuously; "Always Gay! Always Gay!", is featured in Moncreiff's play, *Sam Weller* (1837), but is sung by Isabella, not Sam.⁶⁶ An even bolder borrowing of Sam's good name appears in the "Address to the Public" that introduces *Sam Weller; A Journal of Wit and Humour* (1837). In it the editor claims that the anecdotes contained therein are presented by Sam Weller himself:

Sam Slick, in presenting his compliments to the Public, begs leave to
introduce to their respectful notice his particularly humorous friend Sam

⁶⁶ Moncreiff's play was one of many stage adaptations that capitalized on the name of Sam Weller in their titles: W.T. Moncreiff's *Sam Weller; or, The Pickwickians* (1837) and its sequel, *Sam Weller's Tour; or, The Pickwickians in France* (1838), Thomas Hailes Lacy's *The Pickwickians; or, The Peregrinations of Sam Weller*, Frederic Coleman Nantz's *Mr. Pickwick; or, The Sayings and Doings of Sam Weller* (1838), and *The Weller Family* (1878).

Weller, whose intention it will be, weekly, to make them roar with laughter in the true Pickwickian style. Sam Weller's fame for wit and humour is now well established, and Sam Slick feels confident it will not be lessened by his new attempt to excite the risible faculties of the public. Sam Weller will present every week to his friends the most racy, laughable, and piquant pieces of wit and humour. To make the sad gay, the gay merry, and the merry laugh, will be his constant aim, and my good fortune prosper him in his laudable ambition. (n.p.)

This strange bit of prefatory material features not one, but two fictional Sams. Sam Slick, a pseudonym of Canadian writer Thomas Chandler Haliburton, was himself a popular character known for his humor and knowing observations. Here, one Sam simultaneously vouches for and banks on the other, promising readers that his “particularly humorous friend” will make them laugh “weekly” in “the true Pickwickian style.” What follows, however, little resembles anything that had flowed from the pen of “Boz”; most of the anecdotes, many of which poke fun at the Irish, are in that familiar form of the one-liner: “A gentleman at the Irish bar,” “A traveller, after sleeping at an Irish inn,” “An Irish judge,” et cetera, et cetera, ad nauseam. Indeed, the material is anything but a “new attempt to excite the risible faculties of the public”; at least one of the sketches, “Silence of American Women,” had already appeared as “The Silent Girls” in the *Novascotian, Or Colonial Herald* on 8 October 1835 and in series one of *The Clockmaker; Or The Sayings And Doings Of Samuel Slick, Of Slickville* (1836).⁶⁷ It was June of 1837 when Haliburton's penny journal *Sam Weller* was published, a month after

⁶⁷ See George L. Parker's edited collection of Haliburton's work, *The Clockmaker: Series One, Two and Three* (1995: lxxiv, 752).

Number 14 of *Pickwick Papers*, which included Chapters 37-39, was published. By this time readers Sam Weller's "fame for wit and humour" was indeed "well established" and it would seem even the popular Sam Slick couldn't resist jumping on the Pickwickian bandwagon.

Pickwick Songster (1837), a series of comic songs published in sixteen numbers, is more successful in its mimicry of Dickens's creation.⁶⁸ Purportedly edited by Sam Weller and "the honorable members of 'The Pickwick Club'," most of the early numbers contain at least one song related to *Pickwick* or its adaptations. Number 1, for example, features "Sam Weller's Chapter of Crows!", Number 2 "The Good old English Customs" from Moncrieff's *Sam Weller*, Number 3 "Always Gay! Always Gay!", mentioned above, Number 5 "The Pickwick Age," and Number 8 "The Fat Boy". More impressively, the first number includes a "Notice to Correspondents and Subscribers" written in the voice of Sam Weller. Although the writer's representation of Cockney orthography is not as deft as Dickens's--for example, he falls back on eye dialect and spells *character* with a "k"--he does include Wellerisms and alludes to Tony Weller's "nat'ral *purversion* to poetry." Granted the Wellerisms are not as clever as Dickens's, but they are original and closer to Sam's version of the aphorisms than to Simon Spatterdash's. For example:

My rum uns, on makin' o' my *debutt* in a new karacter, I begs to drop my
best bow, and hopes you're all quite chuff, as the hard-hearted pork
butcher said to the poor little hinnocent pigs vhen he vos a goin' to kill
'em!"

⁶⁸ The British Library attributes this series to Thomas Peckett Prest, author of many a penny dreadful and Dickens imitation, including the *Sketch Book by 'Bos'* (1836).

How we interpret Sam's "debutt" here depends on whether we think that he is punning on the French, as in "of the butt" or that he is guilty of a malapropism, but I think it is safe to say that Dickens would not represent his knowing Cockney as being guilty of either. The "k" in "karacter" I have already commented on. And "vhen he vos goin' to kill 'em!" falls a bit flat, but it is in keeping with the spirit of most Pickwickian Wellerisms in that it has a rather macabre quality, as does the second Wellerism: "it is my detarmination to make it nothin' else but a reg'lar *roarer*, as the affectionate mother said of her babby vot cried hissself ev'ry day into *high strikes!*" The latter is reminiscent of at least two of Sam's Wellerisms: "No, no; reg'lar rotation, as Jack Ketch said, ven he tied the men up. Sorry to keep you a watin', Sir, but I'll attend to you directly" and "Business first, pleasure arterwards, as King Richard the Third said ven he stabbed the t' other king in the Tower, afore he smothered the babbies" (91; no. 4, ch. 10; 256 no. 9, ch. 25). The *Songster's* Wellerisms match Dickens's phonetic representation of "reg'lar" and "babbies" and echo the violence present in so many of Sam's odd comparisons.

The song "Sam Weller's Adventures!", too, makes use of Wellerisms. The final three stanzas end with them: "As the gen'leman said, d'ye see, / At the time he vos goin' to be hung!"; "As the *blind man* said vhen he vas *swished* ['married' (*Grose*)] / To the lady vithout any nose!"; and "As the *hemperor* dictated, vhen / The crocodile nipped off his hand!" A fourth Wellerism opens the final stanza: "Now I hopes you're all hearty and *chuff*, / 'Cos I'm now going to take my release, / As the poulterer said, vith a huff, / While a killing the *hinnocent* geese!" These lines are strikingly similar to those featured in the *Pickwick Songster's* "Notice to Correspondents and Subscribers"; both hope the audience is *chuff*, slang for 'chubby' or 'round-faced,' and both tell of the butchering of *hinnocent*

animals. Here, we see either the work of the same author or an imitation imitating an imitation. But whichever the case, two things are amplified in these penny periodicals: the use of slang and Sam Weller's knowingness. In "Sam Weller's Adventures!", for example, Sam explains how his caninness has kept him out of trouble: "I trotted all over town, / And *seed* all the pleasures of life -- / 'Cos being to knowingness *down*, / I never get into no strife." Sam is not just knowledgeable, he is "down" with knowingness. The phrase, with its doubling up of "down" and "knowingness," is at once emphatic and specific about the particular smarts Sam has to offer.

In one of *Pickwick's* many stage adaptations, William Leman Rede's *Peregrinations of Pickwick; A Drama in Three Acts*, first performed at the Adelphi Theatre on 3 April 1837, Pickwick calls on Sam's specific knowledge of the language of the London:

Sam: Pray, sir, might I ask what sort of a hexpition you're starting on?

Pick: Certainly...the Pickwick Club have deemed me the only person who can solve a certain mystery. I am sure, Samuel, you must be aware that for a very considerable time there have been some mysterious words current in the metropolis.

Sam: Oh, a dollop. How's your mother -- has she sold her mangle? -- who are you? -- flare up -- how fat you get -- all round my hat -- what a shocking bad bonnet -- with many other, too numerous to mention in this here advertisement.

Pick: Well, sir, I am about to write a philological work, in which I shall trace the sources of these extraordinary sentences. You shall go with me.

Nothing comes of this philological exhibition--it seems it was all talk--and Rede is likely poking fun at the nineteenth-century fever for philology, in much the same way Dickens makes fun of antiquarians in *Pickwick*, but the mere mention of such an inquiry speaks to the interest Britons had in metropolitan speech in the 1830s. The Pickwickians may have charged their leader with solving the mystery of the language of the streets, but it becomes immediately clear that it is Sam who is the expert.

Given the popularity of Sam's character, it should come as no surprise that all stage adaptations of *Pickwick* give large parts to Sam. All adaptations include the scene in the Inn Yard of the White Hart and most feature Sam writing his valentine. Moncreiff's *Sam Weller; Or, The Pickwickians*, first performed at the Strand Theatre on 17 July 1837, greatly extends Sam's dialogue, even giving him the opportunity to ruminate on his social position:

[V]orst of being a boots is, it puts a stop to hambition--you can't rise no higher, and the human mind naturally aspires; as the pick-pocket said to the gallows:--I'm summat like a fly in a treacle-can--I should uncommonly like to change my sitivation, although the folks does call me a shining character--I emulates the great Wauxhall balloon--I'm for rising in the world--a boots is sich a sort of amphibbious profession, it hasn't any reg'lar standing in the list of trades. (4)

This soliloquy takes the nascent ambition in Sam's conversation with Pickwick from Chapter 16 and inflates it like Vauxhall's balloon. To an audience of working-class theatre goers, the Boots at the White Hart Inn needn't be modest about his ambitions; he can say without hesitation that he would "uncommonly like to change [his] sitivation."

Indeed, as Sam so boldly declares, “the human mind naturally aspires.” Like the Sam of *Pickwick*, this Sam is adept at punning--folks call him a shining character--and his Wellerism is appropriately macabre--a pick-pocket about to swing from the gallows. More interesting, however, is that what appears at first glance to be a malapropism--*amphibbious*--is actually a pun that demonstrates Sam’s keen awareness of social stratification and his liminal position. *Amphibbious* here means both lacking in “reg’lar standing” as, say, a frog on a lily pad and ‘Having two lives; occupying two positions; connected with or combining two classes, ranks, offices, qualities, etc.’ (OED). The occupation of boot cleaner may not make the list of trades, but with the increased social mobility of the 1830s, neither is Sam fixed in, or should we say landlocked by, this position. He does, after all, become a gentleman’s valet, an amphibious position, indeed, as I discuss above.

Not surprisingly, a play bearing the name of Sam Weller features prominently the scene in which Sam composes his valentine to Mary, but Moncreiff does not give much more space to Sam’s courtship on stage than Dickens does in the pages of *Pickwick*. One key difference, however, is that in the play *Pickwick* does not require Sam to wait two years to marry. Instead, in the final scene, *Pickwick* gives Sam one hundred pounds “to provide for [his] wedding dinner” (Act III, Scene IV). What’s more, Sam’s engagement to Mary is celebrated alongside those of Winkle and Isabella, Snodgrass and Emily, as well as Tupman and Rachel, who in the novel remain a bachelor and spinster. *Pickwick* exclaims, “My friends, you’re each bless’d with the girls’ of your hearts! [...] Sam, you too, have your Mary” (Act III, Scene IV). Still, even in a play that bears his name, Sam’s courtship of Mary is part of an ensemble of romance plots, and *Pickwick* does not include

Sam as among his “friends” in his announcement of the engagements; his servant is syntactically separated from the Pickwickians.

Two generations later, and a sign of the enduring popularity of Sam Weller, is Frank E. Emson’s play *The Weller Family* (1878). Sam is not only the star, his courtship of Mary takes center stage and their engagement serves as the comedy’s denouement. Emson’s play is a picture of domestic bliss, complete with the elder Mr. and Mrs. Weller reconciling in the end: “I don’t think widders is quite so bad as I imagined, arter all,” Tony Weller tells the audience (27). The play’s central tension is the disruption of this domestic bliss caused by the morally repugnant red-nosed Mr. Stiggins. In Dickens’s novel, Stiggins distracts Mrs. Weller from her “dooties at home” with ill-conceived campaigns, such as “providing the infant negroes in the West Indies with flannel waistcoats and moral pocket handkerchiefs,” and worse yet, makes her an accomplice to not only his intemperance but also his plot to fool his parishioners into paying his water-rate (557; no. 18, ch. 51; 278; no. 10, ch. 27). Mrs. Weller is similarly duped by Mr. Stiggins in Emson’s play; however, unlike in the novel, it is not Mrs. Weller’s illness that brings her to her moral senses, it is Mary. Instead of Mrs. Weller’s death-bed scene--in the novel only reported by Tony Weller to his son--audiences witness her indignation.

Mrs. W. (*crying*) Would anybody believe there ever was such a hypocrite? Oh, it’s much too bad, that it is, to be deceived like this. Oh, the wretch, if ever he comes here again if I don’t scratch his face for him, that I will, and I’ve treated him like a prince, and there’s that flint-hearted man with not a word of comfort for his wife, but I might have known that.

Weller. Hallo, vot have you been and transmogrified yourself into a portable fire engine for, eh? What's the matter?

Mrs. W. (*sitting R sobbing*) Why, I've been having a long talk with this dear girl, and she has just told me that that slovenly, impudent Mrs. Brown has been telling all the sisters of our Temperance Society that Stiggins says he is firmly persuaded I've purloined for my own use some of the flannel which was intended to be worked up for the little negroes, and he means to get me expelled from the Society altogether.

Mary. (*sitting L.*) Yes, Mr. Weller, it's quite true, Mrs. Brown told so only half an hour ago, and I said I should tell Mrs. Weller of it. Yes, and Mr. Stiggins also said he didn't like to be seen coming to such a low place as the Marquis o' Granby, but his duties obliged him. (25-26).

Having Mary relay the news of Mr. Stiggins's deception, brings her into the center of the plot and into the family fold. Once the Weller family band together and expel Mr. Stiggins from the Marquis o' Granby, and their lives, they are free to enjoy their respectable domesticity, or as Mr. Weller puts it, "I fancies we've got rid of that old land-shark at last, so don't see vy we shouldn't now copy them fairy sort of books, and live happy ever arter" (31).

Emson's play effectively takes Sam Weller and his lively Cockney speech off the city streets and plants them squarely in the parlor, "cheaply but comfortably furnished" (4). In the following chapter, we go back out onto the streets as I explore the representation of nonstandard dialect in the non-fiction work of Henry Mayhew (1812-1887) who reported on the state of London's poor during the mid-nineteenth century. In

his letters to the *Morning Chronicle* (1849-50) and his *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851-52; 1861), in which a number of the *MC* letters were reprinted, Mayhew constructs his oral interviews as if they were fictional narratives; though his texts purport to be objective journalism, they are highly constructed. I analyze the ways in which Mayhew represents the speech of his informants, from honest weavers to flash patterers, and the ways in which these representations draw upon fictional genres even as they attempt to represent authentic speakers.

Chapter 4

Pattering Hintellecks:

Working-Class Voices in Henry Mayhew's Investigative Journalism

We live like yourself, sir, by the hexercise of our hintellecks--we by talking, and you by writing.
—“Running Patterer” in *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851)

This dissertation has worked to tease out the complicated and sometimes contradictory attitudes the Victorians had toward nonstandard varieties of English. Thus far, I have examined how dialect is represented and functions in fictional texts--the novel and the sketch. In this chapter, I will consider the role of dialect in non-fictional texts--the investigative reporting Henry Mayhew (1812-1887) conducted for London's *Morning Chronicle* between September 1849 and December 1850 and later for his own series of weekly two-penny pamphlets, *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851-52).⁶⁹ Mayhew was not the first nor was he the last to investigate and report on the conditions of the poor and labouring classes of Britain,⁷⁰ but his contribution stands out amongst the nineteenth-century profusion of such publications for its focus on the opinions of the poor themselves and its abundance of direct speech. Unlike most of his colleagues, Mayhew

⁶⁹ The weekly numbers of *London Labour and the London Poor* were subsequently collected and published in three volumes in 1851. In 1861, a fourth volume was published, of which Mayhew wrote only the first thirty-seven pages; his co-authors Bracebridge Hemyng, John Binny and Andrew Halliday were responsible for the bulk of Volume IV. For more on Mayhew's publication history see Humpherys (1971: xviii-xix; 1977: 16-26).

⁷⁰ By 1849, readers were well acquainted with the “Condition of England Question,” as Carlyle dubbed it in 1839: from Edwin Chadwick's *Report on the Sanitary Conditions of the Labouring Poor* (1842) and Friedrich Engels's *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845) to parliamentary blue books, as well as privately published pamphlets and newspaper articles. Post-Mayhew publications include John Hollingshead's *Ragged London in 1861*, George Sims's *How the Poor Live* (1883), and Charles Booth's multi-volume *Life and Labour of the People in London* (1889-1903).

reproduced long passages of his informants' speech in his reports and he did not hesitate to use nonstandard orthography to approximate the Cockney dialect. Mayhew, the novelist cum playwright cum social explorer, drew on established literary techniques of representing speech to bring his informants to life. Indeed his contemporaries credited him with accomplishing what no other investigator before him had: capturing the voices of the poor. Since then, critics have continued to praise Mayhew for his "amazing ear for speech" (Auden 123) and for how his "incomparable records of conversations" allow his informants to "jump from the page with an extraordinary liveliness" (Williams 218). Yet more recent criticism questions how close we can get to the voices of the poor, as they are always mediated and framed by a middle-class observer.⁷¹ I, like Ellen Rosenman, am interested in what these working-class voices *can* do, despite this persistent mediation and framing. As Rosenman points out, most studies of Mayhew's *LLL* "unwittingly replicate the charge they bring against Mayhew. Focusing only on interactions that fulfill bourgeois stereotypes, they miss the articulate self-awareness of other speakers" (56). While Rosenman focuses on informants' use of obscenities as instances of "subtle withholding of deference," I examine their wordplay and the literary techniques Mayhew uses to represent their Cockney speech to illustrate both parties' celebration of working-class verbal agility.

As we saw in Chapter three, the indexicality of the Cockney dialect in nineteenth-century Britain was complex and multivalent; its social meanings were not only in flux, they differed depending on speaker, interlocutor, and context. For some Victorians, however, Cockney would seem irredeemable. In the section "Of Vulgarities" of his

⁷¹ Humpherys (1977: 91-93); Murphy (1998).

Modern Painters (1860), John Ruskin (1819-1900) had these harsh words to level against the Cockney dialect:

[V]ulgarly is indicated by coarseness of language and manners, only so far as this coarseness has been contracted under circumstances not necessarily producing it. The illiterateness of a Spanish or Calabrian peasant is not vulgar, because they had never an opportunity of acquiring letters; but the illiterateness of an English school-boy is. So again, provincial dialect is not vulgar; but cockney dialect, the corruption, by blunted sense, of a finer language continually heard, is so in a deep degree.
(vol. 5, sec. 19)

Speakers of vulgar language for Ruskin, then, are only those who really ought to know better, the Londoners who are exposed to that “finer language,” Standard English, on a daily basis. Peasants, on the other hand, whether they hail from Spain, southern Italy, or the British countryside, are not guilty of vulgarity in speech. For Ruskin, speakers of provincial dialects are those mute stoop-backed peasants of *Pickwick Papers*, who one might see lift their heads momentarily from their work in the field to spy a passing coach. Kept to their fields, Ruskin’s peasants are innocuous, whereas the Cockney is ubiquitous to the streets of London, everywhere and anywhere, hawking their wares, “crying” their songs, pattering their “murders” and “dies”. Cockneys are vulgar to Ruskin not just because as Londoners they should know better but also because they demand something from him: his attention, his acknowledgment, a response.

The Cockney’s mobility and resounding voice trouble Ruskin, and not just in the street but also in the pages of literature. Ruskin calls upon Robert Burns (1759-96) to

further his case against the Cockney, comparing a stanza from, “Blythe was she,” to an utterance by Mrs. Sarah ‘Sairey’ Gamp, a Cockney character from Dickens’s *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843-4), condemning the latter for its vulgarity and inarticulateness:

There is no vulgarity in—

“Blythe, blythe, blythe was she,
Blythe was she, but and ben,
And weel she liked a Hawick gill,
And leugh to see a tappit hen;”

but much in Mrs. Gamp’s inarticulate “bottle on the chimley-piece, and let me put my lips to it when I am so disposed.” (ibid)

In a footnote, Ruskin provides a translation of the Burns’s Lowland Scots, explaining that “but and ben” means “in either room of the house,” while “tappit hen” can mean either “a hen sitting on her eggs,” or “a vessel containing three quarts of claret.” For these latter denotations, Ruskin, much like Gaskell does for *Mary Barton* (1848), provides quotations from literature as evidence of the terms’ legitimacy, from English antiquarian Joseph Ritson’s (1752-1803) collection of *Scottish Songs* (1794) and Walter Scott’s *Guy Mannering* (1815), respectively. Poor Mrs. Gamp receives no such respect, even though she and Burns share the use of *chimley* and it is listed as a legitimate dialect term in a number of nineteenth-century philological sources, including *A Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language* (1808).⁷² Ruskin, rather unfairly, pits the represented speech of

⁷² Burns uses “chimlie” in his poem “Halloween”: “An’ jump out-owre the chimlie” (VII: 8). *Chimley* (and variations: e.g., *chimbley*, *chimlay*, *chimla*) is also listed in Samuel Pegge’s *Anecdotes of the English Language; Chiefly Regarding the Local Dialect of London and Its Environs* (1803), John Trotter Brockett’s *A Glossary of North Country Words, In Use* (1825), Sir George Cornwall Lewis’s *A Glossary of Provincial Words Used in Herefordshire and Some of the Adjoining Counties* (1839), and Thomas Wright’s *Dictionary of Obsolete and Provincial English* (1857), just to name a few. Pegge is perhaps the boldest in his defense of *chimley*, claiming that this pronunciation was “Sanctioned by Shakespere” [sic] and explaining that it is “not peculiar to London, for it prevails universally. It is found in Lancashire: see the Glossary to Tim Bobbin’s Works. It may be observed that the *n* and *l* are both consonants of the same organ” (48-49). What Pegge means by his last remark, is that /n/ and /l/ are articulated with the tongue in

a comic creation against both the actual speech of romanticized peasants and the oral-ballad-influenced poetry of “Scotland’s favourite son.” In this way, he uses the conflation of literary and literal subjects, which worked so effectively for the Manchester advocates in valorizing the Lancashire dialect, in order to denigrate the dialect of London.

Nearly forty years later, in his 1898 study of Dickens, novelist George Gissing (1857-1903) plucks Mrs. Gamp from the pages of Dickens’s novel and plants her in the streets of London. “Meeting her in flesh,” Gissing suggests, “we should shrink disgusted, so well does the foulness of her person correspond with the baseness of her mind. Hearing her speak, we should turn away in half-amused contempt” (89). Written over half a century after the publication of *Martin Chuzzlewit* and nearly three decades after the Education Act, Gissing’s harsh criticism of Mrs. Gamp is inflected not only by shifting language attitudes but also by shifts in the English language; Mrs. Gamp sounds both uneducated and old fashioned, two qualities that would be amplified if readers were to bump into her in the streets of 1890s London. “Yet, when we encounter her in the pages of Dickens,” Gissing continues, “we cannot have too much of Mrs. Gamp’s company; her talk is an occasion of uproarious mirth, we never dream of calling her to moral judgment, but laugh the more, the more famously she sees fit to behave” (89). Indeed, readers fell in love with Mrs. Gamp--among Dickens’s characters she was second

the same position, the alveolar ridge. Lewis also draws phonology in his defense of *chimbley*: “The insertion of *b* after *m* occurs likewise in *homber* and *sumber* [...] Sometimes the provincial dialect omits *b* after *m*: thus the Somersetshire dialect has *timmer* for *timber*” (22). Pointing out these phonological parallels shows that such pronunciations are not mistakes or corruptions but rather regular grammatical features. Walton Burgess, however, and perhaps not surprisingly, lists *chimley* as mistake number 163 in his *Never Too Late To Learn! Five Hundred Mistakes...Corrected* (1856: 37).

only to Sam Weller in popularity⁷³--even though she is, to use Gissing's words, "a very loathsome creature; a sluttish, drunken, avaricious, dishonest woman" (74). Despite this marked contrast to the loyal, honest, and sharply-dressed Sam Weller, her partner in Cockney loquaciousness, Mrs. Gamp manages to rival him in celebrity and admiration. She's a consummate fraud but we love her for it. The character of Mrs. Gamp attests to the fascination Victorian readers had with the fraudulent, a truth perhaps not universally acknowledged, but one in which Henry Mayhew put his confidence.

This chapter considers Victorian readers' love affair with another kind of fraud: the "flying" and "standing" patterers of London, those artful dodgers of the "paper trade" whom Mayhew praises for their "mental superiority" and "gift of the gab" despite their immorality (*LLLPI*: 213;235). If Sam Weller, with his comedy, canniness, and honesty, could charm a nation of readers, Mayhew shows us that the patterers, who relied on their humor, wits, and the "dodge" to survive, could be equally captivating. These men, for they were always men,⁷⁴ were sellers of "cocks," quarter-, half- or whole-sheet papers featuring fictitious tales passed off as true accounts of, usually local and often scandalous, happenings. The London patterers considered themselves "the haristocracy of the streets." "We live like yourself, sir," one of his informants tells Mayhew, "by the hexercise of our hintellects--we by talking, and you by writing" (*LLLPI*: 213).

Mayhew's informant, in a speech style marked as working-class London, not only places himself on equal standing with Mayhew, the middle-class journalist, but also

⁷³ Like Sam Weller, Mrs. Gamp inspired several, though not nearly as many, dramatic adaptations, appropriations, and plagiarisms sporting her name. But perhaps more telling of her popularity is that fact that in the mid-nineteenth century the word *gamp* became slang for 'nurse' and 'umbrella' (OED).

⁷⁴ Women "paper workers," Mayhew explains, "never make their appearance in the streets, but obtain a livelihood by 'busking,' as it is technically termed, or, in other words, by offering their goods for sale only at the bars and in the tap-rooms and parlours of taverns" (215).

makes him complicit in the patterers' fraudulent activities. And Mayhew lets this statement stand. He does not mock this informant's /h/-insertion, in fact, he does not comment on it at all, nor does he contradict his informant's bold assertion. Instead, Mayhew goes on to contrast the patterers with costermongers:

But notwithstanding the self-esteem of the patterers, I am inclined to think that they are less impressionable and less susceptible of kindness than the costers whom they despise. Dr. Conolly has told us that, even among the insane, the educated classes are the most difficult to move and govern through their affections. They are invariably suspicious, attributing unworthy motives to every benefit conferred, and consequently incapable of being touched by any sympathy on the part of those who may be affected by their distress. So far as my experience goes it is the same with the street-patterers. Any attempt to befriend them is almost sure to be met with distrust. [...] The impulsive costermonger, however, approximating more closely to the primitive man, moved solely by his feelings, is as easily humanized by any kindness as he is brutified by any injury. (I: 213)

Instead of distancing himself from broadside street-sellers, Mayhew seems to corroborate the assertion that they are intellectual equals; they certainly have more in common with each other than they do with the "primitive" hawkers of "fruit and veg." Mayhew even cites the work of psychiatrist John Conolly (1794-1866) as evidence of the patterers' mental superiority. Don't take their word for it, or even mine, Mayhew seems to say, for science has shown that those of us who make our living by the exercise of our intellects are not easily duped. Mayhew's gesture toward objectivity here is not surprising in the

context of his larger project, which draws heavily on statistics and techniques of objective observation gleaned from the field of chemistry, but in the context of this specific discussion it does seem rather curious. Both Mayhew and the patterer, his informant suggests, trade in news that purports to be factual but is dubious, but only the latter is upfront about his deception. Indeed, he revels in it. As we shall see, so do Mayhew and his readers.

One of the aims of this chapter is to further complicate our view of Victorian attitudes toward the Cockney dialect by exploring the conflation of fictional and non-fictional genres. Through an examination of the use of literary techniques in non-literary contexts, I show that aspects of fiction, quite paradoxically, are instrumental in the positive construction of Cockney speakers in non-fictional contexts. In my previous chapters, I have focused on the ways in which nonstandard dialects can index respectability. In this chapter, I show how the Cockney dialect could garner respect for its speakers, despite their disreputable behaviour. In Part I, I examine Mayhew's methodology, contrasting his use of literary techniques to those of his fellow correspondent for the *Morning Chronicle*, Angus Reach, and considering their differing effects. In Part II, I focus more closely on how Mayhew represents the speech of the patterers and show how they emerge as Mayhew's peers. In Part III, I discuss Mayhew's public Readings of *London Labour and the London Poor* and the way in which he takes on the persona of patterer himself.

“I sees you a-writing”: From Oral to Written to Aural

Henry Mayhew is now famous for his *London Labour and the London Poor* (hereafter *LLLP*), but in his own time he was also well known for his weekly

contributions to the *Morning Chronicle* (hereafter *MC*). Mayhew's series of eighty-two letters were part of the newspaper's larger survey of the conditions of the country's laboring population and poor. The *MC* employed many correspondents on this project, including Angus Reach who was responsible for the manufacturing districts, Alexander Mackay who surveyed the rural areas, and Charles Mackay who covered Birmingham and Liverpool. As the newspaper's "metropolitan correspondent," Mayhew investigated the lives of the "honest" and "dishonest" poor, the former of which were sub-divided into "striving" and "disabled," or those who "will work" and those who "can't work," while the latter were deemed those who "won't work" (Letter I, Friday, 19 October 1849). The majority of the letters concern those who will work, primarily skilled labourers, such as the Spitalfields weavers, operative tailors, boot and shoe makers, toy makers, carpenters, cabinet makers, coopers and, of course, distressed needlewomen. Among the unskilled labourers interviewed are ballast men, coalwhippers, and dock labourers, some of whom are out-of-work weavers. Mayhew also submitted letters on the ragged schools, low lodging houses, and his speculations on the causes of vagrancy.

In contrast, the contents of *LLL* are devoted to the lives of costermongers, hucksters, and street performers. Less than ten percent of the letters in the *MC* concern these types of workers, revised versions of which are reprinted in *LLL*. In their study of Mayhew's *MC* contributions, Yeo and Thompson (1971) lament, or at the very least seem embarrassed by this change in Mayhew's subject matter and what they perceive as a change in his style: "Whatever the reasons, the Mayhew of the *Morning Chronicle* was already beginning to recede, and the somewhat quaint--but also more dramatic and more readable--Mayhew of the London street folk was taking his place. After another

decade or two, this was the only Mayhew that was remembered” (45). Judging by *LLL* alone, Yeo and Thompson suggest, Mayhew seems “no more than a gifted journalist, with an undisciplined zest for collecting facts about the poor and picturesque characters among the poor” (51). Because one of the aims of Yeo and Thompson’s project is to recover Mayhew as a serious social investigator, they privilege his contributions to the *MC*, deeming the “quaint,” “dramatic,” and “more readable” *LLL* an inferior product in terms of “economic and sociological analysis” (45; 51). This study, on the other hand, asks why street folk take over the pages of *LLL*, how and why they steal the spotlight from the respectable and pathetic workers that not only drew reader sympathy but also reader donations in the *MC* offices.⁷⁵ I would suggest that Mayhew’s and his readers’ interest in street folk goes beyond the scopophilia that most critics point too.⁷⁶

I would like to turn our focus away from the pleasures of looking toward the pleasures of listening. John Picker (2003) has shown that street noise could be a nuisance, for middle-class Londoners especially--indeed some even charged the incessant burr of barrel organs with hastening the death of an already ailing John Leech (48). And yet readers, then and now, listened with rapt attention to “tumult of the thousand different cries” (I: 11) that filled the pages of Mayhew’s work, the remarkable narratives of Mayhew’s informants who, although central to London life, were often marginalized in print. Through his use of literary techniques, I argue, Mayhew amplifies readers’ aural pleasure while translating the oral into the written.

In this section, I examine Mayhew’s use of literary techniques to represent the narratives of his informants for the *Morning Chronicle* and tease apart the differences of

⁷⁵ Readers sent over £800 in donations to the *Chronicle* offices, mostly in response to the plight of the distressed needlewomen.

⁷⁶ Peter Stallybrass and Allon White (1986: 129-30); John B. Lamb (1997); David L. Pike (2005: 199).

his methods to those of another of the *MC*'s contributors, Angus Reach (1821-1856), who served as its correspondent in the manufacturing districts. As we shall see, the writers' disparate methodologies have startling effects on the textual results of their inquiries into the lives of weavers. Beginning with the same subject matter--skilled hand-loom weavers made obsolete by technology and economic circumstances--Reach, the educated journalist, remains to the fore, directing readers' responses, whereas Mayhew, the bohemian, increasingly allows the weavers to speak for themselves. So eloquent are Mayhew's informants that readers must and do sympathize with them, even when they reveal their dishonesty, laziness, or immorality.

The first of Mayhew's letters to feature quotations of his informants is Letter II,⁷⁷ published on Tuesday, 23 October 1849. In it Mayhew visits Bethnal-Green to interview the Spitalfields weavers, who are classified by Mayhew as "those who will work" and are among what he considers the "honest poor" (40), those whose privations are due to the "insufficiency of their wages" and not due to "improvident habits" (51). Though the weavers of the North and those of London hail from different traditions—the London weavers were descendents of French Huguenots—there are striking similarities in the way their pasts are glorified. London's Spitalfield weavers were once independent craftsmen, but they were eventually replaced by cheap labor and piecework and hurt by market instability. These are the downtrodden weavers Mayhew encounters, but he is careful to gesture toward their past glory: "There was at one time a Floricultural Society, an Historical Society, and a Mathematical Society," readers are assured, "all maintained by the operative silk-weavers; and the celebrated Dollond, the inventor of the achromatic

⁷⁷ Letter II is actually Mayhew's third report for the *MC*, the first being a description of the ravages of cholera on Jacob's Island, while the second, Letter I, acts as an introduction to the series of 81 letters to follow.

telescope, was a weaver; so too were Simpson and Edwards, the mathematicians, before they were taken from the loom into the employ of the Government” (54). Such accolades are not unlike Brierley’s praise of Lancashire weavers in “Some Phases of Lancashire Life” (1890). However, Brierley wrote of an intellectual tradition that was still alive among weavers in the 1880s; his characterization of weavers reflects and promotes Lancashire men of the present. In contrast, Mayhew goes on to say, “Such *were* the Spitalfields weavers at the beginning of the present century [...] The weaver of our own time, however, though still far above the ordinary artizan, both in refinement and intellect, falls far short of the weaver of former years” (54). The obsolete and poverty-stricken weaver of Mayhew’s time “falls short” of his legacy, but he maintains some of its past glory. Representing the weaver in this way emphasizes both his respectable status and the negative aspects of his changing economy, while absolving him of any guilt.

The way in which Mayhew frames his informants’ speech reflects their ambiguous status as fallen artisans. The first weaver Mayhew encounters is a velvet weaver, whom he describes as “the ideal of his class – a short spare figure, with a thin face and sunken cheeks” (57). Mayhew’s prose here evokes the image of a once proud man, now hollowed out by his exploitation. As if such a man’s speech cannot stand on its own, Mayhew uses indirect discourse at the start of his interview: “*He told us* he was to have 3s. 6d. per yard for the fabric he was engaged upon [...] They were six in the family, *he said* [...] Up to 1824, the price for the same work as he is now doing was 6s. The reduction, *he was convinced*, arose from the competition in the trade, one master cutting under the other” (emphasis added 57). The next line Mayhew marks off his

informant's contributions with quotation marks but retains the third person voice: ““The workmen are obliged to take the low prices, because *they* have not the means to hold out, and *they* knew that if *they* don't take the work others will. [...]” (57). Here indirect discourse gives way to free indirect discourse, and a few lines later, though still within the same paragraph and quotation marks, the first person appears: “I have made a stand against the lowness of prices, and have lost my work through refusing to take the price” (57). Most striking is the line, “Manufacturers may be divided into two classes – those who care for their men's comforts and welfare, and those who care for none but themselves” (57). These statements, though presented as if spoken by the informant, echo Mayhew's own speech—his own categorization of the London poor. The quotation continues, “In the work of reduction certain houses take the lead, taking advantage of the least depression to offer the workmen less wages. It's useless talking about French goods. Why, we've driven the French out of the market in umbrellas and parasols – but the people are a-starving while they're a-driving of 'em out” (57). Here we see a sudden shift from formal, almost scientific diction, to not one, but two instances of a-affixing, a feature of English that was obsolete except in nonstandard varieties.

Mayhew's use of free indirect discourse suggests that he is perhaps not willing to let the informant's speech stand on its own. Indeed, the very next line reverts back to the third person: “A little time back he'd had only one loom at work for eight persons, and lived by making away with his clothes,” (57) and the quotation ends in the same voice, “Labour is so low he can't afford to send his children to school. He only sends them of a Sunday – can't afford it of a work-a-day” (57-58). A similar pattern is discernable in the interview that follows:

At the next house the man took rather a more gloomy view of his calling. He was at work at brown silk for umbrellas. His wife worked when she was able, but she was nursing a sick child. [...] Weavers were all a-getting poorer, and masters all a-getting country houses. [...] Works 15 hours, and often more. When he knocks off at 10 at night, leaves lights up all around him – many go on till 11. All he knows is, he can't. They are possessed of greater strength than he is, he imagines. In the dead of night he can always see one light somewhere – some man “on the finish.” Wakes at five, and then he can hear the looms going. [...] Isn't able to tell exactly what is the cause of the depression – “I only know I suffers from it – aye, that I do! I do! and have severely for some time,” said the man, striking the silk before him with a clenched fist. (58)

Here again Mayhew uses free indirect discourse, but this time it moves from reportage, with short, choppy clauses, “Works 15 hours, and often more,” to a more literary style that evokes a somber mood, “In the dead of night he can always see one light somewhere – some man “on the finish.” Finally, the weaver's voice is allowed to stand alone, when his direct speech would have the most dramatic effect. As I mention above, Letter II is the first of Mayhew's contributions to the *MC*'s survey of labour and the poor to feature extensive quotations of his informants. The informant's voice emerges as the letter progresses. Mayhew flows in and out of representing the weavers' voices directly, injecting his own voice less and less as the letter progresses.

When Mayhew encounters a man whom he calls “the old weaver,” however, he represents an informant's speech entirely in direct discourse. Humpherys (1977) and

Murphy (2005) assert that Mayhew's questions, even in the midst of informants' statements, are still discernable, but in this case, it seems as though the old weaver is speaking uninterrupted at his own accord; he knows Mayhew's guide and talks candidly, directly to him: "'Oh, Billy, I am so glad to see you,' said the old weaver to my companion; 'I've been dreadful bad, nearly dead with the cholera'" (61). The narrative that follows, for the most part, stems from the old weaver's bout with cholera; he could very well be catching up with an old friend rather than reporting on his poverty to a journalist. When the old weaver does address Mayhew directly, it is to ask a leading question: "I should like to ask a question here, as I sees you a-writing, sir. When is the people of England to see that there big loaf they was promised – that's it – the people wants to know when they're to have it" (62).

This rhetorical question and the speech that follows echo the words of the Lancashire weavers that I discuss in Chapter two, especially those of Ben Brierley's literary persona, "Ab-o'th'-Yate," whose impromptu speech in Rotton Row leads his interlocutors to suspect he is "some great man in cog." Indeed, the two weavers share that air of authenticity that garners them respect and narrative space. The old weaver exclaims, "I am sure if the ladies who wears what we makes, or the Queen of England was to see our state, she'd never let her subjects suffer such privations in a land of plenty" (62). Of course, with Mayhew "a-writing" down every word he says, the old weaver can be relatively certain that the ladies will see the state of the weavers reported in the pages of their morning paper—they will no longer be blind to the tears that stain their garments.

Despite occasional evidence of what Murphy calls hidden dialogue,⁷⁸ the old weaver so fully and effectively takes over the narrative that when Mayhew does finally interject, he does so in brackets:

“Billy, just turn up that shell now, and let the gentleman see what beautiful fabrics we’re in the habit of producing—and then he shall say whether we ought to be in the filthy state we are. Just show the light, Billy! That’s for the ladies to wear and adorn them, and make them handsome.” [It was an exquisite piece of maroon-coloured velvet, that, amidst all the squalor of the place, seemed marvelously beautiful, and it was a wonder to see it unsoiled amid the filth that surrounded it.] “That’s cotton partly, you see, sir, just for manufacturers to cheat the public, and get a cheap article, and have all the gold out of the poor working creatures they can, and don’t care nothing about them.” (63)

Mayhew’s descriptive interjection needn’t have been put in brackets, but doing so highlights both the import and colloquialness of the old weaver’s speech. The juxtaposition of Mayhew’s formal, written register with the weaver’s piling on – “and get a cheap article, and have all the gold [...], and don’t care nothing about them” – not to mention his use of the double negative, is echoed in both the contrast between the exquisite velvet and its filthy surroundings and the contrast between Mayhew’s and the weaver’s perception of the cloth. Mayhew, much like the middle-class reader, is duped by the seeming sumptuousness of the fabric, while the weaver knows that it is “cotton partly,” “a cheap article.” The weaver’s control over the form of the narrative is in

⁷⁸ e.g., A statement such as, “It’s no use talking about the parish; you might as well talk to a wall” (61), could be read as an answer to an absent question, “Can the parish not help?”

keeping with his authority over its content, a control he maintains: the final words of the letter are his: “They’ve lowered the wages so low, that one would hardly believe the people would take the work. But what’s one to do? – the children can’t *quite* starve. Oh no! – oh no!” (63). Ending this letter with the weaver’s words, his emphasis on *quite*, his repeated cries of “oh no!”, creates a desire in readers to read, or rather, hear more from these urban storytellers. The inclusion of precise prices and wages that the weavers receive convinces readers that their situations really are as difficult as they claim. In this way, Mayhew avoids the trap of turning weavers into victims by presenting them as intelligent experts in their occupation; readers should not be moved to pity but rather to anger at the economic circumstances that press weavers down.

Contrasted with reports from the provincial correspondents, Mayhew’s representation of his informants is all the more captivating. The manufacturing correspondent, Angus Reach, rather than capitalizing on the Northern dialects, even if only for their quaintness, often represents the regional speech of his informants with standard phonology. In Letter XXII on the mining districts of Northumberland and Durham, Reach quotes a coal hewer thus:

“We believe that working men in this country work too long and too hard, and we would like to see the time and the fatigue both abridged. [...] We feel assured that if we worked to the utmost that we are capable of, we should suffer severely in health, and perhaps ultimately in wages. We know that there are more men in the trade than are requisite to raise the amount of coals required for the average vend; but by restricting each individual’s work, we compel the masters to employ all, or nearly all of

us, and thus to bring into operation what, under the competing system, would be surplus labour.” (31 December 1849)

The informant, or Reach’s translation of the informant’s speech, goes on for several more lines. This passage does not sound like the speech of a coal hewer. For that matter it does not sound like speech at all—it has none of the hallmarks of quoted speech: contractions, elisions, etc. Instead its formal lexicon (e.g., *requisite*, *compel*, *thus*) and its features of written register, such as dependent clauses, render the passage as dry as the driest of governmental or legal documents. Like Mayhew, Reach seems to be experimenting with how to capture and represent the speech of his informants. In this example especially, admittedly an extreme one, we can see that Reach takes as his model, perhaps not surprisingly, Parliamentary Blue Books, those bundles of facts that since the 1830s were in wide circulation. Constructing his ethos based on the precedent set by the style of the Blue Books grants the young writer authority, but at what expense?

Even the reports in which Reach does transcribe speech with colloquial features, his presence as an expert guide for readers is evident. For example, in his letter on the silk weavers of Middleton (Letter XII), a village that lies between Manchester and Rochdale, Reach does capture the dialect of the region, but the results of its inclusion could not have a more different effect than the Cockney dialect has in Mayhew’s report on the Spitalfields weavers. At first glance, Reach’s commentary seems reminiscent of the Lancashire advocates’ own rhetoric on the purity of their traditional culture and dialect: “Some of the oldest and purest blood of the Lancashire yeoman keeps its current still unmixed by the hearths of this village” (26 November 1849). However, we are soon told that the “‘folk o’ Middleton’, to use their own vernacular,” are guilty of

“intermarrying to the extent of breeding scrofulous disease” and that they are “clannish and prejudiced and peculiar as all such septs are.” To Reach’s credit, he does not romanticize the “folk o’ Middleton,” or capitalize on their “Englishness” in order to build pathos and garner sympathy. And these are not his goals as an objective reporter cum ethnographer. Indeed, his clinical approach to their practice of endogamy and with the use of the word “septs,” which was most often used in reference to clans of Ireland, casts the Middleton folk as the subjects of an ethnography.⁷⁹

Reach’s commentary on the Middleton folks’ culture is matched by his technique of representing their speech; he begins with indirect speech, then the voice of his informant begins to bleed in:

The man lamented over the fall of wages. Twenty years ago he used to make twice as much as now. He didn’t know how it was. He supposed it was the masters. They was hard on the poor man. They was grievous in their ’batements. [...] He wrought, himself, ten hours a day, or twelve just as he was in the humour—some days more nor other days. If he wor lazy beginning in a morning, he made up for it at night. Sometimes, in course, he stopped the loom and went for a walk—why not? I inquired whether the house belonged to him? No, he wished it did. A vast heap in them parts lived in their own houses—more nor in any town in Lancashire. The children (by the way, they were feeding the poultry with crumbs of bread left from the dinner table)—the children were just brought up to their father’s trade. There was ‘naought’ else for ’em to do.

⁷⁹ As do Reach’s later comparisons of the weavers to “Hindustan” craftsmen and their landscape to the “Sahara” (199).

This passage is not unlike the passage from Mayhew's letter quoted above in its gradual use of free indirect discourse. However, Reach's use of the third person has a distancing effect and gives the claims, "They was hard on the poor man. They was grievous in their 'batements," though probably not intentionally, a tone of incredulity. Reach's use of the Lancashire dialect markers, the third person plural *was* and the elision of the initial phoneme in *abatements*, especially when juxtaposed with the Latinate *grievous*, with its educated and legal connotations, rather than giving space to the weaver's voice, sound like Reach mimicking his voice, not in a mocking or derisive manner, but in an imperfect manner, and the weaver's subjectivity is lost in the translation.⁸⁰ Similarly, the Lancashire pronunciation of *were*, "wor" is used in a sentence that implies the weaver is guilty of slothfulness. Contrasted with Mayhew's weaver, who works fifteen hours or more and rebukes himself for not possessing greater strength to work even more, Reach's weaver seems prone to shirk his duties for the sake of a stroll, and "why not?" One might read this as illustrative of the relative freedom and autonomy the Northern weaver enjoys in contrast to the London weavers, who are held in the grip of masters, especially those in the "slop" trade. However, Reach's subsequent remarks, "I inquired whether the house belonged to him? No, he wished it did," suggest that perhaps if the weaver "wor" not so lazy and stopped his loom less, he might own his home, especially when it is considered that "a vast heap in them parts lived in their own houses." Reach's use of parentheses is a sharp contrast to Mayhew's use of brackets; Mayhew's aside, as I discuss above, enhances and supports the weaver's narrative, whereas Reach's parenthetical remark, "(by the way, they [the children] were feeding the poultry with crumbs of bread left from

⁸⁰ As Daniel Gunn (2004) has shown, free indirect discourse can be used to mimic characters, to show narrative distance from characters rather than compassion for or intimacy with them.

the dinner table),” relates only to Reach’s description of the “barbarously primitive” loom-shop, where “half a dozen cocks and hens” have “scratched and scraped” the “earthen floor” (199).

Each of the techniques Reach employs effectively distances him and his readers from his informants; their voices are mimicked rather than represented. In Reach’s hands, the Lancashire dialect is rendered bereft of the prestige, and even the quaintness, it is capable of indexing. The dialect features Reach chooses to include in his quotations in free indirect discourse are those that would be salient to outsiders (e.g., *naought*), especially those that are more generally “nonstandard” rather than particular to Lancashire (e.g., third-person plural *was*; the elision of the interdental fricative in *them*). What’s more, Reach alternates between *abatements* and *'batements*, *bate* and *'bate* in representing the speech of the Middleton weavers, three of which appear in the speech of a single speaker: “But the masters was using us to *bate* down the Spitalfields weavers. [...] The wages are not very different now, but there are grievous and unjust *abatements*. [...] Very often, sir, there was one-and-sixpence and two-and-sixpence unjustly *'bated* out of a week’s work” (emphasis added 201). Reach’s use of the apostrophe to indicate a missing letter is curious here, for he cites the speaker as using *bate* as a verb without an apostrophe just a few lines earlier. Such a use of the apostrophe, I would argue, is an example of eye dialect—the use of nonstandard spelling to illustrate a pronunciation that is actually no different from Standard English pronunciation (e.g., *sez* for *says* or *wuz* for *was*) to mark a character as a dialect speaker, as foreign, or as uneducated.

Both *bate* and *abate* are listed in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as meaning ‘to lower in amount’; ‘to bring down in value.’ And while *bate* is marked “obsolete,” it

should be remembered that older forms were alive and well in nineteenth-century Lancashire English. The *OED*'s latest citation for *bate* is dated 1691: "He must bate the Labourer's Wages," from a letter written by John Locke, no less. The *Glossary of Lancashire Dialect* also includes *bate* in its entries: "BATE, v. to abate, to lessen, to take something from, to deduct, to diminish, to keep back part of a payment," and offers Shakespeare, Milton and Dryden as textual evidence of its use in that sense, followed by an example of colloquial use collected in 1875: "Well, what'n yo *bate*? Aw'st noan gie that mich, as heaw it is." The aphetic form of *abate* was still in use in Lancashire in the late 1840s, when Reach was conducting his interviews there, but as a middle-class Scotsman, educated in Edinburgh and employed in London, Reach hears the Lancashire dialect as filtered through his own ideas about correctness and depicted his Middleton informants as making linguistic mistakes.⁸¹ We might say that, when it comes to dialects, Reach has a tin ear.

Indeed, in contrast to Mayhew, who revels in the voices of the poor and uses them not only to enliven his reports but also to support his evidence, Reach seems to consider direct discourse an obstacle to his mode of investigative journalism: "I shall not attempt to classify the topics which I found scribbled in my note-book. In conversations with working men it is almost impossible to keep them to the point," Reach explains. The conversational data Reach finds "scribbled in his notebook" is unwieldy and defies classification. "[A]nd perhaps," Reach adds, "a more vivid idea is given of the colloquy, and especially of the principal interlocutor, by putting on paper his chat, rambling and disjointed, as it was uttered" (200). What follows is a paragraph of quoted direct speech,

⁸¹ Reach does mention "the lingering Saxon idiom" in the speech of one of his informants (203), but earlier he attributes the Lancaster pronunciation of *tea*, "tay," as "more Hibernico" (202).

that of the Middleton weaver who speaks of “grievous and unjust abatements.” Reach claims to give a “vivid idea” of the conversation by transcribing his weaver’s “chat” just “as it was uttered,” an assurance that echoes Mayhew’s promise to repeat “the story of the people’s sufferings [...] in the self same words in which they were told to [him]” (111). However, although both correspondents make claims to objective observation in their reporting, their approaches to their materials and the resulting texts differ markedly. Reach is remarkably honest about his methodology and the difficulties he has with presenting his data, while Mayhew, though seemingly transparent in his methods, keeps his manipulation of his data cleverly cloaked. For example, let us contrast Reach’s treatment of his weaver’s “chat” with Mayhew’s transcription of his old weaver’s story. Both feature “hidden dialogue” that undergirds their seeming monologues, but Reach’s presence in his interview is closer to the surface—his presence is evident from the first few lines of the weaver’s monologue:

Remember better times? That do I well. Twenty-six years ago we had thirteen pence a yard for what we have 3 ½ d. now. It’s the machinery—the machinery as has done it; for see that Jacquard, and the silk in it (there are many hundred Jacquards hereabouts)—well, the weaving of that silk used to be three shillings a yard. What is it now? Why, one shilling and three pence. (200-201)

Though represented as a monologue, statements such as “Remember better times? That I do well,” “It’s the machinery—the machinery as has done it,” and “What is it now?” are clearly answers to Reach’s absent questions, which we can easily guess: “Do you

remember better times?”, “What do you suppose the cause is?” and “What is the price now?”

Mayhew’s absent questions are much harder to discern. When we read the old weaver’s monologue and come across such lines as, “Why, there’s seven on us, here—yes, seven on us—all dependent on the weaving here—nothing else,” and “God knows how we lived” (61), it is possible to imagine Mayhew asking incredulously, “Seven of you?” and concernedly, “How do you live?” However, these statements can just as well stand on their own. Perhaps less so in the case of “yes, seven on us,” for its structure implies some sort of response from an interlocutor, either a question or a surprised look. But because it is seamlessly placed in speech so lively, the reader absorbs the exclamation as if it had been directed to their own surprise at the quantity of souls living in such close quarters. The reader, therefore, forgets Mayhew’s presence; it is not until he interjects within the confines of those brackets I discuss above that he re-enters the narrative.

In contrast, we never lose sight of Reach’s presence; he is always there as our expert guide, inquiring and interpreting, even when he claims not to be—the weaver’s “chat” seems “disjointed” because it is not a monologic narrative but rather a stream of answers given in response to Reach’s inquiries. At other times, Reach interjects to remind us of his role as interlocutor: “How the conversation turned round I do not remember; but the next entry I have upon my note-book is that the old gentleman was fond not only of a good song, but that he was especially fond of reading the ‘Skootchings’ which Cobbett used to give to people he didn’t like. Then we got back to convivial matters, and so gradually to the *morale* of the village” (202). Again Reach

mentions his notebook, and instead of quoting the speech of “the old gentleman,” he paraphrases him, giving us only a taste of his idiom with the term “Skootchings,” which is likely Reach’s textual representation of the Lancashire dialect word *scutchings*, from *scutch*, which means ‘to beat.’ In the subsequent paragraph, Reach does quote his informant at length, but again Reach’s questions and comments bleed through: “I like to be idle myself sometimes. I dare say you do, too. Yes, of course you do. Well, then, when I feel idle [...]” (202). Whether or not Reach confessed to his own idleness we may never know but his presence, signaled with second-person address, is evident.

Immediately following this exchange, Reach writes, “I quite regretted being obliged to tear myself from my garrulous friend, who, I doubt not, would have talked till midnight with very great pleasure” (202). And for a moment we suspect that Reach, despite his objective ear, might be seduced by the voices of his informants. But leave he must and does, taking his readers with him and denying them the company of the garrulous weaver. Indeed, he too often interferes with readers’ pleasure. Reach apologizes for not “classifying” the weaver’s “rambling” for his readers, but perhaps this “rambling” is exactly what readers want.

What, we might ask, brought aural pleasure to Victorian readers? Readers in 1815 found the chatter of *Emma*’s Miss Bates famously annoying, but two decades later, the equally long-winded Mrs. Nickleby is one of the joys of Dickens’s *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838-9), as is the loquacious Mrs. Gamp for *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843-4) and Sam Weller for *Pickwick Papers* (1836-7). Mayhew’s slippage between fiction and non-fiction is largely what made his contributions to “Condition of England” journalism so readable then and now, over a century and a half later. In his review of the 1967 reprint

of *London Labour and the London Poor*, Auden remarks that “From his many transcripts of conversations it is clear that Mayhew was that rare creature, a natural democrat; his first thought [...] was never ‘This is an unfortunate wretch whom it is my duty, if possible to help’ but always ‘This is a fellow-human being whom it is fun to talk to’” (132-33). This is not to say that readers will find no pathetic stories in *LLL*--the oft-reprinted interview with the watercress girl comes to mind--but for the most part Mayhew respects rather than pities his informants and knowingness certainly upstages pathos in the majority of their narratives. We might say that those who are fun to talk to out-talk those who are not, the subject of my next section.

“Voice from the Gaol!”: The Cultural Capital of Street Patter

“People don’t pay us for what we gives ’em, but only to hear us talk.”
--Running Patterer, *LLL*

“Few of the residents of London,” Mayhew tells this readers, “but chiefly those in the quieter streets--have not been aroused, and most frequently in the evening, by a hurly-burly on each side of the street” (I: 221). In noisy 1850s London, this “hurly-burly” could be any number of things--cabs, omnibuses, construction, demolition, organ grinders, patterers. It is the latter, especially the patterers of the paper trade, with their claims to high literacy and their theatricality, that Ruskin particularly disliked. To Ruskin, ever the moralizer, the patterers’ suspect narratives had no purpose beyond raising prurient curiosity. Mayhew radically disagreed with Ruskin: the patterers were the street folk he found most interesting because of their self-confidence and verbal agility. Mayhew describes with relish the “mob” or “school” of running patterers who announce at great volume the “murders,” “fires,” and other alarming subjects they have for sale in the form of penny broadsides, for “the greater the noise they make, the better is

the chance of a sale” (I: 222). “An attentive listening,” Mayhew reminds his readers, “will not lead any one to an accurate knowledge of what the clamour is about” (I: 221). No amount of pricking up one’s ears, it would seem, would allow the listener to parse the hubbub; only the words “Murder,” “Horrible,” “Barbarous,” “Love,” “Mysterious,” and “Former Crimes” could be “caught by the ear,” Mayhew explains, “there was no announcement of anything like ‘particulars’” (I: 222). The patterers might enunciate the name of a famous criminal or “any new or pretended fact” but only enough to pique the public’s interest (I: 222). Simultaneously strident and obscure, these paper workers’ patter echoes the contradictions that they sell: news so new that they can beat the newspapers but also news that is “pretended,” “fictitious,” and “fake.” One of Mayhew’s informants says it best when he claims, “for herly and correct hinformation, we can beat the *Sun*--aye, or the moon either, for the matter of that” (I: 224). For these patterers and their audiences, the oral is more valuable than the written. The patterers transform text into aural pleasure for their listeners; their presentation of the papers upstages the papers themselves.

In this section, I examine how Mayhew represents the patterers speech in written form. I show how the literary techniques Mayhew employs capture and celebrate both the pleasures of voice and the pleasures of invention. Mayhew’s representation of street patter marvelously mingles social meanings attached to the phonology of working-class London speech, or Cockney, and the lexicon of slang and thieves’ cant. Though, as Deborah Vlock (1998) points out, by the nineteenth century the term *patter* had lost its “impressive etymology”--it derives from *paternoster*--I think she overstates *patter*’s downfall when she remarks on its “overwhelmingly negative cultural value” (94).

Certain varieties of street patter held considerable cultural value for audiences of broadside literature and, as we shall see, for Mayhew. We mustn't discount either the covert prestige of street patter amongst the working classes or the middle-class interest in "the vulgar tongue." The popularity and profusion of dictionaries and glossaries of nonstandard varieties of English, including those of the metropolis, did not wane in the mid-nineteenth century. A third edition of Pegge's philological defense of London speech, *Anecdotes on the English Language*, for example, was published in 1844, with the addition of Grose's *Provincial Glossary*. While I agree with Vlock that Mayhew drew on conventions of popular entertainments in his representation of patterer speech, where Vlock reads "distaste" and "disgust" in Mayhew's treatment of the patterers, I read respect and admiration, and what Vlock interprets as "lapses in grammar and logic" I consider examples of verbal agility.

It may seem curious that Mayhew, who elsewhere in *LLLP* and in his *MC* letters tirelessly constructs his ethos as one of objective observer, would defend the patterers' dubious practices, but this is precisely what he does. "It is very easy," Mayhew remarks, "to stigmatise the death-hunter when he sets off all the attractions of a real or pretended murder, [...] or when he invents or embellishes atrocities which excite the public mind. He does, however, but follow in the path of those who are looked up to as 'the press,'--as the 'fourth estate'" (I: 229). The *Illustrated London News*, the *Lady's Newspaper*, the *Observer*, and the *Times*, Mayhew asserts, are equally guilty of exciting the public mind with illustrations and details of murder and bloodshed. What's more, Mayhew joins the patterers in laughing at the press, aligning himself with the working-class purveyors of

fake news. In a bracketed aside, Mayhew combines his voice with that of the patterers to deride the mainstream press's attempts to capitalize on crime:

Many weekly papers had expensive telegraphic dispatches of Rush's having been hung at Norwich, which event, happily for the interest of Sunday newspapers, took place in Norwich at noon on a Saturday. [I may here remark, that the patterers laugh at telegraphs and express trains for rapidity of communication, boasting that the press strives in vain to rival *them*,--as at a 'hanging match,' for instance, the patterer has the full particulars, dying speech, and confession included--if a confession be feasible--ready for his customers the moment the drop falls, and while the criminal may still be struggling, at the very scene of the hanging. 'If the *Times* was cross-examined about it,' observed one patterer, 'he must confess he's outdone, though he's a rich *Times*, and we is poor fellows.'

But to resume--] (I: 229)

Here Mayhew employs brackets to interject with the opinions of the patterers. But he begins by using his own voice to express them, drawing on his authority as an ex-newspaperman to make their case. So when we reach the patterer's claim that the "rich *Times*" is "outdone" by "poor fellows" we doubt not its veracity. Mayhew might have paraphrased this line of the patterer's as well, but he chose to quote him directly. In so doing, Mayhew flaunts the verbal agility of the patterers and celebrates the slippage between fact and fiction; using legal language to defend one's success in fraud is clever indeed.

Both the patterers and Mayhew enjoy the play of this paradoxical language. In classifying the different varieties of patter, Mayhew makes sure that the patterers he admires, those of the flying and standing variety, stand out:

There is patter pathetic, as from beggars; bouncing, to puff off anything of little or no value; comic, as by the clowns; descriptive, as in the cases where the vendor describes, however ornately, what he really sells; religious, as occasionally by the vendors of tracts; *real patter* (as it is understood by the profession) to make a thing believed to be what it is not; classical, as in the case of the sale of stenographic cards, &c.; and sporting, as in race cards. (I: 243)

The pairing of *real* and *patter*, followed by its definition “to make a thing believed to be what it is not” both emphasizes the irony of the statement and lends legitimacy to the trade. And while Mayhew’s parentheses perhaps act to distance his opinion from those of the patterers--“real patter” is their classification--they emphasize that the patterers themselves also value highly their ability to take people in with their talk. Once again Mayhew gives the patterers a voice with which to express their views.⁸²

The authorship of the papers is similarly slippery. Immediately preceding his claim about beating the *Sun*, the patterer reveals to Mayhew the origins of one his biggest sellers, a broadsheet of the notorious murderer James Blomfield Rush’s execution: “I worked my way down there [to Norwich] with ‘*a sorrowful lamentation*’ of his [Rush’s] own composing, which I’d got written by the blind man expressly for the occasion” (I:

⁸² The word *profession* here has some ambiguity--is this the patterers’ term or Mayhew’s, and if the latter, is he using the word ironically?--but coupled with the word *real* and the objective, quite serious way in which the classification is presented, it might be interpreted as sincere.

223). In one sentence, the patterer attributes the authorship of the lamentation to both Rush and “the blind man,” from whom he had commissioned the piece. “On the morning of the execution,” the patterer continues, “we beat all the regular newspapers out of the field; for we had the full, true, and particular account down, you see, by our own express, and that can beat anything that ever they can publish” (I: 223). Just how “full,” “true,” and “particular” their account can be, since it is, by their own admission, by their “own express,” does not seem to trouble the patterer. Indeed, according to the patterer, it would seem the account is all the fuller, truer, and more particular for its being a fiction.

Audiences, too, seem untroubled by the dubious authorship of gallows literature. “[W]e get’s [the broadsheet] printed several days afore [the execution] comes off, and goes and stands with it right under the drop; and many’s a penny I’ve turned away,” the patterer boasts, “when I’ve been asked for an account of the whole business *before* it happened” (I: 223-24). What a strange scene that must have been: the paper seller standing under “the drop,” or trap-door of the gallows, patterning the jail-cell lamentation of the soon-to-be hanged and refusing the money of eager listeners who desire an account of an execution that has yet to happen. These audiences cared not to hear the “voice from the gaol” from the *Sun*, or even the moon, but rather from the stars of the paper trade--the patterers. Indeed sales of street literature to the street public were remarkable: Mayhew provides the figures for sales of “execution broad-sheets,” showing that those of Rush and the Mannings sold 2.5 million copies each, followed by those of Courvoisier, Good, Corder, and Greenacre selling over 1.6 million copies each (I: 284). The patterers brought the comedy and melodrama of popular theatre to the street, and like the later music hall stars who became associated with the songs they performed over the songs

composers, the patterers outshone the true authors of the papers they sold, no matter who those authors might be.

And yet, even if the patterers did not pen the broadsides, they were the authors of their subjects' narratives. One of Mayhew's informants boasted, "The newspapers 'screved' about Rush, and his mother, and his wife; but we, in our patter, made him confess to having murdered his old grandmother fourteen years back, and how he buried her under the apple-tree in the garden, and how he murdered his wife as well" (I: 284). Not to be outdone by the screevers at the *Times*, the patterers up the accretion of Rush's villainy and *make* him confess to the most heinous of crimes: matricide. Mayhew's informant's choice of verb, *made* him confess, puts him in the position of power--one can almost imagine him interrogating Rush to extract his confession. But he needn't, for his patter itself makes the confession happen; it is a performative speech act. Indeed, the way in which the patterers speak about their practice of selling "cocks" has them verbally murdering and maiming the famous and infamous:

One man told me that in the last eight or ten years, he, either singly or with his "mob," had twice put the Duke of Wellington to death, once by a fall from his horse, and the other time by a "sudden and myst-erious" death, without any condescension to particulars. He had twice performed the same mortal office for Louis Phillipe, before that potentate's departure from France; each death was by the hands of an assassin; "one was stabbing, and the other a shot from a distance." He once thought of poisoning the Pope, but was afraid of the street Irish. He broke Prince

Albert's leg, or arm, (he was not sure which), when his royal highness was out with his harriers. (228)

Each assassination, injury, and "sudden and myst-erious" death puts the patterers in the position of agent; they do not simply hawk someone else's words, they both announce and invent. Their creativity sets them apart from other street sellers and earns them Mayhew's respect.

Vlock charges Mayhew with an inability to "conceal his distaste" for the patterers' slang and industry, and remarks that "he could not observe with complacency without disgust what he perceived as a flagrant rejection of 'truthful' speech and commerce, a violation of bourgeois values" (124). But not only does Mayhew refrain from condemning or even admonishing the patterers for their dubious practices, he encourages them to expand their duping of the public by composing additional "cocks". Mayhew's suggestion comes in the form of "hidden dialogue"; it does not appear explicitly but rather only in the patterer's response: "*We* can write the love-letters for the fiend in human [form]? That's quite true" (I: 225). While Mayhew does show disgust for the class of patterers who "will not work"--professional beggars or "bouncers"--he is careful to distance them from his running and standing patterers: "These parties, it should be distinctly understood, are in no way connected with the puffing street-sellers," Mayhew asserts (I: 310). And he saves his most scathing words for shopkeepers, "who resort to the *printed* mode of puffing off their wares" but "who cannot plead want as an excuse for their dishonesty" (I: 310). According to Mayhew, "the street-sellers are far less reprehensible than their more wealthy brother puffers of the shops" (I: 310). The verbal puffing that the patterers engage in may not be truthful but it is highly entertaining.

Printed signs promising the “*Finest White Pepper*” cannot ameliorate the disappointing contents of the package, as the *Lancet* reported: “This super-excellent pepper, ‘sold in packages, price 1d.,’ was found on analysis to consist of finely-ground *black pepper*, and a very large quantity of *wheat-flour*” (qtd. in *LLLP* I: 310). It would seem, to get one’s penny’s worth, the “cock” is the better buy.

Just how different are shopkeepers from costermongers or paper workers from journalists? One patterer, the same one who boasts of “herly hinformation,” implicates Mayhew explicitly: “O! isn’t there a nice rubbing and polishing up. This here copy won’t do. This must be left out, and that put in; ’cause it suits the walk of the paper. Why, you must know, sir. *I* know. Don’t tell me. You can’t have been on the *Morning Chronicle* for nothing” (I: 225). Both he and Mayhew, the patterer insists, are in the rubbing and polishing up trade; they edit their materials to “suit the walk of the paper.” This patterer even presumes to give Mayhew direction: “I should like to have that there put down correct,” he tells Mayhew, and later, “A slum’s a paper fake,--make a foot-note of that, sir” (I: 224). Mayhew does not make a footnote of this remark; instead he quotes the patterer directly, as if he were providing the entire transcript of the patterer’s testimony, at once giving the patterer a voice but also going against his instruction. Mayhew made an editorial choice to place what would have made an appropriate footnote in the main text and in the patterer’s own words, as his lively voice suits the walk of the paper.

Mayhew and the patterer continue to talk shop in this way--the patterer relating the ups and downs of the paper trade, how important timing is and how the identity of the “wictim” affects sales:

Hollest weren't no good either, 'cause the wictim was a parson. [...] We'd have shown it was the "Commencement of a Most Horrid and Barbarious Plot got up by the Pope and Cardinal Wiseman *for-r* the Mas-ser-cree-ing of all good Protestant Ministers." That would have been the dodge, sir! A beautiful idear, now, isn't it? But the murder came off badly, and you can't expect fellows like them murderers to have any regard for the interest of art and literature. (I: 225)

Here Mayhew captures not only the patterer's words but also his prosody, amplifying both the patterer's powers of invention and his verbal prowess: his emphasis on *for-r* heralds the violence of "Mas-ser-cree-ing," that key term, itself drawn out, which gives, or would give if it existed, life to the paper. "That would have been the dodge, sir," the patterer explains, using the slang term *dodge*, 'an artful trick,'⁸³ then making an additional remark about his ingenuity, "A beautiful idear, now, isn't it?" Mayhew does not represent his answer to the patterer's inquiry, if he indeed gave one, for the patterer's tag question, "isn't it," seems the variety that does the work of affirmation rather than seeking it. Here Mayhew represents the patterer representing himself as a commentator on his own work. Showing the patterer in this self-reflective and confident moment constructs him as an intelligent weaver of fiction. He may not be a gentleman writer but he comes across as Mayhew's peer nonetheless.

This is not to say, however, that patterers and gentleman writers were treated as equals by all parties. Indeed only the latter's fictions were generally sanctioned, and the former often risked arrest because of perceived fraud, speaking against the Queen, or potential obscenity. Mayhew's informants reveled in telling him how they used their

⁸³ *A Dictionary of Modern Slang, Cant, and Vulgar Words* (1859).

verbal skills to avoid arrest or conviction. One patterer, a master salesman--he sold a copy of his broadsheet on Calcraft, "Voice from the Gaol! or the Horrors of the Condemned Cell! Being the Life of William Calcraft, the present Hangman," to Calcraft's own mother and two copies to the hangman himself--narrated how he could talk his way out of any situation:

I was once before Alderman Kelly, when he was Lord Mayor, charged with obstructing, or some humbug of that sort. "What are you man?" says he quietly, and like a gentleman. "In the same line as yourself, my lord," says I. "How's that?" says he. "I'm a paper-worker for my living, lord," says I. I was soon discharged, and there was such fun and laughing, that if I'd had a few slums in my pocket, I believe I could have sold them all in the justice-room. (I: 224).

This scene is reminiscent of that in Chapter 25 of *Pickwick Papers* where Sam Weller is brought in front of the magistrate and, with his wordplay, sets all the specials to laughing and the magistrate's teeth on edge. The patterer's cleverness, however, charms even the Lord Mayor, who does not balk at being equated with a street-seller but rather buys the comparison, as he would buy one of the patterer's "slums" if he only had some on his person. When the patterer's cheek hits the Lord Mayor's ear, the fiction that the two men are on equal terms is transformed into a legal truth; the latter discharges the former because of his verbal acumen, his ability to talk himself out of the charges.

At times, however, the patterers' wordplay could get them into trouble. Another of Mayhew's informants recalls a time that he was accosted by a policeman when he was crying the Queen's *accouchement*:

In course, nothing can be said against her, and nothing ought to; that's true enough, but the last time she was confined, I cried her *accouchement* (the word was pronounced as spelt to a merely English reader, or rather more broadly) of *three!* Lord love you, sir, it would have been no use crying *one*; people's so used to that; but a Bobby came up and he stops me, and said it was some impudence about the Queen's *coachman!* Why look at it, says I, fat-head--I knew I was safe--and see if there's anything in it about the Queen and her coachman! And he looked, and in course there was nothing. I forget just now what the paper *was* about. (I: 228-29).

This patterer goes so far as to call the policeman a "fat-head." He is confident that he has done no wrong and so perhaps he feels bold enough to hurl epithets at the bobby's head, but even more than that, I would argue, he is confident in his ability to talk his way out of any trouble his patter, or rather the misunderstanding of his patter, might walk him into. It is clear to the patterer that it is the bobby's defective ear, one that would hear "coachman" instead of "accouchement," however broadly pronounced, that is at fault. He may be a "merely English speaker" but mere English is the language of currency on the streets of London and the patterer knows this. The patterer has earned his living by being a wordsmith. He can patter a murder, a love story, even work himself out of trouble. Given his penchant for invention, it may be that the patterer is pulling one over on Mayhew and his readers with this very story--did he really call the policeman a "fat-head"?--but Mayhew does not seem to be troubled by this possibility. He does not comment on the potential dubiousness of the patterer's claims and instead continues his praise of the patterers' talent for selling fiction as fact.

“Curious Conversazione”: Mayhew’s Public Performances

“Something of what Mr. Dickens has done in Books, and Mr. Jerrold in Plays, Mr. Mayhew attempts on the Platform.” --*Athenaeum*, August 1st, 1857.

On Saturday, 29 August 1857, the *Bristol Mercury* ran an advertisement touting Mayhew’s scheduled appearance at the Bristol Athenaeum for the evening of Tuesday, September 15, entitled “Punch on the Platform: an amusing entertainment, with original songs, and illustrations in costume of various well-known characters from the ‘Great World of London,’ by Mr. Henry Mayhew, the original editor of *Punch*, and author of ‘London Labour and the London Poor,’ ‘The Great World of London,’ &c.” The advertisement, not surprisingly, capitalizes on the popularity of *Punch*, *LLLP*, and Mayhew’s 1856 series of pamphlets “The Great World of London,” but also profits from Dickens’s literary and Douglas Jerrold’s (1803-1857) theatrical success, promising “Something of what Mr. Dickens has done in Books, and Mr. Jerrold in Plays, Mr. Mayhew attempts on the Platform.” Two members of the “triumphant comic triumvirate,” which also included William Makepeace Thackeray,⁸⁴ Dickens and Jerrold were well-known for their vibrant and verbose characters, and the mention of their names in tandem with Mayhew’s suggests to potential audiences not only a night of “amusing entertainment” but one of wit and humor to rival those illustrious men.⁸⁵ Indeed by 1857, Dickens had been giving public readings of *A Christmas Carol* and *The Cricket on the Hearth* for charity for over four years--his first public reading for profit was in 1858--and in the years prior to that others, including Joseph Chamberlain, read the work of Dickens and other popular authors at Penny Readings. Mayhew was eager to cash in on the

⁸⁴ As Sally Ledger (2004) calls the trio of Dickens, Thackeray, and Jerrold.

⁸⁵ Mayhew’s connection to Douglas Jerrold also extended to his private life; he was married to Jerrold’s daughter Jane.

popularity of *LLL* and audiences welcomed authors bringing their characters to life on the platform.

Mayhew, however, was not acting the part of a fictional character but rather taking on the persona of some of his most interesting informants from *London Labour and the London Poor*, who were, however constructed and mediated by Mayhew's textual representation of them, real people. In this section, I explore Mayhew's further engagement with the patterers of London, this time in the form of his public readings of *London Labour and the London Poor*. From April to September 1857, Mayhew was actively engaged in the public reading circuit. In April of 1857, he began a series of public readings, advertised as "Oddities of the London Streets," which ran through the month of May and included appearances at the Brighton Athenaeum, Glasgow's City Hall, the Mechanics' Hall in Aberdeen, the Mechanics' Institute in Bradford, and the Institution for the Diffusion of Knowledge in Preston. Mayhew then further dramatized his readings of *LLL* with "Curious Conversazione," performing the parts of his informants, complete with costume changes, in July and August, first in the provinces and then followed by several shows at St. Martin's Hall in London. With the success of his London performances, Mayhew decided to take his show back on the road and he enlisted the aid of Thomas Beale (1828-1894), who had had recent success with promoting musical entertainments across Britain, to help him organize a three month tour of the provinces called "Punch on the Platform."

Mayhew's "Punch on the Platform" further upped the performance ante of traditional public readings, not only with Mayhew appearing in costume but also with the addition of "several Buffo Songs between the intervals of the performance" sung and

played on the pianoforte by J. L. Hatton. Unlike Dickens, who was rather wary of the potential moral taint of theatricality and who appeared on stage in evening dress,⁸⁶ Mayhew seemed to have no such qualms. In his memoir *The Light of Other Days*, Beale, writing under his *nom de plume*, Walter Maynard, describes the planning that went into this production and with what glee Mayhew responded to his suggestion that “‘Punch on the Platform’ would be much improved by the addition of a pianist.” “By all means,” Mayhew exclaimed, “we will have the best we can get” (273). Thackeray, on the other hand, took “great offence” to a similar suggestion made by actor Andrew Arcedeckne that his “Four Georges” lectures “would be all the better for ‘a tune on the pianner,’” (273). Mayhew, the bohemian entrepreneur, seems to have had no fears, at least initially, in regard to his public reputation as he moved deeper into the world of theatrical display, while the street patterers would have envied Mayhew’s resources, for they had only their voices to attract an audience on busy street corners. “Much to Mayhew’s delight,” Beale continues, “I engaged J. L. Hatton to play and sing whenever he might be required to vary the programme by so doing. They were for days in consultation on the subject, Henry Mayhew insisting upon hearing all Hatton’s *répertoire*, and thoroughly enjoying its performance” (273).

As it turned out, Hatton was required to play his “Buffo” songs for a much longer interval than he expected, for after making his introductory remarks on opening night in Brighton, Mayhew left the stage and did not return, leaving Hatton to musically placate the audience as best he could. According to Beale, Mayhew fled after spotting his father, Joshua Mayhew, in the front row, while Mayhew himself claimed, by way of a note, that

⁸⁶ For a discussion of Dickens’s concern about maintaining his image as a distinguished author while performing professionally as a public reader see Malcolm Andrews (*Charles Dickens and His Performing Selves* 32-49).

Mrs. Mayhew had taken ill and his presence was needed in London. Co-organizer George Hodder affirms Beale's claim, explaining that the next morning Joshua Mayhew appealed to his son to abandon the "degrading" pursuit as it was sure to "compromise the respectability of the family" (213). The safety of print had previously shielded Mayhew from the shame of slumming and the guise of the "lecture" had guarded him from the stigma of the stage. But with "Punch on the Platform" he had no such protection; all the mimicry, spectacle, and ostentation of the theatre was there, unabashedly on display.⁸⁷ How did Mayhew get here? And what did his movement toward theatricality mean for the future of his philanthropic and sociological work?

Mayhew's various interests were pulled in multiple, sometimes seemingly disparate, directions in 1857. On the literary side of things, he began writing the serial novel *Paved with Gold* with his brother Augustus, while in a more philanthropic vein he organized a series of meetings with London's Ticket-of-Leave men (parolees) in the hope of ameliorating their situation. In a move that seemed to marry his interests in entertainment and philanthropy, he initiated musical entertainment for the working classes called "Monday Evening Concerts for the People" in London, with the musical selections consisting of "sacred music" (*MC* 7 April 1857). He also arranged Saturday evening concerts in Glasgow, where he "addressed a few words to the working classes. He expressed the delight he felt at being present, and said that he knew of no class of amusement or entertainments from which he hoped for so much good as the people's concerts" (*Glasgow Herald* 13 April 1857). He added "some remarks on the fine arts, and said that "refining the tastes and drawing men from animal enjoyments was the way

⁸⁷ Jonas Barish (1983) sees mimicry, spectacle, and ostentation as the key aspects of theatricality that moralists found troubling.

to make men sober, not by compulsory Acts of Parliament.” A few weeks earlier, Mayhew had come forward as a candidate for Southwark in the general election. Given all his other commitments, it is no wonder he did not win a seat in Parliament.

The arts were like a magnet for Mayhew, and perhaps nowhere can we see that more than in his adaptation of *LLL* for public readings. Although the advertisements for Mayhew’s “Oddities of the London Streets” describe these public appearances as “lectures,” and in keeping with the serious tone of a lecture Mayhew did not don the costumes of his “characters,” the performances themselves were replete with wit and humor. The lectures were made up of descriptions of street scenes and autobiographical sketches from *LLL*. They were presented in two parts, with a ten-minute intermission between them. Part I comprised “London Street Markets,” “Punch and Judy-Men,” “Flying Stationers,” and “Old Sarah,” a hurdy-gurdy player. Part II featured “The Street Blind generally,” “Doll’s-eye-maker,” “Street Clown,” “Petticoat Lane,” “Meeting of Boy Thieves,” and “Convict Nursery.” Reviews in the *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle*, the *Bradford Observer*, the *Preston Guardian*, and the *Morning Chronicle* each mark parenthetically the places during Mayhew’s delivery where “(laughter)” and in some case “(much laughter)” was heard. Indeed, Mayhew’s readings were so animated and humorous, it was necessary to emphasize the lectures’ more sober and philanthropic aspects in other ways. With reserved seats costing 2s. (numbered) and 1s. (unnumbered) and gallery seats costing 6d., it is likely that it was the middle-class audiences they were hoping to reach.

Mayhew’s presentation of street sellers as lively, intelligent, and enterprising did not fit the stereotype of the downtrodden poor needed to draw donations from charitable

audiences. Following Mayhew's lecture at the Brighton Athenaeum in April, for example, the chairman reminded the audience about the grave subject matter that lay beneath Mayhew's amusing presentation; as the *Morning Chronicle* reported:

He [the chairman] trusted that having brought before them in so forcible manner the circumstances in which many of those are placed who minister to our pleasures, they would view their proceedings with a different eye; for they would even see from the comic side of human nature that there is also the deeply pathetic bordering on the deeply tragic, and that when they walk through the streets of the metropolis again they would remember that one of the great social problems of the days is, 'What shall we do with our pauperism, what shall we do with the criminal population in our towns?'

(11 April 1857)

That Mayhew and the chairman felt the need to frame the lecture with these moralizing words shows their desire to maintain the respectability of the lecture and its sociological rigour in the face of its undeniable humor. They were equally loathe to have their middle-class audience of potential donors and social activists lose sight of the material realities facing London's poorest citizens, no matter their ability to smile in the face of adversity and how entertaining they might be.

Mayhew's public readings were also a way for him to make money and to remain in the public eye. Many authors supplemented their incomes on the public reading circuit--Brierley and Waugh could not have survived without the money they made from Penny Readings. But some would argue that for Mayhew his attraction to the platform had more to do with increasing his fame as someone uniquely qualified to speak for the

poor. Indeed, during a 27 January 1857 meeting of the Ticket-of-Leave men, one of the parolees railed against Mayhew and what he perceived were his mercenary motives:

I came here to do something in truth and not in fiction, and I wish to caution you against making yourselves so public in speaking your lives in public to benefit another man. That man is Henry Mayhew. His object in calling us together is to sell his books. A nice man is Henry Mayhew-- a'int he?--to come here and get you to tell your confession? (*Morning Post* 28 January 1857)

Who is Mayhew, the speaker asks, to compel our confessions? And what will confessing get us? Our stories will sell books for Mayhew but will it have any material consequences on our lives? And, if so, what might those consequences be? A costermonger was next to speak, and he defended Mayhew, saying that he believed Mayhew had “nothing but our interest in heart,” but surely Mayhew’s motives were mixed. He was both a literary man and a philanthropist. And he needed to make a living.

The Ticket-of-Leave man’s choice of words are telling; in proclaiming, “I came here to do something in truth and not in fiction,” he seems to indict Mayhew not only for exploiting London’s poor and labouring classes for profit but also for fabricating his accounts. As we have seen, *LLL*P has many of the elements of fiction, and it certainly lent itself to dramatic adaptation. Playwrights, who may have been even hungrier than Mayhew, used material from *LLL*P to further their own careers. In April of 1856, a new drama opened at the Surrey Theatre in London called *How We Live in the Great World of London*. As *Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper* explained, the play was “suggested by Mr. Henry Mayhew, who, in his ‘London Labour and the London Poor’ and ‘Great World of

London,' undertakes to tell nine-tenths of the great metropolitans how the other five-sixths live" (6 April 1857). "The majority of the characters," the reviewer adds, "we have already met in the streets." The plot, however, is the stuff of Victorian melodrama: a baronet's son is abducted by an East-Indian villain; a Lady flees from her brutish husband; and the play ends with a great fire, from which the innocent escape and in which the guilty perish. The audience's favorite character, according to the reviewer, was Mr. Widdicomb, a costermonger who comes into a fortune "and does *not* forget his former friends." "The real humour of Mr. Widdicomb," the reviewer enthuses, "is an absolutely perfect personation; and the great delight of the upper audience testify to the merits of the artist in character which they can best judge." The upper audience was, of course, made up of the working classes, who not only reveled in the story of a costermonger lifted out of poverty but also, according to the reviewer, the "real humour" of the actor's "absolutely perfect personation" of one of their own.

A little over a year later, Mayhew himself would try his hand at an "absolutely perfect personation" of his London informants. Unlike his previous lecture tour, during which Mayhew would "narrate his experience in connection with a few of the oddities of the London streets" (*Glasgow Herald* 5 April 1857), or recite passages from *LLL*, Mayhew's reinvented lecture, "Curious Conversazione," allowed him to perform the parts of his favorite informants, or rather embody them. The advertisements for "Curious Conversazione" play off the idea Mayhew will become his characters:

Mr. Henry Mayhew, the originator of "Punch," Author of "London Labour and the London Poor," will hold his CURIOUS CONVERSAZIONE in St. Martin's-hall TO-NIGHT (MONDAY), July 27, to meet a few ODD

CHARACTERS out of the STREETS of LONDON, amongst whom the following have promised to appear in their professional costumes:--The London Costermonger, the Punch and Judy Man, the Death and Fire Hunter, Old Water Cress Seller, the Jew Clothesman, the Professional Beggar, &c. &c.” (*Morning Post* 7 July 1857).

Mayhew “the originator” of the periodical *Punch* and “the author” or *London Labour and the London Poor* is semantically and syntactically separated from the “few odd characters” who have “promised to appear in their professional costumes.” The language of the advertisement also draws on the structure of the textual *LLL*; it implies that the social investigator Mayhew will converse with his informants, that he will bring them before the eyes and ears of his middle-class audience, in the flesh this time, rather than in the text. Venturing into the patterers’ territory was not only deemed improper but it could also be downright dangerous; the fear of being pickpocketed or mugged or beat up kept many away. Mayhew’s entertainment afforded the middle classes an opportunity to hear an oral presentation of their entertaining patter in a setting that would not risk damage to their reputations or their person.

The term *conversazione*, then, is an especially fitting title for this performance. Not only does the term imply a dialogue with the street folk but also its connotations with eighteenth-century “At home” amusements remove some of the taint of a public performance, while its nineteenth-century meaning of ‘assemblies of an intellectual character, in connexion with literature, art, or science’ raise what could be deemed a “theatrical” event to the level of educational gathering (OED). Mayhew’s public presentation of *LLL* might have also capitalized on the other nineteenth-century

denotation of *conversazione*: ‘a soirée given by a learned body or society of arts, at which the society’s work is illustrated by the exhibition of specimens, experiments, and demonstrations’ (OED). This latter definition contains scientific language that would have resonated with Mayhew’s aims to view London’s poor and labouring classes through an objective lens, classify them into groups, exhibit their lives to audiences in a position to effect change and to possibly ameliorate the condition of his informants’ lives.

In effect, however, “Curious Conversazione” more closely resembled a one-man show or monopolylogue, a form of monologue popularized by the comic actor Charles Mathews (1776-1835), with Mayhew playing the role of narrator and of each character. Indeed, the structure of *LLL* lent itself to such a stage production, with Mayhew’s questions, or “hidden dialogue,” becoming even more hidden and the informants’ monologues coming to the fore. According to contemporary reviews, Mayhew would first give a short preamble “in his proper person,” explaining what was to come. He then disappeared into a “tent” and reappeared in the costume of whichever informant he was to “personate,” each character getting a quarter of an hour of stage time (*The Standard* 30 July 1857). Mayhew the narrator is not represented in the show’s text, “A Few Odd Characters Out of the London Streets, as Represented in Mr. Henry Mayhew’s Curious Conversazione”; the text has no preface but instead jumps right into the character monologues. What’s more, we can verify from the “libretto,” as it was called in the *Era*, that Mayhew, the interlocutor, disappears, just as the fourth wall vanishes; the Flying Stationer, for example, talks only to imagined customers and directly to the audience:

Now you have just printed and published! a full true and pertic’lar
account! copied from this hevening’s Globe noospapar! of this horrud and

cold-blooded murdar!--[*Calling off*, “Coming, ma’am, terectly!”]--what was committed this morning! on a hold lady of seventy years of hage!-- and all for von ’aypenny! [*He runs over to the opposite side of the stage as if to serve a customer, saying, in his ordinary voice, ‘Von for you, ma’am! thankee, ma’am!’ and then returns poising a penny-piece in his palm*]--A-penny, ma’am, I said--[*laughing*]--on’y a-penny vos my vords, and no von couldn’t speak plainer. Vy the old bewrick axully wanted the slum to be the whole length of vot she called the von I’d got in my hand. [*Laughs behind his papers.*] The von! vell it a’n’t von--it’s three! put von a-top o’t’other, to make ’em look longer. That’s vot ve calls stacking on ’em--three story high. [*Aside to audience.*] But you’ll keep it dark, von’t ye?
(19)

Like the seeming monologues of *LLL*, the patterer discloses his secrets, but in Mayhew’s dramatized version, audiences are treated to a cheeky aside, “But you’ll keep it dark, von’t ye?”, that one can imagine was accompanied by a knowing wink worthy of Sam Weller. Not surprisingly, at least one review drew the comparison with Dickens: “the ease with which he assumes the flash tongue and *patois* of the street boys is worthy of Dickens” (*The Standard* 30 July 1857). Mayhew’s transcription of the patterer’s lines shows that his performance of their speech was more heavily marked with Cockney features than the represented speech of the patterers in *LLL*. Mayhew may have increased the markers, such as /h/-insertion and /v/-/w/ inversion, for his performance because *hearing* an accent is easier than *reading* one, or he may have done so for comic effect, a la Charles Mathews. Whatever the reason, Mayhew’s stage performance of

patter, like that of his textual representation of it, indexes a canny knowingness; the content and form work together to construct an intelligent subject. The stage character sketch exaggerates the fraudulent behavior of the patterer so that the audience can enjoy both his verbal agility and their own ability to see through it. In effect, they become as knowing as Mayhew and the patterer.

Precisely how accurate Mayhew's Cockney was on stage is impossible to know, but his transcription of it shows a consistency in pronunciation--illustrating a regular phonology as opposed to malapropisms or "mistakes"--and even orthography that at first glance might seem like examples of eye dialect represent a difference in either Cockney phonology or the exaggerated pronunciation of street patter for the sake of drawing hearer's attention. For example, the double "o" in "noospapar" might represent a lengthened vowel, while the "u" in "horrud" and the "a" "murdar" show the use of different vowels in those linguistic environments. Indeed reviewers unanimously praised Mayhew's linguistic performance of the London street folk, especially the patterers. *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* raved, "Mr. Mayhew has most felicitously caught the voice and manner of these fellows [the Death and Fire Hunters]" (2 August 1857). Similarly, *The Standard* deduced from his performance that "he knows the characters he personates, has studied their language and instincts, and is enabled to present so truthful a picture to his hearers that the reality has all the force and supplies the place of the most racy fun" (20 July 1857). Mayhew's presentation, for this reviewer, is not simply "racy fun" but a "truthful" picture of "reality." So moved is this reviewer by Mayhew's "personation" of the flying stationer that he places Mayhew's performance on par with that of Frederick Robson (1821-1864), who was credited with shifting the art of acting away from stiff

elocution toward natural movements, but more importantly for our purposes, for uniting “the terrible with the droll.”⁸⁸ And while the *Era* lamented that the “philanthropist” and “philosopher” in Mayhew had given way to the “comic entertainer,” the reviewer conceded that “the personages he introduces [...] are embodied by him with a dramatic power for which we are hardly prepared” (2 August 1857). While Mayhew learned comic timing from Mathews he also borrowed the melodramatic powers of Robson. Even more striking for this dissertation, however, is how Mayhew increased his use of Cockney features in his stage performances, how in moving from the written to the oral, salient markers of working-class London speech become amplified.

For audiences, Mayhew’s performance brought his informants off the street and into the theatre, their voices off the page and into the mouth of Mayhew. For Mayhew, his performance allowed him to embody the vibrant personas he so admired; while on stage he momentarily became a patterer. Mayhew’s performances were “comic” not because he was making fun of his informants but rather because the patterers were comic geniuses; the audience laughs with Mayhew-as-patterer not at him. Mayhew’s “Curious Conversazione” was the ultimate form of slumming. His appropriation of street patter differed from the young urban sophisticates’ adoption of fashionable cant and slang; he was not simply peppering his speech with lexicon that would index him as “down” but rather taking on more of the features of Cockney and street patter, even if only in the guise of a performance or in the name of the public’s edification. It is no wonder Mayhew’s father disapproved of his son’s performance in “Punch on the Platform.” Addition of “Buffo songs” or no, Mayhew’s embodiment of the street folk was too much

⁸⁸ According to Westland Marston in his *Our Recent Actors* (1888), it was Robson’s “union of the terrible with the droll which most recommended him to general favour” (263).

for his conservative father to bear. For the most part, however, audiences reveled in “Curious Conversazione,” and we might imagine that “Punch on the Platform” would have been an equal if not greater success. Like *London Labour and the London Poor* and the *Morning Chronicle* letters that preceded it, Mayhew’s public performance of his own investigative journalism represented a new genre: part educational lecture, part pathetic narrative, part comic entertainment. Instead of Mayhew the middle-class journalist edifying the audience, it is the informants themselves, though admittedly mediated through Mayhew, in their own style of speaking. Both in *LLLP* and in his performance Mayhew consistently brings the street folk to the fore. Perhaps, because Mayhew’s own life was lived at the financial edge, he may have had a particular sympathy for those he interviewed. As the flying stationer of “Curious Conversazione” says, “Come boys, keep order now! [*Blows his nose and looks down, as if addressing some urchins among the crowd*] and bear in mind, this here a’n’t a comic song. It’s vot ve may all come to some day” (21).

Conclusion

Toward an Alternative History of the Novel

Throughout this dissertation, I have discussed the ways in which nonstandard dialects of English could index “Englishness” for the Victorians, especially in the North where the adulterating influences of French and Latin were held at bay by the strength and fortitude of Northern dialects’ Anglo-Saxon roots. No matter how deracinated urban Mancunians might have been, for example, they could draw on the authenticity of the Lancashire dialect to construct identities that were not only Northern but also robustly English. But even an act as potentially irreverent as crying the Queen’s *accouchement* “of *three*” has patriotic elements. I have discussed how the patterer’s pronunciation of “accouchment” speaks to his pride in the language of the London streets. Indeed, the patterer feels immensely patriotic about his command of English. His variety of English may not be the national “standard” but it is all the truer for being uncontaminated by that standard and its borrowings from French and Latin.

Another of Mayhew’s informants goes beyond taking the mickey out of policemen to claim street literature as representative of the nation: “What do you think of the Great Exhibition, sir?” he asks Mayhew, “I shall be there. Me and my mates. We are going to send in a copy of worses in letters of gold for a prize. *We’ll* let the foreigners know what the real native melodies of England is, and no mistake” (I: 228). The exhibits of the Great Exhibition of 1851 were meant to demonstrate to a global audience the ingenuity, industry, and wealth of Great Britain. Their “copy of worses,” the patterer

suggests, would shine as brightly as the Koh-i-noor Diamond, which was also on display. And why should they not be considered among the British Crown Jewels; they are the “real native melodies of England.” In closing “Working Dialect,” I further consider the role of dialect literature in England’s literary history and how a closer look at the cross-currents of canonical/non-canonical texts can tell us about the history of the novel.

This dissertation has aimed to reveal what literary critics can learn from looking closely at direct dialogue in dialect, not about how people in nineteenth-century actually spoke, but rather how dialect works both narratively and socially in Victorian texts. This project shows how dialect works to construct character in complex and surprising ways, from Gaskell and Eliot’s heroines whose use of dialect signals virtue, to Dickens’s honest serving-man whose verbal agility recasts London Cockney, and to Mayhew’s dishonest patterers whose wordplay constructs both their ingenuity and integrity. It reveals how narrative technique and dialect work together to mediate character development and subjectivity, from Waugh’s humble Besom Ben and Brierley’s able Ab-o’th’-Yate, to Reach’s indolent Middleton folk and Mayhew’s insightful Spitalfields weavers. It demonstrates the ongoing and widespread popularity of characters who were in someway incongruous with their surroundings, from the anachronistic Ab-o’th’-Yate, to the amphibious Sam Weller, who as it turns out, make sense of and even thrive in their vastly and fastly changing landscapes. Despite the industrial revolution, the railways, the Education Act, and social mobility, British canniness and eccentricity remained unscathed and these misfits embody those characteristics.

Linguistic analyses of dialect writing can valuably complicate a static understanding of regional and class identities as fixed and pure. “Working Dialect”

illustrates how regional issues could trump class solidarity, from the Manchester Literary Club's regional alliance, to Pickwick and Sam's cross-class quest. It also shows how class liminality could be both vexing and a productive source for identity formation and negotiation. This project shifts literary criticism's focus away from attempts to locate authentic voices toward an analysis of how authenticity could be performed linguistically. We may feel at times like the patterers' customers, attempting to catch their meaning in the face of indistinct but fascinating, maybe even fraudulent, verbal evidence. But to search for accuracy or authenticity is to miss the point. Just as it is the idea of a murder "myst-erious" that draws audiences, it is the idea of authenticity, not the search for it, that should fuel our future inquiries.

Regardless of what variety of English the writers I discuss in this dissertation spoke, much of their success depended on the ability to mimic--on paper and during public readings--either the rural speech of their region or the urban working-class speech of the metropolis. These writers had a masterful ear for the nuances of dialects and a remarkable talent for capturing them on paper. For Gaskell and Eliot, the mimicking of dialects would end on the page--perhaps the taint of theatricality kept them from performing their works in public--and would lessen as their careers progressed--after *Mary Barton* and *Adam Bede*, Gaskell and Eliot reserved dialect speech for minor characters. Brierley, Waugh, Dickens, and Mayhew, on the other hand, increased their use of dialects in response to the success it brought them. I do not mean to suggest that Gaskell and Eliot's talents for representing dialect waned as their fame grew, for they continued to be extraordinary. But perhaps the gendered difference in these writers' use of dialect serves as further proof that nonstandard dialects were increasingly associated

with masculinity as the century progressed. More study is needed in the uses of dialect by women writers in the nineteenth century and its relationship to constructions of their identities. My project only broaches the subject, but it is my hope that it will also invite further study.

On the other hand, what can literary criticism learn from Brierley, Waugh, Dickens, and Mayhew's increasing use of dialect over the course of their careers? The standard narrative of the history of the novel, is one of an increase in interiority; from Austen to Eliot to James to Woolf, narrative modes privilege interiority over both action and direct dialogue. But, as we have seen, direct dialogue is the narrative mode most employed and effective in capturing and conveying dialect voices, those voices that became increasingly popular as they were perceived to be disappearing. It seems to me that there is an alternative history of the novel waiting to be uncovered. With a closer and more sustained examination of dialect in the novel, literary criticism may just discover what such a history would look, or rather sound, like. A complete aural picture will not emerge, however, until we consider the body of non-canonical works in dialect to which this study only begins to apply its critical ear-trumpet. Canonical/non-canonical, high/low, North/South: each of these oppositional binaries is unstable, yet they continue to stymie what are perhaps unorthodox but what could be productive discussions of British literary history.

I close "Working Dialect" with a strange text from the 10 May 1890 issue of *Ben Brierley's Journal* that I hope will act as a metaphor for the kind of interdisciplinary and boundary traversing work this dissertation practices and hopefully anticipates. A piece called "Classical Slang," probably written by Brierley, as most of the periodical was,

pondered the “lofty lineage” yet “vulgarity” of the nation’s “slang” and gives an example of speech one “might hear any day in Seven Dials, or even less typically ‘low’ localities” (155). What follows is a lively narrative about a gentleman who was “bilked out of [his] duds” and which contains lexical items from the Lancashire dialect (e.g., “abear” and “clemmed”) but also words that could be heard in the Cockney lexicon (e.g., “knabbed” and “bolt”). It is rather curious that Brierley mentions Seven Dials--a neighborhood of London known in the nineteenth century for urban poverty and, as Dickens tells us in *Sketches by Boz* (1836), “the region of song and poetry -- first effusions, and last dying speeches: hallowed by the names Catnach and Pitts [publishers of penny broadsides] -- names that will entwine themselves with costermongers, and barrel organs” (77). Indeed, Mayhew’s patterers would have purchased most of their “slums” in the Dials before flying off to their own special street corner or neighborhood. But here Brierley evokes these Southern images before transcribing a sort of hybrid speech of Northern and Southern features, described with the oxymoronic term “Classical Slang.” That he then describes the passage as “Horribly low and vulgar!” but also “good old English” is equally curious.

But from this strange confluence of region and class, high and low, we might imagine Lancashire weavers “entwin[ing] themselves with costermongers, and barrel organs,” breaking down the boundaries between North and South, “classical” and “slang,” literature and popular culture. If the history of the novel included this panoply of voices, how different it would sound. This dissertation considers literary dialect of a period--the 1830s through the 1910s--when local distinctions and traditions were especially honored, and when attempts to preserve them were played out in literary

contexts. Perhaps the reason Brierley's transcription of "classical slang" seems so curious is that it is an attempt at representing what actual speech in 1890s urban centers sounded like, rather than an attempt to capture traditional dialect and/or contribute to British literary history. Although, regional distinctions in speech still existed, and still exist today, the interest in preserving them faded during the inter-war period. Today those differences are based primarily in accent, rather than dialect, but the idea of authenticity remains integral to identity formation, and becomes especially prevalent when speakers perceive they are losing something valuable about their local culture. Joan Beal's 2009 study of the indie band Arctic Monkeys' use of features of Sheffield English to index authenticity and "independence from the corporate machine" is a recent example of this sociolinguistic phenomenon (223). Literary dialect may have had its heyday in the nineteenth century but some of the impetus behind its prevalence in that century remains today and is manifest in other contexts, such as television and music. It may seem curious to suggest that modern sociolinguistics can teach us something about the history of the novel, but I hope that this dissertation has shown that the critical confluence of literary studies and sociolinguistics is a productive and exciting one.

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