The Only Way is Dickens: Representations of Cockney Speech and Cockney Characters in the Works of Charles Dickens

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Abstract

This thesis examines Dickens's representation of cockney dialect and cockney speakers, as well as representations of upwardly mobile Londoners and their speech. It identifies the linguistic features that Dickens draws upon to construct his character speech and explores the attitudes conveyed through language choice. It investigates how Dickens's representations were shaped by wider attitudes towards language, particularly towards non-standard speech, in Victorian society. It investigates Dickens's role in popularising cockney dialect in nineteenth-century culture, going against the tide of language prescriptivism that had started in the late eighteenth century. This thesis takes an interdisciplinary approach, combining literary criticism of Dickens's works with aspects of historical linguistics. It explores Dickens's work both chronologically and thematically also taking into account adaptations and plagiarisms. The first three chapters focus on Dickens's early works, firstly, his compiled work, *Sketches by Boz* (1833-1836), then the first two novels, *The Pickwick Papers* (1836-1837), followed by *Oliver Twist* (1837-1839), drawing on other novels in each chapter to make comparisons. The final chapter analyses a selection of his novels over his writing career, including *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838-39), *David Copperfield* (1849-1850), *Bleak House* (1852-1853) and *Our Mutual Friend* (1864-1865). This thesis argues that Dickens is influential in promoting certain ideas about cockney speech, but there are complexities in his depictions.

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Table of Contents

List of Illustrations

Introduction

> ‘Wery good,’ rejoined Sam. ‘Then, that’s the wery best reason wy you should alvays have somebody by you as understands you, to keep you up and make you comfortable. If you vant a more polished sort o’ feller, vell and good, have him; but vages or no vages, notice or no notice, board or no board, lodgin’ or no lodgin’, Sam Veller, as you took from the old inn in the Borough, sticks by you, come what may; and let ev’rythin’ and ev’rybody do their wery fiercest, nothin’ shall ever perwent it.’
>
> (*Pickwick Papers*: 708)

This self-publicising speech by Sam Weller in Charles Dickens’s *Pickwick Papers* (1836-37) encapsulates Weller’s characteristics of down-to-earth loyalty and witty pragmatism. It also displays Weller’s distinctive speech mannerisms, which consist of humour and rhythmic prosody, combined with features of nineteenth-century literary cockney, most notably the interchange of ‘v’s and ‘w’s. Dickens captured the imaginations of the public with the character of Sam Weller and promoted a positive and upbeat image of the cockney speaker, which was in contrast with many other literary representations of the time that often associate cockney speech with general ‘lowness’, both socially and morally. At the same time as writing the *Pickwick Papers*, Dickens began writing *Oliver Twist* (1837-39), in which Dickens uses features of cockney dialect to delineate the voices of the criminal gang, in contrast with the pure, ‘unsullied’ speech of the main protagonist, who speaks Standard English despite his workhouse upbringing. This poses a seemingly negative shift in the representation of cockney speakers. However, regardless of moral stature, Dickens’s cockney speaking characters, such as Sam Weller, the pickpocketing Artful Dodger and drunken nurse, Mrs Gamp became household names in the nineteenth century and influenced cultural perceptions of cockney speakers. Dickens’s representations of cockney speakers are complex, nuanced and playful and their popularity continued after the nineteenth century, perpetuated through film adaptations of his works. Dickens’s writing showcased cockney speech and the cockney speaker at a time when, as Lynda Mugglestone has clearly demonstrated, language standardisation was becoming more

firmly embedded and non-standard speech was commonly dismissed as vulgar or incorrect (Mugglestone 2003).

This thesis explores Dickens's representations of cockneys and cockney dialect in the context of their nineteenth-century cultural background and seeks to account for their popularity and influence. It takes a literary approach, but explores literary linguistic considerations, such as the stylistic treatment of dialect, rhetoric, metalanguage and enregisterment, as well as socio-historical considerations, such as societal attitudes towards language and social class. This research draws on recent scholarship in the field of literary dialect studies that has explored the role dialect plays in literature. This thesis argues that Dickens is influential in promoting certain ideas about cockney speakers and cockney speech that are predominantly positive, but there are complexities in these depictions. Firstly, in this thesis introduction, I include some definitions and a literature review, encompassing the wide range of scholarship that has been taken into account in this interdisciplinary study. This includes specific studies focusing on Dickens and language, as well as other literary criticism within the field of Dickens studies and recent developments in the study of literary dialect studies and folk linguistics, which provide some important theoretical underpinnings and influencing factors to the approach this thesis has taken. I then state my original contribution to the field of investigation and provide a summary of the thesis chapters.

Definitions

Before proceeding, I need to establish some of the terms that I use in this thesis and acknowledge that some terms have slightly different meanings in linguistic and literary fields. Firstly, the word 'dialect' in linguistic terms is used to describe different varieties of language that are distinct from other forms based on societal divisions such as geographical settings or social class, which include 'a particular set of linguistic features which a defined subset of the speech community shares' (Geoffrey Leech and Mick Short 1981: 167). Dialect in literary terms tends to refer to any kind of non-standard speech represented through certain recognised features. In this thesis, I use the term dialect in the literary context to refer to any form of non-standard speech represented in writing by non-standard orthography, lexis or syntax. I use the term

'cockney dialect' liberally to refer to London speakers of non-standard dialect where recognised markers of cockney speech are used, some of which will be explained in this introduction. I also refer to 'idiolects', a term first used in 1948 by Bernard Bloch in an article on phonemic analysis, which are features of speech which are associated with individual characters and not specific to dialect that Bloch defines as, 'the totality of the possible utterances of one speaker at one time in using a language to interact with one other speaker' (1948:7). Of course, idiolects can include aspects of dialect too. However, my main area of concentration is on speech that can be considered cockney and characters who speak it.

The term 'cockney' is also an overgeneralised term, used to refer to a particular class and speech community of London. It is based on stereotypes and the cockney character forms a popular trope in English literature, which came to refer to working-class London dwellers that speak in non-standard, vernacular English. The first known literary reference to the word 'cockney' was in William Langland's *Piers Plowman* of 1362 (*Oxford English Dictionary Online* 2018). However, at this point, the word had the meaning of being a small misshapen egg (*Oxford English Dictionary Online* 2018). The word 'cockney' then underwent several semantic shifts. Firstly, it became used to refer to a spoilt, pampered (and thus weak) child. Geoffrey Chaucer uses the word with this meaning in the 'Reeve's Tale' of around 1405. (*Oxford English Dictionary Online* 2018) This particular meaning persisted until towards the end of the eighteenth century. From the beginning of the fifteenth century, the word starts to be used as a derisive term for all townspeople (*Oxford English Dictionary Online* 2018). The implication being that, unlike country dwellers, townsfolk were unaccustomed to hard work and thus delicate and effeminate. This meaning seems to have continued into the nineteenth century. Walter Scott used it in this sense in *Woodstock* in 1826, when he writes, 'Where cockneys or bumpkins are concerned' (1826, II. vi. 167, cited in the *Oxford English Dictionary Online* 2018). However, from the seventeenth century there is evidence of the meaning currently associated with the word (although, already out-dated), which is an inhabitant of London, from the East End - 'borne within the sound of Bow-Bell' (Minsheu, 1617, cited in *Oxford English Dictionary Online* 2018). The cockney as a pampered, impractical city-dweller, often in the form of 'The Cockney Sportsman', was still a frequent trope in popular culture from the beginning of the

eighteenth century and was still a dominant literary trope when Dickens began writing in the 1830s.

Figure 1

(*Cockney-Sportsmen* by James Gillray 1800. Courtesy of The British Museum)

Gillray's painting from the beginning of the century gives a visual representation of the cockney sportsman stereotype. The cockney character in the foreground is dressed in the latest London fashions, consisting of elegant finery obviously unsuitable for the countryside. He has a gormless expression, his over-coiffured dog has already frightened off the birds and the cockney sportsman's gun is pointing the wrong way, having already shot his sporting colleague. The cockney in Gillray's painting is the over-privileged urbanite, who, whilst fully abreast of the latest cosmopolitan fashions, lacks practical skills suited to the outdoor life. In the press of the late 1820s and early 1830s, there is a contradictory mixture of references to cockneys and cockney dialect. The references to cockneys in newspapers and periodicals reflected the different meanings of the word still in use. Often, the term is used simply to refer to all London residents, for example in the extract from a literature review of 'History and Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster. Part 4' in *The Satirist; or, the Censor of the Times*, which states; 'The mass of information here collected will, we should think, astonish the most erudite cockney, and gratify the most ardent lover of research' (1832:

294). With this meaning of the word, equating cockney to all Londoners, there are references to 'Cockney Critics', 'Cockney Journalists', 'Cockney Economists' and 'Cockney Literature'. 'The Cockney School' had been a term used to both deride and define the poetry of John Keats, Leigh Hunt and William Hazlitt; coined by a critic writing in *Blackwood's Magazine* in 1817 and referring to rhymes used which indicated a London accent.[1] Sometimes the term 'cockney' is used to refer politically to the Corporation of London, particularly in relation to The Municipal Corporations Act (1835), of which London was not included:

> When the enquiries were proceeding for the purpose of Corporation Reform, the *cockney* dogs had a large soft sop thrown to them to prevent their barking, in the shape of a sort of half promise that they should not be subjected to the general reform of corporation abuses.
>
> (*Figaro in London*, 26 March 1836: 51)

As these different examples demonstrate, the meaning of the label 'cockney' was still varied and was certainly not only used to represent working-class Londoners in the early mid-nineteenth century, but more commonly to refer to Londoners in general. Cockney is also used as an adjective to describe the language of Londoners from the eighteenth century onwards (*Oxford English Dictionary Online* 2018). I will give further examples of cockneys in popular culture in Historical Linguistic and Literary Background section of this thesis.

Literature Review

> His dialogues, without straining for puns or mere surface effects, are excerpta from veritable life, or such as might have been veritable, or would have been so under the circumstances described, heightened of course, to make their full impression.
>
> (Unsigned article in *Court Magazine* 1837 in Collins 1971: 34)

[1] For a detailed account of the Cockney School see Gregory Dart. 2003. 'The Cockney Moment', *The Cambridge Quarterly*, Volume 32: 203-223.

> Our public has grown to be tired of hearing great characters, or even ordinary ones, uttering virtuous sentiments; but put them in the mouth of a street-walker, and straightaway they become agreeable to listen to. We are sick of heroic griefs, passions, tragedies; and place them in the thief's boozing ken – be prodigal of irony, of slang, and bad grammar – sprinkle with cant phrases – leave out the h's, double the v's, divide the w's (as may be necessary), and tragedy becomes interesting once more.
>
> (Thackeray 1839: 408)

These contemporary responses to Dickens's writing reflect the varied reactions towards Dickens's use of cockney dialect. The first, written in April 1837 as a response to Dickens's early writing including *Sketches* and *The Pickwick Papers*, demonstrates the reception Dickens's dialect writing received from readers who felt it to be like real speech and who praised it for this perceived realism. The second extract, a critique by William Makepeace Thackeray of the so-called 'Newgate' novelists, but with explicit reference to Dickens's *Oliver Twist* through its mention of the 'street-walker', alludes to realism, but in a negative way. The term Newgate novels refers to a series of works published between 1820 and 1840, including Edward Bulwar-Lytton's *Paul Clifford* (1830), William Harrison Ainsworth's *Rookwood* (1834) and *Jack Sheppard* (1839), of which Dicken's *Oliver Twist* was also included by critics such as Thackeray, which were based on the lives of criminals and stories that had featured in the Newgate Calendar. Dickens strongly contested the association with these other writers, as is demonstrated in his preface to the 1841 edition of *Oliver Twist*. In the extract from Thackeray above, he criticises these writers, with particular focus on Dickens, for representing the speech of characters of low social standing and criticises the use of dialect writing for containing slang words, bad grammar and misspellings. As these two quotations demonstrate, Dickens's dialect writing was both praised and criticised for its realism, and on other occasions both praised and criticised for its artistry. Much of the contemporary criticism and discussion of Dickens's dialect writing focused on issues of authenticity, whether or not his dialect writing was true to real speech, or whether it was too authentic, thus exposing its readers to common, vulgar language.

This literature review provides a background to how dialect in literature has been approached and the developments that have taken place in the field, focusing

particularly on research that has explored Dickens's writing. It also attempts to bridge the gap between research in the two fields of Dickens studies and literary dialect studies, which, despite some important areas of convergence, have often developed independently of one another. Issues of authenticity have also played a significant role in early discussions of dialect writing and influenced the first academic studies of literary dialect in the twentieth century. However, in recent years, scholars in literary dialect studies have moved away from this limited way of considering dialect in the literature, adopting a 'post-authenticity' approach.[2]

George Philip Krapp's 1926 essay 'The Psychology of Dialect Writing' is acknowledged as a starting point in the field of literary dialect studies. Krapp's essay focuses on American dialect literature. However, it is relevant to the study of Dickens's use of dialect as it is the first study that begins to formalise a way of discussing dialect in literature. In the essay, Krapp makes a distinction between what he perceives as two types of dialect writing. The first type he describes as being generated from 'below', as being the expression of 'authentic folk interest' or a positive interpretation of a spoken dialect (1971:23). The second category, he describes as being from 'above', which he defines as 'an ingenious invention of sophisticated literary artists' (1971:23). In other words, Krapp presents the idea that the first form comes from imitation of an actual dialect familiar to the writer, whereas the second form, the literary form, involves a creative and imaginative process, which he considers to have higher literary value. Krapp's essay is pioneering in that it highlights the artistry of dialect writing and hints at its functional purpose:

> The writer of a literary dialect is not concerned with giving an exact picture of the folklore of speech. As an artist he must always keep his eye on the effect, and must select and reject what the scientific observations of his material reveals to him according as it suits or does not suit his purpose.
>
> (1971: 24)

In describing the art of the dialect writer, Krapp introduces the term 'eye dialect' to describe respellings of words that match the spoken form of the word, which are used to signpost the speaker as illiterate, or as he terms it, 'uncultivated', highlighting the fact that writers often only need to hint at the way a character speaks in order to trigger

[2] See Suzanne Pickles (2018) for an in depth discussion of 'post-authenticity'.

associations of dialect in the reader's mind (1971: 24). Krapp is quite critical of American dialect writing, pointing out that it often comes from a place of superiority and condescension towards dialect speakers. He writes that it is 'the work of persons who stand superiorly aloof from popular life and picture it amusedly, patronizingly, photographically, satirically, sentimentally, as their tastes incline them' (1971: 27). Krapp points out that literary dialect exposes social divisions in society, but seems to value this aspect for its comedic potential rather than for exploring anything else it might communicate concerning attitudes towards dialect speakers (29).

In 1950, Sumner Ives, building on Krapp's work, sets out to further formalise a theoretical approach for the study of literary dialect. Ives's work, also focusing on American dialect writing, outlines in greater detail the linguistic tensions inherent in producing literary dialect, for example, the limited range of phonemes available to suggest spoken forms and how writers tend to generalise certain dialectal features to emphasise character speech. Ives also discusses the dependent relationship between the writer and the reader in terms of understanding literary dialect and recognising the features used. In addition, Ives touches on the issue of dialect and social class by stating that dialect is used to carry 'some connotation of inferiority', though he adds that this is not always the case (1971: 146). Ives focuses predominantly on authenticity and makes the assumption that writers strive for (or should strive for) authenticity when writing literary dialect. Ives chooses for his study writers who have 'tried to give an impression of literal accuracy, to show actual speech as actually used' (1971: 146). Ives's work, whilst adopting a more systematic approach to the study of literary dialect than that of Krapp, seems to take a drier, slightly joyless and dictatorial approach to the study of dialect in literature. At the same time as acknowledging that dialect writing is a creative practice that cannot mirror reality, his insistence that good dialect writing should strive for proximity to the spoken language appears contradictory. Ives's idea of literary dialect studies was to study literary dialect as a reflection of real dialects with little interest in how the dialect contributed to the text as a whole.

In the field of Dickens studies, academic interest in Dickens's use of dialect first arose during the late 1960s and early 1970s, beginning with Stanley Gerson's study of 'divergent sounds' in Dickens's dialogue, which began an interest in the linguistic analysis of Dickens's non-standard speech (1967: i). Gerson appears to be following the Krapp / Ives school of thought in his way of analysing dialect in Dickens's writing.

Indeed, Gerson cites Krapp in his bibliography (1967: 375). In his study, Gerson meticulously lists all the non-standard variations in spelling used to represent non-standard dialect in Dickens's writing. The result, despite being an impressive piece of detailed research, is predominantly a list of data rather than an integrated critical discussion. In accordance with the Ives school of thinking, Gerson carefully connects Dickens's literary dialect to the dialectal features they are meant to represent, lists them spelling by spelling, and focuses on accuracy. For example in his discussion of the cockney use of 'w for v' (as in *weal*, *wessel*, *wery*), he quotes linguistic evidence from Otto Jesperson (1928) and Alexander John Ellis (1869), who both claimed that this linguistic phenomenon was almost obsolete by the mid-nineteenth century, concluding that 'if this is so, Dickens in his later novels was not giving a faithful record of contemporary speech' (1967: 264). Later, he further concludes that, 'it is not impossible that Dickens was not at fault in using *w* for *v* in his later novels and tales' (266). In this way, Gerson corroborates with the Ivesian notion that dialect writing should always strive for authenticity. Gerson does not attempt to discuss dialect in Dickens in relation to the texts they are included in.

George Leslie Brook (1970) built on the work of Gerson by continuing to address the way in which Dickens represents spoken language in his novels, but as Brook states in his preface, perhaps in reaction to Gerson's work, his aim was 'to suggest possible ways of approaching the language of Dickens, not to treat the subject exhaustively' and appealed to 'the reader whose interest in Dickens is mainly literary' (9). Brook approaches literary dialect in a more accessible way for a literary audience, but with less awareness of the developments in literary dialect studies. Whilst Brook's work attempts to integrate discussion of literary dialect, characterisation and, to a lesser degree, plot, his work reflects now dated, judgemental attitudes towards speakers of cockney dialect. Brook groups cockney speakers in Dickens together in a chapter entitled, 'Substandard Speech' and cockney is notably excluded from his other chapters, entitled 'Class Dialects' and 'Regional Dialects'. This suggests an adherence to the prescriptive views that saw cockney as 'incorrect' speech, rather than being the regional dialect of London or a working-class dialect. Brook's work also tends to be predominantly descriptive in content. He seldom explores or questions Dickens's choices for literary dialect in the novel.

Norman Page's (1969, 1973) research focuses on speech in literature in general, but contains a significant amount on Dickens and dialect. Page's work marks a point at which a more modern approach to literary dialect studies meets the field of literary criticism on Dickens. Page is seminal in initiating a new type of literary approach, which begins to assess the stylistic purposes of dialogue in Dickens's novels, suggesting dialect serves other functions in the narrative, rather than an attempt to reflect linguistic realism. Page's essays on Dickens and speech, include, 'Eccentric Speech in Dickens' (1969) in which he argues for a deeper understanding and appreciation of dialogue in literature, contradicting an argument put forward by David Lodge that dialogue is stylistically less interesting than other parts of the text. In '"A Language Fit for Heroes": Speech in *Oliver Twist* and *Our Mutual Friend*' (1969), Page discusses the absence of dialect in Oliver's speech and that of Lizzie Hexam and what function this has in the novels. Page refers to this speech as 'heroic speech' and challenges the criticism that had been levelled at Dickens for giving characters of a lower social class Standard English speech, beginning to take a more stylistic approach, examining the role dialect speech (or lack of it) plays in the creation of character and development of plot. Page's pioneering book, *Speech in the Novel* (1973) includes a development of his earlier paper, 'A Language Fit for Heroes', and offers an overview of speech in the English novel, as well as focusing on dialects and idiolects. Despite being an overview of dialect in literature, the study includes a whole chapter on 'Dickens and Speech'. Page engages more deeply with the issues raised by Dickens's use of dialect than scholars previously. Unlike Gerson's purely data-based approach and Brook's denigration of cockney speech, Page is the first writer to take a more analytical approach to how speech operates in the novel, without making the same kind of judgements about non-standard dialect that Brook does. Page is innovative in looking at the nuances of speech in the novel, expressing consideration of reader response, the voices people hear when they read speech and whether or not orthographic consistency plays a part. He considers how non-standard speech influences the way readers view a character and considers the author's choice of dialogue as a means of presentation (21). Page attributes Dickens's use of cockney in the *Pickwick Papers* to a combination of Dickens's familiarity with the way working-class Londoners spoke and his awareness of the recent popularity of Pierce Egan's *Life in London* (1821) and William Thomas Moncrieff's adaptation of Egan's play, *Tom and Jerry* (Adelphi Theatre, 1821). Page maintains that Dickens's representation of cockney dialect was conventional in style,

seeing Dickens as following a literary convention of representing cockney dialect (1973: 60).

Whilst Page focuses on all forms of speech in the novel, Norman Francis Blake's *Non-standard Language in English Literature* (1981) begins to narrow the field by focusing specifically on non-standard speech in literature. However, Blake covers a very broad spectrum of literary production from Chaucer to modern times. Included in this is a chapter on Victorian literature, in which Blake discusses Dickens and dedicates three pages to cockney speech. Blake's discussion of cockney in Dickens, like that of Page, focuses on Sam Weller with a brief mention of Mrs Gamp. On the subject of Sam Weller, Blake also links Dickens to the literary tradition, this time in his depiction of servants, in which, according to Blake, cockney dialect provides the comedic aspect (1981: 157). Blake outlines the significance of Dickens's execution of cockney and acknowledges Dickens's different treatment of cockney and cockney speakers from previous works of literature (1981: 157). Blake writes, 'Dickens's Cockney speakers have more life and vigour because they are given a variety of appropriate colloquialisms, slang expressions and turns of phrase suitable for their particular status' (1981: 157). Blake takes a more celebratory approach to non-standard English than Brook and acknowledges Dickens's innovation in creating a variety of cockney speakers, with different peculiarities of speech.

Robert Golding's *Idiolects of Dickens* (1985), although open to criticism for his use of hyperbole and other lapses in academic convention, offers more extensive coverage of Dickens's literary dialects than Blake does and makes some important observations, which have contributed significantly to this field of dialect in Dickens. Golding takes a more progressive view of cockney dialect than Brook, calling it an 'unfortunate fact' that cockney dialect has often been used to indicate that a character is 'low' and he criticises what he calls the 'artificial "rules" of pronunciation' brought about by language standardisation (1985: 34). Golding also makes a distinction between two types of representation of cockney in literature. On the one hand, he groups Dickens, Pierce Egan, Augustus Mayhew and James Greenwood together as writers who demonstrate 'greater sympathy and understanding' towards cockney characters (35). On the other hand, he categorises Robert Smith Surtees and William Makepeace Thackeray as writers who are guilty of deliberately emphasising the non-standard features of speech 'as something "low"' (35). Golding does, however, reiterate Page's

point that Dickens's orthographic representation of cockney is in itself conventional, as opposed to 'realistic' and argues that Dickens's originality lies mainly in his use of rhetorical structures (35). Golding is particularly interested in rhythm in the idiolects of the characters and draws attention to the rhythmic qualities of cockney when he states, 'Dickens showed from the very beginning an ability to re-create the rhythms of the Cockney idiom, rhythms within the framework of his stylised fictional techniques soon developed their own highly theatrical impetus' (36). Thus, Golding attributes much of the success of Dickens's cockney to the rhythm of dialogue writing. Golding makes this case strongly for the language of the Artful Dodger in *Oliver Twist* and attempts to equate Dodger's speech patterns with the political message that Dodger's character conveys, labelling Dodger's language as 'speech of social criticism' (85).

In *Dickens, Women and Language* (1992), Patricia Ingham, influenced by Page's (1973) writing on heroic speech in relation to Oliver and Lizzie Hexam, discusses how Nancy's speech in *Oliver Twist* changes from colloquial to Standard English, mirroring her changing role in the plot, from a member of Fagin's gang to a heroine, as she tries to protect Oliver (50). In this way, Ingham, like Page, begins to explore the stylistic purpose of the use (and absence) of non-standard dialect in relation to plot and characterisation.

Susan Ferguson's 'Drawing Fictional Lines: Dialect and the Victorian Narrative' (1998) proposes a redefinition of the way scholars consider literary dialect with a particular focus on Victorian literature, which includes a discussion of dialect in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), Dickens's *Bleak House* (1853) and Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891). She selects these novels as they were all criticised for their use of dialect in the nineteenth century. Ferguson outlines the importance of separating dialect from discussions of authenticity, as she believes it detracts from the purpose of literary dialect, which is to create a fiction of language, which helps support the narrative. She coins the term 'ficto-linguistics' to describe the way dialect operates within the text in relation to characterisation and the dynamics of character relationships (1998:1). Ferguson goes on to define ficto-linguistics as, 'the systems of language that appear in novels and both deviate from accepted or expected sociolinguistic patterns and indicate identifiable alternative patterns congruent to other aspects of the fictional world' (2). She argues that dialect in the novel serves far more complex purposes than just trying to create a sense of authenticity. Ferguson argues that

Bleak House, in fact, challenges the criticism often levelled at Dickens for using Standard English for the speech of 'good' characters whose social background make them more likely to be dialect speakers, because of the inclusion of Jo and Charley; virtuous characters who speak cockney. According to Ferguson, the use of dialect in the novel, on the one hand, helps the reader to follow the character's speech through the complexity of the double narration. On the other hand, the speech helps to establish the social divisions between the characters and, furthermore, similarities in dialect between characters help to provide clues that foreshadow hidden family connections, which are revealed as the plot unfurls (5). In many ways, Ferguson's concept of ficto-linguistics is an extension of the approach Norman Page took towards dialect in the novel, as Page also discusses how dialect in the novel operates within the narrative structure beyond a representation of authentic speech.

In recent years, research in the field of literary dialect studies has moved towards a 'post-authenticity' approach when discussing dialect in literature, rejecting the limitations that focusing solely on authenticity impose on the field. Pickles defines this as a move 'from considering authenticity *per se* to a view of literary dialect as one of the tools available to writers in the construction of meaning within their texts' (2018: 20) These 'post-authenticity' approaches choose to explore how dialect operates within the text and what it can tell us, not only about attitudes towards the speakers of these dialects on the part of the author, but also about attitudes in the wider cultural context. Page (1969, 1973) and Blake (1981) had begun to signal this move away from judging the merit of literary dialect on grounds of authenticity, but research since then has explored literary dialect from other perspectives, influenced by both sociolinguistics and the study of folk linguistics.

Since the early 2000s, studies in the field of sociolinguistics have influenced the study of literary dialect by exploring the constructedness of authentic speech. These include studies that have challenged the notion of 'the authentic speaker', such as Penelope Eckert's (2003) article 'Sociolinguistics and Authenticity: An Elephant in the Room' in which she argues that the authentic speaker is an 'ideological construct' (392). Nikolas Coupland (2003) warns against abandoning the notion of authenticity altogether, as, even if it is an ideological construct, the idea of authenticity remains an important one. Coupland states that, 'Authenticity matters. It remains a quality of experience we actively seek out, in most domains of life, material and social' (417).

Both ideas impact on the way we consider literary dialect, as, if there is no such thing as an authentic speaker, conversation about the authenticity of dialect writing becomes redundant. However, by acknowledging the importance we place on authenticity as a concept, albeit socially constructed, ideas relating to authenticity remain important for extracting societal and cultural attitudes.

Other studies that have influenced the way in which literary dialect is considered are anthropological studies that have explored the way in which certain norms and linguistic features become associated with types of speakers. These studies include the idea of 'indexicality' (Michael Silverstein 2003) and 'enregisterment' (Asif Agha 2003), which can help explain the role literature plays in the formation of attitudes towards spoken language. Silverstein's theory of indexicality describes the process through which certain features of a speaker's spoken register indexically signal their social class or background. Agha defines enregisterment as 'processes through which a linguistic repertoire becomes differentiable within a language as a socially recognized register of forms' (Agha 2003: 231). In other words, enregisterment refers to the way in which features of language become embedded in the public psyche as having associations of proper and improper use, or as being correct or incorrect speech and as being associated with particular types (stereotypes) of speaker. Agha's study examines the way in which ideas about language were disseminated and transmitted in the nineteenth century leading to the widespread use and promotion of Received Pronunciation. He describes how the work of early prescriptivists was diffused through ever more wide-reaching genres of texts; from the original works, then through popular guidebooks, then through literary works and finally through the mass-produced and widely read Penny Weeklies (259). This process continued until these beliefs and attitudes became commonly held. Agha applies this theory of enregisterment to the dissemination of Received Pronunciation, but the same theory can also be applied to the way in which ideas about and attitudes towards cockney speech spread in the nineteenth century. Agha's theory of literary enregisterment also provides some theoretical underpinnings that can help explain the ways in which Dickens's writing played a role in spreading cultural ideas of nineteenth-century cockney speech, through its popularity, wide distribution and its repeated reproduction and imitation in popular culture.

Developments in the study of folk linguistics, the way in which language is considered by non-linguists, has also contributed to approaches to literary dialect in

recent years. Folk linguistics began as a pejorative term, but thanks to research by linguists such as Dennis Preston, non-linguist perceptions of dialects have become a recognised area of study. The general premise of folk linguistics is that what people think about the language should form part of linguistic investigation, which impacts on both literary dialect production and consumption. Henry Hoenigswald, an early proponent of folk linguistics, argued:

> . . . we should be interested not only in (a) what goes on (language), but also in (b) how people react to what goes on (they are persuaded, they are put off, etc.) and in (c) what people say goes on (talk concerning language). It will not do to dismiss these secondary and tertiary modes of conduct merely as sources of error.
>
> (Hoenigswald 1966: 20, cited in Nancy Niedzielski and Dennis Preston 2000:2)

The implication of folk linguistics for the study of literary dialect is that written speech becomes further recognised as an important source of cultural attitudes towards dialects and speakers of dialect, and that the reactions of readers to it matter.

Recent studies in literary dialect have taken on board these sociolinguistic and folk linguistic ideas to expand the way that dialect is considered. Taryn Hakala's *Working Dialect: Nonstandard Voices in Victorian Literature* (2010) elaborates on Ferguson's concept of ficto-linguistics, taking a more holistic and celebratory approach towards non-standard literary dialect, exploring it from a literary perspective, but informed by an awareness of historical linguistics and modern developments in sociolinguistics. Hakala argues the case for the linguistic counter trend that was taking place in the nineteenth-century literature, which appeared to celebrate non-standard dialects and which was subtly working against the tide of language prescriptivism, which favoured standardisation. Her thesis readdresses the assumption that Standard English had the prestige it did by exploring a variety of texts representing dialects from the north and south of England. Hakala exposes the limitations of Ferguson's concept of ficto-linguistics, arguing that it views Standard English as too powerful a force and that it neglects to examine the social, cultural and linguistic context of the time (2010: 12). In light of the research previously mentioned in sociolinguistics, Hakala writes with an awareness of the social constructedness of authenticity, but acknowledges its importance in the way identity is constructed through language. One aspect of this is the

way in which characters fashion themselves through linguistic output (51). Hakala examines dialect through the lenses of 'vulgarity, authenticity, knowingness, and theatricality' (14). In her chapter 'Some Write Well, But He Writes Weller": *Pickwick Papers* and the New Cockney', she explores how Dickens popularised 'the much-maligned' cockney dialect through the character of Sam Weller, through his deep understanding of the 'social indexicality' of the spoken language (121). Hakala attributes part of Weller's popularity to his 'knowingness', which she describes as being 'not universal and timeless but rather particularly English, working class, and Victorian', as well as his humour (125). Hakala's chapter discusses the origins of Pickwick, argues for Sam being the Cockney hero of *Pickwick* and explores his afterlife in popular fiction, noting his influence on music hall in the latter part of the century (123).

In 'Talking Like a Servant: What Nineteenth Century Novels Can Tell Us About the Social History of the Language' (2016), Jane Hodson, also taking a post-authenticity stance, argues that, rather than providing any clear evidence of how servants actually spoke, the dialect of servants in nineteenth-century literature provides vital clues about social attitudes. These include indications of what was considered to be servant speech in society at that time and how these reflect attitudes towards speech and social class (27). Whilst acknowledging the potential use of Ferguson's concept of ficto-linguistics, Hodson calls for closer investigation of literary texts within these parameters and an expansion of this type of approach, developing ideas of enregisterment. She argues for a deeper understanding of the complexities of texts within their linguistic and cultural contexts, for the study of a broad spectrum of texts, not just those considered to be by 'good' writers and for a more holistic approach to the study of texts, not just focusing on the parts of the texts that demonstrate dialectal writing (33). She states:

> literary dialects must be understood as complex statements that take place within complex linguistic ecologies. We need to dig deeply into understanding literary dialects both in terms of the ficto-linguistic systems established within the literary work, and in terms of how those ficto-linguistic systems respond to the folklinguistic expectations that contemporary readers brought to the texts
>
> (2016: 33)

Thus, Hodson emphasises the need for a context driven approach to help gain a deeper understanding of how literary dialects interact with social meaning, reflecting and shaping attitudes towards non-standard dialects and speakers of those dialects. Furthermore, in *Dialect and Literature in the Long Nineteenth Century*, Hodson argues that there is still a need for more research in the area of nineteenth-century dialect representation and that there have been few studies offering a survey of literary representation of dialect during this period (2017: 2)

Literary scholars have produced valuable contextual work in recent decades and these include various aspects of the cultural context of Dickens's writing, such as its relationship with popular culture, theatre and melodrama, as well as the socio-political climate and popular politics. Juliet John (2001) explores how both the world of theatre and melodrama in the Victorian age and popular accounts of crime and criminals, such as those reported in *The Newgate Calendar*, set the cultural stage for and informed Dickens's villainous characters. John (2008, 2010) also explores Dickens's relationship with the phenomenon of mass culture. John argues that Dickens changed attitudes towards popular culture. She claims that, 'he regarded popular entertainment as culture, not simply popular culture; in so doing, Dickens destabilized the familiar idea of a binary opposition between high and low culture and subverted established cultural hierarchies' (2008: 142). John's insights into Dickens's relationship with mass culture help to draw better understanding of how his representations of cockneys were publicly received and disseminated (2010). Sally Ledger (2007) explores the relationship between Dickens's work and popular political literature such as the publication of show trials, satirical cartoons and political pamphleting. Both of these studies have implications for the consideration of Dickens's representation of cockney speakers as the popular genres they discuss encode many linguistic associations of class and dialect. There is a wealth of other contextual research I refer to in this thesis, including studies on Dickens as a writer and publisher (Butt and Tillotson 1957, Patten 1978), Dickens in relation to crime and education (Collins 1962, 1963), Dickens and his readers (Ford 1974, Winter 2011) and Dickens and theatre (Vlock 1998).

The way in which people consumed Dickens's work is also significant to an understanding of how Dickens represented cockney speech and how readers responded to his work. Dickens's texts were frequently consumed through the process of reading aloud. Dickens's own commitment to the aural consumption of his work is evident

through his exhaustive reading tours of his own work, in which he strove to exaggerate speech forms of his characters for the pleasure of the audience. Research in this area includes Ivan Kreilkamp's (2005) study on Victorian storytelling, in which he explores the orality of Dickens's writing and the significance of Dickens's passion for reading his work aloud and Malcolm Andrews's (2006) work on Dickens and performativity, which includes research into the communal reading practices of Dickens's work.

Linguistic studies in turn can also shed light on the significance of these reading practices. Alexandra Jaffe and Shana Walton's study, 'The Voices People Read: Orthography and the Representation of Non-Standard Speech' (2000), on the voices people hear when reading non-standard dialect, can deepen our understanding of how literary dialect is processed and the effect it has on the reader. Jaffe and Walton conducted studies in which participants were asked to read aloud texts written in non-standard orthographies and then were asked their thoughts concerning the social background and character of the person whose speech they had read. The researchers studied the way in which the participants read and their attitudes towards the speakers through sociolinguistic interviews (2000: 561). Their findings indicate that participants would automatically read the non-standard spelling in the text as signs that the speakers were from a lower social class and that 'participants reading a non-standard text did indeed "hear" embodied voices – whole personas – that weren't evoked by their readings of standard texts' (2000: 561- 562). This research, although conducted in 2000, can give us some insight into the way in which Dickens's work may have been received and processed by readers. In order to gain a better understanding of the complex relationship of literary dialect and cultural consciousness, it is important to move between literary and linguistic interpretations.

In this thesis, I develop existing discussions of Dickens and dialect. Unlike the work of Gerson (1967), I do not present a list of all the cockney dialectal features in Dickens's writing, nor do I try to prove how authentic Dickens's writing of cockney dialect was. Similarly to Brook (1970), I follow a more literary approach, but unlike Brook I do not pass judgement on the cockney speaker as speaking 'substandard' speech. Instead, I take a more positive approach to non-standard dialects in accordance with modern linguistic thought. Following the precedent set by Page (1969, 1973), I attempt to integrate discussion of dialect with wider notions of plot and characterisation. Page's discussion of cockney speech in Dickens's work confines itself to a concise

description of the speech of Sam Weller and that of Mrs Gamp and whilst Page acknowledges that Sam Weller's language in *Pickwick Papers* offered 'a bonus of vigour' and 'a welcome relief' (1973: 139), he does not expand on why Weller's speech was so popular and influential. In this thesis, I offer a more specific focus on Dickens's cockney speech and try to show the innovation and nuances of Dickens's various representations of cockney and cockney speakers, agreeing with and expanding on Blake's argument that Dickens was an innovator of literary cockney speech. Golding makes the important connection between the language of the Artful Dodger and political dissent, describing Dodger's language as the 'speech of social criticism' (1985: 36). However, Golding does not go into detail about the social issues Dickens was criticising through Dodger's language. In this thesis, I develop Golding's notion of 'speech as social criticism' and try to establish a stronger connection between Dodger's language and the social issues addressed through the characterisation and the contemporary context. I engage with the contemporary approaches and ideologies present in the field of literary dialect studies. I do not try to prove the authenticity of Dickens's cockney dialect writing, but I acknowledge the importance of notions of authenticity in the wider cultural framework. In relation to Ferguson's (1998) study, I engage in ficto-linguistics, even if I do not rigidly adhere to this as a framework, as I look at how cockney speech and cockney speakers interact within the literary works. However, I also combine this with an examination of the wider cultural context into which these literary works appeared. I consider enregisterment in the representation of Dickens's cockney dialect and cockney speaking characters and their afterlives in popular culture. Whilst I agree with Hakala (2010) regarding the positive impact of Sam Weller on the image of the cockney speaker in the Victorian era, her study only looks at one example of the cockney in Dickens's work. By focusing on Dickens's representations of cockney and cockney speakers through a variety of his works, I have been able to further explore the complexities and nuances of his representations, which are not always as positively presented as Sam Weller. In a similar way to the research of Hodson (2016) on 'talking like a servant', I acknowledge that the concept of the cockney and cockney speech are social constructs. The object of my thesis is not to find out how cockneys spoke, nor to ascertain how authentic Dickens's representations are, but rather to explore what they tell us about his attitudes, the attitudes that permeated popular culture and the influence his representations had on popular culture. Hodson calls for the study of a wide range of texts and not just those thought to be by 'good'

writers, by which she qualifies as being considered good 'both in terms of recognised literary merit and in terms of linguistic authenticity' (2016: 33). Although I agree with her in principle, I could barely have chosen a more popular writer and one who is undoubtedly thought to be 'good'. By 'good' here, I mean that Dickens is still widely read and currently critically valued, evidence of which can be found in frequent inclusion of Dickens's works on the literary curriculum of schools and universities. Although, this was not always the case. Early twentieth century literary critics were often dismissive of Dickens as a popular writer and F. R. Leavis famously wanted to exclude Dickens from the literary canon as he considered Dickens's work to be merely entertainment and not serious enough to form part of his 'great tradition' of writers (Sasaki 2011: 52). However, my reasons for choosing to work on Dickens, which not only stem from a passion I have for his work and use of language, are largely due to the fact that he was so popular and influential, regardless of perceived literary merit. The popularity of Dickens's work permeated all levels of popular culture, thus his characters and their language became part of a collective consciousness (Winter 2011). Whilst much has been written on Dickens, there are still many aspects to explore with regards to the effect Dickens's dialect writing had on popular culture. There is also still a gap for research that combines literary criticism with linguistic analysis. Besides some notable exceptions, there are few studies that deal with literary dialect from a literary perspective, but which also show an awareness of linguistic scholarship. Writers have produced valuable scholarship on Dickens and dialect, but have not attempted an overview of Dickens's work, focusing exclusively on Dickens and cockney. What were the cultural and historical linguistic precedents for Dickens's representation of cockney speakers and cockney speech? How did Dickens reflect and respond to established representations of cockney speech and cockney speakers in his own writing? How does Dickens use cockney dialect in his novels and to what purpose? What attitudes does he reflect? What role does gender play on the way cockney is represented? What was the influence of Dickens's work on public perceptions of cockney speakers and cockney speech? How does the treatment of working-class, upwardly mobile characters and their speech compare with that of cockney speakers?

My thesis takes a chronological and thematic approach. The first three chapters focus on Dickens's early works, firstly, his compiled work, *Sketches by Boz* (1833-1836), then the first two novels, *The Pickwick Papers* (1836-1837) and *Oliver Twist*

(1837-1839), drawing on other novels in each chapter to make comparisons. The first chapter focuses on the beginnings of Dickens's dialect formation as realised through the compilation of short pieces, which formed *Sketches by Boz*. It considers *Sketches by Boz* as a foundation for Dickens's later dialect writing. The second chapter focuses on the 'cheeky cockney' as exemplified by Sam (and also Tony) Weller in the *Pickwick Papers*, but also in *Master Humphrey's Clock* (1840-41). The third chapter deals with the theme of language and morality and is divided into two sections. It firstly explores issues of language and morality as demonstrated in Dickens's second novel, *Oliver Twist.* The second half of the chapter focuses on attitudes of language, morality and gender and takes a broader look at the cockney speech of women throughout Dickens's writing, revisiting *Sketches by Boz*, but also looking at later works, particularly *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1842-44) and the character of Mrs Gamp. The final chapter analyses a selection of his novels over his writing career, including *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838-39), *David Copperfield* (1849-1850), *Bleak House* (1852-1853) and *Our Mutual Friend* (1864-1865). This chapter investigates the phenomenon of speaking posh, looking at upwardly mobile working-class London characters, whose language is represented as being pretentious or affected. My research is qualitative, rather than quantitative, although, I have included a small quantitative comparison of dialectal features of Tony Weller's speech in his 'appearance' in *Master Humphrey's Clock* with that of his character in *The Pickwick Papers* in order to see if Dickens increased the amount of cockney dialect features in the character's speech when reintroducing him, as a response to the popularity of the character's speech. This thesis includes works such as *Sketches by Boz* and *Master Humphrey's Clock*, which have seldom been included in literary linguistic analysis and it takes into consideration Dickens's influence on wider culture through examining adaptations, plays and advertising. I contextualise Dickens's writing in terms of contemporary literary works and wider popular culture, such as newspapers and periodicals. I also consider Dickens's work in the light of language standardisation, in the form of prescriptive language and etiquette guides. I have also looked at the afterlives of Dickens's cockney characters in popular adaptations and dramatisations of his work, as well as their appearance in other commercial outputs, such as adverts. I argue that through the execution and prevalence of Dickens's cockney dialect, Dickens often subverts and challenges prescribed views towards speakers of cockney dialect and cultural prejudices, and that whilst the attitudes he reflects are complex and often contradictory, Dickens still creates a legacy that is overwhelmingly positive towards

this form of non-standard speech. This thesis aims to lay some foundations for understanding stereotypes both positive and negative towards cockneys and cockney speakers that continue to persist in society today.

In terms of methodology, I have used a combination of book research, mainly using the Penguin and Oxford World's Classics versions of Dickens's works. For *Sketches by Boz*, I have chosen the 1995 Penguin edition, based on the 1839 single octavo volume published by Chapman and Hall, because it was the first complete book of the sketches and one which Dickens closely reviewed and revised (*Sketches by Boz*: xliii). I have chosen the Oxford World's Classics version of *The Pickwick Papers*, based on the Clarendon 1986 edition, because this uses the original 1837 single compiled volume, plus errata. Many other modern editions of *The Pickwick Papers* use the 1867 Charles Dickens edition text, which despite the considerable editorial involvement of Dickens's at this later date, includes a number of significant changes, particularly to dialectal features. As the editor of the Penguin edition points out, Dickens 'extensively altered the orthography of his cockney expressions to bring them into line with contemporary usage' (Patten 1972: 31). Therefore, an edition based on the earlier 1837 volume, represents a clearer representation of Dickens's dialect writing at that time. I have also chosen to use the Oxford World's Classics edition of *Oliver Twist*. This edition also follows the Clarendon edition, which is based on the 1846 text, which Dickens had 'painstakingly' revised (*Oliver Twist*: xxvi). In this case, I have chosen this edition over editions that use an earlier text, because there were issues between Dickens and his publishers which affected the consistency of earlier editions (xxvi). In the introduction to the Clarendon edition, Kathleen Tillotson argues that 'the text achieves stability only in 1846' (1966: xi). In terms of the examples of non-standard dialect in the 1846 edition, they vary little from the copy-text of the original periodical version, used by Penguin. It is worth noting though that when Dickens made changes to the speech of dialect speaking characters in the 1846 edition, it was to add dialectal features, rather than to remove them, for example Dickens changes 'now'(Horne 2002: 379) to 'dow' (*Oliver Twist*: 366) in Barney's speech and also changes 'left hand, and keep on the other side' (Horne 2002: 379) to 'left hand and keep **od** the other side' (*Oliver Twist*: 366) to either maintain or exaggerate the character's idiolect or override corrections made by previous editing. For *Nicholas Nickleby*, I selected the 1978 Penguin edition, edited by Michael Slater, based on the first volume edition of the

novel, printed in 1839, which was collated with the later two editions of 1848 and 1867. For *Master Humphrey's Clock*, I have used the original 1840 compiled edition published by Chapman and Hall. For later texts, there is less variation between editions and I have mainly used Penguin versions for consistency. The Penguin *Martin Chuzzlewit* is based on the original printed volume of 1844 with errata corrected (*Martin Chuzzlewit*: xxxi). Similarly, the Penguin edition of *Dombey and Son* is based on the first single-volume edition of 1848, with the errata incorporated into the text (*Dombey and Son*: xxxi). The Bloomsbury edition of *David Copperfield* and the Penguin versions of *Bleak House* and *Our Mutual Friend* are all based on the first volume editions of each novel, printed in 1850, 1852 and 1865, respectively.

For researching contemporary newspapers and periodicals, I have mainly used online resources, such as Gale Primary Sources Online and the British Library Online. For my research on nineteenth-century adaptations and language guides, I have either looked at original texts in the Special Collections of the David Wilson Library at Leicester University or The British Library, as well as some online versions provided by the British Library or other online archives. I have also conducted research at the Charles Dickens Museum in London, particularly concerning the afterlives of Dickens's characters in the form of illustrations and advertising.

Chapters

In the first chapter, I readdress the question of how and to what extent Dickens's experience working as a shorthand journalist prior to his early writing and his theatrical involvement influenced his early representation of cockney and cockney speakers in terms of the way in which he wrote dialect and also in terms of shaping his attitude towards language and speakers of non-standard dialect. This chapter offers a close reading of Dickens's sketches to show how he was practising and establishing the cockney voices in *Sketches*, which were to form the foundations of characterisations later in his novels and how he was already beginning to enregister ideas of London speech in the minds of his readership.

In the second chapter, I argue that, through the creation of the Wellers in *The Pickwick Papers*, Dickens was fundamental in promoting the trope of the cheeky

cockney that lasted throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century. I examine the precedents for Dickens's Sam Weller. I explore the language Dickens creates for the character (and his father, Tony Weller) and the reception of these characters in popular culture. I explore the role the Wellers play as storytellers and as alternative voices for Dickens in the novel, focusing on the mnemonic functions of Dickens's writing and patterns in Victorian reading, looking at how the Victorian reading practice of reading aloud informed the reception of the characters and their popularity. Through a close reading of *The Pickwick Papers,* this chapter accounts for the popularity of cockney in the novel and what it represents to the reader. I explore how this popularity was manifested in the form of plagiarisms, adaptations and advertising and to what extent features of cockney dialect were included in these reproductions. I look at how the commercial success of the Wellers led to Dickens's own exploitation of these characters through their resurrection in *Master Humphrey's Clock*.

The third chapter investigates issues of language and morality in Dickens's work in order to examine how the language of the criminal classes relates to, supports or challenges culturally held beliefs that equate certain types of speech to certain types of moral behaviour. I focus firstly on Dickens's representation of cockney in *Oliver Twist* and explore how Dickens constructs attitudes towards morality through the use (or lack of) dialect in the novel. I explore how *Oliver Twist* is divided along moral and linguistic lines, but reject the limited view that Dickens denigrates speakers of cockney dialect in the novel. The second part of this chapter focuses on language, morality and gender, by both exploring Dickens's female characters who are depicted as speaking cockney dialect and those who, despite being from working-class London backgrounds, demonstrate an absence of dialect and looks at the reasons motivating these choices. I look at Dickens's cockney speaking women, such as those who appear in *Sketches by Boz*, and also explore the language of Mrs Gamp from *Martin Chuzzlewit*. The chapter assesses whether or not Dickens treats female speakers of cockney as he does male and to what effect.

The last chapter considers London characters who are upwardly mobile and who use features of upwardly mobile speech to explore how different types of upwardly-mobile characters are depicted through speech and to compare the attitudes towards them compared with his cockney speaking characters. I argue that whilst Dickens was

often sympathetic in his treatment of speakers of non-standard dialect, he frequently uses motifs of linguistic pretension as a means of ridiculing upwardly mobile characters. Dickens uses certain speech features to make fun of upwardly mobile characters in the novels and this exposes telling attitudes towards language and social class. I distinguish between three character types: Firstly, comic characters, such as Mr Mantalini from *Nicholas Nickleby* and Mr Turveydrop from *Bleak House*; then, the Parvenu, looking at social awkwardness in these upwardly mobile characters and focusing on *Our Mutual Friend* and characters such as the Boffins and Silas Wegg; finally, the language of upwardly mobile professionals, which includes a discussion of Mr Guppy from *Bleak House*, Uriah Heep from *David Copperfield* and Bradley Headstone and Charley Hexam from *Our Mutual Friend*.

Historical Linguistic and Literary Background

Language Standardisation

The late eighteenth century saw a proliferation of language guides, dictionaries, style guides and elocution manuals, which tried to lay down cohesive rules about what constituted acceptable language. Many of these language guides from the end of the eighteenth century and beginning of the nineteenth century were reprinted multiple times throughout the nineteenth century, and widely circulated, which quickly evolved into what Mugglestone refers to as a 'national obsession' with acquiring proper speech (2003: 1). Besides the glut of language guides on the market, changes in society brought about by rapid urbanisation created new opportunities and saw divergent social classes living closely alongside each other. This caused increased concern about belonging to the 'right' social group and inclusion into the right social circles, which meant speaking in the correct way to be included and created demand for these language guides. Furthermore, increased literacy and awareness of the written form saw language prescriptivists aligning the spoken form more closely with the written form of the language and standard spelling, which Mugglestone refers to as a rise in the 'visual authority of words' (1995: 103). Certain utterances became clear indications of social class and insecurities about language use and awareness of the connotations of language as a reflection of social class became exacerbated by the mid-nineteenth century. The pronunciation of the letter h (or lack of it), for example, became such a major shibboleth of social standing that in the mid-nineteenth century a guide was produced in its honour. *Poor Letter H Its Use and Abuse Addressed to its Little Vowels, a, e, i, o, u And the Millions Who Use Them* (1854) was a pamphlet supposedly written by the letter H himself, (the Hon. Henry H). The pamphlet offers linguistic advice, written in the form of a humorous conceit, which consists of three epistles; one written to the personified Vowels from the Letter H, one from the Letter H to the Vowels and one to the Million (of users) from the Letter H. It gives numerous examples of the 'misuse' of the aspirated 'H', either by people omitting or adding the /h/ sound to words, giving examples from all levels of society and concentrating on the examples which produce the most humorous homophonic confusions, for example adding and /h/ sound to 'Heir' (or 'air'), making it sound like 'hare' (or 'hair'), such as;

> Then I have heard of a person, who was very well dressed and looked like a lady, ask a gentleman who was sitting by her, if he knew whether Lord Murray had left an Heir behind him: - the gentleman almost blushed, and I thought stopped a little, to think whether the lady meant a *Son* or a *Hare*.
>
> (*Poor Letter H*: 13)

However, adding to the confusion and social awkwardness of following 'polite pronunciation' rules, agreement on the 'correct' pronunciation of the letter h was still in a state of flux, as many French loan words were still pronounced by not aspirating the letter h. For example, where *Poor Letter H* shows words in which the /h/ should be silent, some words are as we pronounce them now. However, other words at that time were not generally pronounced aspirating the /h/ for example /erb/, /ospital/ and /umour/. In fact the word 'hotel', in Standard English, was generally pronounced 'otel' until the early twentieth century (Mugglestone 2003; 1004). Mugglestone provides a detailed historical account of the way in which /h/ pronunciation became a symbol of social divide. The complexity and confusion surrounding the pronunciation of the /h/ sound stems from the multiple linguistic influences on the English language with contradictions in the pronunciation of words formed by the mixing of Anglo-Saxon, Latin and French words in the English language (2003: 95). In Mugglestone's historical linguistic account of the way in which certain linguistic features, mainly phonological, came to be considered standard or non-standard, by explaining the rise of Standard English, she provides examples of the counter 'vulgar' language, including cockney. She writes of the way in which cockney and cockney speakers were presented as the negative antithesis of correct speech or speakers, stating:

> many prescriptive writers were well aware, contemporary stereotypes such as the 'Cockney' which took on markedly negative resonances could be equally effective in prescriptive rhetoric, often being employed to give additional impetus to the dissuasions which were regularly mapped on to certain sounds
>
> (2003: 56)

In defining proper language use, these language guides had to use, by means of contrast, examples of incorrect language, which was usually cockney, the 'other' language of the capital. In the next section, I will expand upon what was considered to be nineteenth-century cockney.

Nineteenth-Century Cockney

Cockney dialect is characterised by specific words and usages, which has also included the development of an extensive rhyming slang system, as well as its own phonological and syntactical patterns (John C. Wells 1986). The historical evidence for cockney speech in the nineteenth century comes in part from literature, which can create a circular argument, especially if one did want to analyse literature in terms of authenticity. However, as mentioned above, another source of historical linguistic information about cockney comes from the wide range of language guides in circulation. Evidence of cockney speech, although rather subjective, often came in the form of pieces of advice given to the reader about how not to speak, or examples of the 'vulgar' forms of speech, which the readers were strongly advised to avoid, in favour of the prescribed standard forms. In this way, descriptions of features of cockney speech often appeared as a criticism of these particular speech mannerisms. Language commentators who contributed to our awareness of cockney speech, and attitudes towards it, included: the Irish actor and lecturer on elocution, Thomas Sheridan (1719 – 1788); the Scottish educator, linguist and orthoepist, James Elphinston; the antiquary and lexicographer, Samuel Pegge (the younger) (1733-1800) and John Walker (1732-1807), author of the *Rhyming Dictionary* (1775) and *Critical Pronouncing Dictionary* (1791). Although the works of these authors were first published in the late eighteenth century or very beginning of the nineteenth century, their works continued to be popular and influential throughout the first half of the nineteenth century and into the mid-century, reflected by the various new editions published. John Walker's *Critical Pronouncing Dictionary*, for example, had run past its thirtieth edition by the time Dickens was writing in the early 1830s. Henry Mayhew's sociological studies of Londoners, initially compiled into three volumes, *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851), provide another source of historical linguistic evidence of nineteenth-century

cockney speech. The work includes first-hand accounts from London street traders. Although Mayhew's studies postdate Dickens's early work and the interviews are obviously written down, there is the sense that some care has been taken to reproduce the speech of the interviewees as it was spoken, thus the interviews hold valuable clues about nineteenth century, working-class, London speech.

Some of the late eighteenth-century scholars who wrote about language set out in a more descriptive spirit. Samuel Pegge's *Anecdotes of the English Language* (1803), for example, went to considerable lengths to demonstrate the historical lineage of many aspects of vernacular London speech, using correlations going back to Shakespeare and Chaucer in defence of cockney. Pegge argues that 'there is food for an Antiquary in the daily dialect of London, which, with all its seeming vulgarity, owes its birth to days of yore, as much as any other object of the senses on which Time has laid his unfeeling hand' (1814: 19). William Matthews goes as far as to state that, 'Pegge deserves a place of honour in philological history, moreover, as one of the few linguists to break away from severe didacticism and as a man who contrived to treat language with humanity and humour' (1938:40). However, Pegge was in the minority in his celebratory approach to the London vernacular. Regardless of attitude towards the London vernacular, these scholars began to highlight a divide between two forms of London Speech. There was the prestigious language of the court, which was the language presented as the correct form of speech and the vernacular London dialect, referred to as cockney. In the latter half of the eighteenth century, Thomas Sheridan (1762), for example, drew attention to the linguistic divide in London, which separated the cockney speakers from the 'polite' ones. He wrote:

> Nay in the very metropolis two different modes of pronunciation prevail, by which the inhabitants of one part of the town are distinguished from those of the other. One is current in the city, and is called the cockney, the other at the court end, and is called the polite pronunciation.
>
> (Sheridan 1762: 68)

In this passage, Sheridan demonstrated a sense of duality in the capital, not only of language, but also a geographical divide and a social value. The court language was held up as the 'polite' way of speaking. Cockney, set up in opposition, must be impolite by contrast. John Walker for example spoke of the 'faults' Londoners used in their

speech and Samuel Pegge, whilst more positive about cockney speech, still described the speech habits of Londoners as their 'little peccadillos' with a few features of speech that he classed as '[producing] those heinous charges and grievous offences' (1814: 80). Amongst these descriptions of 'faults' or 'little peccadillos' are clues about cockney speech of the late eighteenth century and beginning of the nineteenth century. Features that were commonly associated with cockney dialect in the nineteenth century included certain phonological features, such as h-dropping and syntactical features, such as double negation and a range of slang words and expressions. In the following description of nineteenth-century cockney speech, I will mainly focus on the most commonly mentioned features of cockney speech, which also tended to be the ones that were represented in literary dialect:[1]

One of the most distinguishable and commonly discussed phonological features of cockney was (and still is) the phenomenon, mentioned earlier, known as 'h-dropping': not pronouncing the /h/ sound at the beginning of words beginning with the letter 'h', for example ''ouse' for *house*, and the slightly less common, contrary hypercorrection of adding an /h/ sound to words beginning with vowels, known as 'h-insertion', for example, 'hexpectations' for *expectations*. John Walker, in the *Critical Pronouncing Dictionary* (1791), called these two features the worst of all the 'faults' of London speakers. Walker wrote:

> A still worse habit than the last prevails, chiefly among the people of London, that of sinking the h at the beginning of words where it ought to be sounded and of sounding it, either where it is not seen, or where it ought to be sunk.
>
> (Walker 1791: xiii)

Prior to the late eighteenth century, the h-less forms existed, but they did not carry with them the social connotations, which began to spread from the late eighteenth century onwards (Mugglestone 2003: 96). The stigmatisation of this speech form grew throughout the nineteenth century, resulting in publications such as the previously mentioned *Poor Letter H* (1866), which expounded the folly of [h] dropping and [h] insertion in polite social circles. Alexander Ellis, in 1869, even commented on dropping [h] in words such as *house* and *heart* as being 'social suicide' (Mugglestone 2003: 3)

[1] Some of the following section has been reworked from my *MSc Applied Linguistics* dissertation submitted to the University of Edinburgh in 2010.

The most iconic feature of Dickens's cockney speech is the representation in s*pelling* form of the [w] for [v] transposition and vice versa, for example 'winegar' (for vinegar) and 'vine' (for wine). This was a feature of cockney speech that language prescriptivists had criticised from the late eighteenth century. John Walker condemned this 'fault' of speech, making an explicit reference to the social class of its users when he wrote, 'The pronunciation of v for w, and more frequently of w for v, among the inhabitants of London, and those not always of the lower order, is a blemish of the first magnitude.'(Walker 1791: xii). Samuel Pegge (1803) calls this speech characteristic one of his 'little peccadilloes' of cockney pronunciation. Pegge states, 'the most striking and most offensive error in pronunciation among the Londoners, I confess, lies in the transpositional use of the letters W and V, ever to be heard where there is any possibility of inverting them' (Pegge 1803: 65). However, there is some controversy as to whether this was still a commonly used feature of cockney at the time Dickens was writing. John C. Wells argues that by the time Dickens began writing, around the mid to late 1830s, the [w] for [v] transposition, for example, 'wery,' was less commonly used and [v] for [w] transposition, as in 'vine' for wine, was already almost obsolete (1986:333). According to Wells (1986), both patterns had become obsolete by the end of the nineteenth century. He is also sceptical that this characteristic of cockney speech was still in use at the time of Dickens's writing:

> As long ago as 1836 Smart, the author of a work entitled Walker Remodelled, calls the interchange of w and v 'the habit of a more distant generation of Cockneys.' On the other hand Wyld (1936:292) remembers the substitution of [w] for [v] as a jocular pronunciation among middle-class adults in 1870-80, the inference being that this was, or had until recently been, a characteristic of lower-class London speech of the day. But in any case it must be doubtful whether actual interchange of [v] and [w] (not only walley for valley, but also vich for which above) was ever as widespread in London as novelists (not only Dickens) make out.
>
> (Wells 1986: 333)

Joan C. Beal (2017), referring to William Labov's (1972) argument that once linguistic variants become stereotypes they often stop being used in everyday speech, uses the example of interchange of [v]s and [w]s in Dickens as an example of a stereotype that

had already fallen out of use in everyday language (2017: 35). In other words, it had become such a strong stereotype of cockney speech that using it would have been so loaded with social meaning as to create a self-consciousness about its usage. However, evidence from Henry Mayhew's study suggest that the /w/ pronunciation of *very* as 'wery' was still in use in London. *London Labour and the London Poor* contains seven incidences of 'wery' and thirty-nine of 'werry', although it could be the case that the writers of interviews were adding in this stereotyped speech form to indicate the speaker was a cockney, not because they actually heard it. The transposition of [w] for [v] and vice versa may not have been such an everyday feature of cockney speech when Dickens was writing as he would have had us believe with the speech of his cockney speaking characters. However, it had become a recognisable marker of cockney speech and a staple feature of literary dialect. The reader would instantly recognise the marker as being cockney.

Another characteristic associated with working class London speech in the nineteenth century was the use of [n] instead of [ŋ] for word ending in –ing, for example, 'walkin'', instead of *walking*. Walker (1791) observed that both forms were being used in the capital, but did not include it in his list of 'faults':

> Hitherto we have considered these letters as they are heard under the accent; but when they are unaccented in the participial termination *ing*, they are frequently a cause of embarrassment to speakers who desire to pronounce correctly…
> No one can be a greater advocate than I am for the strictest adherence to orthography, as long as the public pronunciation pays the least attention to it; but when I find letters given by the Public, with respect to sound, I then consider them as cyphers; and, if my observation does not greatly fail me, I can assert, that our best speakers do not invariably pronounce the participial *ing*, so as to rhyme with *sing*, *king*, and *ring*.
>
> (Walker 1802: 61)

In this extract, Walker observes that the /n/ end form is spoken by even the 'best speakers' in the capital, thus not fully equating it with cockney speech. Some other phonological features that were considered to be cockney included pronouncing words such as 'tune' and 'duke' without the [j] sound, thus [u:] instead of [ju:], a phenomenon which Wells later called 'yod-dropping' (Wells 1982: 330). Walker commented on this

feature of speech, referring to the sound as the diphthong ‘ew’, by saying; ‘this diphthong is pronounced like long u and is almost always regular. There is a corrupt pronunciation of it like oo chiefly in London, where we sometimes hear dew and new, pronounced as if they were written doo and noo’ (1802: 48). Another feature that was considered to be common to cockney was [t] glottalisation, as demonstrated by the spelling of ‘gentlemen’ as ‘genelmen’ (Mayhew 1851: 278).

Other phonemic features which were considered to be cockney included not pronouncing [r] in postvocalic position and using the long /a:/ sound in words such as ‘bath’, both of which were later to become features of Received Pronunciation. It was the representation of this feature that John Keats was criticised for by John Gibson Lockhart in what came to be known as ‘cockney rhyme’, for example, rhyming ‘thorns/fawns’ and ‘thoughts/sorts’ (1818: 519). However, in ‘The Fallacy of the Cockney Rhyme: From Keats and Earlier to Auden’, Mugglestone debunks the idea that this was a feature of speech restricted to cockneys by the early 1800s, stating that by this point the non-rhotic pronunciation of post-vocalic /r/ had already infiltrated educated speech (1991: 62).

Besides phonological features, cockney also included certain syntactical characteristics. Pegge lists multiple negation as number one of the offenses of London speakers, although he notes that it was also a feature of language which has a long history and which exists in other languages. He writes:

> The most notorious imputed crime is, the use of redundant negatives; such as -
>
> No. I.
>
> " I don't know nothing about it."
>
> This is a luxuriance of no modern date among the Cockneys; but it is not of their own manufacture; for there is evidence enough in the history of our language, drawn from the old school, to shew that this mode of speech, this accumulation of negatives, is no new-fangled tautology.
>
> (Pegge 1803: 68)

This extract from Mayhew’s *London Labour and the London Poor*, from an interview with a young costermonger, contains a number of syntactical features of cockney, including multiple negation, which I have indicated in bold and will discuss below:

> "My father" he told me in a thick unimpassioned voice, "was a waggoner, and worked the country roads. **There was two on us** at home with mother, and we used to play along with the boys of our court, in Golding-lane, at buttons and marbles. **I recollects** nothing more than this—only the big boys used to cheat like bricks and thump us if we grumbled—that's all **I recollects** of my infancy, **as you calls it**. Father I've heard tell died when I was three and brother only a year old. It was worse luck for us! — Mother was so easy with us. I once went to school for a couple of weeks, but the **cove** used to fetch me a wipe over the knuckles with his stick, and as I wasn't going to stand that there, why you see **I aint no great schollard**. We did as we liked with mother, she was **so precious easy**, and I never learned anything but playing buttons and making leaden 'bonces,' that's all," (here the youth laughed slightly.) "Mother used to be up and out very early washing in families—anything for a living. She was a good mother to us. **We was left** at home with the key of the room and some bread and butter for dinner. **Afore** she got into work—and it was a goodish long time—**we was shocking hard up**, and she pawned nigh everything. Sometimes, when **we had'nt no grub** at all, the other lads, perhaps, would give us some of their bread and butter, but often our stomachs used to ache with the hunger, and we would cry when **we was werry** far gone. She used to be at work from six in the morning till ten o'clock at night, which was a long time for a child's belly to hold out again, and when it was dark we would go and lie down on the bed and try and sleep until she came home with the food. I was eight year old then. "A man **as know'd** mother, said to her, 'Your boy's got nothing to do, let him come along with me and yarn a few **ha'pence**,' and so I became a coster.
>
> (Mayhew 1851: 39)

The interview includes examples of multiple negation, for example, 'why you see I ain't no schollard' and 'we hadn't no grub at all' (39). Other features associated with cockney and used by the costermonger include: 'as' as a relative pronoun, for example, 'I'm working for another man as gives me a shilling a week'; non-standard concord between subject and verb, for example, 'I recollects nothing' and 'we was left at home';

and the use of adjectives as intensifiers, for example ‘she was so precious easy’ and ‘we was shocking hard up’ (39).

Other characteristics of cockney speech included the use of slang words and expressions. Alongside the rise of language prescriptivism, there was also a public fascination with vernacular language and particularly London slang, as the streetwise language of the capital. This fascination had been nurtured by such works a Francis Grose’s, *Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* (1785) and later works such as Pierce Egan’s *Life in London* (1821), which celebrated London ‘flash’ language. Grose’s dictionary provided glosses to many ‘cant’ words. Cant, considered to be the secret language of criminals, had already existed for a few centuries before the publication of Grose’s dictionary, but many words and phrases had become part of the cockney language. Dickens makes use of some of these cant words to in the language of the den of thieves in *Oliver Twist*, providing his own gloss through Oliver’s first encounter with the Artful Dodger, which I will discuss in Chapter 3. A characteristic that is frequently associated with cockney dialect is cockney rhyming slang. I should point out that Dickens did not include examples of rhyming slang in his writing. According to John Camden Hotten’s, *Slang Dictionary* (1859), rhyming slang or ‘the secret language of chaunters and patterers’ did not come into being until the 1840s. Camden Hotten writes, ‘from the inquiries I have made of various patterers and “paper-workers,” I learn that the Rhyming Slang was introduced about twelve or fifteen years ago’ (1859: 283). He adds a footnote to state that this comment was written in 1858. Dickens does not use rhyming slang, but by 1858, some of Dickens’s language had been assumed by rhyming slang, as Camden Hotten lists ‘Artful Dodger’ as a term meaning ‘lodger’ (1859: 289).

Vulgarity and Anxiety

Before continuing to discuss the characteristics of literary cockney, I want to reflect on another form of speech that was considered to be vulgar in relation to standard speech – upwardly mobile speech – which I will discuss in Chapter 4. Just as certain features of speech became clear indicators of cockney speech, other features of speech could be used to mark pretentious speech or identify the speaker as imitating refined speech. One of the most obvious indicators being that of h insertion, or hypercorrection; placing an h

at the beginning of a word that begins with a vowel sound, in attempt to avoid h-dropping. Whereas h-dropping became an easily recognisable marker of cockney speech or non-standard speech in general (and is still salient today), h-insertion, whilst still also being used to indicate cockney speech, became associated with linguistic over-reaching. It indicated that the speaker was trying too hard to avoid h-dropping and became a sign of pretentiousness and social aspiration. This type of language faux pas was inextricably linked to the idea of being *genteel*, which was popularly derided. In this extract, Day argues that even using the term itself is excruciatingly vulgar:

> Never use the term 'genteel'. Do not speak of 'genteel people;' it is a low estimate of good-breeding, used only by vulgar persons, and from their lips implies that union of finery, flip-pancy, and affectation, often found in those but one remove from 'hewers of wood and drawers of water'. Substitute 'well-bred person' 'man- ners of a gentlewoman' or of 'a gentleman', instead.
>
> (Day 1836: 66)

In *The Vulgarities of Speech Corrected* (1826), the author warns against any form of spoken affectation as a sign of being 'vulgar-genteel' (8). The author writes, 'You may easily avoid the glaring error of speaking in the vulgar-genteel style, by avoiding affectation, or endeavouring to speak finer than your associates' (Anonymous 1826: 8). Other speech idiosyncrasies that were associated with genteel people and the upwardly mobile were being overly polite and cautious with language. Indeed, Day also warns his readers against this kind of overly cautious speech. He writes:

> The fear of being thought vulgar, often drives meritorious people who have risen by their own exertions, into the opposite extreme, and causes them to be superlatively delicate. Such persons are shocked at the sound of 'breeches' will substitute 'inebriated' for 'very drunk' and cannot be brought to allow there are such animals as 'women' in the world. It is also a clumsy attempt at refinement to use a particular set of words: at present we have 'splendid traveling', 'splendid gin', 'splendid potatoes', &c.
>
> (Day 1836:70)

The author of *The Vulgarities of Speech Corrected* (1826) also includes the use of repetition as one of the traits of 'vulgar-genteel'. The author writes:

> It is no less vulgar to show a fondness for any particular word, and repeat it on all occasions, frequently, in the most inappropriate manner, as I shall have to advert to under the chapter on the vulgarity of bye-words.
>
> (Anonymous, 1826:16)

It is no wonder that there was growing anxiety surrounding speaking correctly. According to these style guides, it was almost impossible to get it right. These writers of nineteenth-century language and style guides may have simply been projecting their own personal bugbears when it came to language. However, they reflect contemporary attitudes and anxieties towards social aspiration as expressed through language. The uncertainty surrounding rules of English pronunciation helped create an obsession and preoccupation with achieving 'correct speech'. This also creates a source of humour at the boundaries where linguistic faux pas can abound with humorous consequences, which Dickens exploits in his novels.

Characteristics of Literary Cockney

Partly because certain features of cockney speech are easier to represent through orthography than others, and maybe because they were more easily identifiable as cockney, they became stereotypical staples of literary dialect. For example the [w] for [v] transposition was already such an easily recognisable marker, that readers could see it in print and immediately identify that character as a speaker of cockney dialect, therefore it continued to be used in literary dialect for longer than it was used in speech. Other features, such as /h/ dropping and /h/ insertion were also quite easy to represent through writing by the removal or adding of the letter [h], whereas some subtleties of vowel sounds, for example, may be harder to replicate through spelling. By using a few of the key stereotypes of cockney speech, the reader could infer the other features of pronunciation. For reasons such as these, it is important to separate literary speech from notions of linguistic authenticity (although perceived authenticity of dialect does play an

important role in popular reactions towards Dickens's novels, which this thesis will discuss). According to Geoffrey Leech and Mick Short:

> Fictional speech may aspire to a special kind of realism, a special kind of authenticity in representing the kind of language which a reader can recognize, by observation as being characteristic of a particular situation … This kind of realism is the standard by which we judge a writer's ear 'for conversation', if it is well tuned for literary purposes, will tend to distance itself from the raw realities of spoken discourse.
>
> (1981: 160)

In contrast, real speech is 'messy' and 'formless' and contains hesitation pauses, false starts and syntactic anomalies (1981:161) Written language can never be an exact reproduction of spoken language. Neither writer nor reader would find it desirable for speech to be reproduced using phonetic symbols, for example, had it even been possible in the first half of the nineteenth century - universal methods of producing phonetic symbols such as IPA (International Phonemic Alphabet) were not developed until the latter part of the nineteenth century. However, this level of linguistic 'authenticity' when writing or reading literary dialect would also be undesirable and not the point of literary dialect. What the writer aims for is (and can only be) an illusion of authenticity. Raymond Chapman describes the problematic nature of literary dialect by stating that, 'we enter a world in which all experience is verbalised and no longer directly available to other senses. We accept that dialogue is not intended to give the sensation of listening to a real conversation but is part of the author's imaginative world which we have agreed to enter.' (1994: 2) However, although we know it is an imaginary world, the writer still needs to create the perception of reality. On this point, Chapman argues that:

> the novelist must contrive to make us suspend our disbelief and read as though we were of the company… readers tend to demand credibility even while they connive at artificiality. Dialogue is expected to be 'true to life' and not to sound like a contrivance to further the plot between quotation marks.
>
> (Chapman 1994: 3)

One illustration of the illusionary nature of literary dialect is the use of *eye dialect* [2], mentioned previously, which is used to suggest the lack of illiteracy of the speaker. A typical example of eye dialect is 'wos', as this alternative spelling closely resembles the way in which the word would be pronounced in standard speech. In this extract from *Bleak House*, Jo the crossing sweep's speech includes this feature. In the text, I have highlighted the spellings that are examples of eye dialect, rather than non-standard spelling that actually represents forms of non-standard pronunciation:

> 'No, sir. Nothink at all. Mr Chadbands he **wos** a prayin wunst at Mr Snagsby's and I heerd him, but he sounded as if he **wos** a speakin' to his-self, and not to me. He prayed a lot, but *I* couldn't make out nothink on it. Different times, there wos other genlmen come down Tom-all-Alone's a prayin, but they all mostly **sed** as the t'other **wuns** prayed wrong, and all mostly sounded to be a talking to theirselves, or a passing blame on the t'others, and not a talkin to us. *We* never knowd nothink. *I* never knowd what it **wos** all about.'
>
> (*Bleak House*: 732)

As the reader is able to see, there are several examples of 'wos' and also ''wuns' lends itself to the standard form of pronunciation when read out loud. Other spellings in the text, such as 'genlmen', lend themselves to a reading of non-standard pronunciation, in this case suggesting /t/ glottalisation. In the novel, the use of eye dialect added to Jo's speech helps to emphasise Jo's non-standard speech and draw attention to his lack of education and complete illiteracy.

Literary and Cultural Precedents for Dickens's Early Writing

One of the most famous writers to represent cockney dialect immediately before Charles Dickens began to write was Pierce Egan, who had characterised London accents and London slang in his monthly journal *Life in London*, which began publication in 1821. It was highly popular and inspired a multitude of imitations and adaptations, including plays, such as Moncrieff's *Tom and Jerry* (1826), which was probably the

[2] As mentioned earlier, the term was first introduced by Krapp in 1926.

most famous adaptation and gave further life to Egan's 'flash' speaking characters. John Cowie Reid claims that Egan's work gave way to 'over sixty derivations, including books, dramatizations, newspapers, song-books, games, street ballads, drinks, printed tea-trays and so on' (1970:74). Egan's work was highly influential in the 1820s and throughout the rest of the century and undoubtedly helped shape Dickens's cultural vision. There are many similarities between Egan's work (with its many imitations) and Dickens's first works. In many ways, *Life in London* was a precursor of *The Pickwick Papers* and was also highly influential on *Sketches*. However, whilst Dickens's two first works owe a great deal to Egan's success and mirror certain features, Dickens's work marks an ideological shift away from the style of Egan. Egan's work reflected more elements of the Regency style, whereas Dickens's work moved towards Victorian period sensibilities. Egan's use of cockney slang was unprecedented and started a trend. Indeed, later in the century James Camden Hotten states in his introduction to *Life in London* that, 'its language became the language of the day; drawing-rooms were turned into chaffing cribs, and rank and beauty learned to patter slang' (1870: 14). Egan had already gained notoriety as a sports journalist and expert on pugilism and with *Life in London* Egan claimed he wanted to present a 'Camera Obscura View of London, not only from its safety, but because it is so snug, and also possessing the invaluable advantages of SEEING and not being seen' (Egan 1870: 46). This 'Camera Obscura' vision pre-empts Dickens's *Sketches*, with its detailed accounts of different streets, areas and domestic scenes. However, Egan's work is burlesque in style. The text combines a mixture of prose and poetry, borrowing heavily from the ballad tradition. He uses classical references and conceits and whilst using many slang lexical items, to which he draws attention by the use of italicisation, he makes little attempt to represent 'realistic' speech in the same way that Dickens does. Egan's characters, Tom and Jerry (Corinthian Tom and Jerry Hawthorn, Esquire) are fashionable, sporting, dandy-like figures, embarking on adventures around the capital, exploring the nitty-gritty of urban life and being exposed to 'flash' speech. They were 'slumming it', or rather acquiring urban language, not too dissimilar from the twentieth-century phenomenon of the 'Mockney'; a person of a higher class affecting working-class dialect and slang in order to sound 'cool'. Egan generally embeds the slang terms (in italics) within the narrative voice, accompanied by footnote glosses. One can see an example of this in the following extract in which Tom and Jerry have been mixing with prostitutes in the 'Saloon at Covent Garden':

> This is a fine sketch of real life, and the lovers of character may trace it in every figure in the plate before them. Tom is sluicing the ivory of some of the unfortunate heroines with blue ruin, whom the breaking-up of the SPELL has turned-up without any luck, in order to send them to their pannies full of spirits. JERRY is in Tip Street upon this occasion, and the Mollishers are all nutty upon him, putting it about, one to another, that he is a well-breeched Swell.
>
> (Egan 1870: 217)

Egan accompanies this passage with glosses for 'pannies' ('apartments'), 'nutty' ('very fond') and 'a well-breeched Swell' ('pockets full of money'). 'Sluicing the ivories' and 'blue ruin' refer to drinking gin (217). Egan takes a certain delight in the newness of the language and in his attitude to working-class characters. He appears to be less judgemental and more open-minded with speakers of non-standard dialect than many of his contemporaries. This more positive attitude foreshadows Dickens's depiction of the Wellers in *The Pickwick Papers*. The characters who speak non-standard English, instead of being depicted as low and 'sub-standard', are depicted as linguistic trend-setters, using the latest, fashionable slang. Egan was delighting a middle-class audience with working-class language rather than deriding the slang speaker.

However, many of the writers who imitated Egan's work exaggerate the dialect element with negative connotations. Moncrieff makes an interesting distinction between Egan's work and attitudes to speakers of London slang when he states, 'To the venerable noodles who campaign that I and my prototype, Pierce have made this the age of flash; I answer any age is better than the age of cant!' (1825: Preface). Moncrieff's distinction between 'flash' and 'cant' is a pertinent one as it distinguishes between two types of non-standard London dialect speakers, or rather, two conflicting attitudes towards them. On the one hand, speakers of slang are considered fashionable and innovative, but on the other hand, by speaking 'non-standard' English, they are marked as low. 'Cant', as a word referring to a certain type of slang, had existed in the English language for a few centuries already. According to Hotten (1859), an entry can be found in Harman's *List of Rogue Words* dating from 1566 (4). Hotten, quoting Richardson's Dictionary, states that the words 'Cant' and 'Canting', 'were doubtless derived from Chaunt and Chaunting – the ''whining tone, or modulation of voice adopted by beggars with intent to coax, wheedle, or cajole by pretensions of wretchedness''' (3). Cant was

seen as something ancient and applying to certain lexical items. Typical words from Cant included: 'cove' ('or covey'), defined by Hotten as 'a boy or man of any age or station' (110); 'prig' (a *thief*) (206); and 'beak' (*a magistrate, judge* or *policeman*) (71). By contrast, 'flash' constituted a newer type of slang, which Hotten defines as, 'fast, roguish, and [which] sometimes infers counterfeit or deceptive' (134). Hotten describes the two types of slang thus:

> In the early part of the last century, when highwaymen and footpads were plentiful, and when the dangerous classes were in larger proportion to the bulk of the population than they are now, a great many new words were added to the canting vocabulary whilst several old terms fell into disuse. 'Cant' for instance, as applied to thieves' talk, was supplanted by the word 'flash'.
>
> (23)

From Hotten's description, it would seem that the only difference between the two forms of slang was the label given. Moncrieff's defence of flash suggests higher prestige given to the term 'flash' than to cant. However, attitudes were frequently contradictory towards speakers of non-standard English in the capital. Whilst Egan and Moncrieff presented an attractive and appealing image of the London 'flash' speaker, a popular plagiarism of Egan's work reflected a contrary attitude, which was illustrative of the negative attitudes that also existed towards non-standard London speech. In the following passage, from the plagiarised *Real Life in London*, the Egan pretender gives a description of what he (or she) perceived a Cockney to be and an example of cockney speech: [3]

> Cockney is universally known to be the contemptuous appellation given to an uneducated native of London, brought into life within the sound of Bow bell — pert and conceited, yet truly ignorant, they generally discover themselves by their mode of speech, notwithstanding they have frequent opportunities of

[3] This version called Real Life in London, published by Jones and Company and with the sub-heading 'Or the Rambles and Adventures of Bob Tallyho, Esq. and his Cousin the Hon. Tom Dashall through the Metropolis: Exhibiting a Living Picture of Fashionable Characters, Manners, and Amusements in High and Low Life', does not have Egan's name on the book, instead it states that it is written 'By an Amateur'. It also seems unlikely that Egan would produce a book so similar to his Life in London, so soon after its publication. James Camden Hotten states that; 'the author…is said to have been John Badcock, who some years previously had compiled what was then termed a "Flash Dictionary"' (Egan: 1870: 10).

> hearing the best language… You will hear these gentry frequently deliver themselves in something like the following manner:
> ‘My eyes, Jim, vat slippy valking ‘tis this here morning – I should ave fell’d right down if so be as how I adn’t cotch’d ould of a postis – vere does you thinks I ave been? Va all the va to Vapping Vall, an a top o Tower Hill – I seed a voman pillar’d – such scrouging and squeeging, and peltin vith heggs – ow funny!’’
>
> (Unknown author - wrongly attributed to Egan 1822)

This description degrades the cockney speaker as being low and substandard, describing them as ‘contemptuous’ and ‘uneducated’ and departs in attitude from Egan’s original work. The only vestiges of Egan’s ‘flash’ speakers are the references to being ‘pert’ and ‘conceited’. In the example of cockney speech given, the writer included representations of certain markers of dialect, for example [v] for [w], [h] dropping in certain situations e.g. ‘ave’, ‘and’t’, ‘ould’ and ‘ow’, but not in others ‘here’, ‘how’, ‘Hill’ and [h] insertion in ‘heggs’, but not in ‘eyes’ or ‘as’. He has also included some examples of [n] for –ing, such as ‘peltin,’ but used the [ŋ] form in ‘valking’, ‘scrouging’ and ‘squeeging’. Other features the writer used included marking the contracted endings of irregular past participles e.g. ‘cotche’d’ and the irregular spelling of certain words which are barely recognisable e.g. ‘scrouging’ and ‘squeeging’, so it is difficult to tell if they are slang words or variations of scrounging and squeezing. The passage contains so many examples of non-standard elements that the overall effect is one of over-exaggeration and derisive imitation. In the introduction of an 1869 edition of Egan’s *Life in London* edited by James Camden Hotten, Hotten compared the language of this popular fake of Egan’s work with that of the original. He writes:

> In some respects the text of the counterfeit is more amusing reading than the original. It contains a trifle less of those charming words of the ring, and the stable, which characterise the conversation of Pierce Egan’s “bloods” and “pinks,” and therefore we are very thankful ; but the living “pinks” and “bloods” – the Bon Ton – who subscribed to “Tom and Jerry,” thought otherwise. They relished the “flash,” the “St Giles Greek,” with a gusto which we cannot now enjoy, and there for the need of praise was given to the original.
>
> (1870: 11)

According to Hotten, Egan's work was superior for its sporting language, whilst the reproductions concentrated on the 'flash' and for this reason they were inferior and more easily dated. Hotten's statement contradicts that of Moncrieff by placing 'flash' at the negative end of the spectrum. What is evident is that there was a certain degree of confusion when it came to attitudes towards slang and a duality in terms of associations.

The contradictory list of references to cockneys and cockney in the press of the 1820s and 1830s has already been noted. Newspapers and periodicals frequently featured pastiches and articles that reflected contrasting attitudes towards the dialect. At times, the references to language would be more derisory, poking fun at the way these Londoners spoke. At other times, it was treated in a more humorous or celebratory way, in which references to language focused on witty linguistic innovation, in the form of rhymes and puns. There were references about the pronunciation of the letter *h* in cockney dialect. In this poem from *The Age* of 1828, the letter *h* is personified and confronts the 'cockney illiterati' about their pronunciation, foreshadowing the comedic style of *Poor Letter H* of 1854:

> Whereas by you I have been driven
> From house, from home, from hope, from heav'n;
> Then placed by your most learned Society
> In real anguish and anxiety;
> And used, without one just pretence,
> With arrogance and insolence;
> I hereby ask some restitution,
> And beg you'll mend your elocution.
>
> (*The Age* 1828: 279)

The poem is a humorous remonstrance to the cockney speaker to refrain from /h/ dropping or insertion, reinforcing the idea of cockney speech as being 'incorrect'. Other poems that appear in the press in the 1820s and 30s, embrace the cockney language in a less censorious manner. Poems about cockneys featured frequently in newspapers such as *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle* and included many of the linguistic characteristics used in literature, such as the [v] [w] interchange. The following example is an extract from a poem about 'Cockney Billy' from 1829:

> If you are spatter'd with mud and vet thro' vith the rain

But more of the veather, perhaps, bye and bye,
And vet as it has been, the subject is dry.
Excuse me for punning – I loves a good hit,
And our friends all agree I'm a sort of a vit:
Vith wigour my muse to my aid I vill summon,
And blow me you'll find Cockney bill is a rum'en.

(*Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle* 1829)

As well as [v] for [w] transposition, the poem included commonly recognisable cockney expressions, such as 'blow me' and to be 'a rum'en'. In this more playful representation of cockney speech, Cockney Billy conforms to the more positive depiction of the cockney speaker as a witty, jovial character, of the kind that Dickens would draw for Sam Weller. Cockney speech is also used in poems that utilise the trope of the cockney sportsman, as is demonstrated in these two verses from his poem that appeared in *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle* in 1835, entitled 'Thames Fisherman. – Sketch from "Vands-Vorth" Piles':

Ah! there you sit, my angling cove,
With tile of narrow brim,
And if you tumble off, by Jove,
Won't it be sink or swim?
…
"Vy it may be a dainty dish,
But sich I never court –
For wittles I don't come to fish,
I only comes for sport!

(*Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle* 1835)

In these two verses from the poem, the writer uses cockney slang e.g. 'cove', [v] for [w] and vice versa, non-standard grammar ('I only comes') and deliberate misspelling, for example of 'caught' with the homophone 'court' and 'sich' for 'such' to indicate non-standard pronunciation and to create the effect of cockney dialect. The poem is a play on the cockney sportsman, who is usually depicted out of London in the countryside. This fisherman is fishing in the Thames and can only manage to catch a dead kitten or a cold. Puns and word plays figure frequently in poems or articles about

cockneys. In this feature called 'Cockney Conundrums', from *The Age* (1829), the writer presents the reader with a number of rather laboured puns:

> Why is a persevering man like an ugly donkey? – Because he is assiduous (ass – hideous).
> Why is the bust of his Majesty like a man abashed? – Because it is a sham-head (ashamed).
> Why is a glass of mulled wine like a public caution? – Because it is not-iced (noticed).
> Why is the duke of Wellington a stiletto: - Because he's a-peer-sir (a piercer).
>
> (*The Age* 1829)

It is not entirely clear if the puns are labelled 'Cockney Conundrums' because the writer believes that the punch line depends on cockney pronunciation or because cockneys had become synonymous with humour, word play and linguistic innovation. However, the first pun suggests /h/ dropping and second one /h/ insertion, the third one suggests /ai/ for /i/ in the pronunciation of vowels sounds and the third one just seems to be a play on words with homonyms. The style of humour foregrounds Dickens's 'Wellerisms' in *The Pickwick Papers*, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2. It further demonstrates that cockney language was often associated with humour and linguistic playfulness. As I have illustrated, the representations of cockney in the press of the late 1820s and early 1830s reflected an equally contradictory attitude to those that appear in literature and theatre. The label 'cockney' was used as both an insult to denigrate the speaker or character, but simultaneously, as an indicator of wit, humour and linguistic inventiveness.

The Background of Dickens's Literary Cockney

Dickens's representation of cockney speech was not unique, but based on a literary tradition and influenced by his favourite authors. Indeed, in a review of *Pickwick* in *The Athenaeum*, the reviewer describes Dickens's writing as consisting of 'two pounds of Smollet, three ounces of Sterne, a handful of Hook, a dash of grammatical Pierce Egan.' (3 December 1836: 841, cited in George Ford 1974: 11). There is considerable

evidence that the work of writers such as Henry Fielding and Tobias George Smollet influenced Dickens. Both Fielding and Smollet created characters who spoke in non-standard dialect. In John Forster's biography of Dickens, he recalls Dickens's knowledge of these authors:

> Supposing one wrote an essay on Fielding for instance, and another on Smollett, and another on Sterne, recalling how one read them as a child (no one read them younger than I, I think;) and how one gradually grew up into a different knowledge of them, and so forth—would it not be interesting to many people? I should like to know if you descry anything in this. It is one of the dim notions fluctuating within me.
>
> (Forster 1872: 386)

Indeed, in *David Copperfield*, a semi-autobiographical novel, the young David recalls that:

> My father had left a small collection of books in a little room upstairs, to which I had access (for it adjoined my own) and which nobody else in our house ever troubled. From that blessed little room, Roderick Random, Peregrine Pickle, Humphrey Clinker, Tom Jones, the Vicar of Wakefield, Don Quixote, Gil Blas, and Robinson Crusoe, came out, a glorious host, to keep me company. They kept alive my fancy, and my hope of something beyond that place and time.'
>
> (*David Copperfield*: 51)

As previously mentioned, Pierce Egan was highly popular at the time Dickens started writing. Egan had popularised flash language – a fashionable form of London cockney. There were also writers exploring cockney dialect in writing, publishing work around the same time as Dickens, for example, Robert Smith Surtees. Surtees's *Jorrocks' Jaunts and Jollities* was published in *New Sporting Magazine* between 1831 and 1834, around the same time as Dickens's early writing, in which a popular cockney shopkeeper went on jaunts around the countryside. William Makepeace Thackeray was also writing *The Yellowplush Papers* published in *Fraser's Magazine* from 1837 to 1840. Thackeray's cockney characters lacked the realism of Dickens's characters, consisting of savvy servants based more on stereotypes and depicted in a burlesque style

than on keen observation. In terms of contemporary influences on Dickens's depictions of cockney, theatre also played a major role.

Although Dickens's awareness of cockney language came mostly from living in the capital and listening to speech of those around him, there is evidence in his writing of his awareness of some of the style guides, dictionaries and language sources like those previously mentioned. For example, it would be impossible that Dickens, particularly with his interest in slang, was not familiar with Grose's dictionary, which continued to be popular and had recently been reedited by Pierce Egan in 1823. As mentioned earlier, Dickens used cant words from Grose's dictionary in *Oliver Twist*. As for Egan's *Life in London*, it was one of the biggest sensations of the 1820s, so it would have been practically unavoidable. George Cruikshank had also illustrated *Life in London* before working with Dickens. Dickens makes little mention of Egan, probably due to his dislike of the comparisons made between his work and that of Egan. Indeed, the only reference to Egan in his writing appears in a letter to Frederick Yates in November 1838 (Dickens 1838 in Madeline House & Graham Storey 1965: 463). Yates was running a production of *Nicholas Nickleby* at the Adelphi theatre and in Dickens's letter to him he asks, 'would you think me very unreasonable if I asked you not to compare Nicholas with Tom and Jerry?' (ibid) The footnote in the Pilgrim edition suggests that Dickens was referring to a comparison made on the playbill (ibid).

Concerning an awareness of language standardisation guides, Dickens refers to John Walker's dictionary in *Dombey and Son* (1848) when the schoolteacher Miss Blimber refers to it to explain the meaning of a word to Paul Dombey:

> '"Analysis of the character of P. Dombey." If my recollection serves me,' said Miss Blimber breaking off, 'the word analysis as opposed to synthesis, is thus defined by Walker. "The resolution of an object, whether of the senses or of the intellect, into its first elements." As opposed to synthesis, you observe. *Now* you know what analysis is, Dombey.'
>
> (*Dombey and Son*: 208)

Dickens also mentions the famous prescriptivist, Lindley Murray (1745- 1826) on three separate occasions. Murray, who strongly equated proper English usage with correct behaviour and moral propriety, claimed that 'English Grammar is the art of speaking

and writing the English language with propriety' (1808: c). Murray also produced grammar books and style guides which were ubiquitous in classrooms throughout the nineteenth century. Murray's grammar makes an appearance in Dickens's 'The Boarding House' (1834) sketch, *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838-39) and *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1840). In 'The Boarding House', Murray's name is used as an admonishment of the language of Mrs Bloss, who spoke with, 'a supreme contempt for the memory of Lindley Murray' (*Sketches by Boz*: 177). In *Nicholas Nickleby*, Murray's grammar is one of the few items in Mr Squeer's parlour, described as:

> a small parlour scantily furnished with a few chairs, a yellow map hung against the wall, and a couple of tables; one of which bore some preparations for supper; while, on the other, a tutor's assistant, a Murray's grammar, half-a-dozen cards of terms, and a worn letter directed to Wackford Squeers, Esquire, were arranged in picturesque confusion.
>
> (*Nicholas Nickleby*: 132)

Murray appears again as a re-costumed waxwork in Mrs Jarley's collection, altered from Grimaldi the Clown into Lindley Murray, to impress a group of visiting students:

> And these audiences were of a very superior description, including a great many young ladies' boarding-schools, whose favour Mrs Jarley had been at great pains to conciliate, by altering the face and costume of Mr Grimaldi as clown to represent Mr Lindley Murray as he appeared when engaged in the composition of his English Grammar…
>
> (*The Old Curiosity Shop*: 254)

The final two references suggest a scepticism on Dickens's part towards Murray; firstly associating him with the dogmatic and repressive education system at Dotheboys Hall; and then as the serious face of the grammarian, carved from the more pleasing and entertaining face of the clown. Knowing that Dickens was a great fan of Grimaldi, it cannot be viewed as a positive alteration, suggesting that Dickens had a critical approach to the kind of dry language rules prescribed by the likes of Murray.

By pointing out Dickens's awareness of and references to these sources, I have demonstrated Dickens's familiarity with popular slang, as well as his awareness of language prescriptivism and the binary it created between ideals of language use and language deemed to be vulgar or incorrect. Building on this, in the next chapter, I revaluate the influence Dickens's early experiences working as a short-hand reporter in legal and political spheres had on his writing. I look at how these experiences manifested themselves in his early writings in *Sketches by Boz*, developing common themes both linguistically and ideologically surrounding attitudes towards language and social class.

Chapter 1 - Sketchin' It Out

Introduction

> The fault of the book is the caricature of Cockneyism, of which there is too much. This broad, common-place 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.
>
> (*The Literary Examiner* 1836, cited in Michael Slater 2009: 63)

This criticism of Dickens's *Sketches by Boz* is revealing of attitudes towards Dickens and towards language at that time. On the one hand, the critic, John Forster, who was later to become Dickens close friend and biographer, praises Dickens for his attention to detail and powers of observation, but on the other hand criticises him for paying too much attention to cockney speech.[1] The criticism seems to indicate that it was not so much that Dickens's representation of cockney was badly realised, but that he was not adding anything new by doing so, indicating that these representations were unoriginal. However, were they really 'hacknied' and 'common-place' as described? Or rather, does this reflect a slight snobbishness on the part of Forster towards Dickens's inclusion of cockney voices in the first place? I would argue that in *Sketches by Boz*, Forster's comment about Dickens 'bringing out the meaning and interest of objects which would altogether escape the observation of ordinary minds' can be applied to Dickens's observations of London voices and his representation of cockney dialect in these pieces of writing. With *Sketches*, Dickens introduces cockney voices to a wide audience and begins his contribution to shaping cultural consciousness about language and social class in the capital.

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[1] Michael Slater attributes this anonymously published review to John Forster, citing Walter Dexter's article, 'The Reception of Dickens's First Book', which appeared in *The Dickensian*, Volume 32, published in 1936. As John Forster was the literary critic at *The Examiner* at the time, it is likely, though I have not found it confirmed in a contemporary source.

Sketches by Boz, *Illustrative of Every-day Life and Every-day People* published in a two-volume set in 1836 by John Macrone and illustrated by George Cruikshank, was the collective title of a series of stories and essays that appeared in a variety of newspapers between 1833 and 1836. The newspapers included *The Monthly Magazine*, *Bells's Weekly Magazine*, *The Evening Chronicle*, *Bell's Life in London*, *The Morning Chronicle* and *The Carlton Chronicle*. The collection of *Sketches by Boz* was subsequently published in instalments between 1837 and 1839. As I discussed in the last chapter, Dickens was by no means the first person to represent the cockney speaker in literature and there had been a long tradition of literary depictions of cockney. Cockney had become increasingly popular as both a regional and social dialect, used to add 'colour' to writing and a means of representing 'comic low-life characters' (Poussa 1999: 28). *Sketches by Boz* offers a variety of descriptions of working professional people in London. Dickens describes individual characters, yet through his sketch titles and his use of the definite article he seems to be suggesting these individuals correspond to certain social 'types', for example, 'The Broker's Man', 'The Last Cab-driver and the First Omnibus Cad' and 'The Parlour Orator'. Rather than a deliberate attempt to create caricatures, *Sketches by Boz* (as a collection) appears to pre-empt Henry Mayhew's sociological studies, which describe individuals and include personal testimonies with a general aim of making sense of urban chaos by categorising Londoners into distinct groups (1851-52), albeit, in Dickens's case, in fictional form. Dickens's descriptions of Londoners in *Sketches* also provide prototypes that inform characters in subsequent novels. These prototypes include similarities in character descriptions, but also similarities in speech patterns. In *Sketches by Boz*, it appears that Dickens is acting as a collector of voices and also establishing and developing speech styles.

In this chapter, I revisit the question of how Dickens's work experience, as a reporter and stenographer, prior to writing *Sketches*, influenced his writing, in order to tease out further connections between this past experience and Dickens's representation of cockney in these early pieces of writing. I not only look at the technical skills involved, but also the ways in which these experiences shaped his attitudes towards issues of language and power. I examine how Dickens represents London speech in *Sketches by Boz*, mapping London voices onto a soundscape of the city. I explore how Dickens attempts to group people in his sketches into particular types and the role cockney dialect plays in this. I investigate how Dickens's character sketches provide

cockney models for later novels. I argue that by categorising people into different groups based on speech and locating them geographically in various parts of London, Dickens, in accordance with Agha's (2003) theory regarding literature's role in the process of spreading ideas about spoken language, contributes to the cultural enregisterment of ideas about cockneys and cockney speech.

Work and Play – Dickens's Experience Prior to Writing

Dickens's ability to create dialogue, which appeared to transcend the gap between words on the page and voices in the readers' minds and which forged a strong agreement of understanding between the author and the reader, are contributory factors of his popularity and figured repeatedly in critical responses to his writing. Dickens spent the years leading up to his first publication listening to and carefully transcribing dialogue, which has frequently been attributed to having given him a keen ear and a quick ability to transform sounds into symbols (Marcus 1972, Kreilkamp 2005a). The experience of working in political and legal spheres also gave Dickens an awareness of the power of spoken language to manipulate and negotiate as well as an acute sensitivity to how differences in register and/or manner of speech determined how a speaker was received by others and affected their ability to defend themselves verbally. In this section, I evaluate previous research on the topic and argue that Dickens's work experience did have an impact on his representation of cockneys and cockney dialect. I re-examine how his background as a journalist and stenographer informed his representation of speech and dialect in *Sketches*. I consider how the experience of working in the legal and political spheres, combined with a keen interest in the theatre, informed Dickens's awareness of the power of language and the value placed on different ways of speaking and how this is then reflected in *Sketches*. I also outline the foundations laid in *Sketches* as the beginning of a multi-layering of cockney voices, which continued throughout his writing career.

Dickens's work as a shorthand reporter is firstly significant because of the technical abilities it gave him. A knowledge of stenography (or shorthand), the art of using symbols and marks to 'record' language in order to increase brevity and speed of transcription, requires and develops certain skills. It is, essentially, a second language

and one that takes effort to master. Being a shorthand reporter involved listening intently to conversation and transcribing it into this second language as quickly as possible, allowing more freedom to record every detail than writing each word down verbatim. Shorthand poses two considerable challenges to the learner; firstly, learning all the symbols in order to be able to take notes and secondly, being able to read the symbols to translate them back into longhand. Dickens's own struggle to master the art of shorthand is reflected by his account of David's struggle to acquire the skill in *David Copperfield*. Indeed John Forster (1872) first made this connection when documenting Dickens's study of shorthand. Forster explicitly emphasises the autobiographical element of *David Copperfield* by using extracts from the novel to describe Dickens's own endeavours in this field. Forster wrote of Dickens's experience:

> Of the difficulties that beset his short-hand studies, as well as of what first turned his mind to them, he has told also something in *Copperfield*. He had heard that many men distinguished in various pursuits had begun life by reporting the debates in parliament, and he was not deterred by a friend's warning that the mere mechanical accomplishment for excellence in it might take a few years to master thoroughly; "a perfect and entire command of the mystery of short-hand writing and reading being about equal in difficulty to the mastery of six languages".
>
> (Forster 1872: 91)

The last quotation Forster took directly from *David Copperfield* to describe Dickens's own experience. In the novel, Dickens details the effort involved in learning shorthand and the difficult process David goes through in order to master it, using dramatic and nightmarish imagery, in which the symbols take on a life of their own becoming insect parts and despots. Dickens evokes the elusive mysteriousness of the symbols with images of Ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics in the following passage, which Forster also reproduces in his bibliographic account of Dickens's learning (1872: 91):

> I bought an approved scheme of the noble art and mystery of stenography (which cost me ten and sixpence); and plunged into a sea of perplexity that brought me, in a few weeks, to the confines of distraction. The changes that were rung upon dots, which in such a position meant such a thing, and in such another position something else, entirely different; the wonderful vagaries that

> were played by circles; the unaccountable consequences that resulted from marks like flies' legs; the tremendous effects of a curve in a wrong place; not only troubled my waking hours, but reappeared before me in my sleep. When I had groped my way, blindly, through these difficulties, and had mastered the alphabet, which was an Egyptian Temple in itself, there then appeared a procession of new horrors, called arbitrary characters; the most despotic characters I have ever known; who insisted, for instance, that a thing like the beginning of a cobweb, meant expectation, and that a pen-and-ink sky-rocket, stood for disadvantageous. When I had fixed these wretches in my mind, I found that they had driven everything else out of it; then, beginning again, I forgot them; while I was picking them up, I dropped the other fragments of the system; in short, it was almost heart-breaking.
>
> (*David Copperfield*: 341)

From this description from *David Copperfield,* it would appear that the process of learning shorthand was extremely arduous and dispiriting. However, despite the difficult process, Dickens, like David in the novel, eventually mastered the art and became very proficient at it. According to Forster, Dickens quickly excelled in the acquired skill and was praised by his contemporaries for his abilities: '"There never was such a short-hand writer" has been often said to me by Mr Beard, the friend he first made in that line when he entered the gallery' (Forster 1875: 93). There seems to be plenty of evidence to suggest that Dickens was highly skilled at shorthand. However, the exact connection between Dickens's ability as a shorthand journalist and his ability to write dialogue is not straightforward. Dickens taught himself shorthand from *Gurney's Brachygraphy: or, An Easy and Comendious System of Short-Hand*, which he purchased while working as a clerk (Forster 1875: 92). This popular shorthand guide, which was originally published in 1750, was already in its fifteenth edition (published in 1825) by the time Dickens bought his copy. According to Dickens's son and shorthand pupil, Henry Fielding Dickens, Dickens added to the symbols in Gurney's shorthand guide to include even more complexity (1928:27). Henry Fielding Dickens, one of several family members and friends that Dickens gave shorthand lessons to, remarks in his *Memories of My Father* (1928) that Dickens had his own system of shorthand, having found the symbols provided by Gurney insufficient. Henry Fielding

writes, ‘The system he used was based on Gurney’s, but with many improvements and “arbitrary characters” created by himself’ (1928:27).

Critics and biographers have frequently discussed the fact that Dickens’s background prior to writing had had an impact on the way in which he wrote dialogue. Steven Marcus (1972) makes the case strongly for the influence of shorthand on Dickens’s writing, claiming:

> For a number of important years he had worked as a kind of written recording device for the human voice, for speech, for the English language. He had been a writing machine for others, their language flowing through his writing. In one sense those written voices were all inside of him, wonderfully and instantaneously recorded on the most remarkable of all electronic tapes, and now were about to be played back and expressed.
>
> (1972: 192)

This image, which I will return to later when I discuss the influence of theatricality, shows Marcus leaving no doubt about the connection between Dickens’s experience as a shorthand journalist and his ability to write convincing dialogue. The image Marcus conjures of Dickens as a human voice recorder is in keeping with the comments made by Dickens’s daughter, Mamie Dickens, of her father’s writing process, particularly where Marcus mentions the voices ‘about to be played back’. Mamie recalls Dickens repeatedly jumping up from his work to make faces in the mirror and ‘talking rapidly in a low voice’ to himself, embodying the voices of the characters he was writing about (1902: 49). Kreilkamp also equates Dickens’s ability to write dialogue to his experiences as a stenographer. He writes, ‘it might be fair to say that Dickens’s characteristic style, the vivid immediacy of his characters’ voices, owes a significant debt to the shorthand mastery that meant so much to him’ (2005a: 76).

It is true that in the era in which Dickens began writing, prior to the invention of recording devices, shorthand was the closest thing to recorded speech. In *Voice and the Victorian Storyteller*, Ivan Kreilkamp (2005a) outlines the importance of the Pitman system as an invention to the Victorians. Kreilkamp writes, ‘Pitman’s invention of the shorthand system of phonography in 1837 defined the Victorian period itself as *phonographic* - obsessed with print’s relationship to voice and with the effects of

transcribing or writing voice' (2005a: 30). Despite Dickens having learnt from the earlier Gurney system of shorthand, he was still working with shorthand on the eve of the invention of Pitman's phonographic system of shorthand, which would mean that shorthand transcribers could record a more detailed phonetic representation of what had been said. Pitman's system included a wider variety of vowel sounds than could be expressed using the limited range of graphemes in the traditional alphabet. It is significant that Dickens was working in this field just as the need for a more detailed method of transcription was becoming increasingly evident. Whether or not Dickens was pre-empting Pitman's system that included symbols to represent phonemes is hard to ascertain, but the evidence from Henry Fielding's account of Dickens adding to Gurney's shorthand does suggest Dickens's desire to record speech in a more complex manner than the Gurney system would allow him.

In a recent study, Hugo Bowles (2017) has taken a more systematic, linguistic approach to demonstrate the effect Dickens's shorthand experience had on his dialogue writing. Bowles challenges Kreilkamp's (2005a; 2005b) argument for the way in which shorthand influenced Dickens's writing, which, following on from the arguments put forward by Marcus, suggested Dickens had developed a 'phonographic' way of writing dialogue from his skill in shorthand which is demonstrated in *The Pickwick Papers*. Bowles presents this challenge by highlighting the difference between the Gurney method of shorthand based on the letters of the alphabet and the Pitman one based on sounds, arguing that the non-phonological system of shorthand posed by Gurney would not have influenced Dickens's writing in the ways suggested by critics such as Stephen Marcus and Ivan Kreilkamp. Bowles takes particular exception to Kreilkamp's use of the word 'phonographic' when applied to Dickens's writing of *The Pickwick Papers,* arguing that as Dickens had followed the Gurney system of shorthand and not the Pitman one his shorthand influence could not be described as 'phonographic' (2017: 22). Whilst Bowles criticises the phonographic argument for the way in which shorthand could have affected Dickens's writing, he argues that Gurney's 'logographic and alphabetical' system had its own influence on Dickens's writing. Bowles argues that by condensing language into a series of symbols which did not include vowels, Dickens became more conscious of these sounds through their emission, as Bowles puts it, 'Dickens sounded out vowels through "inner speech" by articulating the words to himself subvocally' (2017: 37). In relation to cockney speech, Bowles argues that the

Gurney method, which did not include any vowel sounds, leant itself to the writing of certain features of cockney dialect, replicating the effect of weak vowel sounds or missed syllables. Bowles writes:

> We can see the Gurney rules of vowel abbreviation partially at work in Sam Weller's elimination of vowel sounds in words like "gen'l'm'n," "cert'nly," "reg'lar," "singl'r" and in the elimination of the penultimate letter <e> in the shift from "creatures" to "creeturs." The shortening of the <ng> to <n> as in words like "startin" or "lodgin's" is also stenographic since Gurney uses a single arbitrary character for <ng>.
>
> (2017: 37)

Whilst Bowles makes a convincing point regarding the connection between the lack of vowel sounds in Gurney's shorthand and absence of vowels in Dickens's cockney dialect, some of these forms of literary cockney can be found in earlier works of literature and were already established forms of dialect writing. For example, this is evident in Thomas Henry's *Arlington: A Novel* of 1832, which includes the line, '"A d—d fine question to ask a gen'l'man! Why, I'll tell you. I got what you couldn't give me."'.[2] Gurney's shorthand system may well have had the same symbol for the letters <v> and <w> as Bowles later points out, but <v> for <w> transposition had been a feature of literary cockney in many previous works of fiction. Regardless of these factors, I would agree that Dickens's shorthand experience gave him a greater consciousness of the way language could be manipulated and that by the omission of letters, words could still be clearly understood, which added to his creativity in writing dialect. Dickens's skill at shorthand also meant that he was used to distinguishing between varieties of speech patterns, identifying idiosyncrasies of speech and recognising a variety of different forms of pronunciation, which he was able to turn into meaningful symbols on a page.

Marcus's comment and Mamie's memories suggest that Dickens's attention to language detail meant that he could easily access voices in his mind and convert them

[2] Thomas Henry, 1832. *Arlington: A Novel* (London: Henry Colborn and Richard Bentley) Vol.3: 33-35, cited in *Dialect in British Fiction 1800-1836*, (eds) Jane Hodson, Alex Broadhead and Julie Millward, University of Sheffield, database development by Katherine Rogers and Michael Pidd, University of Sheffield Humanities Research Institute (November 2014) [13 September 2018] http://www.dialectfiction.org

into individualised and skilfully executed forms of direct speech for the various characters in his stories.

Dickens's skill of imitation could also be associated with his theatrical background. Dickens was both an avid theatregoer and an actor. It is well documented that Dickens was a fan of the comic actor Charles Mathews, who was well known for imitating different accents and putting on a wide variety of voices in his stage shows. Dickens confesses his own theatrical proclivities in a letter to Forster. Dickens states that whilst he had been working as a shorthand reporter at the Doctors' Commons he had seen, 'some theatre every night, with a very few exceptions, for at least three years: really studying the bills first, and going to where there was the best acting: and always to see Mathews whenever he played' (Forster 1875: 206). He claimed to have seen Mathew's 'At Homes' for 'three or four successive years … sitting in the pit to hear them' (Forster 1875: 205). His passion for the theatre was so strong that he applied to the stage manager in the theatre at Covent Garden and he joked that had it not been for being struck down with a terrible cold on the day of the audition, his career may have taken a considerably different turn (Forster 1875: 206). Of his own theatrical talents, Dickens commented, 'I believed I had a strong perception of character and oddity, and a natural power of reproducing in my own person what I observed in others' (Forster 1875: 207). He also admitted to having 'practised immensely …often four, five, six hours a day: shut up in my own room, or walking about in the fields' (Forster 1875: 207). Malcolm Andrews outlines the importance of theatrical imitation and impersonation to Dickens's method of writing, stating that, 'Dickens's continual exercise of his imaginative identification with other characters, down to the smallest details, and the translation of that into bouts of impersonation, became crucial to his compositional method' (2006: 101). Dickens was also particularly good at imitating London accents. Andrews (2006) recounts the memories of George Lear, one of Dickens's fellow clerks from his first job at Ellis and Blackmore, in relation to Dickens's theatrical tendencies, which are also revealing of his prowess at imitating London speech:

> He could imitate, in a manner that I have never heard equalled, the low population of London in all their varieties, whether mere loafers or sellers of fruit, vegetables, or anything else. He could also excel in mimicking the popular

> singers of that day, whether comic or patriotic; as to acting, he could give us Shakespeare by the ten minutes, and imitate all the leading actors of that time.
>
> (George Lear, cited in Andrews 2006:101)

Andrews also cites a review of Dickens's theatrical pursuits in Montreal, stating that 'he assumed four or five different disguises, changing his look, voice and dress with a completeness and rapidity', which included amongst them 'a cockney "Boots", like Sam Weller, and an elderly woman very much like Mrs Gamp' (2006: 110). However, these theatrical abilities do not necessarily account for his skill in writing dialogue or confirm the connection with shorthand; pinpointing exactly how Dickens's shorthand experience influenced his writing of cockney dialect is slightly harder to ascertain.[3]

Besides the obvious technical ability gained through learning shorthand, Dickens's experience of working in the legal and political spheres, as well as his experience of the theatrical world, must have also given him a strong sense of the power of language. This is in terms of both rhetoric and style, but also of the way in which different accents or ways of speaking either commanded the respect or diminished the power of the speakers. Dickens's work shows sensitivity to the nuances of speech, the evaluative judgement placed on different forms of speech, as well as an understanding of the way in which language and class interacted. In *Sketches*, Dickens began to explore the relationship between language, class and power, particularly in the legal and political environments mentioned above, and these scenarios of linguistic interplay are ones which he returns to frequently in his writing. In the sketches that appertain to his experience in these spheres, namely 'Doctors' Commons', 'A Parliamentary Sketch' and 'Criminal Courts', Dickens draws heavily on theatrical language and metaphor. Dickens's experience as a parliamentary reporter provides the material for 'A Parliamentary Sketch'. Dickens refers to his frequent visits to and familiarity with the Houses of Parliament in the introductory paragraph of the sketch:

[3] Hugo Bowles is currently working on deciphering Dickens's shorthand notes in order to conduct further research on the impact Dickens's knowledge of shorthand had on his writing abilities. See *Dickens and the Stenographic Mind* (forthcoming 2019).

> …as we have made some few calls at the aforesaid house in our time—have visited it quite often enough for our purpose, and a great deal too often for our personal peace and comfort—we have determined to attempt the description.
>
> (*Sketches*: 181)

However, it is not so much the political action of the House that provides the subject matter for this sketch, but the activity surrounding it, namely the coming and going of the members, the visitors to the Stranger's Gallery and the diners in Bellamy's (the restaurant in the House of Commons). The sketch is full of theatrical characters and metaphors, for example: the militia-officer with a 'burlesque grandeur' (184); 'Honest Tom', 'a metropolitan representative' who 'wears his D'Orsay hat so rakishly' (185); and the county member who wears 'a costume one seldom sees nowadays' (185). There is also reference to 'the scenes … beheld in the old house' (186) and the 'regular *gourmand*', who is described as 'a personification of Falstaff!' (192). Whilst there is only a limited amount of dialogue in the sketch there are many references to speech and the direct speech included is dramatic and theatrical. There are also several references to the manner of speech made by speakers, for example, 'earnest whispers', 'in an incredibly loud key' and 'the stout man with the hoarse voice' who shouts with 'tremendous emphasis of voice and gesture' (182-183). Parliament was unique in bringing together a range of people from all over the United Kingdom with regional dialects. Even if it was the case that the members of parliament were from upper-middle and upper classes, educated backgrounds and might not have spoken vernacular varieties, the Stranger's Gallery provided a space for the public, with even more diversity of language. In this passage Dickens refers to the noise made by the voices in the crowd:

> As soon as your eyes become a little used to the mist of the place, and the glare of the chandeliers below you, you will see that some unimportant personage on the Ministerial side of the House (to your right hand) is speaking, amidst a hum of voices and confusion which would rival Babel, but for the circumstance of its being all in one language.
>
> (187)

By referring to Babel, the biblical tower in which God punished man by creating different languages, Dickens suggests not only the noise of the place, but also the variety of voices to be heard in the Stranger's Gallery. It was in this environment, in which he was employed to listen carefully to report what was happening, that he gained valuable experience of hearing and noting down the voices of people speaking in different accents and dialects. He further emphasises the cacophony of noise to be heard in the House of Commons, creating a vivid sense of the vocal soundscape inside, by describing the noises made by the Members and comparing it to a cockney market scene. He writes:

> …all of them talking, laughing, lounging, coughing, oh-ing, questioning, or groaning; presenting a conglomeration of noise and confusion, to be met with in no other place in existence, not even excepting Smithfield on a market-day or a cockpit in its glory.
>
> (187)

Dickens also demonstrates the acute class awareness of social class within the political arena by frequently discussing the various backgrounds and merits of the members.

The courtroom provides an even more dramatic environment to emphasise language difference and power relations and appears frequently in Dickens's work, starting in *Sketches*. Sally Ledger (2007) contextualises Dickens's courtroom scenes as not only bearing witness to his own personal work experience, but also as being rooted in the popular fascination with show trials and their dissemination in the public domain, which often resulted in parody. As Ledger points out on the subject of Dickens and the courtroom:

> It is out of a coalescence of law and theatre, then, that Dickens's set-piece trial scenes emerge. The trial is the most theatrical arena of the law, full of melodramatic exaggeration and gesture, and admirably well adapted both to a staging of the legal process and to exposing its abuses.
>
> (Ledger 2007: 42)

In these legal environments, as in the theatre, speech plays a central role, and differences in language use can make clear distinctions between characters and their

social backgrounds. In *Sketches*, Dickens first begins to explore these courtroom scenarios. Similar courtroom scenes then feature in *The Pickwick Papers*, *Oliver Twist*, *Bleak House* and *A Tale of Two Cities*. The theatrical, legal and political worlds in *Sketches* provide environments of linguistic humour often created by the clash of spoken registers; between the formal (and technical) jargon of the courtroom and the vernacular language of those entering the arena from outside. In the 'Doctors' Commons' sketch, Dickens describes the interaction between a working-class man, identified as such by his 'blue apron', trying to gather information from a family will and the clerk official relaying that information. He writes:

> It was perfectly evident that the more the clerk read, the less the man with the blue apron understood about the matter… The first two or three lines were intelligible enough; but then the technicalities began, and the little man began to look rather dubious. Then came a whole string of complicated trusts, and he was regularly at sea. As the reader proceeded, it was quite apparent that it was a hopeless case, and the little man, with his mouth open and his eyes fixed upon his face, looked on with an expression of bewilderment and perplexity irresistibly ludicrous.
>
> (*Sketches*: 114)

In this case, the legatee is completely overwhelmed by the legalese, which causes a complete communication breakdown. The humour and fascination Dickens had with such kinds of linguistic misunderstandings is reflected in his description of the man's confusion as 'irresistibly ludicrous' and the issue of conflicting registers is one that Dickens exploits regularly in similar scenes. In 'Criminal Courts', Dickens describes a typical court case in which 'a boy of thirteen is tried, say for picking pockets' (232); giving the impression that this is just one example amongst many. In this sketch, Dickens includes the courtroom dialogue as direct speech, adding drama and emphasising the difference in linguistic register between the accused and the court. Dickens speaks of the court as one body. In the dialogue, he labels the two speakers as the 'Court' and the 'Boy', hence pitching the boy against the entire legal establishment and formally recalling the lines of a play script:

> Court: Have you any witnesses to speak to your character, boy?

> Boy: Yes, my Lord; fifteen gen'lm'n is a vaten outside, and vos a vaten all day yesterday, vich they told me the night afore my trial vos a comin' on.
> Court: Inquire for these witnesses.
>
> (233)

The boy is assigned features of cockney speech, which separates him dramatically from the language of the courtroom. On the one hand, his speech could act to highlight the hopelessness of his predicament that, without the means of speaking the language required, he stands no chance of defending his position to the courtroom; thus the boy's speech could almost as clearly predetermine his guilt as his lack of witnesses and his poor defence. However, like in the courtroom scenes in *The Pickwick Papers* and *Oliver Twist* which follow, the boy's bold, witty retorts and linguistic dexterity show courage in the face of authority and the dialogue instead acts as a means of critiquing the legal system despite the legal outcome, which sees the boy sentenced to seven years' transportation. The boy's attempt to defend himself and pretence at having witnesses foreshadows the Artful Dodger's defence in *Oliver Twist*, and the boy's subversion of legal protocol pre-empts Sam Weller's interaction in the courtroom in *The Pickwick Papers*. Dickens draws on this type of scene described in *Sketches* repeatedly and each time with similar interaction between the 'cockney' in the dock and the courtroom. In each case, the clash of registers provides linguistic humour, which serves to mock the formality and injustice of the judicial system. In this way, Dickens is persistently enforcing the notion of the cockney voice as the voice of subversion and dissent. In 'Criminal Courts' from *Sketches*, the boy boldly continues to defend himself once it is discovered that he has no witnesses,

> 'S'elp me God, gen'lm'n, I never vos in trouble afore – indeed my Lord, I never vos. It's all a howen of my having a twin brother, vich has wrongfully taken to prigging, and vich is so exactly like me, that no vun ever knows the difference atween us.'
> This representation, like the defence, fails in producing the desired effect, and the boy is sentenced, perhaps, to seven years' transportation.
>
> (233)

The boy's cheeky attempt to blame the crime on his twin brother adds humour to the sketch and allows the defendant to remain defiantly unbowed in the face of adversity,

though this triumph is tempered by the severity of the boy's sentence of transportation. The language is marked with features of cockney pronunciation [v] for [w] transposition ('vos', 'vich', 'vun') and hypercorrection (howen), as well as slang words, for example 'prigging' (stealing). The boy's style and manner of speaking is later echoed in the court scene in *Oliver Twist*, in which Jack Dawkins takes on the legal establishment, using wit, to show fearlessness in court, despite his harsh ruling:

> 'I never see such an out-and-out young wagabond, your worship,' observed the officer with a grin. 'Do you mean to say anything, you young shaver?'
> 'No,' replied the Dodger, 'not here, for this ain't the shop for justice: besides which, my attorney is a-breakfasting this morning with the Wice President of the House of Commons; but I shall have something to say elsewhere, and so will he, and so will a wery numerous and 'spectable circle of acquaintance as'll make them beaks wish they'd never been born, or that they'd got their footmen to hang 'em up to their own hat-pegs, afore they let 'em come out this morning to try it on upon me. I'll—'
> 'There! He's fully committed!' interposed the clerk. 'Take him away.'
>
> (*Oliver Twist*: 356)

Jack Dawkins, like the boy in 'Criminal Courts', plays to the audience in the courtroom, using humour as a means of defiance. This time the joke is Dawkins pretending to hail from a higher social class. Dawkins's language, which I will discuss in more detail in Chapter 3, contains similar markers of cockney dialect and slang words, such as 'beaks' (magistrates). Part of the humour lies in this affectation of grandeur coupled with his cockney dialect. In a similar way, Samuel Weller retaliates against the snide insinuations made against his character in the courtroom with reference to the Newgate Calendar by refusing to play their game and then turning the officiousness of the members of the court back on themselves:

> 'What's your name, fellow?' thundered Mr. Nupkins.
> 'Veller,' replied Sam.
> 'A very good name for the Newgate Calendar,' said Mr. Nupkins.
> This was a joke; so Jinks, Grummer, Dubbley, all the specials, and Muzzle, went into fits of laughter of five minutes' duration.
> 'Put down his name, Mr. Jinks,' said the magistrate.

> ‘Two L’s, old feller,’ said Sam.
> Here an unfortunate special laughed again, whereupon the magistrate threatened to commit him instantly. It is a dangerous thing to laugh at the wrong man, in these cases.
> ‘Where do you live?’ said the magistrate.
> ‘Var -ever I can,’ replied Sam.
> ‘Put down that, Mr. Jinks,’ said the magistrate, who was fast rising into a rage.
> ‘Score it under,’ said Sam.
>
> (*The Pickwick Papers*: 304)

Weller humorously and defiantly refuses to be the object of the courtroom mirth, nor comply with the expected protocol. His mimicry of the proceedings further subverts the hierarchical system of the courtroom, despite the threat of imprisonment. The repetition of these types of scenes, with the cockney character as a dissenting voice in the courtroom, served to strengthen associations in the minds of the reader between cockney speakers and defiant wit.

Dickens’s work experience and theatrical background were not only significant in terms of the technical abilities they may have given him, but also in terms of Dickens’s awareness of the indexicality and the power of language that these performative settings created, which, as I have demonstrated, can be seen reflected in his sketches. In the next section, I will examine how Dickens constructed the urban environment in terms of voice *Sketches* and the role that cockney voices played.

The London Soundscape of *Sketches*

Dickens vividly describes a diversity of London scenes in *Sketches*; from rough areas around the Covent Garden area to private theatres, from Scotland Yard to the Criminal Courts, from Greenwich Fair to Newgate prison. The sounds of the city he describes play an important role in scene building. In ‘The Streets – Morning’, Dickens describes the noisy throng of the awakened streets. He writes:

> men are shouting, carts backing, horses neighing, boys fighting, basket-women talking, piemen expatiating on the excellence of their pastry, and donkeys

> braying. These and a hundred other sounds form a compound discordant enough to a Londoner's ears, and remarkably disagreeable to those of country gentlemen who are sleeping at the Hummums for the first time.
>
> (*Sketches*: 71)

Voices are a vital part of Dickens's soundscape. John Picker, in *Victorian Soundscapes*, argues that, 'the development of Victorian self-awareness was contingent on awareness of sonic environments' and that Dickens was a key contributor to this awareness of urban sound (2003: 11). Picker focuses on the soundscapes created in *Dombey and Son* (1846-48), but Dickens was already at work creating these soundscapes in *Sketches*. Dickens's *Sketches* are peopled by a wide array of characters from different walks of life, from beadles to shopkeepers, from fairground workers to politicians, from high society ladies to prostitutes. The voices of the people are as much part of the scenery as the visual features described in the scenes. In *Sketches*, Dickens creates a network of London voices, providing a kind of audial map of the city from which London voices emerge. These then form models for his later novels. Dickens indicates differences in speech to demarcate people in different speech communities in the various parts of the city.[4] For example, the river workers, the fairground workers at Greenwich fair and the drunken women on the street in Seven Dials. He does this to make distinctions between different social classes, for example, the affected speech of the upwardly mobile social group described in 'Miss Evans and the Eagle'. Dickens repeatedly uses dialect in dialogue as a means of identifying people as being in certain social groups. The narrative style of *Sketches by Boz* gives the sense of a panoramic view London, as it moves from place to place, honing in on the details of its various streets and neighbourhoods and listening in to conversations. The narrative is usually presented in the first person plural, giving the observations a sense of agreed/shared authority, for example, 'We were walking leisurely down the Old Bailey, sometime ago, when…' (*Sketches*: 230), as though the author and companion(s) are experts/researchers chronicling the various aspects of city life. The 'we' could also include the reader,

[4] The term speech community in linguistics was first developed in the 1960s by John Gumperz to apply to dialectology in historical linguistics. Gumperz defined the term as meaning: 'Any human aggregate characterized by regular and frequent interaction by means of a shared body of verbal signs and set off from similar aggregates by significant differences in language usage' (2009: 66). Gumperz later refines his definition by stating: 'Regardless of the linguistic differences among them, the speech varieties employed within a speech community form a system because they are related to a shared set of social norms' (2009: 67).

giving the narrative style a sense of shared understanding between author and reader. The conceit of the panoramic observer is taken further in the preface to the first edition of the first scenes published as the collection *Sketches by Boz* Volume 1, when Dickens places the author of the stories as the pilot of a hot air balloon, his co-pilot being his illustrator, George Cruikshank:

> In a humble imitation of a prudent course, universally adopted by aeronauts, the Author of these volumes throws them up as his pilot balloon, trusting it may catch favourable current, and devoutly and earnestly hoping it may go off well – a sentiment in which his Publisher cordially concurs.
>
> (7)

This image is mirrored in the Cruikshank illustration for the frontispiece of the volume, which features two men leaning out of the basket of a hot air balloon waving flags. They are viewers, observers, eavesdroppers, hovering over the city. These narrative techniques give the readers the sense that they, like the author and illustrator, are peering and listening into the city, capturing it as it really is. Dickens's use of London voices in the collection of essays and short stories serve a variety purposes. Dickens differentiates between the voices of different social classes in a general way. For example, in 'Marsh Gate and Victoria Theatre' at night, which he explains in the notes as being the 'formerly squalid area of Lambeth, close to Waterloo Bridge, on the south bank of the Thames' (591), Dickens presents a stark contrast between the kinds of voices to be heard on the street. He juxtaposes the happy sounds of the revelry of theatregoers with the melancholy lamentations of the destitute poor. On the one hand are the happy sounds of the people spilling out of the theatres engaged in 'theatrical converse' (76); the groups gathered to sing and audiences applauding the singer with 'such a voice!' (78), who can 'go down lower than any man: so low sometimes that you can't hear him' (78); and Mr Smuggins singing comic songs to a joyous audience. On the other hand, are the melancholy sounds of the 'wretched woman with the infant in her arms' who is singing popular ballads 'in hope of wringing a few pence from the compassionate passer-by' (77). Dickens describes the woman's voice as 'weak and tremulous' and '[telling] a fearful tale of want and famishing,' only producing a 'brutal laugh' from a passer-by (ibid). By describing these various voices on the streets of

London at night, Dickens stimulates the aural imagination of the reader to consider the contrastive lives of the inhabitants of the capital.

Dickens also appears to be trying to trigger certain associations and familiarity. He often uses speech within the narration, which serves as a way for the reader to identify a type of speaker or to indicate a collective speech identity: that this is the way these people speak. For example, in 'The Streets – Morning' Dickens relays the attitudes of the cab drivers and the hackney coachmen to each other with dialect embedded within the narration. Dickens writes:

> the cab-drivers and hackney-coachmen who are on the stand polish up the ornamental part of their dingy vehicles—the former wondering how people can prefer '**them** wild beast **cariwans** of **homnibuses**, to a **riglar** cab with a fast trotter,' and the latter admiring how people can trust their necks into one of 'them crazy cabs, when they can have **'spectable 'ackney cotche** with a pair of **'orses as von't** run away with no **vun**;' a consolation unquestionably founded on fact, seeing that a hackney coach-horse never was known to run at all, 'except' as the smart cabman in front of the rank observes, 'except one, and he runs **back'ards**.'
>
> (73)

This generalised free direct speech is not attached to any particular individual until the last part of the quotation, in which the views of one 'smart cabman' are referred to, the rest of the direct speech in the passage appears to be left to represent the class of people as a whole. In this way, Dickens contributes to ideas about how people from different occupations and social classes speak. They are not stereotypes (a term that would be anachronistic at the time he was writing), but linguistic prototypes for later characters in his novels and the basis for later preconceptions of speakers. In this passage Dickens represents cab drivers' speech as including [w] for [v] transposition ('cariwans') and hypercorrection, in this case [h] insertion ('homnibuses'), in their speech and using non-standard pronunciation of the word regular (riglar), by omitting the middle syllable and using [i] instead of [e]. The hackney coachmen are represented as using non-standard grammar, for example, 'them crazy cabs', [v] for [w] transposition ('von't', 'vun'), omitting the first syllable in words which start with a weak syllable, for example ' 'spectable' (respectable) and [h] dropping (' 'ackney', ' 'orses'), and non-standard

pronunciation of the word coach (‘cotche’) indicating a shortened vowel sound. The ‘smart’ cabman omits the [w] in backwards. Whether or not these slight differences represented by inversions of linguistic elements, i.e. [w] for [v] as opposed to [v] for [w] and [h] insertion as opposed to [h] dropping, are meant to indicate any differences in speech patterns between the cab men and the coach drivers, or if the differences are purely stylistic to distinguish the two voices or purely coincidental is difficult to ascertain. The features of non-standard English in the passage correspond with those considered typical of cockney dialect at the time. However, it is significant that Dickens uses cockney dialect to identify these people as being from these distinct occupational groups, and by presenting a generalised voice, he suggests an idea of linguistic uniformity amongst them. By doing this, through a position of observation and description, Dickens, inadvertently, was helping to encode ideas about the speech of this social class. Dickens uses dialect in a similar way in ‘The Streets – Night’. In this sketch, Dickens details an evening street scene in a London suburb, in which the residents of ‘the larger and better kind of street’ are engaged in the purchase of muffins in preparation for their evening tea. The use of the present tense in the description of the scene emphasises the everyday commonality of the scene, where ‘kitchen fires blaze brightly up, and savoury steams of hot dinners salute the nostrils of the hungry wayfarer’ (75). This everydayness is echoed by the way dialect is treated. Again, dialect is used within the narration, this time to indicate the speech of Mrs Walker. By including her words in the narration, Dickens creates a sense that this way of speaking would be typical of the voices in these streets and that her voice is one that represents many:

> when it appears from the voluntary statement of Mrs Walker, that her **‘kittle’s jist a-biling**, and the cups and **sarsers** ready laid,’ and that, it was such a wretched night out **o’doors**, she’s made up her mind to have a nice hot comfortable **cup o’ tea** – a determination at which, by the most singular coincidence, the other two ladies had simultaneously arrived.
>
> (75)

Dickens uses the phrase ‘ ‘kittle’s jist a-biling, and the cups and sarsers ready laid’ ’ in quotation marks, but then uses ‘o’doors’ and ‘a nice hot comfortable cup o’tea’ without, embedded in the narration. The non-standard features suggest: the use of /i/ instead of

/e/ in ‘kettle’; /i/ instead of /ʌ / in ‘just’; /ai/ instead of /oi/ in ‘boiling’; /a:/ instead of /ɔ:/ in ‘saucers’; the contraction of ‘of’ to ‘’o’ and the ‘a’ prefix on the present participle, ‘a-biling’. By embedding dialect in this way, Dickens indicates that either this way of speaking in this part of London would be familiar to the reader or suggests to the reader that this is how people in this area speak. It acts as both a gesture towards a shared knowledge between the writer and the reader of what the speakers represent, but also as a way of further delineating speech communities in the capital, enregistering ideas about speech and social class.

Dickens’s ability to describe the sounds and voices of the capital is further exemplified in the ‘Greenwich Fair’ sketch, in which Dickens describes the road to the fair as being ‘in a state of perpetual bustle and noise’ (*Sketches*: 137) and then describes the fair itself in terms of a barrage of sounds:

> … the screams of the women, the shouts of the boys, the clanging of gongs, the firing of pistols, the ringing of bells, the bellowings of speaking-trumpets, the squeaking of penny dittos, the noise of a dozen bands, with three drums in each, all playing different tunes at the same time, the hallooing of showmen, and an occasional roar from the wild-beast shows; and you are in the very centre and heart of the fair.
>
> (140)

In this sketch, sound, but more specifically, the voices of the fairground workers form a central role in construction of the scene. Dickens uses direct speech, including features of cockney dialect, to exemplify the calls of the workers as they attempt to drum up business. When introducing the speech of the man conducting the ‘three thimbles and a pea trick’, Dickens again attempts to define and categorise the way in which certain people speak, by introducing it with the words, ‘with some such address as’, indicating that the speech was a typical, repeated occurrence. The speech is as follows:

> ‘Here’s the sort **o’game** to make you laugh seven years **arter** you’re dead, and turn **ev’ry ‘air** on your **‘ed gray** with delight! Three thimbles and **vun** little pea – with a two, three, **vun**: Catch him who can, look on, keep your eyes open, and **niver** say die! **niver** mind the change and the expense: all fair and above-board: them as don’t play can’t **vin**, and luck attend the **ryal** sportsman! Bet any

> **gen'l'm'n** any sum of money, from **harf** a crown up to a **suverin**, as he doesn't name the thimble **as kivers** the pea!'
>
> (138)

The fairground worker's speech contains the rhetorical devices of the trade, a series of challenges, promises and exclamations, used to coerce the passer-by into participating and evocations of death and danger to enhance the excitement of the game. Similarly, the speech of the person calling out to attract the passers-by to the lion taming contains short pithy exclamation and employs patterns of repetition to attract the attention of the fairground goers. The caller also makes light of the danger, using the possibility of death as a humorous selling point to entice customers:

> "Here, here, here, the lion, the lion (tap), exactly as his is represented on the canvas outside (three taps): no waiting, remember; no deception. The **fe-ro-cious** lion (tap, tap) who bit off the gentleman's head last **cambervel vos** a twelvemonth and has killed on the **awerage** three keepers a year ever since he arrived at **matoority**. No extra charge on this account recollect; the price of admission is only sixpence.''
>
> (143)

The language of both speakers are categorised using markers of cockney: such as [w] for [v] and [v] for [w] transposition, such as 'vun', 'vos', and 'awerage'; [h] dropping, as in 'air on your 'ed; glottalisation, such as 'gen'l'm'n'; and non-standard spelling to indicate non-standard pronunciation of certain words, for example, 'niver', 'kivers', 'suverin', 'cambervel' and 'matoority'. By using these markers of cockney dialect for the fairground workers, Dickens is emphasising their dialect and making a clear connection between this way of speaking and this group of people.

Likewise, in 'The River' sketch, Dickens characterises the participants in the boat race as speakers of slang, with their own form of boating jargon. He alerts the reader to their use of non-standard English in the opening passage of the sketch:

> 'Are you fond of the water?' is a question very frequently asked, in hot summer weather, by amphibious-looking young men. 'Very' is the general reply. 'An't

you?'- 'Hardly ever off it,' is the response, accompanied by sundry adjectives, expressive of the speaker's heartfelt admiration of the element.

(*Sketches*: 122)

As with the cab drivers and coachmen and the fairground performers, Dickens attempts to linguistically categorise this group of people by the type of language they use, giving a specific voice to the class. In the following passage Dickens uses a mixture of slang and technical jargon to categorise the speech of participants:

> 'Back **wa'ater**, sir,' shouts Dando, 'Back **wa'ater**, you sir, **aft**;' upon which every body thinking he must be the individual referred to, they all back water, and back comes the boat, stern first, to the spot whence it started. 'Back water, you sir, **aft**; pull round, you sir, **for'ad**, can't you?' shouts Dando, in a frenzy of excitement. 'Pull round, Tom, can't you?' re-echoes one of the party. 'Tom **an't for'ad**,' replies another. 'Yes, he is,' cries a third; and the unfortunate young man, at the imminent risk of breaking a blood-vessel, pulls and pulls, until the head of the boat fairly lies in the direction of Vauxhall-bridge. 'That's right—now pull all on you!' shouts Dando again, adding, in an under-tone, to somebody by him, '**Blowed** if **hever** I see **sich a set of muffs**!' and away jogs the boat in a zigzag direction, every one of the six oars dipping into the water at a different time; and the yard is once more clear, until the arrival of the next party.
>
> (124)

Dickens combines the nautical expressions; 'back water', 'aft' and 'pull round' with markers of non-standard dialect, for example 'wa'ater' for water, 'for'ad' for forward, 'an't'for isn't to form a type of collective idiolect for this group of people. Dando's final exclamation contains elements of cockney slang ('Blowed', 'muffs'), non-standard pronunciation ('sich') and hyper-correction ('hever'). At the same time as constructing the linguistic identity for the boaters. Dickens also characterises the voices of the spectators along the river bank who cheer on the race and place bets on competitors, using slang expressions unique to betting, '"Go on, Pink"—"Give it her, Red"—"Sulliwin for ever"—"Bravo! George"—"Now, Tom, now—now—now—why don't your partner stretch out?"—"Two pots to a pint on Yellow," &c., &c.' (124). 'Two pots

to a pint' being a betting term meaning four to one as one pot contained two quarts. In this sketch, Dickens connects these examples of slang and jargon to this particular speech community.

In the 'Characters' sketch, 'Miss Evans and the Eagle', Dickens appears to be mocking the pretensions of the upwardly mobile upper-working class/lower-middle class characters surrounding Miss Jemima Evans as characterised by their manner of speaking. Dickens introduces us to Jemima Evans, by indicating that her name is not pronounced as it is spelt and thus, is pronounced 'incorrectly'. Dickens writes that she was called, 'Miss Evans (or Ivins to adopt the pronunciation most in vogue with her circle of acquaintance)' and from this point in the sketch, Dickens continues to refer to her with non-standard spelling to indicate the way her social circle pronounced her name, as 'Miss J'mima Ivins'. This indication of non-standard speech does not indicate a considerable change from standard spoken English, as even in Standard English the /e/ of the first syllable of the name Jemima would be a weak form and not stressed. The replacement of /i/ for /e/ in the two vowel sounds of the surname, only represents a subtle change in vowel sound. However, the social implications of assigning these speech forms to this group are significant. Dickens is saying that this group speaks in this way, thus this group's speech is not quite standard and it indicates either affectation or that they are not quite members of the polite speech community. The speech assigned to this social group betrays them as aspirational 'wannabes', which is also indicated through the conflicting use of /h/ pronunciation. Their language is characterised as simultaneously consisting of both /h/ dropping, 'How ev'nly!' (269) and /h/ insertion, 'Horficer!' (271). As I mentioned in the introduction, both these forms of pronunciations were considered shibboleths of membership into 'correct'-speaking, middle-class society and their inconsistent use marks the speakers as not quite fitting in. Hypercorrection, in the case of /h/ insertion was also indicative of 'trying too hard' to rise above their station. In this sketch, it is not only their language that is marked out as aspirational, but other aspects of their attire and manners. For example, Mr Samuel Wilkins, J'mima's suitor, who is a carpenter, is described as having, 'earnings…all-sufficient for his wants, varying from eighteen shillings to one pound five, weekly: his manner undeniable – his Sabbath waistcoats dazzling'. When he takes Miss Ivins out, he carries 'a dress cane, with a gilt knob at the top', which we are told is 'to the admiration and envy of the street in general, and to the high gratification of Mrs Ivins,

and to the two youngest Miss Ivinses in particular' (268). Their language, like their ostentatious dress sense, lightly mock the fact that they are 'trying too hard', trying to rise above their station, but not quite doing it properly. I return to this theme of working-class upwardly mobile speech in Chapter 4.

Emerging Voices

Many of the cockney voices Dickens creates in *Sketches by Boz* are used as a basis for the speech of characters in his later novels. If we take, for example, the people working in transport (cab drivers, coachmen, omnibus drivers) who appear in *Sketches*, we can see the formation of a prototype for the character of Tony Weller in *The Pickwick Papers*. The sketch 'The Last Cab-driver, and the First Omnibus Cad' was published in the second series of *Sketches by Boz* in December of 1836, the same month in which the tenth instalment of *The Pickwick Papers* was published, which introduces the character of Tony Weller. 'The Last Cab-driver, and the First Omnibus Cad' sketch consisted of a reworking of two previous articles: 'Hackney-cabs, and their drivers', originally published in the *Carlton Chronicle* on 17 September 1836 and 'Some Account of an Omnibus Cad' published in *Bell's Life of London* on 1 November 1835. Several comparisons can be made between the two characters in the sketch and the character of Tony Weller in terms of the representation of social class and language. Both the red-cab driver and Mr Barker ('The Last Omnibus Driver') combine character traits similar to that of Tony Weller. The red cab-driver is described as 'confident in the strength of his own moral principles' and 'like many other philosophers, was wont to set the feelings and opinions of society at complete defiance.' (*Sketches*: 173). The red cab-driver is caricatured as carrying a flower in his mouth in the summer, replaced by a piece of straw in the winter, which is substituted with a pipe for Tony Weller. His character is more malevolent, but he shares the same savvy wit as Mr Weller. If we compare this passage from the sketch, in which the red cab-driver justifies the advantages of being arrested before proceeding to punch a disgruntled customer, with a passage from *The Pickwick Papers,* in which Mr Weller lays down his reasons for wanting Mr Pickwick to take care of his money, we can see some similarities in speech patterns and rhetorical structure:

> ‘You’ll pull me up, will you?’ said our friend.
> ‘I will,’ rejoined the little gentleman, with even greater vehemence than before.
> ‘Very well,’ said our friend, tucking up his shirt sleeves very calmly.
> ‘There’ll be three veeks for that. Wery good; that’ll bring me up to the middle o’ next month. Three veeks more would carry me on to my birthday, and then I’ve got ten pound to draw. I may as well get board, lodgin’, and washin’, till then, out of the county, as pay for it myself; consequently here goes!’
> So, without more ado, the red cab-driver knocked the little gentleman down, and then called the police to take himself into custody, with all the civility in the world.
>
> (*Sketches*: 163)

> ‘To say this here,’ said the elder Mr. Weller, impatiently, ‘that it ain’t o’ no use to me; I'm a-goin’ to vork a coach reg’lar, and ha’n’t got noveres to keep it in, unless I vos to pay the guard for takin’ care on it, or to put it in vun o’ the coach pockets, vich ’ud be a temptation to the insides. If you’ll take care on it for me, Sir, I shall be wery much obliged to you. P’raps,’ said Mr. Weller, walking up to Mr Pickwick and whispering in his ear, ‘p’raps it'll go a little vay towards the expenses o’ that ‘ere conwiction. All I say is, just you keep it till I ask you for it again.’ With these words, Mr. Weller placed the pocket-book in Mr. Pickwick's hands, caught up his hat, and ran out of the room with a celerity scarcely to be expected from so corpulent a subject.
>
> (*The Pickwick Papers*: 704)

These passages are similar in terms of rhythm and sentence structure. The red cab driver’s speech is broken up into short pithy sentences punctuated with full stops and commas and Tony Weller’s consists of short clauses broken up with commas. Both written utterances are intended to persuade or convince. Both spoken passages are followed by a summation; ‘without much ado’ in the first and ‘with these words’ in the second and an abrupt action, the red-cab driver attacks the gentleman and Tony Weller suddenly takes his leave. In terms of dialect markers, the red cab-driver’s language, like Weller’s includes many features considered typical of cockney dialect; including [v] for [w] and [w] for [v] transposition, [n] instead of [ŋ] for words ending in –ing (gerund and present particle verb forms) and punctuated with hyphen (for example, ‘washin'') and

the short form of ‘of’ reduced to ‘o'’. The two characters have a lot in common in terms of the speech assigned to them and some personal characteristics. Both are remorseless in their acts of violence towards those who provoke them. The red cab-driver punches the gentlemen and Tony Weller beats Mr Stiggins, then practically drowns him in the horse trough, exclaiming; 'send any vun o' them lazy shepherds here, and I'll pound him to a jelly first, and drownd him artervards’ (*The Pickwick Papers*: 664). The account of the red cab-man is equally remorseless. His response to prison and solitary confinement mirrors that of Weller’s unaffected joviality as we are told, ‘he lies on his back on the floor, and sings comic songs all day!’ (*Sketches*: 175). The other character in the sketch ‘The Last Cab-Driver and the First Omnibus Driver’ is the waterman, turned omnibus driver, who we are told could be ‘a distant relative’ of the red cab-driver and who also shares similarities with the character of Tony Weller, although, he is a much darker version. Mr William Barker, also known as Bill Boorker and ‘Aggerawatin Bill’ (for his ability to aggravate), has ‘a love of ladies, liquids, and pocket-hankerchiefs’ (177). There is less dialogue in this section, but his nickname tells us that he pronounces [w] for [v]. William Barker’s love of ladies echoes that of Tony Weller’s irresistible penchant for ‘widders’. In this way, we can see Dickens formulating character voices that included class and speech observations in *Sketches*, which he was to use in more detailed character studies in the rest of his work.

Another case in point is that of Mr Sluffen of Adam and Eve Court, who is given some of the ‘broadest’ dialectal treatment of all of Dickens’s sketches in the sketch, entitled ‘The First of May’. Mr Sluffen is a precursor of the evil master chimney sweep, Gamfield, in *Oliver Twist*. In both cases, the level of vernacular marking serves to indicate the illiteracy of the speaker, mark the lowness of the profession and draw attention to the social issues at a time when regulations were only just coming into place to curtail the dangerous and exploitative chimney sweeping industry that relied on child labour (i.e. the Chimney Sweeper’s Act of 1834). Henry Mayhew, in 1851-52, describes chimney sweeps as having ‘long been looked down upon as the lowest order of workers, and treated with contumely by those who were little better than themselves’ and later goes on to state that he was ‘assured that there is scarcely one out of ten who can either read or write’ (1851-52: 250). Mr Sluffen’s speech is so full of non-standard London vernacular markers that its comprehensibility is challenged:

> ‘That now he’d cotcht the cheerman’s hi, he vished he might be jolly vell blest if he worn’t a goin’ to have his innings, vich he vould say these here obserwashuns – that how some mischeevus coves, as knowed nuffin about the consarn, had tried to sit people agin the mas’r swips, and take the shine out o’ their bisness, and the bread out o’ the traps o’ their preshus kids, buy a-makin’ o’ this here remark, as chimblies could be as vell svept by ‘sheenery as by boys; and the makin’ use o’ boys for that there purpuss vos babareous; vereas he ‘ad been a chummy - he begged the cheerman’s parding for usin’ such a wulgar hexpression – more nor thirty years – he might say he’d been born in a chimbley – and he knowed uncommon vell as ‘sheenery vos vus nor o’ no use; and as to kerhewelty to the boys, everybody in the chimbley line knowed as vell as he did that they liked the climbin’ better nor nuffin as vos.’
>
> (*Sketches*: 206)

Mr Sluffen’s speech entertains not only the full gambit of the usual dialect markers attributed to cockney speakers, such as those listed for the red-cab driver and Tony Weller, but also includes a wide range of other non-standard features. In terms of grammar, Mr Sluffen’s speech includes; the regular treatment of irregular verbs, i.e. ‘cotched’ and ‘knowed’, the use of ‘were’ for ‘was’, i.e. ‘he worn’t’, double negation, i.e. ‘as know’d nuffin’ (*Sketches*: 206). In terms of pronunciation, almost unrecognisable spelling of certain words indicate the manner of pronunciation and/or further emphasise the illiteracy of the speaker, e.g. ‘obserwashuns’ (observations), ‘mischeevus’ (mischievous), ‘consarn’ (concern), ‘chimblies’ (chimneys), ‘ kerhewelty’ (cruelty) and ‘preshus’ (precious) (*Sketches*: 206). Some of these words, notably ‘mischeevus’ and ‘preshus’ read out loud in the manner they have been spelt, do not seem to be that different from standard pronunciation and constitute eye-dialect rather than indicating non-standard pronunciation. Some of the other words contain more obvious deviations from the standard pronunciations. For example, the extra [b] sound in chimneys and the extra vowel sound/syllable in cruelty. Sluffen’s speech also demonstrates the omittance of the weak syllable in the word, ‘‘sheenery’ (machinery). It is not only the volume of dialectal features which connect Mr Sluffen to Mr Gamfield in *Oliver Twist*, but also the content of the speech which demonstrates incredible cruelty of the master sweep towards the climbing boys. In this extract containing the speech of Mr

Gamfield from *Oliver Twist*, we can see parallels in terms of language, as well as ideology:

> That's acause they damped the straw afore they lit it in the chimbley to make 'em come down again,' said Gamfield; 'that's all smoke, and no blaze; vereas smoke ain't o' no use at all in makin' a boy come down, for it only sinds him to sleep, and that's wot he likes. Boys is wery obstinit, and wery lazy, gen'lmen, and there's nothink like a good hot blaze to make 'em come down vith a run. It's humane too, gen'lmen, acause, even if they've stuck in the chimbley, roastin' their feet makes 'em struggle to hextricate theirselves.'
>
> (*Oliver Twist*: 17)

Gamfield's speech includes similar markers of non-standard London vernacular to that of Sluffen, for example, the use of words associated with cockney speakers such as 'chimbley', other variations including 'acause' and, 'obstinit', [v] for [w] transposition ('vereas', 'vith'), glottalisaion ('gen'l'men'), elision of contracted forms ('make 'em'), [h] insertion ('hextricate') and 'theirselves' instead of 'themselves' (*Oliver Twist*: 17). Gamfield's speech in the novel, albeit limited to a short passage, contains one of the highest levels of non-standard markers. This level of vernacular marking serves to draw attention to his lowness and in turn draw attention once again to the social issue. Gamfield's speech seems to have slightly fewer dialectal features than Sluffen's, yet the level of cruelty in his words is more acute. Gamfield even goes as far as advocating the singeing of chimney sweeps to force them up the chimney. There are possible practical and stylistic reasons for this language choice; for example, it could be that Dickens wanted to emphasise the moral and social message more clearly in *Oliver Twist*, avoiding the possibility of incomprehensibility that could have arisen by using the same style of speech as with Sluffen. In addition, there is a difference in genre and whereas Sluffen represents an observation - a character sketch - Gamfield plays a role in the plot of the novel and his speech needs to be more clearly understood and his villainy more exaggerated for melodramatic purpose. Other cockney speaking characters in *Sketches* who could be seen as models for Dickens's later characters include: Mr Bunk in 'The Broker's Man', who foreshadows the debt collector, Pancks in *Little Dorrit*; and the women in the street in 'Seven Dials', whose voices could be early precursors of Mrs Gamp's, who I discuss in Chapter 3.

Conclusion

As I have discussed, Dickens's use of dialect writing was an integral part of characterising the cityscapes described in his London sketches. Through the panoramic view and soundscape of London presented, Dickens provides a means by which the reader can linguistically pinpoint different areas of the capital. In many cases, he presents his aural 'observations' (for lack of a sufficiently descriptive word related to hearing) as being representative of whole groups of people, which in turn, forges strong connections in the minds of the reader between different social groups and ways of speaking and, as a result, either establishes or reinforces ideas of London speech and speakers. Despite the limitations of literary dialect, his attention to the details of speech characteristics and the metalinguistic indications given, acted as a way of classifying speech communities. In this way, Dickens can be seen as engaged in the process of literary enregisterment through metadiscourse, which Agha (2003) refers to, of certain language and dialect characteristics transmitted to his nineteenth-century readership, which was amplified by the popularity and mass distribution of his writing. Dickens's *Sketches* saw Dickens experimenting with dialogue and exploring ways of representing cockney speech in writing. Although, at times, he appeared to be adhering to reactionary ways of depicting low characters with cockney voices, the characters and voices he represents are varied and nuanced. Dickens's linguistic observations provided his readership with an idea of the way in which different groups of Londoners spoke in a way that formed opinions or fixed ideas, which contributed to societal attitudes. The cockney voices he developed in *Sketches* paved the way for later characterisation and dialect writing. In the next chapter, I will explore how the success of Dickens's cockney speaking character, Sam Weller in *The Pickwick Papers*, promoted a positive image of the cockney speaker in a way that was both lucrative and enduring.

Chapter 2 - The Cheeky Cockney

Introduction

> 'we shan't be bankrupts, and we shan't make our fort'ns. We eats our biled mutton without capers, and don't care for horse-radish ven ve can get beef.'
>
> (*The Pickwick Papers*: 112)

The above quotation from *The Pickwick Papers* demonstrates both the down-to-earth, levelling personality of Sam Weller and some of the markers of cockney speech that are characteristic to his literary dialect. As has been well documented, the character of Sam Weller became hugely popular from his introduction in the fourth instalment of *The Pickwick Papers* in June 1836 and Sam's cockney dialect was one of the contributing factors in this success. The character of Sam Weller had a wide appeal. He appealed to middle-class audiences, who appreciated a sympathetic working-class character, especially in light of growing class anxieties of the 1830s. These anxieties were fuelled by the crisis in social reform, agricultural and industrial riots, protest at the New Poor Law Act of 1834 and the growing trade union movement, culminating in the beginnings of the Chartist movement at the end of the decade (Archer 2000). Sam Weller could also be appreciated by working-class people, as, for once, they had a speaker of vernacular London English cast in a leading role. Forster testifies to the mass appeal of *The Pickwick Papers*, claiming, 'Every class, the high equally with the low, was attracted to it … Judges on the bench and boys in the street, gravity and folly, the young and the old, those who were entering life and those who were quitting it, alike found it to be irresistible' (1875:130). According to Forster, Sam Weller was one of the main reasons for the success of *The Pickwick Papers*:

> Its pre-eminent achievement is of course Sam Weller,—one of those people that take their place among the supreme successes of fiction, as one that nobody ever saw but everybody recognizes, at once perfectly natural and intensely original. Who is there that has ever thought him tedious? Who is so familiar with him as not still to be finding something new in him? Who is so amazed by his inexhaustible resources, or so amused by his inextinguishable laughter, as to doubt of his being as ordinary and perfect a reality, nevertheless, as anything in

> the London streets?
>
> (1875: 130)

Forster draws on the sense of reality or authenticity Dickens created, when he describes Sam as being as 'perfect a reality…as anything in the London streets' (1875: 130). The sense that Sam was 'authentic' is a recurrent theme in contemporary reactions to the novel, which confirms Coupland's argument that even if authenticity is a construct, it is a construct which matters to people (2003: 417). According to Agha (2003), literary accents present a kind of hyperreality. Agha argues, 'novelistic depictions of accent do not merely represent the realities of social life, they amplify and transform them into more memorable, figuratively rendered forms' (2003: 255). Weller's cockney speech captured the imagination of Dickens's readers. Sam Weller was a pivotal character in the nineteenth century in terms of attitudes to language and class. In creating Sam Weller, Dickens helped to enregister the concept of the 'cheeky cockney' and paved the way for later manifestations in Victorian popular culture and later in film. So, what was so original about the character of Sam Weller? Why was he so appealing? How did Dickens represent the language of the Wellers? How much did their language contribute to their popularity? What was the impact of these characters and their language on Victorian culture and how did that influence attitudes towards cockney speech and cockney speakers?

There has been a consensus amongst Dickens scholars that the language of Sam Weller marked some kind of shift in the way cockney dialect was represented in literature. Steven Marcus's (1972) 'Language into structure: Pickwick revisited', highlights Dickens's innovation in creating the speech of Sam Weller. Marcus writes:

> It was part of Dickens' genius as a writer to write Sam, or to tap that untapped resource of language in the near illiterate, and to get that speech and its genius into writing, into his writing. It was his genius, in other words, to be able to write that as yet unwritten language. It is at such a juncture that society and social change on the one hand and language and writing on the other all come richly together.
>
> (Marcus 1972: 199)

Although Marcus's hyperbolic literary style is a little outdated now, he recognises

Dickens's creativity in Sam's speech. Kreilkamp also describes Dickens's innovation with Sam Weller, stating that Dickens 'opens 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' (2005: 77). Whilst praising Dickens's creation, both Marcus and Kreilkamp offer quite judgmental descriptions of cockney dialect itself. Marcus describes it as 'the language of the near illiterate' and Kreilkamp describes it as the speech of 'impropriety and ungrammaticality' (1972: 199; 2005: 77). They both draw attention to Sam's dialect speech, but their descriptions of Sam's language downplay the creativity of Sam's speech. Both authors, from a literary perspective, refer to the idea that Dickens was accurately recording voice. Marcus goes as far as suggesting that Dickens was an actual human recording device, as discussed in the previous chapter (1972: 199), whereas Kreilkamp tempers this argument by stating that Dickens's writing gave the 'effect' of voice transcription (2005: 77). Both Marcus and Kreilkamp are writing from a literary, non-linguistic, perspective and do not go into detail about the language Dickens uses to construct Sam's language. However, both authors also offer interesting insights into the role of the Wellers as storytellers, which I will refer to later in the chapter.

Taryn Hakala's compelling chapter on Sam Weller as a champion of working-class dialect in the Victorian era takes a literary linguistic approach and questions why previous critics such as Kreilkamp had not explored in greater detail the importance of Dickens's cockney dialect (2010: 144). Hakala argues that Sam's Cockney speech was popular because it embodied a certain degree of cultural capital due to its association with street-wise, London-dwelling (2010:145). Hakala later adds that, 'Sam's wordsmithery instills Cockney with tremendous value' (2010: 150), thus combining contextual aspects of Sam's speech with a consideration of his dialect. Hakala makes a positive and convincing argument for the significance of Dickens's cockney speaking character, demonstrating how Sam Weller is positioned as the true hero of *The Pickwick Papers*. She also argues that Sam took on a life of his own in the various adaptations and plagiarisms of Dickens's work, noting how his use of 'slang' and 'knowingness' were exaggerated in the cheap imitations of Dickens work.

In assessing the popularity and widespread appeal of the Wellers, it is important to also focus on Victorian reading practices. Developments in the production and distribution of texts and the emergence of serialised forms of novels changed and expanded public reading practices. In *Voice and the Victorian Storyteller*, Kreilkamp

(2005) eloquently describes Dickens's relationship with new reading practices that emerged from the increased availability and circulation of reading material. Kreilkamp writes:

> Concern about the popular reading of Dickens's work amounted to concern about the emergence of what we now call mass culture. Contemporaries had to recognize that the cultural effects of Dickens's fiction derived not simply from his authorial work, but from the work of those readers and performers who made *Pickwick* (and subsequent novels) their own, treating a novel not as a bearer of authorial intentions but as the script for their own entertainment.
>
> (2005: 98)

By referring to the text as a 'script', Kreilkamp is referencing the way in which it could be read aloud, which was how Dickens's writing was frequently consumed. Andrews describes how most 'readers' of Dickens's work, did so by 'listening to another voice inflecting the voice of Dickens that came off the page' (2006: 51). The fact that Dickens's work was read aloud, recited and heard, rather than read in silence, offers a further insight into the way the language of the Wellers was popularised and how their cockney voices became so familiar.

Sarah Winter (2011), in *The Pleasures of Memory: Learning to Read with Charles Dickens*, explores the relationship between Dickens's writing, the reading of his work and the visual and aural effect on memory. Winter explores the interaction between the technical abilities of Dickens and the mnemonic aural connections formed in the minds of the readers, which enable him to forge associations and assign his characters to the memory of his reading public. Winter describes how, 'Victorian readers regardless of age, sex, social background, or geographical location, became personally attached both to Dickens's characters and their specific styles of speech' (2011: 81). Although coming from a completely different discipline, Winter's associationist arguments demonstrate a similarity to Agha's notion of enregisterment, as both deal with the way in which aspects of language becomes part of the collective cultural consciousness.

This chapter corroborates Marcus's (1972) and Kreilkamp's (2005) assessment that Dickens's character speech for Sam Weller was highly innovative, whilst trying to unpack what it was about the language of the Wellers that contributed to their success.

It concurs with Hakala's (2010) position that Dickens's creation of a cockney-speaking protagonist encouraged a more positive attitude to cockney speakers, during a century in which language was becoming more polarised along class lines. This chapter focuses more specifically on how language contributed to this positive attitude and how the language of the Wellers became enregistered. It examines how the Wellers' language became embedded in popular culture as a positive stereotype of the cheeky cockney. This chapter begins by outlining the background of Dickens's Sam Weller, taking into account previous scholarship. It analyses the language of the Wellers (both Sam Weller, and his father, Tony Weller) through close readings of the texts in which they appear, in order to examine what was characteristic or distinctive about their speech. It looks at their roles in both *The Pickwick Papers* (1836-37) and in their reappearance in *Master Humphrey's* Clock (1840-41), how their treatment in each text compares and what the role or function of their language is, paying particular attention to their role as storytellers. It also explores the afterlives of the characters beyond their original appearance in *The Pickwick Papers*, particularly focusing on the part that cockney speech played in these afterlives. It argues that cockney dialect was an essential factor of their popularity, forging a type of cockney collateral, which was fruitfully exploited by imitators, and which Dickens himself tried to capitalise on by resurrecting them in *Master Humphrey's Clock*. I argue that Dickens played a fundamental role in enregistering a certain view of cockney speech and cockney speakers through the characters of the Wellers. Through the Wellers, Dickens developed positive stereotypes that promoted a more egalitarian view of non-standard, cockney speech, even if this is not always the case in Dickens's treatment of cockneys and cockney speech, as subsequent chapters will show.

Pickwick in Parts: Dickens's Inauguration as a Novelist and the Birth of Sam Weller

In order to discuss the background to Dickens's creation of Sam Weller, I will first have to cover some well-trodden ground. As has been frequently discussed by critics and biographers over the years, the way in which *The Pickwick Papers* was conceived and produced had a significant influence on the form of the book, which, arguably, also influenced language in the novel (Marcus 1972, Kreilkamp 2005, Slater 2009). In fact,

Dickens provides an account of the origins of *The Pickwick Papers* in the Preface to 1847 edition. Dickens recounts how the book began when he was made an offer by Chapman and Hall in February of 1836 following on from the success of his sketches in the *Morning Chronicle* (*The Pickwick Papers*: 43). He recounts how he was asked to produce monthly contributions, which could be issued in 'shilling numbers' and which 'should serve as a vehicle for certain plates to be executed by Mr Seymour' (*The Pickwick Papers*: 44). The original idea was of the 'Nimrod Club', in which the members would 'go out shooting, fishing and so forth, and getting themselves into difficulties through their want of dexterity' (ibid), in the ilk of the cockney sportsman caricature that I discussed in the introduction. Dickens states that he objected to the project at first on the grounds of not being a great sportsman and feeling that this format had 'been already much used' (ibid), which it had been. Dickens claims that he had been advised against the project by his friends, who told him that, 'it was a low, cheap form of publication, by which I should ruin all my rising hopes' (ibid). As has been well documented, the project started with low returns, 'barely [selling] a few hundred copies monthly' (Patten 2012: 101). There was also the tragedy of Robert Seymour's suicide before the second issue had even been published. However, this tragic event meant that Dickens no longer had to make concessions to Seymour's creative vision and Dickens gained more artistic freedom over the project (Patten 2012). Patten succinctly summarises the challenges Dickens faced in producing the '16,000 words a month on an exigent schedule' for *Pickwick* as such:

> One had to do with employment, authorial identity, income, and career choices; a second concerned how he was going to carry Seymour's humorous characters through twenty numbers; and the third was how to transform the 'something' into some kind of continuing story with at least a rudimentary plot.
>
> (108)

However, Patten concedes that the second two challenges were probably not so much of a concern to Dickens as the fluency of his writing demonstrates (2012: 108). The nature of production, which consisted of Dickens writing monthly instalments at a time when he had many other commitments, suggests that he had to write quickly. Dickens was still writing his sketches when he began work on *The Pickwick Papers* and started writing his second novel, *Oliver Twist*, when he was only part of the way through

Pickwick. The serialised form of writing in monthly parts also provided the possibility of writing in response to sales and criticism, changing, curtailing and embellishing, in response to public reception. Rather than focusing on one clear narrative vision, Dickens filled column inches with embedded stories and long sections of dialogue. Dickens commented on the uniqueness of the production of *The Pickwick Papers* in a letter to Chapman and Hall:

> If I were to live a hundred years, and write three novels in each, I should never be so proud of any of them, as I am of Pickwick, feeling as I do, that it has made its own way.
>
> (Dickens 1836, in House and Storey 1965: 189)

This idea of the writing of *The Pickwick Papers* being propelled by its own momentum is one that has been embraced by many writers since. Marcus writes:

> Dickens has committed himself at the outset of *Pickwick Papers* to something like pure writing, to language itself. No novelist had, I believe, ever quite done this in such a measure before - certainly not Sterne. In addition, the commitment was paradoxically ensured and enforced by the circumstance of compelled spontaneity in which Dickens wrote, by the necessity he accepted of turning it out every month, of being regularly spontaneous and self-generatingly creative on demand. Dickens was, if it may be said, undertaking to let the writing write the book.
>
> (Marcus 1972: 189)

Marcus echoes Dickens's comment that the book 'made its own way' with his comment that 'the writing [wrote] the book' (ibid). The idea that the book had a life of its own is a pertinent one, especially when considering the role of Weller in the novel and Dickens's relationship to the character, which I will discuss later on in the chapter.

As has been mentioned by various critics since Forster, it was only after the introduction of Dickens's cockney character, Sam Weller in the fourth instalment (Chapter 10) that sales began to increase (Forster 1872: 121). William Jerdan, the editor of the *Literary Gazette*, whose 'reviews could make or break a novel's fortune' (*Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism*: 366), claimed to have instantly seen the

commercial potential of Sam Weller and written to Dickens to tell him to 'develop the novel character largely – to the utmost' (Jerdan, 1852: 364, cited in Butt and Tillotson 1957: 70). Jerdan also reprinted two of Sam Weller's monologues in the *Literary Gazette* on the 9 July and 13 August 1836 (George Ford 1974: 6). Whether or not Jerdan's claim to have been instrumental in the success of the novel is entirely accurate, it is true that the Wellers were instantly popular and the character of Mr Pickwick grew in popularity once he had his Sancho Panza type, cockney sidekick to offset his quixotic character.[1] The popularity of Sam's language is reflected in this review of *The Pickwick Papers* from the *Quarterly*, 'The primary cause, then, of this author's success, we take to be his felicity in working up the genuine motherwit and unadulterated vernacular idioms of the lower classes of London' (*Quarterly* 1837, cited in Ford 1974: 16).

The character of Sam Weller had literary and theatrical precedents. Indeed, there has been much speculation that the name and some of the aspects of Weller's idiosyncratic language were derivative in origin and based on earlier literary or theatrical characters. Hakala (2010) cites the anonymous pamphlet, *On the Origin Sam Weller* (1883: 3), which claims that Sam's famous 'wellerisms' owe a debt to Samuel Beazley's character, Simon Spatterdash, in the comical farce, *The Boarding House*, of 1811 . Both Laura Kasson Fiss (2017) and Hugo Bowles (2015) trace the first mention of this connection to Bleazley's play to an article by Cuthbert Bede in *Notes and Queries* of 1882, which included a reprint of an article by E. L. Blanchard, entitled 'London Amusements', which was first published in the Birmingham Daily Gazette on 7 April and 9 May 1882 (Fiss 2017: 235 and Bowles 2015: 407). The character of Simon Spatterdash in Samuel Beazley's play certainly does use structures similar to that of Weller's wellerisms. These structures consist of a humorous comparative sentence, in which a well-known saying or proverb is said to be by a person in a specific, but ill-matched, situation. They follow the pattern, 'as the_____said, when _____', for example; 'Then the next question is, what the devil do you want with me, as the man said, wen he see the ghost'. These types of sayings had probably been around for a very long time prior to Beazley's writing. Thomas Wright describes them as being, 'as old as Theocritus perhaps older' (1935 in Page 1999: 87). The following is an example from Bleazley's play:

---

[1] The analogy to Cervantes's work is one that has been made by many critics over the years. An early example can be found in John Forster's biography of 1875.

> Simon. Aye, there she is, musical and molancholy, as the cricket said to the tea-kettle. Attention!
>
> …
>
> Simon. Why she's off with a whisk, as the butcher said to the flies, well to be sure how frisky this love do make the lasses, when I left our town what work I made among 'em, but a man must always be millunterry to win the hearts of the ladies.
>
> (*The Boarding House*, 1811: 25)

This connection does seem quite plausible. However, the other notable connection that the 1883 pamphlet makes is the fact that the famous actor, Sam Vale, played Simon Spatterdash in later productions (1883: 4). Sam Vale, also known as Sam Valer, according to these sources from the 1880s, was an actor who became renowned for using this type of structured phrase. The author of the pamphlet writes, 'Vale introduced his peculiarly novel comparisons in his daily talk with his companions and familiar associates' (1883: 4). Wright argues that Sam Valer made this comic structure so popular that, 'witticisms of this kind became popular and formed part of the stock-in-trade of every London wag' (Wright 1935 as cited in Page 1999: 88). Bowles points out that there was no clear evidence that the actor Samuel Vale actually spoke in a cockney accent, and that the lines of Simon Spatterdash were written in Standard English, so whilst there may be a connection to the wellerisms there is not necessarily a connection to Sam's cockney dialect (2015: 407). Bowles makes the case for the inspiration for Sam's accent coming from a Bishopsgate fishmonger, also called Weller, who Dickens may have heard speaking in the Doctors Commons courtroom (2015: 408). It is difficult to know whether these apocryphal accounts, such as that by Bede, made decades after the events took place, are true or not. Wright even goes as far as to claim that Sam Valer was 'well known to Dickens as a boy' (1935 in Page 1999: 88).[2] Whether Dickens deliberately imitated the play or the actor is hard to know or whether they just formed part of the cultural zeitgeist. Even if Sam Weller was based on earlier characters or a homage to Sam Valer, his popularity ended up surpassing any of the previous incarnations and what was original about Sam Weller was having a character who spoke

[2] However, I have not been able to corroborate this statement by Thomas Wright with evidence from any other sources.

in cockney dialect and who had such a large part to play in the narrative. By rendering Samuel Weller as a cockney speaker and giving him such an important role in the novel, Dickens was breaking new ground. The fact that the novel was not conceived as a whole, but developed by instalment meant that Dickens's cockney character was partly created in response to popular demand. To a certain extent, he was a man of the people created by the people. Sam Weller marked a celebration of vernacular speech, which had an impact on attitudes towards class and speech. Dickens's serialisation of his own work in parts meant that his work was more easily affordable and no longer only available to the higher classes of society. This combined with developments in the production and distribution of literature meant that his work could reach a wider audience all over the country and the proliferation of adaptations and plagiarisms of his work, meant that the Wellers quickly become household names.

Speakin' Weller

Sam's language in the novel is witty, catchy and innovative. Dickens employed a range of technical strategies to create the speech of Sam Weller and his father, Tony Weller. Sam's language combined cockney dialect with well-known conventions of theatrical performance, which proved a popular combination. According to Deborah Vlock (1998) Dickens made use of the rhythms of traditional stage patter in Sam's speech, which was commonly used in the theatre to represent working-class speech. Vlock describes stage patter as, 'a frivolous language, a language of form rather than content, in which words are deceptive because they deviate from conventional (elite) semantics, rhythms, and syntax' (1998: 94). It was a form of speech associated with both theatre, but also with the cries of street traders, such as costermongers, used to help drum up trade (Vlock 1998). However, the uniqueness of Dickens's representation was his ability to render this form of speech in writing. The most distinguishable features of Sam Weller's speech in terms of pronunciation was his infamous interchange of [v]s and [w]s, which, as I have discussed in my previous chapter had been considered a prominent feature of cockney dialect, but which thereafter became firmly associated with the character of Weller. Dickens further emphasises this vocal characteristic through his name 'Weller', which pronounced with Sam's cockney pronunciation results in 'Veller'. This detail is humorously brought to light in the courtroom scene in the case of Pickwick and Bardell,

when Sam is asked how to spell his name:

> ‘Do you spell it with a ‘V’ or a ‘W?’ enquired the Judge.
> ‘That depends on the taste and fancy of the speller, my Lord,’ replied Sam; ‘I never had occasion to spell it more than once or twice in my life, but I spells it with a ‘V’.
>
> (*The Pickwick Papers*: 434)

Sam Weller’s first name, Samuel, is also written in speech in the novel as ‘Samivel’, particularly in the speech of Tony Weller, indicating the pronunciation with /v/. The fact that this marker of cockney dialect featured in the names of the Wellers, meant that their speech and dialect was highlighted every time their names were mentioned, strengthening the association between character and speech. Although, the [v] [w] transposition was the most notable feature of the dialect of both Sam and Tony Weller, Dickens makes use of a number of other recognisable features of cockney dialect in the idiolects of the two cockney speaking characters. If we consider this extract from Sam’s first narrative, the story of how his father came to be married to his stepmother, we can see the features that Dickens was employing in Sam’s language:

> ‘Do! *You*, Sir! That **an’t** the wost on it, neither. **They puts** things into old **gen’lm’n’s** heads as they never dreamed of. My father, Sir, **vos** a coachman. A vidower he **vos**, and fat enough for anything—**uncommon fat**, to be sure. His **missus** dies, and leaves him four hundred **pound**. Down he goes to the Commons, to see the lawyer and draw the blunt—wery smart—top boots on—nosegay in his button-hole—broad-brimmed tile—green shawl—quite the **gen’lm’n**. Goes through the **archvay**, thinking how he should **inwest** the money—up comes the **touter**, touches his hat— ‘Licence, Sir, licence?’— 'What’s that?’ says my father.— ‘Licence, Sir,’ says he.— ‘What licence?’ says my father.— ‘Marriage licence,’ says the **touter**.— ‘Dash my **veskit**,’ says my father, ‘I never thought **o’** that.’— ‘I think **you wants** one, Sir,’ says the touter.
>
> (*The Pickwick Papers*: 110)

In this passage, you can see the examples of the [v] for [w] transposition (‘archvay’, ‘veskit’) and vice versa [w] for [v] (‘inwest’, ‘wery’). There is also indication of glottalisation (‘gen’lm’n’s’), non-standard grammar (‘I think you wants one’), slang expressions, for example, ‘Dash my veskit’ and other non-standard spelling (‘vos’,

‘missus’, ‘arter’) (110). Later in the passage, Dickens has Sam using hyper-correction, in other words, adding an [h] sound to a word that begins with a vowel, in this case, ‘horgan’ (110) for *organ*. Other characteristics of Sam’s language include the use of contracted forms to represent rapid speech processes such as ‘o’’ for *of* and ‘‘em’ for *them* and the ‘a’ prefix on present participle verb forms, such as ‘a goin’’ (141), ‘a doin’’ (286). The -ing form of the verbs, are sometimes written without the final ‘g’, representing another feature of cockney pronunciation. Sam also frequently alters the prefix of words, for example, ‘perportion’ (491) and ‘purwide’ (141) and ‘perwent’ (319) for *proportion*, *provide* and *prevent* and his speech includes other non-standard spellings and the occasional use of malapropisms. The above passage also demonstrates Dickens’s use of the rhythmic patterns that Vlock likens to stage patter in Sam’s language (1998). Weller’s speech consists of staccato phrases punctuated by dashes. There are similarities between Weller’s speech and that of Alfred Jingle.[3] On a broader level, Sam’s speech is largely characterised by the use of anecdotes, which I will examine in more detail in the next section. The combination of these elements of Sam’s speech, which brings together features of cockney dialect, with rhythm of speech and witty storytelling, helped to ensure the popularity of the character and created a positive and enduring role model of the cockney speaker.

Tony Weller’s language contains many similar features to Sam’s, but is particularly categorised by the use of amusing malapropisms, for example, ‘appleplexy’ (565) for *apoplexy* (‘I’m afeerd that vun o’ these days I shall laugh myself into a appleplexy, my boy’), ‘dispensary’ (660) for *dispensation*, ‘prodigy son’ (550) for *prodigal son* and ‘probe it’ (694) for *probate*. Tony’s language also consists of the repetition of certain lexical items, the first, most famous example, being ‘widders’ (693) for *widows*, which is also central to his character’s storyline in the novel. This easily recognisable linguistic tag in non-standard English helps emphasise this aspect of Tony’s character and adds humour, perhaps mockingly. Tony Weller also frequently uses the word ‘gammon’ (282), meaning to use talk as a means of persuading someone to do something, usually to further the interests of the person ‘gammoning’ or to mislead the person. A modern equivalent of ‘gammon’ could be the vulgar, (American),

[3] Jingle’s speech appears to be based almost entirely on a kind of shorthand prosody, ‘Hallo!’ shouted the shameless Jingle, ‘any body damaged?—elderly gentlemen—no light weights—dangerous work—very,’ (*The Pickwick Papers*: 106). In Jingle’s speech word order is also inverted, which stylistically serves to emphasis his trickiness and thus, untrustworthiness.

slang term ‘bullshit’, which can be used as both a verb and a noun. In the passage below, Tony Weller uses the word to describe the evangelising that Mrs Weller has been doing with the Reverend Stiggins:

> ‘They’re alvays a-doin’ some gammon of that sort, Sammy,’ replied his father. ‘T’other Sunday I wos walkin’ up the road, wen who should I see, a-standin’ at a chapel door, with a blue soup-plate in her hand, but your mother-in-law! I werily believe there was change for a couple o’ suv’rins in it, then, Sammy, all in ha’pence; and as the people come out, they rattled the pennies in it, till you’d ha’ thought that no mortal plate as ever was baked, could ha’ stood the wear and tear. What d’ye think it was all for?’
>
> (331)

Later on in the novel, in response to the drunken behaviour of Mrs Weller and Reverend Stiggins, Dickens writes of Tony, that ‘he plainly evinced his disapprobation of the whole proceedings, by sundry incoherent ramblings of speech, among which frequent angry repetitions of the word “gammon” were alone distinguishable to the ear’ (570). In this way, Dickens is cleverly setting up the recognisable speech tags for his cockney characters, which meant that readers would only need to hear the word ‘widders’ or ‘gammon’ and think of the character of Tony Weller. These kind of linguistic hooks can be seen as forming part of the associationist theory of memory described by Sarah Winter in relation to the absorption of Dickens’s early work by the reading public, which she argues, can explain the psychological connections at play between reading, reception and assignment to memory of Dickens’s novels (2013). Winter argues that Dickens adopted these techniques in order to help the reader follow the plot and remember the wide variety of characters over the long time span covered by the serialised fiction (2011: 100). This also reflects Agha’s argument about the general effect of literary metadiscourses, which, he argues, were ‘to create a memorable cast of fictional characters, whose popularity made the link between accent and social character more widely known (2003: 256). Dickens clearly allocates these humorous speech markers to his characters as identifying features, hoping they will be recognised and remembered by the readers. Evidence for the success of these techniques can be found through their frequent appearance in adaptations, plagiarisms and wider cultural arenas such as advertising, which I will discuss later in this chapter.

The Wellers' Tale

An important role the Wellers play in the text is that of storytellers. Both *The Pickwick Papers* and *Master Humphrey's Clock* contain embedded tales within the main narrative, and Dickens uses different characters to narrate these stories. The distinctive voices and idiolects Dickens assigns to these characters help maintain the illusion of multiple storytellers. The significance and relevance of character speech in the novel as a means of multi-voiced layering and a way of refracting the author's own voice in a variety of different ways, is a concept explored by Mikhail Bakhtin, in the essay, *Discourse in the Novel*. Bakhtin states;

> The language used by characters in the novel, how they speak, is verbally and semantically autonomous; each character's speech possesses its own belief system, since each is the speech of another in another's language; thus it may also refract authorial intentions and consequently may to a certain degree constitute a second language for the author. Moreover, the character speech almost always influences authorial speech (and sometimes powerfully so), sprinkling it with another's words (that is, the speech of a character perceived as the concealed speech of another) and in this way introducing into it stratification and speech diversity.
>
> (Bakhtin 1981: 315)

The Bakhtinian notion of heteroglossia in the novel, which posits fiction as a juxtaposition of different voices, all refracting the authorial intention goes some way to explaining the complex relationships between Dickens's use of multi-voiced narration as a means of presenting different facets of his personality and as a way of appealing to a wider audience. In light of Bakhtin's argument, Dickens's representations of cockney dialect can constitute a second language for him, one through which his ideas and beliefs are refracted through a working-class lens, enabling him to express different facets of his own belief system. Agha (2003) refers to Bakhtin's ideas multiple 'voicing' when discussing how metadiscursive activity in the text takes place, arguing that 'a juxtaposition of speech forms from different registers [highlights] contrasts of characterlogical types' (Agha 2003: 255). The idea of Sam Weller as another voice for Dickens in one that Marcus adopts when he describes Sam Weller as, 'unmistakably

Dickens' principal surrogate in the novel itself' (1972: 195). Dickens's use of multi-voiced narration also reflects and continues the oral storytelling tradition, in which stories are passed down from generation to generation, through spoken language, which Kreilkamp maintains had not died out but was 'heterogeneous and thriving' within Victorian fiction (2009: 77). This assertion is evident in the multiple storytellers and storytelling strategies in *The Pickwick Papers*.

Dickens employs a variety of narrators to tell stories in *The Pickwick Papers*, for example, 'The Stroller's Tale', 'The Bagman's Story' and 'The Story of the Goblins who stole the Sexton' told by Wardle. However, Sam, with his particular proclivity for telling anecdotes, occupies a significant role as a storyteller in the novel. Sam's language is witty and upbeat, containing (what came to be viewed) as his trademark speech tags and wellerisms, whilst, at the same time, using humour to mask quite dark and slightly disturbing subject matter and to offer a knowing and savvy contrast to the innocence of Mr Pickwick. For example, in Chapter 13, when Sam enlightens Mr Pickwick on the reality of political corruption, exclaiming over Mr Pickwick's naïve sense of shock at the 'pumping' (151) of voters; 'Lord bless your heart, sir…why where was you half baptized - that's nothin', that an't' (151). Then, Sam proceeds to inform his master about the drugging of voters by the 'hocussing' (151) of their brandy with laudanum, before launching into a longer anecdote with the opening; 'Not half as strange as a miraculous circumstance as happened to my own father, at an election time, in the werry place, sir' (152). This anecdote is told by Sam as a conversation that took place between Mr Weller senior and an election committee, in which Tony Weller is bribed to stage a coaching accident (tipping the voters into the canal). The humour of the anecdote is in Sam's reporting of the bribe and the actual accident as having been a matter of 'hex-tra-ordinary, and wonderful coincidence' (153) and the levity of his concern that a passenger may have been drowned in the incident, 'I rather think one old gentleman was missin'; I know his hat was found, but I an'n't quite certain whether his head was in it or not' (153). The other stories that Sam relays contain the same kind of dark wit, for example, the story of the pieman, who made 'weal pie' (230) by seasoning kitten meat and the man who kills himself defending his right to eat crumpets 'on principle' (552). Wellerisms serve as a scaled-down, succinct version of the same narrative formula. Sam's wellerisms contain dark subject matter, demonstrating similar bathos to his longer narratives, for example, 'There's nothin' so refreshin' as sleep, Sir,

as the servant-girl said afore she drank the egg-cup-full o' laudanum' (191) or 'Now, gen'l'men, 'fall on,' as the English said to the French when they fixed bagginets' (231). As demonstrated by these examples, several of these humorous wellerisms refer to violent death. The wellerisms provided the reading public with a humorous micro story, which could easily be assigned to memory and repeated. Dickens develops a strong and memorable narratorial voice by developing Sam's character through these storytelling strategies.

Ironically, in the text, when Sam is required to nurse his master, who is suffering from 'an attack of rheumatism' (206), by amusing him with 'anecdote and conversation' (206), Pickwick then writes down one of Sam's stories to relay to Mr Wardle and Mr Trundle, stating that he has improved on Sam's language. Pickwick claims that the story had been 'edited by himself, during his recent indisposition, from his notes of Mr Weller's unsophisticated recital' (206). Mr Pickwick then proceeds to narrate 'The Parish Clerk – A Tale of True Love'. This acts as a further layering of storytelling devices; as if Pickwick has translated Sam's language from cockney into Standard English to relay the story. It also had the technical advantage for Dickens of not having to sustain Sam's dialect throughout such a lengthy narrative.

As well as being storytellers in the novel, the Wellers perform the function of exposing hypocrisy with their down-to-earth, straight-talking sense. The Wellers challenge ostentatious, affected, oblique and circumlocutory language in a number of different situations, including political, legal, religious and class-related examples. Their linguistic prowess often plays a part in outwitting or shaming pretentious or corrupt characters. In doing so, the Wellers often hold the moral high ground, albeit in an unconventional manner. Sam Weller expresses his brand of Wellerian logic when he states:

> 'Wery, Sir,' replied Mr Weller; 'if ever I vanted anythin' o' my father, I always asked for it in a wery 'spectful and obligin' manner. If he didn't give it me, I took it, for fear I should be led to do anythin' wrong, through not havin' it. I saved him a world o' trouble this vay, Sir.'
>
> (326)

There is a warped, dishonestly honest or honestly dishonest logic to this, which turns

conventional morality on its head. In the legal environment, the Wellers outwit and outperform both the police and the courts, for example, when Sam Weller intervenes when the officious and ill-mannered police captain, Daniel Grummer introduces Mr Pickwick to the magistrate too abruptly in Chapter 25 by stating 'This here's Pickvick, your wash-up' (304), Sam chastises the police captain and offers a more polite and effective introduction:

> 'Come, none o' that 'ere, old Strike-a-light,' interposed Mr. Weller, elbowing himself into the front rank—'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 furder on, next him on the t'other side, Mr. Winkle—all wery nice genl'm'n'…'
>
> (304)

In this way, Sam shows his superiority to the police captain in terms of manners and politeness. Sam might not speak the educated language of the courtroom, though neither does Grummer, but he outshines the captain in terms of etiquette. Sam Weller deconstructs pretentious language in the novel, for example in relation to the corrupt, evangelical, hypocrisy of the Reverend Stiggins. Part of the Reverend Stiggins's evangelical campaign is to provide 'flannel waistcoats and moral pocket handkerchiefs' (329) for children in Africa. Sam is quick to draw attention to the ridiculous and hypocritical nature of this pretence at altruistic charity. He asks:

> 'What's a moral pocket ankercher?' said Sam; 'I never see one o' them articles o'furniter.'
> 'Those which combine amusement with instruction, my young friend,' replied Mr. Stiggins, 'blending select tales with wood-cuts.'
> 'Oh, I know,' said Sam; 'them as hangs up in the linen-drapers' shops, with beggars' petitions and all that 'ere upon 'em?'
>
> (329)

By Sam Weller's refusal to accept the fabricated and emotively manipulative labelling of 'moral pocket handkerchiefs' (329), Dickens is satirising these kinds of charitable

ventures and the evangelical language of missionaries. In *Dickens and Charity*, Norris Pope writes, 'Dickens associated evangelical cant with the much more serious question of hypocrisy' (1978: 132). Dickens is also critical of what he sees as misplaced philanthropy. Dickens extrapolates later on this topic in *Bleak House*, when he coins the phrase 'telescopic philanthropy' in relation to the charitable work of Mrs Jellyby in Boorioboola-Gha in Africa. The criticism that Dickens makes in *Bleak House* of this kind of philanthropy, is that whilst Mrs Jellyby focuses on problems afar in Africa, she detrimentally ignores the domestic issues going on in her own house, leaving her children to fend for themselves. Tony Weller reflects this attitude towards philanthropy when he confirms Sam's mistrust of Stiggins's venture. Tony Weller argues 'and wot aggrawates me, Samivel, is to see 'em a wastin' all their time and labour in making clothes for copper-coloured people as don't want 'em, and taking no notice of flesh-coloured Christians as do' (332). Tony Weller's comment, whilst making the case for charity beginning at home, borders on xenophobic. It is also possible that Tony Weller's position reflects a rather conservative view of Dickens's. Indeed, years later, Dickens reflects similar views to those of Tony Weller in a decidedly uncharitable letter Dickens writes to Angela Burdett-Coutts. Dickens writes:

> I don't know who wrote the African letters in *The Times* but I shall enquire, and tell you. Without at all disparaging Dr Livingstone or in the least doubting his facts, I think however that his deductions must be received with great caution. The history of all African effort, hitherto, is a history of wasted European life, squandered European money, and blighted European hope – in which the generous English have borne a great share. That it would be a great thing to cultivate that cotton and be independent of America, no one can doubt; but I think that happy end, with all its attendant good results, must be sought in India. There are two tremendous obstacles in Africa; one, the climate; the other, the people.[4]
>
> (Dickens 1857 cited in Sajni Mukherji 1981: 17)

In light of Bakhtin's comments on character speech refracting authorial intention, it is interesting to consider the relationship between Tony Weller's comments and Dickens's

[4] For a critical perspective on Dickens's attitude towards charity abroad see Sajni Mukherji (1981) 'Telescopic Philanthropy: Attitudes to Charity and the Empire in Charles Dickens'.

own more conservative, nationalistic opinions expressed here, in his later life.

Sam Weller also goes head-to-head, linguistically, with John Smauker, the affected 'powder-headed footman' in Bath. The label Dickens repeatedly assigns Smauker, as being the 'powder-headed footman' (447), identifies Smauker as belonging to an earlier, out-dated time period. Servants wearing wigs was a remnant of the eighteenth century and a fashion that had begun to die out in the early part of the nineteenth century. This, by contrast, aligns Sam with the modern age. Smauker uses pretentious language as a means of showing his own importance and trying to place himself above Sam. Sam exposes this pretence in each instance for what it is. Firstly, Smauker invites Sam to a 'swarry' (464), meaning *soiree*, for the servants. Sam remarks, 'I never heerd a biled leg o' mutton called a swarry afore' (465). Then Smauker tries to mock Sam for not knowing the meaning of the 'killibeate' (chalybeate) in reference to the waters at Bath:

> 'Have you drank the waters, Mr. Weller?' inquired his companion, as they walked towards High Street.
> 'Once,' replied Sam.
> 'What did you think of 'em, Sir?'
> 'I thought they wos particklery unpleasant,' replied Sam.
> 'Ah,' said Mr. John Smauker, 'you disliked the killibeate taste, perhaps?'
> 'I don't know much about that 'ere,' said Sam. 'I thought they'd a wery strong flavour o' warm flat irons.'
> 'That *is* the killibeate, Mr Weller,' observed Mr. John Smauker contemptuously.
> 'Well, if it is, it's a wery inexpressive word, that's all,' said Sam. 'It may be, but I ain't much in the chimical line myself, so I can't say.' And here, to the great horror of Mr John Smauker, Sam Weller began to whistle.
>
> (466)

Sam shows complete irreverence towards Smauker's attempts to impose language rules on him. Later, Smauker tries to correct Sam when he refers to a group of young women as the 'young missises' (471). Smauker claims the word was 'unparliamentary' (471). In response Sam says 'then I'll amend the obserwation and call 'em the dear creeturs, if Blazes vill allow it' (471). Smauker is left perplexed, not knowing what to make of Sam's reply and his cheeky nick-naming of the chairman as 'Blazes' and is thus stunned

into silence. Sam, once again, has the last word. As Taryn Hakala points out a lot of the language that Sam objects to is language which is 'unnecessarily formal and complicated, usually French, Latinate, or Greek-derived words' (2010: 162). Sam rejects Smaukers's use of such French or Latinate words ('swarry' and 'killibeate') and insists on applying his own grammar rules where necessary, as in the 'young missises'. In other instances in the novel, Sam takes exception to, ridicules or pretends not to understand the use of Latin words or expressions, for example, calling the *habeas corpus* the 'have-his-carcase' (510). This term sounds like a malapropism, but on closer reflection is a direct translation from the Latin into vernacular English. The Latin term in English roughly translates as 'that you have his body', Sam has just applied a more colloquial translation. By reducing this Latin term into a base English translation, it also pokes fun at the mercenary nature of the legal establishment. These humorous twists of language, which on the one hand could be seen as indicating a lack of education on the part of the speaker, also demonstrate a linguistic playfulness, irreverence for language rules and pretentious terminology (in this case, Latin). Sam does this again when presented with the word 'subpoena' (378). To which he inquires, 'What's that in English?' (572). Similarly, when Tony Weller attempts to use the French word 'adieu' in his leave-taking, Sam refuses to recognise it:

> 'A-do, Samivel,' said the old gentleman.
> 'Wot's a-do?' inquired Sammy.
> 'Vell, good-bye, then,' said the old gentleman.
> 'Oh, that's wot you're a' aimin' at, is it?' said Sam. 'Good bye, old double-vicket'
>
> (572)

Rather than reflecting Sam's lack of education, these instances reflect a resolute determination to resist pretention and obfuscation and by doing so, Sam deconstructs class hierarchies based on language. Sam's use of nicknames for other characters also acts as a further way of challenging hierarchies by undermining the sense of self-importance and grandeur, for example, calling the pretentious footman, Mr Tuckle, 'Blazes' (473), or irreverently, but affectionately, referring to his own father as 'old Nobs' (330) or 'my Prooshan Blue' (405).

Tony Weller voices his suspicion of over-extravagant language use, in his

objections to poetry. When Sam Weller tells Tony Weller that he is composing a love letter, Tony Weller enquires, in a concerned fashion, 'Tain't in poetry, is it?' (406). Tony Weller continues to assert that: 'Poetry's unnat'ral; no man ever talked poetry 'cept a beadle on boxin' day, or Warren's blackin' or Rowland's oil, or some o' them low fellows; never you let yourself down to talk poetry, my boy' (406). In Tony Weller's mind, poetry holds the same position as 'gammoning', both of which serve to use language for trickery and commercial gain. The reference to 'Warren's blackin'' and Rowland's oil' suggests that Tony refers to the persuasive language used in company advertising. A further layering of significance is given by the mention of Warren's blacking factory, the factory where Dickens was forced to work as a boy, which, although a fact unknown to the contemporary reader, adds further negative connotations to Tony's perception of poetry as a form of linguistic subterfuge or manipulation. By using the cockney speaking Wellers to challenge pretentious or hypocritical language in the novel, Dickens aligns cockney with a more honest and down-to-earth way of speaking. This linguistic alliance proved popular with the public, which is reflected in some of the contemporary newspaper reviews and the extracts of dialogue chosen for reproduction, which followed the release of the various instalments. I will examine some examples of these in the next section. The cockney voices Dickens created for the Wellers became an essential part of their characterisation and vocal associations formed a large part of their popularity and their fame beyond the novel.

Reviews and Rip-Offs

The reviews and reprinting of sections of *The Pickwick Papers* in the media at the time of Dickens's writing and after the termination of *The Pickwick Papers*, focused strongly on the speech of the Wellers. Jerdan's reprinting of the Weller dialogues started a trend and many examples of cockney dialogue extracts can be found. In an article from the *Blackburn Standard* from 12 April 1837, which served as an introduction to the thirteenth number of *The Pickwick Papers,* the reviewer focuses on Sam Weller's reaction to the language of John Smaulker and writes that 'the richest portion of the present number is where Sam Weller attends a "swarry", of the Bath footmen'. The newspaper then chooses just to include that particular Weller-based extract.

The public appropriation of Dickens's characters can be seen in the eager

consumption of the abundant adaptations and plagiarisms of the novel. These began to be produced long before Dickens had finished writing *Pickwick*, in fact, soon after the first numbers went on sale. Indeed, Edward Stirling's theatrical burletta version of *The Pickwick Club; or, The Age We Live In! A Burletta, in Three Acts* was performed at The City of London Theatre, on 27 March 1837, after only twelve instalments of the novel had been issued. In the adaptations, the Wellers played a prominent role, as did their language. Two of the most popular adaptations of Dickens's work were George W. M. Reynolds serialised novel, *Pickwick Abroad; or, the Tour in France* (1837-8) and William Thomas Moncrieff's theatrical interpretation, *Sam Weller, or, The Pickwickians. A Drama in Three Acts,* published in 1837 and performed at the Strand Theatre in London. George W. M. Reynolds's sequel to *The Pickwick Papers* proved to be extremely successful. In his adaptation, Reynolds continued the adventures of the Pickwick Club, but this time, in France. Reynolds was working as the editor of *Monthly Magazine* at the time and began his serialisation of *Pickwick Abroad* in the magazine. However, due to controversy surrounding the plagiarised content, Reynolds was forced to continue it in penny monthly parts (James 2008).

The Wellers played significant roles in *Pickwick Abroad* and Reynolds strove to maintain the literary dialect that Dickens had created for the characters throughout the novel. Reynolds maintained the literary conceit that these were real characters. In his introduction to *Pickwick Abroad*, Reynolds claims to be continuing the account of the history of these characters, which Dickens had started. Reynolds claimed that he was working from the 'the private notes and memoranda of Samuel Pickwick, esq.'. Reynolds boldly labelled himself the 'new historian', taking over from Boz, 'the first biographer'. As Dickens did in *The Pickwick Papers*, Reynolds also exploits cockney dialect in the language of Sam Weller to present an alternative voice and create a sense of linguistic authenticity. In an entry in *The Penny Satirist*, the reviewer introduces an extract from Reynolds' *Pickwick Abroad* stating that 'the following scene represents some of the humorous adventures of old Mr Weller, who has now arrived in the French metropolis, with plenty of Cockney English and no French' (*The Penny Satirist*, 8 December 1838: 3). This comment reassured the readers that they would be getting the cockney they had come to expect, yet at the same time reassuring them, in a rather xenophobic fashion, that they would not have to encounter any language from across the channel. In *Pickwick Abroad*, Reynolds draws on the comedic nature of Sam's

language and exaggerates linguistic characteristics created by Dickens. Reynolds includes even more examples of wellerisms in Sam's speech, for example:

> 'It's rayther dear vork to make a blackin' brush o' one's self in this country, and to take a man for the boot,' returned Sam, following up the same poetic strain of eastern allegory: 'So jist you come along, an' let them there fellers fasten their own ropes an leathers. Too many cooks spiles the broth as the man said ven he married his fourth vife an' got found out.'
>
> (1839: 537)

In *Pickwick Abroad*, the clash of the two cockney characters and the French language provides a further layering of linguistic humour. Reynolds has the Wellers struggling to master the French language, leading to comic moments of linguistic confusion. For example, when Tony asks Sam what the French is for 'jarvey' (to 'move on'- an instruction to be given to the coach driver in Paris), Sam tells Tony that it is 'cocher' (537). However, Tony misunderstands and instead shouts 'Couchon!' (pig in French) at the coach driver repeatedly, until the coach driver is so enraged he climbs down from the coach and raises his fists in fighting mode at Mr Weller Senior (537). Reynolds who had lived in Paris for many years, delighted in these linguistic clashes in his novel and by setting the Wellers' language off against the French language, delighted readers and enforced the idea of the Wellers' cockney dialect as the no-messing, straight-talking, language of British people.

William Thomas Moncrieff, who had been hampered by serious financial problems from the late 1820s (Stephens 2004), saw not only the comic theatrical potential of the cockney speaking character of Sam Weller, but also the potential financial profitability of adapting Dickens's novel to the theatre. The biggest success of Moncrieff's earlier career had been with *Tom and Jerry, or Life in London*, his 1821 dramatization of Pierce Egan's *Life in London*, another work famous for its cockney characters. Moncrieff saw an opportunity to renew this success by dramatising *The Pickwick Papers,* which became the first of many Dickens novels that Moncrieff went on to stage. Moncrieff emphasised Sam Weller's heroic status in Dickens's novel by naming his play after the cockney speaking character. Sam's role is central to the play. Indeed in Moncrieff's advertisement, which accompanied the written publication of the play, in which he tries very hard to justify his blatant plagiarism, he argues that for

Dickens, 'Sam Weller was a character, by the bye…only an after-conception of its creator, and formed no part of his original projection' (1837: iv). Moncrieff uses this argument, of Dickens's lack of commitment to the character, to justify his appropriation and celebration of Sam Weller. Not only does Sam become the eponymous hero of Moncrieff's play, but also his speech is foregrounded throughout. Indeed, Act I, Scene 1 opens with the introduction of Sam in the courtyard of the White Hart Inn (Dickens's Chapter 10) and with Sam's speech. Moncrieff strove to include literary dialect in his play script, which essentially was not wholly necessary. As a play, it could have been indicated that the actor would speak this way, without having to mark it in writing. It could be argued that it is the job of the playwright to exaggerate language for dramatic effect. However, one would imagine that it was also the job of the actor to provide the dialectal innovation. Moncrieff seems to be at pains to emphasize the linguistic features in the written form in the play script, indicating the importance he was placing on the language and illustrating his awareness of the popularity and commercial potential of including lots of cockney dialect. The play focuses centrally on the Wellers and ends with Sam's speech heralding in the new Queen, Victoria:

> A hundred Pounds! I shall only vish – as the gen'lman did, vhen he von but a tenth part as much in the lottery, that we may have a wery long acquaintance. If I've done my duty, I'm satisfied – at all ewents. I've done my best – and though there may be a few leetle trifling errors – if my kind friend vill but generously overlook them – vy, all I can say is, that I'll endeavour to amend 'em – and vishing ewery true English man vill join vith me, heart and woice, in shouting 'God Save the Queen!' I shall take my leave and vith their permission, appear agin another opportunity!
>
> (Moncrieff 1837: 152)

In this way, Moncrieff gives Sam a very important role. Sam's cockney voice speaks on behalf of 'ewery true English man' and positions him at the dawn of the new Victorian era. The play opens and closes with Sam's speech. Moncrieff draws from, and significantly builds on, Dickens's use of literary dialect to the point that the play itself is a veritable feast of cockney speech. Moncrieff's play was extremely popular, and he shamelessly defends his plagiarism and flagrant liberties with the adaptation of Dickens's work against his critics, in the preface to the printed copy of his play:

> What then means the twaddle of these 'high intellectuals' in so pathetically condoling with Mr Dickens on the penalties he pays for his popularity in being put on the stage? Let these 'high intellectuals' speak to Mr Dickens's publishers, and they will learn it has rendered them by increasing their sale the most fortunate of chapmen and dealers. It is wasting time to show the absurdity of these addle-pated persons, for their 'blow hot and blow cold' articles are as incomprehensible to themselves as they are to everybody else.
>
> (Moncrieff, cited in Fitz-Gerald 1910: 87)

S. J. Adair Fitz-Gerald describes Moncrieff as 'an extraordinarily impudent, yet very clever individual', who 'had a great following in his day' and 'adapted every book as it came out.' (1910: 83) By foregrounding Sam Weller, Moncrieff was tapping into a fascination with cockney dialect by all levels of society and the public admiration of Dickens's cockney speaking character. The higher-class audience were drawn by a curiosity aroused by (and element of exoticism implicit in) hearing the vernacular accent rendered in popular entertainment. For those of similar speech communities as Weller there was the obvious appeal of hearing their own voices or dialect spoken and having a main protagonist or hero who spoke the same vernacular London tongue. As Hakala argues regarding the adaptations of Dickens's work, even if the cockney orthography was not as well realised as Dickens's was, 'they still succeed in further complicating, and in some cases ameliorating, the social meaning of cockney character and cockney speech' (2010:164). A further indication of Dickens's incorporation into the mainstream popular culture of his day, is demonstrated by the fact that in Moncrieff's play, Sam Weller was played by W. J. Hammond, who Fitz-Gerald describes as, 'one of the most popular low comedians of his time' (1910: 79). Although Dickens hated Moncrieff for the blatant plagiarism of his work, Moncrieff was in fact right that he had boosted the popularity of the Dickens brand, by bringing *The Pickwick Papers* and Sam Weller's character to an even wider audience and publicising Dickens's work. Weller had ceased to be the sole property of Dickens almost from his immediate conception.

Some evidence of the way in which Sam Weller and his language infiltrated different sections of society is outlined in Amy Cruse's *The Victorians and Their Books*

(1935), which includes accounts of readers reacting fondly towards Sam and imitating his language in both written and spoken form. Cruse reports:

> Not to know him and his master was esteemed a misfortune. '**Consekens** is, as Sam Weller says,' began Fanny Kemble in a letter to an American friend, and then, checking herself, went on compassionately, 'But alas for you! You don't know *Pickwick*.' Sam had a sprightly cockney tongue and a ready wit, and his retorts were adopted and repeated by many of his admirers. 'Then, as Sam Weller says, you may take down the bill, for I'm let to a single gentleman,' was Harry Coverdale's method of accepting an invitation from a friend to spend a few days at his country house. 'Like Sam Weller I am an "**Inkred'Ious** Turnip,"' said William Hardman; and, 'My **wision** and remarks are limited, as Sam Weller has it,' declared Francis Burnand.
>
> (Cruse 1935: 160)

These examples demonstrate how the cockney dialect that Dickens had created for Sam was exerting an influence on the Victorian reading public. People were imitating Weller's speech in their everyday lives, which shows that ideas about cockney dialect were being created and acted out in a way that can be viewed as a form of literary enregisterment, establishing attitudes towards forms of non-standard dialect and speakers of those dialects. Weller's voice also began to take on a political role. In December 1837, a letter claiming to be from Sam Weller to the editor of *The Age*, which first appeared in *The Age* and then was subsequently reprinted in a variety of newspapers around the country, claimed to express Weller's views on the New Poor Law. The letter is written in the linguistic cockney style Dickens created for Sam, but deliberately exaggerating the features that Sam had become associated with, for example it is crammed full of wellerisms and adopts key features of Sam's speech such as ''ooman' for *woman*, 'pint' for *point* and 'gowerner' for *governor* (*North Wales Chronicle*, 19 December, 1837: 4). The letter begins:

> SIR, — I ask pardon for this unexpected appearance — as the bull said to the young 'ooman in the pastry-cook's shop; but I've knowed a little of your style o'proceedings, because the Gowernor takes you in — as the oyster did the fox when he put his paw between the two parts of his shell.
>
> (*North Wales Chronicle*, 19 December, 1837: 4)

The letter demonstrates both the idea that Sam Weller was almost considered a real (letter-writing) person and also shows an association between Sam Weller's language and political dissent. The content of the letter aligns the character to the social reform movement, in this case to the anti-poor law movement. In the letter, Sam recounts a conversation on the subject with, firstly, Mr Pickwick ('the Gowernor') and then with Sam's father, Tony, both of whom express their criticism of the Poor Law. Tony's opinion is given thus:

> "It ain't by no means a fair thing — poor people half-starved because they're past getting their living — poor crying children kept from their mothers, and a husband mayn't see his wife — which is a right down insult to God Almighty. They makes the coach go, Samivel, but they sadly whips the debiliated cattle: and all the while gives a power o'fine language — preachee and floggee' both, as the negro man said, Sammy."
>
> (*North Wales Chronicle*, 19 December, 1837: 4)

In this text, we can see the Wellers language being used for the purpose of raising social issues and promoting social reform, emotively linking the treatment of the poor to the treatment of slaves.

The Wellers Amplified in *Master Humphrey's Clock*

Dickens's awareness of the marketability of the cockney characters is illustrated by his resurrection of Sam and Tony Weller in *Master Humphrey's Clock*. It was intended to be a compilation of work by a variety of writers, with Dickens as the editor. However, finally, Dickens decided to write it by himself and he created the other voices through his characters. When this project failed to attract the readership and revenue he had become accustomed to, Dickens decided to bring back the Wellers in an attempt to boost sales. As I have discussed in the previous section, by this time, the Wellers had already attained a degree of independent success. Since their 'birth' in *The Pickwick Papers*, the proliferation of plagiarisms and theatrical adaptations meant that the characters had become part of the wider popular culture. The Wellers had become so familiar to the general public that by bringing them back again in *Master Humphrey's Clock*, it was as if Dickens was recasting well-known actors in a new work. The role

the Wellers play in *Master Humphrey's Clock* shows a deliberate attempt to exaggerate the popular features of the characters and exploit the cockney linguistic features assigned the characters in order to increase marketability.

The Wellers appear, along with Mr Pickwick, as visitors of Master Humphrey. Mr Pickwick, who arrives first, informs Master Humphrey that Mr Weller senior, 'is a little more opinionated than he was formerly, and perhaps at times more talkative' (*Master Humphrey's Clock*: 259). In this way, Dickens promises the reader an even more 'Tony Wellerian' version of Tony Weller and that this is going to be characterised by his speech, knowing the intrinsic value of this to his readership. In *Master Humphrey's Clock*, Dickens also appears to be exaggerating the cockney or non-standard elements of his language to satisfy the expectations of his readers. In an attempt to compare the speech of Tony Weller in *The Pickwick Papers* and in *Master Humphrey's Clock*, I took a sample of the equal word length from each book and counted the number of markers of non-standard English to see if there was an increase in the number of markers.[5] The two passages are as follows:

> 'I'm **a goin'** to leave you, **Samivel**, my boy, and there's no telling **ven** I shall see you again. Your mother-in-law may **ha'** been too much for me, or a thousand things may have happened by the time **you next hears** any news **o'** the celebrated Mr. **Veller o'** the Bell Savage. The family name depends **wery** much upon you, **Samivel**, and I hope you'll do **wot's** right by it. Upon all little **pints o' breedin'**, I know I may trust you as **vell** as if it was my own self. So I've only this here one little bit of **adwice** to give you. If ever you gets to **up'ards o'** fifty, and feels disposed to go **a marryin'** anybody—no matter who—**jist** you shut yourself up in your own room, if you've got one, and **pison** yourself off hand. **Hangin's wulgar**, so **don't you have nothin'** to say to that. **Pison** yourself, **Samivel**, my boy, **pison** yourself, and you'll be glad **on it arterwards**.' With these affecting words, Mr. Weller looked stedfastly on his son, and turning slowly upon his heel, disappeared from his sight.
>
> (*The Pickwick Papers*: 282)

'I **con-sider**,' said Mr Weller, 'that the rail is **unconstitootional** and an **inwaser**

[5] This is intended as an indicative comparison, rather than a thorough and scientific analysis. This approach is used here as *Clock* is the only example of Dickens resurrecting characters in his fiction, although he does also write a letter in the style of Mrs Gamp.

> **o' priwileges**, and I should **wery** much like to know what that **'ere** old Carter **as** once stood up for our liberties and **wun 'em** too,—I should like to know **wot** he **vould** say, if he **wos** alive now, to Englishmen being locked up **vith widders**, or with anybody again their wills. **Wot** a old Carter would have said, a old Coachman may say, and I **as-sert** that in that **pint o'** view alone, the rail is an **inwaser.** As to the comfort, **vere's** the comfort **o' sittin'** in a **harm-cheer lookin'** at brick walls or heaps **o'** mud, never **comin'** to a public-house, never **seein'** a glass **o'** ale, never **goin'** through a pike, never **meetin'** a change **o'** no kind (horses or **othervise**), but **alvays comin'** to a place, **ven** you come to one at all, the **wery picter o'** the last, **vith** the same **p'leesemen** standing about, the same **blessed** old bell a **ringin**''
>
> (*Master Humphrey's Clock*: 282)

These markers, which I have indicated in bold, included non-standard spellings, hyphenation to indicate non-standard intonation, apostrophes used to omit letters or sounds and instances of non-standard grammar, for example non-standard subject verb agreement, such as 'you hears'. In the passage from *The Pickwick Papers* there were 30 markers of non-standard dialect in 169 words (18% of the word count) and in *Master Humphrey's Clock* the total number of dialectal features was 42 (25% of the word count). From a quantitative perspective, there is an increase of 7% in the number of markers of non-standard dialect, which may indicate that Dickens was emphasising the language further. However, it is not only the number of features that change, but also the types and frequency of these features. For example, in *Master Humphrey's Clock*, Tony Weller's speech includes more instances of non-standard spellings of words to indicate non-standard pronunciation, for example: 'unconstitootional' (unconstitutional), 'inwaser' (invader), 'harm-cheer' (armchair), 'widders' (widows) and 'ingein' (engine), 'picter' (picture) and 'pl'eesemen' (policemen) (282). There are more examples of exaggerated spelling than before. In the extract from *The Pickwick Papers* the non-standard markers conform to the more typical markers of Cockney, for example [v] for [w] and [w] for [v] and 'in'' endings for *-ing* endings and there are less of these more elaborately mangled spellings. In the extract from *The Pickwick Papers*, the notable examples are 'pison' for *poison* and 'jist' for *just*. There is an increase in the use of certain features in *Master Humphrey's Clock*, for example 'in'' for –ing. In the *Pickwick* extract, there are five examples; 'a-goin'', breedin'', marryin', 'hangin'' and

‘nothin’’. In the passage of the same length from *Master Humphrey’s Clock*, there are eight examples; ‘sittin’’, ‘lookin’’, ‘comin’’ twice, ‘seein’’, ‘goin’’, ‘meetin’’ and ‘ring’’. This layering effect is exaggerated even further in the passage which immediately follows the example passage, in which Tony Weller is voicing his contempt for the steam engine, which he describes as, ‘a nasty, wheezin’, creakin’, gaspin’, puffin’, bustin’ monster, alvays out o’ breath, vith a shiny green-and-gold back, like a unpleasant beetle in that ‘ere gas magnifier’ (282). This repetition serves to build a connection between cockney dialect and popular cynicism of modern technology. Another feature which is appears more in the *Master Humphrey’s Clock* extract is the use of ‘o’’ as a contraction of *of.* There are four instances of it in the *Pickwick* extract (‘news o’ the celebrated Mr Veller’, ‘o’ the Bell Savage’, ‘pints o’ breedin’’ and ‘up’ards o’ fifty’), and then seven instances of it in the extract from *Master Humphrey’s Clock* (‘inwaser o’ priwileges’, ‘pint o’ view’, ‘comfort o’ sittin’’, ‘heaps o’ mud’, ‘glass o’ale’, ‘a change o’ no kind’ and ‘picter o’ the last’). The instances of [v] for [w] transposition do not vary much between the extracts, there are five instances in *Pickwick* and six in *Master Humphrey’s Clock*, nor is there much variation in the number of instances of [w] for [v]; there are three in *Pickwick* and four in *Master Humphrey’s Clock*. These findings suggest that Dickens was exaggerating the linguistic features of Tony Weller in *Master Humphrey’s Clock*, which consciously or unconsciously was giving the reader the more condensed version of Tony Weller that Mr Pickwick promises Master Humphrey.

In a similar way to *The Pickwick Papers*, the Wellers have a role as storytellers in *Master Humphrey’s Clock.* Tony Weller brings news of the Weller progeny, ‘little Tony’, the son of Sam and also, returns to his characteristic fear of ‘widders’. However, this time, Weller, combines this fear of female sexual power with a fear of modern transportation in an anecdote that describes being locked in a train carriage with a ‘living widder’ (282). The chapter entitled, ‘Mr Weller’s Watch’ in *Master Humphrey’s Clock*, offers a strange, embedded section, a watch within a clock, a cog within a larger clockwork device. It also serves as the ‘downstairs’, working class version of the *Master Humphrey’s Clock*, as Sam proposes:

> ‘I don’t think,’ said Sam, who was smoking with great composure and enjoyment, ‘that if the lady wos agreeable it ‘ud be wery far out o’ the vay for us

> four to make up a club of our own like the governors does up-stairs, and let him,' Sam pointed with the stem of his pipe towards his parent, 'be the president.'
>
> (*Master Humphrey's Clock*: 296)

They mark the commencement of the storytelling of the group with the winding up of Tony Weller's watch, which he announces, 'is the title and emblem o' this here society. Sammy, reach the two stools this vay for the wacant cheers. Ladies and gen'lmen, Mr Weller's Watch is vound up and now a-goin'. Order!' (*Master Humphrey's Clock*: 296) And, thus begins a more formalized storytelling section. The chapter contains a couple of strangely surreal stories, narrated by Sam Weller on the theme of hairdressers. The first, an anecdote about a hairdresser who keeps bears in his basement and, the second, about a hairdresser with an obsession with shop dummies. Neither of the anecdotes are particularly funny, they lack the humour of Sam's stories in *The Pickwick Papers* and their lack of resolution, makes them slightly more troubling. The Wellers were introduced into *Master Humphreys Clock* to try to invigorate the poor sales. However, their role in *Master Humphreys Clock* is not on such a level footing as it was in *The Pickwick Papers*. Sam Weller was the hero of *The Pickwick Papers*, assigned a significant level of autonomy and agency despite his servant status. As much of the action in the novel in *The Pickwick Papers* took place on the move, outside the social confines of the upper-class house, we see the Wellers occupy an equal space to the other characters. However, in *Master Humphrey's Clock*, the novel is set in the hierarchical structure of the upper-middle class Victorian house and the Wellers are relegated to the servants' quarters, which puts them on an unequal footing to Master Humphrey and Mr Pickwick, which could account, in part, for the poor reception of the work.

The Wellers in the Nineteenth Century and Beyond

The Wellers continued to be popular throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century. Their popularity not only contributed to commercial success for Dickens; instead, the characters achieved wider commercial success independently from the author, in terms of merchandising, adaptations and plagiarisms. Beyond the adaptations mentioned in this chapter, there followed a wide range of merchandising,

including songbooks, maps, joke books, clothing and toby jugs, representing the Wellers. Indeed, a reviewer in the *Quarterly Review* in 1837 commented that 'Pickwick chintzes figured in linendrapers' windows, and Weller corduroys in breeches-makers' advertisements' (Collins 1971: 56). The Wellers were popularly used in advertising, endorsing an array of products, including calendars, greeting cards, cocoa, corn starch and cigarettes. This type of endorsement was not unique to the Wellers; other Dickens characters also often appeared in advertising. However, more often than not, when the Wellers appeared, they were accompanied by a caption of their characteristic, cockney speech. Their speech was central to their characterisation, as can be seen in these examples of merchandise and advertising from the Charles Dickens Museum:

Figure 2

Figure 3

(Both images are from the archives at the Charles Dickens Museum)

Figure 2 contains two vignettes, one of Sam Weller and the other of Tony Weller.[6] Beneath Sam Weller is the quotation from *The Pickwick Papers* about Smaulker's 'swary' and the quotation under Tony Weller's image is another quotation from *The Pickwick Papers*, about gout being cured by the greater evil of 'widders'. In the top right hand corner of the illustration are the words, 'Familiar in their Mouths as

[6] This illustration is one in a series of illustrations of Dickens characters in a scrapbook in the Charles Dickens Museum of miscellaneous snippets of advertising and memorabilia. Unfortunately, the archive contains does not contain any reference to their source.

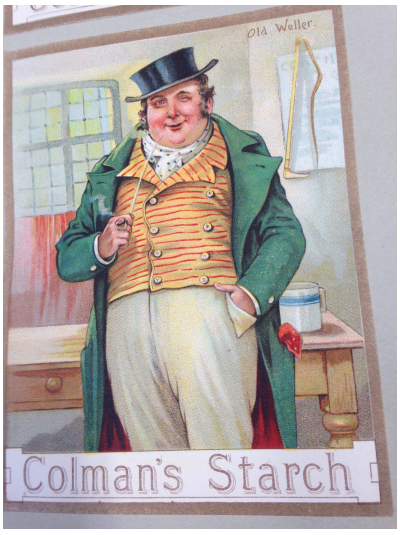
Household Words'. This line from Shakespeare was used by Dickens in his 'Preliminary Word' to the first ever edition of *Household Words* in 1850. This takes on a further resonance when placed with these characters, as their language had become so familiar to the reading public. Figure 3 is an illustration for a cigarette card. It probably dates from the early twentieth century as Sam Weller is more heavily stylised than some of his earlier depictions; he looks slightly more like a dandy than a working-class Londoner. The quote underneath has also been abridged from the original to, 'If my mother-in-law breaks his pipe, he steps out, and gets another. That's philosophy, Sir, ain't it?' The original quotation from the novel, was:

> 'If my mother-in-law blows him up, he whistles. She flies in a passion, and breaks his pipe; he steps out, and gets another. Then she screams wery loud, and falls into 'sterics; and he smokes wery comfortably 'till she comes to agin. That's philosophy Sir, an't it?'
>
> (*The Pickwick Papers*: 189)

The cigarette card has shortened the quotation to fit the card. Most of the 'non-standard' dialect has been removed in the edit, except for the question tag, 'ain't it?' Sam's language has been edited, but it still contains a recognisable marker of cockney dialect – just enough to evoke his language.

Figure 4

Figure 5



(Archives at the Charles Dickens Museum)

Figure 4 and Figure 5 show the Wellers in a series of advertisements for Colman's Starch. Similarly to the other scrapbook entries, there is little contextual information to accompany these advertisements in the Dickens Museum Archives. However, according to the Unilever archives, they probably belonged to one of many series of labels produced in the mid to late 1880s (Email correspondence, Unilever Art, Archives and Record Management 2015). Between 1885 and 1887, Colman's issued almost a hundred different series of labels, averaging one series a week and they were either printed by firms that already supplied labels to Colman's or specialist firms (ibid). In these advertisements cockney speech is not included. However, these images demonstrate how far the two cockney characters had infiltrated popular culture.

Conclusion

By creating the Wellers, Dickens created bold, confident representations of 'non-standard' London speech and cockney speakers, which proved popular across social classes. Dickens's creation of cockney speaking protagonists encouraged a more equibrilated attitude to cockney speech, in a century in which language was becoming more polarised along class lines and in which Standard English was increasingly gaining authority, leading to the development of Received Pronunciation in the early part of the twentieth century. The Wellers also represent challenging and sometimes dissenting voices, expressed through their storytelling and dark, perceptive humour. Their speech infiltrated homes at all levels of society, first made memorable by *The Pickwick Papers*, but then through their various incarnations throughout the century. The debate surrounding the origins of Sam Weller only serves to strengthen the idea that his speech was perceived as being based on real life – a real, but amplified version, in Agha's (2003: 255) sense, which had lasting resonance in the popular psyche of what was considered to be a cockney accent. This is not to say that Dickens always portrayed cockney characters in such a positive light. The relegation of the Wellers to the servants' quarters in *Master Humphrey's Clock*, for example, reflects a slightly more ambivalent treatment. Indeed , in *Oliver Twist*, stylistically, the situation appears to be reversed from the *Pickwick* model and cockney speech is once again presented pejoratively by being associated with the criminal underclass, whilst the leading protagonist is given standard English to emphasise his goodness and intrinsically middle class origins, despite his workhouse upbringing. However, this is an over-simplification

and, as I will discuss in the next chapter, Dickens treatment of language, class and morality in *Oliver Twist* is far more complex and nuanced than may first appear.

Chapter 3 - Cockney Deviants – Language and Morality

3.a. *Oliver Twist*

Introduction

> I saw no reason, when I wrote this book, why the dregs of life (so long as their speech did not offend the ear) should not serve the purpose of a moral, as well as its froth and cream.
>
> ('The Author's Preface to the Third Edition', *Oliver Twist* 1841: liii)

The Pickwick Papers promoted, as we have seen, a more positive representation of the cockney speaker. However, *Oliver Twist*, Dickens's next novel, ostensibly does the opposite. In *Oliver Twist,* the prevalence of non-standard London speech is one of the most striking features of the novel, as Fagin's gang are all represented as speaking forms of cockney and cant; a form of slang associated with the criminal fraternity. Furthermore, Dickens sets speakers of non-standard English in binary opposition to speakers of Standard English, not only in terms of class, but also on the spectrum of morality. In *Oliver Twist*, we are presented with the situation in which the main protagonist, despite his background and upbringing in the workhouse, speaks Standard English, even to the point of not understanding slang terms when they are introduced to him. This anomaly has caused controversy since the novel's first publication. Oliver's speech contrasts with the world of thieves and villains he finds himself amongst, who all speak a form of non-standard London dialect, sprinkled with cant. In this way, Dickens appears to renege on the more positive linguistic stance he proposed in *The Pickwick Papers* and falls back on a more reactionary literary model of speakers of non-standard language as being low and immoral. However, despite the seemingly negative stance, the nuances of his representation of cockney in the novel are far more subtle and complex than they might at first appear and, as I will argue in this chapter, the attitudes reflected towards cockney speakers in *Oliver Twist* mirror the ambiguity of the moral stance of the novel. Despite the seemingly polarised treatment of standard versus non-

standard and good versus morally corrupt in the novel, Dickens continues to subvert prejudicial attitudes towards speech and social class in *Oliver Twist*, by promoting cockney speech as the voice of dissent and subversive humour.

The origins and motivation for Dickens writing *Oliver Twist* were completely different from those of *The Pickwick Papers*. Dickens had more initial control. He was no longer a lesser-known writer, as he had been when he agreed to work on *The Pickwick Papers*, a project that had already been started by Seymour. The success of the first half of *The Pickwick Papers* had given him the opportunity to initiate a project over which he would have control from the beginning, which was to embody the political and social concerns he had been developing. As with *The Pickwick Papers*, *Oliver Twist* was not conceived as a whole novel, but was to evolve into a longer narrative over time. However, *Oliver Twist*, in the beginning, contained a clearer message that was to satirise and criticise the controversial New Poor Law of 1834. This amendment to the poor law introduced a system by which no outdoor relief could be given to the able-bodied poor and social provision had to be provided in the workhouse. To deter people from seeking this kind of provision, the workhouse system was made as uncomfortable and unappealing as possible: men and women were separated, the work inside was hard and tedious, food was basic and meanly rationed and inmates lived in prison-like conditions (Richardson 2012). These political objectives to a certain extent shaped the form, characterisation and narrative, and also influenced the way in which Dickens used speech in the novel. We see a different treatment of language in *Oliver Twist* than in *The Pickwick Papers,* which, to a certain degree, mirrors Dickens's strong moral and political agenda for this novel, whilst at the same time reflecting Dickens's interest in stage melodrama.

Several literary studies of *Oliver Twist* have focused on the juxtaposition of melodrama, political engagement and social realism within the novel. These studies include: Elaine Hadley's (1995) chapter, 'Storming the "Bastile": Oliver Twist and Melodramatic Resistance to the New Poor Law of 1834' in *Melodramatic Tactics – Theatricalized Dissent in the English Marketplace 1800 – 1885*, Juliet John's (2001) chapter, 'Twisting the Newgate Tale: Popular Culture, Pleasure and the Politics of Genre' in *Dickens's Villains* and Sally Ledger's (2007) chapter on *Oliver Twist* in *Dickens and the Popular Radical Imagination*. Hadley, John and Ledger deal with

language in the broader sense, often in relation to genre. Each author considers the relationship between the political or social message and melodrama. Hadley explores how the language of melodrama provides a common thread in both the dialogue surrounding resistance to the new laws and Dickens's realisation of the novel. She outlines the contemporary criticism levied at *Oliver Twist* for its merging of historical and political facts, for example, quoting an article in *The Spectator*, which objected to the novel on the grounds that 'Boz has combined the severity of the new system with the individual tyranny of the old' (1995: 114). Hadley points out that whilst the objections to historical inaccuracy may have been valid, noting that the Beadle belonged to an earlier system, the response the novel had to the New Poor Law, in terms of its melodramatic effect, held true. By using the conventions of melodrama, Dickens was able to convey his message to a wider audience and maximize the impact. Hadley implies that *Oliver Twist*'s position on the New Poor Law; mixing the old and the new systems together, mirrored the novel's somewhat conflicting genre types of the melodrama and the novel. Hadley states that through the mixing of genres, as well as the merging of historical facts, *Oliver Twist* had 'muddied the already murky waters of the publishing market' (1995: 116). The implications of this '[muddying]' of 'murky waters' in the publishing world that Hadley refers to is developed later by John (2001), who considers the objections to *Oliver Twist* that stemmed from anxiety caused by issues of realism and/or lack of realism in fictional works. John discusses the controversy surrounding *Oliver Twist* and its connection to the other novels considered to be 'Newgate novels'. John cites Thackeray's criticism of *Oliver Twist* in which he objected to the novel on the grounds of Dickens's 'unnatural caricatures' (Thackeray, 1839: 407, cited in John, 2001: 124). John concludes that Thackeray's reasoning implied that as the characters were 'unrealistic', thus the book was morally questionable (John, 2001: 124). John then continues to suggest that much of the controversy surrounding the Newgate novels was related to the debate between what constituted realism and what was considered to be 'romance' and the value judgments placed on those genres (2001: 125). John also situates the debate surrounding *Oliver Twist* and the Newgate novels in relation to the developments in mass media and popular culture, she writes, 'Dickens's novels were, of course, formed by, and formative in, these crucial changes in the distribution of cultural capital' (2001: 126), making the case that the controversy surrounding *Oliver Twist* and the so-called Newgate novels was a result of the fears surrounding the rise in popular culture and the democratization of power that

this entailed. I agree with John on this point and argue that Dickens furthers this democratization process in *Oliver Twist* through his representation of non-standard speech, which gave a platform for working-class voices. Sally Ledger (2007) also begins her discussion of *Oliver Twist* by quoting Thackeray's objections to the novel on the grounds that Dickens had lowered himself by representing criminals. Like John, Ledger refers to the issues of realism in fiction that had caused controversy. Contrary to John's positioning of *Oliver Twist* amongst the other Newgate novels, Ledger cites the antecedents for *Oliver Twist* as coming from contemporary street literature and pamphlets, which had fed the public desire for crime stories, as well as popular melodrama. Ledger cites Brinsley Peak's 1832 melodrama, *The Climbing Boy; or The Little Sweep* as an influence for *Oliver Twist*, not only in terms of plot, but also in terms of the use of cockney dialect for the character, Jack Ragg, who, as Ledger points out, could have been an inspiration for Jack Dawkins in *Oliver Twist* (2007: 74). Ledger also compares *Oliver Twist* to the literature of the anti-poor law movement and discusses the similarities in their language as a means of opposing the Benthamite rhetoric of political economy. Hadley, John and Ledger all focus on dualities in the novel and the tension they create. Whether it is the tension between melodrama and the novel form (Hadley), melodrama and romance/social realism and attitudes to popular culture (John), or the language of political economy in the New Poor Law and its conflict with traditional working class lives (Ledger), all three sources draw attention to the issues of morality and immorality in the novel and the way in which these issues were received. Whilst they touch on language in relation to realism, they do not go into detail about the role of speech in the novel.

In terms of focusing on the language in *Oliver Twist*, Norman Page and Robert Golding have analysed certain aspects of speech in the novel from a linguistic angle. Page's study of the speech of Oliver and Lizzie Hexam, focuses on the absence of cockney dialect in the two characters, in order to create a 'speech fit for heroes' (1969). Golding (1985) offers detailed observations of the idiolects Dickens creates in the novel. Golding describes the language of the Artful Dodger in the novel under the subtitle, 'Speech as Social Criticism'. Whilst Golding never really elaborates on the implications of this theory, his suggestion of the relationship between the form of Dodger's language and the power of the social critique Dickens was making through the character is an important basis for exploring how Dickens uses the cockney voice as the

voice of dissent.

My research includes both an in-depth study of how Dickens uses cockney speech in *Oliver Twist* and to what effect, and the extent to which non-standard speech played a role in the issues raised by critics such as Hadley, John and Ledger in terms of public reception to the novel and issues of morality and immorality. I use contemporary adaptations as evidence to demonstrate the popularity and influence of Dickens's cockney speaking characters. I also combine elements of linguistic and literary criticism in an attempt to draw out a deeper understanding of attitudes towards non-standard speech and cockney speakers in the novel, exploring contemporary and subsequent responses to the novel in terms of adaptation and criticism. I look at how Dickens uses standard and non-standard speech in *Oliver Twist* and how it relates to attitudes of morality and immorality associated with language use, exploring the significance of cockney in the good versus bad dynamic of the novel. I investigate how Dickens creates the language of the criminal fraternity and the possible implications and compare the language of the law enforcers with that of the criminals they are pursuing. I also examine the language of the real villains and explore the legacy of cockney from *Oliver Twist*. In the final part of the chapter, I examine issues of language, morality and gender, examining how female speakers of non-standard London English are treated by Dickens and to what extent this differs from the treatment of male non-standard speech. Whilst I focus primarily on *Oliver Twist*, I also draw on other works, such as *Bleak House* (in relation to the language of law enforcers, particularly, Inspector Bucket), and novels such as *Our Mutual Friend* (in which the main protagonist, like Oliver, speaks in a way that contrasts with their social background). I consider issues of language and morality in Dickens's cockney speaking women, looking at how the language of Nancy compares to other female characters across Dickens's work, and finally discuss the language of Mrs Gamp in *Martin Chuzzlewit* and the impact her language has on popular culture.

'Pearls in Dunghills' – The Question of Oliver's Speech

Dickens makes clear his intentions to depict Oliver as the epitome of enduring goodness, in the Preface to the 1841 edition, when he states, 'I wished to show, in little

Oliver, the principle of good surviving through every adverse circumstance and triumphing at last' (*Oliver Twist:* liii). One of the ways in which Dickens constructed Oliver's character to reflect this principle of good, was through his speech, which, despite his background, conformed entirely to Standard English. The absence of cockney in the speech of the protagonist is a central feature of the novel's representation of dialect. Even at Oliver's most provoked, whilst being goaded by Noah Claypole about his mother and social background, his speech is represented as genteel and standard:

> 'Tol de rol lol lol, righ fol lairy, work'us,' said Noah, as a tear rolled down Oliver's cheek. 'What's set you a snivelling now?'
> 'Not you,' replied Oliver, sharply. 'There; that's enough. Don't say anything more to me about her; you'd better not!'
> 'Better not! Exclaimed Noah. 'Well! better not! work'us, don't be impudent. Your mother, too! She was a nice 'un, she was. Oh Lor!'
>
> (*Oliver Twist:* 43)

Oliver's speech in this passage, whilst in short exclamation clauses, contains no markings of non-standard speech and conforms to Standard English. Linguistically, Oliver's 'pure' unmarked language, which Norman Page referred to as 'heroic speech', acts as a standard against which the speakers of non-standard English are measured (1969: 100). In the dialogue with Noah, it is ironic that Noah, the speaker of non-standard dialect is goading Oliver about his low social background with the dialectally marked kind of antonomasia 'work'us,' (workhouse) whilst Oliver responds in Standard English. Oliver's speech in the novel more closely resembles the speech of the Maylies than any other speech community, despite his having spent very little time with them, rather than the speech of those of the environment he grew up in. Oliver is also impervious to the linguistic influence of the Artful Dodger and company, as Page points out, Oliver 'is affected neither morally nor linguistically by the taint of their society' (1969: 100), despite residing with them in London. Oliver's language stretches credulity given that in the real world, a child who had grown up in a workhouse and then mixed almost entirely with people who spoke non-standard English would have spoken in the same vernacular language. This paradox was not lost on the contemporary readership at the time of publication. In a review from the *National Magazine* and *Monthly Critic* of

December 1837, which Philip Collins tentatively attributes to G.H. Lewes, the reviewer criticises the authenticity of Oliver's character, adding: 'To say nothing of the language which this uneducated workhouse-boy ordinarily uses, there are many phrases which amount to positive absurdities in one of his standing' (cited in Collins, 1971: 68). Richard Ford (1839) refers to the impossibility of Oliver's characterisation as a child who had grown up in a workhouse saying, 'less absurd would be to expect to gather grapes on thorns, to find pearls in dunghills, violets in Drury Lane, or make silk purses of sows' ears' (cited in Collins, 1971: 84). These reviews demonstrate the class prejudices of the reviewers. Lewes affirms the way in which spoken language is used as an indicator of social class by noting that someone of Oliver's social 'standing' would not speak in Standard English. Ford's comments offer a derogatory judgment of the working classes. He uses undesirable, natural images, associating them with 'dunghills' and 'sows' ears', in contrast with the 'grapes', 'pearls', 'violets' and 'silk purses' associated with their comparators.

There are a variety of arguments for why Dickens allocates Standard English to his workhouse orphan protagonist, none of which suggest that Dickens is striving for linguistic authenticity. The initial implications suggest that Oliver's higher-class heritage meant that he was of a higher social class by blood and that this meant that he innately spoke in Standard English to reflect the language of his more privileged (and educated) ancestry, implying that language is due to nature rather than nurture. Yet, this argument assumes that Dickens held more discriminatory attitudes towards language and morality than I believe he had. The most obvious argument is that Oliver's speech reflects a stylistic and ideological choice, which is that Oliver's Standard English speech is symbolic of his innate purity and goodness, which sets him further apart from the morally corrupt characters that he is forced to associate with, who, for the most part, speak non-standard English. Page states that due to literary convention it was 'impossible, at any rate difficult to create an impression of dignity and moral worth in a character speaking in idiom that departs from standard usage' (1969: 100), although he overlooks the fact that Dickens had already done this, to a certain degree, with the character of Samuel Weller. Oliver's speech does create an unmarked measure against which all the non-standard speech in the novel can be compared. To this extent, the role of cockney in the novel is *not* being Oliver in terms of speech. Oliver's voice can be seen as absolutely pure and uncontaminated by dialectal features or slang, whilst those

around him demonstrate their corruption through their use of non-standard English. It is important to note that this technique is also directly borrowed from stage melodrama. Melodrama calls for such exaggerated, polarised stereotypes of good and evil, which have to be expressed clearly on stage, and for which voice plays a vital role in theatrically distinguishing moral position.

In terms of Dickens's political aims, another consideration is that Dickens's choice of Standard English for Oliver was intended to engage the more affluent and powerful members of his readership with the plight of children in the workhouses and to rouse them into action in condemnation of the Poor Law reforms. For this to happen, Dickens's hero had to be one of them, potentially their child or the reader themselves. A semi-autobiographical reading could make a case for realism in Oliver's speech, as a reflection of Dickens's own experience as a boy. The clash of registers between Oliver and both the world of the workhouse and Fagin's den reflects the linguistic clash of registers that Dickens experienced when he was forced to put aside his middle-class background and education and go to work in the blacking factory as a young boy. Indeed, Steven Marcus (1965) first made this connection between the Oliver's speech and Dickens's own experience, citing Dickens's account of his work colleagues, in which the author states, 'Though perfectly familiar with them, my conduct and manners were different enough from theirs to place a space between us. They, and the men, always spoke of me as "the young gentleman"' (Forster, 1872:58 cited in Marcus, 1965:81). It is not too far a leap of reasoning to imagine that he also spoke differently from his new companions. Therefore, the seeming incongruity of Oliver's speech, which is often described as unrealistic, could have come about as Dickens was basing it on his own experience of being transplanted into a different speech community as a boy. Faced with this traumatic experience as a boy, Dickens was determined to set himself apart from his work companions and preserve his former sense of self by maintaining his middle-class manners that caused him to be referred to as 'the young gentlemen', of which speech would have played an important role. Dickens often repeats the same formula of goodness and purity of heart reflected through standard speech, despite the social backgrounds of the protagonists. In *Little Dorrit*, Amy Dorrit speaks in Standard English despite having been born and raised in the Marshalsea Debtors' Prison and the surrounding poor area of Bleeding Heart Yard. Similarly, Lizzie Hexam in *Our Mutual Friend* speaks in Standard English despite having been raised by a river scavenger and

living in poor riverside dwellings. These incongruously placed children are a reoccurring theme in Dickens's novels and in each instance the character's goodness is reflected by the use of standard speech, whilst other characters around them have speech that is marked by features of non-standard English.

Cockney and the Criminal Gang

The language Dickens created for the criminal characters in *Oliver Twist* is highly creative in range and realisation. Dickens constructs an evocative impression of London speech through written dialogue. Dickens was concerned with idea of authenticity, or at least declared himself to be so when it came to the representation of the criminals in *Oliver Twist*. He was emphatic about these concerns in the Preface to 1841 edition. Dickens states that he wanted to 'paint them in all their deformity' and that he did not want to miss a single detail. He claims that 'I will not…abate one hole in the Dodger's coat, or one scrap of curl-paper in the girl's disheveled hair', but when it comes to language he was cautious. He states that his intention was 'to banish from the lips of the lowest character…any expressions that could possibly offend; and rather to lead to the unavoidable inference that its existence was of the most debased and vicious kin, than to prove it elaborately by words and deeds' (*Oliver Twist*: lv). Thus he censored his dialogue and combined it with elements of literary and theatrical conventions, such as those used in melodrama. Dickens uses linguistic features for a range of different purposes, making use of a wide array of stylised dialectal markers in order to create the language of the criminal underworld. As well as adopting the usual markers of cockney dialect, which he had used with the language of the Wellers, such as the interchange of [w] for [v], examples of [h] dropping (but notably very few), using the pre-fix 'a- ' before present participles used intransitively, for example, 'a coming', 'a going', 'a blushing,' and non-standard syntax, for example using 'as' as a relative pronoun, for example, 'I know a 'spectable old genelman as lives there' (59). Dickens also embellishes their language with the use of cant slang for example, 'lagged'[1] (125),

[1] Defined as 'when "poor fellows" are transported they are lagged' in Jon Badcock's *Dictionary of Slang* of 1823: 111.

'beak'[2] (57), and 'prig'[3] (140) to identify them as being part of a criminal speech community. However, whilst many of the characters have several of these features in common in their speech, they also have their own idiolects, which contain idiosyncratic characteristics. Certain characters have speech that is more highly marked by non-standard features than others. The speech of Jack Dawkins and Charley Bates, for example, contains a wide range of non-standard, cockney features, whereas Sikes and Fagin's language contain fewer non-standard features. These choices, which I will explore in more detail, often reflect the characters' function within the narrative and stylistic practicalities, such as the amount of dialogue that needs to be sustained for the character for the duration of the novel and the clarity of their message that needs to be conveyed in relation to their narrative role.

The dramatic contrastive effect of the language of the criminal community against Oliver's pure, unsullied speech, sets up (a written) audial conflict of contrastive registers, as a means of promoting Dickens's message, which appears to be strongly realised on moral grounds. The backdrop of criminal voices further exemplifies Oliver's purity and innocence, expressed through his speech. However, despite what could first appear as a reactionary treatment of cockney by using it for the language of the criminals, as a simple way of representing 'low' elements of society, which, according to Golding, was an 'unfortunate and indisputable' norm in Victorian literature (1985: 49), Dickens's treatment of the language of the criminal gang is highly nuanced and not simply a linguistically conservative application of non-standard dialect to denote lowness. Dickens cannot resist the playfulness and creativity in representing cockney voices, inadvertently creating witty cockney heroes out of Jack Dawkins and Charley Bates. Jack Dawkins (or 'the Artful Dodger') first appears in the novel when Oliver encounters him on the road, outside London. After a brief description of his appearance, in which Dickens describes Dawkins as 'a snub-nosed, flat-browed, common-faced boy', but with 'all the airs and manners of a man' and as a 'roystering and swaggering …young gentleman as ever stood three feet six' (57), the reader is chiefly introduced to the character through his language, when it is put in sharp contrast with the language of Oliver. The dialogue between Dawkins and Oliver results in a communication

[2] Meaning 'a sitting magistrate' according to Badcock's *Dictionary of Slang* of 1823: 7.
[3] 'Its present meaning is a thief , in a more confined sense pickpockets are prigs; so also those who would rob shop-windows, coaches, and the like, may be considered as priggishly inclined', from Badcock's *Dictionary of Slang* of 1823: 141.

breakdown, when, the wholly innocent Oliver is unable to understand the Artful Dodger's criminal slang. The Artful Dodger is forced to provide Oliver with the first of many language lessons:

> 'Hullo, my covey! What's the row?' said this strange young gentleman to Oliver.
> 'I am very hungry and tired,' replied Oliver: the tears standing in his eyes as spoke. 'I have been walking these seven days.'
> 'Walking for sivin days!' said the young gentleman. 'Oh, I see. Beak's order, eh? But,' he added, noticing Oliver's look of surprise, 'I suppose you don't know what a beak is, my flash com-pan-i-on?'
> Oliver mildly replied, that he had always heard a bird's mouth described by the term in question.
> 'My eyes, how green!' exclaimed the young gentleman. 'Why, a beak's a madgst'rate; and when you walk by a beak's order, it's not straight forerd, but always a going up and nivir a coming down agin. Was you never on the mill?'
> 'What mill?' inquired Oliver.
>
> (*Oliver Twist*: 57)

Dawkins's language is characterised by non-standard pronunciation, such as non-standard vowel sounds in the words, 'sivin' (*seven*), 'nivir' (*never*) and 'agin' (*again*), and dropping weak vowel sounds in words such as 'madgst'rate' (*magistrate*). Dodger's language also includes a variety of cant words: 'covey'[4], 'beak'[5] and 'on the mill'[6], indicating to the reader his inclusion in the criminal community. This encounter between Oliver and Jack Dawkins serves a number of purposes in the novel. The clash of dialects or social registers is a comic trope that Dickens uses frequently (particularly in his courtroom scenes, as I have discussed in earlier chapters and will return to again shortly). The dialogue also serves to highlight Oliver's purity in contrast to Dawkins. It demonstrates that not only does Oliver not speak the same language as Dawkins, he does not even understand it or the concepts it alludes to. This unlikely scenario, in which Oliver's inability to even understand slang emphasises his pure, unsullied nature,

[4] Meaning 'a boy or man of any age or station' according to the John Camden Hotten's *Slang Dictionary*, 1859.
[5] 'A magistrate' according to the Hotten's *Slang Dictionary*, 1859.
[6] Probably to steal, as 'To mill a ken' is glossed as 'to rob a house' according to Hotten's *Slang Dictionary*, 1859; the term could also refer to the 'treadmill'.

suggests that Dickens was making a correlation between speaking (and/or understanding) slang and moral impurity. With Dawkins, by contrast, Dickens appears to cram as many slang words as possible into his speech, with the intention of clearly indicating Dawkins's social and moral position. However, any intention to highlight Oliver's innocence in the face of linguistic (and moral corruption) is somewhat undermined by the fact that this passage is also providing Dickens's readership with a gloss of cant terms; the reader learns as Oliver does, in a somewhat skewed form of linguistic didacticism. Dawkins's language is immediately appealing and witty, giving the reader a glimpse into another world through a secret language. This also partly accounts for some of the accusations of the novel's corrupting influence. There was a sense that by reading the voices, one was actually hearing them in all their vulgarity. This idea is suggested by Lady Carlisle's famous comment on the novel that, 'I know there are such unfortunate beings as pickpockets and street walkers…but I own I do not much wish to hear what they say to one another' (cited in George H. Ford, 1974: 41). It is in such instances that Dickens is at odds with the type of moral didacticism he claims to be upholding in the Preface to the 1841 edition. Sarah Winter (2011) discusses Dickens's alternative didacticism in particular relation to the *Old Curiosity Shop*. However, she posits *Oliver Twist*, in contrast, as following a more conservative moral form. However, the morality of *Oliver Twist*, particularly in relation to language, is not as simple as it first appears. In the 1841 Preface, written in response to accusations of corruption, Dickens contests the idea that he has made the criminals alluring, stating that he has shown:

> The cold, wet, shelterless midnight streets of London: the foul and frowsy dens, where vice is closely packed and lacks the room to turn; the haunts of hunger and disease, the shabby rags that scarely hold together: where are the attractions of these things? Have they no lesson, and do they not whisper something beyond the little-regarded warning of the moral precept?
>
> (*Oliver Twist:* lv)

Yet Dawkins's language is attractive and holds a linguistic pleasure, which contradicts the message Dickens claims he was making. Evidence for public interest in thieves' slang and cant can be seen in other sensational fiction of the period. George W. M. Reynolds, once again profiting from Dickens's ideas and capitalising on the public

excitement over cant and criminal slang language, includes a chapter in *The Mysteries of London*, in which criminal slang is used and glossed for the reader:

> ‘Two months ago,’ continued Dick Flairer, ‘I was up Hackney way, expecting to do a little business with Tom the Cracksman, which didn't come off; for Tom had been at the boozing-ken all the night before, and had blowed his hand up in a lark with some davy's-dust. Well, I wus coming home again, infernal sulky at the affair's breaking down, when just as I got to Cambridge-Heath-gate I heerd the gallopin' of horses. I looks round, nat'rally enough;—but who should I see upon a lovely chestnut mare——’
> [...]
> The parlour of the ‘boozing-ken’ now received some additional guests—all belonging to the profession of roguery, though not all following precisely the same line. Thus there were Cracksmen, Magsmen, Area-Sneaks, Public Patterers, Buzgloaks, Dummy-Hunters, Compter-Prigs, Smashers, Flimsy-Kiddies, Macers, Coiners, Begging-Letter Impostors, &c., &c.
>
> (Reynolds, 1846:45-50)

Reynolds uses an array of symbols to footnote the various slang adding to the allure and mystery of the language and to promote in the reader that they are being let into the secret language of the underworld.

Dodger’s character, as the loveable rogue, parallels Sam Weller’s cheeky cockney character. Although Dawkins is a pickpocket and criminal, compared to Weller – the honest and trusty servant – they share commonalities in their comedic roles and particularly in their rhetorical mastery. Dawkins’s language is playful and rambunctious, mirroring some of the cockney pronunciation of Weller, as well as sharing similarities in prosody. A comparison of two extracts; one from the first introduction of Weller in *The Pickwick Papers* and the other from Oliver’s first encounter with the Artful Dodger, identifies similarities in the rhythm of their speech. Both characters use of short pithy phrases and employ an interrogative speech style, constantly questioning and usually answering their own questions:

> ‘Touts for licences,’ replied Sam. ‘Two coves in vhite aprons—touches their hats ven you walk in—“Licence, Sir, licence?” Queer sort, them, and their

> mas'rs, too sir—Old Bailey Proctors—and no mistake.'
>
> (*The Pickwick Papers*: 110)

> 'Walking for sivin days!' said the young gentleman. 'Oh, I see. Beak's order, eh? But,' he added, noticing Oliver's look of surprise, 'I suppose you don't know what a beak is, my flash com-pan-i-on.'
>
> (*Oliver Twist:* 57)

Both extracts show similar rhythmic patterns. They both consist of a string of short phrases followed by an interrogation. This manner of speech is both engaging and appealing. The rhythm makes the speech memorable and the use of the interrogative draws the reader/listener in. Dickens uses dashes in both their written speech, giving it a sense of urgency and punchiness. Sam's speech has dashes between phrases, whereas in Dodger's speech the dash is used to indicate a variation in the word stress of 'com-pan-i-on'. Both extracts contain slang words: Weller uses 'coves'[7] and Dawkins 'Beak'. However, Dawkins's language is further characterized by the repeated use of criminal slang, which highlights his inclusion in the criminal underworld. The language Dickens gives Dawkins in the novel is more highly marked by slang and dialectal features of pronunciation and syntax than other characters within the criminal community, such as Sikes and Fagin, who I will discuss later. Yet, at the same time, Dawkins's language displays various rhetorical devices and great linguistic dexterity, which makes his language both memorable and appealing, which is important in the overall political message Dickens transmits through this character. Golding (1985) made the connection between the construction of Dodger's speech and the transmission of the political message. Golding describes Dodger's language as being 'speech as social criticism'; he suggests that the reinforced rhythms of Dodger's speech combined with his shrewdness, sarcasm and cockney humour are part of a deliberate attempt to strengthen the anti-establishment message Dickens intends him to convey through his role in the novel (1985: 87). Indeed, Golding concludes of Dodger's language that, 'it is no exaggeration

[7] Definition from Badcock's (1823) *Dictionary of Slang*: 'Anybody whatever, masculine; thus we may have a rich cove, a 'gentry cove', or a poor one, a tall cove or a short one; 'the cove's a lawyer,' or 'he's a writing cove that takes down the trials, and that 'ere' (reporter) means to show the speaker's low opinion of the person spoken of. He is, however, understood to be one who frequents the haunts of low-bred people, of 'seeing life in its varieties'.'

to see in his idiolect the first signs in Dickens of fictional speech being imbued with more than a modicum of structural significance' (1985: 87). By this he means that the form of the language is significant to the message. What Golding alludes to here is similar to the argument Sarah Winter makes later, concerning the impact Dickens made on cultural memory, in which strong mnemonic connections were made by the reader through Dickens's language and were further encouraged through the practice of reading aloud (Winter 2011). These mnemonic connections are largely formed by the variety of rhetorical devices in Dawkins's language, including short sentences, exclamations and questions. He often ends utterances with exclamations such as 'Oh no!' and 'Certainly not!':

> 'Don't fret your eyelids on that score,' said the young gentleman. 'I've got to be in London to-night; and I know a 'spectable old gentleman as lives there, wot'll give you lodgings for nothink, and never ask for the change—that is, if any genelman he knows interduces you. And don't he know me? Oh, no! Not in the least! By no means. Certainly not!'
>
> (*Oliver Twist:* 58)

These pithy rhetorical structures and recognizable cockney markers form a key part of his characterisation and popularity and the expressions he uses, along with the markers of cockney dialect, become memorable and marketable commodities in the dissemination of Dickens's work amongst the general public. Evidence of this can be found in the work of Dickens's imitators. For example, several phrases from the passage above are repeated verbatim in both Almar's theatrical adaptation of the novel, *Oliver Twist. A Serio-Comic Burletta in Three Acts*, performed at the Royal Surrey Theatre on 19 November 1838 and in *Oliver Twist or The Parish Boy's Progress – A Drama in Three Acts* performed at the Pavilion Theatre in May 1838 and attributed to C. Z. Barnett.

> Dod.
> There, don't fret your eyelids; come along; I know a'spectable gentleman as lives in London, wot'll gie you lodgings for nothink, and never ask for change; and don't he know me---oh not in the least---by no means---certainly not.
>
> (Almar 1838: 25)

> Dodger (gives a whistle of astonishment) What! Well I'm blessed if you ain't hard up! But keep up your pecker; I knows a 'spectable old genelman in London who'll give you lodgings for nothing, and won't never ax you for change; and don't he know me? Oh no, not at all neither. Oh no, certainly not.
>
> (Barnett 1839: 22)

The copied phrases both ironically introduce the reader or audience to the character of Fagin, but also showcase Dodger's language and strengthen the memorable catchphrases from the novel, further etching Dodger's voice on the public imagination. Almar copies 'don't fret your eyelids', while both include verbatim the phrase 'I know a 'spectable old genelman'. Barnett adds the non-standard verb agreement between subject and verb, 'I knows' and uses 'ax' for 'ask', emphasising the non-standard nature of Dodger's language.

In *Oliver Twist*, Dawkins's speech during his theatrical performance in the courtroom, best illustrates his language, cementing his role as the cheeky comic cockney in the novel, but also marks him out as the voice of political dissent. As I discussed in the first chapter, Dickens's courtroom scene in 'Criminal Courts' from *Sketches by Boz* and Weller's courtroom scene in *The Pickwick Papers,* foreshadow Dodger's courtroom appearance in *Oliver Twist* and show Dickens returning to a tried and tested formula, which placed a cockney speaker in the dock, in a humorous clash of linguistic registers and a battle of wits. The humour of Dawkins's defence lies in his feigning a higher social position, paralleling the boy in the 'Criminal Courts' who invokes imaginary witnesses:

> 'We'll see wot the Secretary of State for the Home Affairs has got to say to the beaks, if I don't,' replied Mr Dawkins. 'Now then! Wot is this here business? I shall thank the madg'strates to dispose of this here little affair, and not to keep me while they read the paper, for I've got an appointment with a genelman in the city, and as I'm a man of my word, and wery punctual in bisness matters, he'll go away if I ain't there to my time, and then pr'aps there won't be an action for damage against them as kep me away. Oh no, certainly not!'
>
> (*Oliver Twist:* 355)

In this passage, Dickens uses non-standard orthography to represent words like 'wery'

(*very*), ‘pr’aps’ (*perhaps*) and ‘madg’strates’ (*magistrates*), here indicating either the omission of the unstressed /i/ or /ə/ sound or possibly just an eye dialect representation (note that in the earlier example Dodger is represented as using a different form of the same word ‘madgst’rate’, illustrating the inconsistency of Dickens’s literary dialect). Also, the glottalisation in the word ‘genelman’ (*gentleman*) is represented. Other features such as ‘wot’ and two different spellings of business, both ‘business’ and ‘bisness’ are used. Another feature of Dickens’s representation of Dodger’s language is the use of malapropisms, in which a similar sounding word is used in place of the word intended. This was another linguistic phenomenon associated with illiterate speakers and often used as a marker of non-standard speech and usually used for comic effect. For example, Dodger states: ‘Oh! You know me, do you? [...] That’s a case of deformation of character, any way’ (356), using ‘deformation’ in place of defamation. Dickens repeated this linguistic feature as a characteristic of Mrs Gamp’s language in *Martin Chuzzlewit*.

Dawkins’s iconic line of defense, protesting, ‘I’m an Englishman, an’t I? […] Where are my priwileges?’ (*Oliver Twist*: 355), stands out as one of the most bitterly ironic and politically critical lines of the novel. Its irony lies partly in the fact that Dawkins’s language and social class does not match the language of the courtroom; as a member of the criminal underclass, he is automatically denied any ‘priwileges’; his non-standard speech, which demonstrates his linguistic exclusion from the language of the courtroom, emphasises his exclusion from the privileged classes. However, a further layer of irony lies in answering the question: where are his ‘priwileges’? In the novel Dawkins has a strong sense of his own morality, which could be seen as a logical interpretation of utilitarian politics. Earlier Dawkins questions Oliver’s morality for *not* wanting to steal, ‘Why, where’s your spirit? Don’t you take any pride in yourself? Would you go and be dependent on your friends, eh?’ (*Oliver Twist:* 141). To a certain extent Dawkins is echoing the objectives of the New Poor Law system by not wanting to be dependent on the system.[8] Dawkins is an able-bodied young man, not seeking relief from the state. However, the irony is that the only way to avoid this is through a life of crime, which inevitably leads to his transportation. Thus, the relationship between language and morality in the character of Dawkins is complex. On the one

[8] For a detailed analysis of *Oliver Twist* as a critique of the language of the New Poor Law and political economy see Sally Ledger (2007).

hand, his non-standard, cockney speech marks him out as linguistically and morally corrupt in comparison to Oliver. On the other hand, the playful rhetorical devices he uses make his language both popular and memorable and the ideas he expresses challenge the flaws in the provision of social care.

Like Jack Dawkins, Charley Bates's role in the novel is more of a cheerful cockney rogue, than a serious villain. In the plot, Charley Bates is the only member of the criminal gang to reform. Charley Bates's speech is characterised by Dickens's default non-standard cockney marker of w for v, for example, 'waluables' (*valuables*) (351) and 'the eating of all the wittles' (*vittles*) (353). His language is also represented as dropping unstressed vowel sounds in frontal positions, e.g. ''denitfy,' (*identify*) (351). Syntactically, Charley uses the 'as' relative pronoun form: 'they've found the gentleman as owns the box'; he also uses multiple negation: 'cause nobody will never know half of what he was' and the use of the 'a + ing' form in intransitive present participle form; 'a blushing' and 'a coming'. Bates also uses many slang words, such as 'togs' (*clothes*) (123), which Badcock (1823) defines as meaning 'clothes; derived from toga, the official gown or upper garment worn by the Roman nobs, and our own gownsmen' and Hotten (1859) describes as 'one of the oldest Cant words – in use in the time of Henry VIII', as well as 'prig' (*a petty thief*) (140). In terms of idiolect features, Charley Bates's represented speech is particularly distinguished by its inclusion of colloquial exclamations, such as 'Oh, my wig, my wig!' (123), 'Oh my eye, what a game!' (123), 'He's an out-an-out Christian' (141), 'Oh blow that!' (142), 'that's too mean: that is!' (142), 'Oh, my eye, my eye, wot a blow it is!' (351) and 'What a lark that would be' (352). Stylistically, Charley's use of these exclamations possibly functions as a way of demonstrating his underlying innocence, showing that he is still shocked or surprised by the world around him, which he eventually does reject when he reforms. John (2001) identifies both Dodger and Charley Bates as being those that most closely resemble the romanticised hero of the Newgate novels, such as Dick Turpin, celebrated in *Rookwood* (1834) by William Harrison Ainsworth or Paul Clifford, the hero of Edward Bulwar-Lytton's eponymously titled novel of 1830. Like these Newgate heroes, Dodger and Bates are sympathetically drawn criminals. John describes Dodger and Bates as 'overtly attractive criminals' (2001:130). Much of their appeal is formed through their expressive and playful speech.

Toby Crackitt's speech is characterised by the use of thieves' slang, 'Success to

the crack!' (170), 'you'll be a fine cracksman afore the old file now' (194) and 'the crack failed' (195). The word 'crack' is the thieves' slang for housebreaking (Hotten, 1859). Toby Crackitt's identity is also written into these activities as the word 'crack' forms part of his own name, demonstrating another of Dickens's cratylic name choices. His speech is characterised by an indication of the dialect marker [w] for [wh] in 'wot' and also /w/ for /v/ transposition, for example, 'Wot an inwaluable boy' (p169). Toby Crackit's represented speech also includes examples of yod-dropping, for example, 'fortun'' and non-standard syntax, for example, 'I can't talk about business til I've eat and drank.'

Significantly, the more serious villains of *Oliver Twist* do not speak in such dense cockney dialect. This is partly due to requirement of their role in the plot, which calls for greater clarity of comprehension and several other reasons that I will discuss. Sikes, for example, is certainly not given the playful cockney treatment that the Artful Dodger and Charley Bates receive. For Sikes's language, Dickens turns towards the model of the melodramatic stage villain. Sikes's language contains some markers of cockney dialect, but these are combined with a mixture of aggressive and threatening expressions to form his idiolect:

> 'Why, what the blazes is in the wind now!' growled a deep voice. 'Who pitched that 'ere at me? It's well it's the beer, and not the pot, as hit me, or I'd have settled somebody. I might have know'd, as nobody but an infernal, rich, plundering, thundering old Jew could afford to throw away any drink but water — and not that, unless he done the River Company every quarter. Wot's it all about, Fagin? D—me, if my neckankecher an't lined with beer! Come in, you sneaking warmint; wot are you stopping outside for, as if you was ashamed of your master! Come in!'
>
> (*Oliver Twist:* 94)

Sikes's represented language is characterised by certain dialectal markers associated with cockney speech, such as [h] dropping in ''ere' and internally in 'neckankecher', [w] for [v] in 'warmint', [w] instead of [wh] in 'wot', his language is shown as containing contracted form, for example, 'neckankecher' and 'an't' and non-standard grammatical forms, for example, 'know'd', for known and 'as' as a relative pronoun instead of that. The passage also contains a marked out profanity 'D____me'. Other

features of Sikes's represented speech are non-standard vowel sounds, such as /æ/ for /e/ in 'Hallo' (124), /ɑ: / for /ɛ: / in 'there warn't a penny trumpet in the fair'. He omits the lightly stressed vowels at the front of polysyllabic words, for example, ''prentice' and ''cept' and uses non-standard forms of certain words, for example, 'chimbley' (151) (*chimney*) and 'partickler' (*particular*) (161) and 'arter' for after (161). Sikes is represented as using a number of cant slang expressions such as 'lagged' (151), 'peached'[9] (96) and 'flash' (96) and other idiomatic slang expressions, for example; 'strike me blind' (113), 'it's worth fifty shiners extra!'[10] (150), 'in for a penny, in for a pound' (153). Sikes's represented language is characterised most of all with the use of aggressive, threatening language, for example the use of imperatives, such as, 'Drink it, you perwerse imp: drink it!' (178); and exclamations: 'Why, what the blazes is in the wind now!' (97), 'Strike me blind!' (113) and 'Wolves tear your throats!' (216). According to Norman Page, Dickens constructed Sikes's language to suggest coarse language, which, if realistic, would have contained swearing and profanity, by representing this kind of language 'metaphorically or analogically' rather than actually using bad language itself (Page, 1973: 108). In this way, Dickens was ensuring that his 'speech did not offend the ear' as he had stated in the Preface ('Author's Introduction to the Third Edition', *Oliver Twist*, 1841). Dickens also repeatedly emphasises the aggressive manner of Sikes's speech by referring to his manner of speech in the narration. In our first encounter with Sikes we are introduced to the voice before we are introduced to the character, '"Why, what the blazes is in the wind now!" growled a deep voice' (94). Throughout the novel, many of Sikes's represented speech turns are 'growled'. Not only are his words aggressive, but also his manner of speaking is aggressive, threatening and sinister, for example, 'returned Sikes with a menacing grin' (97), 'muttered Sikes, grinding his teeth' (216). After one piece of Sike's direct speech later in the novel, Dickens adds, 'Sikes growled forth this imprecation with the most desperate ferocity that his desperate nature was capable of' (217). These textual references to his manner of speech exaggerate and give force to his violent language. However, despite the seeming harshness of Sikes's represented speech, propriety takes precedence. Dickens does not include examples of offensive language. Sikes's actual use of cant slang words is less frequent than in the speech of Dodger. However, Dickens

[9] 'Inform against or betray…confined principally to the conversation of thieves and the lower orders' – definition from Hotten's *Slang Dictionary* (1869): 197.
[10] 'Sovereigns or money' - definition from Hotten's *Slang Dictionary* (1869): 227.

makes an excuse through the narration for this representational choice at one point in the novel. Writing of Sikes, Dickens states, 'He then, in cant terms, with which his whole conversation was plentifully besprinkled, but which would be quite unintelligible if they were recorded here, demanded a glass of liquor' (95). This allows the reader to imagine Sikes's use of cant language without writing it into the dialogue. The reason that Sikes's speech contains fewer slang words than some of the other non-standard London speakers is partly stylistic, as his role was more central to the narrative. It appears that Dickens reserves the speech with the higher density of slang words for the minor (comic, or less serious) characters in the novel. These characters did not have as much dialogue in the text and thus their speech was of less importance to the narrative. Dickens relies on other lexical and rhetorical features to characterise the idiolects of some of the more pivotal rogue characters, such as Sikes, thus leaving the use of non-standard orthography representing dialect to characters with less important narrative roles.

Fagin's speech is predominantly in Standard English and only slightly marked for dialectal variation, with the use of occasional cant terms and one or two features of cockney dialect. The subtle speech tags in his language were probably stereotypical markers to indicate his Jewishness, rather than cockney, for example 'my dear' and the long e in 'leetle'. Fagin's language is much less marked than Sikes's. On the one hand, the fact that his language is largely uncharacterised by dialectal variation, as with Sikes, relates to the importance of the clarity of his speech in the narrative. However, the treatment of Fagin's language also reflects a complex and ironic attitude towards language and morality in the novel.

> 'Make **'em** your models, my dear, make **'em** your models,' said the Jew, tapping the fire-shovel on the hearth to add force to his words, 'do everything they bid you, and take their advice in all matters, especially the Dodger's, **my dear**. He'll be a great man himself, and make you one too, if you take pattern by him. Is my handkerchief hanging out of my pocket, my dear?' said the Jew, stopping short.
>
> (*Oliver Twist:* 69)

As one can see from this extract, there are not many features of non-standard markers in Fagin's speech. His speech is characterised by the use of the contracted form ''em' for

them in connected speech, other examples include, ‘a good number of ’em, ain’t there’ (63) and ‘Their looks convict ’em when they get in trouble, and I lose ’em all’ (153). There are also two incidents in the novel of his language being marked as sounding long vowel sounds, replacing /i/ with a long /i:/, when he talks of the ‘leetle boy’ (153) and uses this spelling again later in the novel, ‘Poor leetle child’ (201). Apart from these few incidences of marked non-standard pronunciation, Fagin’s membership in the speech community is mainly denoted by his use of criminal slang and colloquial expressions, for example ‘to play booty, or turn white-livered’ (65), ‘peached’ (100), ‘If he means to blab us to his new friends, we may stop his windpipe yet’ (100), referring to ‘lagging’ (*deportation*) and being a ‘lifer’ (*on a life time prison sentence*) (350). He also refers to Dodger as being the ‘top-sawyer’ (350) among the group. According to Egan’s revised edition of Grose’s Dictionary, a top-sawyer ‘signifies a man that is a master genius in any profession. It is a piece of Norfolk slang and took its rise from Norfolk being a great timber country, where the top sawyers get double the wages of those beneath them’ (Egan 1823). Besides slang, Fagin’s idiolect is characterised by other features, which exemplify his role in the story. His language is often maternal and affectionate, symbolising the (albeit warped) parental role he has adopted in the lives of the orphans. He repeats ‘my dear’ or ‘my dears’ throughout the novel, which is the most characteristic feature of his idiolect. He also often uses motherly language and homely aphorisms, for example, ‘poor leetle child’ and ‘the poor little boy’, ‘It all lies in a nutshell, my dear’ (145), ‘keep my little business all snug’ (349) and in ‘in a little community like ours, my dear’ (349). On the one hand, this acts to highlight his insincerity, but it also serves an ironic purpose. Despite Fagin’s criminal activity and his exploitation of young people, he also offers a form of care and security for the children. When Oliver meets Fagin, Fagin is the closest thing Oliver has ever had to a parental caregiver. Fagin provides Oliver with his first nutritious meal and offers him sanctuary. His language more closely replicates that of a parent than the language of political economy of the workhouse system, which calls into question the morality of the social care provision. Sally Ledger (2007) discusses the idea of political economy in the novel and the way Dickens reflects attitudes towards the poor and consumption. She compares Oliver’s deprivation of food in the workhouse and at the Sowerberrys’ with contemporary attitudes to the poor as potentially ‘devouring consumer[s]’, who need to be controlled through restriction of diet (2007: 94). Ledger makes the connection between consumption and morality in the novel. Ledger argues that the world of Fagin’s

gang represents an extension of the idea of political economy. In this reading, Jack and Fagin see 'a potential return' by feeding Oliver – their world is underpinned by Benthamite ideology, which places self-preservation over social concern (2007: 95). However, Fagin's language is also seductive and manipulative, which it needs to be in order for him to seduce children into a life of crime.

It is impossible to discuss the treatment of Fagin and his language without discussing his representation as a Jewish character. As we have seen, Fagin's idiolect is relatively unmarked by London vernacular dialect markers or any other signs of pronunciation idiosyncrasies. Dickens does not give Fagin the stereotypical Jewish accent, which was commonplace in literature and theatre at the time, even if other aspects of his characterization in the novel and George Cruikshank's illustrations conform to a brutal stereotyping which provoked accusations of anti-Semitism in Dickens's lifetime and since. Anne Aresty Naman (1980) discusses how Fagin's dialect is atypical of the stereotypical theatrical or literary Jewish dialect of the time, which she identifies as being closer to that of Abraham Mendez, a contemporary London Jewish criminal, characterised by W.H. Ainsworth in *Jack Sheppard* of 1839.[11] Naman states that, like that of Mendez in the novel, a German accent was the most notable feature of the stage Jew-villain, which was also used as a caricature in *Punch* (1980: 63). In this extract from Ainsworth's *Jack Sheppard*, one can see that Mendez's accent was characterized by [v] for [w] sounds as associated with a German accent and [d] to represent 'th':

> 'He hash eshcaped!' cried the Jew.
> 'Who? Jack!' exclaimed Jonathan.
> 'Yesh,' replied Abraham. 'I vent to de New Prish'n, and on wishitin' his shel vid de turnkey, vot should ve find but de shains on de ground, de vinder broken, and Jack and Agevorth Besh gone.'
>
> (Ainsworth, *Jack Sheppard*: 231)

In *Oliver Twist*, Barney exemplifies a more stereotypical London Jewish accent of this time that more closely resembles that of Mendez in *Jack Sheppard*. Barney's idiolect,

[11] Anne Aresty Naman (1980) provides a more detailed account of Dickens's treatment of Jewish characters and Fagin in particular in her chapter, 'Charles Dickens: Prejudiced Imagination' in *The Jew in the Victorian Novel*.

which is heavily marked for non-standard phonological pronunciation, represented through orthography, would be harder to maintain if he were given more dialogue in the novel. Fagin is a more developed character, whereas Barney is more of a caricature. Besides features of non-standard speech, Barney's speech is marked for being very nasal, which Dickens also makes reference to in the narration:

> 'Is anybody here, Barney? Inquired Fagin, speaking – not that Sikes was looking on – without raising his eyes from the ground.
> 'Dot a shoul,' replied Barney, whose words, whether they came from the heart or not, made their way through the nose.
>
> (*Oliver Twist:* 113)

Barney's represented speech includes indications of the typical cockney markers of /w/ for /v/ for instance, 'wentur' and h-dropping, for example, 'ouse.' He also uses / ʃ / for /s/, for example, ''Dot a shoul''. But, his dialect is also characterised by other distinctive phonological features to indicate his nasal accent, for example, /b/ for /m/, and realisation of /d/ for /n/; 'Dobody but Biss Dadsy' (113), 'She's bid havid a plate of boiled beef id the bar' (113), 'Bister Sikes' (169), 'cub id, cub, id' (169), 'wud of Bister Fagin's lads'(169), 'that is the dabe of this ouse' (340), 'I'd dot certaid you cad' (340), 'but I'll idquire' (340) and 'stradegers id next roob' (340), '"Ah! Ad rub uds too" added Barney "Frob the cuttry, but sobthig in your way, or I'd bistaked"' (340). Dickens is inconsistent in the dialectal representation of Barney, as he is with the dialect of other characters, sometimes not representing the idiolectal features, which could reflect, in part, the labour of writing in this way. However, the stronger consideration here is that once the dialect has been established with a few key triggers, it becomes unnecessary to maintain it to such a degree, as the reader will make the association and 'hear' the voice in that accent. As Leech and Short point out regarding inconsistency of dialect, 'it is reasonable to conclude not that [writers] are careless, but they are more interested in the illusion, the living flavour, of dialect, rather than with its exact reproduction' (1981: 169). However, the complexity of Barney's speech, whether in terms of the act of writing or the comprehensibility of reading it, provides one important reason why Dickens reserved this speech for Barney; a minor character, and not for Fagin. The fact that Dickens did not rely on the same kind of exaggerated dialect writing for Fagin as he did for Barney, on the one hand, reflects the more serious nature

of Fagin's role. By not making his language into comic caricature, Dickens created a more complex character. Although undoubtedly a villain, Fagin is not a character that warrants a completely unsympathetic reading. In Robert D. Butterworth's (2009) article, 'The Significance of Fagin's Jewishness', he argues that Dickens did not intend to be anti-Semitic in his depiction of Fagin, citing Dickens's own protestations against allegations of anti-Semitism and the fact that Fagin was based on a real-life criminal, Ikey Solomon. Butterworth uses as evidence the fact that Dickens chooses to depict Fagin as 'an unrepresentative Jew', for example, Fagin eats sausages and takes no comfort from religion after he is condemned (2009: 218). By extension, Dickens's use of non-stereotypical dialect could also reflect the fact that Fagin is not meant to be a caricature. However, just because Dickens does not show prejudice against the religion, does not mean to say that he was not showing racial prejudice. Indeed, Dickens later admits this in a letter sent to Eliza Davis in 1863, in which he states 'he is called 'The Jew', not because of his religion, but because of his race' (Dickens 2012: 377). However, by not stereotyping Fagin's speech, Fagin is able to act as a mouthpiece for a wider aspect of social criticism. Fagin's role is challenging and subversive. Fagin's eloquent speech and kind language allows him to appear to be the ''spectable genelmen' that Dawkins promises to Oliver, whilst providing a contrast to the language of the legal social system of provision. His refined manners and caring speech offer the reader an ironic contrast with the workhouse system and show the reader how easy it would be for such a child as Oliver to be lured into a life of crime. Fagin, like Dawkins, is also a character chosen to promote, and thus satirise Benthamite ideals of self-interest in the novel. Fagin here describes his philosophy of looking after 'number one':

> 'Only to show you my meaning clearly,' said the Jew, raising his eyebrows. 'To be able to do that, you depend upon me. To keep my little business all snug, I depend upon you. The first is your number one, the second my number one. The more you value your number one, the more careful you must be of mine; so we come at last to what I told you at first—that a regard for number one holds us all together, and must do so, unless we would all go to pieces in company.'
>
> (*Oliver Twist:* 349)

Fagin exposes the flaws of a wholly self-interested society, and the fact that he delivers these lines in Standard English, assuming a proximity to parts of his middle-class

readership, rather than being marked as 'other', makes the message more effective. Whilst Dickens included very few non-standard markers in the speech of Fagin, subsequent adaptations of *Oliver Twist* exaggerated non-standard features of Fagin's speech. For example, in Almar's play, Fagin is depicted as using [t] for [d]:

> Fag.
> Hush---all o'ye---**tere** is somebody on the stairs---quiet my **teres**---quiet.
> …
> Fag.
> We are glad to see you, Oliver, all of us; ain't we, my **teres**?
>
> (Almar, *Oliver Twist*, 1838)

And in Barnett's play he uses [v] for [w], 'Ha! you're vatching me, eh? Vhy are you avake – vhat did you see? Quick speak! quick for your life!', which coincides with features of a German Jewish accent, but is also a marker of cockney pronunciation. Interestingly, in Barnett's play, Fagin shares this feature of pronunciation with Dodger, for example Dodger says, 'Vot are you after?'. This shows Dickens's adaptors relying more heavily on language stereotypes to emphasise Fagin's dialect.

The representation and changing nature of Nancy's speech throughout the novel, similarly to Oliver's, is based more on ideology than authenticity. Her language changes in the novel from containing features of cockney pronunciation to speaking Standard English, reflecting her moral trajectory within the narrative. Dickens's plan for Nancy was similarly political to his treatment of Oliver. In the same way that Dickens wanted to highlight Oliver's purity to draw attention to the injustices of the New Poor Law system and the poor social conditions, which brought about criminality, Dickens also wanted to arouse sympathy for Nancy and the plight of other women in her position. Dickens's commitment to the difficult situations faced by women, which led them into prostitution, was a reoccurring theme in his novels and a focus for his later charitable work. The depiction of Nancy was very important to Dickens and it was something he defended vehemently. In the 1841 Preface, he finally uses the word 'prostitute' to describe her social position and he emphasises that Nancy's creation was based on reality he had encountered, he argues, 'it is useless to discuss whether the conduct and

character of the girl seems natural or unnatural, probable or improbable, right or wrong. IT IS TRUE'. However, Nancy's speech in the novel, has more to do with eliciting sympathy than any attempt at linguistic realism. From the outset, Nancy's language is not as marked for dialectal features as Sikes (for example), but does include certain features of non-standard English, for example, she says, 'That it won't do; so it's no use a-trying it on, Fagin' (97), using the 'a-' prefix before the '-ing' for of the verb. Also, in the scene when she is pretending to be Oliver's distressed guardian, she exclaims, 'Thank gracious goodness heavins, I've found him' (114), indicating a short [i] vowel sound. As a member of the same represented speech community as Sikes and Fagin, it might be expected that Dickens would represent her speech with more dialectal markers and use of slang. Furthermore, her use of the non-standard vernacular seems to decrease as the novel progresses in correspondence with her changing role in the narrative. By the time of her conversation with Rose Maylie, Nancy's language is almost completely unmarked by features of Cockney English:

> 'I, lady!' replied the girl. 'I am the infamous creature you have heard of, that lives among the thieves, and that never from the first moment I can recollect my eyes and senses opening on London streets have known any better life, or kinder words than they have given me, so help me God! Do not mind shrinking openly from me, lady. I am younger than you would think, to look at me, but I am well used to it. The poorest women fall back, as I make my way along the crowded pavement.'
>
> (*Oliver Twist:* 323)

If one was to put forward the case of authenticity, there could be an argument for stating that Dickens's representation of Nancy's speech was demonstrating an awareness of 'accommodation'. Accommodation theory, originally introduced by Howard Giles (1973), explains the process by which a speaker will adapt and attune their linguistic behaviour to match more closely that of the person they are speaking to. It could be conscious or unconscious. This would include changing register. Therefore, a speaker who normally spoke in a variety of non-standard English, for example, cockney would change towards Standard English whilst speaking to other speakers of standard English and vice versa (Meyerhoff 2006). This could explain what Dickens was trying to represent with Nancy's change of language, which would encourage a more naturalistic

and less stylistic analysis of her speech. On the other hand, it could also be argued that by representing Nancy's speech in Standard English, Dickens was using it as a stylistic device to express ideology in a similar way to how Oliver's speech is used. In the beginning of the novel, Nancy is depicted as simply a member of the group of thieves; a woman of bad moral reputation who thus uses more non-standard English. However, as she moves to being a heroine in the narrative, due to her attempts to help Oliver, her language changes to Standard English. Patricia Ingham explores this contradiction in the novel, stating, 'with her adoption of womanly, middle-class compassion Dickens comes up against the problem of how to make her speak a language fit for heroines, or at least for a (partly) virtuous woman' (1992: 50). Ingham also argues that:

> The convention is not to be taken as implying that all users of middle-class forms of speech are morally worthy; but the more limited implication it carries (that those of moral worth must use them) maintains the connection between a specific class and specific moral values.'
>
> (1992: 50)

Indeed, not all speakers of middle-class English are worthy, as the character of Monks speaks in standard middle-class English, yet he is one of the villains of the novel. However, in the case of *Oliver Twist*, Monks is the exception to the rule. Indeed Monks, perhaps the biggest villain of the novel, speaks in Standard English, but he uses dramatic language, often evoking 'devils' (298) in a way that has some parallels with Sikes, for example he asks Bumble, 'What the devil made you stand lingering there, in the wet?' (297), when responding to the thunder and lightning he remarks, '"Hear it!" he cried, shrinking back. "Hear it! Rolling and crashing on as if it echoed through a thousand caverns where the devils were hiding from it. I hate the sound!"' (298) and he responds, 'who the devil can tell that, without knowing of what kind it is?' (298) when asked how much the information appertaining to Oliver's mother may be worth by the matron. Besides the references to devils, which links his language thematically to Sikes's, Monks's language is represented as Standard English, reflecting his upper-class social background. In subsequent theatrical adaptations of *Oliver Twist*, Monks's language is given added theatricality to coincide with stage conventions and his villainous status. For example, in a theatrical adaptation of *Oliver Twist* thought to be by C. Z. Barnett and performed at the Pavilion Theatre in May 1838, Barnett, who takes

great liberties with Dickens's original narrative, for example, fronting the negotiations between Monks, Fagin and Sikes at the beginning of the play and showing them to be old friends, adjusts Monks's language to contain more theatricality in terms of short exclamations and rhetorical questions:

> MONKS. Fagin, I am glad to see you. I overheard your tale
> —that trinket—let me see it.
> FAGIN. Yes, yes, Mr Monks, in a moment—there is a cypher
> on it—'H. B. The gift of a fond father.'
> MONKS. Those initials too!—Give it me ! (takes it) That
> cypher! By heaven I was not deceived!—'twas hers—'twas
> hers! (sinks into a chair, FAGIN approaches him)
> FAGIN. You knew the owner of this watch, then?
> MONKS. Knew her? Would I ne'er had seen her—I had then
> been a crimeless man. Knew her? Oh, Heaven! Quick—
> take this watch—it seems to sear me like a red hot iron! Take
> it—-take it—it is pain to gaze upon it!
> FAGIN. What means this?
> MONKS. Ask me nothing—I can answer nothing—thoughts
> of the past torture me! Give me some brandy—quick—some
> brandy, I say! (SIKES offers him a glass, he drinks, and snatches
> up the newspaper again)
>
> (Barnett, *Oliver Twist*, 1838: 10)

The characters of Monks, Fagin and Sikes are aligned more closely in Barnett's adaptation and they are also share closer linguistic proximity. Their language needs to more closely coincide with the language of the theatrical villain to meet the expectations of theatre goers. According to Michael R. Booth (1991), the upper class villain is a standard concept in the genre of Victorian melodrama. Booth writes, 'In play after play it is the character with class status, wealth and privilege who is the criminal, and the representative of the underclass who is oppressed and criminalised' (1991:164). In this way Monks character complies with theatrical traditions. The trope of the well-educated and well-spoken villain persists into twentieth and twenty-first century film, in which

the villain is often portrayed as having an upper-class British accent. In the case of Monks and these modern villains, 'pure' speech equates to pure evil. As I will discuss in the following section, in the same way that Monk's speech complicates an idea of linguistic division forged on moral grounds in the novel, so does the language of Dickens's cockney policemen.

Cockney Cops and Other Working Londoners

Dickens gives the characters Blathers and Duff (the Bow Street officers) a similar kind of linguistic treatment as he does the gang of pickpockets. In fact, in Chapter 31, in which Blathers and Duff feature most predominantly, there is the highest density of non-standard English and slang in the novel. Dickens's treatment of their language as being similar to that of the criminals reflects the opinion that the police were not much different to the criminals they pursued. Dickens voices this opinion of the Bow Street Police directly in an article printed later, in July 1850, in *Household Words*;

> We are not by any means devout believers in the Old Bow-Street Police. To say the truth, we think there was a vast amount of humbug about those worthies. Apart from many of them being men of very indifferent character, and far too much in the habit of consorting with thieves and the like, they never lost a public occasion of jobbing and trading in mystery and making the most of themselves.
>
> (Dickens, *Household Words* 1850 (1): 409)

Stylistically, by giving Blathers and Duff's language similar treatment to Dodger and Charley Bates, Dickens linguistically and morally connects the two Bow Street runners with the thieves they are hunting. The characteristics of their speech include repeatedly using the typical cockney marker w for v, e.g. 'Wery easy disposed of, if it is' (237), 'Wery likey not, ma'am' (237), 'a wery intellectual manner' (237) and 'wengeance' (240). Dickens indicates that they use /a:/ vowel sound instead of /ɜ:/ for example, 'That was something in this way, warn't it?' (241) and there is the use of /ʌ/ instead of the diphthong /aʊ/ combined with 'h'-dropping in 'Have you got a coach-'us here' (241) for the standard form 'coach house.' However, the word 'house' is used later on in the chapter in standard spelling form. Their language is also characterised by the use

of contractions, for example ‘two of ’em’ and ‘shutting ’em, to ease ’em’ (241). They use non-standard pronunciation of the word after, pronouncing it ‘arter’ and ‘arterwards’ (242). Another characteristic of their language is the insertion of ‘a’ before the present participle when used to indicate action, for example ‘a tearing-down’ (242), ‘a roaring’ (241), ‘a drinking’ (246). Their speech is also characterised by non-standard use of syntax, for example, demonstrating a syncretism between the past tense and past participle forms of steal, ‘that was stole out of his bedroom’ (241). Their language also includes non-standard concord in terms of subject and verb agreement, for example ‘for there was traces of blood’ (241), ‘‘but he warn’t to be seen nowhere’’ (242). They also use ‘as’ as a relative pronoun instead of ‘who’ or ‘that’, ‘in apprehending the man as robbed his house’, and their language includes the use of multiple negation, for example, ‘but he warn’t to be seen nowhere’ (242) and ‘nobody would never have found out’ (242). They also use ‘precious’ as a pre-modifier, for example, ‘precious anxious’ (245) and ‘precious muddle-headed’ (246). Their language also contains elements of cant, for example, ‘he’s in the gig, a-minding the prad’ (236). ‘Prad’ was a cant word for horse. They also use the word ‘yokel’ from cant and refer to the thief having ‘made off with the blunt’, and exclaim, ‘none of that gammon!’ (245). The scene in which Blathers and Duff meet the Maylies offers a parallel to the scene in which Oliver first encounters the Artful Dodger. Blathers and Duff’s language, with use of cant terminology, proves almost equally incomprehensible to the polite middle class Maylies, as Dodger’s did to Oliver. Mr Losberne is forced to intervene as a translator of their language:

> ‘I can’t say, for certain, till I see the work, of course,’ said Blathers; ‘but my opinion at once is,—I don't mind committing myself to that extent,—that this wasn’t done by a yokel; eh, Duff?’
> ‘Certainly not,’ replied Duff.
> ‘And, translating the word yokel for the benefit of the ladies, I apprehend your meaning to be, that this attempt was not made by a countryman?’ said Mr Losberne, with a smile.
> ‘That’s it, master,’ replied Blathers. ‘This is all about the robbery, is it?’
>
> (*Oliver Twist:* 237)

Later on, Dickens’s slight distrust of the Bow Street Police was replaced with a higher respect for the new Detective Branch of the Police, which was established in

1842. Indeed, Dickens's observations of Inspector 'Wield' and fellow detectives in *Household Words* in 1850, and, later using the detective's real name, in 'On Duty with Inspector Field' in 1851, demonstrated a deep admiration for this new branch of Police. Dickens's admiration of Inspector Field is seen in *Bleak House*, in which he copies Field's work and character traits in the character of Inspector Bucket. In Dickens's characterisation of Inspector Bucket, he also copies his style of language. In 'On Duty with Inspector Field', Dickens represents the banter between the inspectors and the people they call on in a curious mixture of direct and free indirect speech. Field's language is characterised by pithy upbeat interrogation and thorough detailing, whilst he jokes with the thieves, in this case a pickpocket who goes by the name of the Earl of Warwick, he also commands their respect;

> Where's the Earl of Warwick? - Here he is, Mr Field! Here's the Earl of Warwick, Mr Field! - O there you are, my Lord. Come for'ard. There's a chest, sir, not to have a clean shirt on. An't it? Take your hat off, my Lord. Why, I should be ashamed if I was you - and an Earl, too - to show myself to gentleman with my hat on! - The Earl of Warwick laughs and uncovers. All the company laugh. One pickpocket, especially, laughs with great enthusiasm. O what a jolly game it is, when Mr Field comes down - don't want nobody!
>
> (*Household Words* 1851)

Dickens's Inspector Bucket in *Bleak House*, uses the same short sentence clauses and contains similar contractions, such as 'an't', demonstrating that Dickens was copying Field's language as well as his other characteristics:

> 'It's all squared, you see, as I squared it myself, sir. There an't a doubt that it was the other one with this one's dress on. The boy was exact respecting colours and everything. Mr. Snagsby, I promised you as a man that he should be sent away all right. Don't say it wasn't done!'
>
> (*Bleak House*: 365)

The language of the Detective Inspectors marks a notable change from the language of Blathers and Duff, indicating both a professionalisation of the job and a higher social prestige. In *Oliver Twist*, Dickens wants to connect the Blathers and Duff morally with the criminals they pursue and assigning to them similar language to that of the criminals

achieves this effect. However, it also reflects real life, as police and criminals would have been operating in similar spheres.

The police are not the only professional group who are depicted as speaking in cockney dialect in the novel. Gamfield the chimney sweep, who appears at the beginning of *Oliver Twist*, is given speech with a high density of non-standard markers. As I discussed in Chapter 1, Gamfield's speech seems to be modelled on Mr Sluffen from 'The First of May' sketch both in linguistic features and also in terms of attitude. Whilst Gamfield's speech has less non-standard features than Sluffin's, the malicious content of his speech is amplified. Gamfield is a contemptuous character of very low moral standing. In the example of Gamfield, it does appear that Dickens is reverting to a more stereotypical stance of using dialectal features of cockney to show the lowness of the character. However, the way dialect operates in this case is more complex. Gamfield embodies the injustices of the chimney sweeping industry. His language encodes the lack of education of people of his social background, whilst his melodramatic villainy helps raise awareness of a social issue. The moral baseness of the character of Mr Gamfield is reflected in the Barnett stage adaptation of *Oliver Twist* from 1838, in which Gamfield's role in the novel is played by Sikes, pretending to be a chief chimney sweep in order to capture Oliver. This reading pairs Gamfield with the murderous Sikes. To a certain extent, the negative depiction of a morally corrupt, cockney speaking, working Londoner, is counteracted later in Dickens's works with the character of Jo the crossing sweep in *Bleak House*. The two characters, both from the lowest echelons of the social scale, share highly marked, non-grammatical language, representing their illiteracy and poor education. However, whilst Gamfield's dense cockney dialect is used to represent a morally corrupt, exploitative employer, who takes advantage of poor children, Jo the crossing sweep's dense dialectal speech is used to represent a victim of the system, a morally pure innocent, who has not been given any form of education or social care. So, we can see Dickens using a density of dialectal markers for these two minor characters, at the different ends of the moral spectrum, to raise awareness of social issues from two different perspectives.

Conclusion

As I have demonstrated, Dickens's use of cockney dialect and other features of non-standard speech do not necessarily correlate to the criminal element as much as it may

first appear. Language works in a variety of ways within the text. There are certain features that are used more universally to establish the gang as a speech community, but dialects are very much individualised. Rather than in the voices of the hardened criminals, cockney is often used for more playful language, as in the case of Dawkins. Whereas the true villains in the novel, with the exception of Sikes (and Gamfield), are represented as speaking, almost entirely, Standard English, which allows them to commit more dastardly actions. Monks, for example, arguably the biggest villain, speaks in Standard English, which is in keeping with melodramatic stage traditions of villainous characters. Dickens uses cockney dialect for the speech of the Bow Street officers, reflecting their working-class London roots, but this also serves to connect them linguistically and ideologically to the criminal fraternity, further united by their use of criminal cant. Dickens plays with dialect and the absence of it to draw attention to wider social issues. The most obvious absence of dialect being in the case of Oliver's speech, which again borrows from theatrical and literary traditions, in which the hero of the play must speak, as Page termed, a 'language fit for heroes' (1973: 97). However, as I discussed in this chapter, this also acts as a way of forging stronger linguistic connections between the character and Dickens's readership, thus encouraging sympathy towards Oliver and, in turn, the plight of the poor and the misery of the workhouse situation. In a similar way, Fagin's language remains relatively untouched by dialectal features. The occasional cant term connects Fagin to the criminal gang, yet his maternal language and his espousal of utilitarian ideology, evokes an ironic and troubling mixture of empathy and revulsion for the reader. In the case of Gamfield, it could be argued that Dickens was deliberately using markers of cockney dialect to exaggerate the moral 'lowness' of the character, in a way that was more closely aligned to conservative, pejorative treatments of cockney dialect in literature. However, Gamfield is only a minor character, based on a character sketch, and is also being used to represent a wider social issue. Theatrical adaptations of *Oliver Twist* tended to focus on cockney dialect as a key selling point in their productions, which, as I demonstrated, can be seen from the way in which Dodger's language is reproduced each time and the way in which other characters' non-standard features are exaggerated. Despite Dodger's criminal activity in *Oliver Twist*, his linguistic flare and dissenting voice promoted a more positive image of the cockney speaker in society. As with Sam Weller, Dodger's language influenced public consciousness of cockney speech, enregistering ideas about cockney language amongst the readership, ideas that were propagated through the

various imitations and reproductions of the novel. Beyond the nineteenth century, it has been Dodger's cockney voice, rather than Sam's, which has transcended into the archetypal Dickensian cockney voice, as *Oliver Twist* became a popular subject matter for twentieth-century film and TV adaptations. In contrast, *The Pickwick Papers*, was not as popular outside the nineteenth century (and early twentieth century), and Sam's voice, with its antiquated /v/ for /w/, /w/ for /v/ pronunciations, became more distinctly bound in a past time.

Figure 6

(Image from the archives at the Charles Dickens Museum)

The allure of Dodger's cockney speech is captured in this illustration with captions (Figure 6) found in the Charles Dickens Museum Archives. Dodger and Fagin are

depicted in a relatively favourable light, smiling affectionately at each other, even if the main roundel of the illustration contains Bull's Eye searching for Bill Sikes (hidden in the bushes) and the ominous image of the gallows looming in the background. The snippet of language used for Dodger's caption is from the passage in which Dodger first meets Oliver and gives him a lesson in slang. Fagin's caption is also from the moment he is first introduced to Oliver and contains a relatively high density of non-standard features. This demonstrates the popularity of Dickens's cockney voices and how closely these characters were associated with their speech patterns. The image also presents a positive depiction of the two characters. In terms of morality, Dickens's ending to *Oliver Twist*, which saw the Artful Dodger deported and Fagin condemned have almost been forgotten in public consciousness. Through the power of language, his characters gained longevity and to a certain extent were rescued from their fate. This can be seen in the legacy of the novel, with such interpretations and as Lionel Bart's musical *Oliver!*, which sees the Artful Dodger and Fagin deciding to go back into business together and skipping off into the sunset singing 'we are living proof that crime does pay' (Reed 1968).

3.b. Cockney Women, Language and Morality in Dickens

In this section of the chapter, I consider Dickens's treatment of cockney speaking women in more detail. I have included this as a chapter section, rather as a chapter in its own right in part because there are fewer cockney speaking women in Dickens's novels than there are male characters, but also because, in terms of attitudes to language and morality, women faced an added layer of scrutiny in the nineteenth century. The idea of social propriety, including linguistic appropriateness, became closely associated with notions of how femininity should be expressed in the nineteenth century. Nineteenth-century style guides and etiquette manuals offer numerous instructions to women on how they should speak. Ideal female speech was meant to be soft, gentle, refined and devoid of any forms of vulgarity. In *Etiquette for the Ladies* (1837) the author writes, 'Scarcely anything is so repulsive in a lady – so utterly plebeian, as speaking in a loud harsh voice' (1837: 19). Later, women are urged to, 'Never speak for the sake of talking – nothing is so repulsive as the never-ceasing voice of people who deem it a virtue rather to give utterance to foolishness than to be altogether silent' (1837: 40). There are many examples of this kind of prescriptive advice aimed at women in the nineteenth century, which link manner of speech with virtuous behaviour.[1] It is also worth noting that modern sociolinguists have discovered that women speak and are under pressure to speak in more standard ways than their male counterparts (Trudgill 1972; Gordon 1997).

As a result of this level of prescription in the nineteenth century, non-standard speech in women was increasingly regarded as not only slovenly and vulgar, but also morally inferior. Slovenly speech, like slovenly dress, was more closely associated with ideas of moral degeneracy in women than it was in men.[2] With these considerations in mind, I wanted to examine the extent to which Dickens conforms to these stereotypes regarding female speech. Are Dickens's cockney speaking women all moral degenerates? Does he allow for the same playfulness of language that he does for

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[1] Lynda Mugglestone (1995) provides a detailed account of how issues of propriety in speech became particularly exaggerated in reference to female speech in 'Ladylike Accents and the Feminine Proprieties of Speech' in *Talking Proper* (Oxford: Clarendon Press).

[2] See Patricia Ingham (1992) for a more detailed discussion on the way in which description of outward appearance in terms of dress and hair reflects morality in Dickens's women.

cockney men such as Sam Weller and Dodger? Does cockney still present a subversive voice when it is in the mouths of Dickens's women?

Previous research, which has focused on the speech of female characters, has not tended to explore in depth why Dickens uses these speech forms and the impact of it, although Norman Page (1969), does link language and morality in the case of Lizzie Hexam. Robert Golding (1985) discusses the language of Mrs Gamp in detail, but does not consider Dickens's motivations behind it, nor the influence of Gamp's language. Patricia Ingham (1992) explores issues of women, language and morality particularly in the chapter on 'Fallen Girls', but also her chapters on 'Excessive Females' and 'Passionate Women'. However, Ingham approaches the subject area from a perspective that deals with language as a whole. Her focus is on the narratorial language and description that contributes to linguistic encoding, grouping female characters into recognisable types. Ingham does mention the significance of speech, including Nancy's change of speech, but to a lesser degree. Juliet John's chapter on 'Sincerely Deviant Women' in *Dickens's Villains: Melodrama, Character, Popular Culture* also deals with women, language and morality, but, again, does not focus particularly on spoken language in Dickens and her emphasis is on the influence of melodrama in Dickens's characterisation of deviant women. In this section, drawing together aspects of this rich body of research, I try to explore further how represented non-standard speech of female characters in Dickens's writing reflects and influences contemporary attitudes. I acknowledge that the term morality is a broad one. However, the characters I look at all have their morality questioned in the novels or stories they appear in. They either undergo some kind of moral transformation or are presented as having lapsed morals. This could either be through implications of sexual activity outside of marriage, which at the time, was closely linked to prostitution, prostitution itself, or, in the case of Mrs Gamp, a dangerous lack of professionalism, negligence and self-interest.

As I have already noted whilst discussing the language of Nancy, a shift away from the vernacular in favour of Standard English is a strategy Dickens makes use of to suggest moral development. This technique follows literary convention, which requires heroic language to be clear of vernacular elements (Page 1969). Nancy's speech undergoes an 'improvement' that equates with her perceived moral improvement in the novel. Her speech becomes more standard as her sympathy and compassion towards Oliver grows and as she strives to disassociate herself from the criminal activity of the

gang and as her role becomes a more heroic one. Lizzie Hexam's speech in *Our Mutual Friend* undergoes a change, albeit a subtle one, in a similar way to Nancy, which signals her education, but is also a gesture towards her moral development through education. Her speech goes from including several non-standard features to being entirely Standard English. Lizzie Hexam is not a prostitute like Nancy. In fact, her character exemplifies virtue. Partly for this reason and for the relative lack of dialectal features, Lizzie's language is more frequently compared to that of Oliver and Dickens's other heroes and heroines, whose language seems at odds with their background, for example, Pip in *Great Expectations* or Amy Dorrit in *Little Dorrit*. These characters all speak Standard English from the outset, whereas Lizzie's language does undergo a small change. Page (1969) covered Lizzie's speech in considerable depth and was one of the first critics to raise the issue of Lizzie's change in speech. Therefore, it is important here to outline Page's argument before proceeding: Page challenges previous criticism, such as that of Hobsbaum (1963), Muir (1966) Churchill (1942) and Wilson (1962), which criticised Lizzie's speech as ridiculous or incredulous. Page argues that these critics overlooked Dickens's bravery and innovation in including a heroine from such a low social background (1969: 102). Page supports Butt and Tillotson's (1957) argument that Lizzie's progress belongs to a kind of Dickensian allegory and the realm of 'fairy tale', concluding that, if we consider Lizzie in the realm of fairy tale, then 'realistic dialogue' might be considered out of place (Page 1969: 102). However, Page outlines the slight change in Lizzie's speech in the novel, which, in his opinion, demonstrates that Dickens was demonstrating 'an index of development' to mirror her change in social behaviour and class in the novel (1969: 103). At the beginning of the novel Lizzie's speech does contain the occasional marker of non-standard English, for example the 'a' prefix for –ing form verbs, 'Yes. Then as I sit a-looking at the fire, I seem to see in the burning coal—like where that glow is now—' (*Our Mutual Friend*: 70). Her language is also quite colloquial, which Page (1969) describes as being of a 'homely quality' (100). This can be demonstrated in such utterances such as, 'Don't mind me, Charley! I was all in a tremble of another sort when you owned to father you could write a little' (*Our Mutual Friend*: 70). At the end of the novel, Lizzie's speech has moved towards the 'language fit for heroes' that Page discusses:

> 'Ah, my beloved Lizzie!' he said, faintly. 'How shall I ever pay all I owe you, if I recover!'

> ‘Don’t be ashamed of me,’ she replied, ‘and you will have more than paid all.’
> ‘It would require a life, Lizzie, to pay all; more than a life.’
> ‘Live for that, then; live for me, Eugene; live to see how hard I will try to improve myself, and never to discredit you.’
>
> (*Our Mutual Friend*: 824)

The change in language is slight and Page made the argument for language development too emphatically. However, as Page argues, Dickens has at least made a gesture at acknowledging Lizzie’s original background by showing a development in her speech from the very beginning of the novel, which coincides with her moral development through education (1969: 107). Page argues that Lizzie’s development in the novel echoes Dickens’s own beliefs about the transformative powers of education (1969: 106). However, as I discuss in the following chapter on upward mobility, this belief in education as morally transformative is contradicted in both the cases of Charley Hexam and Bradley Headstone. In the novel, Lizzie’s morality is not called into question, but she needs to be shown as developing into an educated woman and speaking in a manner that aligns her to the social class she eventually marries into through her marriage to Eugene Wrayburn, in order to maintain a degree of socially acceptability. Lizzie’s features of cockney dialect need to be abandoned along with her connections to her squalid beginnings. Dialectal features are also noticeably absent at moments in which female ‘fallen’ characters are demonstrating repentance.

A parallel can be drawn between the speech of Nancy in her repentant plea to Rose Maylie and that of Martha Endell in *David Copperfield* when discovered by Mr Peggotty and David by the river Thames at night. Although Martha does not fit into the category of ‘cockney’, nor does Dickens indicate any signs of the Yarmouth dialect in her words, her speech, which seldom appears in first part of the novel, is reported through the thick Yarmouth accent of Ham’s speech. I use the following extract of her speech to compare with Nancy’s address to Rose Maylie, as it is equally melodramatic and written in a language that seems to contradict the speech of someone of her social or regional background. Like Nancy’s speech, it serves to demonstrate her repentance for the life of ill repute into which she has ‘fallen’:

> ‘<u>Stamp upon me, kill me!</u> When she was your pride, you would have thought I had done her harm if I had brushed against her in the street. You can’t believe—

> why should you?—-a syllable that comes out of my lips. It would be a burning shame upon you, even now, if she and I exchanged a word. I don't complain. I don't say she and I are alike—I know there is a long, long way between us. I only say, with all my guilt and wretchedness upon my head, that I am grateful to her from my soul, and love her. Oh, don't think that all the power I had of loving anything is quite worn out! Throw me away, as all the world does. Kill me for being what I am, and having ever known her; but don't think that of me!'
>
> (*David Copperfield*: 689)

'I, lady!' replied the girl. 'I am the infamous creature you have heard of, that lives among the thieves, and that never from the first moment I can recollect my eyes and senses opening on London streets have known any better life, or kinder words than they have given me, so help me God! Do not mind shrinking openly from me, lady. I am younger than you would think, to look at me, but I am well used to it. The poorest women fall back, as I make my way along the crowded pavement.'

(*Oliver Twist:* 323)

Both of these orations appear to adopt elements of theatrical performances. They adhere to traditions of melodrama and pathos, as both women vehemently and dramatically chastise themselves for their states of moral abasement. The repentant language, in both cases, is eloquent and entirely in Standard English, unmarked by signs of vernacular speech. Both speeches include exclamations, Nancy apostrophising to God, Martha seemingly appealing to her audience (Mr Peggotty and David) or apostrophising anyone who will end her suffering. The language is highly melodramatic. Juliet John (2001) argues that it was near impossible for Dickens to disassociate himself with theatrical speech, particularly when it came to women. She writes, 'Dickens could divorce neither his conscious understanding nor his subconscious, creative imagination from the models of womanhood he encountered in the nineteenth-century theatre' (2001: 200). The influence of theatrical convention is clear. However, by giving the 'fallen' women speech unmarked by regional or class dialects, to the point in which they sound like educated, higher-class women, it could be that Dickens acts in accordance with his sympathies and intends to campaign for the plight of such women. As in the case of Nancy, it is possible that Dickens wanted his readership to pity these women and in order to do so he needed to elicit empathy. Dickens's affinity for the plight of women is

evident in his philanthropic endeavours of the 1840s, which saw him establishing Urania Cottage, a home for 'fallen women', with Miss Angela Burdett-Coutts, with the aim of helping women avoid a life of prostitution.[3] Thus, it could be argued that Dickens uses Standard English for these women, combined with melodramatic techniques gained from his theatrical experience in order to elicit more empathy from his readership to the plight of women in these circumstances.

So far, I have just dealt with female characters whose speech, although containing trace elements of cockney dialect as a nod to linguistic authenticity, mainly consists of Standard English, which, as I have discussed, is due to a variety of stylistic aims and conventions. So, what can be said of Dickens's true cockney speaking women? Are female cockney speakers always represented as morally deviant or is cockney dialect always used as a sign of moral deviancy in women? Dickens's novels contain some wholesome female speakers of non-standard dialect, for example Peggotty in *David Copperfield*. However, rural or provincial accents are viewed differently, they are often accorded certain virtues, such as demonstrating honesty, being down-to-earth and plain talking. Cockney, on the other hand, with its connotations as a class dialect, is frequently associated with ignorance, poor education and moral degeneracy, particularly when it comes to the speech of women and for the most part Dickens's cockney speaking women are of questionable moral standing.

[3] See Jenny Hartley (2009). *Charles Dickens and The House of Fallen Women* (London: Methuen) for a detailed account of this subject.

Figure 7

Seven Dials by George Cruikshank, 1839

In Dickens's 'Seven Dials' sketch, the screeching cockney voices of two drunken women fighting in the street serve as an auditory clue to the depravity of the neighbourhood, with its 'dirty, straggling houses' and 'dirty men, filthy women, squalid children, fluttering shuttlecocks, noisy battledores, reeking pipes, bad fruit, more than doubtful oysters, attenuated cats, depressed dogs, and anatomical fowls' (*Sketches by Boz*: 94). Their language contains a density of dialectal features:

> '**Vy** don't you pitch into her, Sarah?' exclaims one half-dressed matron, by way of encouragement. '**Vy** don't you? if *my* **'usband** had treated her with a drain last night, unbeknown to me, I'd tear her **precious eyes** out—a **wixen**!'
> 'What's the matter, ma'am?' inquires another old woman, who has just bustled up to the spot.
> 'Matter!' replies the first speaker, talking *at* the obnoxious combatant, 'matter! Here's poor dear Mrs **Sulliwin**, as has five **blessed children** of her own, can't go out **a-charing** for one **arternoon**, but what **hussies** must be **a-comin'**, and **'ticing avay** her **oun' 'usband**, as she's been **married to twelve** year come next

> Easter Monday, for I see the certificate **ven** I vas a **drinkin'** a **cup o' tea vith** her, only the **werry** last blessed **Ven'sday** as ever was sent. I **'appen'd** to say promiscuously, "Mrs **Sulliwin**," **says I**—'
>
> (*Sketches by Boz*: 92)

Here Dickens uses a wide range of markers to detail the cockney speech of these two fighting women. There are several examples of [v] for [w] transposition, for example, 'vy' and 'ven'sday', 'avay', 'ven' and 'vith' and [w] for [v], such as 'wixen', 'werry' and 'Sulliwin'. H-dropping is represented in ''usband' and ''appen'd' (though not in 'hussies'). There are examples of the a-prefix before gerunds in 'a charing' and 'a comin'' and 'a drinkin'' and the -/in/ for /iŋ/ ending is indicated in some words ending in –ing, but not in others. The weak form first syllable is dropped in words like ''ticing' (*enticing*) and there is non-standard pronunciation indicated in words like, 'arternoon'. Their language also includes some crude insults, such as 'wixen' and 'hussies'. This is obviously quite a negative representation of cockney speaking women, yet as I discussed in Chapter 1, Dickens was recording the sounds as well as the sights of London in his sketches. In this case, to Dickens, their drunken screeches typified the sounds of the neighbourhood of Seven Dials. The use of cockney dialect in this sketch helps to vividly animate the scene and provide the reader with a sense of eavesdropping on a world otherwise off limits.

In 'The Prisoners' Van', Dickens describes a scene in which two sisters (Emily and Bella) are taken to the Bow Street Public Offices and then confronted by the crowds gathered outside. The text implies that the two sisters have been picked up for prostitution. The older of the two girls, Emily, is described in the narration as being more complete in her state of corruption; 'two additional years of depravity had fixed their brand upon the elder girl's features, as legibly as if a red-hot iron had seared them' (*Sketches*: 316). However, the younger sister, who is still yet to be fully corrupted and thus feels remorse at her arrest, remains tearful and silent. The older sister's speech contains elements of Cockney dialect and cant words associated with the criminal world, which on the one hand acts as a way of highlighting her moral corruption. However, Emily's speech is also feisty and defiant, commanding the approval and respect of her audience:

> ‘How long are you for, Emily?’ screamed a red-faced woman in the crowd. ‘Six weeks and labour,’ replied the elder girl with a flaunting laugh; ‘and that’s better than the **stone jug** anyhow; **the mill’s a deal better than the Sessions**, and here’s Bella **a-going too** for the first time. Hold up your head, you chicken,’ she continued, boisterously tearing the other girl’s handkerchief away; ‘Hold up your head, and show **’em y**our face. **I an’t** jealous, but I’m blessed if **I an’t** game!’—‘That’s right, old gal,’ exclaimed a man in a paper cap, who, in common with the greater part of the crowd, had been inexpressibly delighted with this little incident.—‘Right!’ replied the girl; ‘**ah, to be sure; what’s the odds, eh**?’—‘Come! In with you,’ interrupted the driver. ‘Don’t you be in a hurry, coachman,’ replied the girl, ‘and recollect I want to be set down in Cold Bath Fields—large house with a high garden-wall in front; you can’t mistake it.’
>
> (*Sketches*: 316)

Emily uses slang terms such as ‘the stone jug’ meaning *prison* and ‘the mill’ referring to the *treadmill* and hard labour according to Hotten’s *Slang Dictionary* (1865). ‘The Sessions’ probably refers to Middlesex Sessions House in Clerkenwell, which had a reputation for harsh sentencing or the Sessions House of the Old Bailey. Emily’s language includes markers of cockney dialect such as the ‘a-’ prefix on verbs in the gerund form and contractions of words such as ‘’em’ and ‘an’t’ (*Sketches*: 316). Dickens is quite damning of these girls and their chances in life in the narration, describing them thus:

> These two girls had been thrown upon London streets, their vices and debauchery, by a sordid and rapacious mother. What the younger girl was then, the elder had been once; and what the elder then was, the younger must soon become. A melancholy prospect, but how surely to be realised; a tragic drama, but how often acted!
>
> …
>
> The progress of these girls in crime will be as rapid as the flight of a pestilence, resembling it too in its baneful influence and wide-spreading infection. Step by step, how many wretched females, within the sphere of every man’s observation, have become involved in a career of vice, frightful to contemplate; hopeless at

> its commencement, loathsome and repulsive in its course; friendless, forlorn, and unpitied, at its miserable conclusion!
>
> (*Sketches by Boz*: 317)

Yet, Emily's emboldened rant at the system contrasts with the 'hopeless' state of affairs described in the narration. Emily's speech also foreshadows that of Dawkins in the dock, when she cheekily calls out to be 'set down in Cold Bath Fields—large house with a high garden-wall in front; you can't mistake it', pretending she is in control and speaking as if, rather than being taken to prison, she is commanding a cab driver to take her home. Whilst Dickens is drawing attention to the social issue of prostitution and expressing abhorrence towards it, using language such as, 'loathsome', 'repulsive' and 'miserable', he is also celebrating the fighting spirit of the older sister through her speech, which seems to demonstrate a contradiction in attitudes. It is almost as if Dickens celebrates deviancy through cockney voices. Alternatively, it could be argued that through the narration Dickens fulfils the expectation that these morally corrupted women will be condemned, while at the same time cockney speech allows him a freedom to present another side to the story – another voice – in a playful and creative way.

Figure 8

(*The Prisoners' Van* by Fred Barnard, wood-engraving, 1876)

This later (1876) illustration of 'The Prisoner's Van' shows Emily as a strong, charismatic figure in the centre of the crowd, performing to her delighted audience, whilst her sister, rather lost in the background, hides her face in shame. This illustration demonstrates a reading of the sketch that celebrates the vitality of Emily's speech, rather than a condemnation of the miserable state of moral degradation suggested in the narration.

The character of Mrs Gamp in *Martin Chuzzlewit* demonstrates a similar contradiction. The inclusion of Mrs Gamp in the novel, as Dickens expresses in a later preface, was an attempt to raise awareness of the inadequate state of nursing provision and unregulated midwifery at that time. Mrs Gamp represents a morally corrupt and dysfunctional system, which provided deficient care for the poor. Dickens writes:

> In all my writings, I hope I have taken every available opportunity of showing the want of sanitary improvements in the neglected dwellings of the poor. Mrs Sarah Gamp was, four-and-twenty years ago, a fair representation of the hired attendant on the poor in sickness. The hospitals of London were, in many respects, noble Institutions; in others, very defective. I think it not the least among the instances of their mismanagement, that Mrs Betsey Prig was a fair specimen of a Hospital Nurse; and that the Hospitals, with their means and funds, should have left it to private humanity and enterprise, to enter on an attempt to improve that class of persons—since, greatly improved through the agency of good women.
>
> (Dickens, Preface to *Martin Chuzzlewit*, 1868 edition)

Mrs Gamp, according to the midwifery practice of her day, dealt with both births and deaths and could switch between the two with artful ease. The narrator tells the reader that she 'had a face for all occasions' (*Martin Chuzzlewit*: 308). She is a seasoned alcoholic with a penchant for gin, which she tries to procure at every opportunity. She has a strong sense of her own self-importance, epitomised with her introductory gambit, 'Gamp is my name and Gamp my natur' (*Martin Chuzzlewit*: 404). Mrs Gamp's appearance and manner is described as sloppy and slovenly. Her professionalism is severely lacking, she is greedy and self-interested with little thought for the needs of her patients. Indeed, Patricia Ingham describes Mrs Gamp as purveying 'not care and comfort, but unkindness and discomfort' (1992: 80). Yet, at the same time, largely

thanks to the skilfully drawn idiolect that Dickens creates for her, Mrs Gamp becomes a well-loved character and an icon of Victorian culture. Robert Golding describes her as having, 'the most individual, certainly the most complex, idiolect in the whole of Dickens' (1985: 109). This is a fair assessment. Mrs Gamp's language is a humorous mixture of elements of cockney dialect, strange idiomatic idiosyncrasies and funny malapropisms, which when combined with her fanciful stories about her imaginary friend, Mrs Harris, and her arguments with the nurse, Mrs Betsey Prig, ensured her position as a household name in Victorian society and into the early part of the twentieth century. This extract of Mrs Gamp's speech in the novel, in which she is responding to Pecksniff's enquiry as to whether or not she had become accustomed to the realities of nursing since she fainted at the death of her husband, illustrates many of the features of her language:

> 'You may well say second **natur**, sir,' returned that lady, 'One's first ways is to find **sich** things a trial to the feelings, and so is one's lasting custom. If it wasn't for the nerve a little sip of liquor gives me (I never was able to do more than taste it), I never could go through with **what I sometimes has to do**. "Mrs Harris," I says, "leave the bottle on the **chimley-piece**, and **don't ask me to take none**, but let me put my lips to it when I am so **dispoged**, and then I will do what I'm engaged to do, according to the best of my ability." "Mrs Gamp," she says, in answer, "if ever there was a sober **creetur** to be got at eighteen pence a day for working people, and three and six for gentlefolks – night watching,"' said Mrs Gamp with emphasis, "being a extra charge- you are that **inwalluable** person." "Mrs Harris," I says to her, "don't name the charge, for if I could afford to lay all my **feller creeturs** out for **nothink**, I would gladly do it, **sich** is the love I bears **'em.** But **what I always says** to them as has the management of matters, Mrs Harris"' – here she kept her eye on Mr Pecksniff – ''be they gents or be they ladies, is, don't ask me whether **I won't take none**, or whether I will, but leave the bottle on the **chimley-piece**, and let me put my lips to it when I am so **dispoged**.'
>
> (*Martin Chuzzlewit*: 303)

Mrs Gamp's language demonstrates many variations in pronunciation, nearly all coinciding with features that were considered cockney, with some embellishment.

Besides Dickens's cockney staple of /w/ for /v/, for example, 'inwalluable', Mrs Gamp also has an array of other non-standard pronunciation in her speech, such as changing words with a consonant sound /tʃ/ in the middle, such as nature and creature, with a /t/ sound, making them 'natur' and 'creatur'. The most characteristic phonemic variation Dickens gives Mrs Gamp is replacing various sounds, in this case the /s/ sound, with /dʒ/, as in 'dispoge' (*dispose*). She also inserts this sound in words such as *deny*, which in Gamp speech, becomes "denige" (*Martin Chuzzlewit*: 386). Her language also includes a dissimilation of *mn* to *ml* in the pronunciation of *chimney* as 'chimley'. In syntactical terms, Mrs Gamp's language includes non-standard subject and verb agreement as demonstrated in the passage above, in 'what I sometimes has to do' and 'what I always says'. She uses double negation, as in 'don't' ask me to take none' and 'I won't take none'. Of all Dickens's cockney speaking characters, Mrs Gamp has the most detailed use of non-standard features, used over a considerable amount of the text. As with the language of Dodger and the other cockney speaking characters of *Oliver Twist*, this promoted equal amounts of praise and disdain at the time of publication. A contemporary review of the novel clearly expresses the contradictions embodied in the character of Mrs Gamp through the reviewer's reactions to her. There is a sense of disgust, which is overpowered by an admiration for her language:

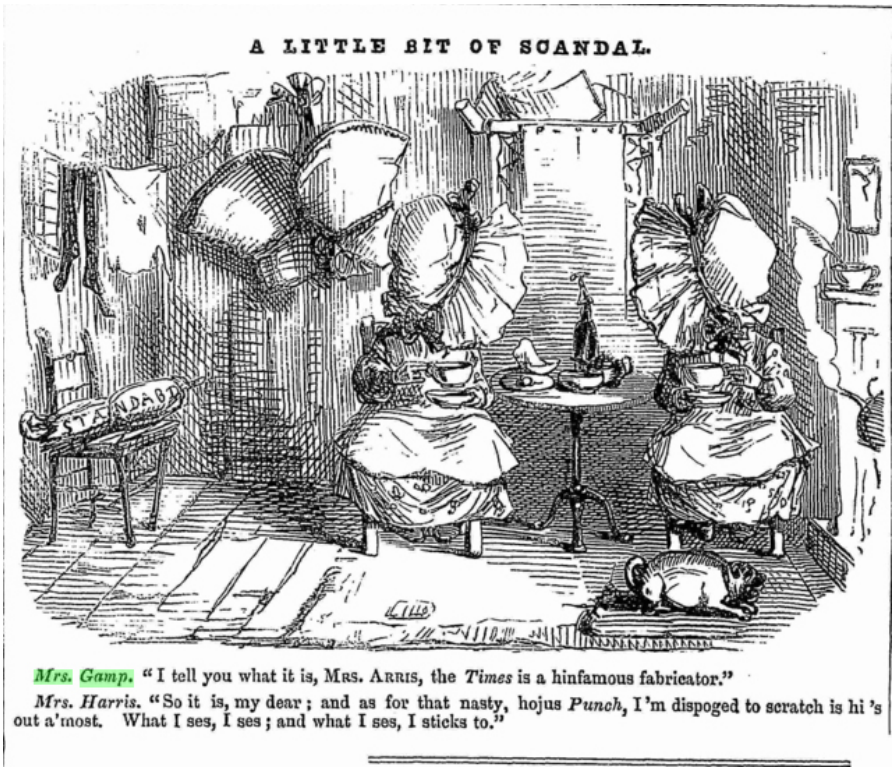
> Revolting as Jonas is, he is not so offensive and intolerable a personage as Sarah Gamp, a midwife, or 'monthly nurse,' in whom the selfishness and greediness of attendants on the sick are coarsely satirized. Her dialect is doubtless copied very faithfully from nature, but her cue is to entertain the reader with a succession of jests, the point of which always lies in sly allusions to the events and secrets of her particular calling. She seems such a favourite of the author that we meet her at every turn, even in the preface, til we are almost provoked to laugh in spite of our disgust.
>
> (*North British Review* cited in Collins 1971: 187)

Despite Mrs Gamp's slightly dubious moral character, her language proved extremely popular and her character, like that of the Wellers lived on in popular culture throughout the Victorian era. From 1845 onwards, Mrs Gamp and her imaginary friend/alter ego, Mrs Harris, appear frequently in newspapers and periodicals. This lasts throughout the rest of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century. From the time of the

publication of *Martin Chuzzlewit*, Mrs Gamp and Mrs Harris featured heavily in *Punch* magazine. Almost immediately, *Punch* seizes Mrs Gamp and Mrs Harris to participate in an on-going conceit concerning rival publications, in which Mrs Harris represents the *Standard* and Mrs Gamp *The Morning Herald.* This entry from the Hotten *Slang Dictionary* refers this cultural appropriation:

> MRS HARRIS and MRS GAMP, nicknames of the Morning Herald and Standard newspapers, while united under the proprietorship of Mr Baldwin, MRS GAMP, a monthly nurse, was a character of *Mr Charles Dickens's* popular novel of *Martin Chuzzlewit*, who continually quoted an imaginary Mrs Harris in attestation of the superiority of her qualifications, and the infallibility of her opinions; and thus afforded a parallel to the two newspapers, which appealed to each other as independent authorities, being all the while the production of the same editorial staff.
>
> (1859: 176)

Figure 9



(*Punch Historical Archive* 1845: 262)

In a similar fashion to Dickens's resurrection of Sam and Tony Weller in *Master Humphrey's Clock*, Dickens, capitalising on the success of his own character, evokes Mrs Gamp in a pastiche letter written to raise an extra hundred pounds for a theatrical benefit-fund he had been involved in. Forster describes this occurrence in his biography:

> it had occurred to him that he might add the much longed-for hundred pounds to the benefit-fund by a little jeu d'esprit in form of a history of the trip, to be published with illustrations from the artists; and his notion was to write it in the character of Mrs Gamp. It was to be, in the phraseology of that notorious woman, a new "Piljians Projiss;" and was to bear upon the title page its description as an Account of a late Expedition into the North, for an Amateur Theatrical Benefit, written by Mrs Gamp (who was an eye-witness), Inscribed to Mrs Harris, Edited by Charles Dickens, and published, with illustrations on wood by so and so, in aid of the Benefit-fund.
>
> (Forster 1892: 375)

Dickens then proceeds to write a nearly 2,500-word letter in the style of Mrs Gamp, consisting mainly of dialogue:

> 'Which Mrs Harris's own words to me, was these: "Sairey Gamp," she says, "why not go to Margate? **Srimps**," says that dear **creetur**, "is to your liking, Sairey; why not go to Margate for a week, bring your **constitootion** up with **srimps**, and come back to them loving arts as knows and **wallies** of you, blooming? Sairey," Mrs Harris says, "you are but poorly. Don't **denige** it, Mrs Gamp, for books is in your looks. You must have rest. Your mind," she says, "is too strong for you; it gets you down and treads upon you, Sairey. It is useless to **disguige** the fact—the blade is a wearing out the sheets." "Mrs Harris," I says to her, "I could not undertake to say, and I will not deceive you ma'am, that I am the woman I could wish to be…"'
>
> (Forster 1892: 375)

The letter contains all the linguistic features ascribed to Mrs Gamp in the novel, but like the occurrence of Tony Weller in *Master Humphrey's Clock*, the language is even more exaggerated. This was to fulfil public expectations, as Mrs Gamp had already become a household name. Mrs Gamp simultaneously acts as a moral lesson of the dangers of

unregulated nursing provision, helping to bring about the social changes that led to the modern nursing profession, yet, also evolves into a national treasure. Despite her questionable morality, the humour and wit of her character overcomes the negative connotations and this is largely performed through her language. Golding concludes that Mrs Gamp 'is her language' (1985: 116). Like the advertisements that include Sam Weller, Mrs Gamp is nearly always accompanied by an extract of her idiosyncratic speech, as can be seen in this advertisement for Mazawattee Tea:

Figure 10

(Advertisement for Mazawattee Tea from the Charles Dickens Museum Archives)

Not all of Dickens's cockney speaking female characters fit into the morally questionable category. Susan Nipper in *Dombey and Son*, for example, is an interesting and complex character whose speech contains elements of cockney. Her role as a feisty, no-messing servant with the language to match mirrors that of Sam Weller's in *Pickwick Papers*, albeit in a much smaller role. She has a curious idiolect that includes exclamations of 'Lork!' and elements of non-standard syntax, combined with an abrupt, brutally honest delivery. Dickens describes her as speaking like a 'spitfire', proceeding to call her 'Spitfire' in the narration (*Dombey and Son*: 38):

> ‘Lork, Mrs Richards, no, her Pa’s a deal too wrapped up in somebody else, and before there was a somebody else to be wrapped up in she never was a favourite, girls are thrown away in this house, Mrs Richards, I assure you.’
>
> (*Dombey and Son*: 38)

Susan Nipper’s voice is a dissenting one. Grace Moore describes her as ‘a linguistic guerrilla … [deploying] speech as her only weapon in an endeavour to talk herself out of the patriarchy that is Dombey’s world’ (2004: 62). Nipper challenges the way her master treats ‘Miss Floy’ (her pet name for Florence), though not to his face:

> ‘This house ain’t so exactly ringing with merry-making,’ said Miss Nipper, ‘that one need be lonelier than one must be. Your Toxes and your Chickses may draw out my two front double teeth, Mrs Richards, but that’s no reason why I need offer ‘em the whole set.’
>
> (*Dombey and Son*: 39)

Conclusion

As I have shown, on the one hand, Dickens does often appear to conform to traditional attitudes towards non-standard English as being associated with low status and questionable morality in women. This is especially noticeable through the absence of dialectal features, in the speech of characters who, given their social backgrounds, would have been more realistically depicted as speaking in dialect, but for whom Dickens wanted to demonstrate improved virtue or redemptive behaviour. However, this linguistic tendency appears to be more for stylistic purposes or to fulfil literary or theatrical traditions, rather than a censure of non-standard speech. Furthermore, these representations can also be seen as reflecting a political and social agenda to raise awareness of a social issue in order to improve the way in which women were treated in society, evidenced by Dickens’s philanthropic campaigns. When Dickens does give female characters cockney dialect, he appears to celebrate the language of his cockney speaking women, similarly to that of his male cockney speaking characters, through its creativity and imagination. Thus, even when he is trying to make a case for moral degeneracy, the overall effect is often playful and positive. In the same way that Dickens is able to explore other sides to his character and personality with the voices of

the Wellers, Dickens is able to express himself through the exuberance of cockney female voices, such as Emily in the Prisoner's Van or Mrs Gamp. He can express his disgust and moral judgment through his narratorial voice, whilst offering a subversive other perspective though the feisty, humorous speech of these cockney women.

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Chapter 4 - Speakin' Posh - Upwardly Mobile Speakers and Speech

Introduction

> 'Lor-a-mussy!' exclaimed Mrs Boffin, laughing and clapping her hands, and gaily rocking herself to and fro, 'when I think of me in a light yellow chariot and pair, with silver boxes to the wheels—'
>
> (*Our Mutual Friend*: 145)

In this extract from *Our Mutual Friend*, Mrs Boffin expresses delightful joy and surprise at her new found status, whilst her exclamation 'Lor-a-mussy!' clearly marks her out as a speaker of the vernacular, London tongue, exposing her original social background.[1] Of Dickens's upwardly-mobile characters, the Boffins in *Our Mutual Friend* are unique, as they, like modern-day lottery winners, suddenly and unexpectedly inherit a vast fortune, which forces them out of their humble, working-class social status and into an upper-class world, to which they have to adapt rapidly. Dickens's approach to these characters is generally playful and sympathetic, as they are shown self-consciously in the active process of trying to fit in with the social class into which they have been catapulted, much of which is reflected in their linguistic endeavours. In the novel, Mr Boffin seeks help to improve his literacy and eventually undergoes a transformation of speech. At the beginning of the novel, the language of the Boffins contains markers of non-standard dialect. However, as the novel progresses, they become accustomed to their new-found social status, and their language, particularly that of Mr Boffin, undergoes a transformation towards almost entirely Standard English. Much of the humour of the Boffins' earlier scenes is generated by their struggle linguistically to match the language of their new social class.

I have included this chapter on upwardly mobile speech in this thesis on Dickens and cockney because during this period of rapid urbanisation and industrialisation,

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[1] In *Errors of Pronunciation and improper expressions used frequently by the inhabitants of London. To which are added those in similar use, chiefly by the inhabitants of Paris*, 'Lawk a Mercy!', a similar expression, is defined as a 'common ejaculation with ordinary speakers, and should, therefore, be carefully avoided'(1817: 18).

people were able to rise up in social status due to newfound wealth, creating a 'new rich' social class. However, wealth alone was often not enough to enable entry into higher social spheres, and snobbery about manners and language meant that these people were often looked down upon. As Mugglestone also points out, 'Attention to accent was vital, so the new canon went, in the course of any social metamorphosis, a reminder frequently issued in the context of another prevalent stereotype of the nineteenth century, that of the "new rich"' (2003: 10). Unless you could speak correctly enough for the social class you aspired to, it was difficult to join the ranks. As Philip J. Waller states, 'Language is an instrument of both communication and excommunication. It makes possible intimacy, also exclusiveness' (1987: 2).

Although upward mobility is a prevelant and celebrated theme in Dickens's writing, as Priti Joshi points out, 'Dickens captures one of the central features of the nineteenth-century middle class: the ability to reinvent oneself, to begin life in one 'station' and make one's way to another' (2011: 263), there are some contradictions in the way he treats working-class upwardly mobile characters, which is often demonstrated through speech. Indeed, there are many examples of upwardly mobile characters in Dickens who are not distinguished through their speech. The eponymous heroes of Dickens's Bildungsroman narratives, such as *David Copperfield, Nicholas Nickleby, Little Dorrit* and *Oliver Twist*, speak in Standard English and their speech contains no markers of either non-standard English reflecting cockney dialect, nor markers of linguistic pretention. Yet, other characters, whom I will discuss in this chapter, are often mocked for their upward mobility, which is often done through the way they speak. These characters are not permitted the ease of transition allowed Dickens's heroes and remain slightly ridiculous as they hover at the boundaries of class inclusion. Their lack of belonging to the social class to which they aspire is reflected through language use, as they are not able to quite fit in linguistically with the class they would like to belong to.

In this chapter, I explore Dickens's treatment of those Londoners who are upwardly mobile and examine how a perceived change in social status is reflected through their speech. I also explore to what extent Dickens both reflects and influences contemporary attitudes towards language and upward mobility. By upwardly mobile characters I refer to those who are 'moving or aspiring to move to a higher social class or to a position of increased status or power' (*Collins English Dictionary*, 2017) either

through inheritance, good fortune, education or professionalisation. Of course, upward mobility is not just reflected through speech. The behaviour of these characters is also identified through other means, such as description of dress or manners and through the content of their speech, what they say, not just how they say it and, of course, the role they play in the plot. However, accent plays a very important role. I focus on these characters, for whom Dickens uses markers of non-standard speech or particular speech patterns that serve to denote affected or pretentious speech. The characters I have chosen are from predominantly working-class London backgrounds, but who are depicted as either having lost (or partially lost) their vernacular accent due to education and/or social aspirations. I explore how Dickens uses these features, which include hypercorrection, hyperbole, and other idiosyncratic speech characteristics, as a means of developing their identity as upwardly mobile characters in the novels and how this contrasts with his treatment of cockneys. I consider what this exposes about Dickens's attitudes towards language and class and how this coincides with wider attitudes in Victorian society. I argue that whilst Dickens was often favourable towards speakers of non-standard dialect, he uses motifs of linguistic pretention as a means of making upwardly mobile characters appear more ridiculous. What is it that makes Dickens mock upward mobility in some instances, but not in others? How does Dickens's treatment of these characters compare with his treatment of cockneys? What does the speech of upwardly mobile characters tell us about attitudes to cockney? This chapter, whilst acknowledging there is some cross-over, divides these upwardly mobile characters into three categories: the predominantly comic characters whose roles are mainly to entertain, the nouveaux riches who demonstrate social awkwardness as they grapple to fit in to the higher class and finally Dickens's upwardly mobile professionals, who demonstrate varying degrees of ambition, some to ruthless ends.

There are certainly a number of contradictions in the way in which Dickens treats the upwardly mobile in his novels. It can be argued that most of Dickens's main protagonists embody some form of upward mobility, or, at least, are seen to be making some form of progress in each novel, with the exception of Little Nell. Oliver, whilst mostly a passive recipient of his twists of fate, progresses from various troubled circumstances to be saved and made prosperous by 'a good old rich man', the Dickensian trope of benevolent do-gooding that George Orwell critiques (1962: 15). Nicholas Nickleby, David Copperfield, Amy Dorrit and Pip (although Pip's upward-

mobility is called into question to a degree), all move up in social class and gain prosperity over the duration of the novels they appear in. All these protagonists are represented as speaking in Standard English and there is little awkwardness expressed in their language, which could reflect any strain. They all achieve Standard English effortlessly. Even Pip, whose childhood letter to Joe shows him to be both a dropper ('ope') and inserter ('habell') of h's, is given an entirely Standard English voice in the novel:

> "MI DEER JO i OPE U R KR WITE WELL i OPE i SHAL SON B HABELL 4 2 TEEDGE U JO AN THEN WE SHORL B SO GLODD AN WEN i M PRENGTD 2 U JO WOT LARX AN BLEVE ME INF XN PIP."
>
> (*Great Expectations*: 45)

Lizzie Hexam's language contains a few markers of non-standard English at the beginning of *Our Mutual Friend*, yet these subside along with her educational and social progress in the novel. Again, the transition into Standard English is made effortlessly. However, this ease of language shift is largely reserved for Dickens's heroes, while other characters are treated differently.

The 'Class' Clown

Upwardly mobile characters in Dickens's novels often play a comedic role. Affected speech, alongside affected manners and ostentatious clothing, are characteristics at which the reader is invited to laugh. In *Nicholas Nickleby*, Dickens explores the comic possibilities of social and linguistic pretension through the character of Mr Mantalini, the husband of a fashionable milliner, Madame Mantalini. The Mantilinis are excessive and decadent. We are told that Alfred Mantalini's real name was Muntle, but they had changed their name to Mantalini as his wife did not think that Muntle would be at all suitable for their trade. By adopting an Italian pseudonym, they give themselves a veneer of foreign exoticism, which suits the fashion industry. Mr Mantalini first appears in Chapter 10, when Kate Nickleby is taken to meet her future employers. Mantalini appears like a forerunner of the Cheshire Cat, by head and then by teeth; 'the head reappeared, and the mouth, displaying a very long row of very white teeth, uttered in a mincing tone of words, 'Demmit, What, Nickleby! oh, demmit!' (*Nicholas Nickleby*: 82). As with many of Dickens's characters, linguistic expression is combined with

description of dress to create the characterisation and to situate the character within a specific social class. Brook (1970) categorises Mantalini's speech as 'affected upper-class speech', whilst Page, describes it as representing 'a corruption of an aristocratic manner transplanted to a lower class' (1973:80). Golding states that Mantalini's language, 'is, for all its emptiness, truly memorable and often extremely funny', despite its being the language of a character 'more foolish than intelligent', quoting Ralph Nickleby referring to Mantalini, as 'Half knave and half a fool' (1985: 90). What Golding overlooks is the extent to which the humorous element covers sinister undertones and draws attention to social issues. In reality we know little of the social background of Mr Mantalini, but through Mantalini's language, as with his dress, Dickens gives us the sense that there is a mismatch and that his extravagant language, like his lavish fashion style, is part of a subterfuge, a social mask, which Mantalini uses to manipulate the women in his life, to dupe money lenders and generally create a false sense of his own grandeur.

Dickens creates a comically affected, and often repeated, speech tag for Mr Mantalini to reflect the pretentiousness and artifice of his character. This speech tag is the principal variation represented in Mantalini's speech from Standard English. It marks a change in the standard pronunciation of the vowel sound /æ/ to /e/ in the word damn, thus in Mantalini's speech, damn becomes 'demn'. Mantalini continuously repeats forms of 'demd' (47 instances in the novel), 'demmit' (31 instances) and other forms of 'demn', such as 'demnable' and 'demnition' (a combined total of 26 times), the repetition of which adds to the humour and the imprinting of the character voice on readers' minds. The only other marker that indicates non-standard pronunciation is the suggestion of a shortened vowel sound from /ei/ to /i/ in the word 'outr-i-geously' (507). Besides these markers of distinct pronunciation, Mr Mantalini's speech contains humorous elements of figurative language. For instance, the use of multiple, exaggerated and florid adjectives and adjectival phrases: He refers to Ralph Nickleby as 'the demdest, longest-headed, queerest-tempered old coiner of gold and silver ever was—demmit' (*Nicholas Nickleby:* 190); he addresses his wife, 'you are an ungrateful, unworthy, demd unthankful little fairy' (276) and when he is trying to acquire some money from Ralph Nickleby in Chapter 34, he states his intention is 'to melt some scraps of dirty paper into bright, shining, chinking, tinkling, demd mint sauce' (507). He also layers adverbials, 'If you will be odiously, demnebly, outr_i_geously jealous, my

soul' (276), and Mantalini's language contains hyperbole, with such exaggerated statements as, 'Not for twenty thousand hemispheres populated with—with—with little ballet-dancers' (191). Mantalini is also in the habit of referring to himself and his wife with the third person neutral pronoun, 'it', 'Ashamed—of me, my joy? It knows it is talking demd charming sweetness, but naughty fibs,' returned Mr Mantalini. 'It knows it is not ashamed of its own popolorum tibby' (509). This use of 'it' appears as a ridiculous affectation. It is in accord with the babyish language he uses towards his partner, reducing her to a pronoun that could be used for a pet. The use of the impersonal pronoun 'it' also has the effect of diminishing his responsibility towards his partner by removing them both from the situation and replacing them with third person agents. It also distances him enough from his wife to permit the evacuation of responsibility as he drains his wife's fortunes.

One of the funniest features of Mantalini's idiolect is the way he provides various pet names for his wife. These include, 'my life and soul' (*Nicholas Nickleby*: 277), 'my soul's delight' (277), 'a demd, enchanting, bewitching, engrossing, captivating Venus' (331), 'my essential juice of pineapple' (277) and, 'My cup of happiness's sweetener' (336). Sometimes the affectionate praise is somewhat paradoxical, for example, 'She, who coils her fascinations round me like a pure angelic rattlesnake!' (277). Dickens heightens the comedic value with allusions to Mantalini's speech in the narrative and metalinguistic references to his manner of speaking. For example, when Mantalini asks his wife, 'May its poppet come in and talk?' Dickens later adds the term 'poppet', which Mantalini gives to himself, in the narration, 'The poppet, however, encouraged perhaps by the relenting tone of this reply, ventured to rebel' (331). Dickens also adds one of Mantalini's favourite terms for his wife into the narration for further comic effect: 'Why will it vex itself, and twist its little face into bewitching nutcrackers?' said Mantalini, putting his left arm round the waist of his life and soul, and drawing her towards him with his right' (331). Besides giving examples of direct and indirect speech, Dickens also refers to Mantalini's manner of speaking in the metalanguage used in the narration, which helps create the idea of Mantalini's flamboyant language; for example we are told in one instance that Mr Mantalini, 'replied in poetical strain' (191) and, in another instance, that he, was 'anathematising the stairs with great volubility' (193).

The dialogue between Mantalini and the cockney bailiff, Mr Scaley is a significant moment in the novel. Besides marking the moment when the extent of Mantalini's excessive, wasteful and fraudulent spending of his wife's fortune is exposed, it also offers a humorous and telling moment of linguistic contrast, in which Mantalini's falseness and affectation, is set off against Mr Scaley's no messing, down-to-earth, cockney voice. This is not to say that Mr Scaley, the bailiff, is a sympathetically drawn character, far from it, but his no-nonsense delivery of the sum owed by Mr Mantalini, in cockney dialect, breaks the delusional fantasy under which Mantalini has been existing:

> 'What's the demd total?' was the first question he asked.
> 'Fifteen hundred and twenty-seven pound, four and ninepence ha'penny,' replied Mr Scaley, without moving a limb.
> 'The halfpenny be demd,' said Mr Mantalini, impatiently.
> 'By all means if you vish it,' retorted Mr Scaley; 'and the ninepence.'
> 'It don't matter to us if the fifteen hundred and twenty-seven pound went along with it, that I know on,' observed Mr Tix.
> 'Not a button,' said Scaley.
> 'Well,' said the same gentleman, after a pause, 'wot's to be done—anything? Is it only a small crack, or a out-and-out smash? A break-up of the constitootion is it?—werry good. Then Mr Tom Tix, esk-vire, you must inform your angel wife and lovely family as you won't sleep at home for three nights to come, along of being in possession here. Wot's the good of the lady a fretting herself?' continued Mr Scaley, as Madame Mantalini sobbed. 'A good half of wot's here isn't paid for, I des-say, and wot a consolation oughtn't that to be to her feelings!'
>
> (*Nicholas Nickleby*: 336)

In this extract, Scaley's speech includes the typically used cockney /v/ for /w/ transposition, 'vish', 'esk-vire' and /w/ for /v/, 'conwenient', 'inwentory', 'werry', also, the non-standard spelling to present of *constitution* as 'constitootion' representing yod-dropping in pronunciation – a form used by both Sam and Tony Weller in *The Pickwick Papers* and *Master Humphrey's Clock*. Scaley's language follows a set of recognised

markers of cockney dialect, rather than a clearly distinguished idiolect. This contrasts with Mantalini's language, which is more heavily caricatured. Indeed Mantalini's idiolect is limited but specific, just relying on the repetition of 'demd'. In the characterisation of Mantalini, repetition of this one marker of non-standard pronunciation is the key factor in creating the sense of Mantalini's voice. Repetition not only helps build comedy by creating a caricature of Mantalini's affected speech, but it also makes the character highly memorable and easily identifiable. Although, I argue that Dickens uses this speech tag as a means of mocking pretentious language, it is worth noting that Mantalini's assertion, 'The halfpenny be demd' (334), finds its way into the cultural consciousness, as illustrated in *Punch*, as a mark of ridicule concerning over exact figures. Mantalini's response, 'The halfpenny be demd' (to the sum presented by Mr Scaley), is later included in the form of satire in *Punch Magazine*'s 'Punch's Essence of Parliament' articles as a humorous response to figures presented in parliament and deemed to be too meticulously precise. In one example from 1856, reporting the budget of the East India Company, the author writes, 'The Company has not mismanaged India so much as could have been anticipated, for the deficit in the coming year's revenue will only be £1,159, 109, so exact is the mis-Government in calculating the result of its future blunders. Had Mr Mantalini been in the House he would have said "the nine pound be demd."' (*Punch Historical Archive*, Saturday 2 August 1856: 41) Mantalini's language is drawn on again in an issue of 'Punch's Essence of Parliament' from 1872 in relation to the Consolidated Fund Bill, 'And yet the Lords did meet for a few minutes, and heard the Royal Assent given to some Bills, especially the Consolidated Fund Bill, regarding £5,411,099 3*s.* 3*d.* "The three-penny-bit be demd." Said Mr Mantalini' (*Punch Historical Archive*, Saturday 6 April 1872: 140)

Although Mr Mantalini is a predominantly comic character, his role in the novel is not benign: he has enough of an air of sinister predator about him to trouble Kate Nickleby. Mantalini's extravagant spending bankrupts his wife and he is the one who informs Ralph Nickleby of Nicholas's violent altercation with Sir Mulberry Hawk. The depiction of Mantalini's character also acts as a critique of the social class he represents. Whilst the Mantalinis occupy the higher end of the scale, their wealth has been acquired from an industry that profits from tremendous exploitation of labour. On Kate Nickleby's journey to her first day at work, the narrator notes that;

> At this early hour many sickly girls, whose business, like that of the poor worm, is to produce, with patient toil, the finery that bedecks the thoughtless and luxurious, traverse our streets, making towards the scene of their daily labour, and catching, as if by stealth, in their hurried walk, the only gasp of wholesome air and glimpse of sunlight which cheer their monotonous existence during the long train of hours that make a working day.
>
> (*Nicholas Nickleby*: 274)

Although the Mantalinis are comic characters in the novel, they are also symbolic of this exploitative industry: with their luxuriant, exotic fabrics and clothes, decadent parties, excessive emotions and affected manners, they earn their living from employing seamstresses in cramped conditions. We are told that the Mantalinis employ 'a number of young women' to work in 'a close room with a skylight, and as dull and quiet as a room need be' (278). Indeed, Phiz's illustration entitled 'Madame Mantalini Introduces Kate to Miss Knag', which accompanies the chapter, features fourteen women in a small room with a small skylight above them. Dickens's depiction of the Mantalinis' enterprise, drew attention to a social issue, which was to become the focus of considerable philanthropic interest in the 1840s, namely the plight of seamstresses. This was exacerbated after the publication of the findings of the Children's Employment Commission of 1843, which drew attention to the working conditions of seamstresses, particularly in the London area, likening the needle trade to slavery.[2] Evidence that the Mantalinis became seen as being representative of this exploitative trade is demonstrated by an article in *Punch* entitled 'Our Suffocated Sempstresses' from 1863, in which Mantalini's voice is evoked to demonstrate the lack of responsibility on the behalf of employers to the plight of their seamstresses. The article concludes:

> So the tale is told, and so will it be repeated, and when another slave is stifled, good Mr Mantalini will heave a sigh of sympathy and say he's **reelly** very sorry, but – but how *can* he help it? Of course by increasing the number of his work women, which would lessen his profits, and hiring extra houses, he might give his slaves more sleeping room and prevent their being stifled. But, dear kind

[2] For a detailed account of this industry see Helen Rogers. 1997. '"The Good Are Not Always Powerful, nor the Powerful Always Good": The Politics of Women's Needlework in Mid-Victorian London'. *Victorian Studies*, 40(4), 589-623.

> thoughtless creature, he will never dream of this, until an Act of Parliament obliges him to do so, and the spectres of his work-rooms have a Government Inspector.
>
> (*Punch Historical Archive*, Saturday 4 July 1863: 4)

Note that whilst the article does not include Mantalini's characteristic 'demd', instead it has a respelling of the word 'really' as 'reelly'. The writer has changed the letter 'a' to another 'e' in an attempt to represent Mantalini's 'demd' for 'damned'. Although, it does not work in terms of vowel sound, as damned / 'demd' goes from /æ/ to /e/ and really/ 'reelly' suggests an /ɪə/ to /i:/ change, it is still significant that the writer includes this spelling change to denote this feature of Mantalini's speech to help identify him to the reader. This time, far from being humorous, it associates this kind of linguistic pretention with dishonest exploitation and lack of social responsibility.

Mr Turveydrop in *Bleak House* is a similar character type to Mr Mantalini, with an over-exaggerated sense of his own grandeur and self-importance. We are informed by Caddy that 'Old Mr Turveydrop is a very gentlemanly man indeed—very gentlemanly' (221) and we are told that, 'He is celebrated almost everywhere for his deportment'. Dickens does not really give Mr Turveydrop any particular speech tags that indicate non-standard pronunciation, apart from the word 'woman', which, in his speech is 'wooman'. He refers to his dead wife as, 'a devoted creature. But wooman, lovely wooman' (229). Interestingly, this spelling, indicating a longer vowel sound of /u:/ instead of the short vowel sound, /ʊ/, as commonly used in Standard English, bears a closer resemblance to Sam Weller's pronunciation, 'Well, you are a nice young 'ooman for a musical party, you are' (*The Pickwick Papers*: 108). This marker of pronunciation could merely suggest a more old-fashioned form of pronunciation, after all, *The Pickwick Papers* were set in the 1820s and Mr Turveydrop, embodies characteristics of an anachronistic, regency style. Mugglestone notes that Queen Victoria recollects the 'ooman' pronunciation of 'woman' as being the way people spoke in her youth (2003: 134), indicating that it was a form not only used by cockney speakers, but by the upper classes too.

Besides the one marker of non-standard pronunciation indicated in Mr Turveydrop's speech, other characteristics are mainly rhetorical and thematic.

Turveydrop's catchphrase could be the verb 'to polish', which he repeats at several points in the novel; 'We do our best to polish — polish — polish !' (*Bleak House*: 228), '"To polish — polish — polish!" he repeated' (228) and later, 'using our little arts to polish, polish!' (376). This verb, the act of giving a surface a shiny veneer, is in keeping with Turveydrop's superficial character. This linguistic metaphor, in which the speech of a character reflects the superficiality of the persona is carried out to a further degree with the description of the Veneerings in *Our Mutual Friend*. Not only is their name a synonym of superficial polish, but they are also likened to the polish of their furniture, 'And what was observable in the furniture, was observable in the Veneerings—the surface smelt a little too much of the workshop and was a trifle sticky' (*Our Mutual Friend*: 48).

As a model of 'deportment', Mr Turveydrop is presented as an individual who values outward appearance above any other virtue. In Dickens's first description of his appearance in the novel, Dickens describes him thus:

> He was a fat old gentleman with a false complexion, false teeth, false whiskers, and a wig... He was pinched in, and swelled out, and got up, and strapped down, as much as he could possibly bear… He had a cane, he had an eye-glass, he had a snuff-box, he had rings, he had wristbands, he had everything but any touch of nature; he was not like youth, he was not like age, he was not like anything in the world but a model of Deportment.
>
> (*Bleak House*: 225)

Absolutely everything about him is false and artificial and his speech mirrors this. Other features that are characteristic of Turveydrop's speech are using a series of exclamations of social niceties, either directed as compliments to Esther, such as 'Distinguished' (225), 'Charmed!' (376), 'Enchanted' (376), 'Overjoyed!' (376) or orders of social politeness, such as, 'Permit me!' (376) and 'Be Seated!' (376). There is not a lot of substance to Turveydrop's speech. He rarely expresses much more than these social niceties or repeated name-dropping concerning his associations with the Prince Regent. Dickens uses these features of Turveydrop's speech to develop the sense of Turveydrop as an aspiring character, and they are repeated to add humour and strengthen the caricature. However, like Mantalini, but to a lesser degree, the humour of Turveydrop's

character conceals a slightly darker cynicism towards this character type. Turveydrop may not be a fraud to the same extent as Mantalini, however he has neglected his parental duties and even exploited his son to further his own vanities. The narratorial description of Turveydrop as 'a model of parental deportment' (378) is paradoxical, as 'deportment' is hardly an important attribute of parenting. To a certain extent, Mr Turveydrop mirrors the delinquent parenting of his son's new mother-in-law, Mrs Jellyby, whose 'telescopic philanthropy' means that she directs all her attention towards her causes, whilst neglecting her family. In *Bleak House*, the epitome of abnegation of responsibility and exploitation of friends and family is illustrated by the character or Skimpole, who constantly absolves himself of any guilt in the matter by claiming to be 'a mere child'. These repeated motifs of delinquent parenting reflect Dickens's personal experiences as a child. These superficially comic characters reflect more serious elements of social critique, under the guise of humour. What makes these characters funny in terms of speech, often involves the repetition of particular speech tags.

The Parvenu and Social Awkwardness

In Dickens's novels, sudden changes in social status due to inheritance or other unforeseen circumstances often see characters struggling socially, and linguistically, to fit in with their new positions. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in *Our Mutual Friend*. Set in Dickens's own time (unlike most of his previous novels), *Our Mutual Friend* offers a detailed and nuanced study of social aspirations, mobility, and the awkwardness and struggle involved in crossing class boundaries. The novel contains an array of characters undergoing social change. Indeed the main plot, crudely defined, is a 'rags to riches' story, in which Lizzie Hexam, the daughter of a river scavenger, a member of one of the lowest echelons of society, through the possession of an inherently good character (and a little education), ends up marrying an upper-middle class gentleman, Eugene Wrayburn, who, in return, gains moral improvement through association with Lizzie's goodness. However, there are also a wide variety of other characters in the novel who embody social change; from the fashionable, nouveau riche Veneerings, to the Boffins, servants who become beneficiaries of the Harmon Estate, to the entrepreneurial Silas Wegg, to those who have 'bettered' themselves through education, such as the exacting schoolmaster, Bradley Headstone and his zealous pupil,

Charley Hexam. In the stratified world depicted in *Our Mutual Friend*, speech plays a crucial role in encoding social class. Although Lizzie's speech undergoes a very slight transformation in the novel, she is represented as speaking Standard English almost from the outset, without any signs of linguistic awkwardness. As mentioned previously, this is due in part to her role and moral function in the novel as the heroine. However, other characters that undergo social transformation in the novel do not transition so seamlessly in their speech. Linguistic awkwardness is often manifested through slips in prescribed language rules and elements that could be deemed as linguistic pretension.

As I mentioned in the chapter introduction, the Boffins embody the self-consciousness of shifting social class once they unexpectedly find themselves part of the nouveaux-riches through inheritance. The Boffins, the trusted old servants of the late Mr Harmon, had already been bequeathed 'the lowest of the range of dust-mountains, with some sort of a dwelling-house at its foot' (58) on the death of his master, but after the supposed death of the young John Harmon, the Boffins inherit the entire Harmon fortune. The Boffins are then left to reposition themselves in society; no longer belonging to the social class they have come from, yet they are not able to suddenly integrate themselves fully into the higher-class society that their fortune gains them access to. Their class-consciousness manifests itself in their manners and way of speaking. Dickens is relatively playful with their language and their language alters, particularly that of Mr Boffin, in the novel. At the beginning of the novel, the reader is introduced to Mr Boffin as he solicits help with his literacy from Silas Wegg; a character whom he perceives to be learned:

> 'Man alive, don't I tell you? A **diseased** governor? Now, it's too late for me to begin shovelling and sifting at **alphabeds** and grammar-books. I'm getting to be a old bird, and I want to take it easy. But I want some reading—some fine bold reading, some splendid book in a gorging Lord-Mayor's-Show of **wollumes**' (probably meaning gorgeous, but misled by association of ideas); 'as'll reach right down your **pint** of view, and take time to go by you. How can I get that reading, Wegg? By,' tapping him on the breast with the head of his thick stick, 'paying a man truly qualified to do it, so much an hour (say twopence) to come and do it.'
>
> (*Our Mutual Friend*: 94)

Boffin's language is characterised by the use of malapropisms, such as 'diseased' for *deceased*, 'alphabeds' for *alphabets* and 'gorging' for *gorgeous*. It also contains the typical cockney marker of /w/ for /v/ in 'wollumes' and other non-standard pronunciation is indicated, such as 'pint' for *point*. Boffin's language at the beginning of the novel displays markers of social and linguistic insecurity, for example, when he tells Wegg that his reason for seeking his help with his reading, he is depicted as using /h/ insertion in his speech; he states, 'I listened with hadmiration amounting to haw. I thought to myself, "Here's a man with a wooden leg -- a literary man with--"' (*Our Mutual Friend*: 93). Here Dickens depicts Boffin as using hyper-correction ('hadmiration' for *admiration* and 'haw' for *awe*) which suggests he is trying too hard. These details reveal Boffin's social aspirations and at the same time betray his class origins. It is also significant and fitting that Dickens includes these linguistic markers of hyper-correction as Boffin makes this utterance of veneration to Silas Wegg, demonstrating Dickens's awareness of these linguistic markers as symbols of the social awkwardness. Other features of Boffin's language in the first dialogue with Wegg reveal his cockney speaking origins. As well as the /h/ insertion, he also drops his aitches, 'No, sir. I never did 'aggle and I never will 'aggle' (*Our Mutual Friend*: 96). He uses non-standard negation, such as 'And it is, ain't it?' (96) When calculating the figure he'd be able to pay Silas Wegg, he goes through a process of adding up 'long'uns' and 'short'uns' (*long ones* and *short ones*) (96) indicating the loss of the /w/ sound and a change of vowel sound from /wʌnz/ to / ənz/. The comical conversation that takes place between Boffin and Wegg, as they try to impress each other in negotiation, involves some awkward style shifting as the two men try to figure each other out and negotiate a deal in a teacher-pupil relationship. The humorous interaction on the mistakenly titled 'Decline-And-Fall-Off-The-Rooshan-Empire' displays Boffin's reverence for books and the written form, from the point of view of someone who cannot access them due to illiteracy. Boffin describes the book to Wegg by appearance only, as he has no way of understanding its content, 'Eight wollumes. Red and gold…Purple ribbon in every wollume' (*Our Mutual Friend*: 96) and then asks Wegg, 'Do you know him?' (96), amusingly attributing further reverence to the book by personifying it. When Wegg enquires as to the name of the book, Boffin responds, 'I thought you might have know'd him without it' (96), demonstrating that Boffin had been, to this point, only able to distinguish books by their physical attributes. When

Boffin gives his version of the title, Silas Wegg continues the conceit of the personification of the volume by saying, 'I haven't been not to say right slap through him, very lately' (96). The fact that Boffin has mistaken the name, labelling it the 'Decline-and-Fall-Off-The-Rooshan-Empire' rather than the *Roman Empire* and that Wegg is unable to correct him, whilst also feigning his familiarity with the book - 'But know him? Old familiar declining and falling off the Rooshan? Rather, sir! Ever since I was not so high as your stick' (97) - add to the humour of the scene and demonstrate the intellectual and social awkwardness of each character. Boffin tries to elevate his language to match his perceived idea of Wegg's superior knowledge and intellect, whilst Wegg, in order to secure Boffin's patronage, tries to rise to meet Boffin's preconceived idea of him. Dickens makes use of a range of linguistic markers, which illustrate both the characters' linguistic backgrounds and their awkward attempts to sound more cultured or literate than they are, with comic effect.

The language of Mrs 'Henerietty' Boffin is predominantly Standard English, but contains examples of non-standard English. In the early part of the novel, she mainly appears as the subject of her husband's conversation. Mr Boffin repeatedly describes Mrs Boffin as a 'highflyer at Fashion' (97). Whenever discussing his wife Mr Boffin uses words such as 'Fashion' (97) and 'Society' (144) written with a capitalized first letter, accentuating their admiration for these institutions of polite society. Mrs Boffin's language also contains these capitalisations for 'Fashion' and 'Society':

> 'Now, I'll tell you what I want, Noddy,' said Mrs Boffin, smoothing her dress with an air of immense enjoyment, 'I want **Society**.'
> '**Fashionable Society**, my dear?'
> 'Yes!' cried Mrs Boffin, laughing with the glee of a child. 'Yes! It's no good my being kept here like **Wax-Work**; is it now?'
> 'People have to pay to see **Wax-Work**, my dear,' returned her husband, 'whereas (though you'd be cheap at the same money) the neighbours is welcome to see you for nothing.'
> '**But it don't answer**,' said the cheerful Mrs Boffin. 'When we worked like the neighbours, we suited one another. Now we have left work off; we have left off suiting one another.'
> 'What, do you think of beginning work again?' Mr Boffin hinted.

> ‘Out of the question! We have come into a great fortune, and we must do what’s right by our fortune; we must act up to it.’
>
> (*Our Mutual Friend*: 144)

In this extract from the novel, Mrs Boffin’s language includes capitalization of the ‘Society’ as previously mentioned. It is unclear exactly what phonological change Dickens intended by using this form of punctuation, perhaps added emphasis or stress of these words. Mrs Boffin also uses non-standard grammar in terms of subject verb agreement, ‘But it don’t answer’ (mirroring the non-standard grammar of her husband, ‘the neighbours is welcome’) and she uses a few more colloquial phrasal verbs, such as ‘left off’ doing something and to ‘act up’ to something. Her language is generally simple, but by using these subtle changes in capitalisation, Dickens suggests that she stresses the words of the things she aspires to in her speech. The occasional use of non-standard grammar demonstrates the language barrier she faces in assimilation into high society.

Mr Boffin’s language changes quite considerably in the novel. In later passages in the novel there are very few markers of non-standard dialect, nor, indeed, the markers of hyper-correction or linguistic over-stretching that characterized some of the language he uses in his conversation with Wegg at the beginning of the novel. In this passage from the end of the novel, for example, in which Boffin has discovered Wegg’s devious plotting, but chooses to take pity on him, Boffin’s language contains no markers of non-standard English;

> ‘I am sorry, Wegg,’ said Mr Boffin, in his clemency, ‘that my old lady and I can’t have a better opinion of you than the bad one we are forced to entertain. But I shouldn’t like to leave you, after all said and done, worse off in life than I found you. Therefore say in a word, before we part, what it’ll cost to set you up in another stall.’
>
> (*Our Mutual Friend*: 860)

With this change in register and the removal of markers of non-standard English, Dickens demonstrates, although somewhat unrealistically, that Boffin’s language has managed to assimilate to its target language of Standard English to match his newfound status and reflect his improved literacy through his private lessons with Silas Wegg.

Dickens also demonstrates sensitivity towards the role speech plays in attaining membership to higher levels of society. However, both Page (1973) and Golding (1985) criticise Dickens for the change in Boffin's speech in the novel. Page suggests that Boffin's change of language reflects a change of heart by the author regarding Boffin's characterization and role in the novel. Page states:

> Mr Boffin's speech undergoes a more permanent transformation which suggests that Dickens may have modified his original conception of this character's role. The malapropisms and comic mispronunciations in Boffin's early speeches very largely disappear in the latter part of the novel as he changes from an eccentric of minor importance to a dramatic figure in his own right.
>
> (1973: 111)

Whereas Golding takes this criticism further by seeing Boffin's language change as a fault on the part of Dickens, revealing signs of Dickens's inconsistency. Golding writes:

> Worst of all is Mr Boffin, who displays far-reaching inconsistency between his initial scenes, particularly with Wegg, and those that follow, such as his confrontation with the fortune-hunting Lammles: on the one hand, speech that is keenly redolent of Cockney cheek, wit and quick-thinking; on the other, obviously slower in delivery, dry to the point of colourlessness, and with a touch of pomposity.
>
> (1985: 186)

Golding later proceeds to attribute this inconsistency on Dickens's part to the fact that the writer was, 'sporadically succumbing to an uncharacteristic but not surprising tiredness' (1985: 186). I believe that Golding's critical evaluation is too speculative to make a convincing argument. It may be difficult to fully grasp what Dickens was intending with Boffin's change of speech in the novel. However, it seems unlikely that it was unintentional and that Dickens was becoming sloppy in his writing style due to the pressures of literary production, as Golding suggests. Rather, it shows that Dickens meant to demonstrate that Boffin acquires Standard English speech due to his change in status and through his newfound literacy. Through Boffin's character, Dickens is demonstrating an awareness of the embodied cultural capital inherent in speech

production, as manifested by Boffin's desire to 'speak posh' to fulfil his new higher status social role (Bourdieu 1986). Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital outlines the value inherent in embodying certain features such as education or language ability, other than material possessions, which can afford a particular status in society (1986). Also, Boffin's character demonstrates Dickens's astute awareness of the performative nature of speech register as is demonstrated by the part of the novel in which Boffin, inspired by his reading of 'Merryweather's Lives and Anecdotes of Misers', decides to commit a 'pious fraud' and assume the role of a miser in order to test and elicit Bella Wilfer's true feelings for John Harmon. Boffin's ability to assume roles and mislead others casts some doubt on the reliability of the early scenes as a true indication of his character, mannerisms and speech, which could be read as yet another example of his ability to perform and to don social masks. It could be that Boffin's speech at the beginning of the novel is meant to be an act in order to strike a better deal with Silas Wegg. Regardless of authorial intention, Dickens demonstrates through Boffin's speech, an awareness of the awkwardness of language across class boundaries and the performative nature of social class through adherence to or assimilation of prescriptive language rules and their embodied associations of social status.

Silas Wegg's language is often speculative, evasive and circumlocutory, and he craftily uses speech as a tool for his own self-aggrandisement. Prior to meeting Boffin, he speaks to himself to speculate on Boffin's activity:

> 'Here you are again,' repeated Mr Wegg, musing. 'And what are you now? Are you in the Funns, or where are you? Have you lately come to settle in this neighbourhood, or do you own to another neighbourhood? Are you in independent circumstances, or is it wasting the motions of a bow on you? Come! I'll speculate! I'll invest a bow in you.'
>
> (*Our Mutual Friend*: 90)

Wegg's language, like Boffin's, contains markers of non-standard, cockney dialect, although the examples are fewer. His language contains markers such as /w/ for /v/, in the case of 'weal' pie (102). He uses non-standard syntax, for example, 'Was you thinking at all of poetry?' (95) in which he replaces 'was' for 'were'. Like Boffin, he uses the non-standard negative contraction of 'ain't' in his speech. As we have seen, in

the dialogue between Mr Boffin and Silas Wegg at their first meeting, both characters grapple with trying to sound more enlightened and educated than they are and to be perceived as speaking correctly. Wegg often adopts charm and flattery in his art of persuasion; for example, when purloining some of Boffin's pie:

> 'Have I lost my smell for fruits, or is it a apple pie, sir?' asked Wegg.
> 'It's a veal and ham pie,' said Mr Boffin.
> 'Is it indeed, sir? And it would be hard, sir, to name the pie that is a better pie than a weal and hammer,' said Mr Wegg, nodding his head emotionally.
> 'Have some, Wegg?'
> 'Thank you, Mr Boffin, I think I will, at your invitation. I wouldn't at any other party's, at the present juncture; but at yours, sir!—And meaty jelly too, especially when a little salt, which is the case where there's ham, is mellering to the organ, is very mellering to the organ.' Mr Wegg did not say what organ, but spoke with a cheerful generality.
>
> (*Our Mutual Friend*: 102)

According to Wegg, gin and water also 'mellers' the organ (*Our Mutual Friend*: 102). This generalized verb, which is (I assume) a variation on 'mellows' lacks any specific meaning and creates a rather vague impression. This vagueness of language helps characterise Wegg's covert nature. Although much is revealed regarding Wegg's character and ambition through his speech and description in the narration, his desire for upward mobility is self-confessed later in his discussion with Mr Venus, when he states:

> 'I have a prospect of getting on in life and elevating myself by my own independent exertions,' says Wegg, feelingly, 'and I shouldn't like—I tell you openly I should not like—under such circumstances, to be what I may call dispersed, a part of me here, and a part of me there, but should wish to collect myself like a genteel person.'
>
> (*Our Mutual Friend*: 127)

Wegg's language reflects his character; that of a person constantly aspiring towards social advancement. Golding (1985) describes Wegg as:

> a rewarding language collage, in both its external detail and intrinsic qualities.

> The parodic nature of its non-standard gentility lays bare the obsessive greed of Wegg's grasping, parasitic nature and the tawdry values of a society that has brought him to such a state.
>
> (Golding 1985: 187)

Golding's description seems somewhat overblown, both in terms of describing Wegg's character as 'parasitic' and in blaming society for the type of character he has become. He is to a certain degree both a victim of circumstance and a devious opportunist, but he is not quite as devious and loathsome as some of Dickens's other upwardly-mobile characters. The character of Wegg still draws a slightly sympathetic response from the reader and contains a degree of humour.

Professional Upstarts

Whereas the characters previously mentioned have demonstrated an awkwardness through language, reflecting their social insecurity and class consciousness, the overall effect has been playful and generally humorous. Their particular speech characteristics have been used to reinforce the idea of their ostentation, in the case of Mantalini and Turveydrop, or to expose their social awkwardness and struggle to belong, in the case of characters such as Boffin and Wegg. In each case, the effect is mostly comical, although, as I have mentioned previously, the satirical nature of these character, which makes them almost caricature, reflect wider social issues, for example, in the case of the Mantalini's affectation and falseness, reflecting the higher end of the exploitative fashion industry or Wegg's circumlocution as a reflection of his desire to deceive. In the cases I have discussed the role of language is to reinforce a humorous identity for the characters. Ostentatious speech tags are worn like items of clothing, as symbols of their pretentious desires and the repetition of which make the characters and their speech comically memorable. However, with certain characters, who have become upwardly mobile through education or professional endeavours, Dickens's portrayals can seem judgmental and unforgiving. In these cases, it is sometimes as though Dickens is criticising upward mobility itself in a rather snobbish fashion. Speech plays an important role in these characterisations too, albeit in a different or subtler way. In this section I'll look at how three professional characters are treated, in terms of speech and characterisation.

Mr Guppy, the legal clerk in *Bleak House*, for example, demonstrates features of linguistic awkwardness, which betray his origins and prevent him from full membership of the higher social class to which he aspires. Guppy's lower-class roots are indicated through his /h/ dropping, use of colloquial language and non-standard syntax, for example when he sees the portrait of Lady Dedlock, he exclaims, '"Well!" says Mr Guppy in a low voice. "I'll be shot if it ain't very curious how well I know that picture! So that's Lady Dedlock, is it!"'(111). However, at the same time, his aspiration is also reflected linguistically and is indicated by his overuse of the legal language of his profession. Guppy allows legal jargon to infiltrate his language in all aspects of his life, including his private life. Indeed, this linguistic faux pas, is one of the improprieties warned against by Lindley Murray in *English Grammar* when he advises readers to 'avoid the injudicious use of technical terms' (1809: 277) by carrying it into other areas of life. Guppy's marriage proposal to Esther Summerson, showcases perfectly all these linguistic elements and his confused use of social registers:

> "Not half a glass?" said Mr Guppy. "Quarter? No! Then, to proceed. My present salary, Miss Summerson, at Kenge and Carboy's, is two pound a week. When I first had the happiness of looking upon you, it was one fifteen, and had stood at that figure for a lengthened period. A rise of five has since taken place, and a further rise of five is guaranteed at the expiration of a term not exceeding twelve months from the present date. My mother has a little property, which takes the form of a small life annuity, upon which she lives in an independent though unassuming manner in the Old Street Road. She is eminently calculated for a mother-in-law. She never interferes, is all for peace, and her disposition easy. She has her failings—as who has not?—but I never knew her do it when company was present, at which time you may freely trust her with wines, spirits, or malt liquors. My own abode is lodgings at Penton Place, Pentonville. It is lowly, but airy, open at the back, and considered one of the 'ealthiest outlets. Miss Summerson! In the mildest language, I adore you. Would you be so kind as to allow me (as I may say) to file a declaration—to make an offer!"
>
> (*Bleak House*: 150)

Guppy struggles with the intensity of his language and uses legal terminology as a matter of course, even where it is not appropriate. He uses financial and legal lexis,

more suitable to a business deal, referring to his ‘salary’, ‘a rise’ being ‘guaranteed’, his ‘eminently calculated’ mother, who has a ‘small annuity’, the proposal itself he puts to her as ‘to file a declaration’ or ‘to make an offer’. When his feelings are expressed, there is no control over his passion and he blurts out, ‘I adore you’. In terms of syntax, Guppy favours the more formal tone of using the passive voice: ‘a further rise of five is guaranteed at the expiration of a term’. Yet, still his language contains /h/ dropping, when he refers to the 'ealthiest outlets’, exposing his social and linguistic background. There are certainly elements of comedy in Guppy’s characterization and speech, demonstrated in his ridiculous marriage proposal, and, later in its retraction, once he sees Esther’s pockmarked face. There are also elements of pathos to his character. He is not ruthless or overly ambitious, like Uriah Heep,

Whilst some upwardly mobile characters, demonstrating characteristics of affected speech, are a source of fun and amusement, others play a far darker role and their language features are often used to betray sinister or untrustworthy elements. The clearest example of this is with Uriah Heep, who can be read as a harsh critique of social upward mobility. Heep, the overly ambitious, obsequious and (falsely) self-deprecating clerk to Mr Wickfield, who eventually manipulates his way into becoming a partner in Wickfield’s law firm, is eventually discovered to be a criminal, an unscrupulous swindler and blackmailer. Uriah’s characterisation in the novel, through the eyes of David Copperfield, is that of an ugly, repellent, loathsome, creature. He is spectral, first described as ‘cadaverous’ (*David Copperfield*: 225) and with ‘sleepless eyes’ (228), with ‘clammy’ and ‘ghostly’ hands (231). David spies him ‘breathing into the pony’s nostrils, and immediately covering them with his hand, as if he were putting some spell upon him’ (226). He is repeatedly described as an animal or having animal-like qualities, being lizard-like, slimy and scaly. He is also described as ‘an eel’ (522). As he reads, he follows the page line with his ‘clammy’ finger, ‘like a snail’ (239). He moves with ‘snaky twistings’ (241) and is often described as ‘writhing’ (241). Yet David is strangely drawn to him. When David is tempted to enter Heep’s office, he explains his motivation thus, ‘immediately feeling myself attracted towards Uriah Heep, who had a sort of fascination for me’. David experiences a troubling mixture of revulsion and attraction in relation to Heep. Heep’s language plays an important role in his characterization and embodies Dickens’s satirical attitudes towards linguistic affectation. Uriah Heep’s famous leitmotif, which is the repetition of the word ‘’umble’

(*humble*) and its various forms, is an essential marker of his ambiguous social standing and a subterfuge of his ambitious intentions. Norman Page describes this emblematic feature of Heep's language as being 'an important clue to the calculated self-abasement which is part of his strategy as plotter and hypocrite' (Page, 1973: 93). John Jordan argues that the inclusion of this linguistic feature in Uriah's speech, 'is the mark of a significant social distinction made by the middle-class narrator for his presumably middle-class audience' and Jordan continues by describing it as 'verismilitude' on the part of the author, stating that Heep's h-dropping, 'supports David's program of legitimizing middle-class superiority' (1985: 79). Jordan's underlying argument is that Dickens's treatment of Uriah is predominantly a reflection of David's own class anxiety and thus should not be read as a true reflection of the attitudes of the author. Whilst there are truths in this interpretation, it is reductive to suggest that Uriah's characterization betrays no attitudes or prejudices on behalf of the author and is only meant to illustrate those of his character. Lynda Mugglestone (1995) provides a very thorough analysis of Uriah's language in her chapter, '/h/ and Other Symbols of the Social Divide', in which she situates Uriah's speech within a historical treatment of this form of pronunciation. The pronunciation of the word 'humble' was one of several Latinate words that were still in flux in the nineteenth century. As 'humble' was a French loan word, the pronunciation was originally without the /h/ sound and pronounced 'umble'. Indeed, even in *The Poor Letter H* (1854) an /h/ less form is still recommended (1854: 19). However, the pronunciation of this word was beginning to move towards an aspirated version and its pronunciation was beginning to be seen as a divider of social class, which Dickens demonstrates clear awareness of by its treatment in the novel.

In the case of Uriah, Dickens is not using a marker of linguistic and social aspiration, as implied by such features of hyper-correction such as /h/ insertion, like Boffin's 'hadmiration and hawe', or altered vowel sounds like Mantalini's 'demmit' or other features of language which could be seen as hyperbole. Instead, Dickens gives Heep this linguistic characteristic of /h/ dropping, to reflect the image that Heep wants to portray of himself as less threatening and less ambitious than he really is. In this case, the lack of aspiration in the phonetic sense of the word, in other words, the lack of aspiration of the /h/ sound, equates with the other meaning of having a lack of aspiration, as having no ambition. This feature of Heep's speech emphasizes his

humility through failing to perform this shibboleth of class inclusion (aspirating the letter 'h' in prevocalic position) in his speech. In fact, Heep is doing the opposite of 'speakin' posh'. He is deliberately emphasising his lower class status through language to sound more lower class, rather like the modern day 'Mockney', but with more sinister intent. By representing Heep's language thus, Dickens once again demonstrates an astute awareness of how these variations in pronunciation denote social standing within society:

> 'Oh, indeed you must excuse me, Master Copperfield! I am greatly obliged, and I should like it of all things, I assure you; but I am far too umble. There are people enough to tread upon me in my lowly state, without my doing outrage to their feelings by possessing learning. Learning ain't for me. A person like myself had better not aspire. If he is to get on in life, he must get on umbly, Master Copperfield!'
>
> (*David Copperfield*: 260)

Uriah's language does not feature many other examples of non-standard markers. Occasionally, he uses the 'ain't' contraction form, as can be seen in the passage above. His language also contains one or two other examples of /h/ dropping in other words beginning with the letter h, such as ''ouse' (*house*) and ''appy' (*happy*) and when he wishes David 'your elth and appiness!', but these /h/ less forms are used inconsistently, as can be demonstrated by the following passage, which contains many words beginning with the letter *h*, but the /h/ less form is only evident in the forms of *humble*;

> 'there's no doubt of it. There would **have** been loss, disgrace, I don't know what at all. Mr Wickfield knows it. I am the **umble** instrument of **umbly** serving **him**, and **he** puts me on an eminence I **hardly** could **have hoped** to reach. **How** thankful should I be!'
>
> (*David Copperfield*: 385)

Heep frequently makes protestations of his own 'umbleness' besides those accompanied by a form of the word 'umble'. Of his own learning, he remarks, 'Learning ain't for me. A person like myself had better not aspire.' He often refers to himself and his background as 'lowly'; he claims to just be 'emerging from his lowly station' (387) and

refers to his ‘lowly dwellings’ (242). Heep uses obsequious language when speaking to David, such as, ‘I am sure it’s very kind of you to make the offer’ (260) and ‘This is indeed an unexpected pleasure!’ (750)

He also makes use of euphemism, which causes the young David a certain degree of confusion. For example, when Heep is asked about his father, he euphemistically indicates the fact his father is dead by saying, ‘He is a partaker of glory at the present’ (240). Heep often exploits false modesty, in a form of humble-bragging, ‘my reading is hardly to be called study. I have passed an hour or two in the evening, sometimes, with Mr Tidd.’ (260), of his father he boasts, ‘Father got the monitor-medal by being umble. So did I’ (579). Uriah Heep’s mother reinforces the connection between their humility and the use of the /h/ less ‘umble’ form:

> ‘My Uriah,’ said Mrs Heep, ‘has looked forward to this, sir, a long while. He had his fears that our umbleness stood in the way, and I joined in them myself. Umble we are, umble we have been, umble we shall ever be,’ said Mrs Heep.
>
> (*David Copperfield*: 261)

Uriah Heep, like Bradley Headstone, is the product of charitable free education, he went to a ‘foundation school for boys’, where he, and his parents before him, were taught ‘to pull off our caps here, and to make bows there; and always know our place, and abase ourselves, before our betters’ (579). And, as in the case of Headstone, whom I will discuss shortly, one might expect Dickens to be more sympathetic to a character from poor origins, with a charitable institution education, who has managed to reach a level of professional accomplishment. However, like Headstone’s, Uriah’s character is a warning, reflecting the paucity of such an education system. Heep’s linguistic fraud reveals itself once his criminal activity has been exposed. Indeed, after the interception in his plotting and conniving, his language changes. Not only does he abandon his ‘umble’ mantra, his language is denoted as including [h]s again. Mugglestone points out this change in his language:

> His pose of humility forgotten as he is brought to bay, Heep, in his anger, manifests a new ability for control, not only in terms of that assumed over other people but also over the use of [h]: ‘“Miss Trotwood, you had better stop this; or

> I'll stop your husband shorter than will be pleasant to you….Miss Wickfield, if you have any love for your father, you had better not join the gang….Now, come! I have got some of you under the harrow. Think twice, before it goes over you."' *Have*, *husband*, *hold*, *harrow*, *had* no longer pose problems. The use of [h], long described in contemporary writings on language as an effective symbol of power and position, here makes full appearance as the 'old trick' of humility is entirely dropped, together with its markers, linguistic as well as social.
>
> (Mugglestone 1995: 126)

The case of Uriah is slightly different to all the other characters in this section, in that he is knowingly performing a linguistic double bluff by using this form of pronunciation, which adds to the humble effect of his professed 'umbleness'. He uses this form of pronunciation as a foil, which masks his ruthless ambition.

Dickens's depiction of the London schoolmaster, Bradley Headstone, who had started life as 'a pauper lad' and was destined for a life at sea (*Our Mutual Friend*: 126), but had, through the charity school education system, raised himself to a position of school master, appears to be another uncharacteristically harsh critique of upward mobility, especially considering Dickens's commitment to self-improvement and his own personal awareness of the value of education as an escape from a life of drudgery. Rebecca Richardson (2013) discusses the contradictory scorn Dickens imposes on self-help in his depiction of Bradley Headstone. She argues that even though Dickens was a figure who had used self-help to achieve his goals, the heroes of his novels often achieve success without much personal effort, for example, Nicholas Nickleby or Oliver Twist. She cites John Jordan who argues that David Copperfield 'tends to disavow his social ambition and aggression' and instead condemns these characteristics in the character of Uriah Heep (Richardson 2013: 269). Bradley Headstone is 'a monstrous result of his ambition, which has warped him into an obsessively persevering character' (Richardson 2013: 270). Richardson considers how Headstone is used as 'a scapegoat for Victorian (and more specifically Dickensian) fears of excessive ambition' (270). Richardson states that 'the only Dickensian character that both desperately desire to better their socioeconomic condition and actively pursue upward mobility are the antagonists. But their ambition is not rewarded' (270). As Philip Collins (1963) points out of Dickens, in relation to both Bradley Headstone and his protégé, Charley Hexam:

> He has campaigned for universal education, but he showed his middle-class instincts when he depicted Headstone and Hexam as specimens of the best education available to a boy from a poor home. The emphasis is wholly on the dangers, not the benefits, of the system, and such sympathy as the reader might feel for these young men, faced with formidable social and intellectual difficulties, is annulled by disgust at the viciousness of temperament which both display.
>
> (Collins 1963: 160)

Headstone's characterization represents a scathing critique of a certain aspect of the contemporary educational process, which Dickens likens to an industrial mechanism, and which produces people who lack understanding or sensitivity. Sarah Winter offers an astute interpretation of the style of education Dickens was critiquing through the character of Headstone when she writes;

> Commodified, compartmentalized knowledge like Bradley's is detached and inert rather than synthetic and therefore is inaccessible as intellectual capital because it resists the learner's recursive reinvestment in new knowledge. Thus the 'owner' of such fragmented knowledge is also alienated from his own mental labour.
>
> (Winter 2011: 236)

Headstone offers a critique of a certain form of education, which favoured learning by rote rather than gaining any real sensitivity to or understanding of the knowledge imparted. The wider social criticism is poignant and topical, reflecting flaws in the education system. Yet, on the more localized, personal level, Dickens's characterization of Bradley Headstone still seems like a rather cruel condemnation of upward mobility through education. Dickens sarcastically describes Headstone as a 'highly certificated stipendiary schoolmaster' and as having 'a naturally slow or inattentive intellect that had toiled hard to get what it had won, and that had to hold it now that it was gotten' (*Our Mutual Friend*: 125). In terms of Headstone's speech, his spoken language is significant in that it is represented as being entirely in Standard English. There are no markers or traces of non-standard, cockney dialect. Yet, Dickens still represents his spoken language, like his dress, as being slightly uncomfortable and ill fitting, as if he

labours to produce it. Headstone's language is represented as being very exact, demonstrating a studied precision and authority:

> 'You see, Hexam, you will be one of us. In good time you are sure to pass a creditable examination and become one of us. Then the question is—' …
> 'I do not say so, because I do not know. I put it to you. I ask you to think of it. I want you to consider. You know how well you are doing here.'
>
> (*Our Mutual Friend*: 125)

Whilst the language that Dickens assigns for Headstone is very precise and correct, it is partly this precision and correctness that Dickens uses in the critique. His speech lacks a range of vocabulary as is demonstrated through his constant use of repetition, which becomes more obvious in his dramatic marriage proposal to Lizzie later in the novel. Headstone's speaking style and the manner in which Dickens describes him in the narration contain parallel patterns of repetition. The key terms repeated in the narration in the description of Bradley Headstone are 'decent' and 'mechanical'. Dickens uses 'decent' repeatedly to build a sense of scathing irony, for Headstone proves to be far from 'decent' in the novel:

> Bradley Headstone, in his decent black coat and waistcoat, and decent white shirt, and decent formal black tie, and decent pantaloons of pepper and salt, with his decent silver watch in his pocket and its decent hair-guard round his neck, looked a thoroughly decent young man of six-and-twenty.
>
> (*Our Mutual Friend*: 266)

These 'decent' clothes are worn uncomfortably, mirroring his class discomfort and the insecurity of his presumed role in society: 'there was a certain stiffness in his manner of wearing this, as if there were a want of adaptation between him and it, recalling some mechanics in their holiday clothes' (*Our Mutual Friend*: 266). Dickens then adopts repetition and polyptoton (the repetition of a word in different forms) to play with the word 'mechanic' throughout the paragraphs describing Headstone, emphasizing the unnaturalness of Bradley Headstone in his manner of acquiring knowledge:

> there was a certain stiffness in his manner of wearing this, as if there were a

> want of adaptation between him and it, recalling some **mechanics** in their holiday clothes. He had acquired **mechanically** a great store of teacher's knowledge. He could do mental arithmetic **mechanically**, sing at sight **mechanically**, blow various wind instruments **mechanically**, even play the great church organ **mechanically**. From his early childhood up, his mind had been a place of **mechanical** stowage.
>
> (*Our Mutual Friend*: 266)

The repetition of 'mechanically' expresses Dickens's disapproval: Headstone's acquired knowledge is a presumption. Dickens also expresses his disapproval of the character's work ethic: the fact that he 'had toiled hard to get what it had won, and that had to hold it now that it was gotten' (267) wins no favours in Dickens's philosophy, especially when it is for personal advancement, rather than for moral or social improvement. Indeed, Eugene Wrayburn, the aesthete 'barrister with nothing to do' (280) is painted a lot more favourably. There are also many references to Headstone's speech made through meta-language in the text. Headstone is often described as having problems with speech production. Whilst in conversation with his nemesis, Eugene Wrayburn, he is said to be 'speaking in a carefully weighed and measured tone, or he could not have spoken at all' (*Our Mutual Friend*: 344). We are informed that when first confronting Lizzie about accepting educational help from Eugene Wrayburn he spoke 'with a mouth so dry that he had some difficulty in articulating his words: the consciousness of which rendered his manner still more ungainly and undecided' (399). Later we are told that he was 'grinding his words slowly out, as though they came from a rusty mill' (401) and then he speaks in 'a burst of irrepressible despair' (402). Headstone is not quite in control of the production of his speech, oscillating between careful, measured language and sudden explosions of passion. In the build up to his proposal to Lizzie he exclaims:

> 'Yes! you are **the ruin**—**the ruin**—**the ruin**—of me. **I have no** resources in myself, **I have no** confidence in myself, **I have no** government of myself when you are near me or **in my thoughts**. And you are always **in my thoughts** now. **I have never** been quit of you since I first saw you. Oh, that was a **wretched** day for me! That was a **wretched**, miserable day!'
>
> (*Our Mutual Friend*: 452)

In passion he becomes even more repetitive. His language lacks creative refinement. He repeats 'ruin', 'I have no', 'in my thoughts' and 'wretched'. As he becomes more passionate in his violent proposal to Lizzie, he repeats other structures, for example the repetition of 'you could draw me to' six times in the following passage:

> You know what I am going to say. I love you. What other men may mean when they use that expression, I cannot tell; what I mean is, that I am under the influence of some tremendous attraction which I have resisted in vain, and which overmasters me. You **could draw me to** fire, **you could draw me to** water, **you could draw me** to the gallows, **you could draw me to** any death, **you could draw me to** anything I have most avoided, **you could draw me to** any exposure and disgrace. This and the confusion of my thoughts, so that I am fit for nothing, is what I mean by your being the ruin of me. But if you would return a favourable answer to my offer of myself in marriage, **you could draw me to** any good—every good—with equal force.
>
> (*Our Mutual Friend*: 454)

This repetition, rather than displaying the technique of a successful orator, has the effect of emphasising Headstone's mental and linguistic limitations, stemming from a mind, which Dickens has already described as a 'wholesale warehouse' and 'a place of mechanical stowage'. His linguistic frugality stemmed from the fact that, 'He always seemed to be uneasy lest anything should be missing from his mental warehouse, and taking stock to assure himself' (*Our Mutual Friend*: 266). Although it is Headstone's suppressed passion and jealousy that cause his downfall and not necessarily his ambition and upward mobility, there is the implication that his violent action is the inevitable result of too much civilization and control on a savage mind. This reading does suggest a very snobbish attitude on the part of Dickens. In terms of speech, Bradley Headstone, who has learnt to speak Standard English through studious endeavour, is judged as being 'mechanical' and 'artificial', and thus in some way betraying his social origins. This is quite unlike characters such as Oliver Twist who appears to have been born with an innate ability to speak Standard English due to his middle-class ancestry or Lizzie Hexam, who being so good that she also speaks predominantly Standard English from the outset and whose minor dialect features at the beginning of the novel are lost as soon as she comes into contact with her middle-class

husband-to-be and exposure to some light education. Rebecca Richardson (2013) writes that:

> Bradley's unmarked speech is not a sign of authorial favour or his true nature, but a sign of his schooling. If he has a verbal tic it is the stylistic equivalent of his perseverance – a patterned, repeating prose that verges on the eloquent. (2013: 280)

Charley Hexam, described as 'a curious mixture…of uncompleted savagery, and uncompleted civilization', is treated in a similar way to Bradley Headstone. Unlike with the language of Headstone, Charley's language at the beginning of the novel reveals more signs of his humble origins. Despite his biblical allusions when he first speaks to Eugene and Mortimer, which demonstrate some education, he still uses non-standard speech. When asked about his sister, he replies, '"she ain't half bad…but if she knows her letters it's the most she does—and them I learned her"' (61). This utterance reveals the use of the non-standard contraction 'ain't' for 'isn't' and a replacement of the transitive verb 'teach', for 'learn', with non-standard syntax ("them I learned her" instead of 'I taught them to her'). In this way, Dickens makes it apparent through his language that Charley's education is far from complete. Charley's speech is more marked than Lizzie's at the beginning, but like Lizzie's goes through a transformation in the novel, showing more Standard English as the novel progresses.

Conclusion

As I have illustrated in this chapter, Dickens often uses particular speech markers to emphasise a character's upward mobility, whether it be Mantalini's altered vowel sounds, Wegg's circumlocution, or Guppy's overuse of legal jargon. Most of these instances are intended to be a source of amusement and often used as a means of reflecting the idea of inauthenticity or falsehood. This contrasts with the representation of cockney speakers and cockney speech, which is principally used to represent the idea of down-to-earth realness. If we compare the treatment of Sam Weller, for example, the features of Cockney speech used by Sam Weller help identify him, but are not used to mock him. The humour of Sam's speech is in the content of his funny Wellerisms and playful language. When Weller's pronunciation is drawn attention to, for example in the

courtroom scene when asked if he spells his name with a ‘v’ or a ‘w’, it is usually to poke fun at other people, not at him. Mantalini’s repetition of the forms of ‘dem’ appears to be more of a source of derision. It seems that, apart from in the case of his main protagonists, Dickens is less sympathetic to characters whose speech does not seem to reflect the language their social backgrounds, as if they are somehow betraying their origins. Through his depiction of upwardly mobile speech Dickens is reflecting contemporary attitudes towards the correlations between social class and language and the idea of inclusivity versus exclusivity. Dickens was able to characterise and reflect the growing class-consciousness surrounding language, which resulted in the formation of RP and twentieth-century notions of linguistic inclusion (exclusion) in social classes, such as the notion of U and Non-U.

Conclusion

This thesis has explored Dickens's representation of cockneys, cockney speech and the speech of upwardly mobile working-class Londoners, chronologically and thematically, in order to elucidate attitudes towards dialect and social class, as well as the way in which dialect functions within the literary text. This thesis has contextualised Dickens's representations by drawing on historical-linguistic evidence of both language and attitudes towards language. It has analysed Dickens's representations from a variety of angles both literary and linguistic by examining how dialect functions in Dickens's writing from a number of stylistic, cultural and linguistic perspectives. Whereas other studies that have taken a literary dialect approach have usually looked at isolated examples from Dickens's work, I have conducted a wider survey of Dickens's work, which has enabled me to explore the nuances of his representations and allowed me to consider the language of a range of characters, including minor ones. I have provided evidence of the cultural impact of Dickens's representations of cockney speech and cockney characters through responses to his work in the form of adaptations, contemporary journalistic commentary and satire, reviews and the use of Dickens's characters in the field of advertising. I have argued that despite the complexities inherent in Dickens's depictions, Dickens influenced public perceptions of cockneys and cockney speech in a generally positive way.

I have considered the formation of Dickens's dialect writing, by revisiting the arguments concerning the influence of Dickens's employment as a shorthand reporter, agreeing with critics who have argued that it probably did have an influence on his technical ability to write convincing dialect. However, I have also proposed that shorthand writing dramatically influenced Dickens's understanding of the indexicality of language (Silverstein 2003) and the power that certain dialects held over others. I have shown how Dickens used cockney dialect speech in his early sketches to create a sense of the sounds of London, linguistically mapping the city, pinpointing different accents and types of slang onto various parts of London, as a means of identifying and celebrating the various voices heard in different neighbourhoods. I have looked at the way in which Dickens established ideas of collective identity through speech, which, in an age prior to voice recordings, gave the reader an idea of the various speech

communities in the capital. I have demonstrated how, by generalising about speech, Dickens helped to create popular perceptions of cockney speech and speakers, in a way that helped shape public consciousness, which contributed to the enregisterment of certain ideas about cockney and speakers of cockney. By doing this, I have extended Agha's argument that literature helps 'linguistic repertoire becomes differentiable within a language as a socially recognized register of form' (2003: 231). Through close readings of the texts, I have demonstrated that Dickens began to explore and develop prototypes of cockney voices in his early sketches, which he developed later in his novels.

I have applied Ferguson's (1998) concept of ficto-linguistics by looking at how cockney dialect speech interacts within the literary works, for example, by exploring the way in which the language of the Wellers corresponds to their roles both in *The Pickwick Papers* and in *Master Humphrey's Clock*. I have explored the linguistic features of the Wellers' speech and the function of their language in the novel, examining their roles as both storytellers and deconstructors of pretentious language and attitudes. I have accounted for the success of the Wellers and the extent to which their language played a role in their success, as well as exploring how adaptations contributed further to the popularisation of the characters. I have developed the argument proposed by Hakala (2010) that through the characters of Sam and Tony Weller, Dickens created an unprecedented degree of cultural cachet surrounding the cockney language, which became a profitable commodity for imitators and advertisers. This thesis has shown how Dickens attempted to capitalise on the success of his own characters by reintroducing them into *Master Humphrey's Clock* and how he exaggerated the cockney aspect of the Weller's language to satisfy public expectations. My research has argued that cockney language played an important role in adaptations of *Pickwick* and often accompanied the Weller's when they appeared in popular cultural contexts, such as advertising.

This thesis has also explored how the relationship between language and morality played out in *Oliver Twist* and has teased out some of the complex ficto-linguistic systems at work. *Oliver Twist*, on the surface, appears to renege on the more positive depiction of cockney speech and cockney speakers that was presented in *The Pickwick Papers*, but actually continues to show cockney as being creative, imaginative and associated with witty defiance, especially in the speech of the Artful Dodger. The

way that dialect speech interacts with the novel illustrates a complex mixture of stylistic and political purposes, for example, by matching the language of the police to that of the cockney criminals, Dickens insinuates the ideological connection between these groups through linguistic similarity. Furthermore, Dickens is able to scathingly critique the New Poor Law by representing Fagin's language as being less marked with London vernacular or stereotyped theatrical or literary Jewish language of the time, yet incorporating the rhetoric of political economy, as first mentioned by Ledger (2007), and ironically combining this with homely, parental language. The overarching villain, Monks, also speaks Standard English, demonstrating a trope of Victorian melodrama, in which the central villain is an upper-class character (Booth 1991). I have shown that theatrical adaptations are valuable cultural sources that show how these ficto-linguistic systems were interpreted and they often focused on and exaggerated Dickens's cockney dialect writing, knowing that it was a popular draw for their audiences.

My thesis has argued that, on the one hand, Dickens's female characters often do appear to conform to contemporary conservative attitudes, of the kind that appear in language and style guides of the period, which associated cockney speech in women with vulgarity and poor morals. This aspect is often displayed in reverse, as has been previously explored by Page (1969) or Ingham (1992), through an absence of dialect in lower-class female Londoners, such as Nancy or Lizzie Hexam, whom he wants to represent as repentant or morally superior. However, as I have argued, rather than necessarily conforming to reactionary prejudices towards non-standard speech, Dickens often does this for stylistic purposes or to adhere to theatrical conventions. Furthermore, when Dickens does actually depict cockney speaking women, despite the fact that the few examples include prostitutes, street ruffians or the drunken nurse, Mrs Gamp, he appears to celebrate the playfulness of language in a similar fashion to his male cockney speaking characters and uses cockney as a voice of defiance and dissent. Not all cockney speaking women fall into the morally questionable category either. The servant Susan Nipper, for example, assumes a role not dissimilar to Sam Weller in her frank outspokenness.

I have shown that there are similar patterns of speech between different cockney characters in Dickens's writing in terms of non-standard marking, but also in terms of persuasive, defiant and amusing rhetorical structures, which can be seen as representing the notion Golding put forward of 'speech as social criticism' (1985: 36). Dickens often

uses cockney speech as a dissenting voice and a way of challenging societal attitudes. Characters such as Sam Weller, Dodger, Emily (from 'The Prisoner's Van' sketch) and Susan Nipper all challenge authority with a cockney voice that is witty, sharp and rambunctious. However, some cockney characters are represented in a more caricatured way. Dickens often does this when he is drawing attention to social issues that are embodied by these characters, for example Mr Gamfield (and his predecessor, Mr Sluffin), through whom Dickens criticises the cruel exploitation of children within the chimney sweeping industry or through the character of Mrs Gamp, when Dickens is satirising the unregulated nursing. Though, through the character of Mrs Gamp, Dickens manages to both raise awareness of a social issue and create a cockney voice that resonates affectionately in popular culture.

By examining the language of upwardly mobile speech in London characters in Dickens's writing, I have been able to further examine attitudes to language and social class. I have argued that whilst Dickens was often sympathetic to speakers of non-standard dialect, he uses markers of linguistic pretention to make some of his working-class, upwardly mobile character appear more ridiculous. Furthermore, I have argued that Dickens was contradictory in his treatment of upward mobility, some characters are permitted to transcend their social class, yet others are shown as desperate or fraudulent and this is often manifested through linguistic faux pas, which prohibits total immersion in the social class to which they aspire. On the one hand, this attitude to affected speech reflects positively on the cockney speaker, who is shown by contrast to be true to his/her roots or as being linguistically 'authentic'. On the other hand, this derisory attitude towards the attempts of working-class characters to 'speak posh', highlights the snobbery in society towards language and social class.

This thesis has argued that Dickens played an important role in popularising cockney dialect in nineteenth-century culture and was responsible for the cultural enregisterment of certain ideas about cockney speech and speakers. By creating a range of nuanced and complex representations, Dickens challenged contemporary attitudes and created lasting cultural impressions. In the nineteenth century, these representations and attitudes were transmitted through such forms as readings, written adaptations and stage performances. Dickens's representation of cockneys also influenced the music hall of the 1840s, which developed over the second half of the century, calling for ever more 'authentic' cockney performers (Scott 2002: 237). As Derek B. Scott argues, the strive

for authenticity was largely reflexive, with performers referring to themselves with such titles as 'the quintessential cockney', yet they were often replicating already existing representations, rather than any real figure (2002: 256). The grittier side of Dickens's cockney representation influenced the group of writers who becme known as the 'slum novelists' in the late part of the century, which included Walter Besant, George Gissing and Arther Morrison. Morrison's *Child of Jago* (1896) for example, deals with a similar social setting as *Oliver Twist*'s criminal world, yet in an even bleaker, starker and more violent vision of the London streets and without the Dickensian flourishes of humour and theatricality. The cockney literary dialect, influenced by Dickens's writing, is also more brutal and more focussed on creating the sensation of realistic cockney pronunciation, although they also avoided profanities in their fictional representations of cockney.

I have had to limit this project to representations of Dickens's cockneys in the nineteenth century, but from the twentieth century onwards, Dickens's cockneys and cockney speech have continued to influence public perceptions in the form of film adaptations, and later, through television adaptations of his work. Even in the silent films of the early twentieth century references were made to cockney dialect in character speech, for example in the 1922 American film version of *Oliver Twist* directed by Frank Lloyd, intertitle cards displayed snippets of Dodger's dialect speech, often differing slightly from Dickens's writing, but attempting to represent cockney nonetheless. In the first sound version of *Oliver Twist* (1933), directed by William J. Cowen, the first cinematic representations of cockney speech in *Oliver Twist* were performed by American actors. In this way, Dickens was also partly responsible for enregistering ideas of cockney speech and creating stereotypes for an American audience. The Dickensian cockney in America was to culminate in the comically American interpretation of cockney language performed by Dick Van Dyke in Mary Poppins. David Lean's (1948) adaptation, which was heavily criticised for its particularly anti-semitic treatment of Fagin, underplayed Dodger's role and gave many of his speech utterances to Fagin. However, Carol Reed's film of Lionel Bart's musical, *Oliver!*, which I mentioned in Chapter 3, further reinforced the image of Dodger as the charming cheeky cockney, played by the child actor Jack Wild (Reed 1968). In recent adaptations of Dickens's works, including the BBC television series, *Dickensian,* a drama based on a mash up of several of Dickens's novels, representing London dialect

authentically has been an important concern (Bradbeer, Langdale, Brozel and Hay 2015). The 1997 adaptation of *Oliver Twist*, for example, received criticism for Elijah Wood's depiction of The Artful Dodger, based on his inability to perform an authentic cockney accent (Bill 1997).

Cockney is still an easily recognised speech form in British society. Nowadays, it is often associated with television programs such as the long running, soap opera, *EastEnders* (1985- present) or the structured-reality programme, *The Only Way is Essex* (2010 – present). The former reflects its East End origins, even if anachronistically, as cockney is less common in the East End than it was in the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, reflecting the movement of the dialect out of London.[1] There is still a degree of street-wise cool associated with the cockney accent, which fosters imitation. In a sociolinguistic study of 2007, researchers found that Glaswegian teenagers were adopting cockney speech forms from watching *EastEnders* (Stuart-Smith, Timmins and Tweedle 2007). This also supports the argument that popular culture has an important role in influencing attitudes toward dialect speech and, in this case, influencing actual speech. Despite the decline in Received Pronunciation in recent years and the diversity of dialects now presented in popular entertainment, people still tend to place judgement on certain accents, making assumptions about the speakers, their levels of education, honesty and social background. For example, in a study entitled '"They ain't using slang"': Working Class Students from Linguistic Minority Communities in Higher Education', Siân Preece studied the way in which working class linguistic minority students were treated in the university system and found that they were judged by their institutions as being 'remedial' users of academic language and that their 'bidialectal and multilingual capital', in other words, the value of their ability to switch between dialects, was erased by having to ascribe to the institutional linguistic identity (2015: 260). Thus, it is still important to question the way in which dialect and speakers of dialect are treated and the value judgments placed on dialect in society.

Understanding the influence on public consciousness of a major cultural figure like Dickens in the nineteenth century is essential in determining how attitudes to speakers

[1] For a discussion of the movement of cockney out of London into Essex and other surrounding Home Counties see Peter Wright, 1981, *Cockney Dialect and Slang*, (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd).

of certain dialects have been formed over time and provides a historical basis for attitudes that still persist in society today.

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