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**Post-Authenticity: Literary Dialect and Realism in Victorian
and Neo-Victorian Social Novels**

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Abstract

This thesis considers what a post-authenticity approach to literary dialect studies should be. Once we have departed from the idea of literary dialect studies being engaged in ascertaining whether or not the fictional representation of nonstandard speech varieties can be matched with those same varieties in the external world, how should we study the dialect we find in novels? I argue that literary dialect studies should be placed within critical work on the realist novel, since the representation of speech, like the broader field of realism, aims to reflect an external world, one with which the reader can identify. This, as yet, has not been done.

My approach is to place greater emphasis on the role of the reader. I consider the ways in which writers use literary dialect to manage readers' responses to characters, and the nature of those responses. I give a close reading of Victorian and neo-Victorian novels to show that, whilst the subject matter of these works has changed over time to suit a modern readership, the dialect representation – its form and the attitudes to language usage it communicates – is conservative. Referring to recent surveys, and through my own research with real readers, I show that nonstandard speakers are still regarded as less well-educated and of a lower social class than those who speak Standard English. This, I argue, is why writers encode such attitudes into their works and are able to manipulate readers' responses to characters. I argue that it is the interplay of text, reader, and the broader cultural context in which the work is both written and read, that gives meaning to the literary dialect and brings it within the scope of studies of the realist novel.

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Post-Authenticity: Literary Dialect and Realism in Victorian and Neo-Victorian Social Novels

Introduction

1. Two Types of Authenticity

A Memoir of Robert Blincoe (1832) recounts the story of Blincoe's early years when he was sent, at the age of seven, from the St. Pancras workhouse to the mills of Nottinghamshire and then Derbyshire.¹ It details the appalling conditions of the factories and the systematic abuse and neglect suffered by children on so-called apprenticeships. By the 1830s there was an established genre of working-class autobiography, written in the first person by the subject.² *A Memoir of Robert Blincoe* is, therefore, perhaps an unusual publication in that the memoir was not written by Blincoe himself but by John Brown who writes in the third person. Brown's narrative often includes lengthy quotations from Blincoe. The first of these is entirely Standard English with sophisticated lexis and phrasing:

“If I could penetrate the source of my exemption from the sorrow and consternation so forcibly expressed by my companions, it would probably have been resolved by the peculiarity of my destiny, and the privation of those endearing ties and ligatures which cement family circles. When the friends, relatives, parents of other children came to visit them, the caresses that were sometimes exchanged, the joy that beamed on the faces of those so favoured, went as daggers to my heart; not that I cherished a feeling of envy at their good fortune; but that it taught me more keenly to feel my own forlorn condition.”
(15)

This seems to be remarkable language from an uneducated man, even though by this time he has matured and is reflecting on his past: the speech reads like a fictional first person narrative and has a poetic quality to it. The use of high-register Latinate vocabulary such as ‘exemption’, ‘consternation’ and ‘ligatures’, as well as sentences containing several clauses including a lengthy initial subordinate clause, marks this as a written rather than a spoken text. Brown's subsequent supposed quotations, some of which are very short, are also written in Standard English. Given that Blincoe's words appear inside quotation marks, readers are likely to expect Brown to attempt to repeat exactly what Blincoe said. Ruth Finnegan explains that despite great complexity in the development and use of quotation marks, by the seventeenth century they were

¹ John Brown (1832), *A Memoir of Robert Blincoe* (Sussex: Caliban Books, 1997).

² James Richard Simmons Jr, ‘Working Class Autobiography and Middle Class Writers: Fictive Representations of the Working Classes in Nineteenth Century British Literature’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of South Carolina, 1997), p.1-2, in Database of ProQuest Dissertations Online <www.proquest.com> [30th December, 2016]. The autobiographies Simmons references are written by the subject.

‘understood as a way of directly marking an exact quoted passage by opening and closing signs’; then, in the eighteenth century, ‘they acquired their modern role of identifying a demarcated written excerpt as someone else’s words.’³ Nineteenth century readers would therefore be familiar with this convention and the literary style of Blincoe’s supposed speech may come as a surprise.

Brown acknowledges, ‘I dare not aver, that such were the very words Blincoe used, but they faithfully convey the spirit and tendency of his language’(16). Brown is aiming for authenticity, but not the ‘authenticity’ of a faithful reproduction of Blincoe’s actual words: Brown wishes to give an authentic representation of Blincoe’s thoughts and feelings; to do so he has chosen to rewrite Blincoe’s words for the benefit of the reader. We might question this choice, particularly if we are familiar with nineteenth century novelists’ attempts to represent direct speech according to the conventions described by Ruth Finnegan, but we accept Brown’s presentation of Blincoe’s thoughts and feelings and the events detailed in the narrative. In other words, Brown does not attempt to achieve a surface linguistic authenticity but he does provide an authentic representation of the factory system and the feelings of those involved.

Charles Dickens’s literary career began very shortly after the publication of Brown’s memoir of Blincoe. Dickens is arguably the most enduring novelist of the Victorian era and his works, for all their artistry and entertainment value, are very much ones which seek to present the reader with a view of real life social problems. His representation of speech has been given considerable critical attention. The direct speech that he gives to his characters is a significant factor in the continued appeal of his work and is generally accepted as reflecting external reality. Norman Page considers this idea:

The epithet ‘Dickensian’ hardly carries very precise associations; but if one were to try to identify a characteristic by which Dickens could be seen to differ from other novelists of his time, his commitment to the spoken language and his attempt to render some of its richness and subtlety through the written word, has a strong claim for consideration.⁴

Critics generally praise Dickens, arguing that his work as a short-hand reporter in the law courts, and as a journalist, combined with his early experiences amongst the poorest in society and a love of the theatre, helped to give him a keen awareness of linguistic differences, and the ability to represent these in writing. Raymond Chapman points out that amongst all the contemporary reviews of Dickens’s work, and Victorian fiction in general, there were relatively few complaints about unrealistic dialogue. Page cites

³ Ruth H. Finnegan, *Why Do We Quote? The Culture and History of Quotation* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2011), p.96.

⁴ Norman Page, *Speech in the English Novel*, 2nd edn (London: Macmillan, 1988), p. 168.

contemporary reviews in *The Edinburgh Review*, *The Athenaeum*, *The Monthly Review* and *The Quarterly* as praising the accuracy of Dickens's presentation of lower-class speech.⁵

Some of the events in his novel *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838), like the memoir of Blincoe, take place in the north of England. An initial comparison of the way in which the two different writers represent direct speech shows a stark contrast, with Dickens aiming to convey a sense of the 'richness and subtlety'⁶ of the regional variety. In the following example, from Chapter Nine, Yorkshireman John Browdie is first introduced both into the novel and to Nicholas:

'Old woman awa', bean't she?' said Mr Browdie with his mouth full.

[...]'Ye wean't get bread and butther ev'ry neight, I expect, mun,' said Mr Browdie[...]

'Ecod,' said Mr Browdie, laughing boisterously, 'they dean't put too much intiv'em. Ye'll be nowt but skeen and boans if you stop here long eneaf. Ho ho! Ho!' (107)⁷

Dickens has tried to convey a sense of the sound of the diphthongs in the northern pronunciation of words such as 'neight' (night), 'boans' (bones) and 'wean't' (won't). There is also the nonstandard verb form 'bean't' as well as the nonstandard lexical items 'nowt' (nothing) and 'mun' (man) and elided lexical forms such as 'awa' (away). The heavily marked nature of John Brodie's speech could not be more different from that of Blincoe as represented by Brown. Whilst it is important to remember that Blincoe is a person in actuality and Browdie is Dickens's creation, both writers share, to some extent, the aim of presenting the reader with an authentic view of external reality to draw attention to social injustice: Dickens's *Nicholas Nickleby* functions, in part, as a critique of the school system; Brown was a journalist from Bolton in Lancashire who sought to advance the campaign to protect children working in factories.⁸ Yet it appears that only Dickens, the novelist, seeks to present the reader with the phonology, grammar and lexis of the speech of the working-class people living in the region in which he sets his story.

It would be difficult to argue that the difference between the two writers' representation of direct speech is the result of the passage of time and the development of literary dialect in the nineteenth century, as Dickens's literary career began within a few years of the publication of the memoir. It might, perhaps, be easier to argue that Dickens, as a novelist, has superior artistic skills which allow him to achieve this apparent

⁵ Raymond Chapman, *Forms of Speech in Victorian Fiction* (London: Longman Press, 1994), p.142.

⁶ Norman Page, *Speech in the English Novel*, 2nd edn (London: Macmillan, 1988), p. 168.

⁷ Wordsworth Classics (2000) edition.

⁸ John Waller, *The Real Oliver Twist, Robert Blincoe: A Life That Illuminates a Violent Age* (Cambridge: Icon Books, 2006), p.244.

verisimilitude. However, the difference is not quite as clear-cut as it first seems. Brown does represent nonstandard speech in the memoir. Firstly, there is one exception to Brown's use of Standard English to represent his subject's speech, which appears when Blincoe has left the mill. He is quoted as using some nonstandard English when he faces two 'suspicious looking fellows' who ask '“What have you got in that bundle?” '(86), with a view to stealing it. There is an accompanying metalinguistic comment as they are described as speaking 'in a stern voice' and this, along with the Standard English, gives them an air of authority. This is their only utterance. Blincoe's response follows immediately: '“I dunna know, Mester, but if you'll ask the gentleman on horseback, that is coming on the horse road, at the other side of the hedge, he'll tell you” '(86). What was actually said during this, or any other situation referred to in the memoir, cannot be known, as Brown quotes Blincoe using his own (Brown's) words. However, Brown's choice of the marked term *Mester*, reveals that he can and does use direct speech more subtly than might first appear. Joseph Wright's *The English Dialect Dictionary* lists *mester* as one of a number of variants of *master*. The term is found in West Yorkshire, Cheshire, North West Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and South West Lincolnshire. Given that this incident took place in North Derbyshire, Brown is using a legitimate regional term. Many different meanings of *master* or *mester* are listed but the ones which could apply in this case are 'a term of address to a superior or stranger, Sir' or 'a respectable, well-dressed man; a gentleman'.⁹ Thus both the form and meaning of the term put Blincoe in a position of inferiority to his interlocutor, emphasising his vulnerability. The syntax of this utterance is also much simpler than that in the previous example. Although there are subordinate clauses, the sentence begins with a short main clause and the subordinate clauses are also very short. Lexical choices throughout are Germanic. Thus Brown can and does use more speech-like language.

Unlike the previous lengthy quotation in which a mature man is speaking retrospectively, here Blincoe is a young boy caught in a difficult and potentially dangerous situation. It seems logical that Brown would want to represent his speech differently at this point. Immediately after the first quotation and Brown's disclaimer, he states that 'Blincoe is by no means deficient in understanding: he can be witty, satirical, and pathetic, by turns, and he never showed himself to such advantage, as when expatiating upon the desolate state to which his utter ignorance of his parentage had reduced him'(16). Thus Brown is characterising his subject for the reader: the lexical choice and grammatical structures Brown chooses to represent Blincoe's speech are designed to reflect the qualities he sees in the man. Furthermore, at this point, Blincoe is a grown man, reflecting on past experiences and the speech Brown gives him may be

⁹ Joseph Wright, *The English Dialect Dictionary*, vol. 4 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1903), p.50-1.

designed to capture that reflective mood. Considering the two examples together, it seems that, although this is a non-fiction text, Brown, to some extent, creates a character for his subject in much the same way as a novelist works. He uses the representation of speech and direct comments on his subject to influence the reader's view of Blincoe.

Other working-class folk, who might be expected to use dialect forms, are also quoted almost entirely in Standard English. When Blincoe first arrives in Nottinghamshire, the speech of the local people is written in Standard English, as are the words of the apprentices who are quoted *en masse* as having a single voice (23). A person named Beckka, the 'witch of Chapel-a-Firth' is also quoted in standard language but with the exceptions of the archaic pronoun *thou* and determiner *thy* (80). One person who is, briefly, presented as speaking using dialect forms is a house-keeper named Sally Oldfield: 'thou mun never go against thy master', *mun* being a form of *must* (77). Again, Brown has made a choice: he could easily have chosen to present this speech in Standard English as is his general practice, but he has not done so. It seems that his sparing use of dialectal forms in the representation of the speech of Beckka and Sally Oldfield serves to differentiate them from the rest of the locals. These two voices do more than add a touch of local flavour to a text which is otherwise full of standard direct speech: as is the case with John Browdie, the dialect characterises them as being fully integrated in, and knowledgeable about, the local community, and therefore able to give advice.

Furthermore, Dickens, who initially seems to represent the speech of a specific geographical area, does not always do so. Firstly, as pointed out by Katie Wales, the verb form *bean't* seen in John Browdie's speech (above) does not belong to Yorkshire regional speech. Wales identifies a specific schema which, in *Nicholas Nickleby*, pertains only to the characterisation of Browdie (who is the son of a corn-factor and engaged to a miller's daughter): the image of a rustic peasant, typically associated with the *South* (my italics) in drama and fiction. Here she notes 'the frequent and consistent occurrence of what would otherwise be very puzzling verb forms: *bean't she? There be; if she bean't; thee be'est; thee bean't; I be asbeamed.*' She argues that Dickens has employed a rural schema; these are unlikely to be forms he picked up from the Lancashire dialect, especially as his visit to the area was a brief one.¹⁰ He is instead using literary resources. Brown's use of *Mester*, may also have come from literary resources but, unlike Dickens's use of *bean't*, it can be linked with actual usage in the area.

The characterisation of Sam Weller through the use of direct speech has received much critical attention and is generally seen to be one of Dickens's great achievements, partly

¹⁰ Katie Wales, 'Dickens and Northern English, Stereotyping and "authenticity" reconsidered', in *Perspectives on Northern English*, ed. by Joan C. Beal and Sylvie Hancil (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter Mouton, 2017), pp. 45.

because he was able to draw on his personal knowledge of the Cockney dialect, which is both a regional and a social form. The fact that *The Pickwick Papers* (1836-7) was published early in his career, suggests that Dickens had indeed great skill in representing natural speech in writing. As pointed out by Page (65) and others, Dickens was, however, drawing on a well-established convention in writing Sam Weller. Raymond Chapman comments that one of the most distinctive features of Sam Weller's speech, the transference of *v* and *w* was already considered 'veritable cockney' by the time Dickens was writing *Pickwick*, adding that in 1762 Sheridan passed comment on this as a dislikeable feature of Cockney dialect (43). Taryn Hakala also refers to the long tradition of the literary Cockney which influenced Dickens's writing, adding that Sam Weller's 'canny Cockney' later became its own stereotype in late nineteenth century music hall.¹¹ Similarly, Page finds a literary precedent for the replacement of *r* or *z* with *g*, as done by Mrs Gamp in *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843-4): Shakespeare's Mistress Quickly in *II Henry IV* (66). Furthermore, it is generally agreed that Dickens is not consistent in his representation of direct speech as his primary concern is not to present a complete rendering of a variety of the language; rather, he 'isolates and emphasises certain features[...]to signal the presence of the dialect'.¹²

More significantly, Dickens has Oliver Twist, who grows up in a workhouse and then lives amongst London thieves, speak Standard English, which is something that critics are quick to point out. Page accounts for this apparent mistake on Dickens's part as follows:

Dickens's apparent assumption[...]is that] it is, if not impossible, at any rate very difficult to create an impression of dignity and moral worth in a character speaking an idiom which departs from standard usage, and [he uses]the convention whereby speech is determined not by environmental factors but by innate moral qualities (104).

Page identifies this elevation of the protagonist's speech as an established convention used to signal the moral rectitude of the character, a quality that Oliver Twist has in abundance. Indeed, Robert Blincoe, the 'real Oliver Twist',¹³ is presented by Brown in much the same way. However, given that Dickens had already created Sam Weller by this time, as a moral, reliable person, I do not find this an entirely satisfactory explanation. Indeed, Page himself offers a better explanation when he states that Oliver's speech is an indication of his 'essential gentility', as it is for Shakespeare's Perdita in *The Winter's Tale* (104). It is this, 'essential gentility' which Dickens is demonstrating more than Oliver's moral worth, and is therefore giving the reader a clue

¹¹ Taryn Hakala, 'Working Dialect' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 2010), p. 123.

¹² Norman Page, *Speech in the English Novel*, 2nd edn (London: Macmillan, 1988), p. 65.

¹³ John Waller, *The Real Oliver Twist, Robert Blincoe: A Life That Illuminates a Violent Age*.

about his character's true identity. Just as Sam Weller's Cockney dialect marks him as sharing the culture of a particular regional and social group, whilst also having a degree of individuality, Oliver's Standard English is also an indication of the class to which he truly belongs. If Dickens were concerned with pure realism, Oliver's speech would be very different; instead his use of the standard can be viewed as integral to the development of the plot.

Sylvia Adamson helpfully divides the presentation of language varieties into the 'naturalistic' which aims for social realism and the 'metaphorical' which is used to 'express solidarity with a national, local or ethnic group'.¹⁴ Yet the idea that a nonstandard dialect is naturalistically or authentically represented by writers, even ones who are producing a work of non-fiction, is problematic and it may not be a straightforward task to differentiate between the 'naturalistic' and the 'metaphorical'. As many scholars including Norman Blake, Michael Toolan, Susan Ferguson and Jane Hodson have pointed out, it is not possible to capture on the page a truly accurate reflection of regional or social speech varieties using the standard orthographic system, even if a writer were attempting to do so.¹⁵ Instead, writers use certain established conventions to suggest a particular variety. Also, the very notion of 'authentic speech' is itself highly problematic. As shown by Nikolas Coupland, people's speech is not consistent, but alters depending on the circumstances in which they are speaking.¹⁶

Yet writers do include representations of dialect in the direct speech of their characters. As can be seen in the examples from Brown and Dickens above, writers make a choice about where to employ nonstandard speech and where to avoid it. Making decisions similar to those made by a novelist, John Brown has chosen to write a narrative in which most speech is rendered in Standard English; yet his subject matter remains 'realist' in the literal sense that it is the biography of an actual person. In the case of Blincoe himself, it is the absence of dialect in the long quotation (above) which is notable as Brown has chosen to write in this way to present the reader with what he sees as an accurate view of his subject. Elsewhere, the dialect of the locals forms a contrast with Blincoe's speech and suggests that they have a deep understanding of the local culture which exists in the actual world. Thus the speech of these characters is, in Sylvia Adamson's terms, both naturalistic (insofar as a written representation of nonstandard speech can be) and metaphorical as it represents their local knowledge. Like Dickens's decision to have *Oliver Twist* speak nothing but Standard English, the choices made by

¹⁴ Sylvia Adamson, 'Literary Language', in *The Cambridge History of the English Language Vol. IV, 1776-1997*, ed. by Romaine, Suzanne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 604.

¹⁵ See, for example, Jane Hodson, *Dialect in Film and Literature* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p.12-13.

¹⁶ Nikolas Coupland, *Style* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 2007), p.179.

Brown form part of the work's overall design. Use of dialect, whilst important, is there to aid the writers' social and artistic purposes. Neither Dickens nor Brown is in the business of painstakingly trying to represent 'authentic' speakers: Dickens's characters are constructs designed to convey his ideas, not least about social justice, and entertain the reader; Brown's work focusses on informing the reader about the horrors of the factory system.

Both writers present the reader with an authentic view of external reality and its social problems, despite the fact that Dickens writes fiction (although he did visit the industrial north prior to writing *Nicholas Nickleby*) and Brown's memoir is the result of investigative journalistic work. The relationship between fiction and factual writing and the way in which both work together to present external reality is something considered by James Richard Simmons Jnr. In his 1997 PhD thesis *Working class autobiography and middle class writers: Fictive representations of the working classes in nineteenth century British literature*, Simmons focusses on the interplay between autobiography and fiction: not just fictional writers using autobiography to inform their realism but autobiographical writers comparing themselves to fictional characters and adopting styles similar to those of novelists.¹⁷ He argues that working-class autobiography and middle-class fiction have a 'symbiotic relationship in which working-class reality spawned a middle-class, literarily created pseudo-reality, which in turn created a new reality when presented by the working classes in their own life-writing' (6). Indeed, the title of John Walker's 2006 book about Robert Blincoe and the factory conditions, *The Real Oliver Twist*, lends support to this argument. Simmons states that 'for modern readers, these autobiographical works are not how we usually form an opinion of the lives of the nineteenth-century working men or women, and on the contrary, it is the literature of the period to which we turn for our points of reference' (2).

One such point of reference is the way in which working-class people from different geographical areas speak: their pronunciation, grammar and lexis. Nineteenth century fiction abounds with such characters: factory workers in the industrial north such as John Barton in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1848); small-town fishermen such as Ham Peggotty in Dickens's *David Copperfield* (1850); rural servants such as Joseph in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847); and the London, urban poor, for example all the characters featured in Gissing's *The Nether World* (1889). Writers' use of nonstandard English, or dialect, in the speech of these characters has been given considerable critical attention over approximately the last one hundred years. Scholars working in the field

¹⁷ Simmons, James Richard, Jnr, 'Working Class Autobiography and Middle Class Writers: Fictive Representations of the Working Classes in Nineteenth Century British Literature' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of South Carolina, 1997), in Database of ProQuest Dissertations Online <www.proquest.com> [30th December, 2016].

have questioned the function of writers' use of dialect within direct speech: whether it should be seen as providing an accurate and authentic representation of the way in which such people speak in actuality or whether the way in which characters speak has significance only within the literary work itself. Below, I consider the work done by scholars in the field of dialect representation over approximately the last one hundred years, taking a chronological view of the development of ideas, focussing mainly on the analysis of nineteenth century novels which is my area of interest. I consider to what extent these scholars have been concerned with the idea of authenticity.

2. Literature Review: Literary Dialect

First it is necessary to define what is meant by dialect. Whilst socio-linguists have come to view dialect as an ideological construct,¹⁸ the popular understanding of the term sees it as denoting any grammatical constructions or lexical items which are not found in Standard English but are typically associated with a specific geographical area. Dialect in literature is more in line with these ideas from folklinguistics than with recent socio-linguistic studies, and I use the term *dialect*, along with *nonstandard English*, to refer to any form of language which differs from the national standard in terms of grammar, lexis or phonology. It should be noted, however, that, in the 'real world', Standard English, the grammatical and lexical form taught in schools and used in writing, can be spoken with regional accents. The accent most associated with Standard English in Britain is Received Pronunciation, known as RP, an accent which became prestigious partly because of its link with the public school system. In the 'real world' a person who speaks with a local accent whilst using standard grammar and lexis would not be considered a dialect speaker. However, pronunciation is included within literary dialect: nonstandard speakers are those whose pronunciation deviates from an educated, RP-type accent.

The earliest work on literary dialect was undertaken by George Philip Krapp who, in the 1920s looked at the representation of American dialects in literary writing.¹⁹ As the first work of its kind, it remains influential today. Krapp's analysis was largely a linguistic one, comparing the literary dialect with the actual speech of real people living in the area where the given text is set in order to ascertain the authenticity of the literary dialect.

¹⁸ See Nikolas Coupland, *Style* (Cambridge, 2007) for a full account of the complexities of dialect: continuums, performativity, and the problem of finding an authentic dialect speaker.

¹⁹ George Philip Krapp (1926), 'The Psychology of Dialect Writing', in *A Various Language: Perspectives on American Dialects*, ed. by Juanita V. Williamson and Virginia M Burke (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1971), pp.22-9.

Krapp also differentiates between two distinct types of literature which involve the use of dialect. He states:

The first question that occurs to one looking at this exuberant dialect literature is whether it comes up from below, that is whether it is a reflection and echo of an authentic folk interest in literary expression, or is imposed from above as an ingenious invention of sophisticated literary artists. Undoubtedly the second is the right explanation of its origins. (23)

According to Krapp, literature which comes ‘from below’ is a product of the culture with which it is concerned and is therefore written entirely in the language of that culture by someone who belongs to it. Such works, often poetry, celebrate and promote the language of the region. On the other hand, fictional representations of dialect within, for example, novels which are narrated in Standard English, come ‘from above’: they are the creations of writers who are not necessarily speakers of the local dialect and who do not have the same purposes as those writing ‘from below.’ Later critics such as Norman Blake and Graham Shorrocks continue to make this distinction; Shorrocks helpfully labels these two categories as ‘dialect literature’ and ‘literary dialect’.²⁰ The fact that Krapp sees the dialect used by novelists as ‘an ingenious invention of sophisticated literary artists’ (23) indicates that he sees no firm link between dialect spoken in actuality and that found in the mouths of fictional characters; it is part of the artist’s creativity. Krapp also comments on what he terms ‘eye dialect’. This is when respellings, such as *iȝ* for *is* and *dere* for *dear* make no difference to the pronunciation of the word but they provide ‘obvious hints that the general tone of the speech is to be felt as something different from the tone of conventional speech’(24). Eye dialect is the work of an artist rather than one engaged in the business of trying to produce an authentic representation of a particular speech variety.

In 1950, Sumner Ives first published his ‘A Theory of Literary Dialect’ which ‘served to correct and update the earlier work of George Philip Krapp’.²¹ Ives’s paper was and still is highly influential, suggesting, as it does, the first theory of literary dialect; and a revised second edition was published in 1971. Ives continues the work of Krapp, criticising his predecessor for ‘the fact that he used too small a sample of each dialect’ (173) whilst conceding that ‘the regional patterns of American speech and the distribution of individual features were imperfectly understood when he made his analysis’ (173). Despite Ives’s acknowledgement that writers are artists, not linguists, his work in the

²⁰ Norman F. Blake, *Non-standard Language in English Literature* (London: John Wiley and Sons, 1981), p. 20; Graham Shorrocks, ‘Non-standard Dialect Literature and Popular Culture’, in *Speech Past and Present, Studies in English Dialectology in Memory of Ossi Ihalainen*, ed. by Juhani Klemola, Merja Kyto and Matti Rissanen (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1996), pp. 386.

²¹ In *A Various Language: Perspectives on American Dialects*, ed. by Juanita V. Williamson and Virginia M Burke (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1971), pp. 145.

field of literary dialect focuses on ascertaining whether nonstandard forms used by novelists can be found in records of actual speech used in the specific geographical areas in which the novels are set. His approach is a more rigorous one than that of Krapp, and he advocates a painstaking approach to discover the authenticity, or lack thereof, of dialect representation in fiction. According to Ives, detailed reference to dialect atlases and detailed analysis of the dialectal forms used by writers is required to discover whether the literary dialect can be considered authentic. He states: ‘It is obvious, of course, that any examination of a literary dialect should be guided by the principles of descriptive linguistics and should be controlled by the findings of linguistic geography’(172). The approach he advocates is to list all the nonstandard spelling forms and, having interpreted the phonology represented, examine them ‘for authenticity’ (175). He then states that it should be determined ‘what degree of individuality the dialect has’(175). In other words, if the features used by the writer overlap with those same features heard in the actual speech in an area which includes the locale of the story, then ‘the literary dialect has regional significance’(175). Thus whilst Ives states that, ‘the author is an artist, not a linguist or a sociologist, and his purpose is literary rather than scientific’(147), that is exactly how he sees those who study the literary dialect of these same novelists. In his view, dialect is to be studied, not as an integral part of a work of art, but abstracted from the work in which it appears, using scientific methods. He concludes his paper by stating: ‘There can be no doubt that the pages of a story are a poor substitute for adequate fieldwork by a competent phonetician’(177) which demonstrates that, for him, the study of literary dialect supports the work of dialectologists. If the literary dialect is found to have little ‘regional significance’ then ‘the problem of the linguist is over; further evaluation of the author is a problem of literary criticism and is based on non-linguistic criteria’(176). This suggests that Ives sees studies of literary dialect as being a separate and independent field from that of literary criticism.

Graham Shorrocks notes that both dialect literature and literary dialect have been used as a corpus for a linguistic description, not least by foreign scholars who, in the past, would have had literary sources as their only access to variation in English. Whilst Shorrocks is aware that there are ‘difficulties’ in using literary texts for linguistic study, such as ‘the inadequacies of dialect orthographies’, he argues that such work should not be abandoned, given that literary sources are sometimes the only records of certain speech patterns.²² Thus Shorrocks’s approach to the study of dialect representation is comparable to that of Ives: like Ives he sees the dialect in literary texts as material to be

²² Graham Shorrocks, ‘Non-standard Dialect Literature and Popular Culture’, in *Speech Past and Present, Studies in English Dialectology in Memory of Ossi Ihalainen*, ed. by Juhani Klemola, Merja Kytö and Matti Rissanen (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1996), pp.393.

used in linguistic studies, considering the speech of fictional characters in relation to that heard in actual local speech communities. Perhaps Shorrocks's view reflects the fact that his main concern is dialect literature, that is, poetry and other texts written by members of a particular speech community, rather than novels in which the literary dialect has been written by an outsider.

In the 1980s, those working in the field of literary dialect moved on from Ives's notion of authenticity to a belief that readers should analyse the way in which the representation of dialect functions within the text. Such work has looked to include the analysis of literary dialect within literary criticism, rather than seeing the two as mutually exclusive. Norman Blake's *Non-standard Language in Literature* (1981) is the first major work which considers how nonstandard language is 'woven into the serious moral' of the text (19). He charts the developments in the use of literary dialect from Chaucer to the modern era, considering both its authenticity and the way it is part of the internal workings of the text. Nineteenth century novelists, in representing dialect were, contrary to Ives's assumption, adopting established conventions. In the second chapter of his publication, Blake successfully argues that Chaucer, in *The Canterbury Tales*, began this convention as he represented the speech of various classes of people. He explains that Spenser took his examples of dialect not from actual speakers but from earlier writers including Chaucer, Malory and Langland, so many of these forms were archaic by the time Spenser used them. And so the pattern continues up to the present day when neo-Victorian writers adopt the conventions used by their predecessors. Literary dialect is, argues Blake, 'a hodge-podge of features used to create a non-standard effect' (59). That is not to say that it is used indiscriminately, as shown in his analysis of the direct speech within *Wuthering Heights*:

The dialect is used to suggest a coarseness and a latent evil. It is for this reason that it is found in Joseph and the young Hareton, both of whom have been brutalized by Heathcliff. The latter ceases to use dialect as he comes increasingly under the spell of Catherine's love, as though the curse of evil and brutality were broken by her gentleness. The dialect is still a class marker but it is not used for cheap laughs[...]Joseph is in many ways diabolical and hypocritical[...]his appearance occurs often at important psychological moments. Characteristically, it is he who sets the dogs on Lockwood and thus suggests the latent violence and inhospitable character of life at the Heights (151).

Unlike Ives, who judges literary dialect only in terms of linguistic accuracy, Blake relates its use to Brontë's themes and characterisation, thus marrying linguistics and literary criticism. Blake's work was continued by Norman Page who also looks at both the authenticity of the literary dialect and its function within the novel.²³ In his analysis of Dickens's novels, Page rejects any claim to authenticity: 'his art is not a realistic one,

²³ Norman Page, *Speech in the English Novel*, 2nd edn (London: Macmillan, 1988).

and in spite of his popular reputation as a historian of London life and manners we must not expect to find in his novels a conscientious representation of observed speech habits' (67). This is the point at which an Ivesian analysis of the literary dialect would end. Page, however, asks the 'fundamental question: what kinds of relationship can exist between the speech of a character and that character's total function in the novel?' (98) He identifies six overlapping types of speech within novels: speech as identification, speech as parody, realistic speech, conventional speech, token speech and neutral, or stylistically unmarked, speech (98). Notably only one of these, 'realistic speech' aims at a faithful representation of actual speech; yet all types have validity within the novel. Page then applies his ideas in analysing the speech of the character Joe Gargery in *Great Expectations* at the point in the story (Chapter 27) when Joe goes to visit Pip in London. Here, Page successfully argues, Joe's language changes in a single scene. Initially, the 'comic absurdity' of his heavily marked speech is used to create a contrast with Pip. Later, however, these marked forms virtually disappear 'in a monologue of some length in which Joe's natural dignity and sensitivity are manifested' (119). Thus Joe is no longer seen as 'a buffoon' but a moral man who puts Pip to shame, and what might initially be seen as an inconsistency in the writer's use of literary dialect is actually integral to the development of character and theme.

Patricia Ingham's 1986 article, 'Dialect as 'Realism': *Hard Times* and the Industrial Novel',²⁴ is concerned with the authenticity of the literary dialect used by Dickens, compared with that of Elizabeth Gaskell, but in a different way from Ives. She sees the literary dialect as having value within the overall 'realism' of *Hard Times*, another tool used in the desire to tell an accurate story of the lives of the poor factory workers. Ingham views the novel as a documentary account of life in the mills. She notes the serious concern with socio-political issues in the novel, as does Page when he argues that in *Hard Times* Dickens 'put a regional dialect to a very different use in the wholly serious, even tragic figure of the factory-hand Stephen Blackpool'(67). Similarly, Blake argues that the use of literary dialect may be political 'in showing that the aspirations of people who speak like that are real and have to be accommodated'(14). Ingham argues that, having little personal knowledge of the Lancashire dialect, Dickens used John Collier's *Tim Bobbin: View of the Lancashire Dialect, with Glossary* (1818) as his source for all the dialect lexis used in the novel. She states that Dickens 'took more care over what he assumed to be an authentic version' (523) of regional speech than he had in his previous novels in order to give a voice to the downtrodden masses and bring public attention to their plight in the same way that Mrs Gaskell did in *Mary Barton*. However, unlike Dickens, Ingham argues, Mrs Gaskell's representation of Lancashire dialect is based on

²⁴ *Review of English Studies: A Quarterly Journal of English Literature and the English Language*, 37.148 (1986), 518-27.

both her personal knowledge of the variety and her husband's research in this area. Thus, in making a comparison between literary dialect and 'authentic speech', Ingham is adopting an approach which is more in line with that of Ives; indeed, her study views *Hard Times*, in general, as a presentation of an external reality rather than a literary construct.

In the late 1990s, Susan L. Ferguson, in coining the term 'ficto-linguistics', built on the work of Blake and Page and proposed an alternative focus for the study of literary dialect.²⁵ Ferguson defines ficto-linguistics as 'the systems of language that appear in novels and both deviate from accepted or expected socio-linguistic patterns and indicate identifiable alternative patterns congruent to other aspects of the fictional world'(2). Thus, for Ferguson, whether the literary dialect has 'regional significance' is not the focus. Unlike Ives, who looks outward from the text to the 'real' world, she looks inward to study how the literary dialect functions within the world created by the novelist. She acknowledges, however, that 'socio-linguistics and ficto-linguistics do interact' and that 'it would be a mistake to suggest that forms of language that appear in novels are disconnected from those outside the novel' (2-3), but her concern is 'the internal workings of the novel' (3). (It is worth noting that Ives considered language only in terms of dialectology, that is, lists of individual pronunciations, lexical items and grammatical forms appearing in a specific region, rather than taking into account any socio-linguistic factors.) In this way, she develops the earlier work of Blake and Page. She applies the notion of ficto-linguistics to an analysis of three Victorian novels, including *Wuthering Heights*:

If we consider how dialect and Standard English function within the novel itself, the "inconsistencies" of the dialect begin to make sense. By making Heathcliff's language exactly like that of Catherine and Hindley, Brontë noticeably resists making Heathcliff's story primarily social; instead, she emphasizes the psychological drama and divisions that are central to the novel. If Heathcliff spoke the dialect, the novel would appear more about the social climbing and illicit love of an adopted son. Further, the intense intimacy of Catherine and Heathcliff would take on a far stronger social meaning[...]and so would Heathcliff's usurpation of *Wuthering Heights*. Instead, by making Heathcliff's style of speech similar to that of Catherine, Hindley, and even Edgar and Isabella, the novel locates him at the absolute centre of its strange world (5).

Whilst the points made by Ferguson in her analysis of this novel are not the same as those made by Blake, her approach is very much the same, discussing how dialect 'follows fictional, rather than strictly social lines' (5). Furthermore, they both, along with Page, illustrate that language use which is apparently inconsistent when compared with actual usage is part of the novelists' development of ideas which are central to the text.

²⁵ 'Drawing Fictional Lines: Dialect and Narrative in the Victorian Novel', *Style*, 32.1 (1998), 1-17.

This interplay between nonstandard and Standard English, as discussed in the work of Ferguson, has become the focus of more recent work which considers the use of literary dialect in relation to narratology, without focussing on its authenticity. Michael Toolan makes the point that direct speech or direct thought rendering 'tends to imply narratorial respect for a character, and that, as teller, you don't mind your readers getting 'close' to the character in this way'.²⁶ Thus Dickens, Eliot and Gaskell, in allowing characters extended passages of direct speech are showing respect for them, giving them the floor, so to speak, to show that they are articulate and capable of discussing serious issues in a thoughtful manner. However, writers may still be wary of the fact that some readers may be predisposed to view dialect-speaking characters as inferior beings and so take measures to avoid those characters being ridiculed. Taryn Hakala gives the example of Mr Pickwick who sometimes 'translates' Sam Weller's speeches, acting as an 'interpreter' for readers who may not be able to follow Sam's words easily, and thus becoming an intradiegetic narrator.²⁷ This is a variation of the convention of having a third person extradiegetic narrator whose Standard English contrasts with the literary dialect and can be used to explain to the reader any marked form which may prove difficult to understand. Indeed, a character may be denied direct speech altogether and have his or her words reported indirectly in Standard English by the third person narrator, which is what happens in John Brown's non-fictional *A Memoir of Robert Blincoe*. This is something considered by Michael Toolan in his earlier work on South African writing.²⁸ Toolan also uses the term 'reader resistance' which is when a reader negotiates a writer's passages of literary dialect 'in a spirit of enforced labour' (34). The inconsistency in writers' representation of dialect which has been noted by many critics, including Blake and Ferguson, can be seen as a way of avoiding 'reader resistance'.

From around the turn of the millennium, the field of literary dialect has made greater reference to socio-linguistics, drawing in particular on Penelope Eckert's and Nikolas Coupland's work on linguistic style. However, it is not the case that early work on literary dialect has ignored the findings of socio-linguistic studies. Even Ives, in the mid-twentieth century, acknowledges that 'a local dialect is not a homogeneous set of speech conventions that differs from other homogeneous sets of conventions'(152), although he does believe that geographical areas can be found where there is a concentration of such a set of features. Then Blake considered more fully the problem of ascertaining what exactly is 'real' in terms of dialectal speech. In his analysis of

²⁶ Michael Toolan, *Language in Literature: An Introduction to Stylistics* (Hodder Arnold: London, 1998), p.108.

²⁷ Taryn Hakala, 'Working Dialect' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 2010), p.148-9.

²⁸ Michael Toolan, 'Significations of Representing Dialect', *Language and Literature*, 1:1 (1992), 29-46.

Wuthering Heights (149), he states that since there are no surviving records to indicate the phonology of the Haworth dialect, the reader cannot be sure how to pronounce Emily Brontë's respellings. Also, perhaps more significantly, he states that the notion of 'linguistic realism' is further complicated by what the socio-linguists have taught us about people adapting their language to suit the social situation in which they find themselves (14).

Eckert and Coupland question the very notion of the existence of authentic speech. In her 2003 article 'Sociolinguistics and Authenticity: An Elephant in the Room'²⁹, Eckert argues that authenticity, in terms of there being a 'speaker of pure vernacular[...]our direct access to language untainted by the interference of reflection or society' is 'an ideological construct'(392). Thus an Ivesian reading of literary dialect, trying to match it to 'authentic' or 'real' dialect is not only failing to appreciate the function of the speech within the novel, but is an impossible task. If an authentic speaker does not exist in the 'real' world then a writer will be unable to represent authentic speech. Philip Leigh makes this point more emphatically, arguing that 'real' dialect is itself unstable.³⁰ This means that any attempt to represent dialect can never arrive at a definitively 'true' variety, even if the writer wanted to do so, but must select from a range of features which are, or more likely have been in the past, associated with the dialect. Taryn Hakala applies Eckert's ideas, and those in her study of linguistic styling in an American high school,³¹ to her own work on dialect representation in the novels of Dickens and Elizabeth Gaskell. Hakala argues that characters 'fashion themselves linguistically'; they 'are represented as performing their identities through speech' which is a way of relating to their local community (24). This then enables Hakala to take a ficto-linguistic approach to the novels, studying the way in which the characters' speech positions them in relation to those around them.

Nikolas Coupland provides an alternative approach to the question of authenticity within socio-linguistics; and this has also had an influence on studies of literary dialect. Coupland argues that 'Authenticity could be a powerful concept to use within the analysis of style', considering how speakers parody themselves or present themselves as 'not being themselves'. He uses the term 'styling' to refer to the 'performativity' within speech, the 'creative design potential for speaking'.³² In doing so, his focus is very much on the individual rather than on socio-economic or regional groups of speakers, as has

²⁹ *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 7.3 (2003), 392-7.

³⁰ 'A Game of Confidence: Literary Dialect, Linguistics and Authenticity'(unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 2011), p. 17.

³¹ Penelope Eckert, *Linguistic Variation as Social Practice* (Blackwell: Oxford, 2000).

³² Nikolas Coupland, *Style* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 25.

been the case in the past in both socio-linguistic studies³³ and in work on literary dialect such as that of Ives.

Although current work on literary dialect has progressed beyond Ivesian analyses of the authenticity of the speech to ascertain whether it has ‘regional significance’, the idea of authenticity is still important. Firstly, as argued by Coupland there is the notion of authenticity within linguistic styling which can be applied to the study of literary dialect; but also, much more fundamentally, readers need to believe in the ‘realism’ of any dialect used by a novelist. Taryn Hakala successfully argues that, whilst it is futile to attempt to determine whether a writer’s representation of speech is authentic, we should not ‘discount the importance of the idea of authenticity’ (14). She continues to make the point that readers identify with characters as real people, showing care and concern for them, and that the legitimacy of the dialect representation employed by writers ‘lends legitimacy to the language use of the novel’s character’ (29), thereby helping the reader to identify with them as real people. Philip Leigh argues that there is a ‘confidence game played between readers and writers when literary market places demand the ‘unvarnished truth’ in fiction’ (46). He extends this notion of a ‘confidence game’ to literary dialect and in Chapter Three of his thesis gives a detailed discussion of Mark Twain’s ‘Explanatory’ note to *Huckleberry Finn* as ‘the most famous (and most answered) call to play the confidence game built into questions of linguistic authenticity in dialect literature’ (10). Twain’s note claims that seven different authentic dialects are used in the novel, thus persuading the reader of the authenticity of the speech, despite what is actually written. As Leigh argues, it is impossible to be certain whether this is actually the case, but critics have responded to the claim almost as a challenge as they attempt to either prove or disprove Twain’s statement. Hakala makes a similar point about Elizabeth Gaskell’s use of footnotes to claim use of authentic local forms (30-5) and Blake notes that George Eliot wrote in a letter to W.W. Skeat that in writing the direct speech in *Adam Bede*, she had followed the Staffordshire and Derbyshire dialect as closely as possible (153).

The field has now moved on 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. It is this kind of analysis which Philip Leigh advocates when he calls for ‘a post-authenticity’ approach to dialect writing (23). In the past the assumption has been that authenticity (or lack thereof) is inherent in the text and can be compared with the real world. Leigh, on the other hand, suggests that authenticity is in the relationship between reader and text. In this thesis, I develop Leigh’s and others’ work by exploring more fully what exactly a ‘post-authenticity’ approach to literary dialect studies should

³³ For example, W. Labov, *The Social Stratification of English in New York City* (Washington D.C.: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1966).

be. Once authenticity *per se* has been dismissed, what is the function of nonstandard speech within a novel? How do writers use literary dialect to manage readers' responses? How do readers respond to marked forms when making judgements about characters? What does all of this tell us about the attitudes to language use which are encoded within, and communicated by, novels? I use literary theory and a range of novels, along with my own work with real readers, to address these issues in order to begin to develop a new framework for the study of literary dialect. This framework draws together the two fields of literary dialect study and critical studies of the realist novel such that the study of literary dialect is an integral part of literary criticism. I consider use of dialect representation in the Victorian era as this is the one in which representations of dialect developed and became embedded in the realist novel, perhaps most notably in the works of Dickens. Our understanding of how to read dialect dates back to the Victorian period, or even specifically to Dickens; therefore it is important to look at how dialect functions in novels from that era. This is followed by later examples in which the writers are also readers who have responded to the earlier work. Finally, I focus on reader response to nonstandard and standard speech in fiction. Since authenticity is no longer the issue, I broaden the range of writers whose literary dialect is studied, considering the forms they use, in comparison with those of better-known novelists, and how these forms generate meaning within the overall design of the novel.

3. Section Summaries: Case Studies and Methodology

There are three main sections in this thesis, each of which begins by outlining the work within an area of literary criticism which is then used to inform an analysis of literary dialect in three case studies, in each of Sections One and Two, and my own work with real readers' response to literary dialect, in Section Three.

Section One brings together the fields of literary dialect and literary realism. I begin with a review of critical work on realism which I use to inform case studies of lesser-known fiction from or about the Victorian era, namely the novels of Frances Trollope, George Gissing and Howard Spring. The writers I have chosen all have a connection with Dickens: Trollope was his contemporary and fellow social reformer; Gissing his biographer; and Spring, who read all Dickens's novels as a child, makes direct reference to them in his own work. For this reason, I have selected them in order to compare their work with that of the more famous novelist, broadening the context in which we consider the use of literary dialect. Patricia Ingham dismisses the representation of dialect in Trollope's *The Life and Adventures of Michael Armstrong, The Factory Boy* (1840), and the other early industrial novels, as lacking verisimilitude in contrast with Elizabeth

Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1848).³⁴ Whilst I agree with Ingham's fundamental point, I show that Trollope's literary dialect has great functional significance which we have missed by considering only the most obvious examples of literary dialect in fiction, such as that in the work of Dickens, Gaskell and Eliot. I study Gissing as an example of a novelist who was writing in the late-Victorian era, to show that, whilst we can see a development in dialect representation, Gissing presents dialect-speaking characters less sympathetically than Trollope does. In *Talking Proper: The Rise of Accent as a Social Symbol* (2003),³⁵ Lynda Mugglestone looks at how attitudes to accent influenced novelists, including Gissing. She gives a full and interesting account of how notions of 'vulgar' nonstandard speech, especially Cockney, are reflected in Gissing's writing. However, a detailed analysis of the systemic use of literary dialect in Gissing's novels is not Mugglestone's concern and therefore does not appear in her study. This is something I address, considering whether Gissing's use of literary dialect creates a different social realism from that of Dickens and Trollope. I include Howard Spring's *Fame is the Spur* (1940), a historical novel, as one which can be seen as a link between Victorian fiction and the neo-Victorian genre which became popular in the late-twentieth century. I show that Spring's use of dialect is progressive and contributes to the idea of counter-history, or an alternative version of past events. I argue that the novel's realism depends, to some extent, on the interplay between texts, namely Dickens's works. Spring's novel makes both direct and indirect reference to Dickens's novels; it was published at a time when some of his readers would have had a living memory of the Victorian era and would have been able to draw on their experience in their response to the novel.

In Section Two I consider the work of the New Historicist school of literary criticism, and its concern with re-reading and re-writing the past, in relation to neo-Victorian realist novels. Ruth Livesey accounts for the importance of Victorian texts in the present day, arguing that from around 1960, with the development of Marxist criticism, 'Victorian literature mattered, as did the Victorian period more generally, because it was the source of modern class society, the processes that continued to shape 20th-century society and were driving history into the future'.³⁶ I consider neo-Victorian novels' use of counter-history: narratives which either challenge those written in the nineteenth century or provide supplementary accounts of aspects of Victorian society not previously represented in fiction. I examine the ways in which Sarah Waters's *Fingersmith* (2002), Michel Faber's *The Crimson Petal and the White* (2002), and Lynn Shepherd's *Tom-*

³⁴ 'Dialect as 'Realism': *Hard Times* and the Industrial Novel', *Review of English Studies: A Quarterly Journal of English Literature and the English Language*, 37.148 (1986), 518-27.

³⁵ Oxford University Press.

³⁶ Introduction, *Oxford Bibliographies* < <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com> > [10th February, 2016].

All-Along's (2012) offer such counter-histories, and generate their meaning through a playful dialogue with one or more works by Dickens, Wilkie Collins and Gissing.

I then study dialect representation in the modern neo-Victorian novels named above. I consider the use of literary dialect, arguing that these writers adopt and adapt not only the conventions used to represent dialect in Victorian fiction but also the subject matter, in order to present their characters, plot and themes to a modern readership. I look at the form and the function of the literary dialect within these texts and also the ways in which the readers' sympathies are engaged or their preconceptions are played upon by writers. I argue that the way in which the contemporary reader responds to the literary dialect is involved in generating the realism. Even though these novels contain subject matter which could not have been included in a Victorian novel, they are essentially conservative, both in terms of the form of their literary dialect and the attitudes to language use that they perpetuate.

Sections One and Two show that writers use literary dialect to manipulate readers' responses to characters so Section Three develops the focus on reader response to fiction by considering how real readers respond to texts, specifically the role of sympathy and empathy in literary criticism. I look at the work done in this field by Lisa Zunshine, Howard Sklar, Suzanne Keen and others. I argue that the use of literary dialect has an important part to play in creating an emotional response to character. It is not possible to ascertain how real readers in the Victorian era responded to the representation of speech in the works of Frances Trollope and George Gissing or even how Spring's use of literary dialect was received. However, it is possible to gather information about the attitudes of present-day readers through the use of surveys and questionnaires. There is a body of recent work, by scholars such as Dennis R. Preston and Christopher Montgomery, on readers' responses to dialect. I use this to inform the analysis of the results of my own reader response study. This involved groups of sixth form students reading extracts from Sarah Waters's *Fingersmith* and answering questions about their perception of the protagonist. I show that their view of the character is affected by her use of dialect and that they accept the novel's literary realism. I also asked a group of my colleagues to record themselves reading aloud a passage from the novel and use these results to argue that readers respond to the literary dialect 'cues' by performing or hearing nonstandard speech as they read.

In summary, up until now, where literary dialect has been studied, it has been abstracted from either the novel in which it is found or from the context in which the novel was written or read. Initially, this took the form of dialectology surveys; then, a ficto-

linguistic approach considered only the ‘internal workings of the novel’.³⁷ This project seeks to develop a more context-based approach, considering how meaning is created through the dialogue between text, related texts, and reader. It aims to broaden the scope of the study of literary dialect to consider how it functions within the realist novel and how readers’ responses to dialect are a key part of the interpretative process. It seeks to further extend the range of Victorian novelists whose use of nonstandard speech is studied, and consider how the conventions of dialect representation are used and manipulated by modern writers whose works have a neo-Victorian setting.

³⁷ Susan L. Ferguson Ferguson, ‘Drawing Fictional Lines: Dialect and Narrative in the Victorian Novel’, *Style*, 32.1 (1998) (1998), pp. 3.

Section One

Literary Dialect and Realism: Frances Trollope, George Gissing and Howard Spring

1. Introduction

In the introduction, I examined critical work on literary dialect, showing that there has been a move away from seeking to verify whether or not the representation is authentic to a consideration of its function within the work. I argued that a post-authenticity approach to studies of literary dialect should consider texts as generating meaning through a conversation between writer, reader, and the broader cultural context in which they are both written and read. Taking such an approach would place the study of the representation of nonstandard speech in fiction within the field of literary criticism. The writers I study are realist in the sense that they aim, to a large extent, to present the reader with a view of the external world, one which depicts the lives of the poor as they were lived by some; their use of direct speech forms part of that representation of the external world. Therefore, I argue that literary dialect should be studied as a component part of realism.

I begin this section by setting out the development of critical views on literary realism, showing that whilst work in this field has been quicker to turn from the idea of strict authenticity, there has been a lack of consideration of the contribution of literary dialect to the realist novel. I show that later work on literary realism focusses more on the idea of the reader's acceptance of the world created by the writer. I draw a parallel between this view and that developed in later literary dialect studies, that is, the view that it is the reader's acceptance of the nonstandard speech variety being represented that gives it 'authenticity'. In this way, I draw together the two fields of study, ready to apply them to the three case studies which follow.

Given that authenticity is no longer the issue, we should broaden the scope of writers studied to include ones whose representation of speech has been dismissed as lacking verisimilitude or consistency, or whose literary dialect has never been studied, as a closer examination reveals that the dialect has a clear function within the text. Frances Trollope's *The Life and Adventures of Michael Armstrong, the Factory Boy* (1840) and George Gissing's *Workers in the Dawn* (1880) were published in the Victorian era, whilst Howard Spring's *Fame is the Spur* (1940) is an historical novel by a writer who was born in the late-nineteenth century. I have chosen these works as lesser-known examples of how novelists were using literary dialect in the early- and late-Victorian era (Trollope and Gissing respectively), and in texts which take a retrospective view of the era. Thus any changes or developments in the use of literary dialect can be discussed. All three writers published realist novels in the sense that they aim to reflect the lives of actual individuals and social groups in their creation of character and setting. The literary dialect of these

novelists has received little critical attention in comparison with that of Gaskell, Eliot and especially Dickens; yet it has an important role in the development of character, plot and key ideas. I consider the form and function of each writer's literary dialect in relation to that of Dickens, looking at how they present working-class society in the Victorian era.

2. Literature Review: Literary Realism

i. What is Realism?

Critics from Auerbach and Watt onwards have pointed out that the term 'realism' used to mean the opposite of what we now understand it to mean. In the Middle Ages, scholars held the view that 'universals, classes or abstractions, and not the particular concrete objects of sense perception' were the true realities.³⁸ Thus the individual and his or her experience of the external world was unimportant as all lives were believed to be governed by these universals. In the modern period, realism is associated with the French school of realists, and literary realism has its foundations in the work of Descartes and Locke as a rejection of such universals for a belief that 'truth can be discovered by the individual through his senses'.³⁹ Thus there has been a shift of focus to the individual's experience and perception of the world, an 'affirmation of the real world',⁴⁰ which is at the heart of the realist novel.

Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis* (1946) and Ian Watt's *The Rise of the Novel* (1957) are two key works on literary realism. Auerbach's work is significant in its study of how aspects of ordinary life which once featured in literary texts only as part of the characterisation of 'low', comedic characters became the main focus of the novel. He points out that there has always been the 'real' in literature, even before the existence of the novel form. He cites Shakespeare's inclusion of 'earthly reality' such as 'mentioning everyday utensils' and the 'everyday processes of life' in plays such as *Henry IV Part One*; but he adds that Shakespeare 'does not take ordinary everyday reality seriously or tragically. He treats only noblemen, princes and kings, statesmen, commanders, and antique heroes tragically'.⁴¹ Auerbach argues that there were distinct 'levels of style' (489) with stories of ordinary people and everyday life being reserved for the 'low' style whilst tales of heroes and statesmen were the concern of 'serious' literature. He documents the mixing of styles that began in the work of the novelists Stendhal and Balzac, concluding as follows:

³⁸ Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1963), p. 12.

³⁹ Watt, p. 10, 12.

⁴⁰ John Romano, *Dickens and Reality* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), p. 83.

⁴¹ Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis* (New York: Doubleday, 1957), p. 288, 275.

When Stendhal and Balzac took random individuals from daily life in their dependence upon current historical circumstances and made them the subjects of serious, problematic, even tragic representation, they broke the classical rule of distinct levels of style, for according to this rule, everyday practical reality could find a place in literature only within the frame of a low or intermediate kind of style, that is to say, as either grotesquely comic or pleasant, light, colourful, and elegant entertainment. They thus completed a development which had long been in preparation[...]And they opened the way for modern realism, which has ever since developed in increasingly rich forms, in keeping with the constantly changing and expanding reality of modern life (489).

Thus Auerbach's book is significant in detailing the origins of literary realism, and his work is developed by Watt. Watt echoes the views above and then considers more specifically the 'technical characteristics' of 'formal realism' (28, 33): the plot became non-traditional so that it could accommodate the actions of the protagonist and therefore focus on 'the primacy of individual experience' (15); the plot had to be acted in particular circumstances (time and place) by particular people rather than general human types; and this, in turn led to the inclusion of detailed descriptions of character and environment (16, 18). Although it has been superseded (as I detail below), Watt's work with its focus on a series of 'technical characteristics' of realism remains highly influential and is still required reading for those studying the novel today.

In terms of providing a clear, succinct definition of literary realism, whilst Dennis Walder and Richard Allen warn that 'it would be a mistake to look for any hard-and-fast definition of the realist novel',⁴² George Levine, in his influential *The Realistic Imagination* (1981), offers the following helpful explanation:

Realism, as a literary method, can[...]be defined as a self-conscious effort, usually in the name of some moral enterprise of truth-telling and extending the limits of human sympathy, to make literature appear to be describing directly not some other language but reality itself.⁴³

Of course, the notion of 'reality itself' and 'the real world' is a highly complex philosophical one bound to the idea of perception; but the explanation above can still be seen as valid and is the one I adopt here when I use the term 'realism'. It is worth noting that Levine sees the text's emotional effect on the reader as a key component of realism, and this is an idea I shall return to in Section Three.

ii. The Rise of Realism

Auerbach, and especially Watt, have studied the development of the novel form as being closely linked to the shift to realism in literature, and subsequent critical work follows

⁴² Dennis Walder and Richard Allen, 'Can Realist Novels Survive?', in *The Realist Novel* ed. by Dennis Walder (Abingdon: Routledge, 1995), pp. 196.

⁴³ George Levine, *The Realistic Imagination: English Fiction from Frankenstein to Lady Chatterley* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), p.8.

their lead. As Dennis Walder states, 'Realism' is a word that anyone studying novels cannot avoid using, or at least trying to come to terms with'.⁴⁴ Reasons for the growth of realist fiction include the rise of the middle classes and a more industrial, urban society, as well as the spread of literacy and the introduction of the circulating libraries. Despite the apparent approbation of the realist novel (above), Auerbach is much more derogatory when he forges a link between the growing popularity of the realist novel and the expansion of the reading public in the nineteenth century. He says that with this increase in literacy came 'the concomitant coarsening of taste' and that 'Intelligence, choiceness of feeling, concern for the forms of life and expression deteriorated' (442). He argues that since the bourgeoisie, the urban middle classes, were the new readers, and that their lives were exhausting as they were the ones driving the economic, scientific and technological change seen in the nineteenth century, they would want only 'an easily attained intoxication' from their reading and not high art (442). The key point here, for the purposes of this study, is that it was in the nineteenth century that the social and economic conditions contributed to the growing popularity of the realist novel: thus the nineteenth century, the Victorian era in particular, could be viewed as the 'golden age' of realism.

In Chapter Two of his book, Ian Watt offers a more detailed, less derogatory, account of the rise of the realist novel. Watt argues that the increase in literacy is in itself, not sufficient to account for the rising popularity of the novel, giving detailed statistical evidence to support his claim. He also considers how the cost of novels would have been prohibitive to all but the most comfortably off. It is the introduction of the circulating libraries in 1740, with novels as their 'main attraction' which, he argues, generated the 'spread of reading to the lower orders' and led to the popularity of the novel. He also points out that women formed a large part of the reading public, especially those of the upper and middle classes who could not partake in the same activities as the men and therefore had plenty of leisure time to read lengthy texts (44-5). Watt argues that 'realist' subject matter of the novel was, in part, an indirect consequence of, on the one hand, the growth of the publishers, or booksellers, and the laws of the market place, and, on the other, the decline of patronage: 'Once the writer's primary aim was no longer to satisfy the standards of patrons and the literary elite, other considerations took on a new importance' (58). He argues that writers now used language to appeal to a much wider audience, favouring prose over poetry and including detailed descriptions and explanations. Watt concludes that the rise of the novel was a reflection of the changing society: 'the great power and self-confidence of the middle-class as a whole' which began in the eighteenth century (61). Lilian R. Furst, whose

⁴⁴ Dennis Walder, 'The Genre Approach', in *The Realist Novel* ed. by Dennis Walder (Abingdon: Routledge, 1995), pp.18.

book, *All Is True: The Claims and Strategies of Realist Fiction* (1995)⁴⁵ is to some extent a development of Watt's ideas, comments that the success of realism should also be seen 'in the context of the growing interest in documentary as a genre, which followed the debut of photography in 1839 with the daguerrotype' (6). Observation, and therefore descriptive detail became increasingly important as people sought documentary evidence of the external world. This being the case, readers of Dickens and other key Victorian writers may well have read these novels as providing documentary evidence of, for example, the conditions in which London's urban poor lived.

Marxist scholar Arnold Kettle focuses much more on the widespread, longer-term changes in society and the class system which led to the development of English realist fiction.⁴⁶ He views the growing popularity of the realist novel as 'part and parcel' (32) of the revolution of the seventeenth century which saw the breakdown of feudalism and the rise of the bourgeoisie which was, at that time, a revolutionary class. Kettle argues that 'Romance was the non-realistic, aristocratic literature of feudalism' (29), in which readers were transported to a world of chivalry and exciting adventures which 'recommended the values the ruling class wished to preserve' (32). This society and its literature, argues Kettle, had nothing to offer the bourgeoisie who, 'in order to win its freedom from the feudal order, had to tear the veil of romance from the face of feudalism' (35). The shift from romance to realism, from poetry to prose 'corresponds to the changing needs and spirit of society' (33). Thus the realist novel spoke to the new bourgeoisie of their lives and reflected their values. As Katherine Kearns states, realist writers 'choose to write in order to teach the lessons of what it means to function humanly within a world increasingly orientated toward orderly, large-scale productivities' rather than writing romances which seem to have little to do with the lives of most readers.⁴⁷ Initially, as Cecil Jenkins states, 'Not only was the introduction of everyday realities into literature or painting felt obscurely to attack the old romanticised ideality which art was expected to sustain and protect[...]but the depiction of 'low life' was felt to be morally and politically subversive'⁴⁸ which is one reason why, as Kettle argues, the bourgeoisie was originally considered a revolutionary class. This differs from Furst's view in that Kettle believes that middle-class readers saw their own lives and values in the new realist novel rather than being provided with documentary

⁴⁵ Lilian R. Furst, *All Is True: The Claims and Strategies of Realist Fiction* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995).

⁴⁶ Arnold Kettle (1951), *An Introduction to the English Novel Volume I* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016).

⁴⁷ Katherine Kearns, *Nineteenth Century Literary Realism: Through the Looking Glass* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.5.

⁴⁸ 'Realism and the Novel Form', in *The Monster in the Mirror: Studies in Nineteenth Century Realism*, ed. by D. A. Williams (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp.9.

evidence of the lives of others. However, like all scholars working in this area, both focus on the inclusion of everyday reality in the novel.

iii. The Conventions of Realism

Having looked at some of the reasons given as to why realism and the novel form developed throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, I will now examine the development of critical ideas about the conventions adopted by realist writers. In doing so, I will show that critical views of realism have developed along similar lines to those of literary dialect, in that both move away from the idea of strict authenticity.

As Lilian R. Furst points out, Henry James's *The House of Fiction* (1884) was the first criticism of the novel as an independent genre (13). James's work is often cited by critics from Watt (1957) onwards and, as the first study of the novel, it remains part of the debate about realism. In his chapter entitled 'The Art of Fiction', James makes the decisive statement that 'The only reason for the existence of a novel is that it does attempt to represent life'.⁴⁹ He equates the job of the novelist with that of the historian, their task being to 'represent and illustrate the past, the actions of men' (26). In performing this task, he argues, the novelist must step out of the narrative; and he criticises Anthony Trollope for a 'want of discretion' in a narrative digression in which he admits that he is describing events which have not really happened. This, for James, is 'a betrayal of a sacred office', a 'terrible crime' which must 'bring tears to the eyes of people who take their fiction seriously' (25, 26). Whilst James acknowledges that 'reality' is not a straightforward notion and there are many different versions of reality, each a personal impression of life 'coloured by the author's vision' (31), he believes that a successful novel creates an unspoiled 'air of reality' as the writer creates an 'illusion of life' (33). For James, the reader has to believe in the reality of the world of the novel and any steps taken by the writer to destroy that 'illusion' damage the novel and the reader's experience of it. This view is echoed in more recent work, for example by D.A. Williams who states that 'the narrator needs to be omniscient if the Realist is to provide the insight into the way both society and individuals work which his claim to be either annalist or analyst implies'; and that whilst complete withdrawal of the narrator is not possible, he needs to withdraw as 'a discernible personality' in order to preserve the apparent objective reportage style of the realist narrative.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Henry James (1884), *The House of Fiction: Essays on the Novel* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1957), p.25.

⁵⁰ 'The Practice of Realism' in *The Monster in the Mirror: Studies in Nineteenth Century Realism*, ed. by D.A. Williams (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp.260.

Like James, Auerbach believes that realist fiction is mimetic, evidenced, as Furst points out, by the title of his book, *Mimesis* (13). Similarly, Watt argues that employing ‘technical characteristics’ (28) in the writing of a novel contributes to the furthering of the novelist’s aim of producing ‘what purports to be an authentic account of the actual experiences of individuals’, adding that ‘perhaps the most important’ of these technical characteristics of the novel is ‘the adaptation of the prose style to give an air of complete authenticity’ (28). Use of the term ‘authenticity’ parallels that within the field of literary dialect and the approach here mirrors that of Ives: both are judging the literary work in comparison with external reality. There is, however, a slight difference, seen in Watt’s choice of phrasing: ‘what purports to be’ authentic and ‘an air of complete authenticity’ reveal that Watt is aware of the fictional construct; Ives, on the other hand, believes that literary dialect can be taken as ‘real’ dialect.

In general, Watt sees Fielding as someone who was highly influential in the development of the novel, but he is critical of his prose style, which he believes pulls against his novels’ realism: ‘Fielding’s stylistic virtues tend to interfere with his technique as a novelist, because a patent selectiveness of vision destroys our belief in the reality of the report, or at least diverts our attention from the content of the report to the skill of the reporter’ (31). This complaint is comparable to that of James against Trollope (above) and leads to opinions such as that expressed by Auerbach (above) that realism necessarily led to language which was less literary; and indeed Watt continues to argue that realism depends on a referential use of language which makes for ‘clear and easy’ prose rather than the earlier ‘literary prose’ (30). John Romano takes this a step further in his complaint that ‘the historical-realist project in nineteenth century fiction, which was to describe the real world instead of or in addition to creating an imaginary one, was unliterary -- not so much an impossible ideal as an error in taste and judgement’.⁵¹ Thus Romano creates an art versus life dichotomy which is echoed, although much less negatively, by Katherine Kearns. She comments that Dickens’s *Hard Times* ‘looks for that impossible thing -- a rhetorical stance that perfectly balances the production of ameliorative action through beautiful or moving language against the need for “truth”’.⁵² Like Romano, and others before him, Kearns believes that ‘truth’ and artistry are mutually exclusive, that a literary work cannot draw attention to itself as such through the conscious crafting of language and at the same time represent external reality.

From the late twentieth century onwards, criticism can be seen to challenge the art versus life dichotomy proposed by Romano. This can be seen in attitudes toward George Eliot, who is considered to be a realist writer by critics including Levine and

⁵¹ John Romano, *Dickens and Reality* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), p.22.

⁵² Katherine Kearns, *Nineteenth Century Literary Realism: Through the Looking Glass* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.181.

Furst. Eliot attacked female novelists who failed their duty to 'describe actual life'.⁵³

Walter Kendrick summarises her realism as follows:

For Eliot[...]the art of the novel was primarily one of transmission. The final goal was that the reader should take its represented world as one continuous in all ways with his own. He should be brought to regard a novel's characters as living beings[...]The novelist had the duty to place his reader in immediate contact with a fictional world to which he would respond as if it were no fiction.⁵⁴

This view is supported by more recent criticism, for example Francis O'Gorman's 'Realism and Romance' in which he states that 'for Eliot the purposes of realism were first and foremost a dedication to the empirical fabric of life[...]Fiction for Eliot is a secular experiment in recording human lives'.⁵⁵ Yet, as pointed out by various critics including Furst, Eliot commits the 'terrible crime'⁵⁶ of stepping outside her narrative to address the reader directly and comment on the events and characters she has created. According to James, such writing ruins the 'air of reality', but Eliot is regarded as very much a realist. Despite James, recent critics accept Eliot as a realist whilst acknowledging that she draws attention to her narrative art. This has led to a shift in the study of realism which rejects straightforward notions of mimesis and sees much greater complexity in the conventions of realist fiction. Binary oppositions such as romance and realism, art and truth are broken down. One of the earliest major works to challenge the older mimetic view of realism was that of George Levine (1981); the title of his book, *The Realistic Imagination*, immediately blurs the boundary between truth and fiction. From the outset, Levine argues that 'No major Victorian novelists were deluded into believing that they were in fact offering an unmediated reality; but all of them struggled to make contact with the world out there, and, even with their knowledge of their own subjectivity, to break from the threatening limits of solipsism, of convention, and of language' (8). Similar to Cecil Jenkins, who sees the resolution of the 'apparent contradiction between objectivity and subjectivity' (10) as 'the artistic achievement of the Realists', Levine states that 'For the realistic method it is a matter of balance' (12). He goes on to summarise three important points which can be seen to act as a response to those who were critical of realist fiction's claim to be a representation of actual life:

First, realism was always in process as long as it was important to nineteenth century fiction; second, there was no such thing as naïve realism -- simple faith

⁵³ 'Silly Novels by Lady Novelists', in *George Eliot: Complete Essays*, ed. by Nathan Sheppard (Funk and Wagnalls: New York, 1883), 188-205 (pp. 189).

⁵⁴ Walter M. Kendrick, 'Balzac and British Realism: Mid-Victorian Theories of the Novel', *Victorian Studies* 20. 1 (1976), 5-24 (pp. 15-16).

⁵⁵ In *The Cambridge History of the English Novel*, ed. by Robert L. Caserio and Clement Hawes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp.485-499 (p. 488).

⁵⁶ Henry James (1884), *The House of Fiction: Essays on the Novel* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1957), p.25.

in the correspondence between word and thing -- among serious Victorian novelists; and third and not quite contradictorily, Victorian realists, recognising the difference between the truth and the appearance of truth, did try to embrace the reality that stretched beyond the reach of language (12).

Levine's differentiation between 'truth and the appearance of truth' is an important development as is his problematising of the link between 'word and thing'. As seen in the development of literary dialect studies, these distinctions promote a shift to consider the novel as a work of art, not a simple mirror held up to reality.

Jerome Meckier's book, *Hidden Rivalries in Victorian Fiction*⁵⁷, adopts an altogether different approach to the realist idea of accurately representing the external world. He views writers such as Dickens and Mrs Gaskell as being in direct competition to create a 'more credible historical document', a 'more realistic depiction of actual Victorian society', choosing to rewrite others' novels as a way of 'enhancing their own credibility'. Meckier refers to this competition as 'the realism wars' (2, 9). The problem with this approach is that at its centre lies the belief that realism is mimetic, a belief that had already been challenged by the time this book was published. In fact, Meckier confidently brushes aside recent work in his statement, 'Notwithstanding Levine, reality itself -- not the appearance of it -- is generally the Victorian realist's goal' (91). His argument that in *Hard Times* (1854) and *North and South* (1854-5) Dickens and Mrs Gaskell consciously and competitively 'rewrite one another's characters, themes and situations with unrelenting assiduity' (47) breaks down somewhat, not least when he acknowledges that neither had access to the other's full text at the time of writing and that the publication of *Hard Times* was well under way before that of *North and South* began (47-8). Meckier is worth mentioning to illustrate the fact that there are those who hold fast to the idea of mimesis despite convincing arguments to the contrary.

Lilian R. Furst's publication *All Is Real* (1995) is largely a development of Levine's ideas and is particularly significant in that it places much greater emphasis on the previously ignored and 'vital' (65) role of the reader as one who is actively involved in constructing meaning, stating that 'To read a realist fiction is[...]to engage in a performative act' (172). (The role of the reader is an area I shall consider in more detail in Section Three.) Furst is critical of earlier 'simplistic' studies such as the work of Auerbach and some of the essays in *The Monster in the Mirror* collection which still see mimesis as the basis of realism (13-14). Her book is part of the new approach to realist fiction which is ready 'to use contradiction as a pivot instead of denying and bypassing it, as critics have tended to do by envisaging the realist novel either as a faithful portrayal of a social situation at a particular time in a particular place or as a textual web of discourse' (2). She argues

⁵⁷ Jerome Meckier, *Hidden Rivalries in Victorian Fiction: Dickens, Realism, and Revaluation* (Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1987).

that the most valid criticism of the realist novel ‘rejects the customary antithesis between fact and fiction to dwell instead on the fruitful interplay between the two’ and that a ‘sustained dialogue between reference to actuality and the textual creation of a fabricated realm[...]is the distinctive hallmark of the realist novel’ (12).

For Furst, the issue is not whether the novel presents the reader with a faithful account of reality but ‘the authenticity of its illusion’ (17). She states, ‘That the realist novel masquerades as truth does not warrant the conclusion that it is a lie, for a lie is a deliberate untruth, whereas the realist novel is a pretence of truth’ (25). She argues that once the truth of the novel is taken to be that of the fictive character and once the representation is understood to be a pretence of truthfulness then ‘the question of mimesis falls into abeyance’ (160). ‘All is true within the frame of pretence evoked by the narration’ (173). Furst argues that the narrative voice creates a bridge between the readers’ world and the fictional world (93). In Chapter Two, ‘Let’s Pretend’, she considers how, even as adults, we retain some of the ability or willingness to pretend that we had as children, for example when we accept that protagonists in an opera communicate through song. She then applies this to the realist novel, saying that this ‘by contrast, always remains within the compass of possibility, centred on the familiar and commonplace, recorded largely in language consistent with that of ordinary people’; and thus ‘The modest distance between the readers’ realm and that of realist fiction facilitates the crucial transition into belief as we accede to the invitation to invest credence in the fiction through our readiness to pretend’ (29-31). So fact and fiction are not polar opposites: we know we are reading a fictional work, but at the same time, because we see a world we recognise, we believe in the reality of the representation. This, she argues, is how the realists achieve their aims.

Rae Greiner’s, *Sympathetic Realism in Nineteenth Century British Fiction*,⁵⁸ does much to develop the way in which realism is studied; yet, like the other texts mentioned, it does so without reference to the body of critical work on literary dialect. Greiner, again, builds on work done by those critics who reject the idea of realism being a simple case of mimesis. Her focus is firmly on the reader: ‘Perhaps this book’s most important claim is that sympathy produces realism’ (9). She argues that the nineteenth-century novel is different from those which precede it ‘in granting to fellow-feeling -- not objects -- the task of maintaining reality’ (10). It is this fellow-feeling which decides ‘what gains significance and what does not’ and therefore is ‘the basis for reality itself’. It is this sympathetic fellow-feeling which ‘binds the reading of fiction to the task of endowing others, and the historical past, with virtual life’ (10). Like previous critics, Greiner considers the interplay of fact and fiction:

⁵⁸ Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012.

Sympathetic realism mobilises the imagination in encouraging readers to “go along with” the virtual perspectives of others situated in time and space. This historicising impulse meets the sympathetic in nineteenth century realism, which depends for both on the power to imagine what it’s like to be somebody else, somewhere else entirely (16-7).

The idea of ‘going along with’ is comparable to Furst’s ‘let’s pretend’: both accept the fiction of the narrative but believe the truth, the reality, lies in the reader’s ability to identify with the fictional world and the people in it. I shall return to consider Greiner’s views on the role of sympathy in creating realism in a more detailed consideration of that topic in Section Three. Here, a key point to make, and one with which I conclude this section, is that Greiner is rare amongst those working in the field of literary realism as she considers, albeit very briefly, the use of literary dialect within Dickens’s work.

Greiner argues that Dickens ‘uses dialect and pronunciation to shore up all kinds of social distinctions, especially of class and moral character’; she then adds, ‘Sometimes bad English isn’t a symbol of imaginative emancipation. It’s just bad’ (97). The whole notion of ‘bad English’ is highly problematic and seems to ignore recent socio-linguistic and ficto-linguistic studies. Likewise, Greiner refers to ‘good English’ sometimes being ‘bad’ in Dickens -- ‘a sign of his snobbishness’ (97). She refers to the complaint against *Oliver Twist*’s Standard English, and how this reduces our engagement with the character. Some readers may feel a lack of engagement with Oliver but, as I argue in the previous chapter, whilst Dickens elevates Oliver’s speech, this has a function in the novel. Also, to accuse Dickens of snobbishness seems somewhat unjust given that some of his best-loved and highly sympathetic characters – not least Sam Weller – are dialect speakers. It seems that Greiner misses the subtleties of Dickens’s use of literary dialect. She does, however, refer to the social context and the Victorian ‘pronunciation anxiety’ (97) particularly in relation to h-dropping. She also gives an example from *Little Dorrit* of a London waiter calling out to a chambermaid, “Chaymaid! Gelen box num seven wish see room,” commenting only, and rather surprisingly, “There’s nothing especially poetical in this mangled bit of pronunciation, which serves primarily a *mimetic* purpose’ (97)(my emphasis). It would appear that the argument has, in this case at least, come full circle. Greiner is unaware of the work done in this field which shows precisely that literary dialect, like literary realism itself, is not straightforwardly mimetic. This is all the more surprising given that she rejects the idea of realist fiction being a simple case of mimesis.

I refer to Greiner’s publication in order to demonstrate that even recent work on realism does not fully incorporate the study of literary dialect as part of that realism and, in the little attention it pays to the representation of speech, does not take account of the body of critical work on literary dialect. Both fields, in moving away from notions of strict authenticity, pay greater attention to the reader and how a novel’s success depends upon

the reader's willingness to accept the representations on offer, either of speech or of the external world. The approach of my project is to marry the two fields of study: in the rest of this section I consider how the literary dialect works to aid the reader's acceptance of a novel's realism. Whilst I agree that dialect and pronunciation are used to make social distinctions between characters, the case studies I offer challenge Greiner's straightforward view of literary dialect, arguing that it is woven into the fabric of a novel's realism and forms a crucial part of that realism.

Considering all the above in comparison to literary dialect studies, a parallel can be drawn between Watt's work on realism and Ives's approach to literary dialect: both first published in the 1950s, they use the term 'authenticity' and see this as the key concept within their respective fields. A parallel can also be drawn between Furst (1995)'s work on realism and Hakala (2010)'s study of literary dialect. Just as for Furst the realism is not a simple mimetic presentation of the actual world, for Hakala the literary dialect is not an authentic representation of an actual nonstandard variety: 'Any attempt to locate a true or authentic working-class voice in these texts would be futile' (14). Yet because we recognise certain features included by the writer, either in the creation of a 'realistic' world or in the representation of nonstandard speech, we project our own perceptions onto the represented form and are prepared to accept it. There is no evidence to suggest that Hakala's ideas were influenced by Furst: Furst's publication does not appear in Hakala's bibliography. Likewise, Hakala makes no mention of Levine (1981), his being the first significant work to challenge the idea of strict authenticity in realism, as I detail above.

It would appear, therefore, that the realist approach has been aware of the lack of strict authenticity in fiction for a longer period than the field of literary dialect studies. Perhaps the different disciplinary boundaries have prevented any cross-communication between the two fields. Those working on realism are engaged in a dialogue with literary criticism whilst those studying literary dialect have typically turned to dialectology and socio-linguistics. Even so, critical views of the realist novel have developed broadly in line with studies of literary dialect in the last hundred years or so. Literary criticism has moved away from considering the novel as a relatively straightforward copy of actual human experience to an appreciation of the complexities of the form, arguing that it is no less 'real' despite acknowledging its fiction. Likewise, criticism of literary dialect has moved from that which seeks to establish whether the dialect being represented has authenticity to the view that it is the perception of authenticity which matters. That the two branches of criticism should have grown in a similar direction is not surprising as both are concerned with the ways in which, and the purposes for which, reality is represented in fiction, ideas which form part of the overall intellectual zeitgeist. Yet they have remained separate, discrete lines of enquiry. I argue that they should be brought

together as literary dialect forms an essential part of the representation of an external reality, and this is the approach I take in the case studies in the rest of this section.

3. Frances Trollope's, *The Life and Adventures of Michael Armstrong, Factory Boy* (1840)

i. Dialect Features in *Michael Armstrong* (See Appendix i)

Frances Trollope was a contemporary of Dickens, and she was, like him, a writer with a clear political agenda who campaigned to improve the lives of the poor. Her novel *The Life and Adventures of Michael Armstrong, the Factory Boy* was originally published as a monthly serial (the first by a woman) and then in novel form in 1840.⁵⁹ It was written to promote the Ten Hours Bill which would limit the number hours that could be worked by factory children. It tells the story of a young Manchester boy who is sold into an 'apprenticeship' at a mill to live like a slave in deplorable conditions. Like Dickens, Mrs Trollope aims to achieve a certain realism in her social novels, that is, she attempts to represent the lives of the poor as they were lived by actual people. In doing so she creates a number of working-class characters who speak nonstandard English. I will argue that, although Mrs Trollope's literary dialect is not nearly as sophisticated as that of Dickens in terms of its form, it has a functional significance within the narrative framework which is an integral part of the novel's realism.

An initial comparison of the nonstandard forms used by Dickens and Mrs Trollope when representing the speech of Northern characters demonstrates the relative absence of marked forms in the work of the latter. In the introductory chapter, I showed that Dickens aims to represent Northern pronunciation in his representation of the speech of John Browdie in *Nicholas Nickleby*. Frances Trollope, on the other hand, can be seen to include in her novel almost no marked forms which are specifically Northern. Firstly, and perhaps in greatest contrast to Dickens, Mrs Trollope makes very little use of nonstandard orthography to convey a sense of regional pronunciation. In *Michael Armstrong* there are eleven occurrences of *cretur(s)* (creature), five of which are spoken by the same character, with four other characters using the term (Vol. 1: 42-9, 198, 204; Vol. 2: 73, 101-6, 113, 211). Besides this, *divil* (devil) is used twice by one character (Vol. 2: 107) and *'printice* (apprentice) is used seven times in total by two different characters (Vol. 2: 106-7, 150) and there are single occurrences of *valiation* (valuation) (Vol. 1: 50) and *continy* (continue) (Vol. 1: 52). Readers familiar with Dickens will note, in particular, the absence of the representation of specifically northern vowel forms. More is done in terms of elision, although here again there is comparatively little, and the forms included

⁵⁹ New York: Harper and Brothers [Nabu Public Domain Reprint reproduction copy used].

tend to be initially elided features of generic colloquial language rather than ones specific to southern Lancashire and north-east Derbyshire where the novel is set: *'em* (them) (for example Vol. 1: 40-45), *'cause* (because) (for example Vol. 1: 154-5) and *'prentice* (apprentice) (for example Vol.1: 210) are the three terms most regularly used; and there are single occurrences of *'feard* (afraid) (Vol.1: 35) and *'cute* (acute/sharp) (Vol. 2: 76) and the medially elided *a'most* (almost) (Vol. 1: 50). The form *t'other* (the other) appears eight times (Vol. 1: 36-42, 216; Vol. 2: 106-7, 159). What is notably absent is h-dropping, something which was well established in literary representations of speech by this time.

Similarly, there is very little dialect lexis. Most frequently used, although only four times each, are *howsomever* (however) (Vol. 1: 42, 53; Vol. 2: 77, 114) and the pronouns *thou* and *thee* (Vol. 1: 178, 215; Vol. 2: 146). There is a single use of each of *summat* (something) (Vol. 2:113), *schollard* (scholar/student) (Vol. 2: 75), and *mothersome* (over-protective) (Vol. 1: 194). Again, there is a notable absence here: the verb *clem* (starve). Given that Mrs Trollope's novel is concerned with members of the working class who have insufficient money to buy food, one would expect this lexical item to appear. It was used extensively by Elizabeth Gaskell in *Mary Barton* (1855) and, although *Michael Armstrong* predates Mrs Gaskell's novel, the term was established in the works of Lancashire dialect writers such as Tim Bobbin (John Collier) and Samuel Bamford.⁶⁰

The representation of nonstandard grammar is used more widely by Mrs Trollope in her representation of the regional speech of a small number of minor characters. However, this too is limited to certain features. Nonstandard agreement of subject and verb is used throughout, with the third person singular *-s* form being used with a first person singular, second person singular or third person plural subject. Examples include: ‘ “I knows him well enough” ’ (Vol. 1: 42); ‘ “ if you sets your mind to it” ’ (Vol. 1: 41); ‘ “they beats ‘em dreadful” ’ (Vol. 1: 155). Whilst *was* is often used with *you*, and *we*, it is of note that the more typical northern form *I were* is not used. However, the base form of the verb is often used with different subjects as in ‘ “I be ready to go” ’ (Vol. 1: 177), and other nonstandard forms such as ‘ “she com'd from the mill” ’ (Vol. 1: 154) are used. One particularly seemingly-anomalous feature is the use of *beant* as in ‘ “they beant neither of them strong” ’ (Vol. 1: 174), ‘ “he beant to work no more” ’ (Vol.1: 42), ‘ “you beant no more Michael Armstrong than he be” ’ (Vol. 2: 152). However, after reading Katie Wales's paper,⁶¹ it appears that Mrs Trollope may, like Dickens, be adopting the schema of the rustic peasant and using verb forms which were

⁶⁰ Poems and glossaries of Lancashire dialect found on Ian Petticrew, ‘Tim Bobbin (4)’, *Minor Victorian Poets and Authors* <[http://www. Gerald-Massey.org.uk](http://www.Gerald-Massey.org.uk)> [10th December, 2013].

⁶¹ Katie Wales, ‘Dickens and northern English, Stereotyping and “authenticity” reconsidered’, in *Perspectives on Northern Englishes*, ed. by Joan C. Beal and Sylvie Hancil eds., (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter Mouton, 2017), pp.41-60.

conventional in the rendering of southern dialect in literary texts. Yet, not all the characters who use this form are to be found in a rural setting. What seems more likely is that Mrs Trollope read *Nicholas Nickleby*, which was published the year before her own novel, and absorbed this feature, used in the characterisation of John Browdie, into her own writing. Dickens and Mrs Trollope were personally acquainted, read each other's work and corresponded; contemporary reviewers, and indeed Dickens himself, commented on similarities between his early novels and *Michael Armstrong*.⁶²

The other most prevalent feature of nonstandard grammar is the use of *as* as a relative pronoun. Examples include: ‘ “I’ll be hanged if I believe as your brother is dead” ’ (Vol. 2: 161); ‘ “ I shouldn’t have thought as he’d told her” ’ (Vol. 2: 211); ‘ “the people as is in authority” ’ (Vol. 2: 76). Although this form is found in the Lancashire/Derbyshire area, it is not confined to that region. Additional nonstandard forms are the use of double negatives, the use of *them* as a deictic determiner as in ‘ “one of them mountains” ’ (Vol. 2: 74) and use of flat adverbs as in ‘ “they totter frightful” ’ (Vol. 2: 38). Again, none of these is particular to the areas in which Mrs Trollope sets her novel; rather, they are generic nonstandard features which can be seen in the representation of dialect in the works of many writers.

It is perhaps worth noting that when *Michael Armstrong* was published there had been comparatively little representation of specifically Northern dialect in fiction, although the monthly publication of Dickens's *Nicholas Nickleby*, with its Yorkshireman John Browdie, began before that of *Michael Armstrong*. The canonical novels which contain significant representation of Northern dialect had yet to be published: *Wuthering Heights* (1847), *Mary Barton* (1848), *Hard Times* (1854). Emily Brontë was writing a dialect with which she was personally familiar; Elizabeth Gaskell was able to draw on the work of her philologist husband; and by the time he wrote *Hard Times* Dickens could refer to the work done by the Gaskells in his representation of Lancashire dialect. For Mrs Trollope, however, there was no firmly established tradition of representing Northern, or more precisely, Lancashire dialect in fiction; thus it seems unsurprising that her literary dialect is not as fully developed in its form as that in Dickens's *Hard Times*.

Whilst Mrs Trollope may have looked to *Nicholas Nickleby* and other works in her representation of direct speech, her main source for much of the content of her novel was *A Memoir of Robert Blincoe*. As I discussed in the introductory chapter, the publication recounts the story of Blincoe's early years when he was sent, at the age of seven, from the St. Pancras workhouse to the mills of Nottinghamshire and then Derbyshire. Litton Mill near Tideswell in Derbyshire reappears as Deep Valley Mill in *Michael Armstrong*,

⁶² Pamela Neville-Sington, *Fanny Trollope: The Life and Adventures of a Clever Woman* (London: Penguin, 1997), p. 276.

with some of Blincoe's experiences being taken directly from this text and given to Michael Armstrong. Whilst it is the descriptions of the northern mills that would have been of interest to Mrs Trollope, it is also worth considering the use of direct speech in this text, specifically the relatively sparse use of nonstandard forms. (I give a full account in the introductory chapter.)

In general, there is comparatively little in terms of dialect representation which would have been helpful to Mrs Trollope in representing specifically Northern speech; and this could be another reason which contributed to her using fewer dialect features in her work than Dickens did in his. But like Brown, the kind of authenticity Mrs Trollope is interested in is the faithful representation of factory life. This is reflected in the fact that contemporary criticism of *Michael Armstrong*, such as the unsigned review in *The Athenaeum*, focussed on the accuracy and appropriateness, or otherwise, of its subject matter.⁶³ More recently Robert Barnard celebrates Mrs Trollope as a committed social reformer, stating that *Michael Armstrong* is 'the product of a strong determination to expose the realities of the child labour so often used in the mills'.⁶⁴ The writer herself breaks the narrative at one point to warn the reader, 'Let none dare say this picture is exaggerated,'⁶⁵ when describing the conditions at Deep Valley Mill which is based on Blincoe's *Memoir*. Whereas writers such as Maria Edgeworth and Walter Scott included footnotes to attest to the 'accuracy' of their dialect representation,⁶⁶ Mrs Trollope is aiming for a different kind of authenticity: her paratext asserts the accuracy of the factory conditions she is describing, thereby making her priorities clear.

Yet it should be pointed out that Mrs Trollope was considered to have an ability to write direct speech, something acknowledged in the favourable response to her travelogue *The Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832). Dickens himself praised this publication in a letter to Trollope written in 1842: 'I am convinced that there is no Writer who has so well and so accurately (I need not add, so entertainingly) described [America], in many of its aspects, as you have done'.⁶⁷ Although there is no direct reference to Trollope's representation of speech here, Dickens's general praise could be seen to include this aspect of her writing. American dialect is represented throughout the text, most often in order to ridicule the Americans or, at the very least, to highlight confusion caused by the difference between Standard English and American usage. Dialect in *Michael Armstrong* functions in an entirely different way. Rather than being

⁶³ No. 165, 1839 (587-90), pp. 587.

⁶⁴ In 'Frances Trollope (1779-1863): The Life and Adventures of a Clever Woman', *Brontë Studies* 37.2 (2012), 83-89 (pp.85).

⁶⁵ *Michael Armstrong*, vol. 1, p. 225.

⁶⁶ Jane Hodson and Alex Broadhead, 'Developments in Dialect Representation in British Fiction 1800-1836', *Language and Literature*, 22.4 (2013), 315-332 (pp. 322).

⁶⁷ Pamela Neville-Sington, *Fanny Trollope: The Life and Adventures of a Clever Woman* (London: Penguin, 1997), p.308.

used to generate humour at the expense of those who speak it, literary dialect is crucial to the serious socio-political concerns of Trollope's realist novel. As a result, she is careful not to present her factory workers as ridiculous figures.

ii. **The Local Dialect of Minor Characters in *Michael Armstrong***

The minor characters are perhaps the best ones to begin with in order to make the point that although Trollope's literary dialect is unsophisticated it has an important role to play within the novel's realism. At first, Trollope seems to handle the Northern English dialect of her minor characters by avoiding it altogether. This is seen in the presentation of a local farmer. The farmer shows concern for Michael, 'in north-country dialect, so broad as to be dangerous for south-country folks to spell' (Vol. 1: 216). Use of the word 'dangerous' here creates not only a statement of her inability to do justice to a nonstandard variety but also a suggestion that a failed attempt might damage her presentation of the character. In view of such a statement, a further factor to consider in this avoidance of literary dialect is that previous and subsequent writers use English regional varieties for comedic effect, or even to ridicule their characters, as does Trollope herself when she represents American dialect in *Domestic Manners*. Here, Trollope wishes to distance herself from such use of nonstandard forms in order to create sympathetic dialect-speaking characters.

In Peter Gaskell's *Plebeians and Patricians* (1836),⁶⁸ which predates *Michael Armstrong* by only four years, nonstandard English is used to mock those who speak it: the Manfords are 'new money' folks, 'caricatures of vulgar, grasping upstarts'⁶⁹ who have neither taste nor education, and the writer occasionally comments on their 'coarse speech' (39). What is more, there are times when these characters write letters which are represented in full and contain a number of nonstandard features (116-7, for example). Notably, the two sympathetic working-class characters whom Gaskell presents as moral and intelligent, Ward and William, are not given any direct speech, possibly because, as servants, they are of little interest to the writer. Therefore, the use of the nonstandard is reserved for purposes of ridicule; and this is what Trollope avoids as her nonstandard speakers are different sorts of character. Sylvia Adamson refers to a growing 'sense of distaste' for social placing using nonstandard language which can be traced back to 'Godwin's refusal to attempt a phonetic rendering of the speech of Hector, the Negro

⁶⁸ Philadelphia: E.L. Carey and A. Hart [Kessinger Publishing reproduction copy used].

⁶⁹ Jane Hodson and Alex Broadhead, 'Developments in Dialect Representation in British Fiction 1800-1836', *Language and Literature*, 22.4 (2013), pp. 325.

jailer in *St Leon* (1799) whom he wishes to present as a natural philosopher'.⁷⁰ I would argue that this is what Trollope is doing with those of her characters who, in reality, would have the most marked regional forms in their speech: they are sympathetic characters from whom she does not want to distance her readers by attempting what she knows will be an unsuccessful representation of their speech which could seem ridiculous.

When Trollope does attempt nonstandard English, she does so using very few features of marked pronunciation or lexis: neither Manchester nor North Derbyshire is enregistered in her representation of dialect. She relies on a select number of grammatical features, most prominently the use of *as* a relative pronoun and nonstandard-agreement of subject and verb. The vast majority of dialect in the novel is given to a small group of minor characters, most of which feature in only a few pages in a single chapter. These are all articulate, intelligent and morally good, the exact opposite of Gaskell's nonstandard speakers. Thus, Trollope is much more tolerant of dialect use than her predecessor. As a further guide for the reader, she refers to them with epithets such as 'the good woman', 'the good man', 'the hard-working master' (Vol. 2: 73, 103, 108 respectively). Such characterisation, giving only positive qualities to dialect speakers, seems radical. It could be argued, as Norman Page does in reference to John Browdie, that these creations are regional types designed for no purpose other than to add 'local colour'.⁷¹ However, following the work of Susan Ferguson and taking more of a post-authenticity approach to these characters, it can be shown that they have a greater function within the text. Each is allowed to speak at length, the content and style of their utterances attesting to the qualities noted above. More importantly, perhaps, they are characters who have close ties with, and knowledge of the local community, as such people would in actuality. They help to educate Mary Brotherton on her quest to find Michael; and in doing so, they are fundamental to driving the plot forwards.

The most significant of Trollope's creations in this respect is Mr Prescott who runs the King's Head inn near Deep Valley mill. He has knowledge of the area, of the mill and how Mary Brotherton might gain access to the children there without arousing the suspicion of the overseers. His speech, along with that of his wife, is the most marked of all the characters in the novel:

"The only man I can think of as would give us a chance is one Smith, the miller as serves 'em with oatmeal; and pretty stuff t'is, as I've been told, which don't speak overwell for his honesty, you'll say, though t'is likely the price is in

⁷⁰ Sylvia Adamson, 'Literary Language', in *The Cambridge History of the English Language* Vol. 4, ed. by Suzanne Romaine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 598-614.

⁷¹ Norman Page, *Speech in the English Novel*, 2nd edn (London: Macmillan, 1988), p.64.

proportion. Howsomever, whether he be good or bad, I don't know another man as comes and goes to Deep Valley as he does, and that's what makes me fix on him as a messenger." (Vol. 2: 77)

The consistent use of *as* a relative pronoun, the verb form *be*, the elision and the lexical item *howsomever* characterise Mr Prescott as a relatively uneducated working-class man. More importantly, they are indicative of his ties to the community which come from his employment as an inn-keeper and give him the knowledge needed by Mary to complete her mission. His comments on Smith also establish his moral integrity, as does his desire not to be involved with any of the goings-on at the mill. Thus, the dialect speaker has the power in this situation; the wealthy, middle-class heroine is entirely dependent on his advice, and the plot develops as a result of this.

iii. Michael Armstrong: Code Switching and Moral Worth

Michael Armstrong is broadly comparable to *Oliver Twist*: Oliver is taken from the workhouse and rescued from Fagin's gang to live with the middle-class Mr Brownlow; Michael escapes from the mill to live as an equal in the household of Mary Brotherton, a wealthy heiress. The difference between them is that Oliver is later found to be of middle-class parentage whereas Michael is not. Dickens was criticised, in otherwise generally favourable reviews, for elevating Oliver's language by having him speak only Standard English throughout the novel when a real life version of Oliver would almost certainly have acquired at least some of the linguistic features of those around him. An unsigned review in *The National Magazine and Monthly Critic* stated, "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."⁷² As I argued in the introduction, Dickens's use of Standard English for *Oliver Twist* may not be an error, but more a foreshadowing of his true birth and rightful place in society: he never belongs either in the workhouse or with Fagin's gang of thieves. The same point can be made about Michael Armstrong who, although he is not a born gentleman, becomes one of that class thanks to the philanthropy of Mary Brotherton. But Trollope's representation of Michael's speech is more sophisticated than Dickens's representation of Oliver's speech: there is some subtle code-switching; and as the novel progresses and Michael matures, his speech reflects both this maturity and his move into the middle classes, as I show below.

Michael is the son of a poor widow and, at the start of the novel, he and his brother Edward are employed by local businessman Sir Matthew Dowling at his Ashleigh (Manchester) factory. Sir Matthew is pressured into becoming Michael's benefactor but,

⁷² December 1837, I, 445-9.

heartless villain that he is, he soon seeks to rid himself of this burden. He has Michael ‘apprenticed’ to the prison-like Deep Valley Mill in Derbyshire, telling his mother that this is a rare career opportunity. A local heiress, Mary Brotherton, learns the truth and attempts to rescue Michael, but a misunderstanding leads to her being told that he is dead. Eventually, Michael escapes and finds a kind master who educates him and provides him with a comfortable living as a shepherd. Finally, as a young man, Michael returns to Ashleigh to face those responsible for his hardship and to find his family. Michael’s interactions with other characters show how his speech is carefully written to chart his social, spiritual and academic education and present him as a young man ready to enter the middle classes.

Michael is first introduced in Chapter Two when he ‘saves’ Lady Clarissa Shrimpton from a cow which has wandered on to the property of Sir Matthew Dowling, with whom the lady is enjoying an evening walk. Michael places himself as a barrier between the lady and the cow, driving the latter away. His first speech, rather surprisingly for a poor working boy, is in Standard English: ‘“I should very much like never to go to the factory any more” ’ (Vol. 1: 21). Here Trollope avoids using a double negative which is a feature of the speech of many of her other uneducated factory employees. This can only be partly explained by Michael being on his best behaviour in the presence of titled people, as others in this situation are given nonstandard speech. The cow, which is, ‘an old, half-starved’ (Vol. 1: 19) creature seems symbolic of the factory people themselves: it comes from a lane which is close to a short cut used by the factory people to get to work; like those people, it is starving; and Sir Matthew’s commanding his dog to attack it parallels his commanding Joseph Parsons, the factory overseer to beat the workers for any perceived wrong-doing. This symbolic function explains Lady Clarissa’s otherwise ridiculously histrionic reaction to seeing it: the lower classes encroaching on her territory is something she cannot tolerate. Michael’s acting as a barrier between the two, ‘placing himself midway between the tormented cow and the fair creature’ (Vol. 1: 19), protects her from having to come into close proximity with dirt and deprivation; his use of Standard English aligns him more with Lady Clarissa than with the starving masses and thus he becomes the lady’s hero.

After being ‘adopted’ by Sir Matthew, Michael is taken to the servants’ quarters by the ‘Scotch’ gardener where he becomes the topic of conversation. He responds to the nonstandard questions of the gardener in Standard English: ‘“I am one of the ragamuffins out of the factory”[...] “I hope he won’t put me in a case, sir” ’(Vol. 1: 28) which again presents him as being different from those of his class. However, there is a slight change in his language after he is spoken to by the haughty housekeeper Mrs Thompson and then the more kindly kitchen maid, Molly: ‘“Because the squire ordered t’other man to bring me” ’(Vol. 1: 36). The use of the nonstandard form ‘t’other’ is

Trollope demonstrating Michael's siding with the kitchen-maid, whose local dialect is a reflection of her down-to-earth good nature, and distancing himself from the cruel Mrs Thompson, whose use of Standard English reflects her social aspirations and sense of superiority. As the members of staff argue about Michael's situation, the dialect speakers can be seen to have the strongest argument in their defence and treatment of the factory boy. The cook says to the kitchen-maid: "Praise and glory to the holy Virgin and all the company of saints, now and for evermore, that I beant one bit better than I ought to be, and I hope you neither Molly; and so just run along to the larder, will you, girl? and bring out something for supper fit for a hungry boy that haven't the misfortune to be so burdened in mind" (Vol. 1: 38). The nonstandard verb form 'beant' and the nonstandard subject-verb agreement in 'boy that haven't', do not make the speech any less articulate; rather this usage conveys the genuine strength of feeling of the cook juxtaposed with the pretensions of the housekeeper and lady's maid. Whilst sarcastically claiming not to have any moral superiority, the cook shows that she actually is morally superior to the others in her attitude toward Michael.

When Michael returns to see his mother to explain all that has happened, Trollope has them both use nonstandard English:

"But yet you don't like it, Mike?" rejoined his mother. "That's what you was going to say. Tell the truth, my child, and don't go to keep nothing from me.

[...] "I didn't like the grumpy old lady as comed into the kitchen and abused me." (Vol. 1: 47)

This is Michael at his most natural and comfortable as he is with those who are closest to him and know him best. The close, personal relationship is further indicated by the use of the familial 'Mike'. Also, at this point Michael is relating the story of how Mrs Thompson spoke rudely about his family and therefore the nonstandard verb form 'comed' and the relative pronoun 'as' once gain distance him from her and align him with the genuine, caring servants at Dowling Lodge. Trollope makes it abundantly clear that, despite her poverty and lack of education, the widow Armstrong is in no way 'vulgar'. Her poor house is described as 'clean' and well-kept and she herself is well presented. The use of the double negative in her utterance above, makes her instruction to Michael more emphatic and therefore presents her as a moral woman who will accept no deceit. This presentation is continued when she cautions Michael to take no food for her from the Dowling residence, without having express permission to do so, even though she and Edward are starving.

Michael's use of nonstandard English continues when he speaks to Martha Dowling, who is the only member of the family to befriend him and show concern for the well-being of his family. This seems inconsistent as, previously, such language has been evident only when Michael is speaking to his family and members of the servant class.

It would be expected that he would use standard forms when speaking to the daughter of Sir Matthew, as he did when first introduced into the novel. However, Martha Dowling is different from her father and all the other members of her family, not just in her treatment of Michael: she is described as an outcast, fat and ugly, with no lady's maid, the butt of many family jokes. She is, however, given the epithet 'kind-hearted' (Vol. 1: 173), and it is this kindness which Michael responds to, the two of them forming a close bond:

"T'is what I would like best of all things," said Michael. "Because, please ma'am, I know I must help 'em, as they beant neither of 'em so strong as I be."

"You are a good boy for thinking of them so much as you do. That is the reason I take notice of you and love you."

The little fellow nestled closer to her side as they walked on, and raising the hand that held his, he laid it upon his shoulder, and pressed upon it with endearing fondness. (Vol. 1: 174)

The elided form of 'them' along with the nonstandard verb forms 'beant' and 'be', as well as Michael's physical closeness to Martha, denote his regard for her and his feeling comfortable in her presence. It is logical that he would not use the same style of speech as he does when addressing her morally corrupt father. Throughout the novel, although Martha loves and remains loyal to her father, she is troubled by some of his actions and motivations. Here, Michael's simple, transparent desire to care for his family acts as a contrast with Sir Matthew's obfuscations and leads to Martha's powerfully simple expression of her love for him.

After his mother and Martha Dowling, the third female character with whom Michael forms a bond is Fanny Fletcher, whom he meets at Deep Valley Mill. Based on an actual place, seen by Trollope when she visited the industrial north to research her novel, Deep Valley Mill is presented as a 'Prison Prentice-house' of 'misery' where dirty, starving children are flogged for falling asleep as they work and fight to eat the pigs' left-over food (Vol. 1: 223). Here Fanny Fletcher is immediately contrasted with her environment: she has 'as much of beauty as it was perhaps possible for any human to have after a sixth months' residence at Deep Valley Mill' (Vol. 1: 221). Trollope gives her an ethereal quality which transcends the baseness of the life she is forced to lead. This can be seen in her instructing Michael to accept his lot and have faith in God: "surely God will give us green fields and sweet fresh air in Heaven, and there must be flowers Michael. Oh I am quite sure of that" (Vol. 2: 33). The mention of 'flowers', 'fresh air' and 'green fields' could not be further removed from Deep Valley Mill or more of a contrast with the other inmates' topics of conversation, and serves to mark Fanny's otherness. Notably, unlike at Dowling Lodge, where the moral characters are dialect speakers, here Trollope has Fanny Fletcher speak in Standard English, which she does throughout the novel. Furthermore, Michael's response to her is standard; his

convergence with her signifies that her words have affected him and he has adopted her approach to the suffering they are experiencing. Indeed, her words continue to give him strength after her departure from the mill. However, during this section of the novel it is not simply the case that Standard English is used to denote a more moral, principled character, although Fanny Fletcher is precisely that, as we have already been introduced to dialect speakers who are highly moral; it is used to create a sense of another world, the afterlife, which has nothing of the reality of the factories of the North and the poor working people within them.

After Michael's escape from Deep Valley Mill, in the depths of his despair, he is taken in by the 'worthy' Mr Thornton, a Westmoreland statesman and sheep farmer. Michael's work tending sheep places him in an environment not dissimilar to Fanny's description of heaven. This is, in two senses, the afterlife for Michael as it is both life after Deep Valley Mill and life after near death from his attempt to drown himself. His new employment allows him to make a full physical recovery, and he is educated by Mr Thornton. These changes, along with new clothes and his continued use of Standard English present him as no longer the factory boy; and Trollope makes it clear that he is a special young man, describing him as 'one of the most trustworthy, active, intelligent lads he [Mr Thornton] had ever met with' (Vol. 2: 145). This prepares the reader for Michael's subsequent return to Ashleigh (Manchester) as a different person with a 'neat appearance' and 'unstained skin', not immediately recognised as a former local factory boy by those there (Vol. 2: 148).

Michael's return to the North and his encounters with three different people of different classes seems to symbolise his rise through the ranks to join the middle classes. At first, he speaks to a factory girl, Kitty Sykes, with whom he used to work:

“Don't you remember Kitty Sykes as have gone to and from the mill with you[...]?”

“Is it indeed Kitty Sykes, grown into such a handsome young woman?” said Michael holding out his hand to her and feeling quite incapable of preserving his incognito. (Vol. 2: 151)

Kitty Sykes' nonstandard verb form 'have' and relative pronoun 'as' are a marked contrast with Michael's standard usage and serve to highlight that he is no longer one of the factory people. Also, throughout this dialogue, Michael speaks and acts with a confidence and maturity gained from having been away from Ashleigh and mill life. This is so much the case that he seeks out his former tormentor and, without giving himself away, inquires about work at the factory in order to see whether things have changed in his absence.

Next, he speaks to the former coachman of the heiress Mary Brotherton. Again, Trollope creates a difference in the style of speech of her two characters. Michael speaks

fluent, confident Standard English throughout, whilst the coachman, who is also fluent and articulate, is a dialect speaker:

“Did she know you was Michael Armstrong?” said the old coachman, with quickness.

“No, she knew me not,” replied Michael; “but she knew the widow Armstrong and her boy were dead.” (Vol. 2: 161)

The non-standard subject-verb agreement in the coachman’s speech contrasts with the standard, even archaic grammar in Michael’s speech, seen in placing the negation after the verb rather than using the dummy auxiliary verb ‘do’ followed by ‘not’. Thus Michael’s speech seems formal, even educated. At the same time, Trollope is again careful not to present her dialect speaker as in any way ‘vulgar’: the coachman is extremely quick-witted and perceptive, and his past profession makes him Michael’s social superior. Yet Michael’s Standard English marks him as different from those around him and foreshadows his move into the middle class.

Then Michael visits Reverend George Bell, who helps him to find his brother. It is here that Trollope presents Michael as a sophisticated speaker of Standard English, giving him more to say than at any other point in the novel:

“And now again I shall answer, as they say the fortune-tellers do,” replied Michael, smiling, “by telling you, sir, what you have told me before. It is Miss Brotherton, whose name I well remember at Dowling Lodge; it is she who has done all this, and may God bless her for it! But yet, truly, it still seems a mystery. How did it happen, sir, that this rich young lady should have left her grand house, and all her fine acquaintance here, to go into foreign countries with two poor factory children?” (Vol. 2: 170)

Michael’s standard language is shown to be no different from that of the educated Reverend Bell in its ability to express complex ideas, and is indicative of the natural intelligence which has been noted previously in the novel. Michael converses with Reverend Bell as an equal which symbolises his belonging with the middle classes, despite his fears about his lack of education. This idea is developed further with Mr Bell’s symbolically ‘taking the young man’s arm within his own, and leading him towards the house’ (Vol. 2: 177). This linking of arms signifies the acceptance of Michael; and leading him towards the house is leading him towards a middle-class way of life.

Michael, accompanied by the now-destitute Martha Dowling, is finally reunited with both his brother and Fanny Fletcher who are living on the continent with the heiress Mary Brotherton. He is to be educated at a university in order to fully develop his ‘richly teeming mind’ (Vol. 2: 244). Edward, also now university educated, is considered to have ‘a most rare intelligence’ and he and Fanny Fletcher are, according to Mary Brotherton, ‘the noblest creatures in the world’ (Vol. 2: 174). All members of the rather strange household speak sophisticated Standard English and the fact that they address

each other using first names indicates their equality: ‘He was with them, he was one of them’ (Vol. 2: 234). These simple statements are poignant in their communication of Michael finally having attained his rightful place in life. Here Mrs Trollope makes a much more radical statement than Dickens does in *Oliver Twist*, in her suggestion that low-born factory children may enter the middle classes. However, it is worth noting that in order to have three former factory children, the now impoverished daughter of a mill owner, and a wealthy heiress living together, Trollope takes her characters to the continent. Although there were changes in the social order in England at this time, Trollope’s choice of ending suggests that her readership was not yet ready for such social mobility.

iv. Joseph Parsons: Code-switching and Immorality

Joseph Parsons is the other character who is shown to code switch. Parsons is the ‘principal overlooker’ employed at the textiles factory of Sir Matthew Dowling to ensure that the workers remain focussed on their task. He is a working-class man, employed by a working-class man ‘made good’; but despite spending his days in the same environment as the starving down-trodden poor, he has little in common with them, having a great deal of power and comparative affluence. I will argue that the alteration in his style of speech is purposely handled less subtly than that in the speech of Michael and is presented as a deliberate choice on the part of the character as he manipulates those around him. Unlike Michael, Parsons is morally bankrupt and I will show that his changing speech, as he performs ‘acts of identity’⁷³ throughout the novel, is indicative of his duplicitous nature.

Parsons is subordinate to Sir Matthew and when first introduced, ‘bowed his head respectfully’ to his employer. He responds in Standard English to Sir Matthew’s enquiry, also phrased in Standard English, about whether he has heard anything of a workers’ meeting: ‘“As much as a man was likely to hear, Sir Matthew, who, as you will easily believe, was not intended to hear anything”’ (Vol. 1: 39). The response is brief, professional and formal, containing a carefully structured relative clause, itself containing a subordinate clause. Parson has been ‘sent for’ and this conversation takes place in Sir Matthew’s study: presumably he is initially uncertain about the direction the conversation will take and is therefore at his most ‘careful’, in Labov’s terms, both in terms of his actual and his linguistic behaviour, shifting more towards the prestige variety.

⁷³ Le Page and Tabouret-Keller, cited in Nikolas Coupland, *Style* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 108.

Once cordially invited to ‘sit down[...]sit down’, Parsons’s speech starts to alter: ‘“I was a coming, sir, if you hadn’t a sent for me”’. The difference between his first and second utterance is quite striking, with the occurrence of a-affixation, or in the case of the second example, perhaps, an elided form of *have* or even *of*, and the choice of simpler lexis. This change occurs when the situation loses its potential danger and Parsons is physically more relaxed, with a greater degree of closeness between the two, so perhaps Parsons is now closer to his authentic self. However, this could also be seen as Parsons performing an identity as he goes on to flatter Sir Matthew, telling him that he could be a successful Member of Parliament: ‘“There’s no doubt of that, Sir Matthew, if you sets your mind to it[...]I should like uncommon much to hear it”’ (Vol. 1: 41). Here the nonstandard verb form ‘sets’ and the adverbial phrase ‘uncommon much’ mark Parsons’s speech as that of a working-class man; and this is Trollope presenting her character as deliberately wishing to appear inferior to Sir Matthew. This is done to emphasise the difference between them and in doing so make his employer believe that he (Sir Matthew) has bettered himself so significantly that becoming a Member of Parliament is feasible. Parsons is clearly aware that he needs to keep his employer’s view of him a favourable one and that such flattery will serve his purposes.

As Sir Matthew asks Parsons to tell him about the widow Armstrong and her family, Parsons’s speech becomes increasingly nonstandard:

“I did hear t’other day she had given in and was a begging to go into the house, and take the eldest boy with her. These creturs never know what they would be at. I suspect howsomever, that she has got hold of a notion that, because he’s so cripplly, he beant to work no more; but I shall take care to see Butchel, the parish overseer, about it. It is altogether a trick, that, what won’t answer; his fingers is just as able to handle the reels and piece threads as ever they was.”
(Vol. 1: 42)

Here Trollope uses a number of features to mark Parsons’s speech as working-class: the change in orthography to reflect his pronunciation of *creatures*; the nonstandard verb form ‘beant’; the nonstandard subject-verb agreement in ‘fingers is’ and ‘they was’; the nonstandard relative pronoun ‘what’; the nonstandard lexical items ‘howsomever’ and ‘cripply’; and the form ‘t’other’. Meanwhile, the speech of Sir Matthew remains almost entirely standard. This is Parsons’s lengthiest utterance so far and it could be that, as he relaxes and warms to his topic, which is one very much within his sphere of experience, his speech is becoming more ‘authentic’ as his focus is perhaps now on content rather than delivery.

In Chapter Four, Parsons is sent by his employer to speak to the widow Armstrong about Sir Matthew’s intention to become the benefactor of her son, Michael. Sir Matthew’s motives are far from charitable, and Parsons is aware of this. He asks the way to the Armstrong home, speaking to a poor working woman who uses nonstandard

English. He can be seen to adapt his style so that he distances himself from her. He comments on another local family: “they have the audaciousness to complain that the rents are raised, as if, because they are above choosing to earn money in an honest way, Sir Matthew was not to make what he could of his own” (Vol. 1: 44). Trollope has her character speak more formal Standard English here, with the exception of the absent subjunctive form *were*, as he is performing the role not just of social superior, but also a moral superior, and the standard form carries the appropriate prestige, in Parsons’s view. He continues to speak in this way, the form and content of his utterances giving him a vicarious superiority and benevolence: “Our good Sir Matthew, who, to be sure, is the kindest man in the whole world, has taken a fancy to her boy, and he’ll be a father to him” (Vol. 1: 45). Use of the possessive determiner ‘our’ at once links Parsons with Sir Matthew’s ostensibly charitable acts, increasing his standing in the community, and persuades the woman that Sir Matthew is the friend of the people. However, at the end of this speech, there is one nonstandard verb form, “If she don’t like going there” which makes clear that Parsons is not a completely confident user of standard English, even when acting his more formal roles.

Parsons enters the Armstrong home, after having spent some time eavesdropping on a conversation between the widow Armstrong and Butchel, the parish overseer. Butchel is there to remind the lady of her mounting debts and her inability to pay them. Here Parsons is clearly performing the role of the one who saves the day, having hidden himself and timed his entrance to coincide with the widow Armstrong’s beginning to weep as she faces both Butchel and Larkins the baker who has come to collect payment: “I should be sorry to let you go back to your employers under any delusion or mistake whatever; and the fact is, that this good woman is no more likely to go into the workhouse than you are yourself, Mr Butchel” (Vol. 1: 52). Again, the moral superiority affected by Parsons is conveyed through the use of the Standard English which Trollope uses for most of his speech during this exchange. He is also described as, ‘striking his cane on the ground with the air of a man ready to do battle with all the world in support of what he has asserted’ which further presents Parsons’s behaviour as a conscious ‘act of identity’.⁷⁴ What is note-worthy is that whilst Parsons assumes that the perception of a Standard English speaker is a favourable one, Trollope uses Standard English for Parsons when, as the reader is aware, he is being deceitful, and therefore the standard form loses its status. Butchel, like the reader, is aware of Parsons’s act and ‘looked at the speaker with a knowing wink’ (Vol. 1: 53), but Larkins and the widow are both fooled.

⁷⁴ Le Page and Tabouret-Keller, cited in Nikolas Coupland, *Style* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 108.

After dismissing the men, Parsons turns to address the widow Armstrong with the words, ‘ “ Well, now, if I ain’t glad they’re gone, them fellows” ’ (Vol. 1: 53) . This immediate switch to the marked verb form ‘ain’t’ and the determiner ‘them’ shows Parsons now aligning himself with the widow. He is taking her side against the men as he uses the nonstandard forms he expects her to use in order to signal a closeness between them. However, this is very short-lived: there is another switch back to formal standard English as Parsons attempts to intimidate the widow into allowing her son to go to live at Dowling House under the care of Sir Matthew: ‘ “What I want to know is, whether he is ready and willing to do that which Sir Matthew will require of him.” ’ Again, Parsons’s words are accompanied by gestures appropriate to the role he is performing as he begins ‘striking his cane magisterially on the ground’ (Vol. 1: 54). His choice of formal Standard English puts him in a position of authority over the widow, and his movements imply a threat of violence, both of which have the desired effect on Mrs Armstrong.

Throughout her introduction of Parsons, Trollope makes it clear that he uses language consciously to perform various roles. As the novel progresses, it becomes increasingly obvious that he has no loyalty to Sir Matthew or to any cause other than his own, and will do whatever is necessary for personal gain. Therefore he has a ‘malleability of sociolinguistic identity’,⁷⁵ altering to suit whatever the situation demands of him. Coupland problematises the notion of authenticity in speech, arguing that speakers are continually giving a ‘stylistic performance’ (179), and Parsons is an extreme example of this. As I have shown, he consciously adapts his style to have the desired impact on his interlocutor, broadening or narrowing the social distance between them for personal gain. Notably, even at his most formal and standard, there are occasional slips in his speech which are both indicative of his upper working-class position and a signal to the reader that Parsons is acting. As a result, we are led to view Parsons as a villain. On the other hand, Michael’s values are consistently good and he is made to use dialect features to distance himself from Standard English speakers whom he recognises as cruel and immoral. Thus the two characters are presented, through their use of speech, in addition to everything else, as being of contrasting moral worth. The use of direct speech to reflect morality is also seen in Gissing’s *Workers in the Dawn*, albeit rather differently than in *Michael Armstrong*, as I show below.

⁷⁵ Nikolas Coupland, *Style* (Cambridge, 2007), p.76.

4. George Gissing's *Workers in the Dawn* (1880)

i. Dialect Features in *Workers in the Dawn* (See Appendix i)

Like Frances Trollope, George Gissing's work as a writer was his means of earning a living; unlike her, he was born into the working class and spent a considerable period of time living amongst the London poor. Gissing's and Dickens's lives overlap but, in terms of his career, Gissing was not a contemporary of Dickens, his first novel being published ten years after his predecessor's death. However, he was highly knowledgeable about Dickens and his work. Gissing's book *Charles Dickens: A Critical Study* (1898), along with other writings such as introductory pieces to new editions of Dickens's novels, led to Gissing earning a reputation 'in the eyes of his contemporaries [as] one of the best Dickens specialists'.⁷⁶ Published in 1880, *Workers in the Dawn* is his first novel. It considers the problems faced by the poor working classes living in the east of London in the second half of the nineteenth century, a concern which occupied Gissing for much of his early career and culminated in the publication of his better-known novel, *The Nether World* (1889). In his first novel, Gissing presents the reader with a picture of the different and divided social classes as well as developing the stories of individuals within each of these classes. Writing about hardship and the descent into immorality, he makes it clear that poverty is not necessarily the cause of either of these; those who are most morally bankrupt are those with least cause to be so. In this section, I look at how Gissing's representation of direct speech, along with metalanguage, is used systematically throughout the novel to characterise the working classes and to develop significant ideas about education and morality. I show that Gissing's social novels are not social novels in the same sense as those of Dickens or Frances Trollope who both seek reform; indeed his novels 'consistently reject not only reform, but even the possibility of reform'.⁷⁷ George Orwell argues that Gissing 'had, of course, a deep loathing of the ugliness, emptiness and cruelty of the society he lived in, but he was concerned to describe it rather than to change it'.⁷⁸ I show that the way in which Gissing employs literary dialect to characterise the working classes supports the views cited above and creates a generally less sympathetic view of such people than Frances Trollope does in *Michael Armstrong*.

Gissing presents the reader with both a regional and a social variety of English, one with which he was familiar, as his working-class characters inhabit a very specific area in the east of central London where he lived for a number of years. Thus he is locating his reader in this locale, gaining an acceptance of the realism on offer. The most

⁷⁶ Pierre Coustillas, *Gissing's Writings on Dickens* (London: Enitharmou Press, 1969), p.11.

⁷⁷ Jacob Korg, *George Gissing: A Critical Biography* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1963), p.52.

⁷⁸ Orwell, George (1948), 'George Gissing', published in *London Magazine* on June 1960 <http://orwell.ru/library/reviews/gissing/english/e_gis> [12th March 2014].

prevalent feature of nonstandard speech in the novel is the pronunciation used by the lower classes. In this Gissing differs from Frances Trollope and has more of a resemblance to Dickens. Like Dickens, Gissing makes generally consistent use of elision to indicate marked speech, with a specific focus on the omission of initial /h/ phonemes: *'ow* (how), *'ere* (here), *'ealth* (health) *'appened* (happened) (for example 12, 14).⁷⁹ He also represents those who drop the /h/ as hyper-correcting as in the case of *hexpense* (expense) and *hinquisitive* (inquisitive) (for example 12, 525). By the time Gissing was writing *Workers in the Dawn*, h-dropping had long been a much-criticised feature of Cockney speech⁸⁰ so one would expect to find it in representations of such speech, although it is not a feature which either was or still is confined to such a specific geographical area. The same point can be made about the other types of elision used by Gissing. There are more examples of elision: initial, such as *'ud* (would) and *'un* (one) (for example 12, 48); medial, such as *gen'leman* (gentleman), *b'lieve* (believe) and *lux'ry* (luxury) (for example 14, 66-7); and final, such as *o'* (of), *an'* (and) and *livin'* (living) (for example 66-7). Indeed the final three of these are used throughout the novel by all nonstandard speakers. Whilst none of these features is specifically Cockney, there are occasions where Gissing represents a more distinctive London pronunciation, focussing on vowel sounds: *rayther* (rather), *sewer* (sure) and *horff* (off) (for example 79). The last of these examples is possibly the most familiar to the reader, the *r* being used as a diacritic to indicate the lengthening of the vowel. The *y* is used similarly in *rayther*, whilst a completely different sound from the standard pronunciation is indicated by *sewer*. Around the time that Gissing was writing, there was greater concern about the vowel and diphthong sounds of Cockney speech. Punch's *Almanac* for 1882 contains a passage of Cockney dialogue in which famous is rendered as 'fymous'; and in the same year the Reverend A.J.D. D'Orsey, who was Professor of Public Reading at King's College, wrote to the London School Board complaining about the pronunciation of 'the very first letter of the alphabet'.⁸¹ Although the publication of *Workers in the Dawn* predates these texts by two years, Gissing would almost certainly have heard such pronunciations at the time of writing his novel.

At one point Gissing represents the pronunciation of a word using standard orthography but then adds a metalinguistic comment: 'an' so you 'ave it straight." Mrs Pettindund, exercising her discretionary powers in the matter of English orthoepy, pronounced the last word "stright" (321). Gissing could have simply spelled the word in this way within the direct speech to make the altered vowel sound apparent, but the

⁷⁹ Brighton: Victorian Secrets edition, 2010.

⁸⁰ See Lynda Mugglestone, *Talking Proper* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2003), Chapter Four.

⁸¹ William Matthews, *Cockney Past and Present* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1938), p.63.

ironic metalinguistic comment is an important aspect of Gissing's method of characterisation and one I shall return to below. Occasionally, there are nonstandard pronunciations where the consonants have been changed, such as *artenoon* (afternoon), *arsting* (asking) and *somethink* (something) (for example 66, 525, 12). In the first two of these, it appears that once again the r is used as a diacritic to lengthen the vowel sound as heard in London speech, whilst the third example is probably not limited to Cockney dialect. What Gissing does not do is employ the interchangeable /w/ and /v/ phonemes as seen in Dickens's representation of London speech, as, by the time Gissing was writing, this feature had fallen out of use in both actual and representational speech.⁸²

Gissing's use of nonstandard grammar is comparable to that of Trollope. He makes consistent use of a limited number of features which can be identified in the actual and representational speech of a number of nonstandard dialects. Firstly, *as* is used as a relative pronoun throughout the speech of a number of characters, for example, "friends as wouldn't like to see poor people suffer by him and as 'ud pay his back rent" (10) and " " No, she 'asn't been able to find no one as'll take her" ' (525). The second of these two examples also contains another feature sometimes used in the representation of dialect: the double negative; and the final main grammatical feature, but one used less widely than by Trollope, is the use of nonstandard verb forms, both in the nonstandard agreement of subject and verb as in, " " I thought you said you was alone, Mrs. Pole?" ' (526) and in the use of past participle forms such as, " "You've broke the jug" ' (9). Just as none of the above can be considered as specifically Cockney, there is also an absence of lexis which belongs only to that dialect. There are informal vocabulary items and abbreviated forms but these can be found in the casual speech of most geographical areas. Possible exceptions to this are *tin* (money) and *screwed* (drunk) (for example 524-5) and the widespread use of *ain't*. There is one example of a character pronouncing the word *syllables* as *syllabums* (79), not a mispronunciation as such but a misunderstanding of the word. Given that some of Gissing's characters are of the criminal classes, the reader might expect more slang, but this could have alienated a middle class readership, or at least proved somewhat trying. The features used by Gissing are sufficient to give a clear indication of the style of speech of his characters and are used consistently as an integral part of that characterisation, as I show below.

⁸² As stated by Bernard Shaw in a note to *Captain Brassbound's Conversion* (1899), cited in William Matthews, *Cockney Past and Present* (London: George Routledge and Sons), p. 73.

ii. **Setting the Scene in *Workers in the Dawn***

Workers in the Dawn begins, ‘Walk with me, reader, into Whitecross Street. It is Saturday night, the market-night of the poor; also the one evening in the week which the weary toilers of our great city can devote to ease and recreation in the sweet assurance of a morrow unenslaved. Let us see how they spend this “Truce of God.”’ Immediately the reader is placed in a very specific working-class locale, the people of which are ‘poor’ ‘weary toilers’ and therefore presented as having difficult lives. The use of the present tense reportage style of narrative creates a sense of immediacy for the reader, particularly as we are guided to the area as though we are walking with the narrator: ‘As we suddenly turn northwards out of the dim and quiet regions of Barbican, we are at first confused by the glare of lights and the hubbub of cries.’ The repeated use of the first person plural pronoun *we* has the effect of placing us not as outside observers but within the narrative, experiencing the same ‘confusion’ as the narrator. This use of the present tense also suggests habitual action, conveying an awareness that every Saturday night is spent in the same way by the people being described. Gissing then takes the reader on a journey through the East End pointing out groups of people and dwellings so that, from the outset, we have a view of a class of people: their physical appearance, the places they call home, their activities and their language. In the first two pages of the novel, words and phrases such as ‘evil’, ‘horrible darkness’, ‘unspeakable abominations’, ‘slum’, ‘evil-looking fellows’, ‘foul-mouthed virulence’ and ‘squalid and shivering women’ are used to describe the people and their environment, creating a hellish vision for the reader. The first direct speech is that of unnamed street vendors: ‘“Lovely, lovely, l-ove-ly! Buy! buy buy buy-buy!”’; ‘“Here’s a humberella! [...] Come, who says ‘alf-a-crownd for this?”’’ These representations of speech are used generically as part of Gissing’s detailed sketch of the area. The first direct speech attributed to a named individual comes after Gissing has moved into a past tense narrative to tell his story, and comes from a small girl who has just met with a minor accident:

She did not begin to cry, but, instantly springing to her feet, proceeded to assail the cause of her accident with a stream of the foulest abuse, which would have been dreadful enough on the lips of a grown-up man, but appeared unutterably so as coming from a child.

“You’ve broke the jug, you have!” screamed the little creature at last, having exhausted her epithets; “you’ve broke the jug, you have; and you’ll ‘ave to pay for it, you will” (9)

The metalanguage preceding the direct speech explains why this is so shocking: we see how young children, hardened by this environment, apparently have none of the innocence we typically associate with childhood. Furthermore, Gissing’s choice of a girl here is striking, and would have been more so for a contemporary reader when there was a greater number of expectations governing the accepted behaviour of females.

Thus Gissing prepares the ground for the meeting of Mr Norman, a middle-class clergyman, and the East End landlady of the house where his former college friend is dying:

“What are you wanting of? Who is it?”

“Is there a Mr. Golding living here?” asked the visitor, stepping back and endeavouring to catch sight of the speaker.

“There’s one o’ that name dyin’ here, I’m thinkin’,” returned a gruff voice, in a tone meant to be humorous. “Does he owe yer money? Cos if he do, I’m thinkin’ ye’ll have to look out sharp after it.”

“Would you be so good as to show me to his room?” cried the visitor. (10)

Mr Norman’s Standard English compared with the marked speech of his interlocutor, along with the use of the phrase ‘the visitor’ signal that he is not part of the environment which Gissing has painstakingly presented to the reader. Furthermore, we see a difference in the morality of these two characters: the landlady, later described as a ‘hag’ and a ‘harpy’ (14), is direct to the point of rudeness, jokes about death, and appears to be primarily concerned with money; Mr Norman, despite being addressed in such a way, replies with the utmost civility. Notably, the landlady is described as having a ‘gruff’ voice; so both the content of her speech and the manner in which it is delivered are objectionable and the dialect speaker is presented as being morally inferior to the Standard English speaker.

iii. Immoral Dialect Speakers

The pattern established in the opening pages, as detailed above, is continued throughout the novel. However, not all the ‘workers’ living in this area of London are represented as speaking working-class dialect, as I show in the following section; Gissing generally reserves the use of marked speech for a subset of the society which is immoral. As Debbie Harrison states in the introduction to the novel, the most depraved people are not the ones who are poor or starving;⁸³ and these are the characters who have the most marked speech. This suggests a link between language and morality which has been made by various commentators from Thomas Sheridan to Norman Tebbit;⁸⁴ and this may have been an influential idea at the time when Gissing was writing. What is also significant is that these characters, with the one exception of Bill Blatherwick, are all women, and a number of them are avaricious landladies, a kind of person with whom Gissing would have become very familiar as he moved around the East End. Between

⁸³ Victorian Secrets edition (Brighton, 2010), pp. xiii.

⁸⁴ See Lynda Mugglestone, *Talking Proper* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 26-7 and James Milroy and Lesley Milroy *Authority In Language*, 2nd edn (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), p.53.

them, these women lie, cheat, commit forgery for financial gain, and show an absolute lack of human feeling for those around them, including family. Mrs Pettindund, the aunt of the pregnant Carrie Mitchell, turns her niece out of her home:

“I tell you, you leave this ‘ouse today, an’ there’s no two ways about that. D’ye ‘ear”[...] “What I’ve been, an’ what I’m going to be now, is two very different things,” returned Mrs. Pettindund, in her coarse, gin-thickened, over-fed voice, and always with that inimitable ferocity of the true London lodging-house keeper. (321)

The elision and nonstandard verb form place Mrs. Pettindund within Gissing’s subset of dialect speakers, whilst the content of her speech combined with the authorial metalanguage confirm that she is immoral; indeed the adjectives used to describe her voice convey an intense dislike on the part of the author-narrator which has no little influence on the reader. Gissing later develops this presentation of Mrs. Pettindund and the rest of her family in Chapter Twenty-Eight, ‘Christmas In-doors and Out’ when, in the middle of a gluttonous Christmas celebration, Mrs. Pettindund once more turns away her niece who, now with a baby, has come to beg for shelter from the snow. Gissing juxtaposes a detailed description of the Pettindunds’ consumption of vast quantities of food and alcohol with the ‘tall woman’s figure, clad in a ragged black dress’ (332), and shows the irony of Mrs. Pettindund turning away Carrie because of her low class when her own family’s Christmas celebrations include a drunken brawl. This chapter seems to be a satire on the way in which Christmas is kept by the Cratchits and other good poor people in Dickens’s *A Christmas Carol*: rather than being presented with a working-class family cheerfully making the best of what little they have, we see the depravity of those who are well-off.

Arguably the most immoral character of all is Polly Hemp. She manipulates the vulnerable Carrie Mitchell, the strong suggestion being that she runs a prostitution business; she obtains money by fraudulent means, and can calmly suggest that Carrie murder her husband for his money. When she is first introduced, Gissing leaves the reader in no doubt about her nature:

This Polly Hemp was as evil-looking a personage as one could encounter in the streets of London. Not that she was ugly in her features, for she had, indeed, what some would call a fine face. But it was the expression of this face which impressed the beholder more than its mere outlines, and that was wholly and absolutely evil. (484)

We later see Polly conspiring with Mrs. Pole, Carrie Mitchell’s landlady, to get as much money as possible from Carrie, each woman wary of the other and protecting her own interests:

“And how d’ye know as she’s here?” asked Mrs. Pole, at the moment when we begin to overhear their conversation. “That’s what I want to know. ‘Ow d’ye know it, Mrs. Hemp?”

“Well, if you must know,” replied the other, sipping her liquor, “t’ain’t so hard to explain. One o’ my girls see her comin’ out, and come and told me. Do you understand?”

Mrs Pole was silent for a minute, apparently revolving something in her mind.

“Well, and what next Mrs. Hemp?” she asked at length. “I s’pose as I can ‘ev what lodgers I like in my ‘ouse, eh?” (524)

This conversation continues for three pages and is the longest section of nonstandard direct speech within the novel. It is also the most marked, containing all the features detailed above (although there are some short sentences which are rendered in Standard English). Given the link between nonstandard English and immorality which can be seen in *Workers in the Dawn*, the length of this conversation serves to establish these two figures, Polly Hemp in particular, as the most base within the dialect-speaking subset of characters within the novel. The form and content of their speech work together to achieve this, along with details within the narrative such as Polly Hemp having a glass of spirits in her hand.

iv. Standard English and Moral Worth

A number of the ‘workers’ who live, and seem to have lived their whole lives, in the East End speak nothing but Standard English. In ‘real life’ these people would surely use at least some marked forms, but Gissing elevates their speech in order to differentiate them from the greedy, scheming, criminal group of characters in the East End. The first of these is the protagonist Arthur Golding. Arthur is introduced as a small child huddled over the body of his father in a room which is the epitome of squalor. He has lived, at least in recent years, in appalling conditions with an alcoholic father who denied him any form of education. His first brief speech is standard, replying to Mr. Norman’s wish to take him home to his rectory with, ‘“Why should I go with you?”’ followed by, ‘“I’m going to stay with father, I am. I’ll wait till he wakes. I don’t know you at all, do I?”’ (14) There are elided forms here, but these are recognised shortenings used in relaxed middle-class speech rather than the forms used by dialect speakers; and the grammar is all standard. In Chapter Four, Arthur’s Standard English is a match for that of Mr Norman’s daughter Helen who is the same age as Arthur but has had the benefit of a middle-class upbringing. When Arthur runs away from Mr Norman’s rectory and returns to the lodging house where his father died, he asks the landlady if he may stay in his old room:

“Is our old room let yet, Mrs. Blatherwick?” he at length plucked up courage to ask.

“And what d’yer want to know for, eh?” replied the woman.

“Because, if it isn’t,” stammered the boy, “I wish you’d let me sleep there tonight. I haven’t anywhere else to go to.

“Ain’t got nowhere else to go to?” echoed Mrs. Blatherwick in surprise. “Why, I thought as you’d gone to live with the parson?” (48-9)

Arthur’s conversation with Mrs Blatherwick is somewhat reminiscent of that between the same lady and Mr Norman in Chapter One which I discuss above. Arthur’s Standard English and his polite manner of speaking are contrasted with the speech of the landlady who goes on to take every penny Arthur has in return for the room, but no food. Particularly worthy of note is Arthur’s standard negative construction in his second utterance above which is then rendered with a double negative when Arthur’s statement is ‘echoed’ by Mrs Blatherwick. Also, Arthur’s ‘haven’t’ becomes ‘ain’t’ in the landlady’s utterance as Gissing makes deliberate use of detail to emphasise the difference between the two characters’ speech, and probably uses the word ‘echo’ with ironic significance. Arthur continues to use Standard English throughout the novel, and there are several reasons for this. Firstly, he belongs to the group of workers which is moral; then, he sees education as important and strives to educate himself as best he can, Gissing making it clear that he has a natural aptitude for study. Another factor to consider is that Arthur may have been born a gentleman. We do not know the full details of his past, but we do know that his father was an old college friend of Mr Norman and therefore probably middle-class. It may well be that Arthur’s speech, as with that of Dickens’s *Oliver Twist*, is an indication of his true birth. Indeed his later apprenticeship as an artist, working under the tutelage of Mr Gresham sees him in surroundings which seem much more appropriate to his natural disposition; yet he continues to feel torn between his desire to be an artist and the belief that he must earn his own living doing something ‘useful’ whilst doing what he can to help others.

One morally good character who speaks Standard English but is certainly not a gentleman is Arthur’s adoptive father, employer and mentor, Mr Tollady. Samuel Tollady was born into the working classes, and although he makes a living from his printing business, that living does not come easily, especially as Mr Tollady does his utmost to offer financial support to the needy in his locale. He has known hardship and is seen to suffer himself in order that he might help others. What Arthur has in common with Mr Tollady is an appreciation of education, a desire to read. Arthur benefits greatly from Mr Tollady’s very modest library and is encouraged by his mentor to pursue his ambition to become an artist when he has the opportunity to do so. In Chapter Eleven, Mr Tollady takes Arthur on a walk through the East End which mirrors that at the opening of the novel when Gissing takes the reader on a similar tour. Like Gissing, Mr Tollady provides a detailed commentary on the people he and Arthur observe:

“Let us stand here for a moment,” said Mr Tollady, “and watch the faces of the people who go past. Is there one upon which vice and crime are not written as

legibly as if put there in words? [...]Do you notice the faces? That lad, now[...]Or that young girl, about fifteen years old, I suppose. Is it possible to imagine a more perfectly hideous countenance? See the cat-like green eyes, swelling over with unutterable infamy; see the hair, coarse and foul as mud-growth. Listen, oh, for the sake of humanity, listen to her words!" (122-3)

The language used by Mr Tollady to describe these people and their activities is very similar to that used in the authorial narrative in Chapter One. Thus Gissing is emphasising for the reader the depravity of this subset of 'workers'. As they are commented on in this way by one who is himself a poor worker, Gissing makes the point that poverty does not necessarily lead to depravity, just as those who are the vilest within society are not poor. Mr Tollady's eloquent Standard English, as well as his way of life, sets him apart from those he observes. Then, through Mr Tollady's narration, Gissing echoes a view expressed by Frances Trollope in *Michael Armstrong*, in comparing the lives of the working classes to those of slaves: "Is it not a disgrace to humanity that generations of servitude, as real and degrading as that of the negroes, should be suffered to produce in the centre of our proudest cities a breed of men and women such as those we have been observing" (123). Mr Tollady's commentary continues for three and a half pages, and whilst the observations made are much more critical than those of Frances Trollope, his desire to change things is every bit as strong as he voices his view that the government must intervene to improve the situation. The key difference is that this desire comes from the character only and not the author-narrator: the opening 'tour' of the London backstreets given to the reader contains no such appeal, just observation.

There are other characters, almost all of them male, who, like Mr Tollady are 'workers', whose Standard English is used to denote their morality: the appropriately-named William Noble, like Mr Tollady, saves some of his modest salary in a fund which is used to help those in need, and runs a club made up of similarly-minded men. This is also a political club where members take it in turns to speak about the need for reform. Mark Challenger, like William Noble, is a working-class friend of Arthur Golding and a member of the club. His direct speech is almost entirely rendered in Standard English, the few nonstandard forms there are perhaps being an indication that he is less educated than Arthur, Noble and Mr Tollady. John Pether is the one who, of all the characters in the East End, has suffered most due poverty: his family starved to death. Not surprisingly, he is also the most radical, continually looking to follow the example of France and destroy the rich through violent means. Yet he never commits any act of violence (although he dies a terrible death after accidentally knocking over a lamp and causing a fire). Instead, he continues to suffer whilst delivering impassioned speeches about revolution. He is a pitiful figure who suffers unimaginable horrors; yet he retains a kind of dignity to the end, never sliding into the kind of depravity exhibited by those such as Polly Hemp. As with Arthur, Noble and Mr Tollady, the fact that Gissing represents his speech almost entirely in Standard English separates John Pether from

the truly contemptible characters and emphasises once more the point that poverty is not necessarily the cause of immorality.

v. The Complexity of Carrie Mitchell

Carrie Mitchell, who becomes Arthur Golding's wife, is a more complex character than most others in the novel in that she does not easily fit into either the subset of immoral, dialect-speaking women or the group of moral Standard English speakers. She is very much a 'fallen woman' in that, when she is first introduced into the novel, she is unmarried and pregnant. She also becomes an alcoholic, which leads to her marriage breaking down, and the implication is that she subsequently turns to prostitution. Gissing has been accused of showing a lack of objectivity in his characterisation, on the one hand idealising beautiful women and on the other expressing loathing of the ugly, vulgar and ignorant.⁸⁵ Indeed Helen Norman and Lucy Venning can be placed into the first of these two categories. Yet Carrie Mitchell is not presented as one of the hardened, vulgar women with whom Gissing populates his version of the East End; and the way her direct speech is represented plays a significant part in this. She is first introduced into the novel at the point where she is being turned out of Mrs. Pettindund's house because of her pregnancy:

“Yer don't think I'm sich a fool as to keep yer, eh?” pursued the kindly-hearted landlady. “An' lose the good name o' th'ouse an' all? If you do, you're mistaken, that's all as I've got to say t'yer.”

The listener's straining ears could just catch the answer.

“You won't turn me out of doors, aunt?” pleaded the girl's sobbing voice. “Won't you let me stay till it's over, and pay you all back?” (321)

As in the case of other conversations earlier in the novel, Gissing contrasts the form and content of an uncaring landlady with that of her interlocutor. Mrs Pettindund's blunt dismissal of her niece contrasts with Carrie's plea; and the lack of concern the landlady has for Carrie's well-being contrasts with the girl's intention to pay her aunt all the money she will owe. Carrie's speech contains abbreviations, but only ones which are used by members of all classes, and is juxtaposed with the much more marked speech of her aunt. By this point in the novel, a pattern has emerged: those in the East End who speak Standard English are moral characters; thus Gissing is aligning Carrie with this group, despite her status as a 'fallen woman'.

Gissing is very careful in his manipulation of the reader's feelings toward Carrie. Before the incident above Arthur Golding happens upon a letter addressed to Carrie from the

⁸⁵ C.J. Francis, 'Gissing's Characterisation: Heredity and Environment' in *George Gissing: Critical Essays*, ed. by Jean-Pierre Michaux (London: Vision Press Ltd, 1981), 73-89 (pp. 79).

father of her child in which the man (Augustus Whiffle, the future clergyman) callously refuses to offer any form of assistance. Thus, even before we are introduced to Carrie, we feel disposed to view her as a victim. Shortly after the incident above, which leads Arthur to secretly pay Carrie's rent, she writes a letter to thank him. This letter is included in the text, written in Standard English, but with the following comment:

The hand-writing was extremely bad, so bad in places as to be almost indecipherable, and the orthographical errors were very abundant. I have chosen to correct the letter fault, lest the letter should excite amusement. It excited a far different feeling in Arthur Golding, as he read it by candle-light. (326)

In much the same way as Gaskell does (above), Gissing previously included an 'uncorrected' version of a text written by Bill Blatherwick specifically designed to illustrate that character's illiteracy which, for Gissing, is indicative of a base nature (54). By representing Carrie's letter in Standard English, he is, once more, distancing Carrie from that group of despicable characters. His fear that the letter 'should excite amusement' is comparable to Mrs Trollope's comment (above) that it would be 'dangerous' for her to attempt to represent heavily marked local dialect. The representation of Carrie's direct speech continues in the same way: presumably, the 'real life' Carrie would speak much like her aunt and the other women of the East End; but Gissing makes a deliberate choice to represent Carrie's direct speech largely in Standard English in order to differentiate her from the women amongst whom she lives. Even when she is drunk, her language remains surprisingly standard (526-7).

What is worthy of note is that there are occasional marked forms in Carrie's speech when she is arguing with Arthur about education or unable to appreciate the things he values, such as art and nature. Having 'rescued' Carrie, Arthur is determined to educate her so that she can both escape her past and become a worthy wife. But Carrie does not value education. In the introduction to the novel, Debbie Harrison argues that in marrying Carrie, Arthur "takes her prisoner" and is "brutal" and "selfish" (xi). I consider this to be a harsh view of Arthur, given that he asks her to spend only half an hour per day trying to improve her reading and writing, and is keen for her to find suitable company whilst he is out at work. However, he does impose his own belief in the value of education on Carrie:

"It's all very well to ask me to do more," she said. "If you only knew how much house-work I have to do every day whilst you are away, you wouldn't ask me to find time for a lot of other things."

"But half an hour, Carrie. Surely you can find half an hour in a day?"

"Well, well, I'll think about it," replied the girl. "Don't talk no more about it now. You make my head ache with talking so much. I don't feel very well as it is." (408)

The one marked form -- the double negative in Carrie's second utterance -- comes when she is taking a defensive position, showing an unwillingness to improve her literacy; and this nonstandard form serves as a reminder that she lacks education. At this point, perhaps Gissing, like Arthur, is expressing some frustration with Carrie as he includes a marked form and refers to her as 'the girl' which is devoid of any sympathy. On the whole, though, Gissing has more sympathy for Carrie than his protagonist does. We are continually told, for example, that Arthur corrects her pronunciation;⁸⁶ yet the 'errors' are not present in Gissing's representation of her direct speech. Indeed, after Carrie leaves Arthur, he reflects on his treatment of her:

Would her new friend trouble himself about her grammatical faults, her errors of pronunciation? Most probably not. How foolish he himself had been to trouble, either. Of what consequence was an h omitted or foisted in where it had no business, what mattered a few violations of the rules of syntax in this most irregular of worlds? Certainly there was passing annoyance caused by the neglect of such little conventions; but then there were other girls quite as beautiful as Carrie who spoke quite grammatically and had no trouble with their *h*'s. Would I not be possible to find such? (421)

Gissing uses free indirect discourse to problematise Arthur's attitude: at first, he seems to be dismissing the importance of Standard English, but the speed with which his thought process moves from this to a wish to look for a girl who has a full command of the standard language shows that he is unable to overlook this issue and reflects actual concerns at that time. Furthermore, Arthur is presented as valuing only, or at least primarily, beauty and the ability to speak 'properly'; he gives no thought to the moral worth of the 'other girls' he might find desirable.

Whilst Gissing is generally more sympathetic in his representation of Carrie's speech than Arthur is in the correction of it, an exception to this is when Arthur, having taken Carrie back, is disappointed that she is unable to appreciate a scene of natural beauty:

At first he had always taken Carrie with him whenever he went on these evening walks, but by degrees her commonplace chatter, her vulgarisms of thought and language, her utter insensibility to the impressions of the season and the hour, rendered her company at such times intolerable to him[...]One evening Arthur endeavoured to make her appreciate the grandeur of a sunset scene from the Heath. After looking at it for some moments, she exclaimed, "It's almost as pretty as the theaytre, isn't it?" (564)

The authorial metalanguage is unusually critical of Carrie here, as Gissing focalises the narrative, employing phrases such as 'commonplace chatter' which present Arthur's view of Carrie's speech; and a representation of her nonstandard pronunciation of the vowel sound in the word *theatre* is included to support the statement that Carrie has vulgar speech. This occurs close to the end of the novel, shortly before Arthur leaves Carrie, no longer able to bear the continual struggle against her alcoholism and her

⁸⁶ For example 410, 415.

inability to break free from her past life. In the passage above, Gissing aligns himself with his male protagonist, preparing the way for his departure. Whilst we should be wary of a narrow biographical interpretation, it seems reasonable to say that Gissing has sympathy for Arthur's situation as the life led by the protagonist with his wife is very much that led by the writer with his. Whilst still at school, Gissing became involved with a prostitute Helen (Nell) Harrison whom he tried to 'rescue' and support by stealing. This led to his expulsion. After a period in the United States working mostly as a private tutor, he returned to England and, just before he was twenty years old, settled in London with Nell, whom he married, and began his career as a writer. For six years, he lived in the slums, moving from one lodging house to another, a struggling writer with an alcohol-dependent wife.⁸⁷

Yet Gissing never loses sympathy for Carrie who is differentiated from characters such as Polly Hemp to the end of the novel. When Polly suggests that Carrie murder Arthur for his money, she throws her drink in Polly's face (574), even though the marriage has broken down. Also, although she is too entrenched in her way of life to effect a change, Carrie never loses the desire to change: ' "I'll do my very best, indeed I will. If I can only keep from drink you shan't have nothing to complain of. Kiss me, Arthur" ' (561). Whilst this speech could be dismissed as the insincerity of the alcoholic relieved to be given a second chance, when considered in the context of Carrie's general honesty it seems to be a genuine statement of intent. Notably, there is a double negative in the speech above and there is a small number of other marked forms in the rest of Carrie's speech on this page. These could serve as a reminder to the reader that Carrie associates with the contemptible elements of East End society, although she is not such a person herself.

Whilst Gissing suggests no easy answers to the question of how to alter the lives of people like Carrie and indeed Polly Hemp, education seems to be the best solution. Perhaps this is not surprising given that *Workers in the Dawn* was published ten years after the 1870 Education Act made education compulsory for all children up to the age of twelve. The unequivocally good 'workers' are the ones who either have some form of education or value education, although it should be pointed out that there are a number of corrupt educated middle-class characters in the novel. Education takes time: it will not necessarily be successful within a generation, but across generations, and language differences can sometimes be a barrier to progress. Helen Norman, the novel's

⁸⁷ Pierre Coustillas ed., *London and the Life of Literature in Late Victorian England: The Diary of George Gissing, Novelist* (Hemel Hempstead: The Harvester Press Ltd., 1978), Introduction.

middle-class heroine and Arthur's true love, laments the lack of progress in her philanthropic work and her attempts to educate the lower classes:

“They will not trust me. My speech, my dress, perhaps revolts them. They think that I do not belong to their class, and, though they take my money, it is with suspicion of my motives. I have made my dress as plain as it possibly can be, to be respectable. If I could, I would even speak in their uncouth tongue. There is always that horrible difference of caste between us. Can it ever be removed? Will they ever learn to look upon me as a human being like themselves?” (296)

There is a surprising reversal of the normal order of things here. The idea that anyone could find Standard English ‘revolting’ is highly unconventional and may well have shocked a contemporary reader. Helen sees her Standard English as a problem, something she is willing to sacrifice in order to be accepted by the people so that they might accept her advice and begin to live differently. Arthur, along with most language commentators, takes the opposite view: Standard English must be imposed on people in order for them to be successful in life. Helen's final question above counters the various references to the lower classes as ‘bestial’ which begin in the opening pages of the novel and offers a different perspective on these people from the one which is developed throughout the majority of the narrative.

Despite the difficulties Helen experiences, her school proves to be a modest success:

Those girls who at their first coming to her she had found rude in manner and speech, grew by degrees gentler and more refined, the deplorably ignorant gradually struggled out of their slough and began to show that they were creatures of mind as well as body, the few who had already begun to yield to the fascination of vulgar vice became ashamed of their conduct when in their teacher's presence and from the mere sound of her voice, the radiance of her beauty, conceived ideas of a purer life. (575)

This is the last comment on education in the novel and as such it leaves the reader feeling that this is the best way forward. Notably, despite Helen's earlier willingness to sacrifice her Standard English, acquiring more ‘refined’ speech is listed here amongst the component parts of a successful education. Thus whilst it may be desirable to ‘speak the language’ of the lower classes in order to gain their trust, this is seen as a means to a very different end. Gissing favours the Standard English speaker. This is evident in the somewhat idealised presentation of Helen Norman above whereby simply the sound of her voice inspires the girls to want to lead better lives. Yet Helen has to give up her work owing to ill health, and later dies of tuberculosis, at the age of twenty-one. Thus, whilst her former students may continue to benefit from the education they received and treasure their memories of Helen, there is an end to the practical help on offer to the poor girls of the East End, limiting their chances of changing their lives. The idea of using nonstandard English to gain the trust of the working classes is seen in a political context in Spring's *Fame is the Spur*. However, Spring's attitude toward the nonstandard speaker is significantly different from that of Gissing as I show below.

5. Howard Spring's *Fame is the Spur* (1940)

i. Story and Context

Like the two case studies above, *Fame is the Spur* (1940) is a socio-political novel, one which, in part, re-tells the story of the rise of the British Labour Party through the use of a fictional protagonist. It also references other literary texts, namely, the novels of Dickens. Like Dickens, Trollope and Gissing, Spring's writing was his means of earning a living. His background is broadly comparable to that of Dickens in that he was born into poverty and left school aged twelve to begin his working life as a butcher's errand boy, later teaching himself shorthand and becoming a journalist on the *Yorkshire Observer* and *Manchester Guardian*.⁸⁸ I consider the ways in which Spring uses literary dialect to develop his representation of the social classes and the changing nature of the political landscape at the end of the Victorian era. I will argue that the representation of nonstandard speech is an essential part of Spring's creation of character and presentation of character relationships, and that, to some extent, Spring breaks with the Victorian convention of elevating the speech of the protagonist or of morally good characters. This convention is followed by both Dickens, for example in his presentation of *Oliver Twist*, and by Gissing, for example in his presentation of Arthur Golding (as I show above). These characters are given Standard English speech to symbolise that they are morally superior (and, in Oliver's case, socially superior) to those amongst whom they live. Spring can be seen to reverse this: he has his characters use nonstandard forms in order to highlight the apparent hypocrisy of the protagonist, John Hamer Shawcross.

Fame is the Spur tells the life story of John Hamer Shawcross (later known as Hamer) who grows up in the working-class Ancoats area of Manchester in the late-nineteenth century to become one of the first Labour Members of Parliament and a Cabinet Minister serving in the first Labour government. Shawcross, along with his wife Ann Artingstall, her aunt, Lizzie Lightowler, and Shawcross's childhood friend Arnold Ryerson are presented as being instrumental to the creation of the Independent Labour Party. Whilst Shawcross is genuinely troubled by the plight of the poor and seeks to improve their lot, he is first and foremost a career politician: for him 'Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise/(That last infirmity of noble mind)/To scorn delights and live laborious days.'⁸⁹ The politician in him, and his instincts for self-preservation, eventually outweigh his loyalty to his former ideals; he is accused of 'selling out' by both his life-long friend Arnold Ryerson and his career-long private secretary Jimmy Newbould. His final step up the political ladder comes when he becomes one of the first

⁸⁸ David Daiches, 'Howard Spring', *The English Journal*, 30.8 (October 1941), 613-22 (pp. 614).

⁸⁹ Milton: *Lycidas*, printed as an epigraph to the novel.

Labour peers and enters the House of Lords as Viscount Shawcross. Yet, ultimately, despite all his fame and success, he is presented as a lonely character, one who comes to value his personal relationships as the most important ones in his life and has a longing for the past and the friendships of the past.

The events of *Fame is the Spur* take place between 1877 and 1939; there is also a flashback to the protagonist's birth in 1865 and another to the Peterloo massacre in Manchester in 1819, experienced by a relative of the protagonist. Approximately two thirds of the novel is set in the late-Victorian era but this is a different work from the neo-Victorian novels of writers such as Sarah Waters and Michel Faber as Spring was born in the late-Victorian era and may have had childhood memories of that time. He would have known adults who had a living memory of the Victorian era and indeed his early readership would have included such people. Thus the Victorian content of *Fame is the Spur* may well constitute a nostalgic return to the past for the reader in the same way that its protagonist approaches the end of his life with a longing to return to all that he valued in his youth. Another example of an affectionate return to the nineteenth century appears in Spring's first novel, *Shabby Tiger* (1934), which is set in the 1930s: the main characters Nick Faunt and Anna Fitzgerald host a house-warming party in which they dress themselves and furnish their home in Victorian style; they then greet their guests in character as a Victorian lady and gentleman.⁹⁰ The neo-Victorian novels of Waters and Faber, on the other hand, recreate a version of the nineteenth century for a readership which has no direct experience of it. Spring's novel, therefore, can be seen as belonging to an interim stage between novels set contemporaneously within the nineteenth century and those of the twenty-first century neo-Victorian writers.

David Daiches states that 'In plot, handling, and atmosphere there is a great deal [in *Fame is the Spur*] that suggests Gissing' (614), although he does not specify in what way. Daiches also argues that Spring's training as a journalist helps him to present to the reader scenes he encountered in his own life such as the poverty in Welsh mining villages. He makes a comparison between Spring and Dickens, arguing that Spring, like his predecessor, 'has a real gift, also, for drawing interiors, particularly slum or semislum interiors, in winter', noting that this is 'in what might be called the Dickens tradition' (617). The aspects of *Fame is the Spur* which can be considered 'Dickensian' are the scenes in which poor working people are presented going about their daily business in Ancoats and later in Bradford, although the attempted unionisation of factory workers in the latter city is perhaps more reminiscent of Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* (1855). The idea of social and political reform, which is an important concern in a number of Dickens's novels and in Trollope's *Michael Armstrong*, is a central idea in *Fame*

⁹⁰ London: Fontana edition, 1973, p. 86-92.

is the Spur. The difference is that whilst Dickens and Trollope were active in the campaign for social reform using their characters and plots to this end, Spring is distanced from the events he narrates: he is showing his characters campaigning, writing in the late nineteenth thirties about events of the past. There is one exception to this (345-6)⁹¹ when the author-narrator contrasts the hardship of the lives of miners in South Wales with the unearned good fortune of those who own the land where the mines are located. Although his characters are fictional, Spring acts as a chronicler of the past, telling the story of the rise of the Independent Labour Party in the late-Victorian era as well as more recent socio-political campaigns such as the women's suffrage movement and the Great War. However, it should be pointed out that *Fame is the Spur* ends in 1939, the year in which Spring was writing, and so there is a clear sense that the world has lost its way and a bleak future awaits; there is, more than ever, a need for reform, but Shawcross accepts that he will not live to see such change.

Dickens himself wrote a historical political novel, *Barnaby Rudge* (1841), one hundred years before Spring's work (his only other historical novel being *A Tale of Two Cities*, published in 1859). This novel looks back approximately the same number of years as does *Fame is the Spur* and focusses on the actual 'No Popery' riots which took place in London in 1780.⁹² As a young child, Spring read all Dickens's works with his father and then, after his father's death, with his mother: 'Her only relaxation in those arduous days was on Sunday nights. We carried on with the readings -- and it was only during those few hours that I read anything good. We went through book after book by Dickens.'⁹³ These novels had an influence on the imagination of the young Spring who envisioned his mother's past life in an orphanage as being 'under the supervision of a person whom [his] infant mind conceived as a beadle of the Bumble type'.⁹⁴ He also read John Forster's *The Life of Charles Dickens* (1904) and refers to his predecessor as 'the Master'.⁹⁵ This knowledge and appreciation of the earlier writer, along with Spring's own experience of both poverty and journalism seem to meet in the accounts of poor people's lives in *Fame is the Spur*.

In *Barnaby Rudge*, one of Dickens's characters is a fictionalised version of Lord George Gordon (1751-1793) who gave his name to the anti-Catholic Gordon Riots of 1780.⁹⁶ Likewise, Spring's narrative contains real historical figures such as Ramsay MacDonald, the first Labour Prime Minister, and Keir Hardie, one of the two first Labour Members

⁹¹ London: Fontana edition, 1982.

⁹² Introduction to the Wordsworth Classics edition, 2010.

⁹³ *The Autobiography of Howard Spring, foreword by A.L. Rowse* (London: Collins, 1972), p.36.

⁹⁴ *Autobiography*, p. 307.

⁹⁵ *Autobiography*, p. 246.

⁹⁶ Encyclopaedia Britannica, 'Lord George Gordon', *Encyclopaedia Britannica* <<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Lord-George-Gordon>> [13th July, 2016].

of Parliament. Their presence, just like that of Lord George Gordon in *Barnaby Rudge*, complements the subject matter and adds to the realism of the novel, as outlined by Furst (above). Daiches states that ‘the weight of contemporary history is meant to be felt by the reader as an important factor in the lives of the characters’ (615). Ramsay MacDonald is referred to by the other characters a number of times and Shawcross is presented as being in conversation with him when the Labour Party is in office (523); Keir Hardie is used similarly, but he is given a brief speaking part (451-2). Also, the young Arnold Ryerson meets Friedrich Engels in a second hand book shop in Manchester when Engels is visiting his old friend Mr Suddaby who owns the shop (77-8).⁹⁷ The inclusion of these historical figures helps the reader to accept Spring’s representation of reality and enter into the world of the novel and the lives of the characters as credible people. The inclusion of a footnote (212) to add an explanation of one of the details in Shawcross’s life also adds to the novel’s literary realism. The fact that Spring is writing about events of the past, a number of which did occur in actuality, gives the novel a specific political context; he is giving readers a narrative which complements the mainstream non-fictional chronicles of the rise of Labour Party. Readers bring to the text any pre-existing knowledge of the British political system in their response to the characters and events of *Fame is the Spur*. As a result, meaning is generated through the interplay between the text itself, other related fictional and non-fictional works, and the reader’s knowledge and opinion of these related works.

The novel presents the accepted account of the life of the fictional character Hamer Shawcross and also challenges that account, creating a counter-history. As a public figure, Shawcross is shown carefully creating an image for himself; at the same time, the author-narrator works in much the same way as an historian to re-examine this image of the protagonist by providing alternative accounts of his past. Shawcross becomes a great orator and the early part of the novel contains a number of flashes forward, quoting great speeches delivered by the successful politician in which he refers to the hardships of his childhood. For example, speaking of the morning rush of the factory workers to their place of employment, he says ‘ “Ah my friends, the lives of the poor[...]It is those children I see! In imagination, the sound of my little clogs is joined with the chorus of theirs, clattering through the cold Manchester morning” ’(28). This speech is then immediately contradicted by the author-narrator’s statement ‘But it wasn’t quite like that’, striking in its simplicity, as he points out the ‘self-deception’ of the words ‘in imagination’ as ‘John Shawcross[...]did not rise until eight’ and never worked in a factory. Here we have a speaker who appeals to Dickensian notions of poverty and suffering for political gain as he creates a fictionalised account of his own past. Those in the audience lived through the time to which he refers and can therefore

⁹⁷ Fontana edition, 1982.

share the 'memory'. Spring then provides an alternative history which challenges the public image of his fictional character in order to present him as a skilled politician who knows how to manipulate the people, thereby perhaps making a statement about politicians in general. He also includes excerpts from Shawcross's diary, referring to this as a document which recorded 'the thoughts and deeds of one living at the very hub of history as its wheel was in maddest whirl', adding that the diary 'gives a valuable light on his mind' (132). Then, later, comes the statement that 'In keeping track of Hamer's career, it is often necessary to check what he said in the years of his maturity against the record of his diary' (178); however, here also, Shawcross is accused of 'self-deception' (300) by the author-narrator. Thus, purporting to work in much the same way as an historian, Spring examines the texts related to his subject, weighs their value and then presents his readers with an account of the life of a public figure. In this case, obviously, all are fictional texts, but the question raised relates to actual people: is it ever possible to know the unequivocal 'truth'?

ii. Literary Dialect Features in *Fame is the Spur* (See Appendix i)

As much of the novel is set in Manchester and then Bradford, there is ample opportunity for the use of literary dialect. Spring gives a number of his major and minor characters regional speech styles. I will firstly look at the nonstandard forms used throughout the novel, focussing mostly on the section set in the Victorian era. This is where most of the literary dialect is present because as Hamer Shawcross rises through the social and political ranks and acquires a residence in an affluent area of London, he encounters fewer dialect speakers. Spring lived and worked in both Manchester and Bradford so would have had the opportunity to hear the local style of speech. Whilst some of the nonstandard forms used are features of all colloquial speech regardless of geographical region, the majority of Spring's literary dialect is made up of specifically Northern forms. There is, however, no apparent differentiation between the speech of the working-class Manchester characters and that of their Bradford counterparts. Manchester and Bradford lie thirty-seven miles apart, the former in Lancashire, the latter in Yorkshire; there is enough distance between them for there to be notable differences between the local dialects. Perhaps Spring makes almost no distinction between the two dialects as to do so might have been to give his readers too much work to do; it is sufficient to use the literary dialect to signal a general 'Northernness'. Or perhaps to differentiate between the Manchester working-classes and their Bradford counterparts would have been contrary to the novel's purposes, the point being that the lives of the urban poor are the same. Ultimately, the cities are not so far apart that having their residents speak in the same way destroys the realism of the novel.

In listing the nonstandard lexical, grammatical and phonological forms used by Spring I give only one page reference for each; however, many of these forms are used repeatedly throughout the novel. In terms of lexis, there is one verb which is specific to Lancashire: *clemmed* (starved, 25). This appears only in the speech of one of the Manchester characters and is a form used in earlier literary dialect such as that of Elizabeth Gaskell, as I note above. Other Northern lexical items are *yon* (a deictic determiner denoting a location in the distance, 25); *lads* and *lasses* (n. 13); the modal *mun* (must, 336); *summat* (pron. something, 56); *nowt* (pron. nothing, 66); the phrase *onny road* (in any case, 284); *knocker-up* (n. the person who knocks on factory workers' windows to wake them, 29); *tyke* (n. a mischievous person, 98); *fettling* (n. cleaning, 147); *brass* (n. money, 171); *owt* (pron. anything, 268); *fair* as in *fair clemmed* (adv. quite, 25). The first six of these lexical items are evident in Elizabeth Gaskell's and Dickens's representation of Northern speech in *Mary Barton*, *North and South*, *Hard Times* and *Nicholas Nickleby*. The archaic forms *ay* and *nay* are used for *yes* and *no* respectively (164, 54), and these are also found in the nineteenth-century novels named above, as are the archaic personal pronouns which Spring includes in his representation of Northern dialects: *thee*, *thi*, *tha* (you, 76, 97, 56); *thisen* (yourself, 227); *thine* (yours, 30); and *yersens* (yourselves, 13).

In terms of grammar, there are constructions such as double negatives which are commonly found in real-life and literary dialect, for example, 'E don't sleep in no bloody coffin' (371). Also *as* is used as a relative pronoun, for example, 'Them as haven't got enough' (54); and the pronoun *them* is used as a deictic determiner, for example, 'down in them low parts' (82). The main grammatical feature which is particular to Northern dialects and is evident in both Gaskell's and Dickens's novels is definite article reduction. Interestingly, the way in which Spring represents this changes: initially the definite article is omitted entirely, for example, 'Hark at wind[...]go and get sausages from kitchen' (25); thereafter, it is rendered using the grapheme *t* and an apostrophe, for example, 'Tha'll not lay t'fire' (56). It seems that Spring changed his mind, during the writing process, about how to represent this feature. In an interview, Spring said, 'Situations, characters -- they all come to me as I go along';⁹⁸ this being the case, it is no surprise that there exists this minor inconsistency. A number of archaic verb forms are used along with the archaic pronouns, for example 'thou art' (284), and 'What dosta say' (232). Other nonstandard verb forms are 'we've 'eared it all' (232), 'E don't sleep' (371) and 'Honest to God, 'e do' (371). There is also the form *nobbut* or *no but* (nothing but) as seen in 'It's no but a curio'(191) and 'He's nobbut talkin' about food' (232).

⁹⁸ John Summers in an interview with Howard Spring, published in *The Sun* on 20th February 1965 as 'The chewed-up pen that made Mr Spring a packet' <www.john-summers.net/spring.html> [6th April 2016].

Similarly, the representation of pronunciation contains forms which are evident in all colloquial speech but also a number of specifically Northern features. The first of the general marked forms is the use of h-dropping as in 'ere (132), 'is (132), 'orse (136), 'ave (137). There are other examples of elision: initial, such as 'em (them, 14); medial, such as p'raps (perhaps, 67); and final such as o' (of, 13), an' (and, 13), swep' (swept, 56), wi' (with, 76) and talkin' (talking, 232). There is a clear attempt to represent the Northern vowel sounds in the pronunciation of Ah (I, 65), coom (come, 76), theer (there, 97), wheer (where, 97), reight (right, 101), tak (take, 153), rahnd (round, 232), ababt (about, 232), watter (water, 233), dabn (down, 233) and neet (night, 302). Again, some of these forms are seen in the novels of Dickens and Elizabeth Gaskell, as I note above. Most significantly, Spring's representation of Northern vowel sounds follows the conventions seen in the work of the earlier writers, where there is both a doubling of vowels and consonants to reflect the Northern pronunciation, for example in neight, heerd and brokeken (*Nicholas Nickleby* 476, 154 and 110 respectively).⁹⁹ Thus Spring is following a tradition of literary dialect writing in his careful attempt to render specifically Northern pronunciation. Such detail is not generally seen when writers are representing nonstandard London, or Cockney speech, as I show in relation to Gissing above. Perhaps, there is an assumption, especially in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, before the widespread influence of television and other media, that readers will not necessarily be familiar with Northern pronunciation.

What is strange, given that Spring generally follows the conventions for representing Northern speech seen in the novels of Gaskell and Dickens, is that he is critical of the literary dialect of the latter. He refers to the speech of Stephen Blackpool in *Hard Times* as 'that tortuous incredible language which Dickens supposed to be Lancashire dialect'.¹⁰⁰ The example he gives is of Stephen saying 'See the numbers o' people as has been broughten into bein heer, fur to weave, en to card'. The only one of these nonstandard forms not evident in *Fame is the Spur* is the *-en* verb ending (*fur* being comparable to Spring's *yer* and *en* with *an*, both on page 13). It is difficult, therefore, to see why Spring objects to this representation of dialect. It could be the density of marked forms which he finds 'tortuous', a style which gives the reader too much work to do. Perhaps, as one who lived and worked for many years in the North, Spring feels his knowledge of the region's dialect is greater than that of his predecessor. He certainly feels an affinity with Manchester, stating that, despite being a Welshman, he is proud to be considered a Manchester man 'in all that matters -- love and...understanding'.¹⁰¹ He adds that when he has one of his characters in another novel (Nick Faunt in *Shabby*

⁹⁹ London: Wordsworth Classics edition, 2000.

¹⁰⁰ *The Autobiography of Howard Spring, foreword by A.L. Rowse* (London: Collins, 1972), p.171.

¹⁰¹ *Autobiography*, p.129.

Tiger) say, 'By God, Anna, it's a grand town to come back to. I could poison anyone who runs Manchester down', that character is speaking for him.¹⁰² Such fierce loyalty to Manchester may have led Spring to become over-critical of another's, especially an outsider's, representation of its dialect, regardless of the fact that Spring's own literary dialect is very similar to that being criticised. He is otherwise very complimentary about Dickens's work.

iii. The Function of Spring's Literary Dialect

Looking at the function of the literary dialect within the novel, I argue, firstly, that it serves to differentiate between the educated and the uneducated working-class characters. I also look at how the speech of individual figures alters depending on their interlocutor and the context in which they find themselves and how these changes are signalled for the reader by the author-narrator's metalinguistic comments. My next line of argument is that characters converge with working-class figures in order to demonstrate solidarity and a common purpose, and that they diverge from the protagonist, Hamer Shawcross, when they feel that he has turned his back on his early principles.

The first important point to make is that Hamer Shawcross, brought up in a working-class area of Manchester, speaks nothing other than Standard English throughout the novel, except when he quotes a Yorkshire saying during his first public speech (268). This use of Standard English marks Shawcross as special within the community. This is a point which is frequently made as we see his step-father struggle so that Hamer does not have to work in the factories; he then creates a study for his step-son in order that he has a quiet place in which to read. Indeed, Hamer Shawcross is presented as a prolific reader: as a child he is taken to Mr Suddaby's second-hand book shop with regularity and he later works there, having ample opportunity to study an enormous range of publications. He is academically gifted: 'He was far ahead of anyone in his class' (53); and all those who meet him recognise his gifts and the enormous potential he has.

Shawcross is illegitimate and has no idea who his father was. More significantly, his father was a member of the aristocracy, a young man who raped his mother, whilst she was in service at a great house, and then died in a riding accident the next day (78). Perhaps Spring intends the reader to think that the aristocratic genes within Shawcross are the ones which have given him the academic gifts which set him apart from others in the community. Certainly, the character has mixed feelings about the aristocracy: when he first sees Hereward House, the Yorkshire home of Lord Lostwithiel, he both admires the grandeur of the building and is angered by the fact that the Lostwithiels

¹⁰² *Autobiography*, p. 203.

enjoy life there while others nearby struggle to earn enough money to survive (279). That the protagonist ends his days as Viscount Shawcross, one of the first Labour peers, could be viewed as his returning to the class to which he has always, to some extent, belonged.

Here, a comparison may be drawn with Dickens's *Oliver Twist*; and Spring could be seen to be elevating Shawcross's speech as a symbol of his parentage (although there are other Standard English speakers in the Ancoats community). Yet Hamer Shawcross differs from *Oliver Twist*: as one born into the middle class, Oliver is restored to his rightful position, which appeals to a Victorian sense of class and one's proper station in life; Shawcross, on the other hand, was born into poverty and rises through the social ranks by virtue of his intelligence, knowledge and hard work. Spring's message is one of social mobility, shown when one of the characters describes it as 'bloody miracle' that 'Hamer Shawcross, of Broadbent Street' in Ancoats becomes a member of the Cabinet (523). In this he somewhat resembles Frances Trollope and the progress she allows Michael Armstrong to make, although Trollope feels the need to remove her protagonist from Britain to allow him to achieve middle-class status. There is also social mobility in some of Dickens's novels: for example, in *Bleak House*, Esther Summerson, the illegitimate daughter of Lady Dedlock (when she was Miss Barbary) achieves a respectable lower-middle class life as the wife of Dr Allan Woodcourt. However, this success pales in comparison to the rise of Hamer Shawcross. Given that Spring was writing in 1939, his readers may have been able to accept such social mobility in a way that a Victorian readership would not. Also, the existence of the Labour Party in the twentieth century provides a key vehicle for Shawcross's rise to the aristocracy.

There is a metalinguistic comment by one of the characters, Lizzie Lightowler, who comments on Hamer's speech when she first meets him: ' " Why! I thought you were a boy -- something about fourteen, with short trousers and a Lancashire accent" ' (263). In response to this 'He looked hurt' and replies 'with arrogance', ' "I, too, used to come to conclusions without evidence[...]And if I have a Lancashire accent, I impart it to four languages in addition to my own" '. It is not wholly clear which part of Lizzie's expectation 'hurt' Hamer, or indeed whether all of it did, but given that the only point he responds to directly is the one about his accent, it would seem that the idea of his speech sounding regional offends him. However, at the same time, the conditional 'if I have a Lancashire accent' is Spring's way of avoiding a complete separation from the community in which he grew up on the part of his protagonist. Also, there is the suggestion that by the time the novel was written, if not at the time in which this meeting is set, there were other ways of attaining social prestige besides accent, namely the ability to speak different languages. This idea would complement that discussed above: the

notion that low-born people may achieve a higher social ranking as a result of hard work and education.

There are other working-class Manchester characters whose speech is largely Standard English with the addition of an occasional regional form. These characters such as Birley Artingstall, the uncle of Hamer's wife, Gordon Stansfield, Hamer's step-father and Mr Suddaby, the owner of the book shop, are all men who read widely. They form a contrast with Birley's boorish brother, Hawley Artingstall, who has the most marked speech of any character in the novel. Hawley, Hamer's father-in-law, is a local man made good: 'He made money and married money' (65), having started his business with one small draper's shop and then acquired a number of shops and a large home in the suburbs. There is a metalinguistic comment from the author-narrator about Hawley's speech which is then exemplified for the reader: 'He had never succeeded, as Birley had, in overcoming his Lancashire speech, and as he had not been able to cure it, he intensified it, and carried it off as a matter of pride. "Nay, Ah'm jannock. What Ah says Ah means. Ah'm not soft in t'speech or in t'brain, like some"' (65). The metalinguistic comment reveals a view of the Lancashire dialect as something to be 'overcome', 'cured' even, as though it were a hindrance to a person's success and well-being, and although Hawley is wealthy and successful, by the end of the novel he is a lonely figure who has lost his family and his business. Viewing Lancashire speech as some kind of affliction could be seen as part of a focalised narrative which expresses Hawley Artingstall's thoughts. However, such descriptions of nonstandard speech are repeated throughout the novel, as I note below; therefore it would seem that these are the opinions of the author-narrator.

That Hawley Artingstall intensifies his Lancashire speech may be symbolic of his insularity, especially in comparison with the characters named above who read and take an interest in the world at large, as Hawley is only interested in his business, his home and his own comfort. One of the most extended passages of nonstandard speech from Hawley comes when he reprimands his daughter Ann, Hamer's future wife, for having spent time in the working-class area of Manchester and in particular in the company of Arnold Ryerson: "' you'll know the people that Ah want you to do. T'classes don't mix. There's rich an' poor, an' they'd better keep apart[...]you'll apologise for all the sorrow you've caused me and thi mother"' (99). Hawley sees class as a matter of wealth alone, and, whilst this may reflect changing attitudes as to what constitutes social class, the irony here is that he himself is working class. The literary dialect functions as a reminder of this and the fact that the 'poor' Arnold Ryerson to whom Hawley refers is presented, on the whole, as a Standard English speaker. Ann Artingstall, also a Standard English speaker, has much more in common with Arnold Ryerson than she does with her father.

Not all nonstandard speakers are presented as dislikeable beings. Edith Ryerson, the widowed mother of Hamer's friend Arnold, is depicted with affection and admiration. Having been born before the age of compulsory education and never having had the opportunity to educate herself, Mrs Ryerson is illiterate. Her life is one of hard physical labour by which she just about manages to keep her children housed, fed and clothed. There is an extended passage in which Spring details her working day, during which she completes a number of low-paid cleaning and laundry jobs, showing her resilience and strength in the face of adversity:

She had to make do with tepid water, and by the time she was ready to tackle the floor, darkness was coming on. "Tackle" was her word: a favourite word suggestive of her attitude to her work: something to be rather aggressively fallen upon and downed[...]there moved, too, the occasional shadow of a passer-by, giving the sense that she was working within a prison of impalpable bars. But such thoughts never entered her mind, which was entirely concrete. (87)

The metalinguistic comment here differs from that made on Hawley Artingstall's speech: it is used to present Mrs Ryerson's strength of spirit; and the fact that Spring uses Mrs Ryerson's word 'tackle' within the narrative suggests his approval of this character. Incidentally, Spring's presentation of Mrs Ryerson here, mirrors the way in which he writes about his mother in his autobiography (35) and may account for the affection he feels for this character. In his autobiography, Spring also refers fondly to the Derbyshire dialectal phrase 'They're all in good gets'(331) used to refer to people who are financially comfortable, calling it 'lovely'. There is similar praise for the Lancashire term 'stay-bit', a snack to keep away hunger between proper meals, in a metalinguistic comment in Spring's novel *Hard Facts*.¹⁰³ Theo Chrystal, a young, Cambridge-educated clergyman has arrived for the first time in urban Manchester to take up a new post and has just met his housekeeper, a local woman who speaks the regional dialect and uses the above term. Theo thinks it 'a rich expressive word, and a rich notion'. Such attitudes seem at odds with the view of Manchester speech as something to be 'cured'. Perhaps Spring views regional dialects as something which may hinder those who seek social and professional advancement such as Hamer Shawcross or Hawley Artingstall, but perfectly acceptable for those who remain in the working class. It could also be that he finds rural dialects more acceptable than urban ones. The nineteenth century saw a growth of academic interest in rural dialects and the foundation of societies which sought to preserve these dialects as part of rural culture in the face of industrialisation and urbanisation;¹⁰⁴ Spring may have an affection for the

¹⁰³ London: Collins edition, 1944, p.11.

¹⁰⁴ William Matthews, *Cockney Past and Present* (London: George Routledge and Sons 1938), Preface.

Derbyshire dialect phrase as a link to an older way of life, one which he is glad to see is still in evidence.

There is also a touching portrait of Edith Ryerson and Hamer's mother Ellen Stansfield, now widowed, spending their evenings enjoying Dickens's novels:

Mrs Ryerson could not read, and Ellen was no great shakes at it[...].as Ellen Stansfield read [aloud], Edith Ryerson would do the mending for both[...].There was nothing to be said about the tale that was ended. They loved it; they accepted it; it would stay with them always. They looked at one another with faint smiles, not speaking, but content-content with their simple lives and with one another[...]. "Ah'm glad we stayed up an' finished t'book, Ellen."
(301-3)

The final sentence above presents Mrs Ryerson as one whose style of speech is distinctly Northern and comparable with that of Hawley Artingstall. Yet she is a very different character. She and Ellen Stansfield have much more highly developed sensibilities than those of Hawley Artingstall: they are able to appreciate literature and take pleasure in one another's company and shared experiences. This scene also illustrates the point that Dickens was popular and widely read at the time, even by semi-literate working people. As mentioned above, Spring and his mother read Dickens together as his mother's only form of relaxation and here, he has the two widows do likewise. It is because of this popularity of Dickens that Spring has Hamer create a Dickensian childhood for himself safe in the knowledge that what he says will resonate with his audience. The nascent Labour Party gives a voice to the downtrodden masses, the people Dickens wished to help, something Hamer Shawcross can capitalise on to further his own career.

Like Shawcross, Tom Hannaway is not a speaker of the local dialect, but, in later life 'cultivated, as carefully as others sought to eradicate it, a northern accent which he had never possessed in youth' (191). There are several reasons why the character is presented as deliberately changing his speech. Firstly, he does so to try to win the confidence of the Bradford electorate when he campaigns for Lord Lostwithiel and against Shawcross. Here Hannaway accuses Shawcross of turning his back on his people, leaving his own mother ' "slaving at t'wash tub, and...doing nowt to help her" ' (296). The form of the speech complements its content as Hannaway makes the point that he, unlike Shawcross, is still living among the people with whom he grew up; he shares their values and culture and wishes to help them. This use of dialect for political gain is similar to the way in which Hannaway uses nonstandard English to speak to Shawcross when the two meet later in life: ' " Oliday! When did I last take an 'oliday?" ' (497). It seems that even during personal conversations, Hannaway enjoys reminding Shawcross of their shared past as a way of criticising Shawcross's present way of life. At the same time, though, Hannaway, seems to have a genuine fondness for the past and may use the dialect in order to maintain a connection with his youth after he has become a highly

successful businessman. Despite his political speech, referred to above, he also remains loyal to his friends from the Ancoats days: it is discovered that he has been helping the career of Shawcross's son Charles, doing so quietly and unacknowledged. When Hamer discovers the truth and thanks him, Hannaway replies: ‘“I don't forget things, you know, Shawcross. The old lettuces, eh? There's a lot between us two”’ (600). It is worth noting that his speech becomes more standard, which is his natural variety, as he is being serious and discussing a personal issue. The fact that Hannaway marries at eighteen and remains a faithful and devoted husband could also be seen to symbolise his loyalty to the area in which he grew up.

At the time when Dickens was writing, there was no Labour Party and therefore there was not the same need, as there was after the rise of the party, for politicians to be seen to be of the people they represent. The idea of code-switching, choosing a less prestigious regional dialect for political gain is not evident in Dickens's *Barnaby Rudge*. Both Lord George Gordon and his fictional secretary Mr Gashford,¹⁰⁵ who is presented as the true instigator of the riots, address their uneducated, working-class supporters in Standard English.¹⁰⁶ There are, however, characters in Dickens's oeuvre who can be seen to code-switch: for example *Bleak House's* Inspector Bucket converges with the Bagnet family when attending Mrs Bagnet's birthday party, and then immediately becomes more standard in his speech when he assumes his professional role and arrests Trooper George (Chapter 49). Here, it is the standard variety which is employed to signal that Bucket has returned to his public duty, unlike in Spring's novel where Tom Hannaway uses Lancashire dialect when in public: Bucket is widening the distance between himself as a police officer and his suspect, whereas Hannaway, even as a Conservative politician, seeks to narrow the distance between himself and the electorate. Frances Trollope also has her character Joseph Parsons code-switch, as I discuss above. At one point he adopts more marked linguistic forms for personal gain, to ingratiate himself with his employer by suggesting his inferiority. This, however is a different use of literary dialect from that in the characterisation of Tom Hannaway: although both Hannaway and Parsons seek to gain from the use of dialect, Parsons is thoroughly corrupt whereas Hannaway is presented as making a valid point in his criticism of Shawcross.

Like Tom Hannaway, Pen Ryerson, the wife of Hamer's friend Arnold, uses nonstandard English when she is making clear her displeasure with Hamer's political decisions, but, unlike Tom Hannaway who speaks publicly and has no personal hard

¹⁰⁵ Gashford is based loosely on the Scottish adventurer Robert Watson. Sol Eytinge, 'Literature, History and Culture in the Age of Victoria', *Victorian Web* <<http://www.victorianweb.org/art/illustration/eytinge/114.html>> [13th July 2016].

¹⁰⁶ Chapters 49 and 37 respectively.

feelings toward Hamer, Pen has a very keen sense of betrayal: ‘ “This is a nice room you’ve got here, a grand room for a Labour leader. The firelight’s fine and romantic. How would tha like it,” she demanded, falling in her excitement into the dialect, “if tha had to go down into t’pit and crawl on thi belly” ’ (380). As previously, the character’s speech is presented as becoming more nonstandard the more emotional she becomes, but here, significantly, this is used as a direct attack upon Hamer, the form of the speech emphasising the contrast between Hamer’s comfortable home and the hardships of the miners whose work helps to keep him in such comfort. This criticism of Shawcross gains weight when Spring uses Keir Hardie, a real-life person, in much the same way as he uses Pen Ryerson above. Hardie, a Scotsman, is given a very brief speaking part and is presented as speaking Standard English; yet he addresses Hamer in Scots dialect:

Keir Hardie stood on the threshold. He was wearing his customary tweeds and rough woolled shirt. He looked Hamer up and down, his shrewd eye taking in the silk dressing-gown, the cared-for hands, the gleaming brushed-back wing of hair. “Ye’re looking bonny lad,” he said dryly. “The auld leddie up at Baidon would have been proud of you.” (451)

Again the style of speech highlights the contrast between Hamer and the Labour Party, this time, not just the workers themselves but other Labour politicians. Hardie’s attire forms a stark contrast with that of Hamer, and the fact that Hardie was a real historical figure adds credence to the criticism of the protagonist. The literary dialect here is different from that used for the other characters as it is a national and not a regional dialect and so is related to broader issues such as national identity and independence. Yet it is also comparable to the Yorkshire and Lancashire dialect used throughout the novel as it serves to present Hardie as a man who has not forgotten his roots, something crucial in a Labour politician.

The most significant use of literary dialect to criticise Hamer and present him as having forgotten the people he set out to help is in the speech of Arnold Ryerson. Hamer and Arnold are close friends in childhood and early adulthood, but their lives, work and beliefs start to diverge once Shawcross becomes a career politician and Arnold becomes a union representative for the miners of South Wales. In middle age, the two share a rare moment of closeness when Hamer visits and spends the night at Arnold’s home. There is a thunderstorm during the night and, remembering from childhood that Hamer has a fear of lightning, Arnold goes to the bedroom where he is sleeping to check that all is well:

[Hamer] felt about twelve years old, and in Arnold all the protective and comforting influence that had been about his childhood was suddenly incarnate.

“Are you alright lad?” Arnold asked. “I remembered you didn’t like lightning.”

“Ay,” said Hamer, dropping into the easy tone, “I’m all right, but thanks for coming.” (474)

Whilst the speech here is not especially marked, the ‘easy tone’ signalled by the use of ‘lad’ and ‘ay’ represent a return to the Ancoats days and to childhood companionship and shared understanding for the two men, somewhat ironically so as neither of them is represented as a nonstandard speaker in childhood. It is as though, having come so far from Ancoats and their childhood, they both feel the need to use the style of speech typically associated with the area to re-establish their friendship. After this touching scene, the one in which Arnold breaks with Hamer, when, in the 1930s, he learns that he advocates the creation of a National Government, has a greater impact on the reader:

“Pen were all reight. They starved her an’ drowned her an’ blinded her, but she were Pen all t’time. They couldn’t take an inch off the height of her. And, with apologies to you, lad, when it comes to a question like this, Ah’d rather follow Pen than follow thee. An’ Ah know what road Pen’d take now. So that’s my road too.”

He held out his large, fleshy, blunt-nailed hand, the hand that had knocked together Hamer’s first bookcases, that had rummaged with his for twopenny bargains in Suddaby’s basement. “So Ah reckon it’s good-bye, lad.” (579)

This is Arnold at his most nonstandard. As in previous examples, the dialect is used to symbolise Arnold’s loyalty to Labour principles and Labour supporters in the face of Hamer’s apparent rejection of both. Also, the fact that Arnold’s speech is at its most nonstandard when he refers to his late wife, who also used to berate Hamer in nonstandard English, complements the content of his utterance: in what is possibly a ‘stylised performance’,¹⁰⁷ he is siding with Pen and her principles and rejecting Hamer and his.

Thus Spring uses literary dialect to signal a moral and political steadfastness which forms a contrast with the way in which the protagonist leads his life. However, Hamer Shawcross is a complex character and Spring takes care not to present him as a villain: it can be argued that many of his political decisions, including the one to support a National Government, come from an extraordinary intelligence and real-world pragmatism which the other characters do not share. Thus whilst Spring shows admiration for the high principles of characters such as Arnold and Pen Ryerson, he simultaneously acknowledges that political success is at least partly dependent on an individual’s ability to change and develop, even if that means compromising on old values. Also, personal relationships become increasingly important to Shawcross. In later years, a widower himself, he forms a strong bond with his son’s widow, who is also the Ryersons’ daughter. Furthermore, he is troubled, when he learns that Arnold is unwell (617-18), seeing Arnold as his final link with the past. He spends more and more time thinking about the past and the people of the past; his return from London to Baildon and his practice of sleeping in ‘the hut’ where he both planned his first political

¹⁰⁷ Nikolas Coupland, *Style* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 179.

campaign and spent his wedding night represents his desire to return to a simpler time when he had great aspirations and solid personal relationships. As the novel ends, he is presented as one disillusioned with politics who views his career, despite his unparalleled success, as 'a failure' (637). It is the beginning of World War Two, something Shawcross sees as the failure of politics on an international scale. What hope he has for the future is symbolised by his one-year-old grandson and his final thought, as the novel closes, is of his late wife. Thus *Spring* suggests that political careers and political success, no matter how extraordinary, are temporary; what is most important to human life and happiness is continued personal relationships.

On the one hand, the fact that *Spring* has a number of working-class Manchester and Bradford figures speak Standard English could be seen as following the nineteenth century convention of elevating the speech of key characters. However, he then departs from this convention in his decision to make Standard English speakers become nonstandard in order to highlight Hamer Shawcross's apparent betrayal of the party he helped to create. Those who criticise Shawcross may not have his acute intelligence and pragmatism, but their loyalty to their principles, emphasised by the use of literary dialect, gives them a certain nobility which Shawcross lacks. Also, *Spring* has politicians using dialect in preference to Standard English as a means of establishing their credentials as men of the people, something particularly important within a Labour Party which was created to serve the working people. At such times, the dialect is part of a performance, although all those who adapt their speech in this way are those who grew up in working-class areas, Tom Hannaway being the most notable example in this case. The use of literary dialect can be seen as fundamental to the novel's revisionist agenda in two ways: firstly, it forms part of the presentation of an alternative view of Shawcross; secondly, it helps to remind the 1940 (and subsequent) readership that the Labour Party was formed by working people for the benefit of working people.

6. Conclusions

In this section, my discussion of three works supports the argument of this thesis: a post-authenticity approach should consider the ways in which literary dialect functions within the novel's realism, the way in which meaning is generated through a dialogue between writer, reader and the broader cultural context. Taking this approach reveals that novelists use dialect representation in complex and nuanced ways to manipulate the reader's response to characters. Trollope, Gissing and *Spring* can each be seen, to varying degrees, to draw on convention in their representation of nonstandard speech, using forms which are found in Dickens; yet the purposes for which they use literary dialect differ. Trollope's literary dialect is relatively sparse because there was a lack of

previously published material for her to draw on, not least because she intends a sympathetic portrayal of factory workers whose voices, like that of Robert Blincoe, had not been represented. Where nonstandard speech had been used, it formed part of the characterisation of morally corrupt, unintelligent or ridiculous figures, as in Gaskell's *Plebeians and Patricians*. Trollope distances herself from such portrayals, resisting the use of heavily marked dialect in the speech of her working-class characters in order to manage her readers' response to them. Also, unlike Gissing and Spring, she was largely unfamiliar with the form of nonstandard speech she includes in her text. Yet the way in which she handles nonstandard English plays a significant role in delivering the novel's radical view of what may be achieved by poor mill workers. Gissing's literary dialect is more fully developed than that of Trollope as he is able to draw on Dickens's representation of Cockney speech. He does, however, adapt the forms used by Dickens partly, perhaps, because of his own familiarity with late-Victorian Cockney speech and partly because some of the conventions of dialect representation, such as *w/v* transposition, had become obsolete by the time he was writing. Gissing's novel continues the on-going discussion of the link between dialect and morality, showing the complexities and difficulties involved in forging such a link, especially in his presentation of Carrie Mitchell. Spring's representation of Northern speech forms an effective contrast with that of Trollope in terms of its being much more marked. Writing one hundred years later than Trollope, he is able to draw on the canonical works of the nineteenth century in which Northern factory workers have their speech represented, and he uses literary dialect to signal the integrity of the working-class people who founded the Labour Party. In doing so, he can be seen to form a contrast with Gissing: the earlier writer elevates the speech of those he wishes to present as unequivocally moral; whereas Spring has his Standard-speaking characters code switch to the regional form to signal their integrity. The works of Gaskell, and Dickens's *Hard Times* had paved the way for Spring to be able to have admirable Northern dialect speaking characters. Together, these novels by Trollope, Gissing and Spring act as snapshots of literary dialect in lesser-known works across a one hundred year period, illuminating some of the developments in its form and the ways in which it is employed.

The case studies show that whilst the form of the literary dialect can be seen to have developed, and the subject matter has altered in line with socio-political change, attitudes towards language, as encoded by the writers, remain relatively conservative. All link Standard English speech with education, even though Trollope and Spring take a much more sympathetic view of dialect speakers, whom Gissing dislikes and considers immoral. I develop this idea in the next section, in which I consider neo-Victorian novels, studying the ways in which they are engaged in a dialogue with earlier texts in

terms of their subject matter and representation of speech, particularly the ways in which they reveal conservative attitudes towards language use.

Section Two

New Historicism and Neo-Victorianism

1. Introduction

At the end of the previous section, I argued that literary dialect, throughout and beyond the Victorian period, communicates conservative attitudes to language use, namely the linking of Standard English usage with a higher level of education in the speaker. In this section, I develop this idea by considering the use of literary dialect in neo-Victorian novels. Writers of these novels borrow conventions from the past and reformulate them for a modern readership, and I explore the link between neo-Victorian novels and the Victorian texts that they borrow from. I show that, although the subject matter of these novels has changed in line with the expectations of a modern readership, dialect representation is generally conservative, both in form and in the way it is used to characterise. We might expect that modern novels, even ones set in the past, take a different view of nonstandard language, a more accepting one, than their predecessors, but this does not seem to be the case. This leads to a consideration of reader response to dialect, which I develop in the following section.

Howard Spring's *Fame is the Spur* (1940), which I discussed in the previous section, can be seen as a proto-neo-Victorian text, a historical novel but one whose writer and original readership are likely to have had a living memory of the Victorian era. In particular, its concern with re-writing the 'biography' of the fictional Hamer Shawcross, can be seen as a forerunner to the neo-Victorian concern with presenting alternative views of the era, a form which became increasingly popular in the late twentieth century. Also, published in 1940, it marks an approximate half-way point between the end of the Victorian era and the late-twentieth century, when neo-Victorianism became established. I examine critical views of the development of the neo-Victorian genre and its relationship with the past, which I apply to each of the three novels I analyse in the case studies: Sarah Waters's *Fingersmith* (2002), Michel Faber's *The Crimson Petal and the White* (2002), and Lynn Shepherd's *Tom All-Along's* (2012). I develop these critical views by looking in more detail at how the above novels adapt an earlier text to write an additional or alternative narrative, a 'counterhistory'. This discussion acts as a preparation for an analysis of the ways in which literary dialect contributes to the neo-Victorian concern with re-reading and re-writing the past.

In the introduction to *Victorian Afterlife: Postmodern Culture Rewrites the Nineteenth Century*,¹⁰⁸ John Kucich and Dianne F. Sadoff argue that a variety of factors have

¹⁰⁸ Kucich, John and Dianne F. Sadoff, *Victorian Afterlife: Postmodern Culture Rewrites the Nineteenth Century* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

contributed to the recent interest in the Victorian era: cultural studies; a nostalgic interest in nineteenth century narrative; the rise of women; and new historicism (xxv-vi). Therefore, I begin this chapter with a discussion of new historicism in order to establish the link between this school of literary criticism and the neo-Victorian genre.

2. New Historicism

In Section One, I refer to Furst's *All Is Real*¹⁰⁹ as a significant development within the field of realist literary criticism; and although Furst does not refer directly to new historicism, she discusses ideas which are relevant to that particular school of thought. In Chapter Four of her book, she considers the use of historical detail in fictional narratives, arguing that historical narratives and fictional narratives are not mutually exclusive. She argues that, in a similar way to how the narrative voice creates a bridge between the readers' world and the fictional world and gives credibility to the narrative, 'The interweaving of historical allusions into the texture of the fiction invites readers to pretend to believe in the truthfulness of the narrative' (93). Thus the reader's acceptance of the realism on offer in neo-Victorian novels is gained through the interplay between the fictional narrative and the inclusion of contextual details from the 'real' Victorian era. This can be seen in *Fame is the Spur* as Spring includes real historical figures as characters in his story.

Fame is the Spur should, however, be differentiated from the neo-Victorian novels which I discuss later in this section, not just because it was written approximately fifty years earlier than they were, but because it employs historical information and details from nineteenth-century novels somewhat differently. In her work on historiographic metafiction, Linda Hutcheon, like Furst, argues that historical fiction incorporates historical information 'in order to lend a feeling of 'verifiability' to the fictional world'.¹¹⁰ This is what Spring does in *Fame is the Spur* and is not the same as historiographic metafiction which, as defined by Hutcheon, 'acknowledges the paradox of the *reality of the past but its textualised accessibility to us today*' (original italics) (114). It is this paradox which is often approached playfully by neo-Victorian writers as they draw on nineteenth-century fiction to shape their own narratives. Not only are Victorian characters and plot details adapted by neo-Victorian writers, but novelists such as Dickens and Collins, and writers of non-fiction such as Mayhew, are featured as characters in the narrative. This is often handled in a game-like way, as the reader is

¹⁰⁹ Lilian R. Furst, *All is True: The Claims and Strategies of Realist Fiction* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995).

¹¹⁰ Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), p.114.

given the challenge of identifying each reference, as I detail in the following discussion of Sarah Waters's, Michel Faber's and Lynn Shepherd's work. Despite this difference, new historicist criticism, which developed decades after the publication of Spring's novel, can illuminate readings of both historical fiction and neo-Victorian historiographic metafiction in its consideration of the way in which literary texts are informed by material in other publications.

New historicism is an approach to literary studies which places greater emphasis on the contexts in which texts are both written and read as having a bearing on their meaning. Writers are influenced by the dominant culture, ideas, knowledge and other significant publications when they create their novels. Even if a work is not directly referenced in another, it may well have had an influence on the writer. Likewise, readers are influenced by the dominant culture of their time, which may be at a significant temporal difference from that of the writer. Their knowledge and preconceptions affect the interpretative process of reading.

American scholars Stephen Greenblatt and Catherine Gallagher, who might be considered the pioneers of the field state that their new historicism grew from 'an impatience with American New Criticism, an unsettling of established norms and procedures, a mingling of dissent and restless curiosity'; however they do not attempt to define the practice as a whole, stating that the new historicist label has been attached to 'an extraordinary assortment of cultural practices', many of which 'bear little resemblance' to their own.¹¹¹ Instead, their book details their own principles and then applies these to the analysis of different texts. Approaching the subject from the viewpoint of a historian rather than a literary critic, Dwight W. Hoover offers the following explanation: 'The New Historicism argues that there is no universal meaning or truth in history and that the meaning imputed to history reflects power relations at the time of writing as well as the time of the events' occurrence'.¹¹² Whilst this explanation refers to the study of history, it can, and has been developed to include the analysis of literary texts as both products of 'power relations at the time of writing' and the means by which accepted power relations are promoted, something I will return to below.

Michel Foucault was a French philosopher who had a wide range of interests, but for my purposes his theories of history and knowledge are the most significant. Foucault challenged the earlier notion that there is a single, unproblematic view of history which is presented to the reader by the historian. Instead, history is something which is

¹¹¹ Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), p.2.

¹¹² Dwight W. Hoover, 'The New Historicism', *The History Teacher*, 25.3 (May 1992), 355-366 (pp.356).

constructed by the historian: it is subject to the historian's own views and the 'historically specific epistemic conditions of possibility'.¹¹³ In other words, historical texts are interpreted differently by different people at different times depending on the knowledge and values they have at that particular time. As a result, we are in a constant process of re-evaluating what we think we know about the past. Foucault added another dimension to this problematising of the notion of history: he rejected 'the concept of a generalized consciousness permeating and defining the thought of all the individuals within its time and space parameters', the notion that it is possible 'to capture the thought of a period'. He believed that there was no single system of values or beliefs in a given society at any point in history. Instead, he sought to find and explain regularities in the historical documents studied.¹¹⁴ For example, in the mid-nineteenth century, one person's or organisation's opinions of and actions toward London's poor may well have been vastly different from those of another; yet there can be found sufficient evidence to suggest that both were common, and to account for their presence. In *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, Thomas Flynn explains Foucault's notion of 'epistemic shifts', that is, alternative views which either challenge or complement accepted historical 'truth'.¹¹⁵ In a later publication, he argues that 'Foucault's ultimate service to the theory of history might well be forcing us to unlock and think otherwise our received concepts of truth, power, and the subject'.¹¹⁶

Arguments comparable to those of Foucault can be seen in the work of Marxist critics. Like Foucault, Marx did not develop a theory of literature as such, but later Marxist critics such as Raymond Williams and Terry Eagleton applied the work of Marx and Engels to literary studies, often challenging or modifying some of the tenets of their original theory. A Marxist view of history sees it as a class struggle, the competition for economic, social and political advantage, with one social class exploiting another.¹¹⁷ The underlying idea behind the Marxist model of society is that it is constituted of an economic base, which is the material means of production, and a superstructure, which is the art, ideas, religion and all things 'cultural' within that society. The belief is that the nature of the superstructure is determined by the base.¹¹⁸ Thus, as Rick Rylance neatly

¹¹³ Devereaux Kennedy, 'Michel Foucault: The Archaeology and Sociology of Knowledge', *Theory and Society*, 8.2 (September 1979), 269-90 (pp. 270).

¹¹⁴ Devereaux Kennedy, 'Michel Foucault: The Archaeology and Sociology of Knowledge', *Theory and Society*, 8.2 (September 1979), 269-90 (pp.287).

¹¹⁵ Thomas Flynn, 'Foucault's Mapping of History', in *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, ed. by Gary Cutting, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 29-48 (pp.34).

¹¹⁶ Thomas R. Flynn, *Sartre, Foucault, and Historical Reason, Volume Two: A Poststructuralist Mapping of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), p.307.

¹¹⁷ Peter Barry, *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*, 3rd edn (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), p.151.

¹¹⁸ Barry, p.151-2.

summarises: ‘any literary work is seen in relation to the literary culture of which it is a part; this, in turn, is seen as a part of a society’s overall culture (including both its art and its general ways of life); and the overall culture is seen as produced by the modes of economic and material production in that society’.¹¹⁹

Raymond Williams’s essay ‘Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory’ (1973)¹²⁰ develops this idea, challenging the notion that there is a straightforward relationship between the base and the superstructure, that the superstructure is a simple reflection of the reality of the base. Williams refers to the selective tradition, ‘the way in which from a whole possible area of past and present, certain meanings and practices are chosen for emphasis, certain other meanings and practices are neglected and excluded’ or ‘reinterpreted, diluted’. He argues that the educational institutions play a key role in this process of selection; and through this process of selection an effective dominant culture is established. As a result ‘the full range of human practice’ is not reflected in the dominant culture as this may not be in the interests of a rising class. The kinds of ‘human practices’ Williams suggests are excluded from the dominant mode are alternative perceptions of others, in immediate personal relationships, or new perceptions of material and media, in art and science. This position is broadly comparable to Foucault’s rejection of the idea of a single historical ‘truth’ and his belief that history is mediated by both the historian and the ‘epistemic conditions’ of the time. Both Williams and Foucault see the impossibility of a text being a reflection of what the whole of a society was like at a particular time and see selectivity, conscious or unconscious, as part of cultural practice.

Terry Eagleton develops the idea of selection in the presentation of human history and states that selection is part of a power struggle between different groups in society: ‘the unending ‘dialogue’ of human history is as often as not a monologue by the powerful to the powerless, or if it is indeed a ‘dialogue’ then the partners -- men and women, for example -- hardly occupy equal positions’.¹²¹ He adds that ‘discourse is always caught up with a power which may be by no means benign’. Here there is a clear link with Williams’s notion of the selective tradition and the way in which discourse supports and maintains the dominant culture. Eagleton’s views are also comparable to Foucault’s argument that our view of history is dictated by ‘historically specific epistemic conditions of possibility’: he states that ‘the past is always grasped from our own partial viewpoint within the present’ (71). We do not necessarily ascribe the same meanings to

¹¹⁹ Rick Rylance, ‘Literature and Society: Marxist Approaches’ in *Debating Texts: A Reader in Twentieth Century Literary Theory and Method*, ed. by Rick Rylance (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1987), 197-201 (pp. 198).

¹²⁰ In Rylance, pp. 204-216 [first published in *New Left Review*].

¹²¹ Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), p.73.

texts as an earlier generation would, or indeed a later generation might, as we are subject to the ideas, beliefs and knowledge of our own era.

The new historicist movement can be seen as having its roots in both the work of Foucault and the Marxist critics in its two fundamental ideas. Firstly, it sees literary texts not as existing in isolation but as part of the broader culture of a specific period, or to use Marxist terminology, as part of the superstructure which is, to some extent, determined by the economic reality of the base. This approach to literature is in opposition to that of the American school of New Critics which analysed literary texts independently of the culture and political and economic practices of the time in which they were written. Secondly, it takes the view that there is not one single, knowable 'truth' but rather a range of complementary or competing discourses. The latter is in direct contrast to 'Old Historicism' which regarded the cultural environment as 'an historical fact' instead of 'a creation of the historian'.¹²² It should be noted that new historicism is an area of literary studies rather than an approach to the study of history *per se*. Dwight W. Hoover makes the point that whilst most historians support 'moderate historicism', few 'have ever been pure historicists; few have argued that there are no universal standards of behaviour, else how could they have condemned the actions of Adolf Hitler?' (358)

The American Renaissance scholar Stephen Greenblatt is credited with being the first to use the term 'the New Historicism'¹²³ and he was the one to differentiate between 'new' and 'old' historicism as detailed above. Greenblatt and Gallagher echo Raymond Williams's idea of selection in their argument that 'Any individual culture, no matter how complex and elaborate, can express and experience only a narrow range of the options available to the human species as a whole' (5); however, their perspective is less overtly political, with a focus on what is possible (in their use of the modal 'can') rather than viewing selection as part of the power struggle within society. Indeed, they describe themselves as 'uncomfortable' with some of the key concepts of Marxist cultural theory and 'forced to transform the notion of ideology critique into discourse analysis' (9). They state that the new historicist project is concerned with 'finding the creative power that shapes literary works outside the narrow boundaries in which it had hitherto been located, as well as within those boundaries', arguing that 'the writers we love did not spring up from nowhere and that their achievements must draw upon a whole life-world and that this life-world has undoubtedly left other traces of itself' (12-13). Practising new historicism, therefore, involves the analysis of these 'other traces' of the life-world which 'expands the range of objects available to be read and interpreted' (9). Peter Barry

¹²² Dwight W. Hoover, 'The New Historicism', *The History Teacher*, 25.3 (May 1992), 355-366 (pp.356).

¹²³ By both Hoover (pp. 359) and Barry (p. 166).

sums up the practice effectively when he states that new historicism 'is a method based on the parallel reading of literary and non-literary texts, usually of the same historical period' so that they can 'inform and interrogate each other' (166). Like Foucault, Greenblatt and Gallagher are aware that interpretation is dependent on the 'epistemic conditions of possibility'; what is greatly attractive to them is that they 'seek something more, something that the authors we study would not have had sufficient distance upon themselves and their own era to grasp' (8). Their knowledge and different perspective, along with their analysis of a broader range of discourse allows them to read different meanings in literary texts compared with both those of the writer and the original readership.

Greenblatt and Gallagher are also interested in 'counterhistories', the narratives 'that make apparent the slippages, cracks, fault lines, and surprising absences in the monumental structures that dominated a more traditional historicism' (17). In this they both resemble Foucault, in their belief that history has more than one voice, and adopt a position which can be seen as derived from Marxist literary theory in their desire to bring to the fore narratives of or by the less powerful which were neglected by the selection process of the dominant culture. 'Counterhistory opposes itself not only to dominant narratives, but also to prevailing modes of historical thought and methods of research' (52). Indeed they draw a parallel between Williams's work and their own interest in 'counterhistory' (60) and refer to Foucault as a 'counterhistorian' (66). Peter Barry argues that new historicism accepts the view that 'everything about the past is only available to us in textualised form', that 'Whatever is represented in a text is thereby remade' and that 'New historicist essays always themselves constitute another remaking, another permutation of the past' (169). Thus, in addition to bringing to the fore previously neglected texts, Greenblatt and Gallagher are also providing a counterhistory when they reread canonical works, finding meanings which would not have been evident at the time of first publication.

A recent criticism levelled against new historicism by Benedict Whalen is that whilst history and literature 'should be in conversation with each other', the practice does not give enough credence to the idea of artistic genius.¹²⁴ However, this criticism had already been addressed by Greenblatt and Gallagher when they state that 'the new historicist project is not about "demoting" art or discrediting artistic pleasure' as they seek to contextualise literary texts (12). In Chapter Six of their book there is an example of them using a non-literary text, Chauncy Hare Townshend's *Facts in Mesmerism*, to inform one

¹²⁴ Ramona Tausz, 'Benedict Whalen lectures on New Historicism', *The Collegian* <<http://hillsdalecollegian.com/2015/02/benedict-whalen-lectures-on-new-historicism>> [24th July 2017].

from the literary canon, Dickens's *Great Expectations*, whilst maintaining an appreciation of Dickens the artist at work.

When reading about the practice of new historicism, it is difficult to achieve a clear definition of the term 'cultural materialism' which is used in relation to, and sometimes interchangeably with the former. Peter Barry states that the two movements 'belong to the same family' (178) and provides what at first appears to be a helpful distinction between the two. He states that cultural materialism is the British counterpart to American new historicism and 'takes a good deal of its outlook' from the work of Raymond Williams (177). Cultural materialism, Barry explains, does not just consider the actual world at the time in which a literary text was produced in order to gain a more informed reading of that text but also considers the nature of the society in which the text is reproduced. He gives the example of how decisions made by the Royal Shakespeare Company, the film industry and the publishers of text books used in the education system will all have a bearing on how a Shakespeare play is interpreted in the present day (177). In short, he states 'the new historicist situates the literary text in the political situation of its own day, while the cultural materialist situates it within that of ours' (179). This can indeed be traced back to Williams's notion of the 'selective tradition', the way in which the education system, in particular, selects and reinterprets certain meanings and practices according to the nature of the dominant culture.¹²⁵

Yet Greenblatt's and Gallagher's assertion that they seek to uncover meanings in texts that the authors they study 'would not have had sufficient distance upon themselves and their own era to grasp' (8) suggests, as I state above, that they do bring a modern perspective to bear on their analyses. Also, Marjorie Levinson explains that 'new historicism was conjunctural, its knowledge arising at the intersection between the past and that past's future, namely, the historian's present'.¹²⁶ The difference is, perhaps, that although new historicists' analysis would make use of the knowledge they have as a result of their temporal distance from the date of the first publication of a text, they do not focus on how the text is received by a modern readership as a result of the social and political forces of the current time; cultural materialists do.

3. Neo-Victorianism

The important idea within new historicism which relates to neo-Victorianism is that of rereading and revision. Terry Eagleton states that 'All literary works[...]are 'rewritten', if only unconsciously, by the societies which read them; indeed there is no reading of a

¹²⁵ Raymond Williams (1973), 'Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory', in *Debating Texts: A Reader in 20th Century Literary Theory and Method*, ed. by Rick Rylance (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1987), 204-16 (pp.209).

¹²⁶ Marjorie Levinson, 'Reflections on the New Historicism', *European Romantic Review*, 23.3 (2012), 355-362 (pp. 357).

work which is not also a 're-writing'.¹²⁷ Not only does this relate to the idea of a modern readership finding new meanings in canonical texts; it is also seen in the literal re-writings of texts in the work of neo-Victorian novelists such as Sarah Waters and Lynn Shepherd. These writers reread and then rewrite both Victorian history and Victorian fiction. They create the counterhistories of both representatives of groups of real-life people, such as prostitutes and lesbians, and fictional characters such as *Bleak House's* Inspector Bucket. The value system of the late twentieth- and early twenty-first centuries allows them to write about those whose histories remained largely untold in nineteenth-century literature, stories which were not selected by the dominant culture of the time. These counterhistories 'make apparent the slippages'¹²⁸ in Victorian fiction and also take an approach to their subject which is a reflection of a modern consciousness or, to use Foucault's terminology, the modern epistemic conditions. In the same way that new historicists see a dialogue between literary and non-literary texts, neo-Victorian writers, whilst also making use of non-literary texts as part of their research, engage in a dialogue with Victorian novels. Either directly or indirectly, they rewrite Victorian novels. Modern readers are unlikely to respond to Victorian texts in the same way that their original readership did; furthermore, after reading a neo-Victorian counterhistory, it seems likely that one would approach a Victorian text with a somewhat altered perspective. In this way, neo-Victorian novels, are themselves part of a modern culture which leads us to reread and assign new meaning to canonical texts. The idea of the reader bringing ideas to the text and meaning being created through the interaction of those ideas and the text itself is a central idea of reader response theory which I develop in the following section.

A further aspect of new historicist criticism which relates to the writing of neo-Victorian novels is the idea of literary realism, an idea crucial to this project. Neo-Victorian novels use their earlier texts and other non-fictional works, such as that of Henry Mayhew,¹²⁹ to help to create an air of authenticity which allows the reader to enter the fictional world. Greenblatt and Gallagher state that what they wanted to recover in their literary criticism was 'a confident conviction of reality, without giving up the power of literature to sidestep or evade the quotidian and without giving up a minimally sophisticated understanding that any text depends upon the absence of the bodies and voices that it represents'; they 'wanted the touch of the real' (31). Referring to non-literary texts contemporaneous with the literary ones enables Greenblatt and Gallagher to read new meaning in the works and achieve this 'touch of the real' in their criticism. The neo-Victorian genre draws on the above concept: its success lies partly in its ability to evoke

¹²⁷ Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), p.12.

¹²⁸ Gallagher, Catherine and Stephen Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), p.17.

¹²⁹ *London Labour and the London Poor*, first published as a periodical, 1850-2.

a clear sense of the Victorian period which is achieved by self-consciously referencing other texts. This intertextuality is often handled in a playful way, setting the reader the challenge of spotting the allusions to earlier texts. Lynn Shepherd describes her novel *Tom-All-Along's* as 'a literary Easter egg hunt in which the more you bring, the more you find'.¹³⁰ It is the readers' knowledge of earlier texts which allows them to gain a full understanding of the new one, as well as a sense of satisfaction after having found the references to Victorian fiction.

Dana Shiller brought the term 'neo-Victorian' into usage and gives a helpful explanation of the dual purpose of such novels:

neo-Victorian novels are acutely aware of both history and fiction as human constructs and use this awareness to rethink forms and contents of the past [...] neo-Victorian fiction is motivated by an essentially revisionist impulse to reconstruct the past by questioning the certitude of our historical knowledge, and yet I want also to claim that even as these novels emphasize events that are usually left out of histories, they nonetheless manage to preserve and celebrate the Victorian past.¹³¹

Subsequent critics have echoed Shiller's view and used her work as the basis for their studies of novelists including Waters and Faber, as I detail below. In the inaugural issue of *Neo-Victorian Studies*, Mark Llewellyn considers the growing academic interest in the concept of the neo-Victorian, arguing that 'the neo-Victorian is about new approaches to the Victorian period' which benefit the work of both students and faculty on nineteenth-century fiction. He argues that 'as the neo-Victorian text writes back to something in the nineteenth century, it does so in a manner that often aims to re-fresh and re-vitalise the importance of that earlier text to the here and now'.¹³² In this way, readers, when they engage with nineteenth century texts, may do so with a heightened awareness of certain issues or groups of people which they might not otherwise have had.

Louisa Yates states that 'an urge to revise can be held as an approximate standard of the genre' and then looks at how Waters's *Tipping the Velvet* (1998), whilst not a revision of a specific Victorian 'pre-text', draws on nineteenth-century literature to tell a previously untold story: 'The city and its inhabitants lend the novel its Victorian credentials in order to valorise a nineteenth-century lesbian experience -- in short, placing lesbians into a convincing nineteenth-century landscape'.¹³³ In other words, if the reader accepts the

¹³⁰ In 'Recalled to Life: from *Bleak House* to *Tom-All-Along's*', a paper given at the *After Dickens* conference at the University of York, 3rd December, 2016.

¹³¹ 'The Redemptive Past in the Neo-Victorian Novel', *Studies in the Novel*, 29. 4 (1997), 538-560 (pp. 540).

¹³² Mark Llewellyn, 'What is Neo-Victorian Studies?', *Neo-Victorian Studies*, 1.1 (2008), 164-185 (pp. 168-9, 170-1)

¹³³ ' "But it's only a novel, Dorian": Neo-Victorian Fiction and the process of Revision', *Neo-Victorian Studies*, 2:2 (2009/10), 186-211 (pp. 187-8).

realism of the Victorian setting, he or she will accept the presentation of the lesbian relationships involved. This is despite the fact, as Yates argues, that there may well be certain anachronisms in the text (191).

In 2010, Ann Heilmann and Mark Llewellyn stated that the term ‘neo-Victorianism’ had previously been only ‘loosely defined’ and gave the following field-defining definition: ‘To be part of the neo-Victorianism we discuss in this book, texts (literary, filmic, audio/visual) must in some respect be *self-consciously engaged with the act of (re)interpretation, (re)discovery and (re)vision concerning the Victorians*’ (original italics).¹³⁴ Whilst previous scholars had discussed neo-Victorianism using similar terminology, this was the first succinct definition of the field. The idea of the (re)discovery and (re)vision of the Victorian era is taken up by Maciej Sulmicki in his work on Faber’s *The Crimson Petal and the White*. He states that the novel adheres to the ‘currently common approach of foregrounding the groups whose voices were not so often heard in Victorian times’,¹³⁵ in this case, prostitutes. Indeed, the novel within the novel -- Sugar’s luridly violent account of a prostitute who murders her customers -- is comparable to Faber’s actual novel as it seeks to give a voice to someone previously denied one. Sulmicki argues that ‘a more overt treatment of -- among other things -- sex and violence’(2) is what makes neo-Victorian fiction stand apart from most of its nineteenth-century counterparts, but comments that ‘The Victorian ‘air’, however, must remain’(2). The choice of the modal ‘must’ in this statement reveals the extent to which Sulmicki sees a credible ‘Victorian air’ as an integral part of these works: the need to keep the novel within the genre of literary realism is crucial if the reader is to engage with the characters and their stories.

Charlotte Boyce and Elodie Rousselot succinctly sum up this duality: ‘Both an appreciation and a revision of the nineteenth century, the neo-Victorian adequately conveys the idea of celebrating while contesting, of looking back while moving forward.’¹³⁶ They consider the way in which the term ‘Dickensian’ resonates in modern Anglophone cultures and, after looking at newspaper headlines from 2012, conclude that the signifier is ‘mutable and mobile’ as it ‘stands in the popular imagination for urban poverty, destitution and suffering’ on the one hand, but ‘on the other it is evocative of bountiful Christmases, idealised families and domestic harmony’(3). Reviews of neo-Victorian novels often draw comparisons with Dickens; for example the Guardian reviewer’s comment printed on the back of the Canongate (2011) edition

¹³⁴ Ann Heilmann and Mark Llewellyn, *Neo-Victorianism: The Victorians in the Twenty-First Century, 1999-2009* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p.4.

¹³⁵ Maciej Sulmicki, ‘The Author as the Antiquarian: Selling Victorian culture to readers of neo-Victorian novels and steampunk comics’, *Otherness: Essays and Studies*, 2.1 (2011), 1-16 (pp. 4).

¹³⁶ Charlotte Boyce and Elodie Rousselot, ‘The Other Dickens: Neo-Victorian Appropriation and Adaptation,’ *Neo-Victorian Studies*, 5:2 (2012), 1-11 (pp.2).

of *The Crimson Petal and the White* reads ‘The novel that Dickens might have written had he been allowed to speak freely’. This statement both supports the revisionist view of the genre taken by Shiller *et al* and assumes an awareness of Dickens on the part of the reader, and therefore creates expectations as to the nature of the novel’s content. Faber responds to the ‘mutable and mobile’ nature of the signifier *Dickensian* in his novel as he presents the reader with detailed images of the lives of the poor and also includes an idealised description of Christmas in Chapter Twenty-Six, complete with decorating the tree, eating delicious food, and giving and receiving special presents. Of course, both the depiction of the poor and the ideal Christmas are very much within the neo-Victorian genre and revised versions of Dickensian scenes: there is graphic detail of sexual acts in the former and the presence of Sugar, prostitute-turned-governess, in the latter.

Some critics, for example Alexia L. Bowler and Jessica Cox¹³⁷, and Allison Neal¹³⁸ consider why, amongst the different genres of historical fiction, the neo-Victorian is especially popular. Bowler and Cox state that ‘the Victorians are frequently constructed as our immediate ancestors whose achievements remain evident in the modern world, not only in the form of art, literature and architecture, but also political structures, social organisations and legal frameworks’(4). Society as we know it today developed due to Victorian innovations such as the railway system, child labour and education laws, and the way in which society and the class system was changed as a result of the rise of the manufacturing middle classes. Thus our sense of identity in the modern world can be traced back to the Victorian era. Spring’s account of the rise of the Labour Party in *Fame is the Spur* can be seen as an exploration of the origins of the modern political system for a 1940s readership. This idea of modern identity beginning in the nineteenth century is perhaps why modern writers look to that era to explore aspects of society which could not be included within novels which were published at the time. Allison Neal makes this point effectively: ‘The conceptions of race, class, and gender in neo-Victorian fiction and culture are just one way of exploring our social assumptions and categories in the twenty-first century through a prism of the neo-Victorian lens’ (70). The views held by modern readers on such issues can be both challenged and corroborated by neo-Victorian fiction.

Neo-Victorian fiction can be seen to be closely aligned with new historicism in terms of its revisionist agenda, its creation of ‘counterhistories’. It develops previously untold narratives which it is able to do as a result of both the present day’s greater knowledge

¹³⁷ Alexia L. Bowler and Jessica Cox, ‘Introduction to Adapting the Nineteenth Century: Revisiting, Revising and Re-writing the Past’, *Neo-Victorian Studies*, 2:2 (2009/10), 1-17.

¹³⁸ Allison Neal, ‘(Neo-)Victorian Impersonations: Vesta Tilley and *Tipping the Velvet*’, *Neo-Victorian Studies*, 4:1 (2011), 55-76.

of certain subjects and modern sensibilities toward different social and political issues. New historicist criticism references other texts as a way of providing a more circumspect analysis of the literary work being read; and writers of neo-Victorian fiction reference other texts in order to create meaning, although the difference is that these are earlier works of fiction as well as non-literary discourses. Thus someone who is reading a neo-Victorian novel, and is cognisant of canonical or popular nineteenth century fiction, could be considered to be engaged in new historicist criticism, albeit in a playful way. Yet new historicism should not be seen as pertinent only to the analysis of recent neo-Victorian texts. The work done by the various scholars referenced above demonstrates that there is an intertextuality, a dialogue, between different publications belonging to the same era. In the previous section, part of my focus was to consider Trollope, Gissing and Spring in their relationship to Dickens and to the social conditions of the time, Trollope as Dickens's contemporary, Gissing as one writing later within the Victorian era and Spring as one taking a retrospective view of the era. Below are three case studies in which I consider, in more detail, the ways in which Waters, Faber and Shepherd rewrite Victorian texts for a twenty-first century readership and the ways in which they use literary dialect to help them to do so.

4. Sarah Waters, *Fingersmith* (2002)

i. Waters's Neo-Victorianism

Published in 2002, *Fingersmith* is Sarah Waters's third novel and, like its two predecessors, it is set in the Victorian era, in 1862. It tells the story of Susan Trinder, brought up in London amongst thieves. She is used and betrayed by Mrs Sucksby, the woman she considers her mother. Susan is the first of two first-person narrators, neither of whom is in full possession of the facts. She begins by telling the reader how her mother, a thief, was hanged, leaving her to the care of Mrs Sucksby, before moving on to the more recent past which forms the plot of the novel. Richard Rivers, an associate of Mrs Sucksby, who is also known as 'Gentleman', has a plan to marry a naïve young heiress, an orphan who has been brought up in isolation by her uncle, and thereby take her money as his own. Shortly after marrying her, he intends to commit her to a lunatic asylum, leaving him free to enjoy her money. Susan's role is to be employed as a maid to Maud Lilly, the heiress, and persuade her that Rivers is the man for her, thus ensuring the plan's success. Susan's first narrative ends at the point where both she and the reader suddenly discover that it is she and not Maud Lilly who is to be committed to the asylum. Maud's narrative then begins, retelling the events the reader has already witnessed to reveal how she was part of Rivers's plan all along; and the plan was (she believes) for her to get access to her money and escape from her miserable life by

swapping identities with her maid and leaving her in an asylum. A further plot twist develops in Part Three when Susan takes up the narrative once more and learns that she is truly Susan Lilly, heiress, and Maud is the daughter of Mrs Sucksby. Maud is also unaware of her true identity until this point. The two were exchanged shortly after birth as Susan's mother, on the run in London, was about to be captured by her tyrannical family and wanted her daughter to be brought up in safe obscurity. Mrs Sucksby agreed to the exchange provided half the inheritance were settled on her own daughter. Thus the real plan, seventeen years in the making, is for Mrs Sucksby to reclaim her own daughter, rid herself of the true heiress, and claim the money of both.

The plot can be seen, at least in part, as an homage to Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* (1860): the villain commits an unwitting female protagonist to an asylum, passing her off as someone else, in order to acquire her inheritance. In *The Woman in White*, the unscrupulous Sir Percival Glyde marries the heiress Laura Fairlie for her money. When a desperate Glyde is pressed by his creditors, his sinister friend Count Fosco comes up with a plan for Glyde to have free access to all his wife's fortune. Laura bears a striking resemblance to Anne Catherick, a local girl who has previously spent some time confined in a lunatic asylum. Anne is now dying of natural causes. The identities of Laura and Anne are swapped so that Glyde may inherit when his 'wife' dies and Laura is left, as Anne Catherick, in the lunatic asylum. Collins's plot, sensational as it is, is based on one of number of true stories which he found in volumes of records of French crimes. He informed a friend, 'In them I found some of my best plots. *The Woman in White* was one. The plot of that has been called outrageous[...]It was true, and it was from the trial of the villain of the plot -- Count Fosco of the novel -- I got my story'.¹³⁹ Like Collins, Waters also has a young drawing master give lessons to a female protagonist. The young woman is an orphan who lives an isolated life in a grand house under the guardianship of an irresponsible uncle. Here the similarity ends: Waters's Richard Rivers is the chief agent in carrying out the identity-swap plan, unlike Collins's heroic and aptly named Walter Hartright. Collins uses multiple narrators to tell the story; Waters uses her two main female characters as narrators, their stories overlapping and providing the reader with a different perspective on the same events. In this way, readers come to realise that they, like Susan herself, have been tricked. Susan believes that Maud Lilly is to be committed to the asylum. Since the first part of the story is narrated by Susan, the reader finds out only when she does that it is Susan herself who is to be left at the asylum.

Although *Fingersmith* has much in common with *The Woman in White*, it is to Dickens that Waters alludes directly. Maria Teresa Chialant includes *Fingersmith* in a category of

¹³⁹ Robert Ashley, *Wilkie Collins* (London: Arthur Barker Ltd., 1952), p.67.

recent novels which ‘although not explicitly connected with a specific Dickens novel, invoke the Dickens world’;¹⁴⁰ yet the first page of the novel has Susan Trinder recount a visit to the theatre where she saw an adaptation of *Oliver Twist* (1837) and was disturbed by seeing Bill Sykes murder Nancy. This then prompts the reader to view the home of Mr Ibbs, Mrs Sucksby and the young thieves as a version of Fagin’s den; and this is emphasised at the end of the novel where Mr Ibbs tries to escape with his stolen goods as the police forcibly enter the property. Chialant, perhaps contradicting herself somewhat, comments later in the same article that Mrs Sucksby ‘proves to be, in the end, fundamentally generous and motherly -- a reversed Fagin, perhaps’ (50) and then notes the direct reference to *Oliver Twist* stated above. There are also echoes of *Great Expectations* (1860): Maud Lilly, trapped in her uncle’s crumbling home to be used by him for his own strange purposes, can be seen as an Estella figure. This is perhaps most apparent at the end of the novel when she returns to the house, Briar, and is seen living alone having taken on work similar to that done by her uncle. Just as Pip returns to Satis House and attempts to save Estella, Susan returns to Briar to find Maud, with whom she has fallen in love. One very specific incident is also adapted by Waters: the card game between Pip and Estella which appears in Chapter Eight of *Great Expectations* and during which Estella criticises Pip for calling ‘the knaves, Jacks’ (90), reappears in Chapter Four of *Fingersmith* when Susan is surprised that Maud calls ‘the jacks, cavaliers’(94).¹⁴¹ In each case the metalanguage serves to highlight the fact that the two characters inhabit very different worlds, although this becomes retrospectively ironic when their true parentage is discovered. Susan Trinder’s first-person, past-tense narrative is also reminiscent of the bildungsroman style of *Great Expectations* as there is a clear sense of an older, wiser narrator looking back on a naïve and sometimes foolish younger self. Finally, Lant Street, where Susan Trinder’s home is found was also where Dickens once lodged whilst his father was in the nearby Marshalsea debtors’ prison. Much of the plot of *Little Dorritt* (1857) takes place in this area, including Marshalsea prison, although Lant Street itself is not named. Maria Teresa Chialant also points out that Dickens’s London, particularly as it is experienced by Joe the crossing-sweeper in *Bleak House*, is mirrored by Waters when Maud Lilly first arrives in the metropolis from the country and is overwhelmed by its sights and sounds, not least the hoardings and signs (45).

As in *Tipping the Velvet*, the most significant aspect of Waters’s re-writing of Victorian fiction is in her tale of lesbian love. This is the ‘counterhistory’ of the novel: the story of the development of a sexual relationship between two females is not one told in

¹⁴⁰ Maria Teresa Chialant, ‘Dickensian Resonances in the Contemporary English Novel’, *Dickens Quarterly*, 28.1, (2011), 41-51 (pp.41).

¹⁴¹ Penguin Classics (1985) and Virago (2002) editions respectively.

canonical Victorian fiction. Partly through the use of ‘pre-texts’, Waters skilfully evokes the Victorian era; yet she does not concern herself with whether or not the account of the lesbian affair is historically accurate. In an interview with Kaye Mitchell, she said: ‘Lesbian historians might agonise over whether women in the past had sex with each other, but if I want my lesbians in the 1860s to have sex, then they just do. I’m in charge. I do try to be sensitive -- of course I do; that’s what motivates me to write historical fiction’.¹⁴² The question of whether or not the lesbian sex is historically accurate is perhaps redundant as a modern readership, living in an age of increased gay rights and openness about homosexuality, is more likely to accept such a relationship. Thus Waters balances a faithful depiction of Victorian life as seen in Dickens and Wilkie Collins with the inclusion of twenty-first century societal values.

ii. Literary Dialect in *Fingersmith* (See Appendix i)

So far, critical work on Sarah Waters has focussed on how she both adopts and adapts the Victorian novel form to reflect her own interest in lesbian narratives. My concern is whether Waters represents the nonstandard English in the direct speech of the working-class and criminal under-class in a way which is comparable to Dickens’s use of literary dialect. Given that Sarah Waters draws on the work of Dickens in terms of setting, character, narrative technique and plot development, I wish to ascertain whether her representation of dialect is also comparable to that of her predecessor. Dickens is one of the most studied novelists when it comes to literary dialect, there being much scholarly work on his representation of not just Cockney but also other regional varieties. When studying Waters’s novel, it is important to keep in mind an obvious point: although *Fingersmith* is set in the nineteenth century, it was written by a modern novelist whose approach to dialect representation will not necessarily be the same as that of her predecessors. In the same way that Waters’s story of a developing lesbian relationship can be viewed as an adaptation of canonical works which reflects the concerns of a living writer, her representation of dialect may depart from that seen in the nineteenth century and also reflect modern sensibilities. I will analyse what Waters does to represent direct speech which deviates from the standard in terms of grammar, lexis or phonology, considering how this compares with Dickens’s literary dialect.

Waters’s dialect speaking characters in *Fingersmith* are the inhabitants of the Lant Street house, all of whom are involved in criminal activity. They are Mrs Sucksby, who makes her living by ‘infant farming’, Mr Ibbs, a receiver of stolen goods, and John Vroom, ‘Dainty’ and Flora, all of whom are thieves. There is also Susan Trinder, the narrator, who has been taught certain nefarious means of earning a living but is protected from

¹⁴² In *Sarah Waters: Contemporary Critical Perspectives*, ed. by Kaye Mitchell (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 136.

committing the more risky acts of theft. In terms of grammar, there are examples of nonstandard agreement of subject and verb, usually where *was* is used with *you*, for example, ‘What was you thinking of’ (Mrs Sucksby, 4), ‘We thought you was the blues’ (Susan, 19) and ‘as you was getting on so nicely’ (Mr Ibbs, 26). The form *don’t* is also used in third person singular negative structures such as ‘the old man keeps her close, don’t he?’ (Mr Ibbs, 25), ‘Suppose she don’t care for you’ (Susan, 28) and ‘Why don’t she wear the kind of stays that fasten at the front’ (Dainty, 37). There are other marked verb forms such as ‘I sticks to you’ (Dainty, 17), ‘I likes to see her cry’ (John Vroom, 35), and ‘I done her ears last week’ (Dainty, 493) as well as nonstandard past participles as in ‘She was only beat a bit about the face’ (Mrs Sucksby, 5). Whilst these forms are used relatively frequently, none of them is particularly widespread. Even less so is the use of the double negative which appears in ‘Haven’t you nothing we might take?’ (Susan, 156) and on very few other occasions. Similarly, *as* and *what* are used as a relative pronouns very sparingly, for example, ‘Have you something with you, as Mr Ibbs will like the look of?’ (Mrs Sucksby, 21) and ‘Another poor motherless infant what I shall be bringing up by hand’ (Mrs Sucksby, 20). (Notice, incidentally, the allusion to *Great Expectations*’s Mrs Joe here.) The mostly widely used marked form is *ain’t* which appears more consistently throughout the novel both in the speech of the London thieves and the servants at Briar, the country home of Maud Lilly. The working-class country folk are represented as using one particular verb form which differentiates them from the London characters and that is using an elided form of *have* to construct the present perfect tense with a third-person singular subject, for example, ‘He’ve took it very hard’ (147) and ‘She don’t know what’ve hit her’ (158).

There are few examples of the representation of nonstandard pronunciation. One notable exception is *shadow* becoming *shadder* (Mr Ibbs, 22). Very infrequently *em* is used instead of *them*¹⁴³, *sovereigns* is abbreviated to *sovs* (Mr Ibbs, 22), and *hysterics* becomes *sterics* (Flora, 5). There is also the metalinguistic comment that the word *Gentleman*, which is used as a nickname for Richard Rivers, is pronounced ‘as if the word were a fish and we had filleted it -- Ge’mun ’ (19). The image used to refer to medial elision, taking out ‘the insides’ of the word, is particularly striking and generates a touch of humour. It also characterises Susan, the narrator at this point, as one who has a sensitivity to language; and this might possibly be a hint about her higher birth. The reversal of the /v/ and /w/ phonemes popularised by Dickens in his presentation of Sam Weller is avoided as, even toward the end of the nineteenth century, this form had dropped out of actual and then literary usage and would not necessarily be familiar to a modern readership.

¹⁴³ On pages 20 and 453, for example in the Virago edition, 2002.

What is particularly notable, though, is that throughout the entire novel there is no representation of either h-dropping, whereby, for example, *bead* would become *'ead*, or elided *-ing* verb forms such as *buntin'*, *shootin'*, *fishin'*. One assumes that 'real' London, or Cockney speech would contain an abundance of these forms, and indeed they are present in the works of Dickens and other nineteenth century novelists who represent this variety; yet Waters chooses not to include them in the speech of her characters. Unlike the reversal of the /v/ and /w/ phonemes, these forms are very much present today and are familiar to modern readers. So why does Waters not use them? The answer may lie in Jaffe's and Walton's study of how students read transcripts of speech from the southern United States.¹⁴⁴ One of their findings was that whilst the word *I* was written as standard, six out of eight students who normally read this word with standard pronunciation read the word with a distinctively Southern pronunciation. Knowing that the transcript was of Southern speech, and taking cues from other orthography which did represent certain nonstandard pronunciations, these students heard a Southern voice and reflected that voice in their reading of the text, even where the text itself did not signal a different pronunciation. Jaffe and Walton comment: 'Collectively, then, we can say that participants were 'doing Southern' by performing difference from their notions of 'standard' speech'(571). They argue that readers have access to 'prepackaged socio-linguistic personae' which they draw on to perform the orthography'(579). This could be applied to our reading of *Fingersmith*. Readers who are familiar with Dickens's novels may well have a mental store of 'prepackaged personae', in this case under-class Cockneys, and therefore hear features such as h-dropping, even when they are not signalled by the literary dialect. (Even those readers not familiar with Dickens may well be able to draw on a similar store created by representations of such characters in film and television programmes.) Waters does not need to be as detailed as Dickens in her literary dialect as the modern reader is able to respond to the cues she gives to 'perform' Cockney. Thus the few nonstandard grammatical structures used by Waters, along with the widespread use of *ain't*, although not confined to the Cockney dialect, is enough, when combined with a London setting, for the reader to imagine, or, in Jaffe's and Walton's terms, to perform Cockney speech. Furthermore, Waters may also want to avoid 'reader resistance' which could occur if her text were heavily marked and the reading experience were one of 'enforced labour'.¹⁴⁵

The area where the direct speech of Waters's characters is most different from Standard English is lexis. Mr Ibbs, Mrs Sucksby and their group use marked lexical items which not only index their London upbringing, but their social group, that is, criminals. In the

¹⁴⁴Alexandra Jaffe and Shana Walton, 'The Voices People Read: Orthography and the Representation of Non-standard Speech' *Journal of Socio-linguistics*, 4.4 (2000), 561-87.

¹⁴⁵ Michael Toolan, 'Significations of Representing Dialect', *Language and Literature*, 1:1 (1992), 29-46 (pp. 34).

first chapter, there are the words *poke* (n. stolen goods), *blues* (n. police), *prig* (v. steal), *ready* (n. cash), *crib* (n. home); and these, when combined with the use of vulgar or taboo language such as *fart*, *arse*, *bitch*, *bloody*, *shit* and *fucking*, create a sense of an under-class. The first group of words is also to be found in Dickens's novels.¹⁴⁶ Waters adopts established conventions for representing dialect: she incorporates Dickens's language to evoke the language of the criminal underclasses; and for readers familiar with Dickens, this may prompt a comparison between Mr Ibbs and his associates and Fagin and his. Thus we read authenticity through Dickens. In using the latter group of words, however, Waters's representation of criminal speech differs from that seen in Dickens, where all such vocabulary is avoided. It must be remembered, though, that the social mores of the time did not permit Dickens the use of such lexis. Geoffrey Hughes states that although Dickens was happy to include criminal slang in his novels, in the persona of *Vox Populi* he denounced 'the sewerage and verbiage of slang'.¹⁴⁷ Hughes notes that swearing, which at the time would have been blasphemy rather than the words used by Waters (above), does not feature in Dickens's work. He uses, for example, *jiggered* as a euphemism for *damned* and *drat* in place of *curse*. Hughes refers to the nonstandard variant of *damned* which is rendered as *dem'd* in Chapter 21 of *Nicholas Nickleby* as 'risque for 1838' (152). (Notably, it is the dialectal rendition of this word which disguises it somewhat, perhaps even functioning euphemistically.) He comments that 'more than at any other stage of English culture, the elite neither recognized or accommodated the underworld'; and he gives the example of the 'humane and diligent' research into the lives of those in the underworld carried out by Henry Mayhew and William Acton which was presented in a form 'cleansed of impolite language' (151).

Of course, attitudes to language and censorship have altered quite considerably in the last one hundred and fifty years; indeed words which, thirty years ago, were 'beeped out' of films shown on television, regardless of the time they were aired, are now left audible. Thus modern readers accept the inclusion of swearing as part of the representation of criminal speech which aims to create at least a sense of authenticity. Indeed, readers today may well expect such vocabulary. As pointed out by Hughes, the lexicon of swearing has altered, the words related to sex being used as insults only relatively recently. He states that the earliest recorded use of the word *fuck* (not expletive at this point), which is of uncertain origin, is 1503, whereas the term *fucker* was not used as an insult until 1893, with *prick* and *cunt* appearing as insults even later, in 1928 and 1929 respectively. He comments that the substitutes *eff* (as in *to eff and blind*) and *effing* were recorded from 1943 and 1944 respectively (24-28), but these were preceded by *adjectival*

¹⁴⁶ Geoffrey Hughes, *Swearing: A Social History of Foul Language, Oaths and Profanity in English* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p. 152.

¹⁴⁷ *Household Words*, no.183, 24 September 1853, cited in Hughes, p.152.

which was recorded from 1910. Hughes argues that Dickens anticipated the use of *adjectival*, citing a piece in *Household Words* in June 1851 in which he writes, ‘“I won’t,” says Bark, “have no adjective police and adjective strangers in my adjective premises!”’(12) Hughes cites Farmer’s and Henley’s *A Dictionary of Slang and its Analogues*, issued in seven volumes from 1890 to 1904, as the nineteenth century’s most definitive work on the language of the lower register (161). It is from this publication that we learn that *fucking* could then be defined as ‘a more violent form of the word bloody’ and that it was used in a variety of compounds including *fuckster* . Hughes concludes that Farmer’s and Henley’s work makes it clear that the modern expansion of swearing occurred earlier than we tend to suppose, namely in the late Victorian period, but ‘it was suppressed by decorum’(161).

What is of interest here is that Susan Trinder uses the term *fuckster* as an insult levelled at Gentleman when she realises she has been betrayed (174). Although this term is actually Victorian, its use may not be strictly authentic as the term *fucker* was first recorded as an insult in 1893 and *fuckster* was recorded by Farmer and Henley in the final decade of the nineteenth century as opposed to thirty years earlier when Waters’s novel is set. But it is difficult to be certain about the date of the earliest usage of such terms as new vocabulary items, especially ‘underground’ ones may have been in use for some time before they were recorded. Either way, Waters’s inclusion of the term resonates with a modern readership which is very much familiar with terms relating to sex being used as insults. She is appealing to a readership which expects to see the inclusion of swearing in the language of criminals; the use of blasphemy, whilst more historically accurate, would have no impact on a modern reader and might even seem somewhat ridiculous. It is, therefore a different kind of authenticity she achieves, one which reflects modern-day social practices rather than those of the Victorian era. Jerome de Groot makes a perceptive point about Waters’s use of the word ‘queer’ which is simultaneously authentic in its earlier sense of ‘strange’ and ‘seems a minor wink to the reader’ (62) who will also interpret it as a reference to sexual identity. He makes his point in relation to *Tipping the Velvet* (1998), but the term is also used in *Fingersmith* , for example when Susan recounts her maid’s duties as including giving Maud salts ‘if she comes over queer’ (40).

iii. The Function of the Literary Dialect in *Fingersmith*

As shown, Waters uses relatively few marked forms in her literary dialect; but those she does employ, combined with a modern reader’s familiarity with representations of Cockney speech as heard in films and on television, are sufficient to create a belief in the authenticity of the variety being represented. What is of greater significance is how she weaves the literary dialect into the fabric of the novel. As pointed out by Susan

Ferguson and others, writers' use of dialect within direct speech is neither consistent nor a strictly accurate representation of what such a person would speak like in 'real' life: it is often used when characters are first introduced or as part of the development of theme and plot in order to differentiate the speakers from other characters and also from a Standard English narrative voice. This is partly true of *Fingersmith*. The opening chapter is set in the home of the thieves with all the main characters present and so the direct speech is more marked here than elsewhere. The nonstandard varieties discussed above are all included. The dialect aids the initial characterisation of the thieves and also helps the reader to envisage the setting. There is also a socio-linguistic aspect to consider in that, in their home environment, these thieves and ne'er-do-wells can be assumed to be speaking in their most relaxed manner rather than altering their speech to try to converge with that of an outsider.

What is more striking is that the first person narrative of Susan Trinder contains a similar number of marked forms to the direct speech. Waters breaks with the nineteenth century tradition of having a Standard English narrative voice, which can be seen in a comparison of *Fingersmith* and *Great Expectations*, where the older Pip who narrates the story does so in Standard English throughout. Both Pip and Susan are taken from their environment and have life-changing experiences: Pip is made a gentleman and therefore acquires a gentleman's style of speech; and Susan, although her story differs from that of Pip, assumes her true identity as the daughter of a lady by the end of the novel. Yet the voice of the older Susan, looking back on her previous life narrates Chapter One using terms such as *peach* (v. to inform to the police), *poke* (n. stolen goods), and *snide* (adj. counterfeit), as well as the use of the negative form *ain't* and marked grammatical structures such as 'whose heart he had just about broke' (21). Waters also uses a generally informal conversational style for Susan's voice: 'And after all, she had been right. Here was my fortune, come from nowhere-come at last. What could I say?' (31) Aligning Susan's narrative voice with the direct speech used by her and the other characters in the scene she is reflecting on furthers the impression that she was and, crucially, still is very much one of this gang. Waters thereby disguises Susan's true identity using not just the literary dialect but nonstandard English within the narrative. Susan is at one with her environment. This is the opposite of what Dickens does in *Oliver Twist*: the novel is narrated in the third person, but Oliver's Standard English elevates him, making it clear that he does not belong in the workhouse or in Fagin's gang, and is a hint about his true parentage. Ironically, Mrs Sucksby treats Susan as though she is special, 'a jewel' (12), but the reader tends to overlook this hint, given the dialect used in both Susan's direct speech and her narrative.

Furthermore, presenting 'Gentleman', or Richard Rivers, as using far fewer marked forms than the others in the opening chapter helps to convince the reader, like the other

characters, that Rivers, although a criminal, ‘really was a gent’ (20). Rivers uses the words *ready*, for *cash*, and *bitch* (25) but his speech contains none of the nonstandard grammatical structures evident in the representation of the other characters’ speech. He is also given relatively lengthy passages of direct speech in which he articulately explains his plan to defraud Maud Lilly. Waters has her character make a metalinguistic comment in order to draw the reader’s attention to his differing style of speech: when John Vroom states that Rivers will ‘jiggle’ (have sex with) Maud Lilly, Rivers, after finishing the explanation of his plan says, ‘and -- as Johnny would say -- I must jiggle her once, for the sake of the cash’(25-7). In this way, Rivers, if anyone, seems unlike the usual inhabitants of the Lant Street house, although it is later discovered that he is not a gentleman by birth. Thus Waters uses dialect to help to set up the complex, twisting plot of changing identities, tricking the reader into a perception of Susan which will later be destroyed, just as Susan herself discovers her true history.

When Maud Lilly’s narrative first begins in Chapter Seven, the Standard English of the narrative voice along with the Standard English of Maud’s direct speech form an immediate contrast with the opening of the novel and Susan’s narrative. Yet Maud’s opening account places the reader in a setting which is baser than the Lant Street house, as she explains what she understands to be the circumstances of her birth in the asylum where her mother had been confined by her family. Given that Maud grew up as ‘a daughter to the nurses of the house’ (179), hearing them speak nonstandard English, it seems highly unlikely that she herself would use only Standard English. Unlike Susan Trinder, who has acquired the style of speech of those surrounding her, Maud has not done so and thus there is an initial contrast between the two characters. At first Waters appears to be using the convention of elevating the language of the protagonist in order to symbolise either her moral worth or her middle-class parentage (as, at this point, the reader believes Maud to be a wealthy heiress, the daughter of a lady wrongly committed to an asylum), or both, as Dickens does with *Oliver Twist*. But this is not the case. At the end of Chapter Six, we have had the plot twist whereby it is suddenly revealed that it is Susan and not Maud who is the innocent target of the plan; and Maud is complicit in that plan. Also, as Chapter Seven progresses we see that Maud is not unaffected by growing up in the asylum: she is a hardened, troublesome child who has tantrums and is literally beaten into submission by her uncle and his staff. Her use of the word ‘cunt’ both in the narrative and when speaking to a servant is more shocking than anything that appears in the language of those at Lant Street, not least as it pulls against the relatively formal Standard English used elsewhere both in her direct speech and in her narrative:

‘What are you looking at?’ she says

‘Your cunt,’ I answer. ‘Why is it so black?’

She starts away from me as if in horror[...]

My cunt grows dark as Barbara's, I understand my uncle's books to be filled with falsehoods (200-1)

With hindsight, we could take the use of this word to be a clue as to Maud's true identity, but at this point we are much more likely to view her use of the term as the result of working with her uncle's erotic books and not understanding that it is taboo. Also, as noted by Hughes, although the word 'cunt' can be traced back to 1203, it was not used as an insult or swear word until 1929 (20). The term was taboo in the Victorian era but had previously been used publicly, most famously in the London street name Gropecuntlane (1230). Maud is using the term in a purely anatomical sense; and in doing so she somewhat ironically appears naïve, a sheltered girl who is unaware that the word is taboo. This view is strengthened when, later, the worst insult she can find for the Lant Street inhabitants is 'Go to Hell' (358), which seems innocuous to a modern reader, especially when compared with the lexis Waters gives to her Lant Street characters, but is in keeping with Victorian swearing being of a blasphemous nature. We can view the Standard English which is used by Maud as symbolic of her middle-class parentage, not yet knowing otherwise. Thus, as with Susan Trinder, Waters uses literary dialect, or in this case, a lack of it, to create a perception of Maud which is later destroyed as the plot twists.

In this respect, Chapter Twelve makes an interesting contrast with the novel's opening chapter. Here Maud Lilly is taken to the Lant Street house by Rivers, Susan Trinder having been left, as Maud Lilly, at the asylum. Maud, unlike Susan, is presented as an outsider, her Standard English contrasting with the dialect spoken by Mrs Sucksby and the others:

I go to Richard and seize his waistcoat. 'What is this? Where have you brought me? What do they know of Sue, here?'

'Hey, hey,' calls the pale man mildly. The boy laughs. The woman looks rueful.

'Got a voice, don't she?' says the girl[...]

'You don't imagine that you ain't more welcome here, than anyone?'

I still shake, a little. 'I can't imagine,' I say, pulling myself away from her hands, 'that you mean me any kind of good, since you persist in keeping me here, when I so clearly wish to leave.'

She tilts her head. 'Hear the grammar in that, Mr Ibbs?' she says. (315-17)

The marked forms *don't* and *ain't* highlight the difference between the two styles of speech, but it is Mrs Sucksby's metalinguistic comment which draws most attention, presenting Maud as belonging to a world very different from that inhabited by Mrs Sucksby. This exchange is followed by the novel's most extensive passages of literary dialect as Mrs Sucksby explains to Maud the plan she developed; and this further

emphasises the contrast between the two characters. All of this is part of Waters's skilful manipulation of the readers' response: our view of Maud is cemented before the revelation to both Maud and the reader that her mother was a common thief: 'Dear, dear girl, you was taken from here so they might make a lady of you. And a lady they've made you-a perfect jewel[...]I been working it over for seventeen years. I been plotting and thinking on this, every minute'(344). The words used by Mrs Sucksby are reminiscent of those spoken by Magwitch when he returns to London to see Pip and reveal that he is Pip's mystery benefactor. The revulsion felt by Pip is mirrored by Maud Lilly here. Although there are no new discoveries about Pip's parentage, both he and Maud are claimed by someone they find abhorrent and they discover that they have been deceived. The term 'jewel' is used in Susan's narrative in Chapter One and is a further way in which Waters makes the readers aware of the twists in the plot: Susan, whom we think is the daughter of a thief, does ironically turn out to be a jewel in the sense both that she is the daughter of a lady and she is of monetary value to Mrs Sucksby; whereas Maud is given the appearance, the polish of a jewel. The image acquires another layer of meaning when, at the end of Chapter Thirteen, there is the further revelation that Maud is Mrs Sucksby's daughter and so is of great emotional value to her.

When Susan is given some instruction on how to be a lady's maid, one of the things Gentleman focusses on is her speech, telling her that she must use the formal term 'chemise' rather than her preferred variant 'shimmy' (36) and must pay attention to her pronunciation so that she does not sound like she is 'selling violets' (40). Although Susan is more mindful of the way she speaks and behaves when in the guise of Maud's maid, her direct speech is represented as containing some marked forms, as it did when she was living with Mrs Sucksby, for example, 'You was only dreaming' (87) and 'Now we're flying, ain't we' (95). Likewise, the narrative voice (Susan's) continues to include the marked forms which index her upbringing amongst East London thieves, for example: 'faked-up' (67), 'tit over heels' (71), 'shimmy' (chemise, 83), 'a busted window' (85) and 'lushing it away' (drinking large quantities of alcohol, 92). However, the criminal slang is removed from her direct speech as she attempts to act her part. There is one incident, after Susan has been at the house a few weeks, in which Maud gets her to dress in one of her old gowns. A servant enters and mistakes Susan for Maud (102). Unbeknown to both Susan and the reader at this point, Maud is beginning to practise the plan of transforming Susan, switching their identities. What is noteworthy is that although Susan does not speak at this point, the narrative voice becomes completely standard and relatively formal:

And it was very good velvet. I stood, plucking at the fringes on the skirt, while Maud ran to her jewel box for a brooch, that she fastened to my bosom, tilting her head to see how it looked. Then there came a knock at the parlour door[...]

For it was something, wasn't it, to be taken for a lady?

It's what my mother would have wanted. (102-3)

The subtle change in the narrative voice, works, along with the change of clothing, to foreshadow the change of identity. This change of identity is first presented as a trick played on Susan, the thief's daughter; but we later learn that Susan has actually been given back her true identity: she is Susan Lilly. Thus the comments above become retrospectively ironic: Susan is a lady and it is she, not Maud who rightfully belongs at Briar. The counterpart to this incident is when Maud assumes the identity of a lady's maid in order to get Susan committed to the asylum, consciously altering her speech when interviewed by the doctor about her 'mistress': 'I speak as a servant might'(299). There are, however, no marked forms in Waters's representation of Maud's direct speech. This could be because, at this point, she does not want the reader to view Maud as anything other than a lady adopting the role of a servant. The doctor comments that Susan, meanwhile, 'speaks like a servant now, and thinks nothing of mouthing filthy words' (301). Whilst this plays into Rivers's hands, it is also part of the trick Waters plays on the reader, characterising Susan as an East London thief. Unlike *Oliver Twist*, whose consistent use of Standard English suggests his high birth, Susan does not have Standard English simply because she is well-born.

Once committed to the asylum, Susan's speech is initially that of Lant Street. She yells, 'Don't you fucking let her go-!' (395) as the carriage containing Maud and Rivers departs from the asylum; her most natural speech is being used at a time of extreme emotion. When she tries to explain to the nurses that she 'ain't Mrs Rivers' (398) this is taken as further proof that she insanely believes herself to be a servant. Then her direct speech is represented as more formal and standard as she makes a conscious effort to reason calmly with the staff in an attempt to get them to see the truth of the situation; but this is taken as proof that she truly is a lady. Thus she is in a lose-lose situation. Throughout this section of the novel Susan's direct speech is presented as swinging from controlled Standard English to nonstandard profanity as she attempts to tell her story and is then frustrated by the doctors and nurses who refuse to believe her and persist in the view that 'when I spoke in the way that was natural to me, I did it to tease them' (430).

In her article 'Variation and the Indexical field',¹⁴⁸ Penelope Eckert argues that 'the meanings of [linguistic] variables are not precise or fixed but rather constitute a field of potential meanings'(453) which are intrinsically linked to the ideology of the speaker and the interlocutor. She makes the further point that when speakers adopt a form associated with a particular social group it is not necessarily because they wish to belong

¹⁴⁸ Penelope Eckert, 'Variation and the Indexical field', *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 12. 4 (2008), 453-76.

to that group, but rather wish to align themselves with certain qualities exhibited by that social group (456). Thus when Susan uses Standard English to attempt to reason with the doctors, this could be interpreted as her attempt to prove her sanity by aligning herself with the calm, polite manner typically associated with the middle and upper classes, rather than a wish to appear as a member of those classes. The ideology of the doctors and nurses, however, means that this standard language is taken as proof of her status as a lady. The fact that she slips into nonstandard profanity when she is most emotional appeals to the staff's belief that such language cannot be the language of a sane lady; therefore she is insane.

Waters continues to include nonstandard language in the representation of Susan's direct speech and this can be seen to take on a more performative function. When visited by Charles, the knife-boy from Briar, Susan's speech converges with that of Charles as she aims to enlist his help to escape:

'Be a good boy now, and tell me the truth. You've run off, haven't you, from Briar?'

'[...]Mrs Cakebread've gone to another man's kitchen[...]Mr Lilly ain't in his right mind...'

I had stopped listening. There had come on in my head a light that was brighter than the rest[...]

'[...]I dare say your aunty don't want you.' (450-452)

Once Susan realises that Charles is homeless and she can manipulate him into helping her, the standard speech with which she initially addresses him acquires certain marked forms as she tries to build a bond between herself and the boy. Similarly, when the pair have made their way to London and need money, Waters has Susan use nonstandard English to beg:

'Please sir, please lady,' I said. 'I just come upon this poor boy, he's come in from the country this morning and has lost his master. Can you spare a couple of farthings, set him back upon his way? Can you? He's all alone and don't know no-one, don't know Chancery Lane from Woolwich' (478-9)

The nonstandard verb forms and the rare use of a double negative, along with the naming of specific areas of London, establish Susan as belonging to the city. Waters presents Susan as performing the identity of a kind-hearted Londoner in order to appeal to the generosity of passers-by, people she thinks will be more likely to give when addressed by one of their own who is looking to do good. Susan then steals a watch from a woman on an omnibus, under cover of admiring the woman's baby: ' "Look at them lashes! He'll break hearts, he will" ' (480). The compliment paid to the doting mother, combined with the nonstandard determiner 'them' creates an apparent closeness between the two women which Susan uses to get physically close to the woman in order to steal her watch. What is also worth noting is that, at this point, the

lexis used in the narrative reflects the fact that Susan has returned to her former way of making a living as she states that ‘under cover of Charles’s coat, I had had a feel about her waistband; and had priggged her watch’ (480). The marked term ‘priggged’ links back to the narrative style at the beginning of the novel. Elsewhere, Susan’s narrative voice is more standard and comparatively formal, but it seems that as she returns to London both her direct speech and her narrative acquire features which link her with her past once more, her style of speech being a deliberate choice by the character in order to manipulate events. Waters is perhaps making a socio-linguistic point, showing that Susan has not forgotten her previous identity and as she performs her previous role, her language modulates accordingly. This enable Susan to slide unnoticed back into London life, so that she may carry out her surveillance on the Lant Street house in order to work out her best course of action. Maud, on the other hand, is presented as having no understanding of the ways of London and its people and no resources to help her negotiate her way through the city. After her escape from the Lant Street house, Maud is lost in London, trying to find the way to the home of one of her uncle’s more sympathetic colleagues:

‘You,’ I say, holding my hand against my side, ‘will you tell me, where is Holywell Street? Which way to Holywell Street?’-- but at the sound of my voice, they fall back. (370)

Unlike Susan, Maud does not know how to speak to Londoners: her commanding Standard English and her pronunciation mark her as an outsider, someone no one is willing to help.

Susan eventually makes her entrance into the Lant Street house, believing that Mrs Sucksby, who set her up in the first place, will be delighted to see her and wish to exact a terrible vengeance against Rivers for leaving her at the asylum. She recounts her story to Mrs Sucksby; and her direct speech is represented entirely in Standard English:

‘This gown I stole,’ I said. ‘And these shoes. And I walked, nearly all the way to London. My only thought was to get back here to you. For worse than all the cruel things that were done to me in the madhouse was the thought of the lies that Gentleman must have told you, about where I had gone. I supposed at first, he would have said that I had died.’ (491)

The inversion of the usual subject-verb-object sentence structure at the start gives the speech a formal quality, as does the lengthy complex sentence. Throughout this section of the novel, even when she is at her most emotional, Susan’s speech is represented almost entirely in Standard English; and, as can be seen above, she is presented as being eloquent and articulate. Similarly, the narrative voice remains standard and comparatively formal. By this point Maud and the reader know the full truth about the girls’ parentage, but Susan does not. It is unlikely that the language of a ‘real life’ Susan would have altered to the same extent: despite the fact that she was linguistically guarded

whilst acting the part of Maud's maid, she has received no formal tuition and has mixed primarily with the lower orders of society since leaving Briar. Furthermore, she is still illiterate at the end of the novel. Thus Waters's use of Standard English for both Susan's direct speech and her narrative voice seems to be a literary device rather than an attempt to achieve verisimilitude. Susan's language is in direct contrast to Chapter One where both her narrative and her direct speech were the same as that of those around her and reflected her environment. Now we know that she is Miss Lilly, an heiress, she is presented as an outsider in the Lant Street house, her language contrasting with that used by Mrs Sucksby, Mr Ibbs, Dainty and John Vroom.

At the same time, Maud, who is present during this conversation, is presented, in terms of her physical appearance at least, as having taken on Susan's previous identity, which is actually Maud's true identity. Her hair and clothing have been changed and she has had her ears pierced. There is also one linguistic indicator that Maud has changed when she refers to Rivers as 'Gentleman', the name used only by the Lant Street inhabitants, and this is noted with bitterness by Susan: '*Gentleman,*' I said. '*Gentleman.* You have learned Borough habits very quick'(489). However, Susan is mistaken. Blinded by emotion, she fails to see that Maud, who is suffering terribly herself, is the only person in the house who is trying to protect her from the full knowledge of Mrs Sucksby's plan. This one word is the only 'Borough' term that Maud has picked up; her speech is otherwise similar to Susan's present style. The linguistic parity of the two girls signals the bond between them, although Susan cannot yet see this herself, and foreshadows their union at the end of the novel.

At the end of the novel, after learning the truth about how Maud tried to shield her from the truth, Susan returns to Briar. Susan and Maud acknowledge their feelings for each other and are presented as embarking upon a life together. Waters uses direct speech to complete the characterisation of her two protagonists now that the reader knows their true identity. During this section of the novel the two speak Standard English to each other and, likewise, Susan's narrative is standard. The use of Standard English for both protagonists makes them equals. It is also worth noting that, according to the term of Susan's mother's will, they each have half of the Lilly fortune and are therefore also financial equals. Throughout the novel we have seen, at different points, that each agreed to a plan to commit the other to an asylum; however they both suffer and are the victims of deceit, each coming to regret her actions and wishing to save the other. Thus it could be argued that, after all, the language of both Maud and Susan is elevated, in the way that *Oliver Twist's* language is elevated, as means of reflecting their morality, finer sensibilities and, in Susan's case, high birth. Otherwise, it might seem strange that Susan, who previously used dialect in both her direct speech and her narrative, should now use Standard English. Both girls, despite their faults, are shown

to have greater moral worth than those within their immediate social or familial circle; and it is because of this that they are granted the possibility of happiness at the end of the novel. On the penultimate page, there is a single nonstandard utterance from Susan who says that the way Maud now lives at Briar, ‘just don’t seem right’, which could be a final reminder of the life Susan has left behind as she begins her new one with Maud. Also, the final chapter begins as the first one did with the words, ‘My name, in those days, was Susan Trinder’, but then Waters adds, ‘Now those days all came to an end’ (509). At this point there is a repeat of the reference to *Oliver Twist* when Susan refers to visiting Mrs Sucksby in jail: ‘Once I took her a sugar mouse, thinking she might remember the time she had put me in her bed and told me about Nancy from *Oliver Twist*’ (513). This, along with the use of the word ‘poke’ in the narrative, evokes a sense of Susan’s former life before she leaves it behind for ever.

When compared with a nineteenth century novelist like Dickens, Sarah Waters does little to represent the variety of speech used by the London under-class and the rural working-class. This may be due to the fact that modern media have made the reading public familiar with representations of the country’s regional and social varieties of language, if not the actual varieties themselves, without the need for any direct personal experience. Also, readers coming to the novel with a knowledge of Dickens will, in the first chapter, understand that the Dickensian underworld is being evoked through Waters’s use of Dickens’s criminal lexis as well as the descriptions of Mr Ibbs, Mrs Sucksby, their residence and their means of making a living. Waters does not need to use as detailed a literary dialect as Dickens: her readers can ‘perform’¹⁴⁹ Cockney dialect, given the linguistic prompts that she gives. Furthermore, attitudes to both real and literary dialect have changed since Dickens was writing. The nineteenth century, perhaps more than any other, was the period in which novelists took pains to represent nonstandard varieties and this inclusion of dialect was popular with readers. Dickens’s novels were originally published in serial form and could therefore be adapted according to their public and critical reception. The immense success of the nonstandard-speaking Sam Weller, as detailed by Hakala,¹⁵⁰ is testament to the Victorian enjoyment of literary dialect. Modern readers do not necessarily want the task of deciphering relatively dense passages of dialect.

Waters’s decision to avoid extensive use of nonstandard English enables the reader to progress swiftly through *Fingersmith*, enjoying its clever plot; but there are enough marked forms to manipulate our perception of the protagonists, playing on the idea

¹⁴⁹ Alexandra Jaffe and Shana Walton, ‘The Voices People Read: Orthography and the Representation of Non-standard Speech’, *Journal of Socio-linguistics*, 4.4 (2000), 561-87 (pp.579).

¹⁵⁰ Taryn Hakala ‘Working Dialect’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 2010), p. 144-63.

that, even today, most readers will judge characters based on their linguistic usage. Thus despite a comparative absence of marked forms, Waters's literary dialect is an integral part of the novel, aiding the various twists and turns in the plot as the identity of the two female protagonists is established and then destroyed. Whereas Dickens has Oliver Twist speak Standard English, giving the reader a clue about his true parentage, in *Fingersmith*, the use or absence of literary dialect generally works to disguise the protagonists' true identity from the reader so that the full force of the plot twist is felt. In the present day there are co-existing, yet contradictory views of nonstandard English, often held by the same person. On the one hand, we generally accept that a person's variety of speech is simply an indicator of where he or she grew up and has nothing to do with intelligence or morality; but there remains a sense that some linguistic usage is 'wrong' and open to ridicule by those who have the 'right' variety (as I detail in the next section). Waters skilfully exploits these conflicting views, and this is what makes the novel the success it is.

5. Michel Faber, *The Crimson Petal and the White* (2002)

i. Faber's Neo-Victorianism

Like *Fingersmith*, Michel Faber's *The Crimson Petal and the White* combines nineteenth century realism with a twenty-first century 'counterhistory': the protagonist, Sugar, is a prostitute who manages to escape the dark London underworld and achieve a degree of respectability as a governess. Faber does not employ a 'pre-text' or texts in the way that Waters does; yet the beginning of the novel leans heavily on the opening of Gissing's *Workers in the Dawn* (discussed in Section Two): "This city I am bringing you to is vast and intricate, and you have not been here before. You may imagine, from other stories you've read, that you know it well, but those stories flattered you as a friend, treating you as if you belonged". My immediate thought on reading this was precisely that I had been there before as the opening is strikingly reminiscent of *Workers in the Dawn* (1880) which begins: "Walk with me, reader, into Whitecross Street. It is Saturday night, the market night of the poor; also the one evening in the week which the weary toilers of our great city can devote to ease and recreation in the sweet assurance of a morrow unenslaved. Let us see how they spend this "Truce of God" ". Here we also have a narrator-persona who acts as a guide for an implied reader who is unfamiliar with the slum area being represented. The opening of Gissing's novel is set in the late 1850s which means that there would have been a temporal distance between the reader and the time being presented, albeit not as great a one as in Faber's novel. Writing in the late Victorian era, Gissing's realism is harsher than that of Dickens: the opening of the novel contains descriptions not just of abject poverty but of violent, drunken behaviour. Indeed, Gissing could be seen as writing a revised version of novels

such as *Oliver Twist* in the way that neo-Victorian novels do. I therefore thought that Faber's claim to be doing something new was unjustified and found myself refusing to step into the position of implied reader in the way that Joanna Gavins is unwilling to identify with the 'you' addressed in the novel *Half Asleep in Frog Pajamas* by Tim Robbins.¹⁵¹

After this initial similarity of the opening description, Faber gives the reader a detailed account of the prostitute Caroline carrying out her *douche* after her latest client has left. Although Gissing's realism is harsher than that of Dickens, there are no glimpses into the lives of prostitutes which compare with those given by Faber, even though Gissing includes characters who are prostitutes. So whilst I disagree with Faber that previous stories 'flattered you as a friend, treating you as if you belonged', it is fair to say that Faber provides descriptions of events that could not be included in even late-Victorian novels because of that time's social codes. Also, most of Faber's readers are unlikely to have read Gissing and are more likely to approach the novel with a knowledge of Dickens: Faber's implied reader is such a person. We should be aware, though, that the process of revision did not begin with the late twentieth- and early twenty-first century neo-Victorian novels; it was taking place within the Victorian period itself.

As well as the similarity between the opening of *The Crimson Petal and the White* and *Workers in the Dawn*, there are a number of direct references to Victorian writers and texts in Faber's novel. The inclusion of writers and works of the time helps to create the novel's realism; but, at the same time, Faber uses these references to challenge the realism of the Victorian texts. In a focalised passage, Faber shows Sugar's outrage as she thinks about the 'respectable novels politely calling for social reform', specifically Wilkie Collins's *The New Magdalen*, which Sugar considers 'A book to throw against the wall in anger' in its shying away from the presentation of the 'unprettified truth' of the lives of prostitutes. She wishes to write such an 'unprettified' novel herself (229).¹⁵² There is also a reference to Sugar's familiarity with *The Moonstone* (677); and a further, more indirect reference to Wilkie Collins is when Sugar appears as a 'woman in white' (288-9) and is taken by Agnes Rackham to be her guardian angel. *Jane Eyre* is also mentioned when a volume of the novel makes Agnes Rackham feel uncomfortable as she thinks about the mad wife being locked away (440) which is something Faber adapts in his plot of having William opt to send Agnes to an asylum. Later, Sugar thinks of houses in the novels of the 'Bell sisters' (504) when she first sees the Rackham home.

¹⁵¹ *Text World Theory: An Introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. 87.

¹⁵² Edinburgh: Canongate edition, 2011.

In the same way that Sugar is angered by Wilkie Collins's sanitised portrayal of the fallen woman, the work of Henry Mayhew is, to some extent, also called into question. Henry Rackham ventures into the slums to speak to the poor and learn about their plight so that he might be better qualified to become a clergyman. One man asks Henry, "You ain't a norfer, are ye[...]. A fellow as writes books about poor men that poor men can't read" (317-318). When Henry assures him that he is not an author, the man becomes more willing to talk to him. Here Faber problematises the nature of texts which address social issues: these texts, fiction and non-fiction are generally the work of educated, middle-class writers and cannot be read by the uneducated poor they aim to help; but the poor are unable to tell their own story as they are generally illiterate. There is a direct reference to Mayhew later when Mrs Fox, the widow whom Henry loves, asks, "You've read the Mayhew I lent you, then?" and he is able to reply that he has "done more than that" (404) by going into the slums and speaking to poor men and prostitutes. Faber has Henry Rackham do what Henry Mayhew did when researching his non-fictional *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851), a detailed account of which is given by Taryn Hakala in her 2010 PhD thesis, *Working Dialect*. Like Mayhew, Faber gives the poor a voice: the prostitute Caroline is able to tell her story in her own voice; but, as with Mayhew, that voice has to be framed by the voice of the middle-class author.

The problematic nature of giving a voice to the poor is also addressed through Sugar. Sugar has always wanted, if she were ever able, to 'help all the poor women in her profession' (410) by giving them food and blankets and also by telling their story: 'But I am their voice!' she thinks (411). Yet as Sugar moves away from Silver Street and begins to live in luxury as William's mistress, she questions, as pointed out by Sulmicki, whether she still has the right to be the representative of the poor: 'Sugar must confront a humiliating truth: the downtrodden may yearn to be heard, but if a voice from a more privileged sphere speaks on their behalf, they'll roll their eyes and jeer at the voice's accent' (411). Once again we have the inescapable problem of the poor not being able to tell their own story but wanting to have their story told by one of their own. Obviously, given that Faber's text is a modern novel, he is not campaigning for social justice and changes to the law in the way that Dickens and Frances Trollope were. Boyce and Rousselot make this point in their essay: 'Although it addresses serious issues, Faber's novel remains confined to the realm of the past, and therefore removed from the sphere of immediate change and action in the present'.¹⁵³ Perhaps what Faber is doing by drawing attention to the problem of poor peoples' stories being told by middle-class writers falls within the framework of neo-Victorian novels as revisions of nineteenth-century texts: he is reminding us that, although writers give a voice to the

¹⁵³ 'The Other Dickens: Neo-Victorian Appropriation and Adaptation,' *Neo-Victorian Studies*, 5:2 (2012), 1-11 (pp. 8).

poor, they select and edit their material to suit their own purposes, in the same way that writers of factual historical narratives are selective. Of course, Faber himself is such a writer.

ii. Literary Dialect in *The Crimson Petal and the White* (See Appendix i)

Like Sarah Waters's *Fingersmith* (2002), which was published in the same year, Faber's novel is concerned, to a large extent, with the lives of the London under-classes in the Victorian period (although Faber focusses on the lives of prostitutes and not thieves). Despite this similarity, the two writers take a different approach to the representation of nonstandard speech, with Faber using a greater range and density of marked forms than Waters, even though only his minor characters are dialect speakers; conversely in Waters's novel *Susan Trinder*, one of the two protagonists and first-person narrators, is given nonstandard language both in her direct speech and her narration of events. Waters relies on widespread use of the form *ain't* and a few nonstandard grammatical forms, along with thieves' slang, to create a sense of authenticity for her version of East London speech. The reader responds to these cues to read Cockney voices. It is mostly in terms of phonology that Faber seeks to represent London speech. The most notable absences from Waters's literary dialect are two features of pronunciation: h-dropping and the use of the elided *-in'* form, as in *buntin'*, *shootin'*, *fisbin'*. Faber uses both these forms widely and consistently throughout the novel to represent the speech of the prostitutes and different members of the servant and lower working classes. In Sugar's first meeting and conversation with Caroline, her prostitute friend, Caroline uses the marked forms *lookin'*, *doin'*, *buyin'*, *refusin'*, *talkin'*, *backin' out*, *bein'*, *knowin'*, as well as the noun *farvin'* (farthing). She is also shown to omit pronunciation of the /h/ phoneme at the beginnings of words: *'ere*, *'as*, *'ome*, *'owever*, *'alf*, *'ear*, *'e*, *'ave*, *'on*, *'ouse*, *'igb-class*, *'ope*, *'er*, *'undreds* (26-40). In employing these forms, Faber is aiming for a degree of realism as, presumably, a 'real life' version of Caroline would speak like this. What is worth noting is that, whilst Gissing used both these forms for his 'nether world' characters, Dickens often renders in full words beginning in *b* in the dialect of his Cockney characters, as can be seen in the direct speech of, for example, *Oliver Twist's* Bill Sikes (350) and *The Pickwick Papers's* Sam Weller (216-7).¹⁵⁴ In these passages, the speech of Sikes and Weller is represented with all initial /h/ phonemes present, which would be unlikely in 'real life' versions of such people. Although Dickens uses a number of respellings to indicate nonstandard pronunciation, it could be argued that when it comes to h-dropping, Faber achieves a greater degree of realism.

¹⁵⁴ Penguin Classics (1985) and Collins (1988) editions respectively.

In the passage cited above, Sam Weller is seen to over-compensate for elided h-forms (even though there are none in Dickens's representation of his speech), pronouncing obvious as the hyper-corrected *hobvious* when speaking to Mr Pickwick. In this way Dickens makes it clear that his character is aware of the social stigma associated with h-dropping; and the reader may, as a result, hear other words with an initial /h/ as missing that sound, even though the letter is present in the text, as it seems likely that a man who says 'hobvious' will also omit initial /h/ phonemes. Faber also has some of his minor characters -- a cab driver, a prostitute and a street sheet music seller -- use this feature, saying *haquainted*, *hignorant* and *haquaintance* respectively (85, 98, 720). This occurs when each is either addressing, or speaking in the hearing of a social superior and, again, shows an awareness of language's relation to social status. The form of the words also suggests this: for example, instead of saying to William Rackham that he does not know the area they are in, the cab driver says that he is not *haquainted* with it. Here Faber is using an established convention which resonates with a modern readership as it did with Victorian readers who would have been aware of the attitudes toward h-dropping and the hyper-correction of this.

Neither h-dropping nor the elided *-in'* form are specific to Cockney speech but are features of nonstandard or informal pronunciation in various parts of the country. However, Faber also represents TH-fronting, a more recent phenomenon, first evident in London and Bristol in the early nineteenth century¹⁵⁵, and one which is perhaps associated with typical or stereotypical London speech, as seen in the media and popular culture today. In the same section discussed above, where Caroline speaks to Sugar, there are the forms *'finkin'*, *fing*, *fanks*, *wiv*, *wivout* and *fink*. The cab driver, cited above, also uses the form *vese* (these) and a street beggar uses the form *Munver* (211). The cab driver's speech also contains a rare representation of a Cockney vowel sound, *plive* (place), possibly the only other one being *jest* (just) appearing in the speech of the same street beggar (212). These forms perhaps do more to create a sense of an authentic Cockney voice, especially for a modern readership which is accustomed to the representation of such voices in films, television dramas and soap operas. Thus two characters who are present for only one or two pages of the novel are put to good use by Faber in his creation of a credible voice for the London poor and working classes. Faber also follows an established tradition of literary dialect with the cab driver's word *pertickler* (particular) which is used by Dickens, for example in the speech of Abel Magwitch in Chapter One of *Great Expectations*, where it is rendered as *partickler*. Other

¹⁵⁵ Paul Kerswill 'Dialect Levelling and Geographical Diffusion in British English', in *Social Dialectology*, ed. by David Britain and Jenny Cheshire (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2003), pp.223-243 (pp.233-5).

phonetic spellings used by Faber indicate both initial and final elision, as in *fore* (before) and *an'* (and), although these are not specific to Cockney pronunciation.

In terms of grammar, Faber employs a few features which are used repeatedly and consistently by his minor under- and working-class characters, which are very much in evidence throughout the work of Dickens, Mrs Gaskell, Gissing, and even Frances Trollope, who does comparatively little to represent nonstandard speech. Firstly, there is the use of the double negative by Caroline and the other prostitutes, for example: 'don't know no better' (30); 'wouldn't do it for nobody' (73); 'You never had no one like me, ducks' (720). Then there is the wider use of nonstandard agreement of subject and verb, also in the prostitutes' speech and in that of the Rackhams' servant Janey too, for example: 'So they 'as their pound o' flesh, pays you well for it' (30); 'we was just leaving' (99); 'I tries to wash every dish the same' (257). The word *as* is used as a relative pronoun, again in the speech of Caroline and the other prostitutes, for example: 'those as ought to know better' (409); 'the name of a person as'd do what you ask' (73). The first person singular object pronoun *me* is frequently used as a possessive determiner, for example: 'I lost me nerve' (29); 'I should know me place' (30); 'I try me luck' (30). And, similarly, the third person plural object pronoun is used as a deictic determiner, for example when Caroline says, 'Some of them stairs are rotten' (487). Sometimes a flat adverb (an adjective used as adverb) is used, for example: 'You're looking awful well' (28); 'She yells soft' (122). Finally, the marked verb form *ain't* is used throughout the novel in the representation of the speech of Caroline and the other prostitutes, as well as that of Janey, the Rackhams' servant. This final form is perhaps the only one which has associations with specifically Cockney speech. All the other nonstandard grammatical forms can be identified in both the actual and the literary representations of speech from a number of geographical areas, not least the north of England. However, when combined with the phonetic re-spellings, they create a clear sense of a London voice.

What is notable is that Faber makes little use of London dialect lexis, with the possible exceptions of 'Gaw' (40) uttered by Caroline. Perhaps this is not particularly surprising, given that the literary dialect is already quite marked in terms of representing the pronunciation and the grammar of its speakers, and Faber may not have wanted to over-complicate things for his reader, thereby creating 'reader resistance'.¹⁵⁶ It is worth comparing Faber with Waters here: Waters's nonstandard lexis is the slang of the criminal under class which is used in *Oliver Twist*, and she uses this vocabulary to create a sense of authenticity for her version of Victorian East London; however, the sociolect of prostitutes, whilst it no doubt existed in Victorian London, did not make its way into

¹⁵⁶ Michael Toolan, 'Significations of Representing Dialect' in *Language and Literature*, 1:1 (1992), 29-46 (pp.34).

the literary dialect of Dickens or similar writers as the social mores of the time did not permit novelists to openly tackle issues such as prostitution. Thus Waters has a clear literary tradition she can follow, one which will be familiar to a modern reader with knowledge of *Oliver Twist* or even one of the many adaptations of the novel; but Faber has no such tradition on which to draw and the use of modern nonstandard lexis would probably damage the appearance of authenticity which he otherwise skilfully creates. He does, however, have his prostitute characters address potential customers as *ducks* (for example 95-8) which goes some way towards creating a sense of their voice.

I showed above that Waters's *Fingersmith* contains anachronistic use of taboo language and that this is done as a modern readership would expect there to be such language in the depiction of the London criminal underworld. Faber's novel is also full of taboo language such as *fuck* and *cunt*. Unlike Waters, he does not use these words as insults in characters' direct speech; instead they appear in both the narrative and in direct speech to denote their original referents: the sex act and the female genitals. By including a great number of taboo words but restricting their use to the literal, Faber manages at once to provide the kind of blunt realism a modern reader might expect in the treatment of such subject matter, and avoid anachronistic usage. An exception to this is when Caroline, on hearing of Henry Rackham's death cries 'Ah, no, fuck me, God damn it!' (481), the modern 'fuck me' juxtaposed with the blasphemous, and authentically Victorian 'God damn it'.

iii. Faber's use of Standard English and Literary Dialect

Perhaps the most important point to make about Faber's use of literary dialect is that it is completely absent in the representation of the direct speech of the main character, Sugar, a prostitute who has lived her life in London. Whilst Mrs Castaway, Sugar's mother and the madam at the brothel where she works, is presented as using Standard English in the few sections where she is given direct speech, it seems unlikely that her daughter has picked up no single Cockney form of speech. It could, therefore, be argued that despite his often brutal literary realism, Faber is continuing the Victorian convention of elevating the speech of a protagonist who would be expected to use dialectal forms in order to reflect a certain superiority of character. And Faber points out Sugar's superiority both in terms of her intellect and education, revealing her comparatively extensive reading, and her morality, as she shows concern for the children Christopher and Sophie as well as doing her best to take care of Agnes Rackham. Sugar's friend Caroline is shown to be kind-hearted, but not to the same extent, and she lacks Sugar's education. Furthermore, having been driven to prostitution by desperate poverty, Caroline now has no aspirations and no desire to leave her life, unlike Sugar

who is desperate to reinvent herself. In Chapter One Caroline watches local women going to their poorly-paid work in a jam factory and thinks, ‘What did God make cunts for, if not to save women from donkey-work?’(12). So, although she is a relatively minor character, Caroline has an important role to play in forming a contrast with Sugar, her nonstandard English being a means of highlighting that contrast for the reader.

Faber’s use of metalanguage also highlights the difference between Sugar and Caroline and initially presents Sugar as speaking differently from those around her. When the two first meet, which is when Sugar is first introduced to the reader, Sugar is described as speaking ‘in her sweet fancy vowels and scrupulous consonants’(27); and indeed the shop assistant who has been serving her mistakenly takes her to be a lady until she greets Caroline, who is clearly not a lady. Later, when Sugar first meets William Rackham, her voice is described as being ‘wholly free of class coarseness’ (99). This is shown in the rendering of her greeting to William as ‘Good evening, Mr Hunt’ (William is using an assumed name), compared with the other prostitute’s ‘Mr ‘Unt’(99). There are, however, suggestions that Sugar’s speech may not be quite as refined as it is first presented. Firstly, Sugar herself questions whether her voice has changed after she has moved from the Silver Street brothel and been established as William’s mistress in a grand modern apartment in Priory Close. The focalised narrative shows Sugar wondering whether she can hear ‘a subtle difference in the way her vowels sound today, compared to how they sounded before the Season. Or were they always as dulcet as this?’ (411). Because this section of the narrative moves to free indirect discourse, the reader cannot be sure whether there has been a change or whether Sugar only perceives her speech as having changed as a result of the changes in her environment. Later, Mrs Fox, the social campaigner, says, in response to Sugar’s comment that she has previously been a governess in Scotland, ‘“Although you don’t sound like a Scotchwoman -- more like a Londoner, I’d say” ’ (709). However, Mrs Fox is playing a game with Sugar here: unbeknown to Sugar, Mrs Fox is well aware of Sugar’s past as a London prostitute and the comment above could be more an attempt to get Sugar to reveal the truth rather than a genuine observation on her speech. But if we believe that Sugar does speak like a Londoner, Faber has made a choice to follow the Victorian convention and elevate her direct speech as part of his characterisation of her.

Elizabeth Rees draws a parallel between Sugar and *Oliver Twist*’s Nancy,¹⁵⁷ arguing that the way in which Nancy protects Oliver is comparable to Sugar’s feelings for Christopher, the small boy who does the domestic work at the Silver Street brothel, and her attempts to save both Agnes and Sophie Rackham. Rees adds that Dickens presents Nancy as having only ‘thieved’ for Fagin since she was a child as Victorian readers would

¹⁵⁷ Elizabeth Rees, ‘Dickensian Childhoods: Blighted Victorian Children in Michel Faber’s *The Crimson Petal and the White*’, *Neo-Victorian Studies*, 5.2 (2012), 104-128 (pp. 112-3).

have been outraged by any reference to prostitution and scenes taking place within brothels. Modern readers, though, may well infer that Nancy is a prostitute. Faber is not bound by the same constraints as Dickens, or indeed Gissing, and can therefore provide full details of Sugar's life as a prostitute; and although some readers may find some of these details disturbing, there has been no outrage at the content of the novel. Rees's concern is the representation of childhood and she argues that, 'by sharing lurid yet historically based details no reputable Victorian novel could ever include, Faber may even seem to have produced a more 'authentic' representation of children than Dickens did'(106). This view can also be applied to Faber's presentation of Sugar's life in comparison with Dickens's presentation of Nancy's life: the graphic depiction of the sex industry is part of the novel's realism; and that realism is evident throughout modern culture, not least in the various 'hard-hitting' television dramas which are now broadcast.

Whilst critics such as Norman Page¹⁵⁸ have pointed out the lack of realism in the way in which Oliver's speech is rendered, what is perhaps more significant is that Nancy's speech is represented almost entirely in Standard English. This, therefore, is another similarity between Sugar and Nancy. When Nancy first speaks, Dickens includes some marked forms in her conversation with Bill Sikes and Fagin: ' "it's no use a-trying it on, Fagin" '; ' "And I don't want 'em to neither" ' (139). The a-affixation, the double negative and the elided form of *them* are not specific to Cockney speech, but serve to create an impression of such speech when given in the context of Fagin's den of thieves. Thereafter, Nancy's speech is rendered in Standard English. A notable example occurs in Chapter Thirty-Nine when Nancy is trying to gain access to see Miss Maylie to warn her of the plot against Oliver, and reluctant servants are barring her entry. She tells the servants, ' "That a young woman earnestly asks to speak to Miss Maylie alone[.]and that if the lady will only hear the first word she has to say, she will know whether to hear her business or to have her turned out of door as an impostor" ' (360). This standard speech contrasts with that of the housemaids, one of whom comments that ' "Brass can do better than the gold what has stood the fire" '. During this exchange, although Nancy's physical appearance marks her as inferior, her eloquent standard speech and the moral task she has taken on, at great personal risk, give her superiority over the servants.

One exception to the use of standard forms in Nancy's direct speech is presented as a deliberate choice on the part of the character as an act to reassure Sikes and Fagin that she is not plotting against them: 'Miss Nancy burst into a loud laugh; and, swallowing a glass of brandy, shook her head with an air of defiance, and burst into sundry exclamations of 'Keep the game a-going!' 'Never say die!' and the like. These seemed to

¹⁵⁸ Norman Page, *Speech in the English Novel*, 2nd edn (London: Macmillan, 1988), p.104.

have the effect of re-assuring both gentlemen' (191). Dickens presents Nancy as consciously assuming the behaviour of 'one of the gang' -- drinking brandy and trotting out familiar phrases -- in order to hide the fact that she is beginning to plan to save Oliver. Yet, despite the fact that Nancy has a very different moral code from those around her, and, like Sugar, she is literate (409), she is unable to leave them and start anew, not because she lacks the opportunity but because her ties to the people and the way of life are too strong to be broken. She says, '“I am chained to my old life. I loathe and hate it now, but I cannot leave it”' (415). Dickens's metaphor here suggests the impossibility of someone like Nancy being socially mobile and perhaps caters to the views of his Victorian readership. As Elizabeth Rees states, Faber allows Sugar to reinvent herself as a respectable woman which is something never granted to Dickens's fallen women; and Audrey Jaffe¹⁵⁹ argues that Mrs Gaskell's *Ruth* (1853) acknowledges that 'sympathy for the fallen woman as a fallen woman is impossible to achieve' with Victorian readers. Faber's readership is different; and he writes at a time when social change has led to a greater acceptance of social mobility, such that his realism can accommodate a prostitute becoming a governess.

Although Dickens does not grant Nancy an escape from Fagin and Sikes, his representation of her speech as mostly standard, along with her protection of Oliver at the cost of her life, would probably garner at least some sympathy from a Victorian readership. That Dickens may have felt it prudent to keep Nancy's speech largely standard is not surprising given Victorian attitudes to language;¹⁶⁰ but perhaps it is surprising that Faber uses Standard English for Sugar's speech in an age when we are more accepting of linguistic differences, as seen, for example, in the choice of BBC television and radio presenters. There is a degree of uncertainty as to whether the fictional reality is that Sugar speaks Standard English or a marked London variety, but Faber's choice of Standard English to represent her speech might suggest an awareness that, even today there remain prejudices against nonstandard varieties which could limit the sympathy felt by the reader for Sugar if her speech contained marked forms. Sugar reinvents herself as a respectable governess; and it would seem that such social mobility is possible and, moreover, accepted by the reader, because she is seen to speak the prestige variety of English.

As I stated above, Caroline has the longest sections of nonstandard direct speech; but her speech is not entirely consistent, at least not according to the metalinguistic comments on her pronunciation. When Henry Rackham first meets Caroline whilst visiting the slums to speak to the poor, he notes that 'Her speech is common, but not

¹⁵⁹ *Scenes of Sympathy: Identity and Representation in Victorian Fiction* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), p.92.

¹⁶⁰ See Lynda Mugglestone, *Talking Proper* (Oxford, 2003) for a full account.

Cockney: possibly she's a ruined maidservant from the country' (324); and indeed Caroline is originally from Grassington in Yorkshire. One noteworthy feature of her speech is that she uses the word *summat* instead of *something* (326) which, as I stated in Section One, is a form found in various parts of the country including Yorkshire, but not in London. Later, when Henry sees Caroline for the second time, he notices a change: 'And why is her Cockney accent so strong? Last time they spoke, there was a Northern cadence to it' (378); but by the end of this second conversation with Henry, 'her weariness of so much talking has brought her Northern accent once more to the fore' (382). We realise, therefore, that Caroline's Cockney accent is assumed, or at least exaggerated. The suggestion is that Caroline uses the accent as a protective shield, a way of presenting herself as a hardened prostitute, especially when she might be in danger of experiencing genuine feelings for someone, which she does for Henry Rackham (481). The accent emphasises the distance between herself and Henry and in doing so helps to avoid any feelings which, as a prostitute, she cannot afford to have. This is comparable to *Oliver Twist's* Nancy adopting a more marked style of speech when seeking to reassure Sikes and Fagin that she is still 'one of the gang': Nancy is trying to close the distance between herself and her interlocutors, or converge, whereas Caroline is increasing the distance between herself and Henry, or diverging, but they use the same assumed language. There is an early indication that Caroline modifies her speech in this way when, in her initial conversation with Sugar, she is described as speaking in 'a nobody's fool voice' (39) when speaking in marked language about how to avoid being 'fleeced.'

Faber's collection of short stories, *The Apple: Crimson Petal Stories* (2006),¹⁶¹ which includes both sequels and prequels to the stories of some of the characters in the novel, tells of a prostitute whose speech has changed. Clara features briefly in the novel as Agnes Rackham's maid, her speech represented in Standard English, at the start of Chapter Eight, for example. In the short story, 'Clara and the Rat Man', after she has lost her job and been forced into prostitution, Clara's speech becomes more Cockney. The metalinguistic commentary on her dialect is worth quoting in full:

Even her way of speaking sounded less well-educated, more common now than when she was a in a cosy middle-class house, as though the grime of street life had soiled her tongue, coarsening her vowels, nibbling the consonants away. The effort of refraining from saying 'ain't', or of avoiding double negatives, seemed too wearisome now that there was no-one to impress. Only twelve months backwards in time, dressed in stiff calico and clutching an impressive set of silvery keys, she had dealt with tradesmen and bakers' boys at the back door of her mistress's house, and had felt herself superior to them as soon as they opened their mouths. The smallest difference of intonation served to

¹⁶¹ Edinburgh: Canongate.

define her place above them on the ladder. But she had descended that ladder with dizzying speed. (22)¹⁶²

Like Caroline, Clara's speech has changed now that she has become a prostitute living in London's slums. However, unlike Caroline, who seems to assume the Cockney variety as a means of self-protection, Clara seems to have slipped into using this variety as, given that she is now a 'fallen' woman, there seems to be no point in speaking 'properly'. Thus the short story passes judgement on the Cockney variety, equating its use with an immoral way of life. The narrative is focalised and so there is some uncertainty as to whether the view of Clara's pronunciation as a 'coarse' and 'soiled' form of speech is that of Clara herself or the author-narrator. Presenting the Cockney dialect as dirty and indicative of the lowest group on society's ladder is an attitude which was prevalent in the nineteenth century, as I discussed above. Whilst Faber revises Victorian texts by telling the stories of those who have previously not been given a voice, including the now-acceptable plot of a prostitute becoming a governess, the attitude towards nonstandard English, expressed above, has not been modernised. Like the decision to represent Sugar's speech in Standard English, the metalanguage above may reflect the fact that, despite the many changes in society, there is still prejudice against certain forms of speech and a sense of a rank order of varieties. The difference here, though, is that Faber himself may be expressing a view of Cockney as 'coarse' and 'soiled'.

That Faber wrote *The Apple: Crimson Petal Stories* is testament to the success of *The Crimson Petal and the White*, in particular the way in which readers engaged with the characters as real people. In the novel, Faber provides no neat endings to anyone's story, perhaps to reflect the fact that in life there are no carefully plotted endings and we often lose contact with people, therefore missing the ends of their stories. But there was such a demand to know more of Sugar and the other characters in the novel that Faber published the short stories, which still leave many questions unanswered but do provide further information about some of the novel's characters. In the preface to the collection Faber prints some of the letters he received from readers after they had completed the novel. One reads, 'And where did Sugar take Sophie off to anyhow'; another, 'Just before I end this letter, please tell me: where did Sugar go????? Did she indeed bring the child back to her mother????? What happens to them? You must write a sequel'; and another, 'After finishing at 1 a.m., I spent the rest of the night wondering what happened to Sugar, Agnes and William, the cad. You can't leave me hanging; please issue a news bulletin regarding their fates.' These letters show that literary realism is alive and well and in demand. Whilst 'You must write a sequel' shows that people are aware of the fiction of the text, they respond to the characters as if they are real people

¹⁶² Canongate edition, 2011.

in the way that has been detailed by scholars such as Lisa Zunshine.¹⁶³ The respondent who asks Faber for ‘a news bulletin’ seems to be blurring the boundary between fiction and reality.

Perhaps the best comment on the effect of Faber’s realism comes from an Amazon customer who reviews *The Apple: Crimson Petal Stories*:

The Crimson Petal and the White has to be one of my favourite books of all time[...] When the book was over, I felt bereft. Not due to the admittedly astonishing open-end to the story, which I loved, but the world in which I had inhabited for those days had been riven away from me and I was reluctantly falling back into reality. The Crimson Petal and the White is one of those books where the detail of the locations and the people are so precise they leave an indelible stain upon your imagination and they never leave you[...] in the final story of this collection, we do have a joyous insight into one particular character's future to allay any fears we, as a reader, may have had for someone we began to care about as dearly as we would a real friend or family member.¹⁶⁴

This reader is clearly aware of the text’s fiction, but, for him, as for many others, the detail included creates the temporary belief in the world and the characters presented. This means that the reader is able to ‘inhabit’ this world and experience an emotional response to the characters, as detailed by critics such as Suzanne Keen.¹⁶⁵ Indeed, the extensive use of question marks in the letter Faber includes in the short story collection suggests a highly emotional response to the characters and the need to know what happened to them. The idea of readers responding emotionally to characters is something I consider in more detail in Section Three.

6. Lynn Shepherd, *Tom-All-Along's* (2012)

i. Shepherd’s Neo-Victorianism

Lynn Shepherd’s *Tom-All-Along's* is a more direct re-writing of a Victorian novel, namely Dickens’s *Bleak House* (1853). Published in 2012, *Tom-All-Along's*, is a detective story which re-writes *Bleak House* by including characters and plot details which would not have been permissible in a text written in the Victorian era. The novel also incorporates elements of the plot of Wilkie Collins’s *The Woman In White* (1860). Shepherd’s hero, Charles Maddox, investigates a case of his creator’s invention, but this case is skilfully interwoven with the plot of *Bleak House* and features characters from that novel. Thus *Tom-All-Along's* is unlike the neo-Victorian novels I discuss above: Faber’s *The Crimson Petal and the White* has no ‘pre-text’ as such; and whilst Waters’s *Fingersmith* makes use of

¹⁶³ Lisa Zunshine, *Why We Read Fiction: Theory of Mind and the Novel* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2006).

¹⁶⁴ <www.amazon.co.uk> [2nd June 2015].

¹⁶⁵ Suzanne Keen, ‘A Theory of Narrative Empathy’, *Narrative*, 14.3 (2006), 207-36.

the identity-swap plot of *The Woman In White* and has characters which are broadly comparable to those in *Oliver Twist*, both plot details and characters are Waters's own.

Summing up the lengthy *Bleak House*, which was originally published as a monthly serial between 1852 and 1853, is not easy, given the complexity of its plot and its enormous cast of characters. In part, it is social commentary, a satire on the court system and the inability of the courts and the government to look after the poor. 'Jarndyce versus Jarndyce', which ruins characters physically, mentally and financially, is based on Dickens's knowledge of a true case which took decades to resolve.¹⁶⁶ And, at the end of Chapter 47, Dickens uses the death of Jo the crossing-sweep to make his most overt criticism of the country's institutions: 'Dead, your Majesty. Dead my lords and gentlemen. Dead Right Reverends and Wrong Reverends of every order'. The novel is also the story of a young, illegitimate girl, Esther Summerson, who, after an unpleasant early life, becomes a force for good in the lives of others and is ultimately rewarded by her marriage to the novel's handsome young hero, Allan Woodcourt. No doubt Dickens was including this aspect of the plot when he stated in the preface to the first edition, 'I have purposely dwelt upon the romantic side of familiar things'. However, Dickens does not explain what he means by 'romantic' and so it is difficult to be completely sure about what he is referring to in the statement above. J.A. Cuddon's *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*¹⁶⁷ cites the American scholar A. O. Lovejoy stating that 'the word 'romantic' has come to mean so many things that, by itself, it means nothing at all'. Of the possible synonyms then given, perhaps the ones in Dickens's mind as he wrote the above were 'heroic', 'extraordinary' or 'unreal', the novel being linked with ancient stories of the quest and the search for truth and justice. If this were the case, it should be pointed out that elsewhere in this preface Dickens takes pains to defend his work from accusations of being unrealistic: for example he cites evidence to support the possibility of spontaneous human combustion, as well as noting that 'Jarndyce versus Jarndyce' is based on a real Chancery suit. Thus the novel can be seen as a mix of the real and the romantic or 'extraordinary'.

The third component part of the novel is the detective or mystery story. *Bleak House* contains a number of mysteries to be worked out by various characters, but also by the reader: the reason for Lady Dedlock's interest in the penniless Nemo; Esther's birth; the murder of Tulkinghorn; the consequences for Lady Dedlock after she is revealed to be Esther's mother. Dickens introduces a police detective, Mr Bucket, to solve some of these mysteries, but other characters, especially Mr Guppy, the clerk, do much unofficial detective work. The lives of the various characters and the different plots within *Bleak House* are seen to be connected as the mysteries are gradually solved. It is the detective

¹⁶⁶ Preface to the first edition, re-printed in the Penguin Classics edition, 1987.

¹⁶⁷ Third Edition (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).

story element of the novel which provides both the inspiration and the basis of Shepherd's *Tom-All-Alone's*. In the acknowledgements, she states: 'I hope that anyone who loves Dickens as much as I do will enjoy seeing how I have interleaved my own mystery with the characters and episodes of his novel'. What is important is that Shepherd is writing for a readership familiar with *Bleak House*, people sufficiently conversant with its plot and characters to be able to identify similarities to, and departures from, his work.

She makes this clear from the outset, with a prologue which begins, as her target reader will know, in exactly the same way as the opening of *Bleak House*: 'London. Michaelmas term lately begun and the Lord Chancellor sitting in Lincoln's Inn. Implacable November weather.' The next sentence, however, is a departure from the original: whereas Dickens writes 'As much mud in the streets as if the waters had but newly retired from the face of the earth'; Shepherd alters this to 'As much mud in the streets as in a Flanders field, and almost as little hope, at least for some.' This anachronistic reference to the First World War resonates with a modern reader, as does the direct reference to Dickens later in the same paragraph: 'If a single man can ever be said to stand for a city, then it is this city, in this year, and the name of that man is Charles Dickens'. In a similar way to that in which Faber begins *The Crimson Petal and the White*, Shepherd's narrator then warns the reader that this is not a tale of 'carol singers and jolly old gentlemen' and acts as the reader's guide as the story moves into the London underworld: 'keep your pocket-book close as we go -- this part of town is silent with thieves and strident with drunks'. The present tense and direct address to the reader create a sense of immediacy, although perhaps the choice of 'pocket book' seems rather strange given that Shepherd is addressing a twenty-first century reader.

Other sections of the novel mirror those in Dickens's work: the shooting of Tulkington; the death of Jo the crossing-sweep; and the arrest of Trooper George. These links with *Bleak House* are crucial to the reader's response to the text: although we are warned that the tale will not be a heart-warming Dickensian one, we are still led to assume that situations featured in *Tom-All-Alone's* are as they appear in *Bleak House*, only to find that we have been misled, as the story proves to be one of sexual abuse and gruesome murder.

Dickens and Wilkie Collins make a cameo appearance in the novel as two good Samaritans who pull the hero, Charles Maddox from the path of an oncoming carriage. They are unnamed but Shepherd's target reader will recognise them from her description: they are 'writers of some note, as well as friends' (298).¹⁶⁸ There follows an ironic joke: 'I would not be at all surprised to find one of them making good literary use

¹⁶⁸ London: Corsair edition, 2012.

of it [saving Charles Maddox] one day or another'. Of course, the reverse is true: the whole of *Tom-All-Along's* is Shepherd 'making good literary use of *Bleak House* and *The Woman In White*, and this joke is a playful way of acknowledging her indebtedness to them.

In creating her own detective story, Shepherd rewrites the story of Esther Summerson. In Dickens's novel Esther narrates approximately half the total number of chapters in the past tense from a point in the future when she has been happily married to Allan Woodcourt for seven years. A third person present tense narrator is used for the remaining chapters. *Tom-All-Along's* follows the same pattern, although much more of the novel is given to the third person present tense narrator. *Bleak House* which appears as 'Solitary House' is eventually revealed to be a private lunatic asylum where some of the patients, 'Hester' included, are young girls who are the victims of sexual abuse, usually at the hands of family members. Charles Maddox uncovers the truth during his investigation to find a missing child, an investigation which becomes linked to work he is doing for the lawyer Tulkinghorn. The way in which Shepherd uses characters from *Bleak House* leads the reader, at least initially, to assume that they and Solitary House itself are as they appear in Dickens's novel, but we gradually realise that this is not the case.

Shepherd creates these assumptions by her skilful use and adaptation of Dickens's characters, putting them into two different categories. Firstly, there are those who are taken directly from *Bleak House*: Tulkinghorn, Inspector Bucket, Trooper George, Phil Squod, Allan Woodcourt and Jo the crossing-sweep. Sir Leicester and Lady Dedlock are also mentioned, although Maddox has no contact with them, and Lady Dedlock's French maid Hortense appears as an unnamed French woman. All these characters are recognisable as Dickens's creations and the situations in which we see them are either the same as those in *Bleak House* or credible as ones which could have occurred within that same fictional world. Shepherd then has a second set of characters who also appear in *Bleak House* and are recognised by the reader but are renamed in her novel: Esther Summerson becomes Hester; Mr Jarndyce becomes Mr Jarvis; Ada Clare becomes Clara; Richard Carstone becomes Roderick Cawston (both abbreviated to Rick); Miss Flite becomes Miss Flint; and Charley Neckett becomes Alice Carley, although she is known only as Carley until the end of the novel. It becomes apparent that Shepherd alters the names of these characters as she alters their fictional reality: their stories are not the same as they are in Dickens's novel. Most significantly, Clara and Hester are both mentally unstable victims of abuse who have been committed to Mr Jarvis's asylum where they each have a child. Shepherd also includes a policeman, Sam Wheeler, who is 'Cockney chipper and quick as ginger' (9) and recognisable as an incarnation of Sam Weller from *The Pickwick Papers*. To these she adds her own creations, most importantly

her hero and the members of his household as well as prostitutes who act as his informants.

It is Hester's narrative which misleads the reader as it opens in exactly the same way as it does in *Bleak House*: 'I have a great deal of difficulty in beginning to write my portion of these pages, for I know I am not clever. I always knew that'(62). Thereafter there are some slight differences between the remainder of the opening paragraphs, but, like Esther, Hester tells of how she talked to her doll as a young child. Given this similarity, the reader initially views Hester as being the same character as Esther, even though we soon learn that the young Hester lived with her mother until her premature death, unlike Esther who was brought up by her cruel godmother. The self-effacing narrative voice of Dickens's Esther is cleverly turned into the voice of a mentally unstable victim of abuse, something we do not initially realise as Shepherd draws an immediate parallel between Esther and Hester. In the first chapter of her narrative, Dickens's Esther explains her feelings toward her godmother, the woman who brought her up: 'I never loved my godmother as I ought to have loved her, and as I felt I must have loved her if I had been a better girl'(63). In Shepherd's novel, Hester was initially brought up by her mother and becomes emotional as she remembers her: 'I think of her shining face[...]her skin so pale and her eyes so bright! It is my weakness, I know, but I cannot help it. But there! I have composed myself again now, and can go on with my story' (35). There is a clear contrast between the calm control of Esther's voice and the emotion of Hester's. At first we may account for this as the difference between one who did not love the person of whom she writes and another who did; but, on re-reading, we realise that Hester's emotional state, indicated by the exclamations, is a sign of her mental illness.

Also, the early references to the 'gentlemen'(34) who visited her mother provide an initial clue that Hester is an unreliable narrator. However, this is likely to be viewed as youthful innocence rather than evidence of an unsound mind; we take the suggestion that Hester's mother was a prostitute as Shepherd's twenty-first century realism rather than realising the full extent of the changes she has made to *Bleak House*'s Esther. An erroneous view of Hester continues to be supported by the text when we are told that Carley comes to work as Hester's maid, just as Charley Neckett does in *Bleak House*. Also, Miss Flint, who appears very much as Miss Flite does, is declared 'Quite mad!' (104) by Clara. Eventually, clues such as Mr Jarvis's reference to Hester's 'fellow boarders' (41) bring about the realisation that Solitary House is a mental institution. For readers familiar with *The Woman In White*, a significant point which leads to this realisation is the presence of Anne Catherick. Initially only referred to as 'Anne', this character is likely to be overlooked, but an unnamed visitor she receives is clearly Marian Halcombe: 'her skin was swarthy, her forehead low, and her features almost masculine'

(265). This description, along with the information that ‘Anne had recently returned to our company after an absence of some months’ brings the plot of *The Woman In White* into the novel and confirms that Hester is institutionalised. Carley is her nurse not her maid. However, it is not until Charles Maddox concludes his investigation at the end of the novel that the full details of Hester’s abuse are revealed.

Unlike Esther, Hester narrates only a small section of the novel, which is necessary to keep the reader unaware of the full ‘truth’ until the novel reaches its conclusion. Keeping Hester’s narrative to a minimum and including incidents at Solitary House which are apparently the same as ones at *Bleak House*, along with Shepherd’s ability to recreate Esther’s voice, allows this withholding of the ‘truth’, which is a feature of the detective story. Shepherd’s use of an unreliable narrator to keep the reader in the dark is broadly comparable with the way in which Sarah Waters’s *Fingersmith* is written. The revelation in *Fingersmith* is, however, much more sudden and shocking; in *Tom-All-Along’s* the narrative provides clues along the way, in keeping with the mystery story genre where the reader also acts as detective.

ii. Shepherd’s Use of Literary Dialect (See Appendix i)

Having looked at how Shepherd appropriates the voice of Esther Summerson, I will now, firstly, analyse the way in which she imitates the voices of four dialect speakers featured in *Bleak House*: Jo the crossing-sweep, Trooper George and his employee Phil Squod and Inspector Bucket. Unlike the characters created by Waters and Faber, these characters all appear as they do in *Bleak House*, hence the use of the same name. In creating their speech Shepherd’s use of literary dialect is taken directly from Dickens and follows the conventions in use during the nineteenth century. Having said that, I will show that there are some differences between the styles of speech of the two Inspector Buckets which, I believe, are the result of Shepherd grafting modern ideas about the detective story genre, and in particular the representation of senior policemen, onto Dickens’s character. To develop this argument, I will compare Shepherd’s Inspector Bucket with other policemen in the novel and with its hero. I will then look at a revised version of a fifth Dickens character, the nonstandard speaker Charley Neckett in *Bleak House* who appears as the Standard English speaker Alice Carley in *Tom-All-Along’s*; this analysis will further my argument that Shepherd projects modern ideas about education and profession through her use of literary dialect. Finally, I will consider the nonstandard speech of Shepherd’s own figures: how this differs from that of the Dickensian characters because they are modern creations.

Jo makes only a very brief appearance in *Tom-All-Along’s* (256-9), but, as in Dickens’s novel, he has information which is crucial to solving a mystery. It is Jo’s death that

Shepherd writes into her novel, and he dies, as he does in *Bleak House*, whilst being cared for by Allan Woodcourt. She inserts an extra 'scene' in which Charles Maddox questions Jo, just before his death, about a body he discovered a year earlier. As Jo in *Tom-All-Alone's* is the same Jo as in *Bleak House*, Shepherd uses the literary dialect used by Dickens to represent his speech, which is the most marked of any character in either novel. As Jo confuses the woman Charles Maddox asks about with the lady with 'the wale and the bonnet and the gownd' (256) whom he encounters in the plot of *Bleak House*, the content as well as the form of his utterances mirrors the speech of Dickens's character. In terms of the representation of Cockney pronunciation Shepherd uses the *v/w* reversal as seen in Dickens, not just in the speech of Jo but in that of others, most notably Sam Weller. As I show in the introduction, this feature of Cockney speech died out, both in reality and in literary representations by the end of the nineteenth century. It is not a feature used by either Waters in *Fingersmith* or by Faber in *The Crimson Petal and the White*; Shepherd takes a more traditional approach, using *v/w* reversal in order to remain true to Dickens's original characterisation. Similarly, Shepherd imitates Dickens's use of a number of seemingly-outdated eye-dialect features such as *wos*, *ses*, *wot*, which, again, are not present in either *Fingersmith* or *The Crimson Petal and the White*. Eye dialect is defined by Krapp as respellings which make no difference to the pronunciation of words but provide 'obvious hints that the general tone of the speech is to be felt as something different from the tone of conventional speech'.¹⁶⁹ Other features of pronunciation taken from Dickens are the elided *-in'* forms as in *berryin-ground* as well as the representation of Cockney vowel sounds: Dickens uses *horsepittle* (hospital, 690), *nixt* (next, 687), *unkiver* (uncover, 278), *jist* (just, 277) and *yit* (yet, 702);¹⁷⁰ Shepherd uses *kip* (keep) and *yit* (yet). She also repeats Dickens's use of the forms *dustn't* and *dusn't* when Jo explains, as he does in *Bleak House* (689), that he daren't name Inspector Bucket as the one who told him to 'move on'. Shepherd does not include any h-dropping in the speech of her Jo, which Dickens does in the speech of his, although this is done inconsistently and there is comparatively little of it, the instances being found in Chapter 19 (321). It is probably because Shepherd adapts a later scene, one where h-dropping does not feature, that her Jo does not use this particular marked form. One feature she does use, which Dickens does not is the TH-fronted, *wiv* (with). This is something seen in more modern representations of Cockney speech as in Michael Faber's *The Crimson Petal and the White* and, although it may resonate with a modern reader, seems out of place here given that Shepherd has taken care to imitate Dickens's literary dialect in other ways.

¹⁶⁹ George Philip Krapp (1926), 'The Psychology of Dialect Writing', in *A Various Language: Perspectives on American Dialects*, ed. by Juanita V. Williamson and Virginia M. Burke (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1971), pp.24.

¹⁷⁰ Penguin Classics edition, 1987.

In terms of grammar, Shepherd is true to the original, using nonstandard subject-verb agreement as in *I done it, I knows* and *it were near the berryin-ground*; the forms *ain't* and *an't*; *as* as a relative pronoun, for example 'lady[...]as sed she was a servant'; and repeated use of the double negative, especially in Jo's refrain *I don't know nothink*. The form *t'other* is also used and there are several examples of *a*-affixation, including *a-hoping*. One thing Dickens occasionally does, which Shepherd does not, is give Jo some nonstandard lexis such as *fen larks* (no tricks, 277). This may well be because her Jo is in the story for only four pages where he is physically and mentally exhausted and about to die and, as with *h-dropping*, there is no nonstandard lexis at this point in *Bleak House*. Dickens uses nonstandard lexis to present Jo as a knowing Cockney at the point in the story before he becomes weak and vulnerable as a result of being hounded by Inspector Bucket. He uses Jo to symbolise the poor and neglected who die because government institutions do not take sufficient care of them. Shepherd's Jo is used to develop the plot by providing the hero with information; he is not such a symbolic character as social care is considerably more advanced in twenty-first century Britain. But although Shepherd is writing a detective story, not a work which is, in part, an appeal for social justice, she does not completely ignore this aspect of Dickens's novel: she has Allan Woodcourt tell Charles Maddox, with bitterness, that he found Jo "all in rage and cowering against a wall, with a hand over his face as if the only thing life has ever dealt him are blows[...]Not so much a human being as a rat, or a stray dog." This is an echo of Woodcourt's thoughts at the start of Chapter 47 in *Bleak House* when he is trying to find a lodging for Jo. Also, Henry Mayhew makes a cameo appearance in the novel (200): he is in a public house, making detailed notes as he listens to a local man talk about the practice of 'rat-matches'. Readers may know that Mayhew published the influential *London Labour and the London Poor* in 1851 and so this cameo appearance is a reminder of the social purpose of some Victorian texts.

Dickens's Trooper George and Phil Squod are also employed by Shepherd and are presented in her novel as they are in *Bleak House*: the trooper is an ex-serviceman who runs a shooting gallery in Leicester Square and his debts cause him to be one of the suspects in the case of Tulkinghorn's shooting; Phil Squod is his loyal employee. In *Tom-All-Along's*, as in *Bleak House*, the trooper's speech is represented mostly using Standard English with the occasional marked form. Dickens has his character use the form *an't* (350), the elided forms *'em* (349) and *'prentices* (397), and the nonstandard subject-verb agreement in 'It don't suit me' (428) and 'he don't know' (432). George repeats *I am one of the Roughts* (397, 428), but his speech suggests otherwise, especially when compared with that of Phil Squod who was found destitute by George and given a home and employment. At the beginning of Chapter 26, Dickens gives Phil extended passages of nonstandard direct speech as he tells the story of his past. Marked forms used include:

nonstandard subject-verb agreement and other marked verb forms; elided forms; a-affixation; *ain't*; *w/v* substitution; and *nothink*. These features, the last two in particular, link *Bleak House's* Phil and Jo, as does their similarity in being destitute and given shelter by George: they are the poorest and most uneducated in society, as is reflected in the representation of their direct speech. George, by contrast, has some education and, although he suffers from money worries, he is not one of the poorest class of character in *Bleak House* so his speech is much more standard. Shepherd follows Dickens's example and gives her trooper occasional nonstandard subject-verb agreement, as in 'He were brought here', and the use of *as* as a relative pronoun (254). Her Phil Squod makes only the briefest of appearances and has very little direct speech but he does use *gw'nor* to refer to George in the same way that Dickens's character uses *gw'ner*. As with Jo the crossing-sweep, because the characters are the same as the ones in *Bleak House*, their direct speech is represented in the same way. But because the Phil in *Tom-All-Alone's* hardly features, Jo's nonstandard speech is the only example of its kind and is used to mark him and him alone as the poorest and most uneducated member of society. Furthermore, because Shepherd uses broadly the same literary dialect in the representation of Jo's speech as does Dickens, he is contextualised as a nineteenth century figure: the poor, uneducated, destitute child who was seen in the era before compulsory education and the welfare state and no longer exists in modern London.

Even though he is the same character in *Tom-All-Alone's* as he is in *Bleak House*, Shepherd's Inspector Bucket does not speak in exactly the same way as his predecessor. Dickens uses a wide variety of marked forms in Inspector Bucket's direct speech and does so from the outset, his first utterance containing the nonstandard subject-verb agreement 'if Mr Snagsby don't object' and the term *lay* meaning occupation (361). Bucket is seen in the company of Tulkinghorn and the contrast between that character's Standard English and Bucket's marked forms present him as having had less formal education, but at the same time being knowledgeable about the ways of the London streets and therefore an effective detective. Throughout the novel, other nonstandard forms used in Bucket's direct speech are: a-affixation; the forms *an't* and *ain't*; *v/w* substitution in the word *violinceller* (728); various elided forms including 'em and *for'ard*; double negatives; *as* as a relative pronoun; *t'other* (796); omission of the plural *s* morpheme as in 'a thousand pound and a hundred pound' (823) and a number of representations of Cockney pronunciation such as *Gammon* (come on, 405), *arter* (after, 733) and *theyater* (theatre, 795). There is the continued use of marked verb forms and colloquial lexis such as *waxy* (angry, 408).

Dickens's Inspector Bucket's speech is inconsistent such that the character seems to be adapting his style of speech to converge with his interlocutor, even though he never speaks entirely in Standard English. For example his long passages of direct speech in

Chapter 54, when explaining the facts of Tulkinghorn's shooting to Sir Leicester Dedlock, are more formal and less marked than his speech elsewhere, suggesting that the character is responding to Sir Leicester's rank. The fact that he continually addresses Sir Leicester as 'Sir Leicester Dedlock Baronet' adds to this impression. Also, in Chapter 49, there seems to be some degree of code-switching in Bucket's speech. In this chapter, Bucket arrests Trooper George for the murder of Tulkinghorn. He has found George to be at the Bagnet family home where Mrs Bagnet's birthday is being celebrated. He joins the celebrations, playing with the Bagnet children and speaking affably in nonstandard English: ' " Do you think father could recommend a second-hand violinceller of good tone for Mr Bucket's friend my dear? My name's Bucket. Ain't that a funny name?" ' (728). Then, as he and George walk away from the house, he makes his arrest using more formal, professional English: ' "I have endeavoured to make things pleasant tonight, and I put it to you whether I have done it or not. You must consider yourself in my custody, George" ' (734). The episode is presented as one where Bucket does not want to risk losing his man but neither does he want to arrest him at the party, ruining the day for the Bagnets. Whilst Bucket is socialising with the Bagnets, his speech contains more marked forms than it does when he arrests George. The Bagnets are nonstandard speakers so Bucket's use of cordial marked forms helps to create a bond between them, and the switch to more formal and more standard English signals Bucket's transition from his social to his professional self.

In Chapter 56, which is narrated by Esther, Bucket's speech is represented as containing the same marked forms as it does elsewhere in the novel, but it becomes more marked as the chapter progresses, even though Esther speaks Standard English. At this point in the story, Bucket has asked Esther to join him in pursuit of Lady Dedlock, her mother, whose personal safety and well-being has become a grave concern. It seems that the more time Bucket spends with Esther, the more relaxed his speech becomes, especially as he begins to refer to her as 'my dear'. He seems genuinely concerned about Esther, taking an almost paternal care of her, and the slight change in his speech could be indicative of the growing bond he feels with Esther.

Although Shepherd adopts the features used by Dickens in the representation of her Inspector Bucket's speech, she does not use the full range of marked forms that appears in *Bleak House*. The feature she uses most widely is a-affixation, seen for example in *a-charging*, *a-persuading*, *a-fretting*, *a-saying* (276-80). She also uses: the elided form *'em* (Chapters 24 and 25); one example of *for'ard* (318); a double negative (271); two nonstandard subject-verb agreements (275, 316); and two omissions of the *s* plural morpheme as in a *hundred pound* (317, 346). Otherwise, Bucket's speech is standard, not least when he is first introduced in Chapter 21. Most notably, Bucket's final speech (348), a lengthy utterance in which he explains Tulkinghorn's crimes and Hester's past

to Charles Maddox, is all in relatively formal Standard English: ‘ “ There were secrets in Tulkingorn’s house, my friend, that even you did not discover. Like a wall hung with pictures that turned out to be no more than a wooden partition. Like a little brass clasp that unlocked that partition and allowed it to swing open” ’(348). The speech of Shepherd’s Bucket is more standard than that of Dickens’s Bucket, as, even at its most standard and formal, Dickens’s Bucket’s speech contains some marked forms. This difference may be a reflection of a modern view of police inspectors, both actual people and fictional ones seen in film and television drama, not least the Oxford-educated Inspector Morse: the rank of Inspector may be perceived as one held by those who are relatively educated in comparison with both their Victorian counterparts and their junior colleagues, the increased use of Standard English being indicative of this.

This can be seen to be the case in Shepherd’s novel in the contrast between the largely standard speech of Inspector Bucket and the nonstandard variety spoken by the ‘Cockney chipper’ police constable Sam Wheeler (9). Also, another unnamed senior policeman speaks Standard English (13) (although his use of ‘my arse’ to express disagreement suggests a lack of refinement). It could be argued that Sam Wheeler is younger than both Bucket and the unnamed officer and may yet progress to a senior rank; however, we are never given either Sam’s or the unnamed officer’s ages, and Sam is presented as having been in the police for some time. It could also be the case that if Sam Wheeler is based on Sam Weller, uneducated but highly intelligent and streetwise, Shepherd wishes to represent his direct speech as nonstandard to lead the reader to make the link between the two characters. Sam appears in Chapters 1, 14, 21 and 24 and Shepherd uses a broadly consistently applied range of marked forms to present him as a Cockney speaker: elided *-in*’ and *’em* forms; h-dropping; double negatives; the *ain’t* form; and mild swear words such as *bloody*. Whilst these are not specifically Cockney varieties, the fact that we are told at the outset that Sam is a Cockney leads us to read the voice as such using these forms as prompts. Also, the forms used by Shepherd are not an exact copy of those used in Sam Weller’s speech: she makes greater use of h-dropping; and most notably does not employ *v/w* substitution which she does for Jo. This is most probably because, unlike Jo, Sam Wheeler is not the same as Sam Weller: he is a modern character who has much in common with those detective constables a modern readership has seen in police dramas on television, so if he were to use *v/w* substitution it would seem anachronistic, even though the story is set in 1850. And, whilst Victorian social mores would not allow the printing of a words such as *bloody* (and this would not have been used as a swear word at that time), a modern reader accepts it as part of the realism of the character. The main point, however, is that Sam Wheeler’s speech is significantly more marked than that of his superior officers which links status with standard speech.

The fact that the novel's hero, Charles Maddox, speaks nothing other than Standard English strengthens the link between standard speech and status, or class. Maddox comes from a middle-class family; his father is an eminent doctor who was disappointed by Charles's decision to give up a career in medicine after a year to follow his true passion and become a police detective. Although his parents named Charles after his 'celebrated' great-uncle, a 'thief-taker' in the days before an established police force, they did so with 'misgivings' as this profession was 'not one well regarded by the middle classes' (10). Charles is highly educated and takes an interest in all aspects of science, his lodgings being full of books and artefacts (4). In Chapter Four, he attends a lecture about unicorns given by Baron von Muller (a real person) to the Royal Geographical Society and debunks the Baron's 'evidence' by sharing his own superior knowledge. Thus Charles is seen as a young man earning a living in a profession which is, at least to some extent, at odds with his birth and education, and the consistent use of Standard English serves as a reminder of this. Even Inspector Bucket, a relatively high-ranking officer, has some marked forms in his speech and so the suggestion is that, although Bucket is clever, Charles has had more of a formal education as was born into a higher social class than his former supervising officer.

The way in which Shepherd adapts the *Bleak House* character Charley Neckett also links education with Standard English usage. Charley Neckett is approximately thirteen years old, the eldest of three orphans who are supported by Charley's work as a washer woman and the kindness of their landlady in waiving their rent. She is uneducated and lives in a poor area of London. Mr Jarndyce takes pity on the family and pays for the two younger children to go to school whilst Charley is employed as Esther's maid. Charley's direct speech contains a number of marked forms. When she is first introduced she uses *as* as a relative pronoun, the elided form *'em*, and the form *an't* (263). Later, her speech contains a-affixation and both nonstandard subject-verb agreement and pronoun use in 'we was so small' and 'Me and Tom was to be sure to remember' (390). Shepherd makes a clear link between Charley Neckett and her character Alice Carley: *If you please* is a refrain given to Charley when addressing her elders and social superiors, and Alice Carley's first words in *Tom-All-Alone's*, when she speaks to Hester, are 'If you please' (170). Even if readers do not notice this link, the apparent subservience indicated by these words fools them into thinking that 'Carley' is Hester's maid, rather than her nurse, delaying the discovery that Solitary House is a private lunatic asylum. At this point in the novel 'Carley' is not given much direct speech, which also helps to prevent the reader from realising what her role is. Only after the full revelation is Alice Carley given extensive passages of direct speech in which she explains what has been happening at Solitary House: ' "One day in October, Mr Jarvis summoned me to his office, and told me that one of the patients had given birth to a

stillborn. I didn't know, then, whose baby it was -- they'd kept Hester close for weeks, telling us she was ill and letting no one near her" '(331). This character speaks only Standard English, and lexical choices such as 'summoned' create a relatively formal register. In her representation of Alice Carley, Shepherd seems to be appealing to modern perceptions of nurses: today a degree in nursing is necessary to enter the profession and mental health nursing is highly specialised; also, the sympathetic view of mental illness and physical disfigurement shown by Alice Carley is in line with modern sensibilities. Thus, in the same way that Sam Wheeler seems to be a modern police detective constable, Alice Carley seems to be a modern nurse, and her relatively formal Standard English is taken as an indication that she is educated.

Other than Jo the crossing-sweep, the most uneducated and low-class group of characters in Shepherd's novel is the prostitutes, a group Dickens's could not include in his novel for fear of offending his largely middle-class readership. There are three prostitutes who each feature very briefly: Lizzie Miller, Charles's informant and friend (153-5); Sarah, a child prostitute (186-195); and an unnamed friend of Lizzie who agrees to give Charles information in order to try to catch Lizzie's murderer. The speech of these characters, along with that of Jo, is the most marked in the novel, as they, like him, occupy the lowest social ranking; however, their speech is not represented in the same way as that of Jo. Firstly, there is no *v/w* substitution for the same reason that this feature is not included in the speech of Sam Wheeler: they, unlike Jo, are modern characters. Prostitutes, although they obviously existed in the Victorian era, do not appear in Victorian novels and so there are no conventions for representing their speech. Whilst Shepherd uses familiar features such as h-dropping, double negatives, the *ain't* form and nonstandard verb forms, she also uses TH-fronting which is a modern way of representing Cockney speech: " ' ' I'm off to Brighton first fing wiv one a' me reg'lars" ' (155). This is a feature used widely by Michael Faber in *The Crimson Petal and the White*. There is also representation of some Cockney pronunciation, such as 'Gawd' (God, 189) and 'gel' (girl, 290). Along with this, there is the anachronistic use of the swear words 'bloody' (154-5) and 'bastard' (189, 290), along with the euphemistic 'frigging' (290) which was not used until the 1920s. These forms, used in the speech of all three prostitutes, presents them as modern characters and contributes to the twenty-first century realism which resonates with a modern reader. Also, in casting two out of the three in the role of informant, Shepherd is using a type of character associated with the modern detective genre.

Shepherd's final nonstandard speaker is Robert Mann, the novel's villain, hired by Tulkinghorn, who escapes from both Charles Maddox and Inspector Bucket. Mann is responsible for the murder of Lizzie Miller and others and is based on a real person who is 'a new suspect' in the Jack the Ripper killings. He 'was old enough to have started

his murderous career as early as 1850, and who might -- just possibly -- have been prevented from any further atrocities until the 1880s by the vigilance of a man like Inspector Bucket'.¹⁷¹ Basing this character on a real person could be seen as comparable to Dickens basing Inspector Bucket on the real Inspector Field (although Dickens was personally acquainted with Field) and continuing the tradition of literary realism. Shepherd's description of the murder of Lizzie Miller, the way in which her throat is cut before she is butchered, may well be noted by the reader as a Ripper-style killing. Although he is introduced earlier on in the novel, Mann's speech is not represented until Chapter 23, when he is revealed as Lizzie's killer and the one who cut off Charles Maddox's finger. Mann's speech consists of conventional nonstandard forms: h-dropping, elided *-in'* and *'em* forms and nonstandard subject-verb agreement, for example ' "that weren't what I was being paid for" '(305). However, what marks his language as different from that of the rest, including the prostitutes, is that it is especially crude: he uses the words 'whore', 'balls' and the triad ' cut 'em, fuck 'em, watch 'em die' (308-9). This is the only use of the word *fuck* in the novel; even the hardened child prostitute Sarah does not use it. As a result, it comes as something of a shock here, especially in the context of Mann describing what he does to his victims in such a casual way, devoid of any conscience. The crude language denotes his base actions and helps to characterise him as the villain of the novel.

In summary, Shepherd's cast of characters can be split into three groups, not counting the cameo appearances of actual people: those who have the same name and the same 'reality' as they do in *Bleak House*; those who are based on Dickens's creations but have a different 'reality' and therefore a different name; and those of Shepherd's own invention. For the nonstandard speakers belonging to the first group, because they are the same as they appear in *Bleak House*, Shepherd adopts broadly the same conventions as Dickens to represent their language. In the second group, Alice Carley is the most significant adaptation of the original Dickens character, and it is the way in which this is handled that helps to hide the true nature of Solitary House from the reader. Of Shepherd's own creations, the prostitutes use the most marked speech, including modern forms such as TH-fronting which are not in evidence in *Bleak House*. Consistent Standard English is spoken by Charles Maddox, the educated middle class hero.

Whilst Shepherd's novel might initially be seen as more progressive than Dickens's in its inclusion of prostitute-informants, gruesome murders and sexual abuse, these are the conventional 'ingredients' of the modern detective fiction genre, designed to appeal to a modern reader. Moreover, it is very much conventional in terms of linking standard

¹⁷¹ Acknowledgements.

speech with education, class and status. The more educated, or higher in social class or status characters are, the more they are represented as speaking Standard English.

7. Conclusions

The novels I study in this section follow the conventions, established by the nineteenth century, in their use of literary dialect. Waters's literary dialect is relatively sparse; but, along with the vernacular of street thieves and the allusions to Dickens, it has an air of authenticity. Faber uses a greater range of marked forms, but only in the speech of minor characters: it seems that he has elevated the speech of his main character in order to differentiate her from the other prostitutes and to keep the reader sympathetic to her. In doing so, he is following a convention seen in both Dickens's and Gissing's works. Waters, on the other hand, uses nonstandard language for the narrative voice and the direct speech of one of her protagonists as a means of tricking the reader into believing that the character was born into the under-class. Shepherd adapts the forms used by Dickens in order to present characters such as police detectives and mental health nurses in a way which is more in line with modern views of such professions.

Whilst Waters, Faber and Shepherd give a voice to social groups previously excluded from Victorian fiction, they are appealing to attitudes toward speech which were in evidence in the Victorian era.¹⁷² They see Standard English as a marker of social class, status and level of education. Moreover, Waters and Shepherd depend, to a great extent, on the reader sharing such attitudes to language for the full force of the plot twists and revelations to be felt. Thus neo-Victorianism, as represented by the novels I study, can be seen as a conservative form, despite its revisionist agenda. The form of the literary dialect and the way in which it is employed within these novels are a continuation of the ways in which nonstandard speech was used in Victorian works. The question is now, why do writers continue to convey such attitudes to language? And why do readers accept this view? This is something I consider in more detail in the following section when I analyse real readers' responses to a passage from *Fingersmith*.

¹⁷² See Lynda Mugglestone, *Talking Proper* (Oxford, 2003).

Section Three

Sympathy and Empathy: Reader Response to Realist Fiction

1. Introduction

In Section Two, I argued that neo-Victorian writers playfully re-work the content of Victorian novels for a modern readership, and that in doing so they rely, to some extent, on the reader having a prior knowledge of the earlier texts which can be utilised in the interpretative process. I also argued that the use of literary dialect in neo-Victorian novels is in line with conservative attitudes towards speech and is likely to generate a particular response from the reader towards the characters who are dialect speakers. In this section, I develop this idea by considering modern attitudes toward nonstandard English and then, in the light of these studies, discussing the results of my own research into real readers' responses to dialect-speaking characters. I begin by reviewing the critical work done on emotional engagement with characters by those studying realism. I align this with literary dialect studies by arguing that readers' views of speech varieties will affect their emotional response to characters.

2. Literature Review: Readers' Emotional Response to Fiction

Recent studies of literary realism, such as that of Rae Greiner,¹⁷³ have paid much greater attention to the role of the reader, and the nature of the reader's response to fiction, than in the past. Previous work, such as that of the New Critics and subsequent scholars like Robert Scholes,¹⁷⁴ who largely adopted the ideas of New Criticism, tended to view the text as containing meaning which was to be discovered by the reader, whereas more recent studies consider the ways in which meaning is created by readers applying their experiences, knowledge and beliefs to linguistic cues within the text. It is the way in which meaning is generated through a kind of partnership between text and reader which forms a major focus of this study. It should be pointed out that Stanley Fish's essay, 'Literature in the Reader',¹⁷⁵ was an early attack on the exclusion of reader response from literary criticism, but his work did not consider real readers and empirical data in the way that modern critics such as Howard Sklar do.¹⁷⁶ An important aspect of this process is the emotion felt by readers in response to the fictional world, characters

¹⁷³ Rae Greiner, *Sympathetic Realism in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2012); Lisa Zunshine, *Why We Read Fiction: Theory of Mind and the Novel* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2006).

¹⁷⁴ Robert Scholes, *Textual Power: Literary Theory and the Teaching of English* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985).

¹⁷⁵ *New Literary History: A Journal of Theory and Interpretation*, 2.1 (1970), 123-62.

¹⁷⁶ Howard Sklar, *The Art of Sympathy in Fiction: Forms of Ethical and Emotional Persuasion* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2013).

in particular, and how that emotion is a key factor in the success of the realist novel. Sympathy with fictional characters, Greiner argues is the key to the success and longevity of a realist novel: ‘Sympathy with the workings of represented minds, and not simply an accurate account of the concrete details of life as it really is (or was), was a surer guarantee that a novel’s realism would endure for decades to come’ (28-9).

As is the case with other work on realism, the study of readers’ emotional response to fiction takes no account of the role of literary dialect in creating the fellow-feeling, referred to by Greiner, on the part of the reader for fictional creations. Below, I give a brief overview of some of the key work in the field in order to establish this point. I consider critics’ notions of sympathy and empathy and their role in the relationship between reader and text, and how narration impacts this relationship. I argue that literary dialect has an important role to play in the generation of emotion: it has an influence on readers because of our preconceptions about standard and nonstandard forms; these preconceptions may lead to our aligning ourselves with one character whilst turning against another.

Historically, metonymy, rather than metaphor has been considered a key feature of realist fiction. In his essay on Dickens’s *Hard Times*, Stephen J. Spector states that ‘In *Hard Times*, as in realism generally, a person’s character is “read” by contiguous exteriors such as his actions, his environment, his clothing, and -- in the novelist’s formula -- his face and figure. To identify an invisible quality – character -- by a visible exterior is realism’s fundamental metonymy’.¹⁷⁷ This view can be seen to have led to the developing field of ‘mind-reading’ or ‘Theory of Mind’ as proposed by Lisa Zunshine in her 2006 publication *Why We Read Fiction*. Drawing on the work done within the field of cognitive psychology, Zunshine uses the phrase ‘Theory of Mind’ ‘to describe our ability to explain people’s behavior in terms of their thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and desires’. She states that we engage in mind-reading when, amongst other things, ‘we ascribe to a person a certain mental state on the basis of her observable action’ and when ‘we intuit a complex state of mind based on a limited verbal description’ (6). Whilst Zunshine’s argument here is in relation to our response to people in the real world, the basic idea is comparable to that expressed by Spector. Indeed, Zunshine’s book ‘makes a case for admitting the recent findings of cognitive psychologists into literary studies by showing how their research into the ability to explain behavior in terms of the underlying states of mind -- or *mind-reading* ability -- can furnish us with a series of surprising insights into our interaction with literary texts’ (4). Readers ‘invest the flimsy verbal constructions that we generously call “characters” with a potential for a variety of thoughts, feelings, and desires and then look for the “cues” that would allow

¹⁷⁷ Stephen J. Spector, ‘Masters of Metonymy: *Hard Times* and Knowing the Working Class’, *ELH*, 51.2 (1984), 365-84 (pp. 367).

us to guess at their feelings and predict their actions’(10). For example, in the actual world, if I see a man standing at a bus stop continually looking at his watch, I use my mind-reading ability to conclude that he is anxious for the bus to arrive on time; likewise, I use my mind-reading ability to ascribe thoughts and feelings to fictional characters based on the writer’s descriptions of their external appearance and behaviour. Zunshine argues that we read fiction and think about characters as we do because we both need and enjoy the stimulation the reading process gives to our Theory of Mind. She refers to reading as a satisfying ‘intensive workout’ for our minds (16, 164). As Zunshine’s work draws on studies done within the field of cognitive psychology, it is referred to, along with related publications, as taking a ‘cognitive approach’ to literary studies.

Fundamental to this approach, and to my work on this project, is the link between readers’ response to characters and their response to actual people: indeed the enduring appeal of realist fiction could be said to lie in the way in which readers respond to characters as if they were real people. Jonathan Culpeper anticipates Zunshine’s more scientific approach when he argues that ‘It is difficult to deny that what we all do when we watch a play or a film is to attempt to *interpret* characters with the structures and processes which we use to interpret our real-life experiences of people’(original emphasis).¹⁷⁸ He continues, ‘the cognitive structures and inferential mechanisms that readers have already developed for real-life people might be used in their comprehension of characters’ Culpeper’s ‘might’, above, is definitive in Zunshine’s book (11); but the way in which they both illustrate how textual factors and cognitive factors combine to lead the reader to have an impression of a character is comparable. Similarly, James Phelan, whose work on narratology also predates that of Zunshine, calls his approach to literary studies ‘*rhetorical* reader response’ (original emphasis) and defines it as ‘the recursive relationship between authorial agency, textual phenomena, and reader response’. He challenges criticism which sees reading fictional narratives as identifying and explaining ‘the division of the text into binary categories rather than the identification of a sequence of responses’ to textual sources.¹⁷⁹ And, more recently David S. Miall wishes to remind readers of ‘the experiential resources that they can bring to bear on a literary text, and to outline the ways in which an awareness of these and an ability to articulate them can facilitate appreciation of a text.’¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁸ J. Culpeper, *Language and Characterisation: People in Plays and Other Texts*, (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2001), p. 10.

¹⁷⁹ James Phelan, *Narrative as Rhetoric: Techniques, Audiences, Ethics, Ideology* (Columbus, Ohio State University Press, 1996), p. 176-7.

¹⁸⁰ David S. Miall, ‘Emotions, Feelings and Stylistics’, in *The Cambridge Handbook of Stylistics*, ed. by Peter Stockwell and Sara Whiteley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 425.

Adela Pinch modifies this argument when she claims that George Eliot's *'Daniel Deronda'* renders vividly the ways in which thinking about not only other actual people, but also literary characters, can occasionally make them real.¹⁸¹ We can see this taken to an extreme in the magazines on sale near supermarket check-outs in which the characters in soap operas are written about as though they are real people, their latest difficulties and dilemmas explored. Presumably, there is a market for such publications as people enter into the fictional world of the soap opera and feel an emotional attachment to the characters. In her work on 'Text World Theory', Joanna Gavins considers how readers create a world in their minds, based on the language used in the text; this is an approach which 'attaches primacy to human experience' and focuses 'entirely on the relationship between language and the human mind'¹⁸² and thus incorporates ideas from cognitive psychology into literary studies. Howard Sklar's, *The Art of Sympathy in Fiction* looks closely at readers' emotional responses to fiction, asking 'Why do they feel for characters they know do not exist?' (2) He states that his book builds on the work done by James Phelan and Suzanne Keen, who coined the term 'narrative empathy' in her article 'A Theory of Narrative Empathy'.¹⁸³ In his consideration of how the field of cognitive psychology contributes to literary studies, Sklar can also be seen to be developing the work done by Zunshine, especially in his argument that 'that which allows us to form a mental image of a "complete" human being out of fictional fragments that are provided is precisely our own prior experience with people[...]. In this respect, we respond to characters that are primarily "real" in their essences, however much the object of our reflection has been "made up" by an author' (11). By extension, any views readers have about nonstandard English in actuality will be brought to bear when they encounter 'fictional fragments' of nonstandard direct speech.

As pointed out by Amy Coplan 'concepts like identification and empathy[...]are somewhat vague or ambiguous'.¹⁸⁴ She adds that scholars often fail to recognise the difference between sympathetic and empathetic response and that outside psychology the terms are frequently used interchangeably. This view is echoed by Sklar who is critical of the 'unstable' definition of sympathy and the lack of clarity with which terms such as *sympathy* and *empathy* are used, the two often being confused (23). Looking at the titles of publications in the field, one can see that critics label readers' emotional response differently: 'Empathic Engagement with Narrative Fictions' (Coplan), *The Art*

¹⁸¹ Adela Pinch, *Thinking About Other People in Nineteenth Century British Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p.5.

¹⁸² Joanna Gavins, *Text World Theory: An Introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p.4.

¹⁸³ In *Narrative* 14.3 (2006), 207-236.

¹⁸⁴ Amy Coplan, 'Empathic Engagement with Narrative Fictions', *Journal of Aesthetic and Art Criticism*, 62. 2, *Special Issue: Art, Mind, and Cognitive Science* (2004), 141-152 (pp. 142).

of *Sympathy in Fiction* (Sklar), 'A Theory of Narrative Empathy' (Keen), *Scenes of Sympathy* (Jaffe); and some avoid giving a label to the emotion, for example 'Emotions, Feelings and Stylistics' (Miall). In her book, Joanna Gavins refers to the 'empathetic identification' of the reader, or discourse-world participant, with a character, or enactor (64). The question is, are they looking at the same thing? The point to be emphasised, as Coplan does throughout her article, is that whilst the empathiser, or reader, 'imaginatively experiences the target's experiences from the target's point of view', he or she 'maintains self-other differentiation' (152); thus the relationship between readers and characters is not one of complete identity, even in imagination. She argues convincingly that pity (sympathy?) is not part of empathy even though it occurs at the same time: it is something only the reader feels, not the target character.

Audrey Jaffe's book *Scenes of Sympathy: Identity and Representations in Victorian Fiction*¹⁸⁵ considers sympathy within the context of a rapidly changing Victorian society in which social identity was a huge concern. Jaffe states that her book is 'not an attempt to define sympathy *per se*' but 'exposes and explores the recurrent connection between sympathy, representation, and constructions of social identity in a series of Victorian texts' (8). At first, she considers the middle-class Victorian reading public and their response to lower-class characters as haunting representations of what they could become in such a time of changing social strata. She then continues to study how fictional characters such as Daniel Deronda achieve a sense of their own identity through their sympathetic engagement with others, particularly with certain social groups. Her chapter on Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* argues that Scrooge is placed in the position of a reader of realist fiction and shown representations of his own past life and the lives of others in his community in order that he might change. Jaffe argues that the way in which Scrooge 'typically loses himself in the "reality" of what he sees' is analogous to the reading process (37-8). In this way Scrooge learns of the suffering of others and wishes to alleviate that suffering; likewise the reader feels a strong desire not to be in the other's place, as in the case of the Cratchit family (41). Here, Jaffe's diachronic view, considering sympathy within the context of Victorian society, argues that Victorian realist fiction sought to generate an emotional response in order to provoke practical action to improve the lives of the poor.

As in studies of literary realism, critics analysing reader response consider the role of Free Indirect Discourse, and the use of narrative voice in general, to create an emotional response to characters. The overlap is not surprising given that both fields are concerned with the representation of fictional characters as 'real' people, even though they approach the issue from different directions. Gavins, Phelan, Coplan, Sklar, Keen

¹⁸⁵ Audrey Jaffe, *Scenes of Sympathy: Identity and Representations in Victorian Fiction* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2000).

and Richard Aczel¹⁸⁶ all write about narration. Their work is relevant to this project as the use of a nonstandard first-person narrative voice in one of the novels I study, Sarah Waters's *Fingersmith* (2002), is crucial to the reader's response to the narrator. Most critics suggest that a first person narrative effects greater closeness between reader and protagonist; however, one of Suzanne Keen's 'Unanswered Questions' in the final section of her paper is whether a third person narrative can create just as close a bond. Joanna Gavins answers this question, stating that empirical evidence shows that readers are just as able and likely to identify with the protagonist of a third-person focalised narrative (46). Similarly, Sklar argues that focalisation, Free Indirect Discourse and homodiegetic narration (having direct access to the self-reported thoughts and/or feelings of a character) close the distance between reader and character (48-9). If the fictional world is represented from the point of view of a particular character, readers are more likely to adopt the same perspective.

This 'siding', as it were, with the protagonist can lead to misjudgements on the part of the reader, and is tied to the concept of the unreliable first-person narrator. If the perspective of the reader is too closely aligned with that of the protagonist -- if there is a strong narrative empathy, perhaps, which the use of literary dialect might promote -- the reader may fail to recognise the unreliability of the narrator. This could be intentional on the part of the writer as he or she seeks to effect a twist later in the narrative. Joanna Gavins explains this in terms of Text World Theory as 'world-repair', whereby the reader has to 'repair' or adjust the mental image of the fictional world which he or she had maintained up to this point. In the most extreme cases, where everything the reader believed to be 'true' about the fictional world and the characters in it is completely destroyed, 'world-replacement' is necessary (135).

On the other hand, readers sometimes fail, even by the end of the novel, to see the unreliability of a first-person narrator and therefore their engagement with the novel is a misreading in terms of the writer's purposes. In Chapter 10 of her book, Lisa Zunshine gives a useful example of how readers misinterpret Robert Lovelace in Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* (1747-8). She argues that the first person narrative initially establishes Lovelace as giving a 'truthful' version of events and his own motives, and that it takes about five hundred pages for us to begin to question his account. This is in line with the study, cited by Coplan,¹⁸⁷ which found that once readers adopt the perspective of a protagonist, they continue to process information from that same perspective. Zunshine comments that eighteenth century readers maintained Lovelace's

¹⁸⁶ Richard Aczel, 'Hearing Voices in Narrative Texts', *New Literary History*, 29. 3 (1998), 467-500.

¹⁸⁷ Amy Coplan, 'Empathic Engagement with Narrative Fictions', *Journal of Aesthetic and Art Criticism*, 62. 2 (2004), 141-152.

perspective and, against Richardson's wishes 'fell in love with the rake and started demanding of the author that he end the novel with a happy marriage between the angelic Clarissa and the man whom Richardson saw as a consummate stalker and rapist' (101). In response, Richardson revised the novel to 'blacken' Lovelace's image, that is, he provided much clearer cues for the direction of readers' emotional response to Lovelace. In Chapter 11, Zunshine also reflects on how she herself was, like many readers, fooled by the way in which the first person narrative presents Humbert, the sexual predator in Nabokov's *Lolita*. She argues that Humbert initially presents himself as a 'star-crossed lover' (101) and subsequent lexical choices in his self-representation such as 'pathetic', 'comic', 'weak' and 'clumsy' (106) trick readers into consolidating that image and aligning themselves with his view such that it is difficult, even impossible for some, to see the 'true' version of events.

In a section of his book given to 'knowledge structures', Culpeper explains the concepts of prototypes and schema which can be seen to have developed from the idea of stereotyping and has implications for the ways in which readers respond to fictional characters: 'prototype theory tends to deal with the process involved in applying category or concept labels to the phenomena we encounter (matters of categorisation), whilst schema theory tends to deal with the effects the application of a category or concept label has on processes of perception, memory and inference' (60). In terms of reader response, if we identify certain traits which lead us to label a character as belonging to a particular category, for example, uneducated working-class Northern man, then our subsequent perception of that character will be affected by having applied the label.

Sklar continues to use the term *stereotype* when he argues that 'while one may rightly question the existence of a common version of reality, there are conceptions that, by definition, *are* shared. One such conception is the stereotype, which is a shared shortcut for generalizing the characteristics of another group' (66). Miall, in his analysis of Blake's 'The Sick Rose', also refers to the 'affective colouration of words and phrases' which can shape the reader's response to a text.¹⁸⁸ We all have sets of ideas and beliefs which we apply to our experiences in the actual world and to the process of reading fiction (or poetry) or watching a play or film. It is because, as Sklar argues above, these ideas are shared that writers are able to appeal to them in their fiction. Culpeper gives as an example the opening of Osborne's play *The Entertainer*, which has Jean greeting Billy with the words 'Hello Granddad' (4). Culpeper argues that Osborne's use of the one word 'Granddad' does more than inform us of the relationship between the two

¹⁸⁸ David S. Miall, 'Emotions, Feelings and Stylistics', in *The Cambridge Handbook of Stylistics*, ed. by Peter Stockwell and Sara Whiteley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 425.

characters; it also triggers our prior knowledge about grandfathers and granddaughters such that when Billy replies rudely to Jean and swears, we are somewhat taken aback. In this way, writers are able to exploit our preconceptions and lead us to adjust our view of certain ‘prototypes’.

What Culpeper does not do is consider people’s views about speech as part of ‘knowledge structures’. In our everyday lives, the way people speak is probably one of the first things we notice about them. Real world surveys such as the 2013 *ITV ComRes* poll reveal that people have preconceptions about speakers of different varieties of English. So, in the same way that the lexical item *Granddad* leads readers to draw on their prior knowledge of grandfathers, the representation of a particular nonstandard form of English within a character’s direct speech leads to readers projecting their preconceptions about that variety onto the character who uses it. Thus, I would add to the work done on readers’ emotional response to character by arguing that a reader’s capacity to feel either sympathy or empathy for a fictional creation may be affected by the nature of that character’s speech. For example, a confident, fluent speaker of Standard English may be viewed as one capable of solving his or her own problems. Alternatively, if the literary dialect is highly marked, the reader may experience what Toolan terms ‘reader resistance’. This occurs when passages of dialect are difficult for readers to negotiate and they do so ‘in a spirit of enforced labour’.¹⁸⁹ Such labour would interrupt the flow of the reading process and readers might give up trying to decipher the representation and therefore fail to engage with the speaker. This would lead to the text’s failure as a work of realist fiction.

Whereas Zunshine and Culpeper show how the choice of standard lexical items can create particular responses to characters, Sylvia Adamson considers the way in which representations of dialect affect the reader or audience, although not in realist fiction. In ‘Varieties, Stereotypes, Satire – and Shakespeare’, Adamson considers ‘the act of literary illusionism by which the reader is persuaded that what s/he is reading is not a collection of words on a page but the transcription of a human voice endowed with a specific social identity’.¹⁹⁰ Readers recognise certain nonstandard forms and from this they make inferences about the social identity of the speaker. Focussing largely on Shakespeare’s *King Lear*, Adamson looks at how the representation of nonstandard English appeals to a sense of stereotype and how this can be exploited by the artist for satirical purposes. She adds that ‘any literary representation of social identity is likely to be recognised simultaneously by stereotype and as stereotype’. Alexandra Jaffe’s and

¹⁸⁹ ‘Significations of representing Dialect’, *Language and Literature*, 1:1 (1992), 29-46 (pp. 34).

¹⁹⁰ Sylvia Adamson, ‘Varieties, Stereotypes, Satire – and Shakespeare’, in *Aspects of English as a World Language*, ed. by Y. Ikegami and M. Toyota (Tokyo: Maruzen, 1993), pp. 225-45 (pp. 232).

Shana Walton's 'The Voices People Read: Orthography and the representation of non-standard speech'¹⁹¹ is somewhat different in that this paper details the results of working with real readers, but shares with Adamson's publication the idea that readers respond to cues in the text to hear certain nonstandard voices, that is, they recognise and respond to a stereotype. Students were asked to read aloud a transcript of a speaker of Southern American English in which some of the lexical items were spelled in a way which represented southern pronunciation. Two of Jaffe's and Walton's findings are relevant here. First, even though the first person pronoun *I* was spelled using standard orthography, students often pronounced it with a southern monophthong; they 'drew on a prepacked 'voice' in order to 'perform' ' the words on the page (579). Second, some of the students considered these to be stigmatised forms, so their view of the speaker was affected. Jaffe and Walton make the key point that 'Respelled texts force these personae into palpable existence' as readers are quick to envision a character, a social stereotype, based on the marked forms signalled by the respellings (580). They then either identify with the character they have created or distance themselves from it.

The above studies demonstrate that readers' response to fiction is a key aspect of literary realism. It is because we apply our knowledge and experience of people in the actual world to our interpretation of characters and invest those characters with the qualities of sentient beings that we respond emotionally to fictional narratives. Keen refers to 'quality of attributed speech' as one of the aspects of characterisation which may shape a reader's emotional response.¹⁹² Zunshine considers how the lexical choice in *Lolita* influenced her response to Humbert. These ideas can be extended to include the use of literary dialect as the nonstandard direct speech given to characters may be used to manipulate readers' responses to those characters. Both Adamson's and Jaffe's and Walton's papers look specifically at how readers respond to the representation of nonstandard forms, but neither considers this in relation to the use of literary dialect in the realist novel, as it is not their concern. I wish to continue and extend their research by discussing my own research into real readers' response to literary dialect in fiction. I investigate the ways in which readers respond to the use of literary dialect, that is, the use of nonstandard direct speech but also a nonstandard first-person narrative voice and metalinguistic comments, and how this shapes their view of characters in realist narrative fiction. Creating a voice for a character is a key component part of realism, although up until now studies of literary realism have paid little attention to the use of literary dialect. This is something I address, considering how writers use literary dialect

¹⁹¹ *Journal of Socio-linguistics*, 4.4 (2000), 561-87.

¹⁹² Suzanne Keen, 'A Theory of Narrative Empathy', *Narrative*, 14.3 (2006), 207-36 (pp.215).

to influence readers' emotional response to their creations, and how this affects our understanding of the novel as a whole.

First it is necessary to consider the public's views of nonstandard English. Mugglestone gives a full account of attitudes toward language use in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.¹⁹³ Below, I consider more recent opinions, those held by present-day readers, which will influence the way dialect-speaking characters are perceived.

3. Attitudes Towards Language in the Twentieth and Twenty-first Centuries: What People Think and Why They Think It.

I will begin by considering recent attitudes to different varieties of spoken language. I will look at the results of late twentieth century studies carried out by linguists including Howard Giles, more recent work by Peter Garrett, who analyses the findings of the 2005 BBC *Voices* survey, and the results of the 2013 ITV *ComRes* poll to show that there have been only minor changes when it comes to the way in which regional speech is perceived. Most of these studies focus on attitudes to accent alone. I will then look at some of the possible reasons for these prevailing attitudes, drawing on the work of Asif Agha, who considers the influence of different media; and I will examine the attitudes toward language displayed by writers of recent usage guides. I will also look at a study by Julia Snell which examines the role played by the education system, and by individual teachers, in maintaining a sense of 'correct' and 'incorrect' speech. Finally, I will draw on my own experience as a secondary school English teacher, considering the examination board specifications and how these impact on classroom teaching, assessment and, as a result, children's attitudes toward language.

In the late twentieth century the field of perceptual dialectology began to develop. In essence, this involves asking lay people for their views on regional varieties of speech. In the introduction to *A Handbook of Perceptual Dialectology*, Dennis R. Preston and William A. Krezschmar provide the following explanation: 'Perceptual dialectology, then, represents the dialectologist's-sociolinguist's-variationist's interest in folk linguistics. What do nonspecialists have to say about variation? Where do they believe it comes from? Where do they believe it exists? What do they believe is its function?'¹⁹⁴ Preston and Krezschmar are largely concerned with the geographical aspects of perceptual dialectology, that is, where respondents believe a certain dialect is to be found which they indicate by drawing an area on a map. However, the field also includes

¹⁹³ Lynda Mugglestone, *Talking Proper: The Rise of Accent as a Social Symbol* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

¹⁹⁴ Dennis R. Preston and William A. Krezschmar Jr., *A Handbook of Perceptual Dialectology*, vol. 1 (Baltimore: John Benjamins, 1999), Introduction, pp. xxv.

work on the opinions held by the public in relation to regional varieties. Fumio Inoue uses the term ‘dialect image’, defining this as ‘the socio-psychological images of a (geographical or social) dialect’.¹⁹⁵ Christopher Montgomery builds on the work of Preston and Krezschmar, stating ‘language attitudes can and sometimes will be influenced by beliefs about language, especially beliefs about the status of a language, culture, or the speakers of a language’.¹⁹⁶ And in a later work, Preston is concerned with ‘perceptual strategies that arise from underlying beliefs and presuppositions about language’. Looking at US English, he considers how linguistic forms are ‘imbued’ with listeners’ attitudes, based on their prior experience of those forms, which then leads to them to react in a particular way when they hear these items again.¹⁹⁷

One of the main ways in which studies have ascertained respondents’ views about regional accents is through the use of the matched-guise test, a methodology which was first developed in the 1950s.¹⁹⁸ Such tests involve a single speaker recording himself or herself reading the same passage using a number of different accents; these accents are then rated on various scales, the most significant being ‘status’ and ‘pleasantness’. A single speaker is used in order to eliminate, or at least minimise, potential differences in paralinguistic features, such as pitch and tempo, between the different accents. Although respondents’ ability to recognise a regional variety, to place it on a map, might seem like a separate issue from their value judgements of that variety, Garrett, Coupland and Williams suggest that recognition and judgement are inextricably linked: ‘evidence in our study supported the tantalizing interpretation that dialect recognition is part of a much more elaborate process of social recognition, reflecting ideologies and preferences in listeners’ communities’.¹⁹⁹ Whilst Garrett, Coupland and Williams refer to the grammar and lexis of dialect as well as the way in which these features are pronounced, their comment above can be applied to accent alone, as rated in matched-guise tests.

The first highly influential matched guise-test was that carried out by Howard Giles in 1970.²⁰⁰ Giles asked 177 school pupils to rate different accents in terms of their ‘aesthetic’ (how pleasant), ‘communicative’ (how comfortable to interact with) and

¹⁹⁵ ‘Classifications of Dialects by Image,’ in *A Handbook of Perceptual Dialectology*, vol. 1, ed. by Dennis R. Preston and William A. Krezschmar Jnr., pp. 147-59.

¹⁹⁶ Christopher Montgomery, ‘Northern English Dialects: A Perceptual Approach’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Sheffield, 2007), p. 19, in Database of White Rose Thesis Online <theses.whiterose.ac.uk> [19th September 2015]

¹⁹⁷ ‘Language, People, Salience, Space: Perceptual Dialectology and Language Regard’, *Dialectologia*, 5 (2010), 87-131 (pp. 89).

¹⁹⁸ Peter Garrett, *Attitudes to Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p.59.

¹⁹⁹ Peter Garrett, Nikolas Coupland and Angie Williams, *Investgating Language Attitudes: Social Meanings of Dialect Ethnicity and Performance* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), p.176.

²⁰⁰ ‘Evaluative Reactions to Accents’, *Educational Review*, 22:3 (1970), 211-227.

'status' (prestige) content. The students attended the same comprehensive school in South Wales and were of two different age groups: 12 and 17. One male speaker was recorded reading the same passage in 13 different foreign and regional accents which were rated on a 7 point scale. Giles also conducted a conceptual test whereby a list of randomly ordered accents was given to the students and they were asked to rate them in the same way as in the matched-guise test. Giles found that R.P. was the top-rated accent on all three scales in the matched-guise test and was the top-rated accent in terms of 'aesthetic' and 'status' content in the conceptual test. The Birmingham accent was ranked lowest of the regional accents which corroborated the suggestion of Wilkinson that town and industrial accents have the lowest prestige.²⁰¹

Another study conducted by Giles and Peter F. Powesland looked at how the persuasiveness of an argument was affected by the accent in which it was delivered.²⁰² Giles and Powesland worked with a group of medical undergraduates whose political views had been ascertained beforehand. The same male speaker recorded two different speeches, one in favour of the Industrial Relations Act and one against it, in each of two different accents, R.P. and Bristolian, thus recording four speeches in total. The speech was a House of Commons debate-style speech and was used to see whether listeners' attitudes could be changed by the speaker. The 'tentative conclusion' drawn by Giles and Powesland is that 'The quality of an argument is more favourably perceived when presented in a standard accented voice'²⁰³ by which they presumably mean R.P.. In the same publication, Giles and Powesland refer to an earlier study carried out by Giles, Bourhis, Trudgill and Lewis in 1974 in which British undergraduates were asked to evaluate two different dialects of Greek, a language with which they were completely unfamiliar. The two dialects were spoken by the same person using the matched-guise technique. The British students were unable to differentiate between the two Greek dialects on aesthetic, prestige and personality trait scales, unlike Greek respondents who, when asked informally, did attribute a certain stereotype to the different dialect speakers. The findings of these studies would seem to support the view that respondents' value judgements of accents and dialects is at least to some extent tied to their ability to recognise that variety.

Levin, Giles and Garrett conducted a study similar to that of Giles and Powesland (above) in which they looked at how people react evaluatively to the accent in which a

²⁰¹ Andrew Wilkinson, 'Spoken English in School', *Educational Review*, 17.4 (1965), 58-71 (pp.62).

²⁰² Howard Giles and Peter F. Powesland, *Speech Style and Social Evaluation* (London: Academic Press, 1975), Chapter 6.

²⁰³ Giles and Powesland (1975), p. 99.

message is delivered.²⁰⁴ Given that a ‘standard’, that is R.P., accent had been linked to perceptions of formality and intelligence in previous research, one of the things they wanted to find out was whether a ‘nonstandard-accented’ speaker using Latinate vocabulary would be rated at the same level on the ‘status’ scale as a ‘standard-accented’ speaker using more Germanic vocabulary. A bi-dialectal speaker (R.P. and south-east Wales English) was recorded describing a house, firstly in a Latinate style in each guise and then in a Germanic style in each guise. Respondents listened to only one of the four readings and were asked to rate the speaker in terms of personality traits and communication features. It was found that the R.P. speakers, who were judged as ‘more intelligent, dominant, formal, ambitious’ than the Welsh English speakers, were perceived to be ‘speaking less colloquially, and using longer and fancier words, even though they were in fact reading exactly the same two texts as the south-east Wales speakers’.²⁰⁵ As Garrett states, this study demonstrates the strength of influence on a listener of accent over lexis: even though the differently-accented speakers were reading exactly the same texts, the perception was that the R.P. voice sounded more formal and intelligent.

Garrett, Coupland and Williams studied attitudes to Welsh dialects and R.P. amongst teachers and 15 year old pupils in a secondary school in Wales.²⁰⁶ Both the teachers and the students were asked to listen to recordings of teenagers from all over Wales telling stories in their local dialect about events in their lives. The respondents were asked to identify the dialect and to give immediate impressions of each of the speakers. In addition to this, each of the teachers was asked to complete a questionnaire about their language attitudes. The study found that ‘the teachers appear to endorse the social value of a high-prestige non-Welsh sounding variety for their students’ social advancement’ (112) and that, in general, the teachers’ judgements were similar to those of the students on both R.P. and Welsh English speakers (170). These findings seem to support the idea that as children become older, as they move through secondary school, their attitudes to language move ‘more in the direction of the conventional social evaluation’²⁰⁷ and suggest that there has not been any significant social change in terms of attitudes to regional variation.

²⁰⁴ Cited in Peter Garrett, *Attitudes to Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), Chapter 6.

²⁰⁵ Peter Garrett, *Attitudes to Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 88-9.

²⁰⁶ Peter Garrett, Nikolas Coupland and Angie Williams, *Investgating Language Attitudes: Social Meanings of Dialect Ethnicity and Performance* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003).

²⁰⁷ Howard Giles, ‘Evaluative Reactions to Accents’, *Educational Review*, 22:3 (1970), 211-227 (pp. 220).

In the last decade or so, the advances in technology, particularly the advent of the internet, have made it possible to gather information about the public's attitudes to language varieties in ways which were not previously possible. The use of technology also makes it possible to gather information from potentially very large numbers of respondents. Garrett presents the findings of the 2005 BBC *Voices* study²⁰⁸ which was an on-line survey of language attitudes in the U.K.. An on-line questionnaire was completed by 5010 respondents who rated 34 different accents including native British ones and those of countries such as the U.S.A. which are present and relevant in the U.K.. This was not a matched-guise test: respondents did not listen to the accents before they rated them; rather, they made their judgements based on their own understanding of what each named accent sounds like. This left a margin for error, as respondents may have failed to identify certain varieties from their given name or mistaken one accent for another; however such errors would not have skewed the results to such an extent to make them invalid. Garrett compares the findings of this survey with the match guise test done by Giles in 1970 to see whether there are any suggestions of a change in language attitudes as a result of the changes in society in the intervening 35 years. Garrett states that 'Globalisation processes, for example, might lead to an expectation of a waning of deference towards standard varieties, and some loosening of negative attitudes towards nonstandard' ones.²⁰⁹ Also, during the period from 1970 to 2005, the number of British television and radio presenters who speak with a regional accent increased dramatically and, given the power of these media, one might expect a significant change in language attitudes. However, the results of the BBC survey show that not a great deal has changed. Garrett states that there is 'a striking similarity between the findings for prestige in Giles' study and the BBC results'. R.P., labelled 'the Queen's English' in the BBC study retains its position as the most prestigious, with Birmingham once again appearing at the bottom of the rank order for prestige. The results for social attractiveness are also very similar to those found by Giles.

Looking more closely at a breakdown of the results, Garrett states that although R.P. is still very highly regarded on both scales, 'it would seem that younger people were less influenced by the conservative ideology of valuing standard accents'.²¹⁰ In his conclusion he expresses the following hope: 'That younger respondents were found to be less negative about the stigmatised varieties (even if still negative) provides some signs at least of liberal sentiment and perhaps a suggestion at least of an ideological shift over time'.²¹¹ Referring back to Giles's findings, this seems unlikely. In 1970, Giles found

²⁰⁸ Peter Garrett, *Attitudes to Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

²⁰⁹ Peter Garrett, *Attitudes to Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p.172.

²¹⁰ Garrett (2010), p.175.

²¹¹ Garrett (2010), p.176.

that the 12 year olds had a more ‘liberal’ attitude than the 17 year olds; he also raised the possibility of social change, but added that a longitudinal study would be needed to corroborate this. The generation of people represented by Giles’s 12 year old respondents are the older generation at the time of the BBC study. Thus, if the two studies can be taken as representative of the national feeling, it would seem that what happens is that younger people with comparatively ‘liberal’ attitudes to nonstandard language change their views to the more ‘conservative ideology’ as they grow up, rather than there being any significant social change. This is what Giles suggests might be happening and it is a view supported by the findings of Garrett, Coupland and Williams (above).

The most recent study into language attitudes is the 2013 ITV *ComRes* poll, the results of which were used in a *Tonight* programme about accent prejudice which aired on 25th. September, 2013. *ComRes*, which is a member of the British Polling Council, interviewed on line 6045 British adults over the age of 18 in August and September of 2013. Very much as in the BBC survey, respondents were asked to rate accents in terms of friendliness, intelligence and trustworthiness but were also asked whether they felt they have ever been discriminated against because of their accent.²¹² Twenty-eight percent of respondents said they did feel that they had been discriminated against because of their accent. This, perhaps, makes it somewhat surprising that the results of the survey are, in general, very similar to those found by Giles in 1970: the people who feel they have suffered discrimination because of their accent seem to hold the same ‘conservative’ views about accent which may have led to that very discrimination. Penny Marshall, the ITV Social Affairs Editor states that “The most upsetting moment for me making this film was when some Middlesbrough children confessed to me that they were ashamed of their accents.”²¹³ Related research also found that ‘eighty percent of employers admit to making discriminating decisions based on regional accents’. Like previous studies, the ITV *ComRes* one found that the R.P. accent is, by far, considered the most ‘intelligent’ with Cockney, Birmingham and Liverpool occupying the bottom three rankings on this scale which, once again, corroborates the view that urban and industrial accents are the ones looked upon least favourably.²¹⁴

The results of these studies and surveys indicate that there has been no significant change in language attitudes. Over the last thirty-five years or so, when researchers have been asking members of the public for their views of regional varieties of speech, R.P.

²¹² Penny Marshall, ‘28% of Britons feel discriminated against due to accent’, *ITV* <www.itv.com/news/2013-09-25/28-of-britons-feel-discriminated-against-due-to-accent> [17th September 2015].

²¹³ Penny Marshall.

²¹⁴ Andrew Wilkinson, ‘Spoken English in School’, *Educational Review*, 17.4 (1965), 58-71 (pp.62).

has remained the accent most highly thought of in terms of social prestige and as an indication of intelligence. Why should this be the case, especially when there seems to be a greater acceptance of regional speech within such influential media as television and radio? Having looked at what people think about regional speech, I will now look at some of the possible reasons and arguments as to why people think what they do.

Asif Agha's paper, 'The social life of cultural value' charts the way in which the power and influence of R.P. developed from 1760 such that by 1900 'competence in RP was widely recognized as a prerequisite for social advancement'.²¹⁵ Citing Mugglestone, he argues that the influence of R.P. began with the publication of a number of scholarly texts on all aspects of language usage, including pronunciation. These 'prescriptivist' texts, he argues, initially 'exerted an influence only within a small discourse community' (250) but in doing so 're-configure[d] the values of accent from its earlier role as an index of geographic affiliation to its role as an index of social status, thus transforming a system of dialect differences into a system of status-differentiating registers' (252). Agha argues that by the mid-nineteenth century the relatively small audience reached by these early texts had passed on views about language usage through the publication of texts written in a 'non-technical style for a much larger audience, seeking to popularize the message which these works had earlier propounded' (252). This, he argues, led to a growing anxiety about language use which in turn led to an increasing number of elocution masters offering their services to those desirous of social advancement. Agha adds that the language guides formed one section of the market that offered many other etiquette guides, including how to dress in polite society. The fact that there was a rising middle class at the time, the 'new money' industrialists, increased the demand for such publications as people sought to enter polite society (259).

Agha argues that novels and other literary texts form the third genre responsible for developing attitudes towards speech amongst the public. He states that novels, and then the penny weeklies which were affordable for many, were read by those seeking to better themselves. Moreover, they were written by those who had been influenced by the first two genres, the scholarly 'prescriptivist' texts and the etiquette guides. As a result, ideas about language usage were developed through writers' presentation of nonstandard-speaking characters and accepted by readers. Agha states that 'novelistic depictions of accent do not merely represent the realities of social life, they amplify and transform them into more memorable, figuratively rendered forms' (255) and that these forms often become caricatures. (He cites Dickens's characters, most specifically *David Copperfield's* Uriah Heep as being such a caricature.) In this way, Agha continues, novels, with their highly memorable characters and their general popularity 'made the link

²¹⁵ *Language & Communication*, 23.3–4 (2003), 231–273 (pp. 232).

between accent and social character more widely known'(256). Agha sees the influence of R.P. spreading outward, web-like, from a central point, that point being the early scholarly 'prescriptivist' texts, until it achieved a firm and lasting hold on society.

In a later publication, *Language and Social Relations*, Agha briefly considers the role of the education system in promoting the idea of a prestige form of the language, arguing that school boards 'serve as loci of public sphere legitimation and replication of register stereotypes over segments of the population'.²¹⁶ Agha's chief concern is the spread of language attitudes and, given that in 1870 education was made compulsory for all English children up to the age of twelve, schools would seem to be very much involved in the process, especially if they made use of the popular language guides in their curricula.

Agha's work centres on the development of language attitudes in the nineteenth century; I will now look at more recent work on how teachers and the education system may be reinforcing those attitudes. Julia Snell's paper, 'Dialect, interaction and class positioning at school: From deficit to difference to repertoire'²¹⁷ discusses her work observing the language of nine and ten year old working-class children in two primary schools in Teesside. Snell looks at the use of nonstandard lexis and grammar as well as pronunciation and argues that 'deficit views of nonstandard English are regaining currency in educational discourse', despite the work of sociolinguistics since the 1960s. The most striking example Snell gives is that of Freddy, a child who previously did not want to speak aloud in front of the rest of the class but then answered one of teacher's questions about an image. The teacher's question was "What makes him look sad?" and Freddy answered with "because he ain't got a smile on his face". The teacher repeated "ain't got a smile on his face" emphasising the "ain't" in order to point out the 'mistake' to Freddy who then said "he has not got a smile on his face", emphasising the "not". Snell observes that the teacher's response is to correct Freddy's grammar rather than to respond to the content of his answer or to acknowledge that he has now made a contribution to the class discussion, and adds that this method of 'correcting' children's speech was not uncommon. She argues that the fact that Freddy was immediately able to reformulate his answer shows that he has access to the standard form but, in the context of the classroom discussion, the reformulation was completely unnecessary as it posed no barrier to understanding. Freddy, who ought to have been praised for his contribution, instead has his grammar criticised. Snell argues that 'Freddy was constrained by norms which dictate that only utterances in Standard English can

²¹⁶ Asif Agha, *Language and Social Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p.156.

²¹⁷ Pre-publication copy (2012) <www.snell.me.uk/.../Julia-Snell_Dialect-Interaction-and-Class-positioning> [17th September 2015].

function as legitimate contributions to classroom discourse’ and that this may ‘have more enduring consequences’. Such classroom practice might certainly account for the shame felt by the Middlesbrough children in relation to their accent (above). Snell concludes by stating that although there is currently little evidence for children being influenced in this way by educational practices, there is a ‘pressing need for research which addresses this issue’. In this, Snell echoes the views of Garrett, Coupland and Williams (above) in relation to their study of teachers’ attitudes to regional Welsh English speech.

Snell cites recent newspaper articles which detail the increase of anti-liberal attitudes toward speech in British state schools. Jessica Shepherd’s article ‘Hiya pupils, please avoid slang, ta’ which was published in *The Guardian* on Tuesday 14th February 2012, looks at how a Sheffield state comprehensive school has an ethos of “the street stops at the gate” when it comes to speech, in an attempt to get students to become practised users of the formal register which is deemed necessary for them to be able to perform well in a university or job interview, thus enabling them to succeed in life. Reading the article, the school does not appear to be trying to teach its students R.P. but focussing instead on lexical and grammatical choices and emphasising that there are different registers. Handled sensitively, with a focus on what is appropriate in certain contexts, rather than taking the view that the students’ ‘street’ language is ‘wrong’, this approach need not be damaging. It is perhaps a different matter at the Essex primary school where students are given elocution lessons in an attempt not just to ‘correct’ their speech, but also to address the negative impact that this ‘incorrect’ speech is perceived to have on children’s grammar and spelling.²¹⁸ The lessons have been introduced at least in part in response to the television programme *The Only Way is Essex*. Sarah Harris, the writer of *The Daily Mail* article which covers the story, begins her piece with, ‘The Essex accent has long attracted ridicule and disapproval’, thus promoting ridicule and disapproval herself. According to Harris, ‘Rising numbers of all ages from all over Britain are turning to elocution, according to research by the thetutorpages.com website’. Perhaps what she and the teachers at such schools ought to be doing is introducing children to positive role models who have an Essex accent rather than perpetuating the stereotype of the unintelligent Essex person.

At the time of writing, I have been a secondary school English teacher for 25 years and I believe that teachers have a very difficult path to tread: we must acknowledge, whether we like it or not, that our students will be judged both within and beyond the school system on their ability to use the grammar and lexis of Standard English, and we have

²¹⁸ Sarah Harris, ‘The Only Way is Elocution: Pupils in Essex Being Taught To Talk Proper!’ *The Daily Mail* < <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2092732> > [19th September 2015].

to give them access to these forms; at the same time we must avoid any suggestion that their regional dialect, and indeed their pronunciation, is ‘wrong’ or substandard. To be critical of students’ regional usage is to be critical of their family and the society in which they live. Teachers also have to work with what we are given: the examination board specifications which are developed following Ofqual directives and are subject to change depending on the ideology of whichever political party is in government. The school where I work follows the AQA specification for English Language; AQA is one of the major examination boards in the country and whilst there are differences between boards, they all have to follow the same Ofqual directives. The specification which was introduced in 2008 and was in use until 2013 allocated twenty percent of the marks for GCSE English to the use of spoken English. (A further forty percent was allocated to written coursework and the remaining forty percent to an examination.) Students were assessed by their teachers in three separate and equally weighted areas: discussing and listening, presenting, and role-playing. There were three different assessment objectives, one of which read ‘speak to communicate clearly and purposefully; structure and sustain talk, adapting it to different situations and audiences; use standard English and a variety of techniques as appropriate’. In order to achieve in the top band for this assessment objective, students had to ‘show an assured choice and flexible use of standard English vocabulary and grammar in appropriate situations’. In the next band down, the phrase ‘assured and flexible’ became ‘appropriate, controlled, effective’ and then in the band below that ‘competent and appropriate’ and so on. There were five bands, and a C grade, often considered as a ‘pass’, fell at the top of the ‘competent and appropriate’ band. Therefore, students could not achieve a C grade or above on this task unless they could demonstrate their competence in spoken Standard English. However, this assessment objective applied only to the ‘presenting’ component; the other two assessment objectives, applied to the other two tasks, had no mention of Standard English. Thus, on the speaking and listening unit as a whole, it was possible for students to achieve in the top band without the use of Standard English. This enabled some highly intelligent and articulate speakers of local dialect to do very well.

Since 2013, there have been changes. Initially, the twenty percent weighting given to spoken language was dropped from the overall GCSE: although the tasks and assessment objectives remained the same, the unit no longer ‘counted’ toward the GCSE grade but became ‘an endorsement, separately reported on certificates’. This denied students the chance to earn marks in this way and devalued spoken language, both standard and nonstandard. Next, a completely new specification was introduced in 2015, the first examinations being in 2017. Under this specification, students are assessed entirely by formal examination. There is a speaking and listening component, but it is once more a ‘separate endorsement’. What is significant is that even though

spoken language has been reduced to this ‘separate endorsement’, the new assessment objectives for speaking and listening have a much greater focus on the use of Standard English. Whereas the old specification mentioned Standard English in only one of the three assessment objectives, the new specification states that students are to ‘use spoken Standard English effectively in speeches and presentations’. This covers a greater range of tasks than the previous specification did, and there is now more of an emphasis on ‘formal settings’.²¹⁹ The 2008 specification was developed when a Labour government was in power; the changes have occurred since a Conservative government came to power, albeit in coalition with the Liberal Democrats between 2010 and 2015. It seems that the Conservative party wants there to be a much greater emphasis on the use of Standard English in schools but, at the same time, does not accept students’ ability to use spoken language as a valid component of the GCSE assessment. This sends mixed messages to teachers and students alike.

Some recent usage guides also contain mixed messages. Readily available in book shops and via the internet, the usage guide appears to have retained at least some of its earlier popularity. The title of B. A. Phythian’s *Correct English: Teach Yourself*²²⁰ tells the reader that there is such a thing as ‘correct’ English and may exacerbate any anxieties he or she may have. Having said that, the book then begins by adopting the term ‘Standard English’ rather than ‘correct English’ and taking a more liberal position on language use:

Standard English is the written English of the business letter, the official report, most serious novels and the leader columns of broadsheet newspapers, and the spoken English of the job interview and the television documentary[...]it is the language used when the occasion requires a degree of formality or when one wants to be easily understood by strangers. It can be spoken in any accent (3).

This definition or explanation of Standard English suggests an awareness of sociolinguistics, an acknowledgement that there are different registers, and that in actuality relatively few interactions in life call for formal Standard English. Phythian also laments the possibility that ‘Universal education and the spread of standard English may sadly have pushed some minor dialects to extinction’ (4). However, a few pages later, he warns:

We talk in a kind of verbal shorthand, making use of colloquial expressions, repeating ourselves, not finishing our sentences. This is not necessarily bad English, although it sometimes is: bad English is incorrect, unclear, long-winded or pretentious, and there are plenty of examples of each in the language of the mass media. Words chatter out at us every day, and we have to be on our guard not to let the language become impoverished (7).

²¹⁹ AQA, ‘GCSE English Language’, AQA <www.aqa.org.uk> [17th September 2015].

²²⁰ B. A. Phythian, *Correct English: Teach Yourself* (Teach Yourself, a trademark of Hodder, 2010).

This almost seems to have been written by a different person. Firstly, the notion of ‘bad’ and ‘incorrect’ English has reappeared, in addition to which there is the use of the emotive ‘impoverished’, suggesting that nonstandard speech is responsible for ruining the language. Any acceptance of stylistic variation which was expressed four pages previously now seems to have been forgotten, so the reader is left in some confusion. There are no such mixed messages in *Gwynne’s Grammar: The Ultimate Introduction to Grammar and the Writing of Good English*.²²¹ The confident title, like Phythian’s, assumes there is such a thing as ‘good’ English and Gwynne claims that ‘happiness depends partly on grammar’(5). Gwynne’s ‘proof’ of this is worth quoting in full:

Step One: For genuine thinking we need words. By ‘genuine thinking’ I mean: as opposed to merely being -- as animals are capable of being -- conscious of feeling hungry, tired, angry and so on and wanting to do something about it. Thinking cannot be done without words.

Step Two: If we do not use words rightly, we shall not think rightly.

Step Three: If we do not think rightly, we cannot reliably decide rightly, because good decisions depend on accurate thinking.

Step Four: If we do not decide rightly, we shall make a mess of our lives, and also of other people’s lives to the extent that we have an influence on other people.

Step Five: If we make a mess of our lives, we shall make ourselves and other people unhappy. (5-6)

At first, this seems to be hyperbolic language used for comic effect, but as one reads on it becomes clear that this is not the case: Gwynne is quite serious, even when he claims that ‘the very well-being of society therefore depends in part on good grammar’ and that ‘the whole of world civilisation faces collapse’ if we fail to correct our bad grammar (6). This, in 2013, is staggering; and of course Gwynne’s ‘proof’ is no proof at all. Yet this book is widely available and may well have a damaging effect on some of the people who read it, causing them to fear the use of ‘bad’ English and lose confidence in their regional variety.

The balance is redressed by Geoffrey Marnell in *Correct English: Reality or Myth?*²²² in which the writer is very clear that ‘correct English’ is a myth. He states that ‘Asking if a piece of writing is correct is on par with asking if honesty is green. It is what philosophers call a *category mistake*’.²²³ Marnell debunks the ‘rules’ people have come to accept and calls for an ‘active descriptivism’ as an approach to education about language usage. He is highly critical of those who bemoan the lack of linguistic standards and

²²¹ N.M. Gwynne, *Gwynne’s Grammar: The Ultimate Introduction to Grammar and the Writing of Good English* (London: Ebury Press, 2013).

²²² Geoffrey Marnell, *Correct English: Reality or Myth?* (Burdock Books, 2015), Kindle edition.

²²³ Marnell, Introduction.

simultaneously show off their own superior language usage. He is especially critical of the ‘arch-pedant’ Lynne Truss who ‘refers to those who cannot write as well as she does as “appallingly ignorant” ’ and is frustrated that such people are given oxygen to ‘megaphone their shameless superiority and spread language neurosis far and wide’.²²⁴ It is this ‘neurosis’ which Marnell seeks to eradicate. The idea of there being ‘neurosis’ in relation to language usage is particularly striking. If Marnell is right, Lynne Truss, and those like her, rather than educating people to feel more confident, help to feed any insecurities and keep alive the ideas about ‘correct’ and ‘incorrect’ language which began to develop in the second half of the eighteenth century.

Despite the fact that we are living in a generally more tolerant society than we were thirty-five years ago when Howard Giles conducted his influential matched-guise test, attitudes to language seem to have altered very little and may well be perpetuated by the education system and modern usage guides as well as the use of stereotypical regional characters in novels, including modern ones. Television and radio executives have, on the one hand given greater prominence to regional accents in their choice of presenter; but, on the other hand, they also play a part in keeping alive the negative stereotypes of regional speakers through the sort of programme that leads primary school teachers in Essex to give their pupils elocution lessons. The various mass media available in the modern world have a potentially enormous effect on the way the public thinks and feels about many issues, not least language usage. Whilst negative stereotypes of nonstandard speakers continue to be present, and whilst phrases like ‘good English’ continue to be used, it seems likely that the views expressed in the recent language surveys will also continue.

With this in mind, I wanted to see whether readers’ attitudes towards fictional characters are affected by the way in which the characters’ speech is represented. If, as Lisa Zunshine states, we apply our knowledge of, and attitudes towards, actual human beings when we respond to fictional creations,²²⁵ any prejudices or preconceptions we have about language use will colour our view of characters. Below, I discuss the findings of a study I conducted with real readers to see whether or not the views expressed in the mass media and in some usage guides, as well as being written into school curricula, are echoed in their response to dialect-speaking characters.

²²⁴ Marnell, Introduction.

²²⁵ Lisa Zunshine, *Why We Read Fiction: Theory of Mind and the Novel* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2006), p. 10.

4. *Fingersmith: Working With Real Readers*

In order to provide a context and a framework for the methodology of my study of real readers' responses to a character, I will briefly summarise the empirical work done by Howard Sklar and Sara Whiteley²²⁶ in their analyses of reader response and emotional engagement with fictional narratives. Sklar includes two case studies in his book, but I shall consider only the first here as he employs a broadly similar methodology for each. In Chapter 5, he looks at how Toni Cade Bambara's story 'The Hammer Man' 'structures the parameters of the readers' responses, so that, while they may like or dislike particular characters, or feel disgust or sympathy (or any other response) to varying degrees, depending on their own experience of the narrative and their own life experiences before engaging with it, most readers will feel sympathy for Manny by the end of the narrative' (90). Sklar conducted a Reader Emotions Test on 180 fourteen to sixteen year old secondary school students who were asked about their feelings for Manny at four different points in the narrative. He obviously gained a vast amount of data from this, but the end result is that the study showed that the level of sympathy felt for Manny increased as the narrative progressed. Notably, Sklar found that even those students who (according to the previously conducted Interpersonal Reactivity Index test) claimed they did not feel sympathy for others in their daily lives still felt sympathy for the character. This finding would support Keen's argument that readers' responses to fiction may have greater emotional depth than their responses to real life interactions.²²⁷ Sklar concludes that it is the narrative itself which generates the sympathy and considers the potential this has for the moral and social education of teenagers. One could apply this to adults too; indeed Suzanne Keen is interested in the possible link between narrative empathy and altruistic behaviour.

Sara Whiteley takes a different approach in her study of readers' responses to Miss Kenton and Stevens in Forster's *The Remains of the Day*. Using 'Text World Theory', she analyses a book group style discussion of the text by three young adult females. Her aim is to 'investigate the type of emotional experiences readers reported in relation to the novel and which (if any) aspects of the novel readers identified as the object or cause of such experiences'. Her findings included one reader making a direct link between her own life and that of Miss Kenton. Whiteley also discovered that readers are able to adopt the perspective of more than one character, or in Text World Theory terms, they use multiple 'projections' (33), often switching from their own reader perspective to that of an internal enactor (or character) with great rapidity. One reader, when

²²⁶ Howard Sklar, *The Art of Sympathy in Fiction: Forms of Ethical and Emotional Persuasion* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2013); Sara Whiteley 'Text World Theory, real readers and emotional responses to *The Remains of the Day*', *Language and Literature* 20.1 (2011), 23-42.

²²⁷ 'A Theory of Narrative Empathy', *Narrative*, 14.3 (2006), 207-36.

recounting a particular event, part-way through her utterance, switched from her own voice to using that of the character involved (35). And all three worked collaboratively to reconstruct certain scenes, using the textual detail and their mind-reading ability (35). Whiteley concludes that the study shows that readers are able to ‘project psychologically into a range of text-world roles’, not just a single one, and that this has implications for our understanding of the way in which we read narrative (38).

Following this work, I set up two different tasks to obtain information on how present-day real readers respond to literary dialect, the first involving sixth-form students and the second involving staff at the state comprehensive school in Chesterfield, Derbyshire, where I work as an English teacher. The aim of Task One was to investigate whether the attitudes to different varieties of English seen in the results of surveys such as the 2013 ITV *ComRes* poll affect modern readers’ judgement of fictional characters. In particular, I wanted to ascertain whether readers’ views about the level of education and social class of a character are affected by the form of that character’s speech. I also wanted to see whether readers’ ability to both hear an individual voice and experience any sort of emotional response is affected by whether a character’s speech is represented using Standard English or literary dialect. Task Two is a much shorter task but is nevertheless a revealing one. Influenced by the work of Jaffe and Walton,²²⁸ my aim was to investigate whether readers follow a limited number of nonstandard ‘cues’ in the text to imagine a fully-developed London or Cockney variety and therefore read as nonstandard certain forms which are represented in Standard English. I felt this would give an insight into the ways in which readers create a fully-formed identity for a character, based on a few textual hints.

Task One

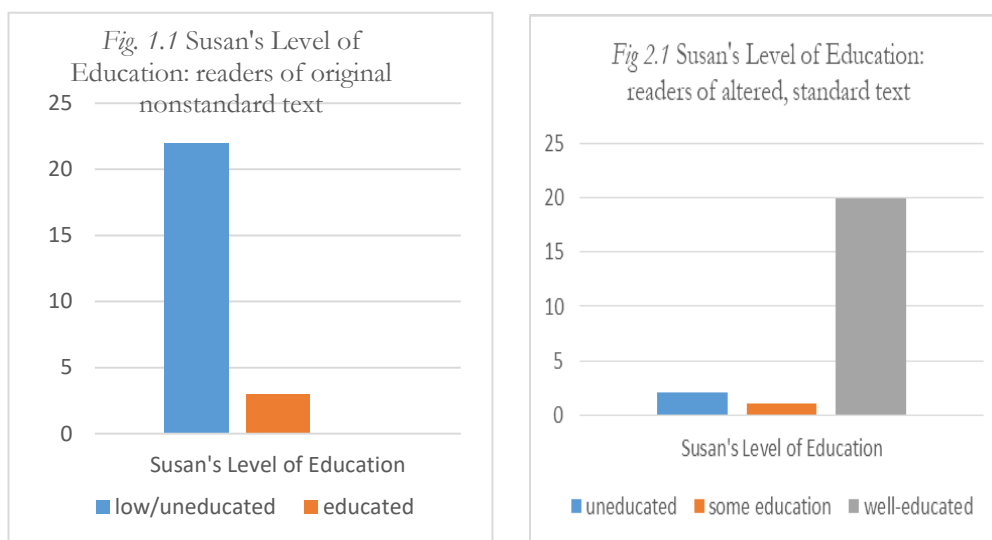
This initially involved a class of 19 sixteen and seventeen year old sixth form students, 6 male and 13 female, from Chesterfield, reading short passages of Sarah Waters’s *Fingersmith* (2002) taken from Chapter Fourteen (406-7, 416), and another short passage from Chapter Fifteen (453) (Appendices ii and iii). I believe that I acquired some useful data from this study, but given that I had carried out the task with a relatively small number of respondents, I decided to repeat the activity one year later. I gave the task to a further 29 sixteen and seventeen year old sixth form students, 8 male and 21 female, from the same school in Chesterfield as the initial group. This later group completed the original exercise at exactly the same point in their academic career as the initial group. They were also taught by the same teachers and were, of course, the same age and from the same locality. Given that the only difference between the two sets of

²²⁸ ‘The Voices People Read: Orthography and the Representation of Non-standard Speech’, *Journal of Socio-linguistics*, 4. 4 (2000), 561-87.

respondents is that one group completed the task a year later than the other, I deal with the results as those obtained from a single study involving 48 readers.

In Chapter Fourteen of *Fingersmith*, Susan Trinder has been committed to a lunatic asylum as Maud Lilly and is trying to argue with the nurses that she is not who they think she is. In Chapter Fifteen, Susan is visited by Charles, a young boy who knows her true identity, and she explains her situation to him in order to enlist his help to escape. Together, the passages fitted on to a single side of A4 paper and read as a continuous extract. Susan's direct speech contains four instances of the marked form *ain't*, one instance of the elided form *'em* (them) and the nonstandard verb in the statement 'I got a mother in London'. There is also the use of a nonstandard relative pronoun in 'never mind by who', although perhaps for modern readers in particular, the use of *who* rather than *whom* after the preposition *by* may not be noticed. This is a first-person narrative, and the narrative also contains one nonstandard verb form: 'That is another place that don't show cuts and bruises'. Twenty-five of the forty-eight students, Readers 1 to 25, were given the original passage which includes the nonstandard features listed above. The other twenty-three, Readers 26 to 48 were given a version of the passage in which I had made the following alterations: changed all the instances of *ain't* to *isn't*; changed *'em* to *them*; rewrote 'I got a mother' as 'I have a mother'; and rewrote the narrative 'that don't show cuts and bruises' as 'that doesn't show cuts and bruises'. I decided to leave *who* as in the original as I did not think it sufficiently marked to need to be changed. All students were asked to read the passages, annotate them with their thoughts and then answer the following questions: *Where would you place Susan in terms of social class? What level of education would you say Susan has? What is your opinion of Susan's moral character? What are your feelings toward Susan? Do you think the writer is successful in creating an individual voice for Susan?* They were asked to explain the reason for their view in each case. The aim of the experiment was to see whether the students' opinion of Susan was affected by the way in which her speech is represented (in the way that mine was when I initially read the novel). None of them had any prior knowledge of the novel.

Task One: Results and Analysis



Across the entire group of forty-eight, most readers comment on Susan's speech, either in relation to her education, or her social class, or both. Of the twenty-five who had the original, nonstandard passage (R1 to R25), twenty-two see Susan's education as lacking, giving responses which range from the belief that she has a 'very basic [education] or none at all' (R21) to the view that it is 'not above average' (R14). Seventeen out of these twenty-two refer to Susan's speech as indicative of a lack of education. Reader 5 states that she has a 'low level of education because she uses informal/nonstandard English e.g. "ain't" instead of "not" " 'em" instead of "them" "I got a mother" instead of "I have a mother"'. This reader notices almost all the instances of nonstandard English in the passage. Reader 9 states, 'I would say a meagre level of education due to her speech pattern; "I ain't"- coarse and rough grammar makes us think of a Cockney accent rather than a well-educated Queen's English'. This student's choice of the adjectives 'coarse' and 'rough' are particularly revealing about attitudes toward language: a view which might have been, and probably was, expressed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is held by a young person in 2015, and, moreover, one whose own speech is a regional variety. What is also worth noting is that for this student the relatively few marked forms are sufficient to suggest a Cockney accent, perhaps because s/he is familiar with conventional representations of the variety.

Similarly, Reader 25 states that 'her use of language suggests that she hasn't received proper education', and Reader 18 believes that Susan has a 'poor education, suggested by her informal and rather common use of language'. These comments, with their inclusion of the adjectives 'proper' and 'common' reveal the value judgements being made by the students, Reader 18 in particular seeming to make links between speech, education and class. Reader 19 follows suit, but gives a more detailed and considered

response: ‘When considering the high frequency use of ‘Ain’t’ it would appear that she may be slightly illiterate, but the rest of her speech appears to be well-mannered[...]of course the flaws in her speech could be down to her London accent’. What is interesting here, apart from the association of the use of ain’t in speech with illiteracy, is the implied link between literacy and manners. Also, the idea that features of London pronunciation are ‘flaws’ in speech suggests that this reader has a sense that there is a ‘right’ and a ‘wrong’ way to speak and that London speech falls into the latter category.

Reader 8 expresses a similar view, but in less critical terms: ‘I would say that Susan is educated enough to be able to read and write coherently but at the same time the language used such as ‘ain’t’ shows her lack of sophistication that the upper class would have through education.’ Not dissimilar is Reader 12, who, whilst feeling that the marked terms suggest a lack of education, believes that Susan’s use of the formal term ‘mother’ is a sign that she has received some education.

Reader 3 makes an interesting distinction between education and intellect: after noting the use of *ain’t*, s/he states, ‘I don’t think that Susan is ‘dim’ but I doubt she is able to write and read’. Although Reader 13 does not comment on the use of literary dialect, his/her views are similar to those of Reader 3: s/he believes Susan to be of a ‘more common background’ and ‘not that well educated’ but adds ‘however [she] seems quite intelligent’, so these two readers make a distinction between education and intelligence. Three readers (R7, R23 and R25) do not see Susan’s education as lacking in any way. Reader 7 initially states that Susan has a ‘good’ education; but this view is then qualified when the student writes, ‘However she pronounces some words “ain’t” incorrectly’. The student’s choice of ‘incorrectly’ reveals a sense of there being a ‘right’ and a ‘wrong’ way of speaking, which again echoes much more dated views on linguistic usage. Likewise, Reader 23 notes Susan’s ‘broad accent [which] doesn’t fit into the standard dialect’ but comments that ‘I don’t think this reflects lower education’. This reader is an exception from all the others who note Susan’s nonstandard English: they take it as a sign of a lack of education. Reader 25 states that Susan has ‘a high level of education as she speaks well’ and is the only one to comment directly that Susan is well-spoken. It is not clear whether this reader noted the nonstandard English or not as none of his/her annotations and responses contain references to the literary dialect. It seems that the reader has judged Susan to be well-spoken on the basis of the content and not the form of her utterances.

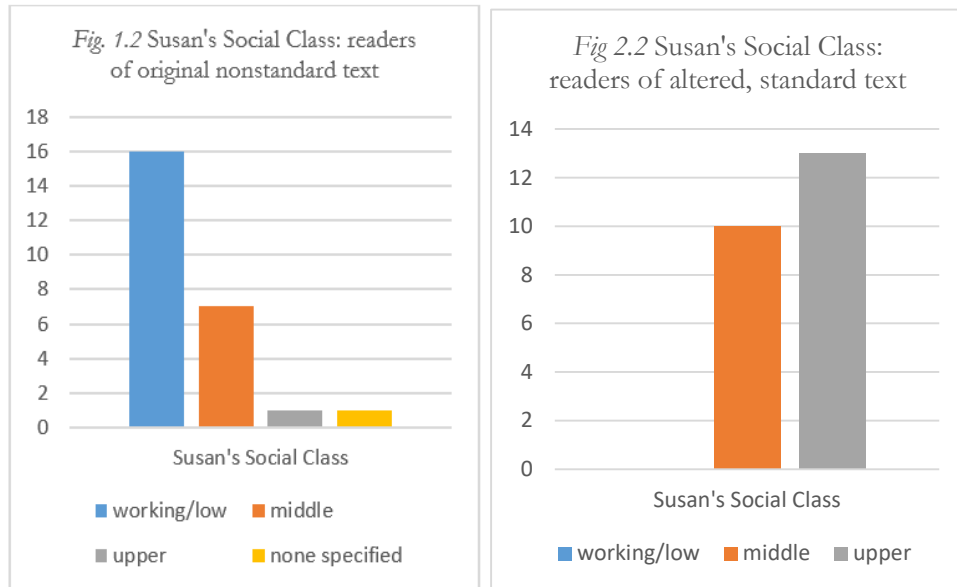
Of the twenty-three readers who were given the altered, standard passages (R26 to R48), seventeen believe Susan to be well- or highly-educated. Of these seventeen, thirteen give Susan’s use of English as a reason for thinking that she is educated. Readers comment that: ‘she speaks properly’ (R27); ‘she has very good grammar’ (R38); ‘she has

very good English' (R43); she is 'very well spoken' (R34, R40 and R44); she speaks 'the Queen's English' (R41); she speaks 'Standard English' with 'no accented dialogue' and 'good grammar' (R36); and 'she speaks in a very formal manner' (R37). The word 'good' is used repeatedly to refer to Susan's manner of speech which shows students making value judgements and, as might be expected, viewing Standard English as the 'right' way to speak, the way in which educated individuals speak. Reader 36 initially states just that Susan speaks Standard English but then goes on to judge her grammar as 'good'. This is similar to Reader 30 who states that 'the syntax holds an air of formality' and then cites 'I need only speak with' and 'every house in the land' as examples of Susan's 'good understanding of grammar'. Interestingly, this reader also gives 'never mind by who' as another example of Susan's 'good' grammar. Reader 37 is the only one of the above whose description of Susan's speech does not contain any value judgement. Reader 41's reference to 'the Queen's English' is also interesting as it not only reveals an awareness of the status and social prestige of Standard English, but also suggests that this person is hearing an R.P. accent when reading Susan's dialogue.

Other readers who cite Susan's speech as evidence of her being educated focus less on its being standard and more on the success of the argument. For example, Reader 26 states that 'she can structure her argument' and, similarly, Reader 33 states that she is 'able to express her opinion' and 'speaks clearly with completed sentences'. Reader 31 gives 'the words she uses' as a reason for thinking her educated, without providing any specific examples. Three of the remaining four readers who do not mention Susan's speech as indicative of her level of education refer instead to the fact that she 'understands the processes that got her imprisoned' (R28), 'her protest' (R45) and that Susan's 'high degree of education' was illustrated by 'her intelligence' and her 'ability to fight back' (R47). Reader 29 states quite simply, that she is 'reasonably well educated because of her social class'. (As Reader 29 refers to Susan's 'proper' English as a sign of her class, an indirect link is made between speech and education.)

Three further readers believe that Susan's level of education is 'fairly' or 'reasonably' high (R35, R39 and R42): Reader 35 stating that this is due to 'the way she articulates herself'; Reader 39 believing that this is seen 'by how her sentences are formed'; and Reader 42 commenting that 'she seems to be someone with high prestige'. Reader 46 believes Susan's education to be 'normal for the time', citing her knowledge about the doctors. Only two readers think that Susan is uneducated. Reader 32, who thinks Susan has 'not much education', does so because 'her social class isn't excellent and only rich people could afford education in the Victorian times'. This reader believes Susan to be lower middle class because of 'the way she talks' but does not give any examples to support this. Reader 48 states that Susan is 'not very educated because women at this time tended to be considered as people who should clean the house etc. not be

educated'. It is interesting that both these responses are not based on anything that the character does or says but on the readers' own beliefs about the Victorian era.



When it comes to judging social class, the results from the first group are not quite as clear cut as seen for views on Susan's level of education. Initially, thirteen out of the twenty-five readers of the original, nonstandard passage believe Susan to belong to the lower classes, ten of these thirteen giving her language use as the reason for this. Reader 21 is the most decisive here, stating that Susan's nonstandard English is a 'give away'. The other three readers who consider Susan to be working class do so for reasons other than her speech. Reader 6, who believes that Susan is 'low' class states that this is because 'her opinion is not valued by the nurse'. This view is echoed by Reader 22 who states 'she is being mistreated and has no voice as such', and by Reader 23, who notes that 'she's not thought highly of', which reveals an awareness of the different social strata in Victorian England.

The three of the nine readers who believe that Susan is middle class do so because she has a mother in London who is looking for her (R5, R7, R9) and 'to have people looking for her costs money' (R5). Reader 9 puts this more bluntly: 'if she was of working class, not much thought would be given by the population to her whereabouts'; the use of 'population' here suggests this student has clear views that working class people were treated badly by the rest of society in Victorian England. Reader 7 gives the same view but also adds that the way Susan speaks to the nurses, telling them to keep their hands off her linen also suggests middle class status. Likewise, Reader 4, who does not mention the mother in London, states that Susan's 'gown' and her outspoken nature make her

middle class. Two other readers who consider Susan to be middle class comment on her 'disgust with the nurses' (R14) and her 'expensive possessions' (R25). It is interesting that Readers 4, 5 and 9, who believe Susan to be middle class also believe that she is not well educated as they pick up on different features of the text to form these opinions.

Of course, what these readers do not know is that Susan does not have a mother in London who is looking for her. In fact, it is quite the opposite: Mrs Sucksby, Susan's foster mother has planned to have her committed to the asylum as part of a plot to defraud her of her inheritance. The focalised narrative, and the fact that the readers were given only an extract, means they do not question what Susan says; so their opinions are based on false information which is what happens when someone reads the novel from the beginning. Also, there may be some confusion over the term *gown*, with Reader 4 not realising that this is broadly equivalent to the present-day *dress* and not necessarily an expensive garment.

Despite their initial assessment of Susan as middle class, two readers state that her language reflects her 'common background' (R16) and that her use of 'ain't' negates the perception of Susan as middle class (R19). Thus these two readers could be added to those who judge Susan to be working class. Also, Reader 20 believes that Susan is 'middle class as she uses words such as 'ain't' and 'I got a' [whereas] if she was upper class she would not abbreviate and [would] use grammatically complete sentences'. (Reader 20 also infers Susan's middle class status from her knowledge of the law). All other readers who note Susan's dialect take it as a sign of working- or lower-class status.

Of the three remaining readers, two believe Susan to be 'high' class: Reader 24 because of her authoritative way of speaking to her nurses and because she seems to have an influential mother; Reader 17 because of Susan's references to her gown, linen and stockings. However, this reader then rethinks her/his initial assessment of Susan's 'high class' status, adding 'her vocabulary: 'ain't' 'em' leads me to believe otherwise'. Reader 12 makes no direct reference to a specific class, stating that Susan 'seems to be well off' because of her clothing and that her knowledge of the law and her use of the Standard English 'mother' 'show her manners and class'. However, I think it can be inferred that this reader considers Susan to be at least middle class. Considering the responses in full, it seems fair to say that sixteen out of twenty-five respondents considered Susan to be lower or working class.

Not surprisingly, there is a strong correlation between judging Susan to be lower or working class and considering her education to be lacking: those who note the literary dialect generally take it as a signal that Susan is both working class and uneducated. This is what I expected to find as the views are in line with the perceptions of dialect which

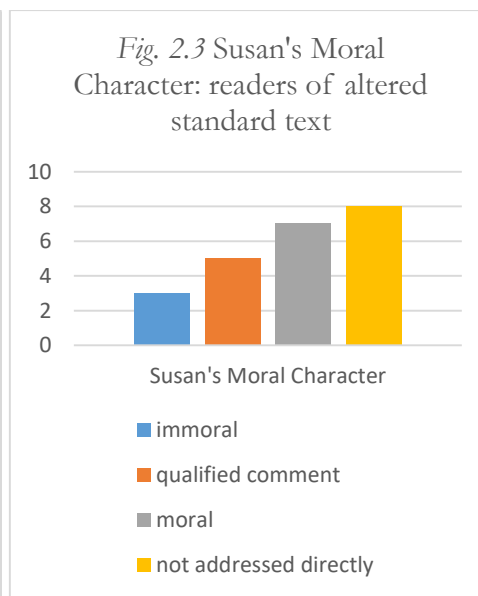
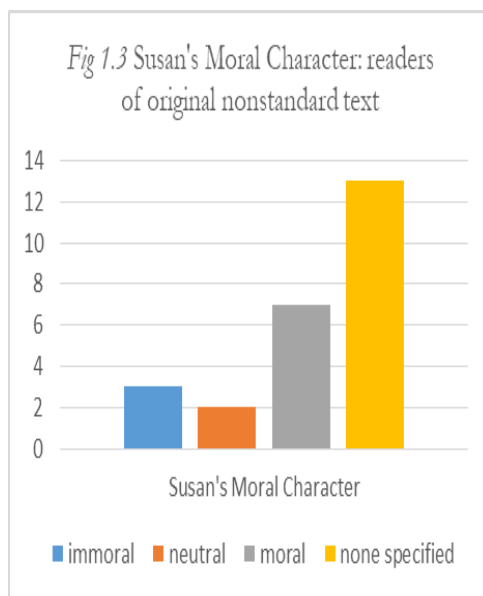
are still prevalent in society, as seen in the results of surveys such as the ITV *ComRes* poll (2013).

All twenty-three readers of the altered passage place Susan in the middle or upper classes. Reader 32 gives her the lowest social class, specifying that she is probably lower middle class. Thirteen believe her to be 'high', 'higher' or 'upper' class, and the remaining nine readers place her in the middle or upper middle class. Eleven out of twenty-three readers mention Susan's standard speech as indicating her superior social class. For example, Reader 34 states that 'she has no obvious accent' and 'perfect grammar'; and Reader 27 states that 'she talks properly', a view shared by Readers 29 and 33, from which we infer that these students believe there is a correct and an incorrect way of speaking. Readers 40, 42, 43 and 44 state that she is 'well-spoken' with Reader 44 feeling very confident here: Susan is 'definitely upper class because she speaks well'. This reader also states that the character has 'definitely a high level of education', giving her speech as the reason. Reader 28 is a noteworthy exception as, although this reader places Susan in the upper middle classes, he or she states that 'The language and dialogue she uses is by no means completely refined'. No examples are given but the reader seems to acknowledge use of the standard form as indicative of middle class status but then also have an awareness of degrees of refinement, or different registers, within the standard.

Three further readers make reference to Susan's speech in deciding her social class, but their focus is slightly different: Reader 45 believes that Susan 'speaks like she has power', and Reader 38 states that 'her use of dialogue' and 'her actions' show that she is 'upper' class. These two readers do not mention the use of Standard English but the fact that they have drawn these conclusions from a passage containing Standard English speech might suggest that they associate the use of the standard dialect with power and authority. This idea is stated more directly by Reader 46, who states that Susan 'isn't at the bottom' in terms of social class because 'she has some authoritative role' and 'speaks her opinions to get what she wants'.

Most of the remaining nine students who believe Susan to be middle or upper class do so because of her clothing and the fact that she has, or so she thinks, a mother in London who is searching for her. For example Reader 31 comments that Susan 'relies on her mother's authority', an observation also made by a number of those who read the unaltered text. Another similarity to those who read the original nonstandard passages is that students refer to Susan's 'gown' as a sign of her status, perhaps not realising that this is loosely equivalent to today's *dress*, which may have skewed the results somewhat. Reader 47 makes, I think, a very interesting additional observation when s/he states that the protagonist 'must be higher class for someone to want to steal her

identity'. Knowing the full 'truth' of the story, we can see that this student is correct, as much of the novel's plot revolves around the identity-swap of Susan Trinder and Maud Lilly. And the response of Reader 26 is to give a blunt but thoughtful assessment of Victorian society: 'I believe that she is middle class as she has been sent there. She states there's an order been signed. If she was upper class it would have been dealt with at home and if lower class no-one would care'. This is a similar view to that of Reader 9 (who had the original text) and is evidence of the student applying his/her already-existing beliefs about the Victorian era to the interpretation of this text. Readers 39 and 48 believe the character has a lack of power which is indicative of middle- rather than upper-class status, commenting that the mistreatment she suffers at the hands of the nurses would not occur if she were upper class.



Thirteen out of the twenty-five students who read the original passage did not address the issue of Susan's moral character directly; instead they made more general observations about the protagonist, such as she has 'got her wits about her' (R13) and she is 'strong' (R14, R15, R18, R22). Seven other readers of the original passages state, to different degrees, that Susan seems to be of good moral character; for example she 'isn't afraid to stand up against what isn't right. This creates a very effective moral character' (R21).

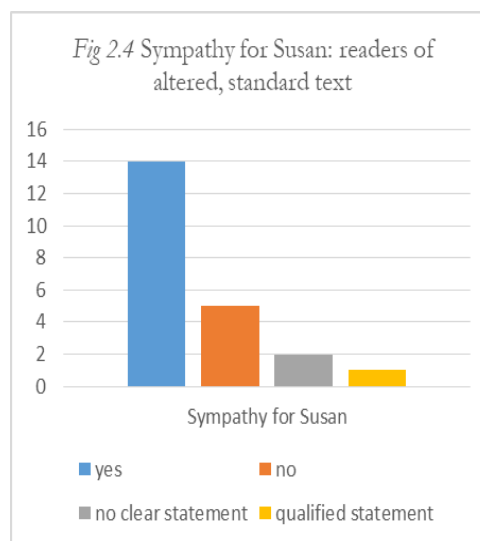
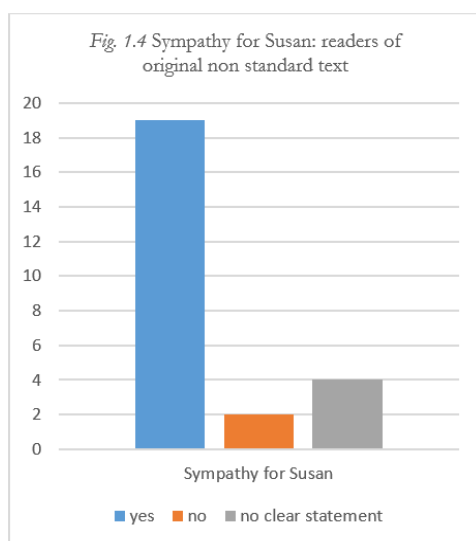
Five others offer more considered, qualified or negative views. Reader 9 states, 'I believe her to have a sense of justice, though it is difficult to pertain a true grasp of her character and moral standings from such a small (yet emotional) extract'; and Reader 5 states 'she can see the difference between right and wrong'. Even though they feel Susan has a moral code, these two readers do not feel they can commit to an opinion on the moral validity of Susan's behaviour based on this extract alone. It is perhaps for this reason

that in response to the question *What are your feelings toward Susan?* Reader 9 responds, ‘As a reader, we are meant to sympathise with Susan as she is in an awful position’ rather than ‘I sympathise with Susan’. However, use of the phrase ‘awful position’ suggests that this reader does have at least some fellow feeling for the character. Others are more overtly negative in their judgement: she is ‘slightly selfish’ (R19); ‘she tries to right wrongs, but only if it is beneficial to her’ (R20); ‘I think she cares mainly about her own well-being’ (R24). Considering the group as a whole, there is no clear pattern: amongst those who comment directly on Susan’s morality, there is a mixture of readers who think her working class and uneducated and those who think her middle class and educated.

As with the group who had the original passage containing the literary dialect, not all of the readers in the second group addressed directly the issue of Susan’s moral character. There were more general analyses: ‘she’s powerful and stands up for herself’ (R46); ‘she’s aggressive, agitated and threatening because of the situation’ (R43); she ‘seems distressed’ (R41). Seven out of twenty-three readers give an unequivocal assessment of Susan as a morally good character (R26, R31, R33, R34, R40, R42 and R48), using phrases including ‘a good person’, ‘trustworthy and honest’, ‘honest and well-grounded’, ‘good moral character’ and ‘a perfectly moral person’. I note the use of ‘person’ as opposed to ‘character’ in two of these comments which suggests that these readers have engaged with the text, accepting its literary realism and entering into Susan’s world. One reader is more guarded in his/her response to this question stating that ‘Susan realises that what is happening to her is wrong’ (R45), seemingly unwilling to declare Susan a moral person on the basis of this extract. Another reader is more guarded still, stating ‘she believes she has the right not to be in the asylum’ (R37). This is comparable to Reader 32’s comment that ‘she seems to think that she’s right’ which suggests a reluctance to accept everything we are told in the first person narrative and direct speech. Given that these students do not accept without question Susan’s view of the situation, it would appear that they have failed to side with her, so to speak.

Reader 30 states that she seems ‘neither good nor bad’. Reader 27 also has a qualified view of Susan’s moral character, stating that she ‘is morally correct in her own situation’ by which I understand the reader to mean that in the incident depicted in the selected passages Susan is morally right; so Reader 27 does not feel willing or able to vouch for Susan’s general moral character. Other readers take a less favourable view of the character: Readers 35 and 36 believe her to be ‘self-centred’. The most considered and, in my view, interesting response comes from Reader 38 who begins by describing Susan as ‘uptight, paranoid and distressed’ and then adds that her words ‘ “ you’ll be sorry” make me think that she’s going to inflict pain [and this] makes me think she’s ‘dark’ herself’ . The student is referring to the content and not the form of the character’s

speech in this example but has noted Susan's 'very good grammar' in his/her response to the question about Susan's level of education. Thus it can be inferred that this person does not believe that the use of Standard English is, in itself, indicative of sound morality. Overall, of the readers who make a judgement about Susan's morality, there is an even split between those who believe her to be a moral character and those who either qualify their response or make an unfavourable judgement. Thus, even when taking into account these students' previous responses, it is not possible to draw a conclusion about whether the character's use of Standard English affected their view of her morality one way or the other.



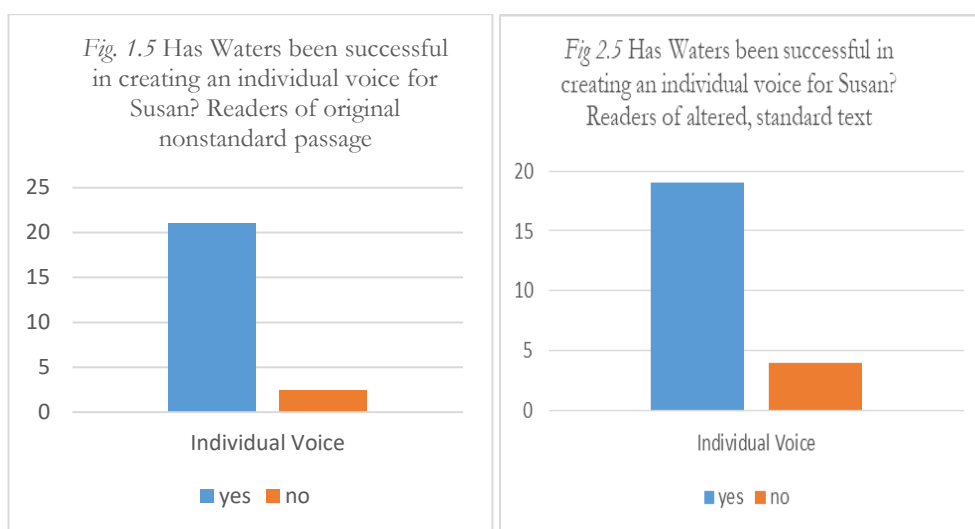
Even though there was no clear-cut assessment of Susan's morality, nineteen out of the twenty-five readers in the first group stated that they feel sympathy for Susan because of the situation in which she finds herself. For example, Reader 6 comments, 'I have sympathy towards Susan as she cannot put across her point that she is the victim of mistaken identity without sounding like a lunatic'. Notably, Reader 5, who makes no definitive comment on the morality of Susan's actions, is one of the nineteen who feel sympathy for her. Reader 9, as discussed above, states that 'we are meant to sympathise with Susan'. Two readers feel no sympathy for her for completely opposite reasons: Reader 13 because Susan is strong enough to fend for herself and 'no weak victim'; Reader 17 because she is not strong enough. Reader 4 does not give any clear expression of sympathy or lack thereof but states that Susan's aggression is 'understandable, given the situation'. The remaining two readers did not express either any sympathy or lack thereof.

Twelve out twenty-three readers in the second group either felt sorry for or liked Susan; one more feels 'slightly sorry' for her (R37); and another 'quite like[s] her' because she is 'a strong character' (R29). Thus fewer readers feel sorry for or like the Standard

English-speaking version of the character than those who have sympathy for the nonstandard speaker. Four of these, (R26, R33, R40 and R42) also think she is a morally good person. Reader 26 states that the repetition of 'It isn't fair' 'highlights a feeling of sympathy' and 'They think I'm mad' 'also evokes sympathy in the reader as her character has been portrayed incorrectly by people in the novel'. One wonders whether this reader would have responded in the same way to the original text in which the repeated sentence is 'It ain't fair'. Interestingly, Reader 38 who thinks Susan is a 'dark' character also feels sorry for her but does so because s/he thinks she is insane. As with those who had the original text, most readers feel sorry for Susan because of the situation in which she finds herself. For example, Reader 33 feels 'sorry for her being treated so poorly'; and Reader 27, who believes Susan to be 'morally correct in her situation', feels sympathy as 'she is clearly distressed'. Reader 47 comments 'I feel and share Susan's frustration' which indicates an acceptance of the literary realism and suggests that this reader is engaging with the character as s/he would with an actual person in the same predicament. Reader 43, whilst feeling sorry for Susan, is 'annoyed that she has not used her intelligence to her advantage', again apparently engaging with the character as a 'real' person. Reader 41 goes even further in his/her acceptance of the literary realism: after an expression of sympathy, this reader states 'I almost feel guilty that I can't help her'. Although this statement is qualified by the use of 'almost', the reader has entered into the fictional world, accepting the realism of the character and her situation and experiencing an emotional reaction to the events depicted.

Reader 30 gives a qualified response saying that s/he feels sorry for Susan 'if she has been wrongly imprisoned'. This is the same reader who believes Susan to be neither good nor bad, based on the information given in the passage; and the conditional sympathy suggests a reluctance to believe what Susan says (which is a similar reaction to that of Readers 32 and 37, above). Reader 32 gives no clear statement of his or her feelings toward Susan and Reader 45 gives an emotionally detached response, stating that she is 'an interesting character'. Other readers show more of a dislike for the character. Reader 28 seems critical of Susan when s/he states, 'I don't think Susan is helping herself'; and Reader 35 states 'I haven't really connected with Susan[...]she doesn't have a lot of likeability in this extract'. Reader 31 gives a categorical 'I don't like Susan. She seems an untrustworthy character'; and Reader 48 comments 'I think Susan is slightly irritating and naïve'. Reader 36 explains his/her view: 'I don't like her as a person' due to her treatment of Charles and the nurses. Whilst fully aware of the fictional nature of the text, all these students respond to Susan and judge her as they would an actual human being; Reader 36's use of the word 'person' is particularly revealing here.

Reader 34's neutral response contains an implied link between the lack of sympathy felt by this person and the use of Standard English. The student states that 'it is hard to feel anything such as sympathy towards her' because 'she doesn't show much emotion and she tells the story factually'. The point made here relates directly to this reader's response to the question *Do you think the writer is successful in creating an individual voice for Susan?* The answer is a clear 'no' and the most significant explanation is that 'the character voice is too neutral'. It seems that the standard version of the text has created a distance between the reader and the character which, as a result, precludes the reader from experiencing any sympathy for the character.



In response to being asked whether the writer has been successful in creating an individual voice for Susan, twenty-one out of twenty-five in the first group state that this has been achieved. Of these twenty-one, seven cite the nonstandard language features as the means of creating this sense of an individual voice. For example, Reader 4 comments, 'some hints of dialect are included, making her sound different from everyone else'; and Reader 9 echoes this, stating that Susan has a 'unique voice'. It is interesting that Reader 4 sees that there are only 'some hints' of dialect and is able to use these to imagine Susan's voice as being completely individual, as is Reader 9. Two readers (R11 and R14) make more general comments on Waters's use of 'tone and vocabulary' and 'dialogue' respectively. Readers 8, 12 and 20 give the first person narrative as the reason, from which it could be inferred that the readers have responded to the nonstandard usage. The remaining respondents who hear an individual voice focus on aspects of Susan's personality such as her strength rather than linguistic features.

Of the four readers who do not feel that Waters has been successful in creating an individual voice, Reader 10 is most dismissive, stating that Susan is 'a boring character'.

Readers 1 and 2 make points which are much more detailed and are similar to each other: her 'voice doesn't give insight into what she really is as a person' (R1); 'she doesn't seem to show her own way of speaking and it is difficult to see what her true character is really like' (R2). Whilst these readers do not respond to the nonstandard usage in the way that some of the others do, it is significant that they do respond to Susan as they would a real person: they accept the conventions of literary realism and seek to get to know Susan in accordance with those conventions.

Reader 17 feels that 'Susan's voice could be anyone's' as 'she has a standard/general everyday narrative with no quirks or uniqueness'. This reader felt no sympathy for Susan and thought she was literate but not well educated. S/he also initially considered Susan to be 'high up' in terms of social class but then revised this view when taking account of the literary dialect. What is interesting is that this student noted the nonstandard English but does not feel that it creates a sense of an individual voice. This may be because the nonstandard features used by Waters in this passage are familiar and well-established, even in the nineteenth century.

Nineteen readers in the second group believe that Waters does create an individual voice for her protagonist; this is two fewer than in the first group. The reasons given for this are varied. Eight refer to some aspect of Susan's speech: Reader 27 refers again to the 'well-spoken' voice; Reader 30 comments that Susan's language is 'consistent'; Reader 31 states that a voice is created because of 'the lexical features to show her emotion'; Reader 35 states that she is a 'fast talker'; Reader 36 notes 'consistency in the whining tone'; Reader 39 believes that the 'short outbursts show a bold personality'; Reader 40 comments on the greater number of utterances she has compared with Charles and that these are 'declaratives, exclamations and imperatives'; and Reader 47 states that she 'gives orders' which shows that she is a strong character.

Readers 46 and 48 refer directly to the use of the first person narrative in creating the effect of an individual voice for the protagonist and Reader 41 states that 'our focus is primarily on her'. Reader 29's comment is somewhat vague: s/he says that an individual voice is created 'because Susan stands out as being a main character'. The remaining readers focus more on Waters's creation of a credible strong and independent character: Reader 26 states that Susan's 'stubborn' nature and her 'frustration' are clear; and Reader 32 comments that it 'seems like Susan is real and the same person throughout'. It seems that, for these readers, their ability to engage with the novel's realism, even for the duration of such a short extract, enables them to view Susan as a 'real' person, and to hear an individual voice, regardless of the fact that the version they read was altered to Standard English.

As in the first group, there were four readers of the altered, standard text who did not feel that an individual voice had been created; however, Group One contained two more readers overall. Reader 28 thinks the novel ‘feels like a third person narrative’ and Reader 33 comments that ‘Susan hasn’t got a specific tone which puts a barrier between her and the reader’. This reader, however, is one of the three who express sympathy for Susan. Reader 38, who is the one who believes that Susan is insane, states that the lack of an individual voice is ‘isn’t a bad thing [because] it creates ambiguity and makes readers like me wonder whether she is really insane or not’. Questioning what the protagonist is ‘really’ like, and indeed ascertaining her ‘true’ identity is a key aspect of the process of reading *Fingersmith*.

Given that most students in both groups believe that Waters has successfully created an individual voice for her protagonist, it would appear that this sense of individuality is possible regardless of whether Standard English or literary dialect is used for the voice.

Finally, I would like to discuss some of the responses in the *Any other comments?* section with which I concluded the task. Many students, regardless of which text they were given, wrote that they would like to read the rest of the story to find out what happens to Susan, showing that they had engaged with the character and her plight, accepting the novel’s realism. One particular reader entered the fictional world to the extent that s/he could imagine being in Susan’s place as she is abused by the nurses: ‘The part where they SEWED her plaits to her head was so gross I could feel it in my head, effective bit of writing but I hated it!!’ (R48; capitalisation, underlining and exclamation marks in the student’s response). Apart from the content of this comment, the capitalisation, underlining (which was a double underlining in the original) and exclamation marks convey the strength of this person’s emotional response. Even though s/he acknowledges the text as a ‘bit of writing’, aware of its fictionality, the reader is fully able to accept the ‘reality’ of the situation and experience not just an emotional but also a physical reaction. This response is very much in line with the work of scholars such as Amy Coplan and Howard Sklar on narrative sympathy and empathy: the reader is empathising with Susan here, that is, imaginatively sharing the experience with her.

One other response worth noting is that of Reader 44 who ‘like[s] how it is set in Victorian times [because this] makes it seem all the more English’. It is not possible to ascertain what this person’s notions of Englishness are; however, there seems to be a sense of nostalgia here, from one who is sixteen or seventeen years old, which might be in line with the current popularity of neo-Victorian fiction.

Task One: Summary and Conclusion

Firstly, I must point out that this was not a natural reading process for the students: although they completed the exercise 'blind', having no idea what I was looking for, it was not how they would normally engage with a novel either as part of their school work or as part of their own private reading. They had only a short extract and the focussed questions directed them to consider issues which they might not have considered had they been reading the novel independently. That said, I feel that the results are still valid and offer insight into how modern readers engage with literary dialect.

Direct speech is a key factor when considering Susan's class and level of education: those with the original text generally deemed Susan to be of the lower classes and lacking education, whereas those who had the altered text generally believed her to be educated and of the upper classes. Since the content of Susan's utterances was exactly the same in each text and there was a change only in the form of some of the dialogue, it can be inferred that the readers were influenced by the form of the speech. Thus there is evidence of a perceived link between, on the one hand, manner of speech and, on the other, education and social status, which is what Giles found in 1970. Notably, the students who completed the *Fingersmith* task were the same age as Giles's older respondents and therefore ones whose views are also likely to 'move in the direction of the conventional social evaluation'.²²⁹ Moreover, the readers' use of phrases such as 'proper English' and 'incorrect pronunciation' show that such notions are still in existence today, even amongst the younger generation which has grown up hearing the nonstandard speech and regional accents of a number of prominent television and radio presenters. This, perhaps, is not surprising given that these students, like Giles's, are nearing the end of their time in a school system which emphasises the prestige of Standard English, as I show above. The continuation of such views affects readers' judgements of fictional characters, and real life people, as demonstrated by this study.

There is no clear evidence that the students' view of Susan's morality was affected by which passage they were given. Likewise, there is very little difference between the two groups in their view of whether Waters has created an individual voice for Susan. Readers' views seem to depend largely on whether they were able to believe in Susan as a 'real' person, that is, whether the representation of the character's voice, either as standard or nonstandard, allowed them to accept the novel's realism and imaginatively enter into the fictional world created. Indeed, across both groups, most readers did

²²⁹ Howard Giles, 'Evaluative Reactions to Accents', *Educational Review*, 22:3 (1970), 211-227 (pp. 220).

believe that an individual voice was created, and they engaged with Susan as they would with an actual person.

Perhaps the most significant point to note, in terms of the focus of this project, is that fewer readers of the standard passage felt sympathy for Susan compared with those who read the original nonstandard passage. Both versions are first-person narratives which, as seen in the work of the critics such as Keen,²³⁰ is generally thought to effect a closer bond between reader and protagonist than that achieved by a third-person narrative. This would suggest that readers are more likely to feel sympathy for a dialect-speaking character than a standard speaker, given that the two are otherwise characterised in the same way and faced with the same situation. These results, however, are not conclusive and could depend more on each student's natural propensity to feel sympathy for another than on the use of language to represent Susan's speech. Also, the numbers involved are small and the difference is not great: 19 out of 25 readers of the original, nonstandard passage feel sympathy for Susan, whereas 12 out of 23 readers of the altered, standard passage give a complete and unequivocal expression of sympathy for her. That said, the result does tentatively suggest that greater sympathy is felt for a nonstandard speaker, perhaps because she is perceived as being a vulnerable, uneducated member of the lower classes. This adds another dimension to the findings of the dialect surveys that I review above: whilst nonstandard speakers are viewed as less well educated and of a lower social class than those who speak Standard English with an R.P. accent, this, rather than alienating the listener, might actually effect a closer bond between the two as the listener feels sympathy for the speaker's perceived lack of education and social status. This has implications for the ways in which readers respond to realist fiction as there may be a stronger sympathetic bond between reader and character, which draws the reader into the fictional world, when the character's speech is marked.

Task Two

For the second task I asked eight of my colleagues, two male and six female, to record themselves reading aloud the original, marked version of the text which I gave to the students. The adults are aged from their early twenties to their late forties, are all university educated and all from northern areas of England. All are teachers and are therefore used to reading aloud, or 'performing' in some way, but not all are English teachers, and only one had previously read the novel. I did not give any instructions other than to read the text aloud. The aim was to see how the readers 'performed'

²³⁰ Suzanne Keen, 'A Theory of Narrative Empathy', *Narrative*, 14.3 (2006), 207-36.

Susan's voice,²³¹ whether they read the words exactly as they were rendered or added any additional features of nonstandard speech, which were not present in the writing, to give Susan more of a Cockney variety.

Task Two: Results and Analysis

None of the readers adopts a Cockney pronunciation for either the focalised first-person narrative or for the direct speech. Their northern pronunciation is still clear, for example on the first vowel sound in the word *mother*. There are, however, some subtle changes in the way readers pronounce words in comparison with the written form in the text. The most significant of these is the deletion of initial /h/ phonemes. Sarah Waters does not delete the initial *h* or *wh* in her orthographic representation of the words *hands*, *house*, *here* (two instances), *her*, *how*, and *who* which appear in Susan's direct speech in the extract given to the readers. Yet almost all the readers omit the initial /h/ phoneme on at least some of these words whilst pronouncing it on words with an initial /h/ which appear in the narrative. Readers 2 and 6 are the exceptions: they pronounce all initial /h/ phonemes. The other readers omit between one and four of these sounds within the direct speech. Reader 1 is the only person who also omits an initial /h/ from a word within the narrative. He also omits two such sounds from the words within the direct speech. Reader 3 pronounces *how* emphatically without the /h/; and such emphasis, I believe, suggests the reader is consciously omitting the sound. Also, the fact that any /h/ deletion occurs, in all readings, almost entirely within the direct speech suggests that readers hear or imagine the character's voice to be one which deletes this sound.

There are other forms of elision, albeit more minor ones, all of which occur only within the reading of direct speech and therefore support the view that readers alter their delivery to reflect their perception of the character's voice. Readers 3 and 5 pronounce 'one of them' as 'one o' them'. Also the pronunciation of *my* in 'I want my own gown back, and my stockings and my shoes' is altered by Readers 3, 4, 5, 7 and 8. In all cases, the first *my* is given a standard pronunciation which follows its orthographic representation; but the second and third instances of *my* are pronounced with a short a vowel sound, as though the orthographic representation were *ma*. Glottal stops feature in all readings, again, only within the direct speech, with readers including between one and four glottal stops within 'I got a mother', 'ain't fair at all', 'When I get out' and 'twenty nurses'. One different type of alteration is Reader 8's addition of a sound when reading 'and no skin off my nose either' which is spoken by a nurse. The reader adds an

²³¹ Alexandra Jaffe and Shana Walton, 'The Voices People Read: Orthography and the Representation of Non-standard Speech', *Journal of Socio-linguistics*, 4.4 (2000), 561-87 (pp. 579).

extra schwa after the word *off* so that the speech is read as if it were written ‘and no skin off ‘o my nose either’. This could simply be a misreading but it is interesting that the extra feature changes the speech to a more nonstandard variety.

Task Two: Summary and Conclusion

It should be pointed out that, as for the students, this was not a natural reading task. Also, unlike the students, my colleagues are aware of my research project. However, even those with whom I work most closely and count as friends are aware only that I am looking at speech in nineteenth century fiction; I very rarely mention my research. Given that the respondents completed the task without knowing why I was asking them to do so, I think that any knowledge they have of my research would not have skewed the results.

The changes made by the readers are subtle but generally consistent; and whilst these alterations are not specific to Cockney speech, their effect is to create a more nonstandard voice for Susan than that represented in the novel. As found by Jaffe and Walton, this suggests that the readers hear or imagine such a nonstandard voice, taking their cue from the few instances of *ain’t* and nonstandard grammar which are included by Waters, and create a character based on these. In the same way that Jaffe’s and Walton’s students read the standard first person pronoun *I* with a southern monophthong, my readers generally add h-dropping which is not represented in the text in order to create a more nonstandard voice which they imagine to be that of the character they envision. It should be remembered that the whole text is narrated in Susan’s voice so one could argue that if readers were ‘performing’ Susan’s voice in any way they would do so throughout the entire extract and not just in the sections of direct speech; but I believe that the speech marks act as visual cues for the readers, prompting them, either consciously or subconsciously, to modify their reading. Furthermore, in doing so, they are accepting the novel’s realism, giving Susan a voice which is more akin to nonstandard speech in the actual world.

5. Conclusions

I began this section by arguing that novelists’ use of literary dialect is in line with conservative attitudes towards speech and is likely to generate a particular response from the reader towards the characters who are dialect speakers, and considered why it is that such a response can be depended upon. The results of my Task One are in line with recent language surveys which show that the general public still favours R.P. as the prestige variety and see it as a marker of both a high social status and a good level of

education. It is because such views are still prevalent in society that they are, first of all, implicit (or even explicit) in fictional works, and then responded to by the reader. Thus it would appear that little has altered since the Victorian era in terms of novelists being influenced by the dominant conservative attitudes to language.

I considered the critical work, by scholars such as Sklar, on readers' emotional responses to characters within texts. This work argues that the way in which we respond to fictional creations as real people, and use our knowledge of people in the actual world to analyse them, is one of the key processes involved in our engagement with a realist novel. Much valuable work has been done on this subject but, up until now, there has been a lack of focus on how attitudes to speech varieties in actuality affect a reader's emotional response to characters in a realist novel. I develop previous work, bringing the two fields together, by arguing that the representation of speech is a factor in determining whether readers feel sympathy for characters, almost as they would for real people. The *Fingersmith* study shows that readers are affected by the writer's choice to represent a character's speech as nonstandard, and suggests that whilst dialect speakers are considered to be less well-educated and from a lower social class than their standard-speaking counterparts, they may be regarded with greater sympathy. This has implications for the kind of bond that develops between reader and character and therefore also determines the extent to which the reader enters into the fictional world, accepting the representation of reality on offer in a novel.

Conclusions

I began the thesis with an example from *A Memoir of Robert Blincoe*, written by John Brown, in order to argue that there are two types of authenticity in that text and that the presentation of a credible actual world is not dependent on a painstaking representation of an ‘authentic’ dialect voice. Brown is writing about the reality that was Blincoe’s experience as an apprentice in Northern mills. The sparse use of respelling is not ‘authentic’ but it does not lead us to question the veracity of the account of life in a mill town; it is sufficient to signal to the reader that individual speakers belong to the Nottinghamshire community. Like Brown, the novelists I study seek, to varying extents, to present the reader with the harsh reality of working-class life and, rather than aiming for strict ‘authenticity’ in their representation of dialect, they use it as a tool to characterise. I considered early-, late-, post-, and neo-Victorian novels, showing that conventions for representing nonstandard speech have developed over time, whilst the enduring prestige of Standard English and the Received Pronunciation accent leads to the reader forming opinions of fictional characters based on how they speak, as I found in my *Fingersmith* study. These judgements have some bearing on the extent to which a reader engages emotionally with fictional creations.

Having started with a real world example, I would like to finish with one. This example seems a fitting ending to the thesis as it illustrates a key point that I have developed throughout: it is the response of the reader to the literary dialect which contributes to the creation of meaning in the text. Henry Mayhew first published *London Labour and the London Poor* as a periodical in 1850 to 1852 and, later, as a set of four volumes (1860-2). The result of extensive research, it consists of a series of interviews with, and observations on, the lives of different occupational and social groups living in the poor, densely populated areas of the growing metropolis.²³² Mayhew’s method of telling the stories of individuals is to do so using direct speech, apparently letting them speak for themselves. The first group he writes about is the costermongers, one man, whom Mayhew says is ‘the most intelligent man I met with among them’, being quoted at length:

“Love and murder suits us best, sir; but within these few years I think there’s a great deal more liking for deep tragedies among us. They set men a thinking; but then we all consider them too long. Of *Hamlet* we can make neither end nor side; and nine out of ten of us – ay, far more than that – would like it to be confined to the ghost scenes, and the funeral, and the killing off at the last”
(21)

²³² Introduction to the Oxford World’s Classics edition, 2012.

What is striking here is the absence of marked forms. Perhaps because Mayhew believes the man to be the most intelligent of the costermongers he met, he represents his speech as being almost entirely standard, possibly elevating it in the way that Brown does with that of Blincoe and as Gissing does with that of Arthur Golding. The content of the speech also supports this presentation of the man: even though he says that he and his friends could not understand *Hamlet*, the fact that he went to see it in the first place suggests that he is a man of more refined tastes than some of London's urban poor. A different sort of person who is also quoted at length is a young female watercress seller:

“I can't read or write, but I knows how many pennies goes to a shilling, why twelve, of course, but I don't know how many ha'pence there is, though there's two to a penny. When I've bought 3*d* of creases, I ties 'em up into as many little bundles as I can. They must look biggish, or the people won't buy them, some puffs them out as much as they'll go.” (50)

There is an increased use of marked forms in the representation of this girl's speech: nonstandard pronunciation of *creases*; nonstandard verb forms; and some elision, although the latter may also have been found in the casual speech of those from higher social classes. This girl is younger than the costermonger and she is uneducated. Perhaps her speech was, in reality, more marked than that of the man, but perhaps Mayhew is, either consciously or subconsciously, representing the speech of the two differently due to the differences in character he perceives. We cannot ever know the extent to which the language use of these two people was nonstandard; however, we can see that Mayhew, like a novelist, is choosing to represent his subjects' speech in a particular way as part of his characterisation of them. We can see what he is doing textually, reproducing common patterns, as seen in the work of Dickens and other novelists. The dialect representation in both interviews does not and cannot fully reflect the way these people spoke in actuality; an obvious omission is that, other than *creases*, there is no sense of urban London pronunciation. Dennis R. Preston explains that, in folklinguistics, ‘the presumed social attributes of a group are transferred to the linguistic features associated with it[...]and an occurrence of those features may directly trigger recognition of those attributes’.²³³ Mayhew seems to be subject to this association of social attributes and speech variety in the representation of his interviewees: a man who goes to the theatre to see *Hamlet* is not one, for Mayhew, who uses many nonstandard forms.

We can also look at the reader's response to Mayhew's representation of speech. In *The working classes in Victorian fiction*, P.J Keating argues that ‘in spite of his instinctive grasp of working-class slang, idiom and speech patterns, he rarely attempts any extended

²³³ ‘A Language Attitude Approach to the Perception of Regional Variety’, in *A Handbook of Perceptual Dialectology: Volume 1*, ed. by Dennis R. Preston, William A. Krezschmar Jr. (Baltimore: John Benjamins, 1999), pp. 360.

phonetic representation, remaining content with variant spellings of occasional words in a manner similar to Dickens'.²³⁴ Keating draws a parallel between Mayhew, one who writes factually, and Dickens, the novelist, which supports Simmon's view that stories from actuality are told in styles similar to those used by artists.²³⁵ What is particularly important is that Keating does not seem to hear an authentic voice based on Mayhew's representation of speech, even though he knows that Mayhew is familiar with actual London varieties. Although this is a realist text in the literal sense that its subject matter is real human beings and the stories they tell of their lives, Keating is unable to accept the dialect representation as conveying that reality. On the other hand, Robert Douglas-Fairhurst is far more complimentary about Mayhew's representation of speech:

Mayhew was different, not least because what he loved most about his subjects was that they were so different from each other as well as from him. Whenever his writing threatens to descend into the period's standard responses of disdain or whimsy, his ear catches the unique accent of an individual and affords it the same respect as a shorthand reporter taking down the latest proceedings in Parliament.²³⁶

Use of the phrase 'shorthand reporter' suggests that Douglas-Fairhurst sees Mayhew's writing as a transcript, the speech of his subjects set down verbatim. He goes on to use the word 'realism' in relation to Mayhew's use of direct speech, all of which is a very different view to that of Keating: whereas Keating considers the mechanics of what Mayhew is doing, seeing Mayhew as repeating conventions used by Dickens in fictional representations of speech, Douglas-Fairhurst believes that each voice has its 'unique accent' represented with precision and accuracy. These two critics have read the same material: one, it seems, cannot hear the voices of the individuals concerned based on the cues provided in the narrative; the other takes these same cues and is able to respond to them, creating fully formed characters with whom he feels some degree of sympathy. At the end of the introduction to the text, Douglas-Fairhurst singles out 'the Italian showman who lost his monkey', 'the man who hawks fly-papers' and 'the street-seller of ginger-nuts', showing that these are people whose stories have affected him.

That two highly-educated critics express such different views of the same material illustrates the two key points I make in this thesis in developing my view of what a post-authenticity approach to literary dialect studies should be. Firstly, I have questioned what it means to be 'authentic', showing that dialect representation is an important component part of realism, although, as with realism in general, it is not, and cannot be,

²³⁴ P.J. Keating, *The working classes in Victorian fiction* (Abingdon: Routledge & Kegan Paul), 1971, p. 254.

²³⁵ James Richard Simmons Jr, 'Working Class Autobiography and Middle Class Writers: Fictive Representations of the Working Classes in Nineteenth Century British Literature' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of South Carolina, 1997), p.2.

²³⁶ Introduction to The Oxford World's Classics edition of *London Labour and the London Poor* (2012), pp. xlii.

a simple act of mimesis; it is the acceptance of the version of reality on offer that leads to the success of the realist text. The criteria applied to the study of literary dialect have changed: we are no longer approaching novels from the standpoint of the linguist, one who conducts a close analysis of the different dialectal forms, but from the position of the real reader, one who responds to direct speech as part of characterisation. This being the case, there are writers, whose dialect representation has not previously been paid much attention, who are worthy of study. Their literary dialect may be less well developed and less of a prominent feature in their novels than that of Dickens, for example, but it does serve a purpose and is skilfully woven into the fabric of their novels in terms of the development of character, plot and theme. Secondly, considering the notion of acceptance, I have placed greater prominence on the role of the reader in creating meaning. Readers have, initially, to accept that the literary dialect represents an actual variety of speech; this then enables them to build a character based on the use of direct speech, along with all the other descriptions and accounts included by the novelist, as was the case with the real readers in my tasks in Section Three. The nature of the readers' creation will then determine how much sympathy they have for that character and thereby how satisfied they are with the development and resolution of the novel.

Taken together, the case studies in Section One provide a diachronic view of how literary dialect developed during and beyond the Victorian era, showing that it works differently at different times. This takes a step towards answering Hakala's call for an aural history of the novel and supports both her and my view that the work of less well-known novelists should be studied.²³⁷ At the start of the period, Frances Trollope was writing when there was no established tradition of representing regional varieties in the direct speech of serious and sympathetic characters; dialect-speaking literary figures were generally comedic ones. Trollope's clear political agenda in *Michael Armstrong* means that she has to proceed carefully in the presentation of her factory workers. She cannot risk them being seen as figures of fun or, worse, contemptible, and has little to draw on in her representation of their speech, so her literary dialect is subtle. By the time Gissing was writing, there were more fully developed conventions for representing nonstandard speech, especially the Cockney variety which appears in *Workers in the Dawn*; indeed literary dialect can be seen to have developed in its increased representation of vowel sounds and the omission of *v/w* substitution which had died out in actual usage by that time. It is significant that by the time Gissing was writing, the growth of the middle classes had led to a growth in language usage (and other) guides which, in turn, led to increased anxiety about the use of 'proper' language which

²³⁷ Taryn Hakala, 'Working Dialect' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 2010), p.228.

some equated with one's status and the quality of one's character.²³⁸ These attitudes are evident in Gissing's protagonist Arthur Golding and, at least to some extent, in Gissing himself as he opts to present morally good people in London's East End who, in actuality, would speak some form of the Cockney variety, as Standard English speakers. In this way, Gissing is reinforcing popular attitudes towards language usage which became dominant in the nineteenth century. On the other hand Spring, writing over half a century after Gissing, and a century after Trollope, uses literary dialect in *Fame is the Spur* to signal the speaker's moral rectitude. By this time, readers were familiar with novels such as *Hard Times* and *Mary Barton* and their sympathetic portrayal of Northern protagonists, so Spring is able to capitalise on this. His use of Northern dialect forms is pertinent to his account of the rise of the Labour Party, one which contains actual historical figures and events to strengthen its claim to be representing reality.

Spring does not look to Dickens in his representation of the speech of Northern working-class folk only; he also makes direct reference to the earlier novelist within his narrative, perhaps assuming his readers to be familiar with the novels featured. Gissing is also influenced by Dickens's subject matter, although the references are less overt than they are in Spring's novel. For example, Gissing's portrayal of Christmas celebrations at the Pettindund home is a bitter parody of a Dickensian Christmas as in *A Christmas Carol*. It seems that Gissing, writing a short time after Dickens, is keen to distance himself from his predecessor's representation of reality, offering an altogether harsher view of humanity; whereas Spring, writing at greater distance, references Dickens's works in order to strengthen the illusion of reality he is creating. It is this interplay between novels, which led to Section Two and the consideration of how representations of reality are created, in part, by drawing on other texts, including fictional ones, from the relevant era. This is evident in the three neo-Victorian case studies, novels which playfully reference or even re-write the works of Dickens and Wilkie Collins to present a different Victorian reality for a modern readership.

Waters's *Fingersmith*, Faber's *The Crimson Petal and the White*, and Shepard's *Tom All-Along's* are not without serious concerns, but, as retrospective views of the Victorian era, they are not campaigning for social justice in the same way that Dickens and Trollope were. Instead, they are adapting canonical nineteenth century novels to focus on issues, such as sexual abuse, and societal groups, such as lesbians and prostitutes, that their predecessors were unable to write about owing to Victorian social mores. These novels, especially Shepard's *Tom All-Along's*, rely on the reader's familiarity with the earlier publications, and the reader may feel a sense of satisfaction from having identified the allusions to those texts. The resolution of *Tom All-Along's* is surprising, as

²³⁸ 'The Social Life of Cultural Value', *Language & Communication*, 23. 3-4 (2003), 231-273 (pp.259).

the reader realises the full extent to which this novel re-writes *Bleak House*. Throughout these neo-Victorian novels, the references to nineteenth-century literature and historical figures are used to give credence to the version of reality on offer, forming a continuum between the acknowledged social realism of the Victorian era and the writing of the present novelists. As in the work of the earlier writers, literary dialect forms a key component part of that realism; indeed Waters, Faber and Shepard can all be seen to be drawing on nineteenth-century conventions in their representation of nonstandard speech, the main difference being that the speech of characters, such as prostitutes, who did not feature in the earlier works, is represented using more modern forms, such as TH-fronting. In such cases, modern writers have no nineteenth century conventions to draw on, so they reflect speech styles that are likely to be familiar to a modern audience, either from film and television or from actuality.

This appeal to the reader's knowledge led me to consider in greater depth, in Section Three, the role of the reader in the interpretation of realist fiction. Neo-Victorian novels assume a certain degree of knowledge of nineteenth century novels and novelists on the part of the reader. But they do more than that. They assume certain attitudes towards dialect-speaking characters. Whereas Gissing can be seen to promote popular nineteenth century preoccupations with 'proper' English, the modern novels I discuss, especially *Fingersmith*, actually rely on the reader's shemata or background knowledge in order that the full force of the resolution is felt. Susan Trinder's 'true' identity is skilfully withheld from the reader partly due to the fact that she is a dialect speaker and therefore assumed to be of low social status. This led me to a closer examination of late twentieth- and early twenty-first century attitudes to dialect and how these come to bear on the reading of a novel. My work with real readers yielded results which mirrored my own reading experience and confirmed my view that the preconceptions the public has, in relation to actual speech styles, affect the way in which readers respond to fictional characters who are dialect speakers. There was some indication in my findings that readers have more sympathy for a dialect speaking character than one whose language is standard.

Michael Toolan uses corpus stylistics to argue that the language of fictional passages of high emotion differs from that in passages which are less emotionally charged. He considers, amongst other features, a particular use of the verb *feel* and all its variants such as *felt* and *feeling*, arguing that there is a greater occurrence of these forms in passages of high emotion where they have 'more subtle or indefinable empathic purposes' which 'involve[s] more reader-text empathy than the reader-processing of

what (we are told) the character thought, or said, or knew'.²³⁹ Adopting Toolan's methods might go some way to responding to Philip Leigh when he refers to 'the ineffable sense that literary dialect provides readers something worth counting', acknowledging that this counting must be freed 'from the problems presented by the circular logics of provable authenticity'.²⁴⁰ Corpus linguistics, used to identify passages of lightly marked speech and specific nonstandard forms within novels, could be used to gain qualitative data from studies with real readers. As found by Jaffe and Walton,²⁴¹ light, rather than heavy marking, leads readers to 'perform' a nonstandard voice, a view corroborated by the results of Task Two in my *Fingersmith* study. Using quantitative data to underpin qualitative studies in this way would help to gain an insight into the ways in which readers respond to a range of different dialect-speaking characters and whether, as suggested by my study, there is greater sympathy for them than there is for speakers of Standard English.

Much excellent work has been done in the field of the reader's role in generating meaning and in studying sympathy and empathy, that is, readers' emotional response to character. Likewise, much illuminating work has been done in the field of literary dialect, moving from a focus on establishing the authenticity of the variety being represented to looking at how the nonstandard language functions within the novel as a work of art. As yet, no one has made significant steps in bringing these two fields together. Critics such as Lisa Zunshine argue that the success of realist novels lies at least partly in the way that readers respond to fictional creations as they would to actual people: the way in which they invest emotionally in these creations, evident in responses to Faber's work, which I cited in Section Two, and even in responses to the short passage from *Fingersmith* read by sixth form students. I suggest that attitudes to dialect are a key part of this emotional investment in characters and key to engaging with realist text. Firstly, readers respond to orthographic cues in the representation of direct speech to hear a particular language variety which leads to the development of a clearer sense of the character, one likely to conform to a social stereotype based on preconceptions about the language variety being represented. This, in turn, may lead to readers identifying either more or less with the character, their ability to feel sympathy being affected.

The problem is that whilst we can access real readers in the present day, we cannot access nineteenth century real readers, those who would have bought the works of

²³⁹ 'The Texture of Emotionally-immersive Passages in Short Stories: Steps Towards a Tentative Local Grammar', <<https://professormichaeltoolan.wordpress.com>> [13th March 2018].

²⁴⁰ Philip Leigh, 'A Game of Confidence: Literary Dialect, Linguistics and Authenticity (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 2011), p. 115.

²⁴¹ Alexandra Jaffe and Shana Walton, 'The Voices People Read: Orthography and the Representation of Non-standard Speech', *Journal of Socio-linguistics*, 4.4 (2000), 561-87.

Dickens, Trollope and Gissing as they were published; therefore we cannot compare nineteenth century responses to dialect-speaking characters with ones such as I found in my *Fingersmith* study. In his work on the Cumberland poems of Josiah Relph, Alex Broadhead considers the way in which nineteenth century publications present Relph and his work in different guises.²⁴² He argues that, latterly, the poems were seen as ‘the work of a member of a tradition of Cumberland dialect authors’(84) and links this with the interest in dialect shown by John Russell Smith who edited the collection in which they appear, contrasting Smith’s approach with that of previous editors. Whilst Broadhead is able to consider editors’ attitudes towards dialect, it is not possible to assess the views of the nineteenth century reading public due to the lack of availability of printed evidence. Similarly, reviews of novels were written by literary critics and, if they mention the effects of dialect at all, might not necessarily represent the variety of opinions that may have been held by the general public. I have shown that it is possible for real readers today to have differing responses to dialect-speaking characters; therefore we should not assume that there was a single response to such characters in the past.

In ‘Indexing Bob Cranky: Social Meaning and the Voices of Pitmen and Keelmen in Early Nineteenth-Century Tyneside Song’,²⁴³ Rod Hermeston addresses this issue, engaging with the debate which began in the 1970s ‘as to whether Bob is a subject of satire who could not appeal to a ‘working man’, or whether pitmen and keelmen derived self-celebration from him’(1). He makes a detailed survey of what social historians and literary critics have had to say on this subject, his own contention being ‘that the songs have different meanings for different audiences and that language and its indexical relationship to character trait is central to these varied meanings’(18). He argues that ‘Different types of audience will perceive different indexical relations between the pitmen or keelmen and the Tyneside dialect, according to their attitude towards those groups, as depicted in song’ (26). And the point that Hermeston makes, which I wish to emphasise, is that ‘This in large part depends upon the cultural discourses and knowledge they bring to texts’ (26). Hermeston suggests what some of these audience responses ‘might’ be as, like Broadhead, he has no access to the opinions of the real nineteenth century audiences of these songs.

The problem is insurmountable. Perhaps the closest we could possibly get to overcoming it would be to sift through all the available reviews of Victorian novels to

²⁴² Alex Broadhead, ‘The textual history of Josiah Relph’s Cumberland poems: Inventing dialect literature in the long nineteenth century’, in *Dialect and Literature in the Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Jane Hodson (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), pp. 67-88.

²⁴³ From Sheffield Hallam University Research Archive (SHURA).
<<http://shura.shu.ac.uk/10717/>> [16th January, 2018].

find glimpses of responses to literary dialect and then compare these to modern readers' views of the same material. We might also look at how modern readers engage with Victorian dialect-speaking characters in comparison with how they respond to modern ones. This might reveal how the development of new social stereotypes, and the speech patterns associated with them, affect the reading of a novel; whether there is greater or less sympathy for modern dialect-speaking characters than there is for their Victorian counterparts.

However it is done, I believe that the way forward in the post-authenticity approach to literary dialect is to marry the two fields of literary realism and studies of people's views of nonstandard usage in actuality. More work with real readers should be undertaken in order to assess the extent to which they, firstly, create a character based on the representation of direct speech and, thereafter, respond to that character. The Victorian and neo-Victorian novels I use as case studies all, to differing extents, rely on the reader responding to characters in a particular way in order to achieve their purposes, be they engaged in fighting for social justice, or offering an alternative look at the Victorian era. Reader response to literary dialect should be placed firmly within critical studies of the realist novel.

Appendices

- i) Table showing the distribution of marked features in the six novels studied

(Totals for *Fingersmith* relate to direct speech only.)

	Initial <i>h</i> deletion	- <i>in'</i> forms	Regional vowel sounds	TH-fronting	Verb forms	Double negatives	As relative pronoun	Lexis
Trollope, <i>Michael Armstrong</i>	0	0	22	0	140	12	56	11
Gissing, <i>Workers in the Dawn</i>	131	77	35	0	74	23	87	12
Spring, <i>Fame is the Spur</i>	64	42	145	0	10	1	7	341
Waters, <i>Fingersmith</i>	0	0	1	0	276	6	7	76
Faber, <i>The Crimson Petal and the White</i>	250	77	46	76	74	16	9	15
Shepherd, <i>Tom-All-Alone's</i>	175	44	21	16	93	23	20	98

ii) Unaltered extract from *Fingersmith*, given to the real readers

The novel is set in Victorian times. Susan Trinder is the victim of mistaken identity and has been committed to a lunatic asylum. She tries to argue with the staff that she is not who they think she is. She then receives a visit from a young boy, Charles, who knows her true identity.

‘I ain’t married,’ I said. ‘And I’ll thank you both to keep your hands off my linen. I want my own gown back, and my stockings and my shoes. I need only speak with Dr Christie, and then you’ll be sorry.’

They laughed again then, for quite a minute. Then they did this. They sat me in the chair and combed my hair and made it into plaits; and they took out a needle and cotton, and sewed the plaits to my head.

‘It’s this or cut it,’ the dark nurse said when I struggled; ‘and no skin off my nose either way.’

‘Let me see to it,’ said Nurse Spiller. She finished off – two or three times putting the point of the needle to my scalp. That is another place that don’t show cuts and bruises.

‘This ain’t fair!’ I said. ‘This ain’t fair at all!’

They put me back in the pads. They let me wear the gown and boots, however; and they gave me a basin of tea.

‘When I get out, you’ll be sorry!’ I said, as they closed the door on me. ‘I got a mother in London. She is looking for me in every house in the land!’

I swallowed. ‘They think I’m mad, Charles. There’s an order been signed – well, never mind by who – that keeps me here.’ It’s the law. See that nurse? See her arm? They’ve got twenty nurses with arms like that; and they know how to use ‘em. Now, look at my face. Am I mad?’

He looked and blinked. ‘Well...’

‘Of course I ain’t. But here there are some lunatics so crafty, they pass as sane; and the doctors and nurses can’t see the difference between me, and one of them.’

iii) Altered (standard) passage from *Fingersmith*, given to the real readers

The novel is set in Victorian times. Susan Trinder is the victim of mistaken identity and has been committed to a lunatic asylum. She tries to argue with the staff that she is not who they think she is. She then receives a visit from a young boy, Charles, who knows her true identity.

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He looked and blinked. ‘Well...’

‘Of course I’m not. But here there are some lunatics so crafty, they pass as sane; and the doctors and nurses can’t see the difference between me, and one of them.’

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