

**Cab Cultures in Victorian London: Horse-Drawn
Cabs, Users and the City, ca 1830-1914**

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Abstract

By scrutinising the contemporary practice and discourse of the nineteenth-century cabbing, this thesis has sought to enhance our understanding of London's hackney carriages from one place to another particularly by reconsidering some relatively overlooked primary sources and adopting a different methodology from previous researchers. The increasing amount of searchable online databases of newspaper collections, periodicals, diaries, letters, and literature works has opened new practical possibilities to explore the untouched area left by previous works on London's hackney carriages. Also, the object-in-use, object-in-discourse approach adopted in this study has enabled this thesis to provide new understandings of the practice of cabbing in the Victorian London, the relationship between the cab driver and passenger, and the interaction between the city, the cab, and other forms of public transport in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This study has suggested that London's hackney carriage kept changing its role to help its clientele cope with the increasingly mobilised/modernised/time-pressured society. It became a coordinator or connection among different modes of transport and communication. In addition, it was often appropriated to fulfil a wide range of tasks essential to the time-conscious, privacy-aware, and privacy-pursuing modern urban life, including policing, delivery, transporting ill and wounded people, and providing a private place for meeting, sleeping, or even committing suicide, making itself indispensable to Victorian Londoners. This study also demonstrated various and dynamic relationships between Victorian cab drivers and passengers. It has shown how the service was constantly debated and negotiated among the administration (usually the police and the magistrates), the trade (usually the drivers), and the public (usually the cab hirers) by examining the highly informative court reports considering the quarrels between the cab drivers and the hirers. The driver-passenger relationship was ephemeral and female cab passengers were vulnerable and unprotected so far assumed has been challenged. Evident has been shown in this study to prove that a long-term, or even friendly relationship between individual driver and passenger existed, that Victorian females not only regularly took horse-drawn cabs but also dared to perform bargaining with the drivers (at times even bilked or sued them), and that our Victorian ancestors had different ways of practicing cabbing to ours (bargaining, tipping, or offering the drivers a meal or a drink...), which helped develop different and more complicated driver-passenger relationships.

Table of Contents

Abstract	2
Table of Contents	3
List of Figures	6
List of tables	8
Acknowledgements	9
Author’s Declaration	10
Chapter 1 Introduction	11
Methodology and Materials	16
Thesis Structure	19
Chapter 2 A Short History of London’s Hackney Carriages, 1830-1914	23
The Monopoly of the Hackney Coaches before the 1830s	25
From Hackney Coaches to Horse-drawn Cabs.....	27
The Horse-drawn Cabs as a Trade	33
A Mode of Transport, A Trade, or A Business of the Police.....	40
Conclusion	47
Chapter 3 The Conveyance of Convenience	48
The Horse-drawn Cab as An Easily Accessible and Flexible Conveyance	52
The most accessible conveyance in Victorian London.....	52
The most flexible conveyance in Victorian London.....	63
The Horse-drawn Cab as the Fastest Mode of Urban Transport.....	69
The Horse-drawn Cab as a Versatile Conveyance	76
The Inconvenience When Not A Cab Was to be Had	90
‘Cab-famine in London’	91
Cab strike: ‘the cab-desolation of London’.....	95
Conclusion	102
Chapter 4 The Public Conveyance of Privacy	108
The Conveyance of Comfort and Safety	115
A castle on the move	115
The absence of fellow passengers	118
The most domestic public vehicle in Victorian London	120
The Conveyance of Freedom.....	131
Unfettered mobility	131

Suicide in a cab: a public statement of individual free will	137
The Conveyance of Distinction and Ambiguity.....	140
The conveyance of distinction.....	140
The conveyance of ambiguity	144
Conclusion	146
Chapter 5 The Conveyance of Adventure	148
The Conveyance of Pleasure.....	152
A vehicle of leisure	152
A conveyance with great and enjoyable speed.....	154
The Conveyance of Risk.....	157
The conveyance of crime	157
A hazardous conveyance	158
The conveyance of disease	161
Different Adventure to Different Group of Passengers.....	163
A Masculine Heroic Discourse of Mobility	167
Freedom, mobility and city	168
The traditional prerogative of the Victorian male.....	170
The masculine heroic discourse of mobility	172
Conclusion	175
Chapter 6 The Conveyance of Dynamic Trust	188
The Conveyance of Distrust.....	191
Overcharge.....	192
Bilking.....	197
The Conveyance of Confusion.....	201
The problematic extra passenger	201
The disputable luggage	204
Other arguable issues	208
The Conveyance of Bargaining, Knowledge, Experience and Practice.....	210
Bargaining	210
Knowledge, practice and experience.....	217
Civilization and cabbing.....	223
The Conveyance of Relationship.....	227
The possibility of long-standing relationship	227
Relationship outside the carriage	230
A relationship never realised: the hirer a master and the driver a public servant....	232

Conclusion	236
Conclusion.....	239
List of References.....	247

List of Figures

Figure 3.1 Excitement of the Hansom Cabbies on the Appearance of a Swell out of the Season, <i>Punch</i> , 1 October 1859	56
Figure 3.2 Four-wheeler versus Hansom, <i>Punch</i> , 20 August 1870	56
Figure 3.3 Luxury in a Cab at Last, <i>Funny Folks</i> , 3 April 1886	57
Figure 3.4 On the Cab-rank, <i>Punch</i> , 20 April 1895	58
Figure 3.5 Very Accommodating, <i>Punch</i> , 25 March 1853	68
Figure 3.6 The Last Cab at the Railway Station, <i>Punch</i> , 21 January 1865	104
Figure 3.7 Before/After the Cab Strike, <i>Punch</i> , 24 June 1894	104
Figure 3.8 Effect of the Cab Strike – Going to the Opera in a Wheelbarrow, <i>Punch</i> , 6 August 1853	105
Figure 3.9 The Great Cab Strike, <i>Illustrated London News</i> , 6 August 1853	106
Figure 3.10 The Cab Strike, <i>Fun</i> , 29 May 1894	107
Figure 4.1 Piccadilly, London, Bridgeman Education	110
Figure 4.2 Mayhew’s Great Exhibition of 1851: Odds and Ends, in, out, and about, 1851, Bridgeman Education	123
Figure 4.3 Omnibus Life in London, <i>Illustrated London News</i> , 11 June 1859	123
Figure 4.4 A Study of Omnibus Life, <i>Punch</i> , 28 October 1871	124
Figure 4.5 An Omnibus Ride to Piccadilly Circus, Mr Gladstone Travelling with Ordinary Passengers, 1885, Bridgeman Education	125
Figure 4.6 The Bayswater Omnibus, c. 1895, Bridgeman Education	125
Figure 4.7 Going to Business (Going to the City), c. 1879, Bridgeman Education ..	126
Figure 4.8 Caution to Ladies Riding in Hansoms, <i>Punch</i> , 6 September 1862	127
Figure 4.9 A Pleasant Kind of Uncle, <i>Punch</i> , 23 July 1864	128
Figure 4.10 Our Captain is one of the gallantest fellows in the Service (R.V.), but he cannot face H. M.’s guards in the streets. He generally takes refuge in a Hansom, <i>Punch</i> , 4 June 1864	129
Figure 4.11 Another Outrage on the “Underground”, <i>Judy</i> , 29 June 1881	130
Figure 5.1 “Hansom, Miss! Yes, Miss! Cattle or Dog Show?” <i>Punch</i> , 12 July 1862.	176
Figure 5.2 Farwell to the Season, <i>Punch</i> , 3 July 1886	177
Figure 5.3 Although A Hansom Has Its Disadvantages – it remains a most popular vehicle, dear to the hearts of Englishmen and Englishwomen, <i>Daily Mirror</i> , 28 November 1907	178
Figure 5.4 <i>Punch</i> , unknown date	179

Figure 5.5 The Old Gentleman is in a hurry to get to the station – cab horse jibs most resolutely, <i>Punch</i> , 1 January 1853	179
Figure 5.6 Don't Look Too Much Before You Leap, <i>Punch</i> , 1 February 1868.....	180
Figure 5.7 <i>Punch</i> , 14 February 1868.....	181
Figure 5.8 Prevention Better Than Cure, <i>Punch</i> , 30 May 1863.....	181
Figure 5.9 Four-Wheeler Versus Hansom, <i>Punch</i> , 20 August 1870.....	182
Figure 5.10 What A Dreadful Story! <i>Punch</i> , 22 July 1854.....	182
Figure 5.11 "In Medio Tutissimus", <i>Punch</i> , 6 September 1863.....	183
Figure 5.12 Caution to Ladies Riding in Hansoms, <i>Punch</i> , 6 September 1862	184
Figure 5.13 "Politesse Oblige," <i>Punch</i> , 11 October 1879	185
Figure 5.14 A Female Cab Driver, <i>The Illustrated Police News</i> , 29 June 1878.....	186
Figure 5.15 A Female Cab Driver – Exciting Scene in Piccadilly, <i>The Illustrated Police News</i> , 22 August 1885	186
Figure 5.16 The New Hansom Cab-girl, <i>Punch</i> , 19 December 1896.....	187
Figure 6.1 Before and After, <i>Punch</i> , 30 July 1853	197
Figure 6.2 Handsome is that Hansom does, <i>Chums</i> , 29 March 1893	201
Figure 6.3 Handsome is as Hansom DOES, <i>Funny Folks</i> , 8 October 1887	207
Figure 6.4 (same as Figure 5.10) What A Dreadful Story! <i>Punch</i> , 22 July 1854.....	213
Figure 6.5 <i>Punch</i> , 25 June 1864.....	214
Figure 6.6 Un-Hansom-Ly Done, <i>Funny Folks</i> , 30 January 1875.....	215
Figure 6.7 An Ultimatum, <i>Punch</i> , 5 February 1881	216
Figure 6.8 Cabby at his club, <i>Punch</i> , 17 September 1864.....	221
Figure 6.9 Then All the Cab-Horses Bolted, <i>Illustrated Chips</i> , 11 March 1899	222
Figure 6.10 The Cabman's Shelter. (Enter Mrs. Giacometti Prodgers. Tableau!), <i>Punch</i> , 6 March 1875.....	222
Figure 6.11 His first hansom, <i>Illustrated Chips</i> , 2 December 1893	226
Figure 6.12 Strike, <i>Fun</i> , 29 May 1894.....	227

List of Tables

Table 2.1 Departments responsible for London's horse-drawn cab, 1830-1914	44
Table 3.1 The Number of Public Vehicles and Population in London, 1851-1911	54
Table 4.1 Omnibus Law	131
Table 4.2 Suicides in London's Horse-drawn Cabs, 1850-1910	140
Table 6.1 Convictions for Overcharge and Exaction recorded in the Metropolitan Police Records, 1833-1907	196

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Author's Declaration

I hereby certify that I am the sole author of this thesis and that no part of this thesis has been published or submitted for publication. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University.

Chapter 1 Introduction

The mascot of London 2012 – Wenlock – was not composed of too many design features. In fact, only four were listed on the official website, among them ‘the taxi light: inspired by London’s black taxis.’¹ Perhaps this is the modern way to honour this well-acknowledged vehicle. But had it not been pointed out by the rubric, few people would have associated the Olympic mascot with the world-famous black cab. But when Sherlock Holmes is mentioned, most people would automatically picture Victorian London’s horse-drawn cab when envisaging the renowned detective’s escapades. That is to say, London’s cab has become legendary since the nineteenth century. Even though Victorian London witnessed a dramatic development and modernisation of its public transport network, the relatively pre-modern hackney carriage remained in service until the first decade of the twentieth century when it was replaced by the motor cab (but not other forms of urban transport, which were not able to perform equivalent functions). In other words, London’s horse-drawn cabs – mostly composed of the two-wheeler hansoms and the four-wheeler Clarence – carried on a profitable business throughout the Victorian Era.

However, compared with other modes of public transport, London’s hackney carriage has not attracted much academic interest. Mark Jenner has worked on the hackney coach in the earlier centuries, and there are only few substantial studies of the Victorian horse-drawn cab. Two of these were conducted by Trevor May.² May’s PhD thesis closely examined the organization and administration of London’s hackney carriage in the nineteenth century. In it he presented detailed information about the change of the official authorities, relocating the management of a mode of public transport in the broader political and economic context. His work on how the metropolitan police took over the management of the trade is also valuable; he argues that even within the police system there was long-lasting doubt about whether this was

¹ <http://www.london2012.com/about-us/our-brand/making-of-the-mascot/> (accessed 30 March 2013)

² Trevor May, *The Administration and Organisation of the London Cab Trade from the Late Eighteenth Century to the First World War* (PhD Dissertation of University of London, 1991). And Trevor May, *Gondolas and Growlers: The History of the London Horse Cab* (Stroud: Alan Sutton Publishing Ltd, 1995)

police business or not. May's second work broadened the scope of the field to include and take (different groups of) 'people' into consideration. He focused on the Victorian horse-drawn cab with its social and cultural implications by quoting many contemporary news reports, social comments and literary works.³ Furthermore, May also makes a special contribution by pointing out the market segmentation between hansom and growler; as well as mentioning the influence of the railway on the growler.

Another important study was Warren's *The History of the London Cab Trade: From 1600 to the Present Day*. In his book, Warren attempts to sketch the history of London's cab industry from the seventeenth century to the present, covering numerous modes of commercial transport, including the early hackney coach, the sedan chair, the horse-drawn cab, and the modern automobile taxi. He emphasizes the evolution of transport authorities, public policy, technology, and the operation of the industry. His work, in this sense, belongs to the traditional historiography of transport history.⁴

As has been noted, Warren and May touch on certain topics about people, especially the drivers, introducing their daily routines, religious lives, and the formation of trade unions. However, they both fail to use other social or cultural dimensions (except class) such as ethnicity, gender, or family background as analytical categories, despite the fact that people from different backgrounds could have diverse sensory experiences while riding a cab. Furthermore, neither of them put enough stress on the transport industry's opposite side, namely, the demand side, or the consumers' side. The absence of in-depth historical analysis and ignorance of the dynamics of contemporary agents/actors therefore has led to an inability to explicate the interactions and mutual influences between all sides of the trade. Although some disagreement remains, transport historians today have the common awareness that in addition to the macro parts of politics, technology and economics, the micro psychological and cultural influences caused by different kinds of transport and mobility should be included as a

³ May, *Gondolas and Growlers*, p. vi.

⁴ May, *Gondolas and Growlers*, p. 3. There are other books covering the topic of cabs, such as Bill Munro, *A Century of London Taxi* (Wiltshire: The Crowood Press Ltd, 2005); G. N. Georgano, *A History of the London Taxicab* (New York: Drake Publishers Inc, 1973), and Philip Warren & Malcolm Linskey, *Taxicabs: A Photographic History* (London: Almark Publishing, 1976). Nevertheless, all of them focus on the automobile cars, relatively irrelevant to this study, so I decide to pass them here. In 2008, Paul Dobraszczyk published an article considering the cab fares and the huge number of documents – fare books, lists, and maps – designed to provide information for Victorian cab hirers. However, this article focuses more on Victorian reading experiences than cabbings experiences. See Paul Dobraszczyk, 'Useful Reading? Designing Information for London's Victorian Cab Passengers', *Journal Of Design History* 21:2 (2008), 121-140.

single integral part of transport history.⁵ Only when we put transport studies back into the context of users' everyday lives can we explain the connection and co-evolution between our bodily experiences and the development of transport.

In this light, although focusing on earlier period, Mark Jenner's work on the hackney coach in eighteenth-century London is still inspiring. Standing on the shoulders of several giants, including Pierre Bourdieu, Michel Foucault and Michel de Certeau, Jenner chooses not to treat the hackney coach as merely a form of transport, but 'as a heuristic vehicle' to portray the vivid street life in eighteenth-century London. In his specific historical picture, Jenner shows the contradiction between the ideal of 'physiological circulation' and the 'physical' disorder caused and experienced by coachdrivers; the separation between the upper and lower classes when each adopted different means to move in the city and accordingly occupied diverse road space – in which hackney coach served as a distinctive signifier; as well as how the urban space was commercialized; how the knowledge of coach management was accumulated and even the 'political economy' hidden by only studying the topics around the hackney coach.⁶

In addition, scholars on other modes of transport, especially those working on railway studies, likewise afford a variety of references beneficial to this study. In March 2001, *The Journal of Transport History* published a special issue discussing how gender could be a useful and productive perspective in studying transport history, a field normally criticised for its masculine temperament and 'the absence of women'.⁷ In this special issue, Beth Muellner and Barbara Schmucki attempt to bring women, usually as customers of public transport, into the discussion, arguing that travel did

⁵ Except the tangible subject such as policy, regulations and technology improvement, Colin Divall, George Revill and Michael Freeman do recommend transport historians not forget the cultural part when dealing with the transport history or the history of mobility. Divall and Revill also remind not to be trapped into 'either crude cultural or material determinisms'. See Colin Divall & George Revill, 'Cultures of Transport: Representation, Practice and Technology', *Journal of Transport History*, 26:1 (March, 2005), 99-111; Michael Freeman, 'Turn If You Want to: A Comment on the "Cultural Turn" in Divall and Revill's "Cultures of Transport"', *Journal of Transport History*, 27:1 (March, 2006), 138-143; and Colin Divall & George Revill, 'No Turn Needed: A Reply to Michael Freeman', *Journal of Transport History*, 27:1 (March, 2006), 144-149.

⁶ Mark Jenner, 'London Streets and hackney Coaches, c. 1640-c. 1740', in Tim Hitchcock and Heather Shore (eds.), *The Streets of London: From the Great Fire to the Great Stink* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 2003), 40-53.

⁷ Margaret Walsh, 'Gendering Transport History', *Journal of Transport History*, 23:1 (March, 2001), 1-8

provide different meanings to Victorian men and women.⁸ In addition, although stations, carriages, or other public spaces regarding transport were mainly planned, built and operated/managed by men, so helped to construct gender or reproduce the social identity of each sex, female passengers still had a chance to occupy or compete for these spaces, even feminize them. These researches imply that public transport was not neutral or pure, but could be seen as an arena of gender difference.⁹

In addition, Ian Carter adapts a sex-crime fiction as a research text, offering an alternative lens for understanding the inter-connection between railway, gender, and crime. According to Carter, the vivid image of a train going through the tunnel, the excitement generated by the high speed, and the moving carriage as an enclosed space perfect for committing a crime, all combined to strengthen the metaphor of the railways as a complex of sex and violence, an interpretation which was evident and widespread in the Victorian Era.¹⁰ Although the relation between horse-drawn cab, gender and crime is still unclear (not yet being touched), at least it is known that cab riding was not uncommon to females in the Victorian society.¹¹ However, news stories titled as ‘A Mystery of a Hansom Cab,’ – named after the popular mystery novel conducted by Fergus W. Hume (1859-1932), in which a body was discovered in a hansom cab – and articles containing ‘helpless woman’ or ‘unprotected woman’ were not rare in the nineteenth-century discourse, making sex and gender an interesting and important issue when Victorian horse-drawn cab is considered. And the above-mentioned research regarding gender and transport history consequently could be viewed as predecessors enlightening this study.

In a later issue of the *Journal of Transport History*, Cotton Seiler takes the United States for instance to remind us that race or ethnicity could likewise provide another

⁸ For men, ‘Journeys mark the transition from one’s studies to practical life, a transition that leads one to a freer, more lively image of the world. [German Brockhaus Encyclopaedia, 1822].’ See Beth Muellner, ‘The Deviance of Respectability: Nineteenth-century Transport from a Woman’s Perspective’, *Journal of Transport History*, 23:1 (March, 2001), 37-45.

⁹ Barbara Schmucki, ‘On the Trams: Women, Men and Urban Public Transport in Germany’, *Journal of Transport History*, 23:1 (March, 2001), 60-72.

¹⁰ Ian Carter, ‘The Lady in the Trunk: Railways, Gender and Crime Fiction’, *Journal of Transport History*, 23:1 (March, 2001), 46-59.

¹¹ According to their diaries and private letters, English women such as George Eliot (1819-80) and Jane Baillie Welsh Carlyle (Thomas Carlyle’s wife, 1801-66) were quite used to using horse-drawn cabs as their means to move about.

analytical category where individual experience is concerned. Seiler indicates that different bodies with dissimilar colour must have completely diverse experiences during the travel. Every time the race/colour boundary is transgressed, it would entail an intense shock to the passenger's 'dignity, safety, and comfort'. Race or ethnicity, moreover, is a constructive and productive perspective for transport historians since nowadays slaves, immigrants, colonization, modernization and globalization are issues of greater weight in the field.¹² Considering that Victorian London was the capital of the British Empire; certain urban spaces were thus exotic and hybrid; and many of cabdrivers were immigrants like Jews; and it was recorded that many passengers taking horse-drawn cabs were travelling to ports or hotels; it is quite clearly important to examine the history of London's horse-drawn cab from a global perspective.

In sum, the body experiences and the sensory feelings of consumers, users or subjects have become more and more valued by transport historians. The reason is this kind of research certainly could be helpful to connect three different levels containing individual, transport system, and society, since personal experiences are highly influenced by the real spaces or abstract atmosphere created by a specific conveyance. Meanwhile, the seemingly neutral and transparent conveyance in fact is constructed and will represent the outward society. People, transport and society are therefore intertwined with each other. Consequently it is not possible to study the history of the horse-drawn cab without considering the physical practices and sensory experiences of the participants. That is what this research aims to do, to apply different lenses, use different materials, and sketch the everyday history of London's horse-drawn cab.

Scholars also employ such types of sensory studies as a way to approach to the field of everyday life and material culture, arguing that it can be beneficial in several ways. First of all, it is said that this approach switches the research focus from 'object-centred' to 'object-in-use', relocating people – the subject as users or consumers – back into the context, to avoid problems caused by the absence of people.¹³ This argument assumes that the consumer is an active historical agent whose

¹² Cotton Seiler, 'The Significance of Race to Transport History', *Journal of Transport History*, 28:2 (September, 2007), 307-11.

¹³ Elizabeth Shove, *Comfort, Cleanliness and Convenience: The Social Organization of Normality* (Oxford, New York: Berg, 2003).

feedback is essential to the future development of what he or she has used.¹⁴ In this light, the study of passengers' sensory experiences is surely essential when examining the history of the horse-drawn cab in Victorian London.

Methodology and materials

By examining the contemporary practice and discourse of the nineteenth-century cabbaging, this research has also sought to enhanced our understanding of London's hackney carriages from one place to another by reconsidering some relatively overlooked primary sources and adopting a different methodology from previous researchers. The object-in-use, object-in-discourse approach adopted in the study has enabled a shift in focus away from the conventional historiography associated with the field – a rather object-centred approach which pays more attention to politics, system, administrative organizations, technology, and to a certain degree drivers (and their jargon) – to the practical experiences of users (both drivers and hirers), the dynamic relationships between people who were involved, how the cabs connected and interacted with other modes of public transport, and how the vehicles responded to the changes and rhythm(s) of the city, namely, the role the horse-drawn cabs played in the modernising Victorian London. By putting the users and the vehicle back into the Victorian context, this approach attempts to broaden the scope of transport studies, regarding the cab as a vehicle conveying and at times negotiating with the social milieu of nineteenth-century London. It can be seen as a response to recent calls for transport historians to add a cultural and experiential aspect to their studies, by focusing on topics such as consumption, practice and representation.

As for the sources, the increasing amount of searchable online databases of Victorian newspaper collections, periodicals, diaries, letters, and literary works has opened new practical possibilities for this study to explore this untouched area. First of all, they are very user-friendly in terms of the accessibility. Researcher is not required to visit the library or archive that possesses the documents but still able to access to thousands of publications.¹⁵ This is even more important since nowadays the majority of these

¹⁴ Shuenn-Der Yu, 'Objects and History of Experience of the Body: Contemplation of a New Approach', *Thought and Words: Journal of the Humanities and Social Science*, 44:1(March, 2006), p. 36.

¹⁵ Take *19th Century UK Periodicals* database for example. The construction of the database started in 2004. When complete it will provide 'over 600 publications and 6 million pages.' See *19th Century UK Periodicals*:
<http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.york.ac.uk/ukpc/start.do?prodId=NCUK&userGroupName=uniyork>.

original copies of the periodicals are moved to the remote branches.¹⁶ Secondly, they are very convenient and useful for studies focusing on public experiences and opinion. Contemporary diaries, letters¹⁷ and news articles have provided valuable first-hand information of how Victorians appropriated the horse-drawn cabs in their everyday lives (their travel practices and travel habits), what they did (or did not do) in the cab, and their interactions with the driver. The editorials and letters to the editors reveal their opinions on the vehicles or the trade. The reports of the disputes brought to court have shown how the service was debated, negotiated and finally determined. And the literary sources and visual materials have demonstrated how Victorians represented the vehicle.¹⁸ Thirdly, they are also suitable for studying particular event, topic or person by tracking a specific term or name in the databases, such as the general cab strike in 1853, or the infamous Mrs. Prodgers, who was in the habit of suing London's cabdrivers in the 1870s.

However, as several scholars have warned, the convenience of keyword searching in databases sometimes proves problematic. First of all, there are still a lot of Victorian periodicals and newspapers not digitized. Without these missing puzzle pieces, the study on public opinion/discourse and practical experiences could not be completed.¹⁹ Second, even though not every material is digitized and searchable, they are already too much information could be collected. In Matthew Rubery's words: 'Researchers who once faced the problem of too little access to periodicals now face the opposite problem of information overload' due to the digitized databases.²⁰ For example, if people simply type the keyword 'cab' in Thomson Gale's digital archive of *The Times* 1785-1985, even though the publication dates were limited between 31 January 1830 and 31 December 1914, there will be 51,531 entries popping out, which is impossible to look at one by one. Therefore, strategies to search and select are required. Third, the usefulness and reliability of the databases is concerned. As Sean Latham and Robert

(accessed 10 September 2014)

¹⁶ Laurel Brake, 'On Print Culture: the State We're In', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 6:1 (2001), p. 126.

¹⁷ For diaries and letters, see *British and Irish Women's Letters and Diaries, 1500-1950*:

<http://solomon.bwld.alexanderstreet.com.ezproxy.york.ac.uk/> (accessed 10 September 2014). *Past Masters*: <http://library.nlx.com.ezproxy.york.ac.uk/xtf/search?browse-collections=true> (accessed 10 September 2014)

¹⁸ For literary works see *Literature Online*: http://www.proquest.com/products-services/literature_online.html (accessed 10 September 2014). For visual materials, cartoons see *British Cartoon Archive*: <http://www.cartoons.ac.uk/> (accessed 10 September 2014). Photographs and fine art see *Bridgeman Education*: <http://www.bridgemaneducation.com/> (accessed 10 September 2014).

¹⁹ Sally Mitchell, 'Victorian Journalism in Plenty', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 37 (2002), p. 318.

²⁰ Matthew Rubery, 'Journalism', in Francis O'Gorman ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 178.

Scholes remind, ‘...digital archiving is being done in many ways with degrees of usefulness and reliability that vary enormously from instance to instance’,²¹ different databases thus perform different degree of accuracy. For instance, the searchable *The Times* digital archive is made by ‘optical character recognition (OCR)’,²² and the accuracy or the search ability is influenced. When people search ‘cab’ in *The Times* database, entries such as ‘cabins’ (8 April 1831), ‘cabinets’ (16 April 1831) and ‘carried’ (14 December 1786) pop out as well. That is perhaps why Latham and Scholes warn that researchers ‘must be wary of its search capability.’²³ Four, there is the danger of making wrong conclusion. Mitchell cautions that it is very tempting to draw a conclusion when ‘one provocative paragraph’ pops out. The only problem is whether the entry is representative enough. Five, another problem of digital searching is decontextualisation. Focusing on single entry could easily distract the researcher from seeing the periodical/newspaper as a whole and also different from each other (owned by different publishers, contributed by different editors, journalists and writers, and designed for different target readers).²⁴ Fortunately, database like *The Waterloo Directory of English Newspapers and Periodicals, 1800-1900* helps a lot for reminding us the nature of each periodical and publication.²⁵

In this study I depend heavily on the searchable databases. In the initial step, general keywords such as ‘cab’, ‘hackney’, ‘cabriolet’, ‘hansom’, ‘growler’, and ‘clarence’ were adopted to test different databases. Sometimes this is enough for certain databases which do not contain many materials in relation to London’s horse-drawn cab, such as *British and Irish Women’s Letters and Diaries, 1500-1950*, *Past Masters*, *Literature Online*, *British Cartoon Archive*, and *Bridgeman Education*. It is therefore not too difficult to examine all the entries one after another. Searching special terminology and specific person is relatively easy as well. For ‘unprotected women/woman/female’, ‘public servant’ and ‘Mrs. Prdgers’, I put in the keywords straightforwardly and not many entries are produced. However, for other topics, the search strategies vary case by case and often I adopt more than one strategy for each case. For example, I put in ‘cab’ and ‘strike’ first to get the general idea of this specific topic, including how many and how often cab strikes took place in Victorian London,

²¹ Sean Latham and Robert Scholes, ‘The Rise of Periodical Studies’, *PMLA*, 121:2 (2006), p. 521.

²² Latham and Scholes, ‘The Rise of Periodical Studies’, p. 524.

²³ Latham and Scholes, ‘The Rise of Periodical Studies’, p. 524.

²⁴ Mitchell, ‘Victorian Journalism in Plenty’, p. 317.

²⁵ *The Waterloo Directory of English Newspapers and Periodicals, 1800-1900*:

<http://www.victorianperiodicals.com.ezproxy.york.ac.uk/series2/defaultLoggedIn.asp> (accessed 10 September 2014).

and the reason why the proprietors and cab drivers withdrew their vehicles from the streets. Then I limit the publication dates to 1853 (and other important dates) to get as much as details about the cab strike. Similar cases include suicide. For the topic of contagious disease, I combine different keywords including ‘smallpox’, ‘chickenpox’, ‘fever’ and ‘hospital’ with ‘cab’, ‘hackney’, ‘cabriolet’, ‘hansom’, ‘growler’, ‘clarence’, and even ‘coach’ to collect information. For cab accidents I focus on *Old Bailey* and the special column named Police and Court Circular in *The Times*.

In addition, in order to include as much as materials to represent the public opinion and discourse, this thesis deliberately chooses a wide range of sources, ranging from well-acknowledged newspaper like *The Times* to cheap, sensational weekly periodical like *The Illustrated Police News*, from conservative *Punch* to feminist *The Women’s Signal*, from official parliament papers to personal diaries, and from the fine art like oil paintings to satirical cartoons. However, it is noteworthy that the interpretation of the visual materials proves difficult and (to a certain degree) problematic because as an overseas student growing in a totally different culture, it is sometimes hard to tell the real meaning of one particular painting or cartoon. The interpretation of the visual materials, particularly the paintings in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, is therefore basically very plain and straightforward.

Thesis structure

Chapter 2 will sketch a short history of London’s hackney carriages, providing the background knowledge that is necessary for the rest of the thesis. It will particularly emphasize the multiple roles the horse-drawn cabs played, including taxpayer, livelihood, mode of public transport, an arena engaging the power of different groups of people, and a social problem in need of management. It explores how deeply and greatly the cab was involved in Victorian society, at all individual, city, and national levels.

Chapter 3 will deal with one of the most distinctive characteristics of London’s horse-drawn cab: its quality of being convenient in the period when the perception of time changed and the individual pursuit of efficient mobility increased. It will first focus on three criteria for ‘being convenient’: the accessibility, the speed, and the versatility of the horse-drawn cab in comparison to other modes of public transport in Victorian London. It will then provide examples of cases in which there was no cab to

be had – including the rush hour and the cab strike – showing how inconvenient life would be without this specific form of public transport. By doing this, this chapter will examine how the horse-drawn cab coped with the process of the modernization of the city and its public transport network, and when Victorian Londoners hailed a cab and for what purpose. This chapter will also examine several points that will be followed and elaborated in the later chapters. First of all, the accessibility, flexibility and versatility of the cab enabled its hirer to use them like a private coach. However, obviously not everyone could afford to ride the cab, so this convenience possessed a characteristic of snobbishness. Secondly, London's hackney carriage changed its role from the dominant surface conveyance to a feeder for the city as time progressed. Highly mobile individuals like the poet and novelist Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) were often seen interchanging between the cabs and other public vehicles. Cabs in this way not only circulated people and things within the city but also connected the city to further places. Thirdly, the cab was widely used as a substitute both in urgent cases and before an adequate transport system was established for the police and ambulance services. The chapter thus attests to the important part the cab played in the modernisation of the city.

Chapter 4 will tackle another distinguishing characteristic of the horse-drawn cab: a distinction – in both the physical and mental senses – drawn by the enclosed carriage, which was only occupied by its hirer. It will examine how this quasi-private space provoked in the Victorian cab hirer the senses of safety, comfort, freedom and then distinction by separating them from anonymous fellow-passengers as well as other street users, freed them from watchful eyes and codes of conducts, provided them an almost domestic atmosphere, and enabled them to do something private or intimate. The chapter also scrutinises how Victorian cab hirers made use of this quasi-private/quasi-public space and privatised this mode of public transport, such as resting themselves during the night, or committing suicide in a cab. It thus will show how London's hackney carriage fit itself into another Victorian modernisation process: a process as Richard Sennett remarks, whereby 'the private was superimposed on the public.'²⁶ The chapter will also discuss the cab's qualities of complexity, ambiguity,

²⁶ About 'the right to be let alone', see Peter Gay, *Schmitzier's Century: The Making of Middle-Class Culture: 1815-1914* (London: Allen Lane The penguin Press, 2001), p.256. Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (First published in 1977, London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2002), p. 17. 'Invisible wall' and the last quotation, see Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, p. 17.

and ambivalence, as the vehicle and its user constantly crossed and complicated the borderline between the public and private.

Chapter 5 will examine another dichotomy of London's horse-drawn cab: its quality of being adventurous. The first part of the chapter presents how Victorians used and described the cab as a conveyance of leisure: a popular vehicle for theatre-goers, clubbers, sports fans, shoppers, art lovers, tourists and visitors. The second part of the chapter reveals the other side – the hazardous, the darker images – of cabbings in Victorian London, including the exciting but dangerous speed (in contrast to the positive meaning of speed discussed in Chapter 3), the threat of contagious disease, the poor design or construction of the carriage (in contrast to the so-called 'castle on the move' in Chapter 4), and the anonymity and mobility of the driver. Access to London's hackney carriage in this sense was considered and actually suggested to be exclusive of several groups of people, especially females, the aged, the sick, the obese, and the timid. This chapter therefore suggests that there was a prevailing discourse which associated the cabbings (and adventurous mobility) with masculinity, a male discourse that attempted to monopolise mobility, despite the fact that in reality, cabbings in Victorian London was much more common and complicated.

Chapter 6 will discuss the dynamic relationships among the cab, its users, and the authorities following a particular thread: the long-standing dispute over the fare between the hire and the hired. Compared to other modes of public transport in Victorian London (the modern mass transit), the hackney carriage had the most flexible yet complicated fare system. Without the adequate equipment to measure the distance and time – the taximeter was not compulsory until 1907 – the actual fare was generally decided on the basis of negotiation, depending on the generosity or timidity of the passenger, the conscience or honesty of the driver, and the final call made by the magistrate (if necessary). It was therefore a relatively pre-modern way of running business, particularly in an age when the department store – where every commodity was price tagged and sold at fixed price, the same way in which other public conveyances were marketed – had already been introduced to the general public. Consequently, the drivers and hirers of London's hackney carriage interacted more closely with each other than those of other modes of public transit, and those of its successor: the motor cab. Their interactions established various and dynamic relationships between the two parties, at times even outside the carriage, such as a

complainant-defendant relationship in a court, a creditor-debtor relationship, and friendly companions in a public house – showing (again) the complexity and ambiguity of the cab.

Chapter 2 A Short History of London's Hackney Carriages, 1830-1914

The rapid growth of public transport during the reign of Queen Victoria (r. 1837-1901) made a phenomenal difference to the appearance and the shape of London. Within this period, the latest innovations in transport such as the railway (the 1830s), omnibus (the 1830s), underground (1863) and tram (1870) in turn took the stage in the capital of the Empire. Each brought greater carrying capacity as well as other advances in technology. In the meantime, however, a relatively traditional mode of travel, the horse-drawn cabs – coaches drawn by one or two horses plying for hire on the streets – continued to prosper. The trade of the horse-drawn cabs soared to its zenith in the second half of the nineteenth century. The number of licences annually issued to the cabs never dropped below 7,000 between 1870 and 1908 and stayed at over 10,000 between 1884 and 1906.²⁷ The rates of growth of horse-drawn cabs at the time even exceeded the already impressive increase of London's population; thus 'a provision of one cab to 1,000 head of people at the start of Victoria's reign had improved to one cab to every 350 people at its end.'²⁸

In addition, the cab was not merely a significant mode of urban transport but also a major employer and influential business. Excluding the many thousands who indirectly earned their livings from cab industry – such as coachbuilders, horse dealers, saddlers and stable keepers – the quantity of licensed cab drivers in 1851 was 6,039. This number grew two and half times in just half a century, reaching 15,219 in 1891, more than those working for the railways or at the London docks.²⁹ In the meanwhile, the trade was also of economic importance to the Government due to the considerable revenue generated from licensing. For instance, the average revenue in the three financial years ending in January 1850 was £2,460, whilst administrative expenditure

²⁷ Parliamentary Papers *Annual Reports of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis*, 1869-1914.

²⁸ F. M. L. Thompson, *Victorian England: The Horse-Drawn Society, An Inaugural Lecture* (London: Bedford College, 1970), p. 14. Also, T. C. Barker and Michael Robbins, *A History of London Transport* (2 vols, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1963), vol.1, p. 221.

²⁹ May, *Gondolas and Growlers*, p. vi.

was only half at £1423.³⁰ The revenue generated was so substantial that throughout the Victorian period there were institutions – central or municipal – competed to deal with the business. The horse-drawn cabs, as has been shown previously, played multiple roles in Victorian Londoners’ daily lives, and as such deserve much more serious attention than they have so far received in the academic literature.

The focus on the development of the horse-drawn cabs from 1830 to 1914 in this chapter is not merely due to their indispensability but also to the fact that during this specific period, the trade itself underwent some tremendous changes. Some technological innovations were adopted, several Acts and regulations were set, then put into practice, and the administrative body was altered. All of these together made both the industry and London’s streets different. In addition, the period covered here is worth further explanation. This time frame not only coincides with the reign of Queen Victoria but also falls closely between the arrival of the railways and the coming of the automobile, two other modes of transport which had a great effect on the horse-drawn cabs. As will be discussed below, the railway in fact stimulated the growth of the horse-drawn cab, but later, the increase of automobile did mean the end of its horse-drawn predecessor. In 1914, there were already 7,260 motor cabs on the streets of London while the number of horse cabs dropped to only 1,391.³¹ Additionally, to certain transport historians, although arguable, the transition from the horse-drawn vehicles to automobiles does signal a significant evolution in the transport history, that is, ‘from primarily individual travel modes – the cabs and carriages of the well-to-do – through the collective travel modes of bus, train and tram, back to individual travel...’³² The dates 1830 to 1914 therefore cover the turning points in urban transport history, and include both the heyday and the time of adversity of the horse-cab trade.³³

This chapter attempts to sketch the history of the horse-drawn cabs in Victorian

³⁰ May, *Gondolas and Growlers*, p. 79.

³¹ Thompson likewise dates 1914 as the end of the horse-drawn society, ‘Horses and carriages were so much a part of ordinary life until the death of Queen Victoria – and indeed until 1914.’ See May, *Gondolas and Growlers*, p. 166. (Parliamentary Papers *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis*, 1897-1914); Thompson, *Victorian England: The Horse-Drawn Society, An Inaugural Lecture*, p. 14.

³² Philip Bagwell and Peter Lyth, *Transport in Britain* (London: Hambledon and London), p. 104.

³³ When conducting his classic research into the Victorian cities, Asa Briggs also discussed the correspondence between the Victorian era and the period between the coming of the railway and the coming of the automobile. See Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities* (London: Odhams Press Ltd, 1963), pp. 13-14.

London. Emphasis will be put on the multiple roles – as an occupation, mode of public transport, source of revenue, social problem/concern and part of the cultural/urban landscape of London – played by the cabs. The chapter will be divided into four parts. The history of the hackney coach, the forerunner of the horse-drawn cabs, will be briefly outlined in the first part. The section following discusses the transition from the hackney coaches to the horse-drawn cabs after the 1830s. Different kinds of vehicles will be introduced as they did stimulate some interesting discussions and seemed to attract dissimilar hirers. Interactions between the horse-drawn cabs and other modes of transport will be covered as well. The third part will focus on the economic aspects of London's cab, scrutinising it as an industry, considering the characteristics of the trade and the general lives of the cab drivers. The evolution and the transformation of the administrative apparatus will be dealt with in the final part. Aspects or wider fields such as politics, finance and the police system will be under consideration in this section.

The monopoly of the hackney coaches before the 1830s

The business of carriages plying for hire on the streets of London is believed to have begun in the seventeenth century. The earliest horse-drawn vehicle for public hire in the city was probably the hackney coach, a specific four-wheeled carriage drawn by a pair of horses. The name 'hackney' is alleged to have come from a French word *haquenée*, which means 'ambling nag'³⁴ and even today some people still use the term to describe an automobile taxi. The original hackney coaches initially were only allowed to stay at the back yards of the inns or stables awaiting hirers. In 1634 a Captain Baily (Bailey in Warren's study), a retired seaman, started to place four hackney coaches at the Maypole tavern in the Strand and then simply turned the tide.³⁵ Hailing a public carriage soon became a specific gesture/practice still performed by urban inhabitants today, as the hackney coach gradually overtook the sedan chair and the wherry on the River Thames, monopolising surface transport in London until the middle of the nineteenth century.

³⁴ May, *Gondolas and Growlers*, p. 3; Philip Warren, *The History of the London Cab Trade* (London: Taxi Trade Promotions Ltd, 1995), p. 16.

³⁵ May, *Gondolas and Growlers*, p. 3; Warren, *The History of the London Cab Trade*, p. 19; G. N. Georganos, *A History of the London Taxicab* (New York: Drake Publishers INC, 1973), p. 14; Henry Charles Moore, *Omnibuses and Cabs: Their Origin and History* (London: Chapman & Hall LD., 1902), pp. 183-85.

The first law concerning the hackney coach, the Ordinance of 1654 (An Ordinance for the Regulation of Hackney Coachmen in London and the Places Adjacent) was introduced when Oliver Cromwell was Lord Protector. The law placed the power to regulate the hackney coach under the City of London, namely, the Fellowship of Master Hackney Coachmen and the Court of Aldermen. From then on, the maximum number of licences issued to hackney coaches was limited by law but this did not stop the expansion of the trade. The 200 hackney coaches allowed to carry on business when the Act was put into practice quickly became 300.³⁶ As the city expanded and the demand for transport spiralled, the maximum number of licensed hackney coaches was then raised step by step from 400 in 1662 to 1,100 in 1802.³⁷

It is noteworthy that the atmosphere of the trade was extremely conservative. According to a petition proposed by hackney coachmen dated 11 February 1637, Warren critically asserts that it was not the Government determining to control the trade and the people ‘who were overcharging and cheating the public.’ On the contrary, the hackney coachmen volunteered to ask for ‘control and were willing to pay for it.’³⁸ The circle of hackney coachmen and the proprietors hence was quite closed and exclusive. It was not easy to get into the market either due to the fact that the authorities preferred to issue the licences to original plate holders and those ‘recommended by Ministers, and other Persons of Rank and Consequence, or by individual Commissioners.’³⁹ Therefore, qualified candidates were scarce. In addition, both the administrative apparatus and the licensed hackney coachmen were determined to uphold the statutory maxima of the coaches hired on the streets, in order to maintain order on the streets and protect the monopoly of the trade. Moore thus recorded at the dawn of the twentieth century that ‘...in the early part of last century, the public were

³⁶ Warren, *The History of the London Cab Trade*, pp. 24-25.

³⁷ May, *Gondolas and Growlers*, p. 163.

³⁸ This argument does contradict the general belief that it was the Government taking the active role to regulate the trade. May argues that ‘[s]o great was their number that hackney coaches were soon subject to official restraint.’ However, if we approach this question in a different way and consider both the pros and cons of being controlled by the Government, namely, to pay a fixed tax (20s per vehicle per year) but secure exclusive right to the market, the reason why hackney coachmen petitioned for Government control becomes understandable. Besides, it is interesting that while Warren emphasizes the volunteer past of the trade, he focuses less on its conservatism. On the other hand, May, who concentrates on the conservative characteristics of the trade, fails to connect this feature with the history of the trade. May, *Gondolas and Growlers*, p. 163; Warren, *The History of the London Cab Trade*, p. 23.

³⁹ May, *Gondolas and Growlers*, p. 5.

complaining constantly that there were not sufficient hackney coaches plying for hire.⁴⁰ Last but not least, hackney coachmen were less willing to adopt the latest innovations, probably because they were quite satisfied with the conditions of the monopoly. For instance, when the Act of 1815 opened the market to two-wheeled horse cabs, no one took up the licence until 1823. Four years later in 1827, only two out of the 17 largest proprietors of hackney coaches kept the licences of the horse cabs.⁴¹ Hackney coachmen's unwillingness to employ cabs eventually turned into open hostility. Not only, as Moore notes, was the introduction of cab 'detained by the opposition of hackney-coach proprietors' but also a magistrate testified that hackney coachmen were 'at open war with the cabriolets.'⁴² Hence, the hackney coachmen's conservative attitude made newcomers, new vehicles, and any new change unwelcome to the trade. It was therefore not until 1830s when the market opened up that the monopoly of the hackney coaches was broken.

From hackney coaches to horse-drawn cabs

As the nineteenth century progressed, London grew exponentially: the capital and its inhabitants thus were in urgent need of public transport to circulate both people and goods; and, as noted before, people started to complain about the lack of hackney coaches. The situation deteriorated during the famine years at the beginning of the 1810s. Licences were not allocated and even being given up 'on the daily basis.' An amendment of the law was passed in 1814, permitting 200 chariots to be hired on the streets with only half duties of 5s per week, in order to encourage proprietors to invest in the trade again and thus relieve the predicament. This number was doubled to 400 the following year due to the popularity of the new conveyance, a four-wheeled carriage drawn by two horses, a lighter and faster version of the hackney coach.⁴³ According to Moore, the chariot could carry two passengers inside and 'had room for a third on the box seat.'⁴⁴ In the meantime, the Act of 1815 not only legislated for up to 400 chariots standing for hire on the streets but also allowed for other two-wheeled

⁴⁰ Moore, *Omnibuses and Cabs*, p. 197.

⁴¹ May, *Gondolas and Growlers*, p. 8.

⁴² May, *Gondolas and Growlers*, p. 15; Moore, *Omnibuses and Cabs*, p. 205.

⁴³ May, *Gondolas and Growlers*, p. 5.

⁴⁴ Here Warren mistakenly calls the chariot a 'one horse, two wheeled cabriolet;' however, he is right when he comments that chariot has 'better performance in mobility.' About chariots, see May, *Gondolas and Growlers*, p. 5; Moore, *Omnibuses and Cab*, p. 195; Warren, *The History of the London Cab Trade*, p. 94.

horse-drawn vehicles i.e. cabs, without limitation, as long as the sum did not outnumber 1,100. Although the plates of cabs were not allocated until 1823, the Acts of 1814 and 1815 could still be deemed a prelude of radical change in the industry.⁴⁵

The cabriolet was a light French carriage introduced into Britain in the early 1820s. It was a two-wheeled carriage drawn by a single horse. Compared to the hackney coach, the cab, an abbreviation of cabriolet soon widely adopted in the English-speaking world, was characterised by its agility. May comments that ‘speed was the essence of the cab’ Moore on the contrary emphasises the danger and risk of its ‘superior speed’, complaining that it was extremely hazardous to the passengers as cab drivers ‘were fond to showing their superior speed.’ ‘The difficulty of climbing into it’ was another chief defect, and deterred senior citizens from taking it. However, to those who were young and full of adventure – the ‘dandies’ – travelling by this specific conveyance seemed to be an exciting prospect.⁴⁶ As for the hackney coachmen, regardless of their conservatism, the reasons why they refused to take up the cab licences at that time were understandable. Running a cab meant an immediate investment in better horses and new vehicles even though the fare was only two-thirds that of the hackney coach. People who devoted themselves to the trade of horse cabs were therefore different from the hackney coachmen.⁴⁷

The market of the horse-drawn public carriages was entirely open in 1833. It is in this sense that the London Hackney Carriage Act of 1831, which removed the limitation of licence in both number and mode, can be regarded as milestone in the transport history of London. Not only was the restriction of the horse-drawn carriages abolished but omnibuses were also allowed to run in the city. Just a year after the abolition of such restriction, the population of the horse cabs had already soared to 1,000 and exceeded the hackney coach in number. Londoners soon began to complain that there were too many, but never too few, horse cabs shuttling on the streets in the city whilst the outdated hackney coaches were gradually withering away.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ May, *Gondolas and Growlers*, p. 5, 163. (55th Geo. III C159)

⁴⁶ Trevor May, *The Administration and Organisation of the London Cab Trade from the Late Eighteenth Century to the First World War* (PhD Dissertation of University of London, 1991), p. 60; Moore, *Omnibuses and Cabs*, pp. 208-209.

⁴⁷ May, *Gondolas and Growlers*, p. 15.

⁴⁸ May, *Gondolas and Growlers*, pp. 28-32.

The 1830s not only saw the break-up of the hackney coach monopoly but also its replacement by two newly introduced conveyances: the Hansom and the Clarence, which succeeded in dominating the trade until the dawn of the twentieth century when they were substituted by the internal combustion engine. The Hansom, a one-horse, one-seater chaise with two huge wheels, was named after its inventor Joseph Aloysius Hansom. The patent for the cab was granted in 1834. Nevertheless, it was another person, John Chapman, who made the vehicle an exceptional success. By altering the position of driver's seat, from its original location to the rear and top of the carriage, Chapman greatly improved both the safety and performance of the Hansom. This modification helped give the vehicle better balance and at the same time reduced the burden on the horse. The single axle, which passed under the passenger's seat, made the journey much more stable and comfortable. Bagwell and Lyth hailed the Hansom as 'a revolution in horse-drawn vehicles.'⁴⁹ Since the Hansom was so elegant, cosy and speedy, it soon became welcome among people who could afford to pay for a ride. Henry Mayhew once asserted that 'there is nothing more pleasant' than riding a Hansom with a good horse and civil driver along a nice road on a pleasant day. Adolphe Smith also recorded that the Hansom was popular among those only one-step underneath the 'cream of the society.'⁵⁰ The Hansom proved an immediate success and London streets were rapidly overwhelmed by thousands of cabs.⁵¹

The Hansom was so popular that piracy infringing the patent quickly became a problem. The pirates attempted to avoid prosecution by painting a small 'not' in front of the phrase 'Hansom's patent safety cab'. Apart from continuous lawsuits, everyday conflicts between patented Hansom drivers and their illegitimate rivals were common. The phrase 'shofuls' – a term of Yiddish origin meaning 'counterfeit' – was widely used by real Hansom drivers to describe the pirates throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. This piece of slang hence also illustrates another characteristic of

⁴⁹ Bagwell and Lyth, *Transport in Britain*, pp. 104-105. Warren also claims that the Hansom cab 'was later to revolutionise passenger carrying vehicles plying of hire.' See Warren, *The History of the London Cab Trade*, p. 105.

⁵⁰ Henry Mayhew, 'Opposite A Cabstand', *London Characters* (London, Chatto and Windus, 1874), p. 252; John Thomson and Adolphe Smith, 'London Cabmen', in *Victorian London Street Life in Historic Photographs* [originally *Street Life in London* published in 1877], (New York: Dover Publications, INC, 1994), pp. 6-7.

⁵¹ However, the actual number of Hansoms only became clear when the Metropolitan Police took charge of licensing in 1869.

the trade, that there were many Jewish people engaged in the industry.⁵²

The 1870s and 1880s witnessed another boom in Hansom cabs owing to some improvements in technology. The introduction of rubber tyres, for example, made the Hansom much more comfortable and efficient.⁵³ Between 1879 and 1907, the number of licensed Hansoms in the capital city never fell below 5,000.⁵⁴ Due to its importance with regard to the transport of London, Hansom cab hence became a symbol of the metropolis in the late Victorian period, whenever transport or even culture was taken into account.⁵⁵ Benjamin Disraeli, for instance, once compared the Hansom with the ‘Gondola of London.’ Not to mention that the vehicle later gained its worldwide reputation as the favourite conveyance of Sherlock Holmes – the most celebrated fictional detective created by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.⁵⁶

The Clarence, a four-wheeled conveyance drawn by a single horse, appeared on the streets around the time the Hansom was patented. It was allegedly named after King William IV, who had used similar coach as the Duke of Clarence.⁵⁷ Since the covered conveyance was able to carry three passengers, people therefore called it ‘the covered cab’. The Clarence also earned a colloquial name which was much more widespread – the ‘Growler’ – either because of the noise it produced on the cobbled streets or the temper of its drivers.⁵⁸

The differences in construction and structure between the Clarence and the Hansom had some interesting consequences. For example, compared to the Hansom, the Clarence was less speedy, less elegant, but much easier for passengers to get in. A 1902 letter to the *Times* editor once stated that ‘The dangers of these hansom cabs in getting in and out, with no helping hand, are prohibitive to all but active people.’⁵⁹

⁵² Moore, *Omnibuses and Cabs*, p. 224; Warren, *The History of the London Cab Trade*, p. 106.

⁵³ May, *Gondolas and Growlers*, pp. 48-49.

⁵⁴ May, *Gondolas and Growlers*, p. 165.

⁵⁵ For instance, Bagwell and Lyth believe that the Hansom ‘remained closely identified with London’s transport for the rest of the nineteenth century.’ Bagwell and Lyth, *Transport in Britain*, p. 104.

⁵⁶ May even uses ‘Gondolas’ in the title of his book. See May, *Gondolas and Growlers*, p. v; Warren, *The History of the London Cab Trade*, p. 107.

⁵⁷ Georgano, *A History of the London Taxicab*, p. 31.

⁵⁸ Warren, *The History of the London Cab Trade*, pp. 106-107.

⁵⁹ *The Times*, 19 July 1902. (pg. 4; Issue 36824; col A.) Besides, compared to the Clarence, the Hansom underwent more major modifications for several reasons such as the ‘want of room, the difficulty of getting in and out, by reason of interference of large wheels...’ Quoted from May, *Gondolas and Growlers*, p. 66.

Moore therefore commented that ‘Elderly and sober-minded people showed a marked preference for riding in clarences,’ for the sake of safety, while ‘hansoms soon became considered the vehicles of the fast and disreputable.’⁶⁰ The Clarence, according to May, also had a very close interaction with the railways. The reason why the railway passengers preferred the Growler was likely due to its commodious space, which was more comfortable to their families and more convenient to set down their luggage. In his work *Living London*, George Augustus Sala asserted that a Growler was able to carry a family of a junior official which contained the couple, their three small children – two sons (aged 3 and 2) and one baby girl – and one nurse in the carriage, with their page-boy ‘perched on the box, by the side of the driver...to the Paddington terminus of the Great Western Railway,’ while ‘on the roof of the “growler” may be piled an astonishing quantity of luggage’⁶¹ In this respect, the Growler was able to offer a distinct service to the city and had dissimilar target costumers from the Hansoms. The number of four-wheeled cabs remained around 3,000 from 1877 to 1910, usually lower but more stable than that of the Hansom cabs. It is also noteworthy that the Growlers seemed to decline slower and later than the Hansoms: there were 567 Hansoms but 1,818 Growlers in 1912; and 232 to 1,159 in 1914, probably because of their indispensability to the railways.⁶²

As was noted in the introduction, the ‘Railway Age’ corresponds neatly to the golden age of ‘what may be termed the “Coaching Era”’.⁶³ The blossoming of the railway not only stimulated the growth of the horse cab and cart industry but was itself supported by these horse-drawn vehicles. Most of the main railway terminuses in London including Euston (1837), Paddington (1838) and King’s Cross (1852) were built in the Victorian Era. These stations were often somewhere distant from the central area of the city – The ‘rail-free zone’ – in order to avoid immense disturbance and severe congestion. Passenger carriages and commercial carts were therefore required to transport both people and goods to their final destination and, in this light, it is clear that intra-city transport in Victorian London depended on horse traction particularly the cabs rather than other modern modes of power. In addition, the main stations each

⁶⁰ Moore also noted that the Hansoms caused many more lawsuits than the Growlers, though the reason and the source remained unclear. See Moore, *Omnibuses and Cabs*, pp. 225-26.

⁶¹ May, *Gondolas and Growlers*, pp. 48-49; George Augustus Sala, *Living London* (London: Remington, 1883), p. 175.

⁶² May, *Gondolas and Growlers*, p. 165.

⁶³ Paul Schlicke ed., *Oxford Reader’s Companion to Dickens* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 581.

belonged to different railway companies, which operated routes toward different directions. Hence both horse cabs and inter-stations omnibuses were necessary to transport passengers from one terminus to another. Thompson therefore comments that ‘without carriages and carts the railways would have been like stand whales, giants unable to use their strength’⁶⁴

Although Victorian horse cabs played an important role in inter-city transport, not everyone moving about the city could afford to ride them. According to Moore, the fare of the hackney coach in the earlier part of the Victorian Period was ‘one shilling a mile, and sixpence extra for every additional half-mile or part of half mile.’ A bill proposed in 1831 fixed the price at this rate.⁶⁵ In the 1830s, the fare of the omnibus, a trade which was in its infancy, was ‘1s single to the outskirts and 6d to hop on and off in the central streets.’ As a skilled worker barely earned 30s a week and the weekly income of most workers was approximately 20s,⁶⁶ travelling by cab or omnibus was not an option. The horse cabs, if not restricted to those men of wealth only, were, as Edmund Yates observed, at least ‘the staple conveyance of middle-class Riding London.’⁶⁷ They were also something of a hindrance to the vast majority of Victorian Londoners, who moved around ‘on foot’. It is believed that there were about 100,000 people walking across the River Thames by London Bridge and another 75,000 over Blackfriars Bridge.⁶⁸ To these pedestrians, galloping horse cabs were not a mode of transport, but rather a threat to their lives. Moreover, the congestion caused by numerous carriages in London awoke the sense of inconvenience to other road users during the nineteenth century.

⁶⁴ About the interaction between the horse-drawn vehicles and the railways, see Bagwell and Lyth, *Transport in Britain*, p. 109; Thompson, *Victorian England: The Horse-Drawn Society, An Inaugural Lecture*, pp. 13-14; Sheila Taylor (ed.), *The Moving Metropolis: A History of London's Transport since 1800* (London: Laurence King Publishing Ltd, 2002), p. 13.

⁶⁵ Moore, *Omnibuses and Cabs*, p. 198; Bill (2 August 1831): A bill to consolidate and amend the laws relating to hackney coaches..., pp. 34-35.

⁶⁶ T. C. Barker, ‘Urban Transport’, in Michael J. Freeman and Derek H. Aldcroft (eds.), *Transport in Victorian Britain* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1988), p. 140.

⁶⁷ Edmund Yates, *The Business of Pleasure* (London, 1865), p. 42.

⁶⁸ About walking in the Victorian cities, including London, see Bagwell and Lyth, *Transport in Britain*, p. 104; Barker, ‘Urban Transport’, pp. 134-35.

The horse-drawn cabs as a trade

The horse cabs not only made a significant contribution to urban transport but also played a major part in the economy of Victorian London. The scale of the industry was never small. The character of the trade – its fluctuation – was noteworthy as well. As for the cabmen's lives, they were by no means good. Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, the number of the cabs remained twice that of buses and trams.⁶⁹ Also, as it was noted at the beginning of the chapter, the number of licensed cab drivers was greater than that of those working on the railways or at London docks. In addition, the scale of the trade was huge because operating a horse cab involved a large number of people from other business, such as horse dealer, stable keeper, veterinarian, saddler, provender retailer, waterman and coachbuilder. In 1865, J.T. Dexter even estimated that some 50,000 people were directly reliant on the trade.⁷⁰ In this regard, horse cab was the livelihood of a large number of people. Nevertheless, despite its huge scale, the business was highly changeable and there were a number of variables that could affect the trade such as the weather, luck, the regulations and the 'city rhythms.'⁷¹ Due to such unstable conditions, cabmen's incomes inevitably fluctuated. Their way of life hence was far from easy. In 1893, W. H. Wilkins portrayed the unsteady reality the cabmen faced as follows,

It is well-nigh impossible to give an accurate idea of a cabman's average earnings. Speaking roughly, it may be said to average from about 15s. to 18s. a week...The earnings vary, and must vary, according to the season, the weather, and the value of the 'property', i.e. of the horse and cab. Doubtless something depends upon the driver, and certainly much depends upon his luck – the number of his fares, and the generosity of those who pay them. As to fares, it may be stated that if everyone only paid a cabman his strictly legal fare he would starve...⁷²

It was widely acknowledged that the horse cab was a seasonal business. The trade

⁶⁹ May, *Gondolas and Growlers*, p. v.

⁷⁰ J. T. Dexter, 'The cabmen of London', *Social Science Review* (May, 1865), p. 401. [Quoted from May, p. vi]

⁷¹ About city rhythms, see Doreen Massey, John Allen and Steve Pile (eds.) *City Worlds* (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 55-63.

⁷² W. H. Wilkins, 'Hansoms and Their Drivers', *The Nineteenth Century* 33:193 (1893: March), pp. 475-76.

generally peaked during the summer time but ground to a standstill in February and March, when the weather was too bad and ‘post-Christmas economies were made.’⁷³ Besides, not only did seasonal differences in climate affect the business, the weather too could change on a daily basis. The observation made by W.J. Gordon about ‘cabmen’s weather’ is probably the best example of this. He commented that ‘the cabmen’s weather’ would be ‘a showery day, or what is better, a fine morning and a wet afternoon, or a series of scorching hot days when people find the other means of conveyance too stuffy for comfort.’⁷⁴ In this respect, the weather, or the ‘natural rhythms’ of the city, was indeed a key factor to the horse cab trade. In addition, the word seasonal here not only refers to the natural seasons but also the different social stages or events during in the course of the year, such as the London Season, when continuous social events were held and the horse cabs were in great demand. Therefore, the idea of ‘city rhythms’ is quite helpful here. As a mode of urban transport, the horse cab trade seemed to have no choice but to follow or adapt itself to the tempo of the city. In *Street Life in London*, Adolphe Smith further detailed this list of social events by including the opening of the Law Courts and Parliament, the Cattle Show week and Christmas day.⁷⁵ The city rhythms had daily versions as well. For example, most horse cabs hired in the daytime were used for business purposes, but in the evening they were frequently hired to and fro the theatres of the West End of London. The ‘Left in cab’ advertisement, which recorded opera glasses as one of the often lost items, testifies to this special city rhythm of Victorian London.⁷⁶ The differing rents of carriage likewise reflected the seasonal characteristic of this trade. In 1853, for example, the rent of a Hansom was 16s to 18s per day in season, but 11s to 16s a day out of season. Meanwhile, the rent of a Growler was 12s to 14s or 9s to 12s.⁷⁷ Although particular events like the Great Exhibition in 1851 were able to make significant difference to the business – the number of vehicles bloomed, the fare was raised due to spiralling demand⁷⁸ – cabbing, either in a natural or social sense, was a highly seasonal business.

⁷³ May, *Gondolas and Growlers*, p. 7.

⁷⁴ William John Gordon, *The horse-world of London* (London: David & Charles, 1893), p. 44.

⁷⁵ Thomson and Smith, ‘London Cabmen’ (1877), pp. 6-7.

⁷⁶ May, *Gondolas and Growlers*, pp. 106-107; From 1834 to 1850, opera glasses were listed 10 times out of 86 advertisements posted in *The Times*.

⁷⁷ May, *Gondolas and Growlers*, p. 58.

⁷⁸ Smith commented that ‘The best season was that of the Exhibition of 1851.’ See Thomson and Smith, ‘London Cabmen’, p. 7.

The horse cab trade was also a business requiring some investment. The horse, the carriage, the plate and the license all required money. This financial threshold divided the licensed London cabmen into two groups: the owner-drivers who owned their horses and carriage(s), and the rest who hired both horses and carriages from the proprietors, those who possessed and hired out horses and vehicles. Although it is difficult to tell which group was larger, it is clear that every cabman dependent on the proprietors desired to become an owner-driver someday. It was therefore not uncommon to hear about someone starting as a driver becoming an owner-driver and eventually ending up as a proprietor, or the other way around. To put it more exactly, people did change their positions within the rank hinging on their finances. To see the trade as a whole, throughout the lifetime of the horse cabs, according to May, small masters and owner-drivers were those who dominated the business – about two-thirds of all proprietors were owner-drivers with one plate for one cab, and over 90 percent kept 10 or fewer.⁷⁹ The owner-drivers thus earned the nickname ‘mush’ because they sprang up like mushrooms.⁸⁰

Victorian cabmen had to work hard to make ends meet, regardless of whether they were owner-drivers or hirers of horses and carriages. Among their expenditures, there is no doubt that horses accounted for a large proportion. The horse was crucial not only because it was the power of the vehicle but also the key factor which decided the performance of the cab and sometimes the basis on which people judged the cab. Charles Booth once noted that ‘Anyone choosing a cab looks even more particularly at the horse than at anything else, and finds, as a rule, that good cattle and good cabs go together.’⁸¹ It is unpractical to think that one horse was enough to run a cab drawn by a single horse. In fact, two, changed once a day, was normal to the hirer-driver and three would be reasonable to an owner-driver, for the sake of rotation and urgent preparation.⁸² Between the 1830s and 60s, the price of one horse remained steady in

⁷⁹ May, *Gondolas and Growlers*, pp. 49-50.

⁸⁰ The constituent of the trade, see May, *Gondolas and Growlers*, p. vii; Ralph Turvey, ‘The Horse Traction in Victorian London’, *The Journal of Transport History* 26:2 (September, 2005), p. 39. However, here Munro gives a different explanation of the terminology, arguing that it derived from the French *marche*, because the owner-driver needed to work steadily and laboriously. See: Bill Munro, *A Century of London Taxi* (Marlborough: The Crowood Press Ltd, 2005), p. 188.

⁸¹ Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London* (1903), Second Series, 1886-1893, III *Industry*, on cab owners and drivers. Cited from: Turvey, ‘The Horse Traction in Victorian London’, p. 39.

⁸² When the subject of how many horses were required to run a horse cab business is under consideration, two

the vicinity of £20. From the 1860s, however, the cost began to soar and stayed at over £30 until the end of the century. In May's view, the increase of the price was mainly due to the exportation of some 30,000 horses to both France and Prussia during the Franco-Prussian War. This case clearly illustrates another example of how the trade was influenced by the outside world. Other costs related to the horse, consisting of provender – both for fodder and bedding – harness, shoeing, stable, watering, and wages to those who looked after it, were of equivalent importance. The price of provender, in particular, was not only the largest part of costs but also an unstable one, which fluctuated severely and hence could cause great pressure on cabmen. During the second half of the nineteenth century, these costs were approximately 10s 10d per horse per week on average.⁸³

Historians of transport history generally agree that the horse, 'as a practical and commercial means of locomotion', was 'expensive and insufficient'.⁸⁴ The cab horse was only eligible to work for two to three years, although there were some tricks to extend its career such as transferring it to a Clarence, or from day work to night work, as the workloads were less heavy. Furthermore, cab horses, like human beings, were under threat of infectious diseases and accidents, which might cause disastrous losses for cabmen. Dexter hence commented that 'The morality of horses is one of the chief causes of the failure of small proprietors.'⁸⁵ In order to lower the probability of infection, certain proprietors therefore rigidly forbade their men from feeding or watering horses at the inn-yards, watermen's piles, public drinking fountains and public troughs.⁸⁶ In this respect, to Victorian London cabmen, a horse was definitely an inevitable and high-risk investment.

to three was the average answer. Yates noted it was normal to have two horses, but better to have seven horses for three cabs. May mentions that the average would be two-and-a-half to two-and-a-third. Turver agrees with the number of two to three. See May, *Gondolas and Growlers*, p. 55; Turvey, 'The Horse Traction in Victorian London', p. 39; Yates, *The Business of Pleasure*, p. 43.

⁸³ Turvey cites two sets of the number recorded by London General Omnibus Company (LGOC) in 1857 and 1876, showing the average cost was £0.69 (1857) and £0.59 (1876) per horse per week. Meanwhile, May also refers to the reports of LGOC and London Improved Cab Company (1894), concludes the average cost was 10s 10d in a lean year and around 8s 4d in a good year. See May, *Gondolas and Growlers*, pp. 56-57; Turvey, 'The Horse Traction in Victorian London', pp. 49-51.

⁸⁴ Cited from Thompson. Bagwell and Lyth also noted that 'horse was one of the most expensive pieces of capital equipment used in British transport.' See Bagwell and Lyth, *Transport in Britain*, pp. 44-45; Thompson, *Victorian England: The Horse-Drawn Society, An Inaugural Lecture*, p. 8.

⁸⁵ Dexter, 'The cabmen of London', pp. 405-06. Cited from: May, *Gondolas and Growlers*, p. 52.

⁸⁶ May, *Gondolas and Growlers*, p. 55; Yates, *The Business of Pleasure*, p. 44.

The carriage was another necessary and again, changeable expenditure. Victorian cab drivers could get a vehicle either by buying it or hiring it. The rent of a carriage was not merely in relation to which type of vehicle was in demand – Hansom or Growler – but also to when the vehicle was hired – in season or not. The rental of a Hansom was slightly higher, and of course, so was the seasonal cost when cabs were in greater demand. To purchase a carriage was another option. The price of the cab – whether two-wheeled or four-wheeled – declined in the middle of the century from over £60 to around £35, and then levelled off in the vicinity of £40 to £55. Second-hand carriages were also available to those who could not afford a new cab. The cost was around £26 according to May. Nevertheless, to buy or rent a cab was only the first step toward launching a business. The costs of maintaining a cab also had to be considered as well, especially as it required both time and money to repair the carriage. Besides, annual examination by the police was imposed. Extra vehicle(s) thus had to be prepared to fill the gap. Fortunately, for the owner-drivers, when their cabs were undergoing repairs there might be an opportunity to hire one from the coachbuilders. The lifespan of a cab, generally speaking, was 6 to 8 years if under good care, but just like cab horses, the vehicles depreciated in value as time passed. Therefore, to those who ignored the depreciation of both horses and cabs in the beginning, their attempts at the trade often ended in failure.⁸⁷

The cost of horses and cabs comprised the largest part of expenditure of Victorian cab drivers, but to run a business there were still other costs awaiting them, including tolls, fines and duties. A toll is a small amount of money charged to the user of a road or a bridge. Since the dawn of the eighteenth century, turnpike trusts had been set up all over the Britain to collect tolls in order to maintain the condition of British highways and bridges. In London, for instance, London, Blackfriars and Westminster bridges were free to cross, but a toll of 2s per horse was required at Waterloo and Lambeth bridges. To those who made their livelihoods by circulating people in the city, tolls were unavoidable expense. Mayhew once recorded how some people would take advantage of cab drivers by cabbing across a bridge and leaving the cabman to pay the toll, which was higher than or at least included in the regular fare.⁸⁸ However, as the

⁸⁷ May, *Gondolas and Growlers*, p. 51; 55.

⁸⁸ Mayhew, 'Opposite A Cabstand', p. 247.

charge was believed to discourage or divert urban traffic, tolls were gradually removed from turnpikes (1864-65) and bridges (1878-80).⁸⁹ Fines and duties were another financial burden on cab drivers. Throughout the history of the horse cabs, the law protected passengers but severe penalties and fines could be imposed on cab drivers. For example, if proprietors attempted to call a strike, or, a cabman held his cab off the streets two days a week without any due cause, there would be a fine of 20s to pay.⁹⁰ Fines for reckless driving, extortions and other unwelcome behaviours were also common. As for the duties, it was not until 1869 that the weekly duty for a plate was abolished. Between 1784 and 1853, the weekly duty remained 10s. However, this was an expense only for the proprietors and owner-drivers, those who kept their own vehicles.⁹¹ Hence, until the removal of tolls and weekly duties in the second half of the nineteenth century, tolls, duties, and fines were still accounted costs in the horse cab trade.

Given such restrictions and their uncertain income, the lives of cab drivers in Victorian London were far from easy. According to Moore, although this cannot be confirmed, the hired driver was paid a salary of just 9s a week, but allowed to keep all that he earned exceeding the rent due to the proprietor.⁹² In this sense, it was theoretically possible for people who worked harder to make a fortune or at least join the proprietor class but, in reality, the threshold was difficult to cross, partly because the proprietors manipulated the rental dependant on the season, and partly because fare were fixed by the authorities. Smith therefore noted that while the legal fare, without tips, enabled a cab driver to pay for the hire of horse and vehicle, it would 'leave him nothing to live upon'. Likewise May suggests that the drivers had to 'drive 24 miles in low season and 36 miles for high season only to pay for their proprietor.' The blame for notorious extortion committed by cab drivers in Victorian London hence should go more to the proprietors but not the drivers.⁹³ Cab drivers had to labour extremely hard to make a meagre profit, generally spending 12 to 15 hours on the streets each day – 'going out between nine or ten A.M., returning to change horses between three, and five P.M., starting afresh, and finally returning home between midnight and one A.M.' – and

⁸⁹ About the tolls, see Bagwell and Lyth, *Transport in Britain*, p. 107; Ralph Turvey, 'Road and Bridge Tolls in Nineteenth-century London', *Journal of Transport History*, 17:2 (1996: September), pp. 150-64.

⁹⁰ May, *Gondolas and Growlers*, p. 121.

⁹¹ May, *Gondolas and Growlers*, p. 4; 65.

⁹² Moore, *Omnibuses and Cabs*, p. 198.

⁹³ May, *Gondolas and Growlers*, p. 61; Thompson and Smith, 'London Cabmen', pp. 6-7.

sometimes even up to 18 hours.⁹⁴ They endeavoured to exploit the value of horses and the cab by wasting no time. They hired ‘bucks’ – a jargon referring to those who had been deprived of their licenses – to carry on their business during the night and when they were taking a rest or having a meal.⁹⁵ Proprietors, drivers and bucks therefore comprised the specific hierarchy of the trade on the basis of the relationship of exploitation.

The trade also faced intense competition. Cabmen not only had to compete with each other but with other modes of urban transport such as the omnibus and tramways, which shared the market with horse cabs. However, among these competitors, the job coach was undoubtedly the most resented by cab drivers in Victorian London. The jobmaster was the man ‘who hired out carriages or horses by the hour, day, week or season,’ offering the city ‘with the equivalent of an Avis or Hertz service,’ or, in Warren’s opinion, something similar to today’s ‘minicab’ service – cabs not permitted for public hire on the streets. In addition, the jobmaster paid different duties from the cabmen. The authorities responsible were initially separate as well. The jobmasters acquired their license from the Board of Stamps, while the cabmen went to the Hackney Coach Office until 1831. Due to the fact that there was an overlap between the two trades, and because the quality of job coaches was generally better than the horse cabs, jobmasters were deemed a threat or opponent by most London cabmen. Thus, the enduring hostility between drivers of black cabs and minicabs can be traced back to the time of the horse cab. Sometimes a jobmaster could be a proprietor as well. In 1850, as Mayhew noted, 51 out of 154 jobmasters in London also operated cab business.⁹⁶ In 1902, there were 145 jobmasters in the city and the business was controlled by 14 major jobmasters who run 26 stables.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Cited from Yates. About the cab drivers’ working hours see Turvey, ‘The Horse Traction in Victorian London’, p. 40; Yates, *The Business of Pleasure*, p. 44.

⁹⁵ John Garwood, *The Million-Peopled City* (London: Wertheim and MacIntosh, 1853), pp. 177-79.

⁹⁶ Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor* (London, 1851-62), letter LXXIII, Thursday 10 October 1850. Quoted from: Turvey, ‘The Horse Traction in Victorian London’, p. 39.

⁹⁷ Quotations and statistics were cited from: F.M.L Thompson, ‘Nineteenth-Century Horse Sense’, *Economic History Review* XXIX (1976), p. 60. About the private-hired cabs, while May argues that they provided a different service to the horse cabs for people who had different priorities – speed or comfortableness – Warren focuses on the conflict and overlap between the two modes of urban transport. See May, *Gondolas and Growlers*, p. 65; May, *The Administration and Organisation of the London Cab Trade from the Late Eighteenth Century to the First World War*, p. 36; Warren, *The History of the London Cab Trade*, p. 23.

The challenges the cab drivers faced, both from inside and outside the trade, were such that when the Government attempted to further reduce their income, it was met with concerted resistance. The Act of 1853 first cut the fare from 8d a mile to 6d a mile; then abolished the ‘back fare’ – forbidding a driver to extract extra payment from passengers who hired the cab to destinations outside the central heart of the city – causing a huge financial loss to cab drivers. The Act was also obviously biased toward passengers. Thus, when a cabman named Phillips was punished severely but erroneously according to the Act, the trade responded with industrial action. On 20 July 1853, Philips and his passenger had got into a dispute about the distance and the fare of the ride. The passenger said it was 3 miles but Philip insisted that it at least was 4. He then drove the passenger to the nearest magistrate, Henry, to have the quarrel settled because the Act empowered passengers to make such a requirement – but only the passengers, not the drivers. Without carrying out any serious investigation, Henry mistakenly punished Philips while the actual distance was later proved as 7. This case not only awoke huge dissatisfaction of the trade but also the public concern. On 27 July, proprietors suddenly withdrew their cabs from the streets, nearly shutting down the transport of the city. This was the first strike in the history of the cab trade.⁹⁸

A mode of transport, a trade, or a business of the police

As discussed in the previous section, one of the noteworthy characteristics of the trade was its changeability, as was the legislation and organisation of its administrative apparatus. Between 1654 when Cromwell first endorsed An Ordinance for the Regulation of Hackney Coachmen in London and the Places Adjacent and 1869 when Queen Victoria assented to the Metropolitan Public Carriage Act, more than 30 decrees were passed directly related to the horse cabs in the city. Likewise, transference of the administration considering the horse cabs was common throughout the history of the trade, particularly in the nineteenth century, when there were at least 5 different authoritative bodies in turn responsible for issuing the license. It was not until 1850 that a permanent institute – the Public Carriage Office – was constituted to take charge of the administration. Nevertheless, in some ways this changeability and discontinuity also managed to represent the political milieu of Victorian London. One

⁹⁸ May, *The Administration and Organisation of the London Cab Trade from the Late Eighteenth Century to the First World War*, pp. 143-45.

is that the city did grow at a rapid pace. The other, which is relevant to the former at a certain level, was the absence of an efficient or legitimate municipal government.

The Victorian period saw London grow dramatically, both, demographically and geographically. Between 1841 and 1891, the population of the capital doubled from 1,873,676 to 4,232,118 and the proportion of British people who residing in London increased from nearly 12 percent to 15 percent. Most of them belonged to the younger generation.⁹⁹ In the meantime, the borders of the city were pushed back as more and more parishes previously on the outskirts were absorbed as part of the metropolis, which meant defining the boundary of London became a continuous problem. The range within which the horse cabs were allowed to pick up passengers therefore altered several times throughout course of the nineteenth century. The Act of 1710 initially restricted the trade of hackney coaches to ‘within the Cities of London and Westminster and the suburbs thereof, and within all and every the parishes and places comprised within the weekly Bills of Mortality.’ The Bills of Mortality were the statistics of deaths recorded and published by the parish clerks on a weekly basis, in order to monitor mortality in periods of plague from the sixteenth century. For a long time, the area included in the Bills was deemed the territory of London. Later, in the Act of 1831, the area was changed to a 5 miles radius from the General Post Office, then 10 miles (in 1838), then to the City and Metropolitan Police Districts (1843), eventually to 6 miles radius from Charing Cross.¹⁰⁰

The rapid growth of London not only influenced the business area of the horse cabs but also made it almost impossible to form a municipal government of the so-called Greater London. The reason is quite simple, because further places with their original municipal authoritative bodies were continuing to be absorbed by the metropolis. Before the constitution of the London County Council in 1888, Greater London was governed by a complicated system while the Lord Mayor and the corporation took charge of the City of London, numerous parish councils and vestries controlled the rest of the territory. In addition, during the reign of Queen Victoria, some 250 local Acts of Parliament were passed with regard to somewhere within the city, while 10,000 commissioners were exercising different functions and degrees of authority. London,

⁹⁹ Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities* (London: Odhams Press Limited), p. 57.

¹⁰⁰ May, *The Administration and Organisation of the London Cab Trade from the Late Eighteenth Century to the First World War*, p. 11.

the capital city of the Empire, in Briggs' words, was 'the only space in that Empire in which the nation cannot speak through its local representatives.'¹⁰¹ The business of horse cabs in Victorian London, unlike its counterparts in other British cities, was therefore managed by central Government not the local one. In this sense, considering the political milieu of nineteenth-century London, the lack of a permanent administrative body and the continuous changes to the administration of the horse cabs is thus understandable.

Before 1833, hackney coaches in London were under the supervision of the Hackney Coach Office. The office was more relevant to the Treasury but had nothing to do with either the Home Office or the Metropolitan Police, which was constituted in 1829. It was the Treasury which decided the maximum limitation of the licenses. Following the limitation made by the Treasury, Hackney Coach Commissioners were responsible for issuing licenses to the hackney coachmen and regulating them once licensed. Hence, in May's words, the Hackney Coach Office was a department of both revenue and police.¹⁰² However, the office was abolished by the Act of 1830. Administrative responsibility was then transferred to the Board of Stamps, again, an institute with no relevance to the duties of police or transport, but collecting stamp duties, including taxes considering lottery tickets, pamphlets, newspapers, advertisements and playing cards. Between 1833 and 1869, the Board of Stamps and its successor after 1849 – the Board of Inland Revenue – continued to issue licenses to the plate owner – the proprietors – but not the cab drivers.¹⁰³

The cab drivers, along with watermen and conductors, had required licenses since 1838. The Home Secretary thus assigned the task to a new position – the Registrar of Metropolitan Public Carriages. At this point, the Home Office started involving itself in the administration of the horse cabs in London. In other words, there were now two administrative bodies dealing with the horse cabs: the Board of Stamps taking care of licensing the (vehicular) plates to proprietors, those who ran the business; and the Registrar responsible for licensing the drivers, conductors and watermen, those who

¹⁰¹ Briggs, *Victorian Cities*, pp. 331-32.

¹⁰² May, *The Administration and Organisation of the London Cab Trade from the Late Eighteenth Century to the First World War*, pp. 64-66.

¹⁰³ May, *The Administration and Organisation of the London Cab Trade from the Late Eighteenth Century to the First World War*, pp. 127-28.

worked at the front line of the trade. The situation became much more complicated when the Metropolitan Police got involved in 1843. The Act of 1843 engaged the Metropolitan Police in the business by empowering the Commissioners to appoint and manage standings within the districts. It was not until 1850 that the offices of Registrar and Commissioners were consolidated. After 1850, horse cabs in Victorian London were controlled by the Public Carriage Office belonging to the Metropolitan Police.

Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, the duties of the office included inspecting the carriages and horses, and licensing the drivers, conductors and watermen. The Public Carriage Office was charged with the inspection of carriages under the Act of 1853. The Act required every carriage for public use in London to be 'in fit condition' and licenses could only be issued after both the carriage and horse had been inspected. Inspection was conducted to determine 'Conditions of Fitness', which according to Warren were derived from the rules for the construction of boats serving on the River Thames to transport people crossing the river. The enforcement of such regulations aimed to secure the safety of the passengers. Some comparable rules for hackney coaches were allegedly first laid down in 1679. Since then, in order to fit in with the 'Conditions of Fitness,' London cabs, whether they were drawn by horse or powered by engine, have often had a unified look which Munro singles out as their defining characteristic. Nowadays some Londoners even are proud to have the safest cab in the world.¹⁰⁴

In addition, the earlier version of the driver test was also recorded in the nineteenth century. The Act of 1838 already empowered the Registrar to grant a license to any person who 'shall produce such a Certificate of his Ability to drive and of his good Character as shall be satisfactory to the said Registrar.' According to May, being of good character was much more important than having driving skills, because no driving test was actually carried out until 1896.¹⁰⁵ A simple interview was all that was necessary for a candidate to get the license. The questions normally comprised the principal routes and places of interest across the city. The test thus gained its name as

¹⁰⁴ May, *Gondolas and Growlers*, p. 86; Munro, *A Century of London Taxi*, p. 8, 112; Warren, *The History of the London Cab Trade*, pp. 103-104.

¹⁰⁵ May, *The Administration and Organisation of the London Cab Trade from the Late Eighteenth Century to the First World War*, p. 126.

the ‘Knowledge of London.’¹⁰⁶ The Knowledge of London became one the most rigorous driving tests in the world as time progressed and its legendary difficulty made it a topic of popular culture. For example, in the 1930s, there was a pop song titled ‘The Last Hansom’ illustrating why the old Charlie became the last Hansom cabman in London because he could not pass the examination.¹⁰⁷

Table 2.1 Departments responsible for London’s horse-drawn cab, 1830-1914

Date	Department/Office	Duties	Acts
1831	1. The Broad of Stamps (Commissioner of the Stamps) 2. The Court of Mayor and Aldermen of the City of London	1. License proprietors (cabs) 2. License watermen 3. Property left in a cab Make orders for control cabs in the City and Southwark.	1 & 2 Will. IV., c. 22
1838	1. The Broad of Stamps 2. The Registrar of Metropolitan Public Carriages (appointed by Home Secretary) 3. The Court of Mayor and Aldermen of the City of London	1. License proprietors (cabs) 2. Property left in a cab License cab drivers, watermen and bus conductors/drivers Make orders for control cabs in the City and Southwark	1 & 2 Vict., c. 79 * Created the office of the Registrar of Metropolitan Public Carriage
1843	1. The Broad of Stamps 2. The Registrar of Metropolitan Public Carriages 3. The Commissioners of Police of the Metropolis 4. The Court of Mayor and Aldermen of the City of London	1. License proprietors (cabs) 2. Property left in a cab License cab drivers, watermen and bus conductors/drivers Appointed standing within the Metropolitan Police District Make orders for control cabs in the City and Southwark	6 & 7 Vict., c. 86 * Included the Commissioners of the Police of the Metropolis

¹⁰⁶ Here there is yet another disagreement about the date. Both Warren and Munro trace the ‘knowledge of London’ back to 1851, while May asserts that it was launched in 1865. See Warren, *The History of the London Cab Trade*, p. 97; Munro, *A Century of London Taxi*, p. 149; May, *Gondolas and Growlers*, pp. 99-100.

¹⁰⁷ Tommie Connor & Raymond Wallace, *The Last Hansom Cabby (Poor Old Charlie)* (London: Southern Music Publishing Co., Ltd.: 1938).

1850	1. The Broad of Stamps	1. License proprietors (cabs) 2. Property left in a cab	13 & 14 Vict., c. 7 *Abolished the
	2. The Commissioners of Police of the Metropolis	1. License cab drivers, watermen and bus conductors/drivers 2. Appointed standing within the Metropolitan Police District	office of the Registrar and transferred its job to the Commissioners of police of the
	3. The Court of Mayor and Aldermen of the City of London	Make orders for control cabs in the City and Southwark	Metropolis
1853	1. The Commissioners of Police of the Metropolis	1. License cab drivers, watermen and bus conductors/drivers 2. Appointed standing within the Metropolitan Police District 3. Inspect carriages before the licenses were granted. 4. Inspect horses and carriages at anytime 5. Manage the property left in cabs and public vehicles (if sold, money went to the Broad of Inland Revenue) 6. Appoint standing assistants who replaced the watermen	16 & 17 Vict., c. 33 * Police of the Metropolis gained the power to: 1. Inspect horses and vehicles. 2. Take care the property left in cabs. 3. Appoint standing assistants.
	2. The Board of Inland Revenue (the successor of the Broad of Stamps)	License the proprietors (cabs) when the vehicle was inspected by Police of the Metropolis	
	3. The Court of Mayor and Aldermen of the City of London	Make orders for control cabs in the City and Southwark	
1869	1. Home Secretary	1. Prescribe the sum paid for the cab license (now paid to the Police Fund, not to the Broad of Inland Revenue) 2. License the proprietors (cabs) 3. License cab drivers and bus drivers/conductors. 4. Regulating the number of persons to be carried; and how carriages are to be furnished	32 & 33 Vict., c. 115 * Transfer the license fee (for both vehicles and drivers) from the Broad of Inland Revenue to the Metropolitan police Fund.

	and fitted.
	4. Fixing the cab stands, and assigning the persons to attend at such stands (replacing watermen).
	5. Fixing the rates and fares.
	6. Responsible for the property left in cabs.
	7. May appoint officers and constables of the police to carry this Act into execution.
2. The Court the Mayor and Aldermen of the city of London	Consenting (or not) to the stand in fixing within the city of London.

While reviewing the development of the administration of horse cabs in Victorian London, there are some other points worth further discussion. The first is the debate and negotiation about the duties of the police with respect to the cabs. According to May, the reason why the Home Secretary did not assign the work of Registrar to the Commissioners of Metropolitan Police in the beginning is that regulating horse cabs was not regarded as a police duty. The task of police at that time was believed to be maintaining order and solving crimes. However, as time passed, although not without dispute, this point of view changed. Road transport then became the responsibility of the Metropolitan Police, including the horse cabs. The second is the money issue. The consolidation of two authoritative bodies did make the cab trade less complicated to administer but the main consideration of the Government was the economy. That is, fewer people, lower wages and less expenditure of the government. Besides, the revenue income was the main reason why the Metropolitan Police given responsibility for the cabs, which the staff originally thought irrelevant to police work. When the Board of Inland Revenue handed the Public Carriage Revenue to the Metropolitan Police after 1869, the revenue immediately became the main source of the Metropolitan Police Fund.¹⁰⁸ Thirdly, the development of the administrative apparatus exemplifies the trend toward professionalization, bureaucratization and organization.

¹⁰⁸ May, *The Administration and Organisation of the London Cab Trade from the Late Eighteenth Century to the First World War*, pp. 164-67.

For example, in 1831, people who stayed at cab stands and regulated the cabmen were watermen, who were paid by cabmen. The system therefore did not work. In 1853, waged attendants – quasi-policemen – were assigned to replace the watermen. Later in 1869, official constables finally replaced the attendants and keeping order at the cab stands became another official task of the Metropolitan Police.¹⁰⁹

Conclusion

In this chapter the history of public carriages in Victorian London, and horse cabs in particular, was briefly reviewed in order to demonstrate the importance of the cab trade as an industry, business and cultural phenomenon. The chapter considered the golden age of cabbage, its turning points, and its sharp decline within a relatively short period, as well as broader fields such as urban transport, economics, politics and policing which had an impact on the trade. The horse cabs in Victorian London, as the chapter suggests, were much more than just a mode of urban transport. They were a major source of employment and generated huge amount of revenue for the authorities charged with regulated the trade. And as objects, literary or visual, the cabs were one of the key signifiers of the age. Hence, there can be no doubt that the status and situation of the horse drawn cab within Victorian London is a topic worthy of further academic research.

¹⁰⁹ May, *The Administration and Organisation of the London Cab Trade from the Late Eighteenth Century to the First World War*, pp. 148-50.

Chapter 3 The Conveyance of Convenience

Nowadays, it is generally accepted that the cab is one of the most convenient modes of urban transport. This impression has been consolidated by the widespread use of people crying ‘Taxi!’ on busy city streets as a popular cultural trope. But how did Victorian Londoners experience and perceive the predecessor of the famous London black cab – the horse-drawn cab? Did they see the hackney carriage as a convenient way to move about the city? And if so, what made it convenient for them compared to other contemporary means of public transport? More importantly, why was convenience so important to Victorian Londoners? And how did they take advantage of this quality when using the horse cab?

In order to answer these questions, it is first necessary to clarify the meaning of the words ‘convenience’ and ‘convenient’. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* and several studies, after undergoing various changes in concept and usage, the word ‘convenience’ now conveys three separate but overlapping meanings.¹¹⁰ The first of these is ‘Agreement, accordance; congruity of form, quality, or nature’ and ‘Moral or ethical fitness’, which describes the proper condition of something or of someone’s behaviour. The definition later expanded to cover the quality of ‘being suitable or well-adapted to the satisfying of requirements; suitability, commodiousness’ and ‘ease of trouble in use or action; material advantage or absence of disadvantage, commodity, personal comfort; saving of trouble’. In this definition the word thus describes something easy to reach or use, or something which can increase personal comfort. In fact, in the eighteenth century, the words ‘comfortable’ and ‘convenient’ were interchangeable in many cases.¹¹¹ It is this second signification that led to the third and current meaning of convenience, which has a strong association with time

¹¹⁰ See John Crowley, ‘The Sensibility of Comfort’, *American Historical Review*, 104:3 (June, 1999), 749-83. Elizabeth Shove, *Comfort, Cleanliness and Convenience* (Oxford, New York: Berg, 2003). *Oxford English Dictionary*: <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/40695?redirectedFrom=convenient#eid> (accessed 10 September 2014). Quotation, Shove, *Comfort, Cleanliness and Convenience*, p. 170.

¹¹¹ Crowley, ‘The Sensibility of Comfort’, pp. 749-82.

management or with something flexible and time-saving. In this sense, Shove therefore argues that ‘convenient’ things such as convenience stores and convenience food ‘are those that enhance people’s control over the scheduling of activity.’¹¹² The word’s current usage and popularity does not mean that it has lost its previous connotations though. On the contrary, people often employ the word depending on the context, sometimes even combining different meanings and in an ambiguous way, especially where the last two meanings are concerned.

The evolution of a word often signifies a change in people’s lifestyles and social values. In this regard, the evolution of the word ‘convenience’, which initially meant ‘ease of use’ and then took on the extra connotation of ‘time-saving’, mirrors and signals the significant shift in common perceptions of time, speed and efficiency. As numerous studies have demonstrated, the rapid developments in transport and information/communications technology during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had various consequences: the compression of time and space, a radical improvement in individual mobility, a dramatic acceleration in the pace of daily life, and the increasing importance of punctuality, accuracy and efficiency. These changes therefore had both a mental and a physical; both a political and a cultural impact.¹¹³ This transition appears to have been both arbitrary and unavoidable, and particularly intense in urban areas. As early as 1905, the sociologist George Simmel (1858-1918) argued that:

The technique of metropolitan life in general is not conceivable without all of its activities and reciprocal relationships being organized and coordinated into a firmly fixed framework of time which transcends all subjective elements.¹¹⁴

In order to fit in with the rhythm and complexity of life in the city, urban dwellers started to depend heavily on facilities such as timetables, wristwatches, clocks, the telegraph, newspapers, periodicals and telephones in order to ensure that they were on

¹¹² Shove, *Comfort, Cleanliness and Convenience*, p. 170.

¹¹³ See Gerry Beegan, ‘The Up-to-Date Periodical: Subjectivity, Technology and Time in the Late Victorian Press’, *Time & Society*, 10:1 (2001), 113-34. Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918* (London: Harvard University Press, 2003). Ilya Parkins, ‘Rewriting the Time of Women’s Modernity’, *Time & Society*, 19:1 (2010), 98-119. Shove, *Comfort, Cleanliness and Convenience*. John Tomlinson, *The Culture of Speed* (London: SAGE, 2007). Paul Virilio, *Speed and Politics* (Los Angeles: Wemiotext(e), 2006).

¹¹⁴ Georg Simmel, ‘The Metropolis and Mental Life’, in *On Individuality and Social Forms* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), p 328.

time, 'up to date' and fashionable.¹¹⁵ According to Shove it is 'the ambition of maintaining standards in the context of an increasingly fragmented temporal environment that drives the pursuit of convenience'¹¹⁶ and it is in these circumstances that the concept of convenience – referring to both 'ease of use' and 'time-saving' – has become so crucial since the second half of the Victorian period.

The growing pursuit of speed and convenience in the Victorian period also possessed the characteristics of 'snobbishness' and inequality, involving issues such as public accessibility and individual power, knowledge and ability. The modern idea of convenience is 'associated with the capacity to shift, juggle and reorder episodes and events' but, as Shove points out, 'the more important issue is usually that of control'¹¹⁷ and the capacity of the individual 'to respond flexibly and change plans at short notice.'¹¹⁸ Scholars such as Colin Divall and Hiroki Shin¹¹⁹ have revealed the regional and social inequalities in the distribution of the advantages of both speed and mobility. From this point of view, mobility, speed and convenience reflect the differences between individuals, and thus are the privilege of a limited group of people. It is therefore essential to explore which members of Victorian society were in a position to benefit from such facilities and possessed the resources and know-how required to coordinate them.

Following this central theme of 'convenience', the aim of this chapter is to identify the role played by London's horse-drawn cabs in such a convenience-oriented (and class-conscious) society. The following questions will be asked: Were they convenient for their passengers? What kind of service did they offer? How did Victorian Londoners appropriate¹²⁰ the cabs? How did they fit this pre-modern vehicle into their

¹¹⁵ Beegan, 'The Up-to-Date Periodical: Subjectivity, Technology and Time in the Late Victorian Press', pp. 115-17. Mike Esbester, 'Designing Time: The Design and Use of Nineteenth Century Transport Timetables', *Journal of Design History*, 22:2 (2009), 91-113. Mike Esbester, 'Nineteenth-Century Timetables and the History of Reading', *Book History*, 12 (2009), 156-85.

¹¹⁶ Shove, *Comfort, Cleanliness and Convenience*, p. 170.

¹¹⁷ Shove, *Comfort, Cleanliness and Convenience*, pp. 170-72.

¹¹⁸ Shove, *Comfort, Cleanliness and Convenience*, p. 181.

¹¹⁹ Colin Divall and H. Shin, 'Cultures of Speed and Conservative Modernity: Representations of Speed in Britain's Railway Marketing'. To appear in Steven Spalding and Benjamin Fraser (eds.), *Trains, Modernity and Cultural Production* (Lexington Books, 2011). See also Tomlinson, *The Culture of Speed*. Virilio, *Speed and Politics*.

¹²⁰ Here, the word 'appropriate' means not only how did Victorian Londoners make use of the horse cab but also how did they fit the conveyance into their urban daily lives. See Marcus Boon, 'On Appropriation', *CR: The New Centennial Review* 7:1 (Spring 2007), p. 2. Barbara Schmucki, 'The Machine in the City, Public Appropriation of the Tramway in Britain and Germany, 1870-1915', to appear in the upcoming

increasingly accelerated 'modern' lifestyle? And how did they talk about their experiences of cabbing with regard to the theme of 'convenience'?

In order to answer these questions, this chapter is divided into four parts. The first section considers the remarkable accessibility and flexibility of the horse-drawn cabs, qualities which combine to fulfil one of the definitions of convenience: something which is proper, suitable, comfortable and easy to use. In the second section the focus shifts to another one of the vehicle's strengths: its speed and efficiency, which correspond to the second definition of convenience – helping to save time and reduce trouble. In the third part of the chapter it is shown how, thanks to its convenience, the horse-drawn cab was able to fulfil a variety of tasks that no other modes of public transport could accomplish. The final part approaches the topic from the opposite perspective, considering the inconvenient nature of life in Victorian London when there was no cab to be had. First, general situations in which people were unable to secure a cab are examined. Secondly, cab strikes, an intentional, voluntary and collective action – a refusal to offer the usual service – carried out by members of the cab trade are discussed. In both situations the central theme is the inconvenience of urban life when horse-drawn cabs were not available. This chapter will argue that being convenient was not only a distinguishing characteristic of London's horse-drawn cabs but also a feature which ensured their survival in the face of competition from other modes of public or mass transport. In addition, it will also suggest that Victorian Londoners appeared to be so familiar with the horse cab's qualities of convenience, speed and efficiency that these features soon became regular and commonplace topics in contemporary popular culture, and that this in turn helped to form a collective 'civic pride.'¹²¹ As demonstrated in Benjamin Disraeli's (1804-81) famous analogy, in which he describes the horse-drawn cab as 'the gondola of London'¹²², the cab then became an icon of the city, a cultural signifier of convenience and an exemplar of the flexibility and speed which were familiar and generally accepted by Victorian society during the period.

Journal of Urban History.

¹²¹ See Ralph Harrington, 'Civic Pride, Urban Identity and Public Transport in Britain, 1880-1980', in Colin Divall and Winstan Bond (eds.), *Suburbanizing the Masses; Public Transport and Urban Development in Historical Perspective* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 261.

¹²² Benjamin Disraeli, *Lothair* (3 vols, London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1870), vol. 1, p. 226.

The horse-drawn cab as an easily accessible and flexible conveyance

The term ‘convenient’ contains two meanings that seem to overlap: it is used to describe something proper, suitable, comfortable and easy to use; or it is used to refer to something which helps to save time and reduce trouble. In this section the emphasis is on the former. Two concepts – accessibility and flexibility – will be introduced and discussed. Accessibility has long been the central topic when transport or mobility is addressed. Flexibility, the ability or quality required to cope with different requirements or unexpected changes, is equally important. This section will therefore be divided into two parts, each covering one of these topics and attempting to demonstrate why this characteristic made the horse cabs a convenient conveyance in Victorian London, and how the people who hired the cabs took advantage of it.

The most accessible conveyance in Victorian London

Three criteria will here be adopted to demonstrate the accessibility of London’s hackney carriages. First, statistics will be provided to show how the number of cabs increased significantly during the reign of Queen Victoria. The statistical data also reveal that cabs outnumbered other contemporary modes of public transport. Secondly, it will be shown that London’s horse-drawn cab was the only means of urban transport at the time not regulated by a timetable. Thirdly, unlike other forms of public transport, the cabs were not required to follow a fixed route or direction, or to stop at designated points along the journey. It will thus be shown how ‘easily accessible’ and convenient London’s horse-drawn cabs were for Victorian Londoners, in the absence of any restrictions on when and where the cabs could be hailed, and given the huge number of vehicles plying for trade.

The first criterion used here to define accessibility is quantity: the greater the number of vehicles operating on the streets, the easier it was for passengers to gain access to them. In this regard, the Victorian era witnessed an explosion in the number of horse-drawn cabs. Until the 1830s, the number of hackney carriage licences issued in London was under strict control. For instance, the maximum number allowed in 1815 was 1,100. However, this number started to rise steadily straight after the market was opened, and the upper limit was abolished in 1833. Although there were more minor fluctuations after the late 1880s, in 1901, the end of Queen Victoria’s reign, the total number of licensed horse cabs in London was 11,173, ten times more than a century earlier. In addition, as shown in Table 3.1, this growth rate was so rapid that it even

exceeded the already impressive population growth rate of contemporary London.¹²³ Consequently, the city's cab-citizen ratio decreased from approximately 1:650 in 1851 to 1:400 in 1901.¹²⁴ It was not until 1904 that the number of licensed horse cabs began a slow but steady decline and it was only in 1907, when the number of motor cabs soared from under 100 to 723, that the number of horse cabs really started to slump.¹²⁵ This thus suggests that public access to London's horse-drawn cabs improved over the second half of the nineteenth century.

At the same time, the horse-drawn cab also considerably outnumbered other public conveyances in the capital. Although the official statistics for earlier years are not easy to obtain, other materials can still give us a general idea. For example, as recorded in *Bradshaw's Diary and Travellers' Companion*, in 1869 the number of licensed cabs was 5,784, whilst the total number of omnibuses was only 1,050. Another tourist guide published in 1879 noted that the respective figures were 8,891 and around 1,500. The annual reports of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis after the 1870s provide a much clearer picture. As presented in Table 3.1, the combined number of omnibuses and tramcars in the second half of the nineteenth century never reached even half the number of horse-drawn cabs.¹²⁶ Thus, even considering quantity alone, the accessibility of the hackney carriages seems to have been better than that of other forms of public transport in Victorian London.

¹²³ May, *Gondolas and Growlers*, pp. 163-65.

¹²⁴ According to his estimation, Thompson noted the ratio rose from 1:100 to 1:350 between the start and the end of Victoria's reign: 'a provision of one cab to 1,000 head of people at the start of Victoria's reign had improved to one cab to every 350 people at its end.' See F. M. L. Thompson, *Victorian England: The Horse-Drawn Society, An Inaugural Lecture* (London: Bedford College, 1970), p. 14.

¹²⁵ Parliament Papers *Annual Reports of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis*, 1869-1914.

¹²⁶ See George Bradshaw, *Bradshaw's Diary and Travellers' Companion* (London: W. J. Adams; Manchester: Bradshaw & Blacklock, 1869), p. 97. *London*, (London: Henry Herbert & Co, 1880), pp. 18-19. May, *Gondolas and Growlers*, p. v.

Table 3.1 The Number of Public Vehicles and Population in London, 1851-1911

Year	2-wheeled	4-wheeled	Total	Omnibuses	Trams	Population*	Cab/citizen
1851	N/A	N/A	3,548	N/A	N/A	2,363,341	1:666
1861	N/A	N/A	5,119	N/A	N/A	2,808,494	1:548
1871	N/A	N/A	7,818	1,289	N/A	3,261,393	1:417
1881	5,800	3,847	9,647	N/A	N/A	3,830,287	1:397
1891	7,320	3,809	11,129	2,415	1,126	4,228,283	1:379
1901	7,454	3,719	11,173	3,746	1,621	4,566,429	1:408
1911	1,054	2,293	3,347	786	90	4,521,685	1:1350
		7,626**		1,962**	2,665**		

Note

* Population of inner London and the London County Council and the Metropolitan Board of Works.

** The number of motorized vehicles.

Source Annual Reports of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, 1869-1914. T. C. Barker and Michael Robbins, *A History of London Transport* (2 vols, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1963), vol. 1, p. 221. Trevor May, *Gondolas and Growlers* (Stroud: Alan Sutton Publishing Ltd, 1995), p. 48.

Not only do the statistics reveal a broad public access to the horse-drawn cabs, but also contemporary words and cartoons tell the same story, although often in an exaggerated and satirical manner. As early as 1834, just a year after the opening of the cab market, a letter to *The Times*' editor entitled 'Cab Nuisance' grumbled of '...upwards of 1,000 cabs... when 165 used to suffice, and more than 1,800 coaches and cabs, when 1,200 used to be complained of as a nuisance,'¹²⁷ arguing that there were already too many cabs on the streets. Two decades later, when the number of horse cabs had doubled, a German guide (1853) to Victorian London warned its readership that 'Whenever a stranger is bold enough to hail a cab, not one, but half a dozen come at once, obedient to his call; and the eagerness the drivers display is truly touching.'¹²⁸ Coincidentally (or not), a *Punch* cartoon (Figure 3.1) published slightly later in 1859 converted this quotation into a vivid image, portraying a potential cab hirer surrounded by an army of excited cabmen competing for his favour.¹²⁹ As shown in Figures 3.2 (1870), 3.3

¹²⁷ *The Times*, 17 November 1834.

¹²⁸ Max Schlesinger, *Saunterings in and about London*. The English edition by O. Wenckstern. (London: 1853), p. 158.

¹²⁹ *Punch*, 1 October 1859.

(1886) and 3.4 (1895), similar images were reproduced repeatedly over the course of the later part of the nineteenth century, suggesting that London's horse-drawn cab trade was basically a buyers' market.

Figure 3.2 shows a *Punch* cartoon published in 1870 of two cabmen – one with a hansom and the other with a four-wheeler – rushing to respond to a gentleman's hail and opening an interesting conversation. The details of the dialogue in which the subject of infectious disease was brought up will be discussed in later chapter. The focus here is on the confident expression on the gentleman's face, the nonchalance displayed in his body language and the pride evident in his words, all of which are clear indications of his advantageous position. By contrast, the words uttered by the cabman of the growler – whether true or false – reveal his desire and efforts to fight for the passenger.¹³⁰ Figure 3.3 shows an 1886 cartoon from the then weekly budget comic paper *Funny Folks*, which likewise is a sketch of a cut-throat competition between two cab drivers, who both offer ridiculous (domestic) services to a fashionable couple, including a brush and comb, cigarettes, boot cleaning and scent for a handkerchief.¹³¹ Figure 3.4, a cartoon published in *Punch* in 1895, shows a bored cab driver who finally hears a whistle and immediately rushes to secure his first job after a 5-hour interval, just ahead of another cab.¹³² All of these cases suggest that, from the customer's perspective, or in the general opinion of Victorian Londoners, it was quite easy to get a cab after the cab market was opened in 1833. The accessibility of Victorian London's horse-drawn cabs is therefore confirmed.

¹³⁰ *Punch*, 20 August 1870.

¹³¹ *Funny Folks*, 3 April 1886. About *Funny Folks* see *The Waterloo Directory of English Newspaper and Periodicals: 1800-1900*:

<http://www.victorianperiodicals.com.ezproxy.york.ac.uk/series2/showarticle.asp?id=80600&HighlightedField=title&HighlightedWords=funny~folks>. (accessed 10 September 2014)

¹³² *Punch*, 20 April 1895.

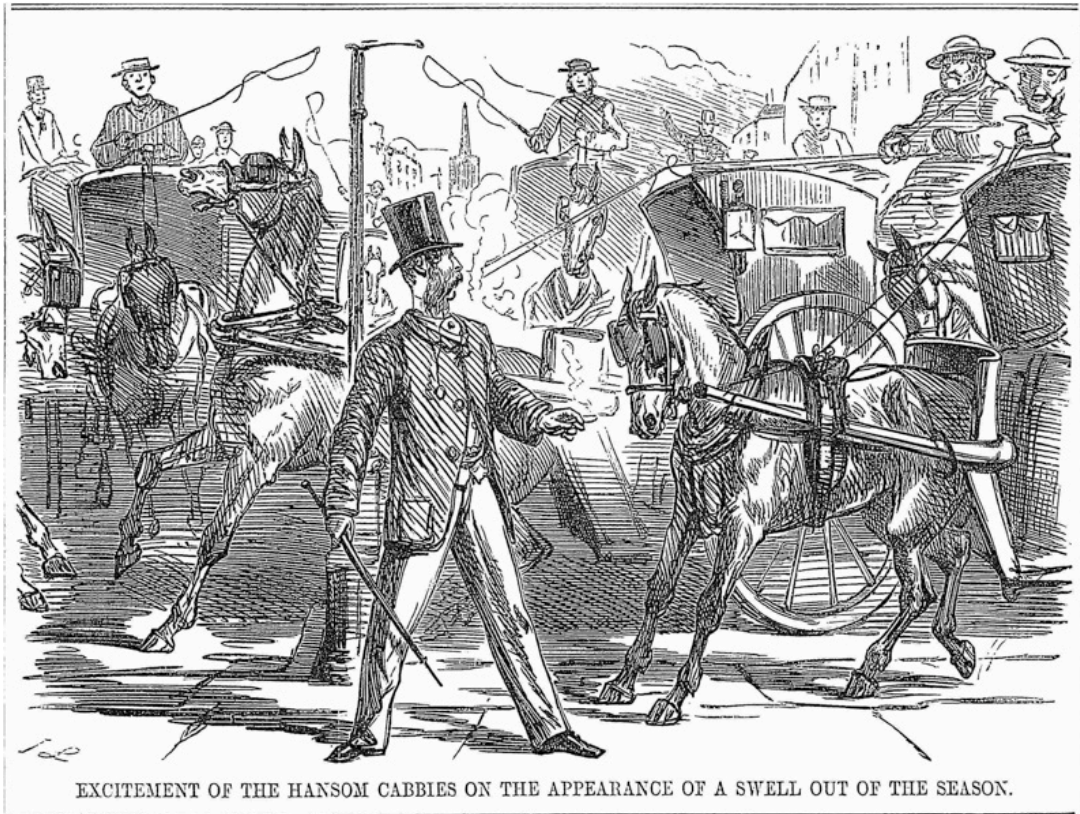


Figure 3.1 Excitement of the Hansom Cabbies on the Appearance of a Swell out of the Season.

Source *Punch*, 1 October 1859

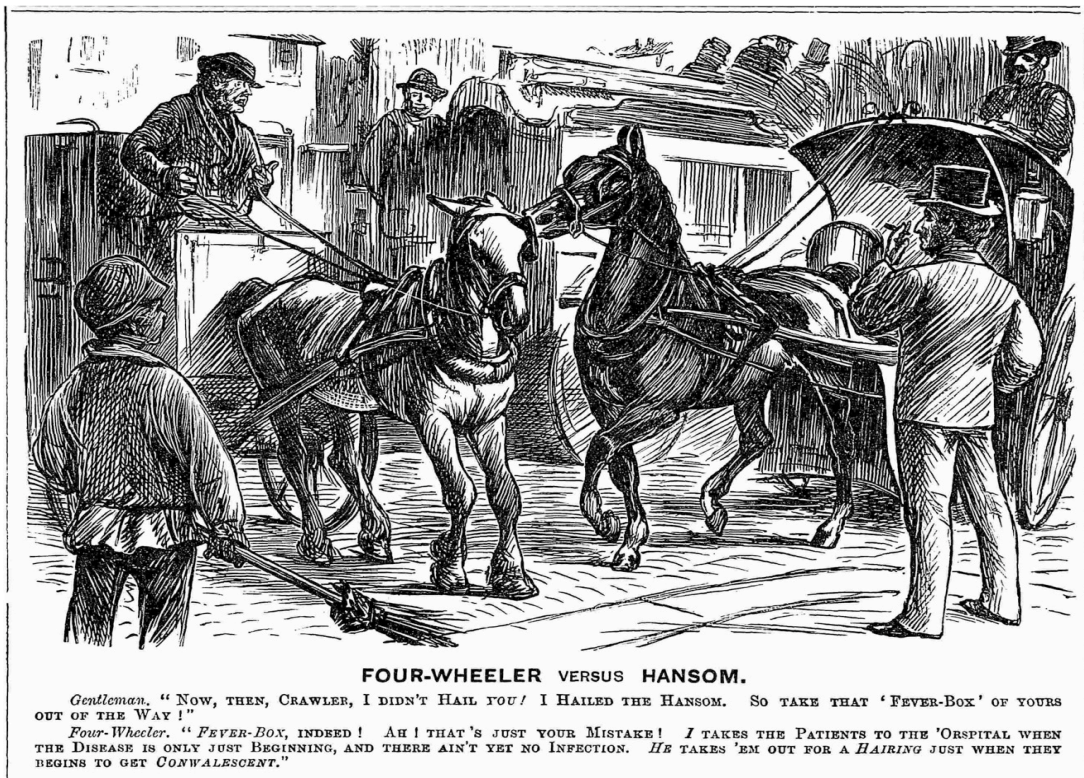


Figure 3.2 Four-wheeler versus Hansom.

Source *Punch*, 20 August 1870



Figure 3.3 Luxury in a Cab at Last.

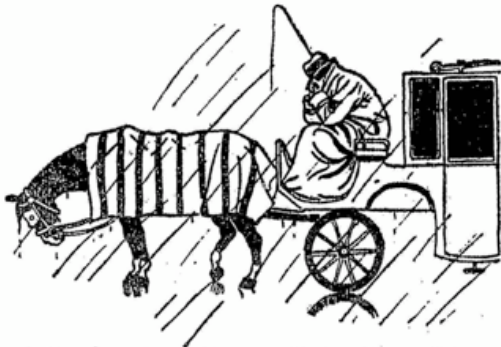
Birmingham promises to supply London with four thousand cabs, luxuriously fitted, liveried drivers, and sixpenny fares. Of course there will be rivals in the field, and the public will benefit.

First Cabby: Here Y'are, sir. Sixpence any distance. Comb and brush, lookin' glass, cigarette, lights, and boots cleaned, no extra charge.

Second Cabby: Come along wi' me, sir. We gives all that t'other gives, and scent for the lady's handkerchief besides.

Source *Funny Folks*, 3 April 1886

ON THE CAB-RANK.



1. THEY have been waiting for a job since 9 a.m. ; it is now 2 p.m. "Oh, what misery! If we could only get a job to warm us up



2. "What was that? It sounded uncommonly like a whistle.



3. "Now, we could have sworn that was a whistle!



4. "We felt sure we were right. There is a servant beckoning to us half-way down the street. There, she has just whistled again."



5. And off they tear at full speed to get to the house before another cab which had already started from the other end of the street. They get the job.

Figure 3.4 On the Cab-rank.

Source *Punch*, 20 April 1895

In addition, although their fares were higher, unlike other modes of public conveyance, horse-drawn cabs were not subject to certain general restrictions such as fixed routes, timetables and other consequent limitations. With regard to timetables, for example, omnibuses in London normally did not start operating until about 8.00 a.m. and the service ended at midnight. The underground opened earlier. Trains from Hammersmith to the City began running at 5.30 a.m. every weekday to convey working-class commuters, as did the workmen's trams, which departed even earlier, between 4.45 and 7.00 a.m.¹³³ However, neither of these conveyances ran through the night. It was only in 1899 that the London County Council offered an all-night tram service at workmen's fares.¹³⁴ In this regard, there was no public vehicle like the horse-drawn cab, which operated 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. In the mid-nineteenth century, Henry Mayhew (1812-87) admitted that he preferred 'the carriages that don't ply on Sunday,' which implies that working on a Sunday was not unusual for London's cabmen at that time.¹³⁵ An 1869 *Bradshaw* also noted that more than half of the licensed cabs – 3,435 out of 5,874 – were out 7 days a week.¹³⁶ Likewise, in his *The Wilds of London* (1874), James Greenwood (1835?-1927), a Victorian author and journalist who enjoyed observing the poor at close quarters, wrote an account of the time he spent 'With a Night Cabman'. The journalist joined the cabman and helped him with his business between 1.00 and 6.30 a.m. – and they actually picked up several customers.¹³⁷ The same year also saw *The Times* reporting a cabman taking fares on 'the night of Christmas-day.'¹³⁸

Late-Victorian literature also provides abundant evidence that horse-drawn cabs, and

¹³³ T.C. Barker and Michael Robbins, *A History of London Transport* (2 vols, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1963), vol. 1, p. 188. Michael J. Freeman and Derek H. Aldcroft (eds.), *Transport in Victorian Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p. 148. Roy Porter, *London: A Social History* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2000), p. 271. Sheila Taylor (ed.), *The Moving Metropolis: A History of London's Transport since 1800* (London: Laurence King Publishing Ltd, 2002), p. 77.

¹³⁴ For details of the trams' night services, see Schmucki, 'The Machine in the City, Public Appropriation of the Tramway in Britain and Germany, 1870-1915'.

¹³⁵ Mayhew thought that the driver who did not work on Sunday valued his mind and body more than his job and money, which is 'a sort of manliness to be encouraged.' See Henry Mayhew, 'Opposite A Cabstand', *London Characters* (London, Chatto and Windus, 1874), p. 246.

¹³⁶ *Bradshaw, Bradshaw's Diary and Travellers' Companion*, p. 97. The Act of 1831 allowed the proprietors or drivers to apply their licences for either a seven-day licence or six-day one. The plates were then put in different colours. See 1 & 2 Will. IV., cap.22, sec. 37.

¹³⁷ James Greenwood, 'With a Night Cabman', in *The Wilds of London* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1874), pp. 107-16. In fact, as an early investigative journalist, Greenwood once spent a night with vagrants in a warehouse in 1866. See DNB: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/41224?docPos=13> (accessed 10 September 2014).

¹³⁸ *The Times*, 5 January 1874.

only horse-drawn cabs, were frequently seen doing business at unusual times. For example, a description by George Gissing (1857-1903) written in the 1890s highlights the contrast between the busyness of the cabs and the stillness of other human activities: ‘The street would have been silent but for a cab that now and then passed – the swing of a hansom or the roll of a four-wheeler – and within the buildings nothing whatever was audible.’¹³⁹ The Sherlock Holmes series (published between 1887 and 1927, although the stories cover a period from around 1880 to 1914) likewise give us several typical examples of how the cabs never stopped serving the city. In one story a constable testifies that when he was on patrol around 2.00 a.m., ‘Not a soul did I meet all the way down, though a cab or two went past me.’¹⁴⁰ And when Scotland Yard detective Stanley Hopkins rushes to Baker Street in a hansom one rainy night, Holmes asks Watson to open the door as quickly as possible because ‘all virtuous folk have been long in bed.’¹⁴¹ The examples above clearly demonstrate that being unrestricted by a timetable, London’s hackney carriages were generally accessible at any time of the day or night.

Furthermore, buses, tramcars and underground trains could only run on fixed routes or tracks, in a single direction, at regular intervals and calling at particular places.¹⁴² Their departure points were thus unlikely to be the exact place from which a passenger had set off, nor was the terminus necessarily the passenger’s final destination. In other words, people inevitably needed to move to and fro between the public transport stations and their ultimate destinations, especially in the early period when the networks of neither routes nor rails were completed. This of course cost extra time, money or energy. Perhaps more importantly, railways, the underground and horse trams were initially intentionally banned from central London, where most business was conducted. The city’s, also the world’s, first underground service was the line opened in 1863 by the Metropolitan Railway between Paddington and Farrington – two mainline terminals – at the northern fringe of the City. The Inner Circle underground – a ring line that *circled* the city – was only completed in 1884. It was not

¹³⁹ George Gissing, *New Grub Street* (3 vols, London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1891), vol. 1, p. 124.

¹⁴⁰ Arthur Conan Doyle, *A Study in Scarlet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, first published 1993, reissued 2008), p. 38.

¹⁴¹ Arthur Conan Doyle, ‘The Golden Pince-Nez’, in *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 219.

¹⁴² Unlike their modern successor, Victorian omnibuses did not really have ‘stops’ in the modern sense until 1919. Passengers could hop on and off anywhere along the fixed route. See Philip Bagwell and Peter Lyth, *Transport in Britain* (London: Hambledon and London, 2002), p. 117; Freeman and Aldcroft, *Transport in Victorian Britain*, pp. 21-22, 25.

until 1900 that the Central London Railway opened a new line, which penetrated the business heart of the city for the first time.¹⁴³ Likewise, none of the first three horse tramways started in 1870 – the Metropolitan Street Tramways from Brixton to Kennington; the North Metropolitan Tramways between Bow and Whitechapel, and the Pimlico, Peckham & Greenwich Street Tramways from Blackheath to New Cross – were authorized to serve in the City.¹⁴⁴ Even at the dawn of the twentieth century, when electric trams were introduced, London’s tramways were still not allowed to drive through the city centre.¹⁴⁵ This meant that people who travelled by railway, underground or trams would have to transfer (by cab, bus,¹⁴⁶ or simply on foot) in order to get anywhere near the heart of Victorian London, which definitely would have caused some inconvenience.

In order to make efficient use of these forms of public transport, customers needed to possess a certain degree of knowledge and skill, a general familiarity with the route and landmarks along it, and the ability to read a timetable, map or set of instructions.¹⁴⁷ With regard to the underground, for example, in his series of letters and diaries William Hardman (?-1890), one of the very first passengers on London’s tube, noted that ‘it was difficult to recognize the stations because they all looked alike.’¹⁴⁸ In 1868, a *Punch* article also reminded readers that, ‘Unless you carry a time-table in your head, and know exactly when your train is due, you may be a little too late, and have to wait for the next. If you don’t keep a sharp look-out, you will miss that.’ The article went on to warn; ‘Unless you are so familiar with the lines as to be able to recognise every station at a glance,’ the best way is to ‘open the door at every one [station] you come to, and ask which it is.’ This was partly because the pronunciation of the attendants was so ill-defined – “Oosh! Oosh!” for Shepherd’s Bush and “Nil!

¹⁴³ Taylor (ed.), *The Moving Metropolis: A History of London’s Transport since 1800*, pp. 52-53, 62, 66, 101-102. The maps on pages 62 (Metropolitan Railway map 1882), 66 (District Railway map 1892) and 101 (The Central London Railway map 1912) present this change in the last two decades of the nineteenth century.

¹⁴⁴ Barker and Robbins, *A History of London Transport*, vol. 1, pp. 183-87.

¹⁴⁵ Taylor (ed.), *The Moving Metropolis*, pp. 51-52; 100-101.

¹⁴⁶ In earlier days, it is not unusual that cabs were employed to transfer people because ‘omnibuses only run in what they call rounds, they don’t run in streets. Now ladies often require to visit their friends in streets.’ See *The Penny Satirist*, 11 October 1845.

¹⁴⁷ According to Esbester, reading timetables – so-called ‘functional reading’ which differs from general reading – is a technique that requires practice and skill. See Mike Esbester, ‘Nineteenth-Century Timetables and the History of Reading’, *Book History*, 12 (2009), pp. 156-85.

¹⁴⁸ William Hardman, *A Mid-Victorian Pepys: The Letters and Memoirs of Sir William Hardman*, ed. S. M. Ellis, (London, 1923), p. 283. Quoted in Barker and Robbins, *A History of London Transport*, vol. 1, p. 117.

Nil!” (which of course means ‘nothing’) for Notting Hill’ – and partly because the signs which displayed the names of the stations were poorly posted on a single board. The article therefore concluded that taking the underground was a good way ‘to foster habits of vigilance, activity and self-help.’¹⁴⁹ Generally speaking, it was not until the beginning of the twentieth century that the timetables could finally be ignored, when trains were ‘to succeed each other every two or three minutes’ on the newly built central line.¹⁵⁰

Taking an omnibus was not particularly easy in Victorian London either. For example, a German guide (1853) warned its readership that,

It astonishes and puzzles the stranger in his first week of London life; he gazes at the omnibus in a helpless state of bewilderment...Even the great caution cannot prevent a ludicrous mistake now and then; and the stranger who would be safe had better consult a policeman, or inform the conductor of the exact locality to which he desires to go. In the worst case, however, nothing is lost but a couple of hours and pence.¹⁵¹

Although some improvements were made, the core difficulties associated with taking omnibuses remained unresolved. As late as 1898, tourist guides were still suggesting that any tiny mistake such as hopping on the wrong bus, going in the wrong direction or getting off at the wrong place, could result in considerable inconvenience:

The visitor should make himself acquainted with the relative positions of the chief localities by a reference to a map, so as to guard against the possibility of mistaking the direction in which the vehicle is travelling. Attention to apparently small matters prevents a considerable amount of inconvenience....¹⁵²

London’s horse-drawn cabs, by contrast, seem to have caused no such trouble for their customers. They provided a point-to-point service. They could be hailed whenever and wherever they were needed. In other words, it did not matter what time it was or where the prospective hirer was when a cab was hailed. It did not matter either whether the

¹⁴⁹ *Punch*, 3 October 1868.

¹⁵⁰ *The Municipal Journal, established as London*, 9 February 1900.

¹⁵¹ Schlesinger, *Saunterings in and about London*, p. 163.

¹⁵² *A Popular Pictorial and Practical Guide to London* (London: Ward, Lock & co., Ltd, 1898), pp. 58-59.

passenger knew the directions or the place he wanted to go to. Last but not least, there was no timetable to be borne in mind and no transfers needed when the vehicle finally set the passenger down.

To conclude, taking all the sources hitherto discussed into account – including statistics, popular culture and other written documents – apart from the financial concern, in Victorian London it was easier and more convenient to travel by horse-drawn cabs than by other modes of urban transport.

The most flexible conveyance in Victorian London

In addition to its great accessibility, London's horse cab had the added advantage of being flexible, thus fulfilling another condition of convenience: 'Personally suitable or well-adapted to one's easy action or performance of functions' and 'favourable to one's comfort'.¹⁵³ In this sub-section the focus will be on the two features of London's horse-drawn cab which gave it its flexibility. First, unlike other forms of public transport operating on a fixed/single rate system, London's hackney carriages offered their hirers more flexibility by charging them either according to journey time or according to the distance covered, depending on the hirer's preference. Secondly, the cabs also allowed consumers maximum flexibility in how they chose to make use of them, which inevitably made them highly convenient. Through an examination of these two special qualities and how Victorian Londoners took advantage of them, this sub-section will show the great flexibility the horse-drawn cab provided and how it saved cab hirers time and trouble.

Regulations that governed cab fares changed several times in the Victorian era. However, the general principles remained unchanged. The fares were basically charged according to distance or time, 'at the option of the hirer expressed at the commencement of the hiring ... if not otherwise expressed, the fare to be paid according to distance.'¹⁵⁴ Normally, if a single destination was involved, or when the trip was short, the cab hirer would usually choose to pay the tariff by distance, since during the Victorian era the legal fare never exceeded 1s per mile, while the charge for

¹⁵³ *Oxford English Dictionary*: <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/40695?redirectedFrom=convenient> - eid (accessed 29 March 2013).

¹⁵⁴ Quotation: Bradshaw, *Bradshaw's Diary and Travellers' Companion*, p. 96. For details concerning the regulations, see a variety of tourist guides: Bradshaw, *Bradshaw's Diary and Travellers' Companion* (1869), pp. 96-97. *The Golden Guide to London: Illustrated with plans and engravings on wood*, (London: Lambert, c. 1879), pp. 7-8. *A Popular, Pictorial and Practical Guide to London*, pp. 58-59.

one hour or less was at least 2s.¹⁵⁵ On the other hand, if there were several places to call at or inevitable intervals between the journeys, it would be cheaper and more convenient to calculate the tariff by time.¹⁵⁶ This is because when a consumer hired a cab by distance, the driver was entitled to an extra 6d. for every 15 minutes of waiting. This flexible rate system allowed cab hirers to choose the cheapest method. An 1856 script provides a representative example of how this rule worked. Knowing that the hirer had no idea which of the Red Lion Inns in London he was staying at, the hansom cabby proposed ‘engage me by the hour, and we’ll go the round of the whole of the Red Lions, until we get to the right ’un.’¹⁵⁷ Even this is clearly a joke, it still suggests that London’s horse-drawn cabs could offer their customers greater flexibility, and certainly greater convenience, in comparison to other public vehicles.¹⁵⁸

At the same time, London’s cab hirers were also entitled to make use of the cabs in a variety of ways, like cab sharing, for example. To Victorian cab customers, picking up an acquaintance on the way, or being picked up themselves on the way by an acquaintance, was not an unusual practice. Among those customers who shared cabs, Charles Dickens (1812-70) was probably the most prominent. In a letter dated as early as 1837, Dickens wrote to his old friend and biographer John Forster (1812-76) that ‘it will be better if you call here in a cab when you leave the Ourang Outangs... We will then go together.’¹⁵⁹ Later, some time between 1838 and 1839, he wrote to Forster again saying, ‘Beaver is going away tomorrow morning, and will be at home at 2 o’Clock to-day. Will you call there with me? And if so, will you be here in a cab at a quarter before?’¹⁶⁰ In another letter written in 1845 to Clarkson Stanfield (1793-1867), a landscape painter, he suggested, ‘Yes – at the Gray’s Inn Coffee House with Mac and Tony. But come here, about 5, or a quarter before. We can have a Cab down.’¹⁶¹ An 1850 message informed Daniel Maclise (1806-70) that Dickens would ‘call for you

¹⁵⁵ The fare did fluctuate but it never exceeded 1s per mile. For example, the 1853 Act reduced the fare from 8d. to 6d. per mile, and the minimum fare of 1s. was introduced in 1867. According to the 1895 report, this rate lasted at least until the end of the nineteenth century. See 16 & 17 Vict., cap. 33, Schedule A. Parliament Paper (1895, C. 7607) *The cab service of the metropolis. Report of the committee of enquiry appointed by the home secretary.*

¹⁵⁶ An 1898 guide to London agreed that ‘Sometimes, this [travel by time] is the cheaper and more convenient plan.’ See *A Popular, Pictorial and Practical Guide to London*, p. 58.

¹⁵⁷ Augustus Harris (1852-96), ‘Doing the “Hansom”, a farce in one act’, in *Lacy, Lacy’s acting edition of Plays*, vol. 28, p. 8.

¹⁵⁸ See 1 & 2 Will. IV., cap.22, sec. 44.

¹⁵⁹ Charles Dickens, ‘To John Forster, 6 December 1837’, in *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, ed. Madeline House, Graham Storey, Kathleen Tillotson, (12 vols, Oxford: Clarendon Press: 1965-2002), vol. 1, p. 338.

¹⁶⁰ Dickens, ‘To John Forster, winter 1838-39’, in *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, vol. 1, p. 487.

¹⁶¹ Dickens, ‘To Clarkson Stanfield, 28 October 1845’, in *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, vol. 4, p. 420.

in a cab about ¼ past 7.’¹⁶² And in 1857, he proposed to another close friend – Wilkie Collins (1824-89) – that ‘There is a train at 12 [...] If you will call for me in a Cab at about 20 minutes past 11, my hand will be on the latch of the door.’¹⁶³ These letters indicate that Dickens had an inclination for sharing a cab with close friends, or at least asking them to pick him up.

For Dickens and other like-minded Londoners¹⁶⁴ there were some obvious advantages of cab sharing. First, they might gain some extra time to spend with friends. Second, and perhaps more likely, they could avoid the trouble and expense required to secure their own cab. It was only London’s horse-drawn cab that could offer this flexibility and convenience. Meanwhile, it is also noteworthy that most of the aforementioned letters indicate specific times such as ‘5’, ‘¼ past 7’, or ‘20 minutes past 11’. This suggests that being punctual or precise about time was already crucial in the urban area, at least to highly active and mobile Victorians before the 1850s, not merely a fin-de-siècle phenomenon as several previous studies have proposed.¹⁶⁵ However, in Dickens’s London, where the omnibus, underground and tram services remained relatively inaccessible or in their infancy, perhaps only the horse-drawn cab could meet the requirement of ‘being on time’. In this sense, it is no surprise that busy Victorians like Dickens depended heavily upon the cabs and their efficient, convenient and flexible service, but not on other forms of urban transport.

While Dickens’s words provide information about friends cab sharing in the mid-Victorian period, another literary text suggests that by the turn of the century it was also possible to share a cab with a stranger. In 1887, the journalist and newspaper

¹⁶² Dickens, ‘To Daniel Maclise, 31 August 1850’, in *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, vol. 6, p. 161.

¹⁶³ Dickens, ‘To Wilkie Collins, 4 March 1857’, in *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, vol. 8, p. 294. Dickens’s relationship with Forster, Stanfield, Maclise, and Collins, see Paul Schlicke (ed.), *Oxford Reader’s Companion to Dickens* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 244-48 (Forster); pp. 550-51 (Stanfield); pp. 366-67 (Maclise); pp. 114-16 (Collins).

¹⁶⁴ For example, Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-82), the English poet, painter, illustrator, and one of the founders of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in 1848, once wrote in 1868 that ‘I will call for you in a cab as I suppose that would be much in my way.’ Also, in 1877, he asked Walter Theodore Watts-Dunton (1832-1914) to ‘meet us at the station in a cab, whereupon after seeing my mother and sister safe off, I would wend homewards with you.’ See Dante Gabriel Rossetti, ‘To Ford Madox Brown, ? 1868’, in Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Letters of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, ed. Oswald Doughty and John Robert Wahl, (4 vols, Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1965-67), vol. 2, p. 677; ‘To Walter Theodore Watts-Dunton, 22 October 1877’, in *Letters of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, vol. 4, p. 1521.

¹⁶⁵ Scholars such as Beegan and Kern all focus on the significant change in the general perception of time in the late Victorian period. However, here I propose that the transition might have started earlier, particularly (or at least) in the urban area. See Beegan, ‘The Up-to-date Periodical: Subjectivity, Technology and Time in the Late Victorian Press’, and Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918*.

editor R. D. Blumenfeld (1864-1948), for instance, recorded in his diary that he returned to London in a hansom cab with a young man he had just met at the luncheon in Hampstead.¹⁶⁶ In 1902, the author of *The Night Side of London* advised that, ‘Well, about twelve you get into a hansom. Perhaps you are with a friend; if not, you will have no trouble in picking up one, if you want to, in the ballroom.’¹⁶⁷ Additionally, in 1907, social observer Olive Christian Malvery, later Mrs. Archibald Mackirdy (1875/7-1914), also recorded that on one rainy night she once shared her hansom with ‘a smartly-dressed girl’.¹⁶⁸ All these instances suggest that under certain circumstances, late-Victorian Londoners were willing to share their cabs with strangers. In such cases, the cabs became more public than private vehicles.

Both fictional and non-fictional materials provide other typical examples highlighting the flexibility of London’s horse-drawn cabs. For instance, in 1862, not many years after Dickens’s letters and when there were still no trams or underground services, a news article in *The Times* recorded that Isaac Butt MP (1813-79) was summoned for not paying his cab fare. According to the driver, Mr. Butt said that since he had many places to call at, he would hire the cab by the hour. During the 10-hour trip, they went to several places and finally ended up at Charing Cross. The cab even picked up two extra people – first a man and then a boy – during the journey. Nevertheless, at the end of the day the cabman’s hard work did not pay off because when he got off at Charing Cross the MP left him nothing but the two extra passengers. The legal fare should have been 18s. 6d.¹⁶⁹ This case however underlines almost all the strengths of London’s horse-drawn cabs – their flexible rate system and ability to accommodate extra passengers, who could be picked up and set down anywhere – which no other modes of public transport could offer. However, it also indicates that some people were ready to take advantage of these characteristics and even attempted to exploit or ‘bilk’ the cabman.

Additional examples can be obtained from the contemporary fictions, which contain useful information concerning the popular usage of horse-drawn cabs in Victorian London. For instance, in *The Sign of the Four* (1890), in reply to Holmes’s request for bringing him a hound ‘back in the cab with you’, Watson says, ‘It is one now. I ought

¹⁶⁶ R. D. Blumenfeld, ‘June 1887’ in *R.D.B.’s Diary* (London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1930), p. 17.

¹⁶⁷ Robert Machray, *The Night Side of London* (London: J. McQueen, 1902), p. 136.

¹⁶⁸ Olive Christine Malvery, *The Soul Market: With which is included “The Heart of Things”* (London: Hutchinson, 1907), pp. 60-61.

¹⁶⁹ *The Times*, 19 February 1862.

to be back before three, if I can get a fresh horse.’¹⁷⁰ This case on the one hand confirms the accessibility of London’s horse-drawn cab (and its all-night service) and on the other, reveals that the cab customer could demand a fresh horse during a long journey, a request which would not have been granted when taking a horse-drawn tram or omnibus.

A paragraph in ‘A Scandal in Bohemia’ (1891) provides even more information:

...a hansom cab drove up to Briony Lodge, and a gentleman sprang out...He appeared to be in a great hurry, shouted to the cabman to wait...He was in the house about half an hour...As he stepped up to the cab, he pulled a gold watch from his pocket and looked at it earnestly, ‘Drive like the devil,’ he shouted, ‘first to Gross & Hankey’s in Regent Street, and then to the Church of St. Monica in the Edgeware Road. Half guinea if you do it in twenty minutes!’¹⁷¹

This quotation again attests to the enormous flexibility and convenience of the London horse cab: its point-to-point service, the cab driver’s willingness to wait, the ability to call at multiple points, and its great agility in moving about the city. However, it also confirms that cab hirers could make specific requests by paying more. Half a guinea was approximately equal to 10s in the nineteenth century¹⁷², which was 5 times more than the legal tariff for hiring a cab for an hour. It reconfirms that paying more than the regular fare was helpful in special circumstances and suggesting that within a reasonable range, the more the customer paid, the more cooperative the driver became, and the more flexible the service could be. In this sense, the individualized or customized flexibility of the London horse cab not only catered to the ‘snobbery’ of its users and the inequalities of Victorian society but also provided them with a quasi-private conveyance, a feature which separated it from other forms of public transport.

¹⁷⁰ Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Sign of Four*, ed. Christopher Roden (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994) p. 48.

¹⁷¹ Arthur Conan Doyle, ‘A Scandal in Bohemia’, in *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, first published 1993, reissued 2008), p. 18.

¹⁷² *Oxford English Dictionary*: <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/82381?redirectedFrom=guinea#eid> (accessed 10 September 2014).



Figure 3.5 Very Accommodating.

Source *Punch*, 25 March 1853

In conclusion, the examples discussed above clearly demonstrate the accessibility and flexibility of London's horse-drawn cabs. It was this ease of access and enormous flexibility that distinguished the cabs from other forms of urban transport and if money was not an issue, then the advantages of taking a horse cab in Victorian London were almost as great as those promised by the seemingly attentive cabman in the caption shown in Figure 3.5: 'Take yer anyvere, any distance, any price, and when yer please!'¹⁷³

¹⁷³ *Punch*, 26 March 1853.

The horse-drawn cab as the fastest mode of urban transport

In the previous section we discussed the enormous accessibility and flexibility of London's horse-drawn cabs, which fulfilled the first condition of being convenient: ease of use. This section will focus on another advantage of the vehicle: namely, its speed and efficiency, which corresponds to the second aspect of convenience: helping to save time and trouble. I will argue that in Victorian London, where coordination, punctuality and accuracy were crucial in order for people to be able to adapt to the accelerating pace of urban life, the horse-drawn cab remained the fastest and smartest – and thus, the most convenient – public conveyance in the city. In addition, the speed of the cabs – particularly the two-wheelers – was almost legendary, to the extent that it became a fashionable subject (re)presented in Victorian popular culture. Moreover, the cabs came to be regarded as a symbol of quickness, smartness and convenience, even as the emblem of the metropolis, which not only added extra colour to the vehicles but also contributed to Victorian Londoners' burgeoning sense of collective identity.

There were several factors that made London's horse cab a speedy mode of urban transport. First of all, the cabs could accelerate freely and take shortcuts, because unlike the alternative modes of public transport they were free from limitations and interruptions such as fixed timetables, routes and stations, which inevitably slowed other conveyances down and prolonged the duration of their journeys. The horse-drawn cabs helped passengers save time and circumvent trouble. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that in most circumstances, taking a cab would have been the faster and more convenient choice for Victorian Londoners.

Secondly, the cabs, especially the two-wheelers, were designed to move quickly in an urban environment. Historically, carriages plying for hire in London's streets were intentionally built smaller than other types of carriage because the less the vehicle weighed, the faster it could run; the smaller the vehicle's size, the greater its agility in coping with London's traffic. In the early modern period, the poet and playwright Sir William D'Avenant (1606-68) is supposed to have depicted the hackney coach, the predecessor of Victorian cabs, as 'a small affair...so narrow that I took them for sedans on wheels.'¹⁷⁴ The Victorian coachbuilders upheld this tradition. Later on, the Metropolitan Police, in charge of administrating the city's cabs, even set clear regulations regarding the actual size of the vehicles, for reasons of both

¹⁷⁴ John Garwood, *The Million-peopled City* (London: 1853), p. 167.

manoeuvrability and safety.¹⁷⁵ This feature of London cabs also attracted the attention of contemporary figures. Doyle, for instance, mentions it in the first Holmes story, *A Study in Scarlet* (1887), saying that ‘The ordinary London growler [the four-wheeler] is considerably less wide than a gentleman’s brougham.’¹⁷⁶ Therefore, it is not surprising that the smaller, narrower growlers dealt with London’s traffic better than normal carriages, not to mention other much heavier, more cumbersome public vehicles such as omnibuses or horse-drawn trams which were designed for carrying a larger volume of passengers. Nor is it surprising that the even shorter, more lightweight two-wheelers – first the cabriolets and later the hansoms – acquired a well-deserved reputation for being fast.

At the same time, there were external factors which helped London’s horse cabs to move around the city more quickly. Richard Sennett notes that the efficient circulation of people, goods, information and currency in the city – just like the fluent movement of blood through arteries and veins in the body – was one of the key ideas in the minds of Enlightenment urban planners. Nevertheless, it was not until the nineteenth century that the concept of ‘speed’ – fast, rapid speed¹⁷⁷ – began to preoccupy the general public. Several thoroughfares such as the ring road around Regent’s Park, which Dickens compared to a racetrack, were opened to accommodate a heavier volume of carriage traffic as well as encourage fast moving traffic. ‘And this rapid motion,’ said Sennett, ‘was individualized transport – it occurred in hansoms and carriages.’¹⁷⁸ In addition to the improvements in road conditions, the removal of toll charges in the second half of the century also speeded up vehicular movement in the city, including that of the horse cabs.¹⁷⁹ Last but not least, official regulations encouraged efficiency

¹⁷⁵ See Parliament Paper 1871 [C.358] ‘No Hackney Carriage can be certified it for Public Use unless the following Conditions are strictly complied with’, in *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis*, p. 33. (1872 [C.652]) Same title in *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis*, p. 29. An earlier version could be found in: William Thomas Charley, *A Handy Book of the Law of London Cabs and Omnibuses* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1867), pp. 16-17.

¹⁷⁶ Doyle, *A Study in Scarlet*, p. 123.

¹⁷⁷ According to John Tomlinson, in modern society, ‘speed is fast ... It is *rapid* speed, speed thought of as remarkable in its increase, that is the dominant meaning.’ Therefore, speed is one of the key aspects of modernity. See John Tomlinson, *The Culture of Speed* (London: SAGE, 2007), p. 2.

¹⁷⁸ The road around Regent’s Park was built between the 1810s and the 1820s. See Richard Sennett, *Flesh and Stone* (New York & London: W. W. Norton & Company Ltd., 1996), pp. 324-27. For details of further road improvements and the newly constructed roads that appeared in the 1870s and the 1880s, including Northumberland Avenue (1876), Shaftesbury Avenue (1886) and Charing Cross Road (1887), see Barker and Robbins, *A History of London Transport*, vol. 1, p. 242.

¹⁷⁹ For details concerning the tolls, see Bagwell and Lyth, *Transport in Britain*, p. 107; Barker and Robbins, *A History of London Transport*, vol. 1, pp. 242-243; Ralph Turvey, ‘Road and Bridge Tolls in

by setting minimum speed limits. An 1862 version of *Bradshaw's Diary* states that, unless they receive a passenger's demand to the contrary, or 'in cases of unavoidable delay', cab drivers should never run their cabs at a speed of 'less than 6 miles an hour'¹⁸⁰, while according to Bagwell and Lyth's estimation, the average speed of omnibuses and horse trams in the 1850s never exceeded 5 miles per hour.¹⁸¹

It is worth making a comparison between the speeds of London's horse cabs and other modes of public transport. If we focus only on speed, then no other horse-drawn public vehicle (omnibus and horse tram) could run faster than the horse-drawn cab. It was, however, slower than the machines – trains, motor-omnibuses, taxi-cabs and electric trams – which were introduced later. But, even so, according to an article published in 1908, the speed of the horse cab, especially the hansom, was still quite impressive in comparison with that of its modern competitors. The article was based on a study carried out along the Embankment, which found that 'a motor-cab travelled at 27 miles an hour, a private car at 22 miles, a motor-omnibus at 17 miles...and a hansom at 10¼ miles.' As the title of the article indicates, the author considered all these speeds as 'fearsome'¹⁸². On the other hand, it was not until the turn of the century that these modern public vehicles were permitted to operate in the heart of London. Prior to that, in the later part of the nineteenth century, the effect of the introduction of suburban railways, the underground and omnibuses on London's horse cabs was to shrink their 'business radius' to '2½ miles measured from Charing Cross'¹⁸³. Thus, by the end of the century, the cabs' monopoly on the capital's surface transport was limited to short-distance journeys in the city centre and ferrying people between stations or into the City. The part the horse cabs played in London's transport system changed over time but for the majority of the Victorian era, inner-city depended mainly on three means of transport: omnibuses, horse-drawn cabs and walking.¹⁸⁴ Hence, it makes more sense to compare the speeds of these three means of transport alone, rather than to include all the different kinds of public conveyance.

Victorian Londoners were well aware of the speed difference between horse-drawn

Nineteenth-century London', *Journal of Transport History*, 17:2 (1996), 150-64.

¹⁸⁰ Bradshaw, *Bradshaw's Diary and Travellers' Companion*, p. 97.

¹⁸¹ Bagwell and Lyth, *Transport in Britain*, p. 106 (buses), 113 (trams).

¹⁸² 'Fearsome Speed', *The Observer*, 19 July 1908.

¹⁸³ Parliament Paper (1895, C. 7607) *The cab service of the metropolis. Report of the committee of enquiry appointed by the home secretary*, p. 3.

¹⁸⁴ For details of buses and cabs sharing the 'profitable central traffic' in the later part of the nineteenth century, see Barker and Robbins, *A History of London Transport*, vol. 1, pp. 244-45.

cabs and omnibuses, and it is interesting to see how they referred to this difference. As early as 1835, in a letter to his fiancée, Miss Catherine Hogarth (1815-79), Dickens mentions that the absence of someone named Robert is concerning him. He then goes on to say, 'I hope however, that his absence is only occasioned by his having been very late, and taken an omnibus.'¹⁸⁵ It is not clear whether the phrase 'taken an omnibus' used here was Dickens's opinion about what had happened or just a metaphor for 'slow'. What it does tell us is that, from the perspective of regular cab customers such as Dickens, taking a bus was definitely a slower way to travel in the city. By contrast, in the *Sketches by Boz*, the description of urban life Dickens wrote as a reporter for *The Morning Chronicle*, which republished almost at the same time as the above-mentioned letter, Dickens vividly pictures how fast and acrobatically a cabriolet could move around the city:

His cabriolet was gorgeously painted - a bright red; and wherever we went, City or West End, Paddington or Holloway, North, East, West, or South, there was the red cab, bumping up against the posts at the street corners, and turning in and out, among hackney-coaches, and drays, and carts, and waggons, and omnibuses, and contriving by some strange means or other, to get out of places which no other vehicle but the red cab could ever by any possibility have contrived to get into at all.¹⁸⁶

There may be no words that highlight more clearly the difference between the cab and the bus than these words of Dickens.

Two decades later in 1856, when Schlesinger was trying to illustrate life in London to his fellow Germans, he described the omnibus as slow partly because of the city's dense traffic, and partly because the vehicle had to stop frequently to pick up passengers. Although he admitted that taking an omnibus was enjoyable, he still found it wearisome and time-consuming. Hence, 'A short visit [calling on some friends on the other side of the town] certainly is not worth the trouble of a long omnibus journey.'¹⁸⁷ However, when talking about the cabs in the city, he describes the hansom's drivers as happy to push their horses and vehicles to the limit, emphasizing the vehicles' agility and speed:

¹⁸⁵ Dickens, 'To Miss Catherine Hogarth, ?20 October 1835', in *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, vol. 1, pp. 78-79.

¹⁸⁶ Charles Dickens, *Sketches by Boz* (1836, London; New York: Penguin Books, 1996), p. 171.

¹⁸⁷ Schlesinger, *Saunterings in and about London*, pp. 163-65.

They go at a dashing pace whenever they have an open space before them, and they are most skilful in winding and edging their light vehicles through the most formidable knots of waggons and carriages.¹⁸⁸

In the 1870s, an article in the *Pall Mall Gazette* (1871) condemned London's buses as 'expensive, slow, and uncomfortable'¹⁸⁹ while a guidebook (1879) warned that the hansoms 'are invariably driven very fast.'¹⁹⁰ The situation was the same at the turn of the century. In a story entitled 'The Naval Treaty' (1893, set in 1889), Sherlock Holmes asks a Scotland Yard detective, 'Did you point out to her that you and Mr Phelps, who started at least twenty minutes after her, got home before her?' And the answer was: 'She explains that by the difference between a bus and a hansom.'¹⁹¹ In another story, 'The Adventure of the Missing Three-Quarter' (1904, set in 1896), the explanation Mr Mount-James gives for his lateness for a meeting with Holmes regarding his missing nephew is: 'I came round as quickly as the Bayswater bus would bring me.'¹⁹² Here, Doyle is trying to portray a character who is both rich and mean by implying that he was too miserly to hire a cab, and chose to take the slower (yet cheaper) bus instead, even though the situation is urgent. It is thus clear that Victorian Londoners made a sharp distinction between horse-drawn cabs and omnibuses in terms of both speed and convenience.

The impression that London's horse cabs, particularly the hansoms, were fast was deeply ingrained in the minds of Victorian people and represented and reproduced in a wide variety of Victorian popular culture. For example, an article in *Paul Pry* (1849), a scandalous, humorous, and pornographic weekly paper focusing on London's low life, pictured a hansom 'progressing cityward at a smartish rate.' In a sensational novel entitled *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862), the hansom 'rattled rapidly'. In *At the Back of the North Wind* (1868, 1871), a children's book, people who took hansoms wanted 'to go like the wind.' In addition, Anthony Trollope (1815-1882) also specifically referred to the vehicle in his novels (1873), saying, for example, 'Mount Street is not exactly in the way from the India Office to the House of Lords; but a hansom cab can make it

¹⁸⁸ Schlesinger, *Saunterings in and about London*, p. 160.

¹⁸⁹ *Pall Mall Gazette*, 29 June 1871.

¹⁹⁰ *The Golden Guide to London: Illustrated with plans and engravings on wood* [tourist guide], London: Lambert, c. 1879, pp. 7-8.

¹⁹¹ Arthur Conan Doyle, 'The Naval Treaty', in *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, first published 1993, reissued 2009), p. 232.

¹⁹² Arthur Conan Doyle, 'The Missing Three-Quarter', in *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*, p. 251.

almost in the way.’ In another book (1875), he states, ‘How quick that cab went! Nothing ever goes so quick as a Hansom cab...Of all cabs this, surely, was the quickest.’ There was even an 1878 song entitled simply ‘Hansom Joe the fastest on the road’. An article in the *Police and Public* (1889) – a cheap, short-lived (06 July 1889-14 September 1889) ‘weekly summary of police and general news’ for union members and wage earners – described the hansom as ‘nimble’. And a rhyme of 1898 includes the sentence: ‘Away through snow-clad streets the hansom speeds.’¹⁹³ Each of these words ‘smartish’, ‘speeds’, ‘nimble’, ‘rapidly’, ‘quick’ and ‘fastest’ clearly illustrate the superb speed of the hansoms in Victorian London.

Nevertheless, the best evidence in support of the speed of the hansom is found not so much in the direct application of the above-mentioned adjectives or adverbs to describe it, but in the use of the hansom and its celerity as an analogy or metaphor to describe other things. In an 1883 letter that the Victorian poet George Meredith (1828-1909) sent to the Scottish novelist Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-94), Meredith wrote that:

I dined t’other night with Andrew Lang...and Saintsbury [George Saintsbury, 1845-1933] who talked with me of you, preferring your *Modern Western Arabian Tales* to your *Choice Excursions*. For me, the Hansom celerity movement of the former is astonishing...¹⁹⁴

The phrase ‘the Hansom celerity movement’ was probably used here to praise Stevenson’s work for its neatness, fluency, sharpness and stylishness, which were like that of the lightweight cab flashing around the city. In this regard, the quotation not only points to the nimbleness of the hansom but also suggests that the speed of the

¹⁹³ See *Paul Pry*, 20 [26] March 1849, p.4. Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Lady Audley’s Secret* (3 vols, London: Tinsley Brothers, 1862), vol. 2, pp. 194-95. George Macdonald, *At the Back of the North Wind* (London: Strahan & Co., 1871), p. 145. Anthony Trollope, *The Eustace Diamonds* (3 vols, London: Chapman & Hall, 1873), vol. 1, p. 68. Anthony Trollope, *The Way We Live Now* (2 vols, London: Chapman & Hall, 1875), vol. 1, p. 249. Arthur Guyatt, ‘Hansom Joe, the fastest on the road’ (London: 1878). *Police and Public* 1:1 (London, 6 July 1889), pp. 4-5. Albert Brodrick, ‘His first pantomime’, in *A Wanderer’s Rhymes* (London: Wilkinson Bros., Ltd, 1898), p. 87. About *Paul Pry* and *Police and Public*, see *The Waterloo Dictionary of English Newspapers and Periodicals: 1800-1900* (accessed 10 September 2014): <http://www.victorianperiodicals.com.ezproxy.york.ac.uk/series2/showarticle.asp?id=93443&HighlightedField=title&HighlightedWords=paul~pry> (*Paul Pry*) <http://www.victorianperiodicals.com.ezproxy.york.ac.uk/series2/showarticle.asp?id=89342&HighlightedField=title&HighlightedWords=police~public> (*Police and Public*)

¹⁹⁴ George Meredith, ‘To Robert Louis Stevenson, 17 March 1883’, in *The Letters of George Meredith*, ed. C. L. Cline, (3 vols, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), vol. 2, p. 693.

vehicle was so familiar to Victorian people that it could even be evoked to refer something else.

This reference to the hansom's speed was echoed and developed in an article in *The Observer* (1906), a successful Sunday newspaper in the Victorian period:

Is not our hansom one of the sights of London? Is there in all France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Russia or Austria any form of carriage that can show so smart a turn out, that is so silent, swift, discreet, alluring; that can whirl and twirl about with more fascinating accuracy, which, in point of horse, whip or inconvenience of construction can in the least compete with the merrily jingling hansom cab! Most assuredly not.¹⁹⁵

Here London's hansom is elevated from being just a mode of urban transport to an icon of the metropolis epitomising the qualities of quickness, precision, smartness, elegance and convenience. A similar point was often made in the course of the later part of the nineteenth century. As previously noted, in 1870 Disraeli hailed the dashing hansom as 'the gondola of London', thus comparing it to another iconic mode of urban transport in Venice. Another article in *The Observer* (1909) praised the hansom for being 'as perennial as the Thames, and the public cabman on his box seemed to belong, no less than the Bank of England, to the permanent nature of things.'¹⁹⁶ It may therefore be said that since the Victorian era, the London cab, either horse-drawn or motorised, has become one of the symbols of the city, distinguishing it from other cities both within and outside Britain.

Thus, as the primary sources indicate, at least before the first decade of the twentieth century, Victorian Londoners generally approved of the speed of the horse cab, considering riding a cab as a fast, efficient and convenient way to travel in the metropolis. However, only the relatively wealthy could afford and enjoy this kind of speed and convenience. Furthermore, as Sherlock Holmes, Meredith and *The Observer* articles reveal, this expensive and superior speed sometimes carried additional cultural meanings, which, however, needed no explanation to most people during the period in

¹⁹⁵ *The Observer*, 7 October 1906. About *The Observer*, see *The Waterloo Directory of English Newspapers and Periodicals: 1800-1900*:

<http://www.victorianperiodicals.com.ezproxy.york.ac.uk/series2/ShowArticle.asp?id=94477> (accessed 10 September 2014).

¹⁹⁶ 'Fate and the Cabman', *The Observer*, 25 April 1909.

question.

The horse-drawn cab as a versatile conveyance

The previous sections highlight the accessibility, flexibility, quickness and efficiency of the horse-drawn cabs. In this section the focus shifts to how cab customers took practical advantage of these features and made use of the cabs to accomplish various purposes. To this end, another significant quality of the horse cab, its versatility, will be discussed; it will also be argued that because of this versatility – this ability to tackle a wide variety of emergencies – the horse cabs became indispensable in Victorian London.

First of all, when it comes to the use made of London's horse cabs, perhaps no one draws a more vivid picture than Edmund Yates' (1831-94) words in 1879:

THERE is a very large class of Riding London, which, while not sufficiently rich to keep its private carriage, holds omnibus conveyance in contempt and scorn, loathes flies, and pins its vehicular faith on cabs alone. To this class belong lawyers' clerks, of whom, red-bag-holding and perspiration-covered, there are always two or three at the Holborn end of Chancery Lane flinging themselves into Hansoms, and being whirled off to Guildhall or Westminster; to it belong newspaper reporters, with their note-books in their breast-pockets, hurrying up from parliament debates to their offices, there to turn their mystic hieroglyphics into sonorous phrases; to it belong stockbrokers having 'time bargains' to transact; editors hunting up 'copy' from recalcitrant contributors; artists hurrying to be in time with their pictures ere the stern exhibition-gallery porter closes the door, and, pointing to the clock, says, 'It's struck!' – young gentlemen going or coming from Cremorne; and all people who have to catch trains, keep appointments, or do anything by a certain specified time, and who, following the grand governing law of human nature, have, in old ladies' phraseology, 'driven everything to the last.' To such people a Hansom cab is a primary matter of faith; and certainly, when provided with a large pair of wheels, a thick round tubby horse (your thin bony rather blood-looking dancing jumping quadruped lately introduced is no good at all for speed), and a clever driver, there is nothing to compare to it.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁷ Edmund Yates, *The Business of Pleasure* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1879), pp. 41-42.

This long extract is useful for deepening our understanding of the multiple uses made of the horse-drawn cab in Victorian London. It underlines the connection between the cab's superb speed and the strong demand for 'meeting the deadlines'. It also shows quite clearly that the amount and range of these kinds of demands and deadlines had already increased to an unprecedented level in the nineteenth century, suggesting that the values of speed, punctuality, accuracy, efficiency and convenience had become the central theme of Victorian modernity. In these circumstances the cabs met with the approval of Victorian Londoners, because their speed, accessibility, flexibility and the feature of being convenient all saved their passengers time and trouble, thus enabling them to meet both the deadlines and the standards of modernity.

Among the deadlines Victorians had to meet, catching trains was without a doubt one of the most important.¹⁹⁸ In the previous sections, we saw how in the mid-Victorian era Charles Dickens frequently took a horse-drawn cab in order to catch a train. Some other highly mobile Victorians such as Rossetti and George Augustus Sala (1828-95) one of 'Mr Dickens's young men', who regularly contributed to the *Household Words*, also appear to have shared this preference.¹⁹⁹ Rossetti's personal letters give us an idea about how mobile his life was in the 1870s and in which the London cab played an indispensable role. In 1872 he suggested that 'He and I propose now to leave here [from Perth in Scotland] at 4 on Monday next, and make for London, arriving in Euston 4.30 on Tuesday morning. We should then cab it to Paddington whence we should proceed at 6.30 to Faringdon, reaching there at 8.50 and so going on by fly to Kelmscott which is seven miles further.'²⁰⁰ Two years later, Rossetti apologized in a letter '...the fact is that we found ourselves so late on leaving Turnham Green that we had no choice but to get to Hammersmith by cab and there take train in time to catch the Paddington train...'²⁰¹ In another letter dated 1876 he describes the following plan: 'The train I shall almost certainly come by is very late and only gets to London Bridge at midnight – not going to Victoria. Thence we should come on by cab and be

¹⁹⁸ According to Esbester, the nineteenth century was viewed by contemporaries as 'an age of timetables.' See Esbester, 'Nineteenth-Century Timetables and the History of Reading', p. 156.

¹⁹⁹ For details of the relationship between Dickens and Sala, see Schlicke (ed.), *Oxford Reader's Companion to Dickens*, p. 515.

²⁰⁰ Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 'To Thomas Gordon Hake, 20 September 1872', in Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Letters of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, ed. Oswald Doughty and John Robert Wahl (4 vols, Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1965-67), vol. 3, p. 1065.

²⁰¹ Rossetti, 'To Ford Madox Brown, 2 January 1874, 1442', *Letters of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, Vol 3, p. 1252.

at Chelsea about one or a little before.²⁰² Two decades later (1894) roughly the same interval as that between the letters of Dickens (1850s) and Rossetti (1870s) Sala recorded his daily routine: ‘I was living in an ancient mansion called Upton Court, near Slough. I used to come up every morning by the ten o'clock express. From Paddington to St. Clement's Church Yard, in a rapid hansom, took twenty-two minutes,’²⁰³ showing how accurate and precise the pace of his life was, and the important part played in it by the hansom.

These quotations in the first place again highlight the indispensable role London's horse cabs played in Victorian rail-based mobility. At the same time, the repetition of the exact times in the quotations also emphasizes the cab's reputation for being a punctual and efficient provider of this special ‘feeder service’. These references therefore show that the relatively traditional horse cabs were included and integrated into the modern railway system, confirming Thompson's point that ‘without carriages and carts the railways would have been like stand whales, giants unable to use their strength.’²⁰⁴ Additionally, the extracts quoted above also reveal how often and how proficiently people like Dickens, Rossetti and Sala switched between different modes of public transport. This suggests that Victorian mobility was not only the privilege of a relatively limited group of people but also an ability, which required knowledge, skills and practice.

There were, however, during the same period an enormous number of complaints concerning the horse-drawn cabs' failure to convey their passengers to the railway stations in time to catch their trains. For instance, in 1848, Frances Kemble (1809-93) a famous actress, grumbled in a letter: ‘I left London for this place on Monday morning, and having a sulky deliberate cab-driver, arrived at the station just five minutes after the train had departed.’²⁰⁵ Mayhew also said that he would never employ one particular driver, who had overcharged him and intentionally kept the cab slow on their way to the ‘Great Western Station’, which had forced him to break his habit of

²⁰² Rossetti, ‘To Henry Treffry Dunn, March 1876’, *Letters of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, Vol 3, p. 1415.

²⁰³ George Augustus Sala, *London up to Date* (London: A. and c. Black, 1894), p. 280.

²⁰⁴ For details concerning the interaction between the horse-drawn vehicles and the railways, see Bagwell and Lyth, *Transport in Britain*, p. 109; Thompson, *Victorian England: The Horse-Drawn Society, An Inaugural Lecture*, pp. 13-14; Taylor (ed.), *The Moving Metropolis: A History of London's Transport since 1800*, p. 13.

²⁰⁵ Frances Kemble (1809-93), Letter from Frances Kemble, 20 January 1848, in *Records of Later Life* (London: Richard Bentley & Son, 1882), p. 605.

‘always being a quarter of an hour before the time.’²⁰⁶ In 1879, a cab proprietor was fined because he failed to send his vehicle to the pick-up point on time. His customer, a London clergyman, therefore ‘arrived at the station seven minutes after train time – 7.30 – and the train was gone.’²⁰⁷ An 1899 edition of *Punch* also carried an article of complaint, saying, ‘Slow cab – and foggy weather! I have missed the express again.’²⁰⁸ Indeed, these cases seem to suggest that London’s horse cabs often failed to satisfy the pressing needs of individual users for catching trains and caused great inconvenience. However, from another perspective, these endless and frequent complaints not only reconfirm the Victorian custom of using cabs to catch trains but also reveal the common and enduring impression that the cabs were fast, convenient, punctual, and would be helpful to people hurrying to meet deadlines.

The horse cabs were also useful for transporting people who were too ill or too weak to move by any other means. In fact, the establishment of London’s ambulance service was closely connected to the horse-drawn cab trade. The custom of hiring public carriages to invalided Londoners can be traced back to the early modern era. According to Samuel Pepys (1633-1703) and Daniel Defoe (1660?-1731) during the time of the Great Plague, patients were often transported by hackney coaches – the original version of London’s horse cab. However, public attention was soon drawn to the possibility of contagion via these coaches.²⁰⁹ An effective system of special vans to transport the sick was therefore proposed. However, although local parishes and workhouses ran some so-called ambulances, it was not until the 1860s that the London Hospital Carriage Fund introduced a universal hospital carriage system. Six wagons, each deployed to one hospital, comprised the not-so-impressive fleet. It was only in the late 1880s that the London Asylums Board ‘finally granted the city-wide legal authority to operate ambulances’. Until then, these services were only provided for the transportation of patients with infectious diseases.²¹⁰

²⁰⁶ Mayhew, ‘Opposite A Cabstand’, p. 246.

²⁰⁷ *The Daily Gazette*, 17 January 1879.

²⁰⁸ *Punch*, 17 May 1899.

²⁰⁹ At that time, the authority did follow a serious policy, prohibiting coaches which had carried infected people to take passengers ‘by the space of five or six days after such service.’ See Daniel Defoe, *A Journal of the Plague Year* (1722, New York, 1960), p. 51.

²¹⁰ For details of the history of London’s early ambulance system, see Gwendoline M. Ayers, *England’s First State Hospitals and the Metropolitan Asylums Board, 1867-1930* (London: Wellcome Institute of the History of Medicine, 1971). Ryan Corbett Bell, *The Ambulance: A History* (California: McFarland & Co Inc, 2008), pp. 26-29. Matthew Kerr, ‘“Peregrinating Fever Nests of our London Streets”: Cabs, Omnibuses, Ambulances, and Other “Pest-Vehicles” in the Victorian Metropolis’, *Journal of British Studies* 49 (2010), pp. 283-310. Quotation, Bell, *The Ambulance*, p. 29.

It is noteworthy that the introduction and improvement of London's ambulance service was a direct result of a heated debate that took place in the third quarter of the nineteenth century over the use of the cabs to move contagious patients. As Matthew Kerr shows, many cab hirers, physicians and commentators in Victorian London expressed their uneasiness and suspicion about 'infectious hired vehicles'²¹¹ in both professional journals and daily newspapers. For example, an 1860 edition of *The Lancet* – one of the oldest and best known medical journals in the world – issued an unpleasant reminder warning that, 'It is not very agreeable to suspect that the previous occupant (and not ten minutes ago) of the cab we have just got into had small-pox or typhus, scarlatina, scabies, favus, or choleraic diarrhoea...'²¹² In 1866, another article in *The Times* further described London's cabs as the 'Perambulating fever nests of our London streets.'²¹³ Similarly, as shown in Figure 3.3, a cartoon published in an 1870 edition of *Punch* also describes the four-wheeler as a 'Fever-Box.'²¹⁴ In this sense, the horse-drawn cab was not only a mode of urban transport but also a public health issue.²¹⁵ On the one hand, this impressive array of discourses and articulated concern helped to accelerate the establishment of a London ambulance service for conveying people with infectious diseases. On the other hand, at the same time it attests to the way in which the horse cabs were commonly used as a substitute for the ambulance in Victorian London.

London's ambulance service was initially established for dealing with contagious diseases, not for tackling general emergencies such as street accidents or sudden illness. Such a system was not introduced until the twentieth century, decades after the formation of the previous system designed solely for infectious patients.²¹⁶ As late as 1909 a Bill was advocating the foundation of an ambulance service operated by the London County Council to cope with 'cases of accident and sudden illness occurring in streets and public places within the metropolis.' The aim was to improve a service which people perceived as 'gravely defective' because throughout the nineteenth century 'persons who have been injured or taken ill in the streets or other public

²¹¹ Kerr, "'Perambulating Fever Nests of our London Streets': Cabs, Omnibuses, Ambulances, and Other 'Pest-Vehicles' in the Victorian Metropolis", pp. 283-310.

²¹² 'Malappropriation of Public Vehicle', *The Lancet*, 11 August 1860, p. 143.

²¹³ Horace Jeaffreson, 'London Fevers and London Cabs', *The Times*, 5 March 1866.

²¹⁴ *Punch*, 20 August 1870.

²¹⁵ The discussion on the phobia about taking the horse cabs and the risk of infection continues in more detail in Chapter 5, which considers London's horse-drawn cab as a conveyance of adventure.

²¹⁶ Quotation: Bell, *The Ambulance: A History*, p. 29.

places' were often delivered by ordinary vehicles such as cabs or vans.²¹⁷

Along with the absence of a functional ambulance system, another reason why London's horse cabs were widely hired to move the weak was because they were deemed the most convenient conveyance, in the sense of being both 'easy to use/access' and 'time-saving', particularly when the situation was critical. They also had the added advantage of being able to provide a much more comfortable and private travel experience, which is equally important for people who are ill or injured.

Hiring a horse cab as a substitute for an ambulance was so popular in Victorian London that it even became an ingrained habit shared by people of different professions, classes and gender. For example, in a private letter dated 1836, Dickens told his fiancée 'If I should not be out to-night, of course I shall see you tomorrow. If I am not better I shall take a Cab...to meet you...' ²¹⁸, showing that he preferred to hire a cab when he felt unwell. One could argue that since London's cabs were the preferred mode of transport for relatively wealthy people like Dickens, they would almost certainly to take a cab regardless of whether they were ill or in good health. However, there are several examples of people belonging to other classes and professions also employing the horse cab as an ambulance. In 1840, a sick and pregnant working-class female was taken from the workhouse 'in a cab when in labour', although she was then 'barbarously repulsed from two workhouses and several hospitals' because she did not have a letter of admission. She was thus forced to deliver 'on the road' and the child, born 'in the bottom of the cab', was soon found dead.²¹⁹ This tragedy generated great public concern and the blame fell on the superintendents of the workhouses and hospitals for their cruelty, rather than on the cabby for any unwillingness or delay on his part. The Old Bailey record also confirms this common use of London's horse cabs. During the period covered by this study, Londoners from a variety of social categories in need of urgent medical treatment were put into the cabs, including an injured clerk (1840), a policeman stabbed on duty (1850), a blacksmith wounded by his tenant (1860), a female stabbed by her ex-partner (1870), a labourer knocked down by his colleague (1880), an almost suicidal woman and her poisoned baby (1890), and a boy run over by a van (1900), to list but a few.²²⁰

²¹⁷ Parliament Paper *Metropolitan Ambulances. A Bill to Enable the London County Council to Establish and Maintain an Ambulance Service in London* (1909).

²¹⁸ Dickens, 'To Miss Catherine Hogarth, 23rd January 1836', in *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, vol. 1, p. 121.

²¹⁹ See *The Times*, 17 November 1840, 18 February 1841.

²²⁰ See *Old Bailey* (6 April 1840, Reference Number: t18400406-1304. 7 January 1850, Reference Number:

In sum, these cases not only demonstrate Victorian Londoners' ingrained habit of hiring the horse-drawn cab as an ambulance but again highlight the accessibility, flexibility and speed of this public conveyance, all of which were crucial in such emergencies. In addition, they also reveal the Victorian age as a time when London's modern ambulance service was gradually being established, and how the horse cab acted as a substitute during this transition.

Another important use made of London's horse cabs was in the policing of the capital: that is, they were often engaged by the Metropolitan Police to carry out police tasks. As we know, the motorization of Britain's police force took quite a long time. It was only partially underway by the outbreak of World War I and not completed until the 1970s.²²¹ Before then, London's police forces remained very much 'pedestrian-oriented institutions', working on a tactic called 'beat' policing.²²² This system relied on pedestrian constables who regularly patrolled a given area within a specific period in order to monitor that territory closely and prevent any trouble in advance. Nevertheless, as the size of the city and volume of traffic grew rapidly, the mobility of London's police force became much more important. Thus, it is not surprising that horses were recruited into the police over the Victorian era. The Bow Street magistrate's office – the base of London's first professional police force: the Bow Street Runners – introduced the horse patrol in 1805. The expenditure on the police horses was first officially recorded later, in 1837. Spending on police vans was then added in 1845.²²³ It was in this social and police context that the horse cabs were

t18500107-357. 2 January 1860, Reference Number: t18600102-167. 6 June 1870, Reference Number: t18700606-486a. 1 March 1880, Reference Number: t18800301-246. 3 March 1890, Reference Number: t18900303-284. 11 September 1900, Reference Number: t19000911-548.)

<http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/browse.jsp?id=t18500107-357&div=t18500107-357>

<http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/browse.jsp?id=t18600102-167&div=t18600102-167>

<http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/browse.jsp?id=t18700606-486a&div=t18700606-486a>

<http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/browse.jsp?id=t18800301-246&div=t18800301-246>

<http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/browse.jsp?id=t18900303-284&div=t18900303-284>

<http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/browse.jsp?id=t19000911-548&div=t19000911-548>

(accessed 20 September 2012).

²²¹ For details of the early history of the police car in Britain, see Benjamin Taylor, 'Driving Out Crime: The Mass Motorisation of Police Patrols in Britain 1948-1975' (unpublished MA thesis, University of York, 2010), and Malcolm Bobbitt, *Police Cars* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing Ltd., 2001), pp. 1-12.

²²² Taylor, 'Driving Out Crime: The Mass Motorisation of Police Patrols in Britain 1948-1975', p. 15.

²²³ The expenditure on horses was first recorded under the heading 'Stable Expenditure' in 1837, then 'Horses, Vans, &c.' in the annual financial reports of the Metropolitan Police between 1845 and 1867. In the years between 1837 and 1839, the accounts of horse patrols were independent of the Metropolitan Police. See Parliament Paper. 1837 (64) *Metropolitan Police. An account of all monies demanded, received and*

frequently commandeered by the Metropolitan Police to help it fulfil its duties.

The financial record of the Metropolitan Police attests to this interesting connection between the police and cabs in Victorian London. In the annual reports the Metropolitan Police sent to Parliament between 1833 and 1866, there was always a disbursement listed under the heading 'Coach and Cab Hire', ranging from a few dozen to several hundred pounds. The existence of a separate category here implies that cab and coach hiring was deemed to be a routine police expenditure, just like other police-related expenses such as salaries, pensions, equipment and clothing. It is also noteworthy that this payment was recorded even earlier than the expenditure on police horses and vans mentioned above. Additionally, while there was a tendency for the latter to increase as time passed, there was corresponding downward trend in the former. Although these reports only cover three decades of the period in question, they do suggest that the horse cabs played a significant role during the formative years of the Metropolitan Police.

Information provided by other official documents on how and when the London police force made use of the cabs helps to fill in the blanks and add vivid colour to this incomplete story. Reports by the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, for instance, occasionally disclose details for the second half of the century. In the 1874 report, T. Garforth, the Superintendent of M division, recorded an extraordinary case in which a dog was eventually captured and killed after 'it had bitten at least five children.' The mission was completed by Police Constable 318, who 'hired a cab' to hunt the animal.²²⁴ In the 1884 report, the Superintendent of K division complained about the workload, with 1,657 prisoners being conveyed by police by rail and cab, and 'this necessarily took up much of the Police time',²²⁵ which gives a general idea of the frequency and the purpose of the police's employment of London's horse-drawn cabs.

expended for the purposes of the Metropolitan Police establishment, made up to the 31st day of December 1836, p. 9. 1837-38 (143) *Metropolitan Police. Horse patrol. An account of all monies demanded, received, and expended for the purposes of the Metropolitan Police and Horse Patrol, made up to the 31st day of December 1837*, p. 9; p. 11. 1845 (114) *Metropolitan Police. 1844 Accounts showing the sums received and expended for the purposes of the Metropolitan Police, Police Superannuation Fund, and police courts, in the year ended the 31st December 1844*, p. 5.

²²⁴ Parliament Paper 1875 (C. 1314) *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the year 1874*, p. 90.

²²⁵ Parliament Paper 1885-85 (C. 4513) *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the year 1884*, p. 33.

In addition, the Old Bailey Sessions Papers record a substantial number of cases throughout the Victorian era in which London's police engaged the cabs. In 1833, Joseph Higgins, Police Constable F 35, testified that he stopped and got into a cab that was transporting two thieves. He then drove around with them while he conducted his investigation and finally 'told the driver to go to Covent-garden station-house.'²²⁶ Similarly, in 1840, two policemen affirmed that they had seized a cab with suspects on board and ordered the cabmen to go to the station-house.²²⁷ In 1850, when Francis Hayes, Policeman E 82, was questioned by the prisoner in court, he replied that 'Yes; for about an hour previous – you were acting as thieves usually do – I got into a cab and watched you.'²²⁸ At the end of 1859, a man who attempted to pass a counterfeit coin in a café was sent to the station-house in a cab.²²⁹ Another man was arrested for possessing counterfeit coin with intent to change it in January 1870. At that time, he had been driving a hansom he had borrowed or rented from a real driver. Hence, he was driven to the station in *his own* cab.²³⁰ These cases together also demonstrate the cab's speed, accessibility, flexibility and versatility, and how the police took advantage of this.

It can therefore be concluded that the convenience offered by London's horse-drawn cabs as a result of the characteristics described above made them a popular vehicle with the Metropolitan Police. As the primary sources show, the police could employ the cabs to fulfil a range of police duties including conveying police officers, suspects and prisoners, tracking criminals and animals, performing interceptions and as a temporary place to keep the suspects in custody. Hence, throughout the Victorian period, London's horse-drawn cabs were extensively used by the police as a substitute for modern police cars. A 1910 news article in *The Observer* proves that this custom continued even after the motorised taxi-cab had been introduced. It describes three of

²²⁶ *Old Bailey*: (3 January 1833, Reference Number: t18330103-94):
<http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/browse.jsp?id=t18330103-94&div=t18330103-94> (accessed 20 September 2012).

²²⁷ *Old Bailey*: (2 March 1840, Reference Number: t18400302-820):
<http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/browse.jsp?id=t18400302-820&div=t18400302-820> (accessed 20 September 2012).

²²⁸ *Old Bailey*: (6 May 1850, Reference Number: t18500506-964):
<http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/browse.jsp?id=t18500506-964&div=t18500506-964> (accessed 20 September 2012).

²²⁹ *Old Bailey*: (2 January 1860, Reference Number: t18600102-152):
<http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/browse.jsp?ref=t18600102-152> (accessed 20 September 2012).

²³⁰ *Old Bailey*: (31 January 1870, Reference Number: t18700131-206):
<http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/browse.jsp?id=t18700131-206&div=t18700131-206> (accessed 20 September 2012).

the cabs being ordered to wait as ‘forty police’ laid siege to a house. After 15 minutes, ‘the door of the house opened and officers came out with three women, who were at once driven off to the police station.’²³¹ This again highlights the transitional role London’s cabs played whilst the Metropolitan Police gradually built up its own fleet of police vans and cars.

Victorian Londoners were also accustomed to hiring the horse cabs to convey objects and messages, particularly in emergencies. The reason for this practice is obvious: it was more convenient, and sometimes even cheaper than other methods. As long as finance was not a problem, the cab was more accessible and faster than other public vehicles and means of communication. It is in this sense that London’s horse cabs were not only a mode of public conveyance which transported people, but also became carriers, circulating items and information within the city. For instance, an article published in 1836 reads:

Sir Charles Douglas was so anxious to let the world know that he had arrived at the honours of paternity, that, no sooner was the happy event communicated to him of the safe delivery of his lady of a daughter, than, calling a street cab, he flew...to the various newspaper offices in order that the event might be announced in due form...²³²

The familiar sense of excitement and immediacy this quotation gives us (and gave its nineteenth-century readership) is worth noting, since it highlights how ‘up-to-date’ to Victorian mindset to was. It was a mindset which valued the present, speed and change.²³³ This ‘culture of speed’ as Tomlinson puts it was (and still is) formed around and based on the development of communications/transport technology and the popularization of mass media, or, to be more precise, the integration of these two elements during the last two centuries. The value of the above extract and the sense of excitement and immediacy it conveys would thus be lost if terms such as ‘street cab’ (communication) and ‘newspapers’ (mass media) were omitted.

There are a number of cases which exemplify the popular practice of hiring London’s horse-drawn cabs as efficient information carriers. For instance, William Bradbury

²³¹ *The Observer*, 18 December 1910.

²³² *The Satirist, and the Censor of the Time*, Sunday, 2 October 1836, p. 317.

²³³ See Gerry Beegan, ‘The Up-to-Date Periodical: Subjectivity, Technology and Time in the Late Victorian Press’, *Time & Society* 10:1 (2001), 113-34.

(1800-69) Dickens's main printer and occasional publisher, was assigned by the novelist as a messenger in a letter dated 1848, which said, 'Enclosed also, is a note for Stanfield himself, which if you can put yourself in a Cab and give him (he is sure to be at home, for he has a bad leg) will do the business.'²³⁴ In 1859, Dickens again dispatched a maid to deliver a message to Arthur Stone, the son of Frank Stone (1800-59), noting that 'Your father is ill, and Ellen [Arthur's sister] has asked us to send a messenger to bring you to him. One of our women comes in a cab with this.'²³⁵ Coincidentally, Mayhew, another big name in publishing circles in Dickens's time, also showed his preference for employing the cabs to send messages because 'it is much quicker and not dearer than a messenger.'²³⁶ This point is supported by an 1838 committee report on postage, which proposed that 'a porter, with a cab, would deliver letters cheaper and quicker in London than the twopenny-post.'²³⁷ These cases do not merely illustrate how crucial timing, speed and efficiency were to Victorian Londoners who chose to send messages by horse-drawn cab. They also indicate that, until the mid-Victorian period, the cab was a cheaper option than the post in London.

The Victorian period witnessed substantial improvements in communications technology, with the invention of the telegraph (in 1837) and telephone (in the 1870s). And as these cheaper, quicker and therefore more convenient means of exchanging information were developed, the use of the cabs as information carriers gradually declined in importance. For instance, in 1873, Rossetti, a regular cab hirer in Victorian London, noted that, 'Howell has sent telegrams within the last few days to the amount (to my cost) 16/-. Hansom Cabs being impossible he seems to have resorted to telegrams, which suit his purse better, as *I* have to pay.'²³⁸ By this point it had become cheaper to send a telegram than to charter a cab, since the receiver had to pay for the message. The introduction and use of the telephone similarly challenged the business

²³⁴ Dickens, 'To William Bradbury, 1 December 1848', in *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, vol. 5, p. 452. For details of the relationship between Dickens and Bradbury, see Schlicke (ed.), *Oxford Reader's Companion to Dickens*, pp. 53-56.

²³⁵ Dickens, 'To Arthur Stone, 18 November 1859', in *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, vol. 9, p. 165. For details of the friendship between Dickens and the Stone family, including Frank Stone, Ellen (daughter, b. 1836?), Arthur Paul (son, b. 1838), Lillian Bertha (daughter, b. 1845) and Marcus Clayton (son, b. 1840), see *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*: <http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy.york.ac.uk/view/article/26570> (accessed 20 September 2012)

²³⁶ Mayhew, 'Opposite A Cabstand', p. 245.

²³⁷ Parliament Paper 1837-38 (658) *Second Report from the Select Committee on Postage; together with the minutes of evidence, appendix and index*, p. 810.

²³⁸ Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 'To Ford Madox Brown, 20 February 1873', in Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Letters of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, ed. Oswald Doughty and John Robert Wahl, (4 vols, Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1965-67), vol. 3, p. 1140.

of London's horse cabs. In 1895, a cab driver complained to the Home Office Committee:

...and I may say, sir, that the city work is largely cut up by the telephone. Of course it used to be a common thing for a cab driver to take a fare into the city, and when he was in the city he would sometimes get seven or eight short shilling runs from, say Throgmorton Street, that neighbourhood, to Leadenhall Street, perhaps well within a mile; but what we call very easy shillings, sir. But now the gentlemen seems [*sic*] as it was hardly necessary to leave their offices; they can do the work by telephone or messenger.²³⁹

This testimony in the first place confirms the fact that London's horse cabs were a mode of urban transport, depending mainly on short-distance journeys for the so-called 'easy shillings' in the heart of the city. However, it also reveals that, at least in the 1890s, the cabs' market was already under threat from the new communications technology.

The switch from hansoms to telegrams and telephones was not accomplished overnight, however. In most situations, during the transition period people appear to have preferred to 'mix and match' the co-existing means of communication. A letter was sent to *The Times*'s editor grumbling that he had spent a night and 7s. on cab hiring to find the 'Electric Telegraph Company.'²⁴⁰ Thus, despite gradually losing its importance, the horse-drawn cab retained its role as an information carrier.

Similarly, it was not unusual for Victorian Londoners to employ cabs to move or dispatch goods and items, just like the courier service of today. In an 1833 Old Bailey case, a cabman refused to transport a man and his trunk. The driver, however, said that, 'he would take the trunk for 1s 6d', so the man told the driver to 'deliver the trunk at No. 12 Chatham-place, Blackfriars.'²⁴¹ Another similar case, in which a man named Matthew Harrison was summoned because he had refused to pay the cab driver his fare, was recorded in *The Illustrated Police News* (1876). Harrison's explanation was

²³⁹ Parliament Paper (C. 7607-I) *The Cab Service of the Metropolis. Minutes of Evidence Taken before the Committee of Inquiry appointed by the Home Secretary, with Appendices, 1895*, p. 125.

²⁴⁰ *The Times*, 8 April 1853.

²⁴¹ *Old Bailey* (11 April 1833: Reference Number: t183304110154): <http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/browse.jsp?id=t18330411-154&div=t18330411-154> (accessed 20 September 2012).

that ‘he did not employ the complainant as a cabdriver to carry him as a passenger, but as a common carrier, to convey the property to his residence...’²⁴² This excuse was not accepted by the magistrate, but the two cases above do prove that cabs were used in this way during the Victorian period. The custom continued even until the 1920s. A photograph pictured in the mid-1920s shows ‘a four-wheeler weighed down with Kelly’s Directories outside Kelly’s London office’, highlighting a special function of this specific vehicle.²⁴³

Victorian celebrities also sent items via London’s horse-drawn cabs. In July 1870, Frederick Engels (1820-95) in Manchester wrote Karl Marx (1818-83) in London a note probably accompanying a parcel, saying: ‘Enclosed you will find the *plan of the Prussian campaign*. Please get a cab *immediately* and take it round to *The Pall Mall Gazette*, so that it can *come out on Monday evening*.’²⁴⁴ Slightly later, in 1881, Rossetti also asked someone ‘to get a cab at my expense and bring on those books,’ otherwise he ‘shall never have them.’²⁴⁵ In these two cases, although the transported items were different, a similar feeling of urgency can be sensed, which again emphasizes the cab’s distinct advantages of accessibility, flexibility, efficiency and speed. In addition to this ‘convenience’, according to an 1895 Parliamentary committee report, sending parcels by cab was often cheaper than any other means because:

‘...one can easily form an idea, from the rapidity with which a person could go over a distance of several miles in a cab, merely stopping to hand in parcels at the door. Suppose 1s or 2s were paid for such a conveyance, and a man getting 1s or 2s for his trouble, he could deliver an enormous quantity of parcels within a short time for this small sum.’²⁴⁶

London’s horse cab was thus even used as a substitute for the courier.

²⁴² *The Illustrated Police News*, 29 July 1876.

²⁴³ ‘The “Growler” Survives’, in Taylor (ed.), *The Moving Metropolis*, p. 73.

²⁴⁴ Marx had been moved to London since 1849 and would stay there until his death in 1883. See *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/39021?docPos=1> (accessed 20 March 2013). Frederick Engels, ‘Engels to Marx in London, 31 July 1870’, in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Collected Works of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels*, (47 vols, London: Lawrence & Wishart Ltd., 1975-), vol. 44, p. 18.

²⁴⁵ Rossetti, ‘To Frederic James Shields, 20 January 1881’, in *Letters of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, vol. 4, p. 1840.

²⁴⁶ Parliament Paper (C. 7607-I) *The Cab Service of the Metropolis. Minutes of Evidence Taken before the Committee of Inquiry appointed by the Home Secretary, with Appendices, 1895*, p. 95.

In addition to the regular uses outlined above, Victorian people occasionally took advantage of the cabs in some unusual ways. For example, when Sir Charles Napier (1786-1860) – a naval officer and then politician – ran an election at Southwark in 1857, his election agent engaged 30 cabs to ‘convey voters to the poll.’²⁴⁷ Thus the cabs were sometimes engaged in Victorian politics.²⁴⁸ Besides, according to Mayhew, a cab driver once told him, ‘There was a gent that was locked out of his own house in the race week, and found several hotels closed, who took his cab for a night, and made himself as comfortable as if he were in his own bed, from two in the morning till seven.’²⁴⁹ Greenwood confirms this special usage. Once, when he hired a cab in the middle of the night, the misled cab driver said: ‘...jump in. It ain’t like the down beds and woolly blankets like what you’ve got at home, but the cushions is warm, and there’s no draught to speak of. What time shall I wake you sir?’ Greenwood added later that this kind of service would be ‘at the rather expensive rate of two shillings an hour.’²⁵⁰ In this instance the cab became a type of temporary and alternative accommodation. In 1888, a fierce fire broke out at a house in the West End. With the people in the house hopelessly cut off upstairs, a passing cabby drove his vehicle straight up to the house and a ‘similarly smart “peeler” [police] climbed to the roof of the hansom’ and lifted the people down before the fire brigade arrived. The accident took place just after 3.00 a.m.; therefore, had it not been for the timely rescue carried out by the cabman and policeman, the fire would have cost several lives.²⁵¹

Victorian fiction also provides some interesting examples of how contemporary people made use of the cabs. For instance, in the Sherlock Holmes stories, it is not uncommon to find people employing a cab to spy on someone.²⁵² In *A Study in Scarlet*, the suspect confesses that, ‘Go where they would about London, I was always at their heels. Sometimes I followed them on my cab, and sometimes on foot, but the former

²⁴⁷ *The Observer*, 19 April 1857. Sir Charles Napier (1786-1860) was first elected to parliament (Marylebone) in 1841. He was elected MP for Southwark in 1855 and kept the seat until his death. See *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*: <http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy.york.ac.uk/view/article/19747?docPos=10> (accessed 20 September 2012).

²⁴⁸ Also, in her well-known novel *Black Beauty*, Anna Sewell (1820-78) spends two chapters (chapter 42 and 43) depicting how London’s horse-drawn cab engaged in the elections (and party politics). According to Sewell, during the elections, the cabs not merely transport voters but also would be ‘pasted over with their (the candidates’) great bills,’ sometimes even ‘with the candidates’ colors on them.’ See Anna Sewell, *Black Beauty* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 136-140.

²⁴⁹ Mayhew, ‘Opposite A Cabstand’, p. 250.

²⁵⁰ Greenwood, ‘With a Night Cabman’, pp. 107-108.

²⁵¹ *The Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times*, 28 January 1888.

²⁵² Doyle, *A Study in Scarlet*, p. 41; p. 85. *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, pp. 204-205. ‘A Scandal in Bohemia’, p. 439.

was the best, for then they could not get away from me...'²⁵³ which illustrates how efficient the cabs could be. Fast, flexible and accessible, it is no difficult to see why the horse cab was the fictional detective's favourite mode of transport. A paragraph from Gissing's novel *The Whirlpool* (1897) also confirms that London's horse-drawn cabs could sometimes function as temporary mobile meeting points:

'I want to speak to you, Rolfe,' he said hurriedly, 'but I haven't a moment to spare. Going to Euston – could you come along for a few minutes?

...Abbott's driver got quickly out of the crowd, and the two men continued their conversation.'²⁵⁴

These cases demonstrate that Victorian cab customers were well aware of how to take advantage of the different forms of convenience offered by the horse-drawn cab.

To conclude, the efficiency, speed, flexibility and accessibility of London's horse cabs enabled their customers to accomplish a wide variety of tasks, and helped to circulate not only people but also information and items in the metropolis. It is also noteworthy how Victorian people integrated the relatively traditional cabs with other modern transport and communications facilities such as the telegraph, timetables and the railways, in order to cope with the accelerating pace of life and the increasing demand for speed, accuracy and punctuality. However, perhaps the most important point made in this section relates to the transitional and substitute role played by the cabs in Victorian London, during a time when huge social, technological and cultural changes were taking place. Its use as a feeder, ambulance, police car, postal car, accommodation or meeting point, allowed this pre-modern vehicle to survive competition with other modern modes of public transport, and also helped Londoners, albeit a limited group, to deal with emergencies during the transition period of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The Inconvenience When Not a Cab Was To Be Had

It is often useful to view matters from a different or opposite perspective. Therefore, in order to capture how convenient London's horse-drawn cabs could be and how

²⁵³ Doyle, *A Study in Scarlet*, p. 85.

²⁵⁴ George Gissing, *The Whirlpool* (London: Lawrence and Bullen, Ltd., 1897), p. 7.

important they were, this section examines the difficulties caused when cabs were not available in the city. Running a cab was a seasonal business. The market, the general demand for public carriage, varied in accordance with both natural and social rhythms, and the number of cabs on the streets fluctuated in response to these rhythms. There was thus a greater probability of being unable to find a cab in an off-season like winter. Nevertheless, even in the peak season, when the number of horse cabs increased remarkably, sometimes it was still difficult to get a cab in particular areas, or at certain times, or both. In addition, since London's cabmen, like other nineteenth-century labourers, generally led humble lives owing to their unreasonably low income, they would often go out on strike. Needless to say, these cab strikes had an enormous impact on the transport system of the city and the lives of many citizens.

The section is divided into two parts. The first part covers general situations in which people could not get a cab, while the second part focuses on cab strikes, an intentional, voluntary and collective action – refusing to offer their usual service – carried out by members of the cab trade. However, both parts share a central theme in common: the inconvenience of urban life when horse-drawn cabs were not available.

‘Cab-famine in London’,²⁵⁵

In the down season, Londoners expected a reduction in the number of horse-drawn cabs plying for hire on the streets. The situation deteriorated rapidly in the winter, owing to severe weather conditions, the poor state of the roads, and the scarcity of social events. It is unlikely that there is a better description than that of Meredith. In a message dated January 1881, Meredith expressed his commiserations to a friend: ‘We hear gloomy reports of thick fog, universal slipperiness, and cab-famine in London’,²⁵⁶ in which he includes the terrible weather, the poor road conditions and the lack of a cab service during the winter months in a single sentence. The use of the phrase ‘cab-famine’ also underlines the importance of the horse cab in Londoners’ lives, at least for a certain group of citizens – those who possessed a certain wealth, social status and mobility.

The winter cab famine was such a common occurrence in Victorian London that even

²⁵⁵ The phrase is quoted from one of George Meredith's letters dated 19 January 1881. See: Meredith, ‘684. To Miss Louisa Lawrence’, in *The Letters of George Meredith*, vol. 2, p. 614.

²⁵⁶ Meredith, ‘684. To Miss Louisa Lawrence’, p. 614.

popular culture could refer to it without further explanation. For instance, from the first line of the fifth chapter of Rhoda Broughton's (1840-1920) novel *Belinda* (1883): 'The winter advances; Christmas comes',²⁵⁷ we know that the time setting is winter. Later, when Miss Watson pops in to Sarah's house to wish her a Merry Christmas, Broughton depicts the scene as follows:

But Miss Watson does not hear.

"I am sure I do not know how I ever got here!" continues she [Miss Watson], drawing up a chair to the fire, and setting her large feet on the fender; "there is not a cab to be had. I felt my way all round Berkeley Square by the railings. Five or six times I was as nearly as possible run over!"²⁵⁸

In this short paragraph, Broughton details a series of movements made by Miss Watson to show the startling contrast between her earlier state of mind and her condition when she arrives at Sarah's place. She starts by being more eager to talk than to listen because she has been alone and has had no one to share her feelings with. She heads for the fireplace because she feels cold and needs some warmth, both physical and emotional. She puts her feet on the fender to relax herself, suggesting that a long, unbearable and perhaps also dangerous (being nearly run over) walk alone at night has made her nervous and exhausted. But what makes such a dramatic difference – anxiety/relief, chill/warmth, fatigue/comfort – to Miss Watson's state of mind? It is the fact that 'There is not a cab to be had.' The inconvenience and other side effects caused by there being 'not a cab to be had' in the down season hence become much clearer.

Although the number of horse-drawn cabs did indeed multiply during the peak season, there was still a possibility that potential cab hirers in Victorian London would be disappointed, particularly on 'scorching hot days' and showery days, so-called 'cabmen's weather' when cabs were highly in need.²⁵⁹ Figure 3.6, for instance, shows an 1865 *Punch* cartoon²⁶⁰ illustrating the competition between two females for 'the last cab in the railway station'. Their need for a cab to convey their luggage and themselves on such a rainy day was desperate. Hence, although the editor ironically describes the conflict as an 'elegant dispute', at first glance the reader is able to sense

²⁵⁷ Rhoda Broughton, *Belinda*, Vol. II (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1883), p. 63.

²⁵⁸ Broughton, *Belinda*, Vol. II, p. 81.

²⁵⁹ W. J. Gordon, *The Horse-world of London* (London: 1893), p. 44.

²⁶⁰ *Punch*, 21 January 1865.

the mounting tension in the scene. Another example can be found in another scene from Broughton's novel *Belinda* (1883). When her husband attempts to decline an invitation on the grounds of adverse weather conditions, the heroine, Belinda, cries impatiently: 'you will be in cabs and trains all day'. However, her husband obviously disagrees, demurring that, 'It is not always easy to secure a cab at a moment's notice on a wet day!'²⁶¹ Twenty years later the situation appears to have changed very little. It was the dawn of the twentieth century and also the time when the British Indian, Mrs. Mackirdy, became famous for her documentary articles concerning London's low life. In 1907, she recorded that she had picked up a girl to share her hansom one rainy night. These three cases, in spite of the 20-year intervals, all highlight the difficulty of hiring a cab on rainy days. Furthermore, they also suggest that the anxiety and worry caused by not being able to get a cab was so intense that people would be willing to fight for one, give up going out, or share a cab with a stranger. It is particularly noteworthy that Mrs. Mackirdy, Broughton, the cartoonist, and the editor of *Punch* all presumed that their readership would perfectly understand this predicament, so they could mention/joke about it without further explanation.

Horse cabs were equally popular and thus equally hard to obtain on hot days. In 1893, Gordon noted that scorching days were welcome to Victorian cabmen. And at about the same time, in the story 'The Man with the Twisted Lip' (1891, set in 1889), Holmes attempts to reconstruct a scene with Watson: 'If you remember, Monday was an extremely hot day, and Mrs. St. Clair walked slowly, glancing about in the hope of seeing a cab, as she did not like the neighbourhood in which she found herself.'²⁶² In the end Mrs. St. Clair fails to get a cab, and instead bumps into her husband who should not have been there, which is how the story began. Although Doyle does not provide much detail, it is clear enough that Mrs. St. Clair does not feel comfortable about the weather, the speed at which she is moving, or the environment in which she finds herself. This is why she wants to hail a cab – an easier, cosier, faster and maybe even safer way to travel the city. However, it can be inferred that because of the demand for cabs in circumstances, she ends up finding her husband instead.

Timing – the moment, the period and the season – were decisive in terms of hiring a cab. Place or location was of equal importance. The illustration in Figure 3.6 shows that the railway station was a popular place and trouble spot for cab hirers. It is

²⁶¹ Broughton, *Belinda*, Vol. II, p. 275.

²⁶² Doyle, 'The Man with the Twisted Lip', p. 527.

therefore understandable that people who wanted a cab around the theatres – another busy point and favourite place for cab drivers – would face a similar annoyance. The situation worsened at the end of the nineteenth century because, according to May, the police ‘cordoned off the theatre district in the evening, and refused to let in empty cabs to prevent them from blocking up the streets.’²⁶³ This made it even more difficult to secure a cab. Hence, in a *Punch* article entitled ‘An Operatic Puzzle’ (1891), the author recalls that when the opera had nearly come to an end, someone ‘who knew all about it [the opera]’ suggested that, ‘If you want to get your cab, and escape the crush, now’s the time, as the Opera is just over.’ The author therefore hurried off before the curtain came down and ended up not having the ‘faintest idea how it [the opera] all ended’.²⁶⁴ The article might be exaggerating slightly, and people who acted like this were very much in the minority; however, this case nevertheless suggests that someone would prefer to give up knowing how an opera ended than to get stuck in traffic, or find no cabs available. This, again, shows how annoying or inconvenient it was for people when they could not secure a cab. They would therefore rather compromise, or sacrifice something in order to get one.

As with the temporal factor, it seems that the most impossible places to obtain a cab were both the most and the least popular and bustling places. A private letter concerning Alfred Tennyson (1809-92), Queen Victoria’s poet laureate, provides a description of the situation in which not a single cab was available in a remote area when one was needed. In the message, dated 30 July 1867 (1871), Lord Houghton (Richard Monckton Milnes, 1809-85) tells his wife that his visit to Tennyson turned out to be ‘a moral success, but a physical failure’ because he had to walk 7 miles ‘in the moonlight’ to Tennyson’s house and had ‘not met with a London cab returning from Goodwood [for Graywood?].’ The word ‘expedition’ which appears in the first sentence of that letter perhaps not only implies the remote location where Tennyson’s house was situated but also refers to Lord Houghton’s exhausting march in which he sorely missed the convenient service that only London horse cabs could offer.²⁶⁵

In conclusion, it can be argued that to those who relied heavily on the horse-drawn cabs, or on certain occasions when a cab was desperately needed, it was definitely an

²⁶³ May, *Gondolas and Growlers*, pp. 106-107.

²⁶⁴ ‘An Operatic Puzzle’, *Punch*, 27 June 1891, p. 305.

²⁶⁵ ‘Lord Houghton to Lady Houghton, 30 July 1867 [1871]’, in Alfred Lord Tennyson, *The Letters of Alfred Lord Tennyson*, ed. Cecil Y. Lang and Edgar F. Shannon (3 vols, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; Oxford: Clarendon Press; and New York: Oxford University Press, 1981-1990), vol. 3, p. 12.

annoyance not to be able to find one. Sometimes this inconvenience was so unbearable that people would feel anxious or uncomfortable about it, or would rather pay some extra cost to compensate, no matter whether this cost was a quarrel, a temporary loss of individual space, missing the end of an opera, the last-minute cancellation of an appointment, or even immobility (when people simply chose not to go out).

Cab Strikes: ‘The Cab-desolation of London’²⁶⁶

In the previous section, we saw how being unable to secure a cab could cause the would-be cab hirer anxiety, uneasiness, and even result in immobility. The discussion so far has remained at the individual level, but what if a situation arose at a much more general level, as in the case of a cab strike, which might affect more people or even the whole city? What if the whole industry refused to provide its services to the public so that there were no, or just a limited number of cabs on the streets? The result is not difficult to imagine. To the cab customers and to the city, it would be a nightmare. In fact, London experienced this particular nightmare several times in the second half of the Victorian Age. After the first major cab strike in 1853, around 10 more large and small-scale strikes took place, causing varying degrees of inconvenience to the capital. Each strike was called for a particular reason: to oppose the reduction in fares (1853), to disagree with the regulation which compelled every cab to have a light on at night (1867), or to protest against the privilege of the railway companies (1868, 1894, 1896).²⁶⁷ However, all of these excuses were merely ‘the last straw on the camel’s back’²⁶⁸ because the major reason behind all the strikes was that, in general, Victorian cabmen were ‘underrated and underpaid’²⁶⁹ – an observation that many Victorian Londoners would have concurred with, given their deep dependence on the cab.

Although, as a short reply posted in *The Era*’s ‘Answers to Correspondents’ column concludes, ‘There was another [in fact there were a dozen] some years afterwards of

²⁶⁶ The phrase is quoted from Karl Marx. See Karl Marx, ‘Financial Failure of Government.– Cabs – Ireland. – The Russian Question, 29 July 1853’, in *The Collected Works of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels*, vol. 12, p. 224.

²⁶⁷ Trevor May, *The Administration and Organisation of the London Cab Trade from the Late Eighteenth Century to the First World War* (PhD Dissertation of University of London, 1991), pp. 140-44; *John Bull*, 7 December 1867; *Bell’s Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, 5 September 1868.

²⁶⁸ Quotation taken from *John Bull*, 7 December 1867.

²⁶⁹ See *The Sporting Times: A Review of Racing, Literature, Art and the Drama*, 1 August 1868; Adolphe Smith, ‘London Cabmen’, in Adolphe Smith and John Thomson, *Street Life in London* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1877), pp. 4-7. Quotation taken from *The Sporting Times: A Review of Racing, Literature, Art and the Drama*.

less significance’,²⁷⁰ none of the strikes was more astonishing or serious than the first one – the general cab strike of 1853. The records in connection with this strike are richer as well. The reason for this is partly because it was so sudden and because such a thing had never happened before, so nobody knew how to tackle the resulting problems, and partly because in the early 1850s the urban transport and communications technology network was not capable of taking up the slack. In addition, since people learn from experience, they were better equipped when they faced the next strike. The after-effects of subsequent strikes were therefore less serious. Consequently, in order to portray how Victorian people felt, and what they did to deal with the cab strike, the majority of the primary sources investigated in this section will be those concerned with the 1853 strike. A contrast will then be drawn between the circumstances when cabs were available and those when they were not.

It has already been demonstrated that a lack of available cabs could cause a huge amount of annoyance and inconvenience. The cab strikes were thus widely recorded, reported and represented by Victorian people. With regard to the 1853 cab strike, for example, while Karl Marx described it as a ‘cab revolution’ and a ‘cab rebellion’, which caused the ‘Cab-desolation of London’, *The Daily News* compared it to a ‘*coup d’état*’.²⁷¹ The terms ‘revolution’, ‘rebellion’, ‘desolation’ and ‘*coup d’état*’ imply chaos and disorder. So, during the 1853 strike, as Marx asked, ‘What was it that had happened to London?’ According to Marx, ‘cabmen and cabs have disappeared, as though by [*sic*] miracle, from the streets, from their stands, from the railway stations.’²⁷² Hence, ‘to thousands in the metropolis, and coming to the metropolis, the inconvenience and vexation cannot be described.’²⁷³ Departing passengers could not get to railway stations on time, while those arriving could find no means of getting into the City. People who were used to travelling by cabs missed their appointments. The result of the cab strike was thus the virtual immobilization of the entire city, or, in Marx’s words, ‘an absolute famine of locomotion.’²⁷⁴ It is therefore not surprising that inconvenience was the key word on people’s lips at the time. Other words such as confusion, discomfort, distress, helplessness, nonplus, perplexity, vexation and so on

²⁷⁰ *The Era*, 14 January 1888.

²⁷¹ See Marx, ‘Financial Failure of Government.– Cabs – Ireland. – The Russian Question’, p. 224; *The Daily News*, 28 July 1853.

²⁷² Marx, ‘Financial Failure of Government. – Cabs – Ireland. – The Russian Question’, p. 224.

²⁷³ *The Lady’s Newspaper*, 30 July 1853; 6 August 1853. This special material also implies that London’s horse-drawn cabs played an important role in Victorian females’ daily life, particularly those who were wealthier.

²⁷⁴ Marx, ‘Financial Failure of Government.–Cabs–Ireland.–The Russian Question’, p. 224.

were also used to describe the situation or people's feelings about the strike.

In order to overcome the crises caused by cab strikes, victims soon developed their own response strategies. For instance, railway companies, which perhaps were hit the hardest by the strikes, realized how important it was to prepare countermeasures in advance as early as the outbreak of the first cab strike. *The Morning Post* of 30 July 1853 carried two similar advertisements placed by the South-Eastern Railway and the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway, announcing their provision of a luggage-collecting service during the strike, to help passengers transport their belongings from their residences in the city to the terminus. The latter even stated that there would be a 'certain number of Cabs', omnibuses and private flies on standby. On the same page there was another advertisement featuring the Eastern Counties Railway's attempt to recruit 100 'first-rate CABS', 'HARNESS for 200 horses', and 'DRIVERS' to deal with situations in which no public cabs were available.²⁷⁵ The content of the advertisements and the quantities mentioned here indicate that Victorian railway companies were well aware of the significant role the horse-drawn cabs played in their business. Hence, without the help of the cabs, they had no choice but to restore the connection themselves. By the end of the century, it was common for the railway companies to run their own omnibuses and carriages, or simply contract with the so-called 'privileged cabs' to convey their passengers and luggage. By doing this, the railway companies could not only make extra money (by charging tolls for each contract cab) but also minimize the potential harm caused by cab strikes.²⁷⁶

It is therefore not surprising that other popular spots for cab-hiring such as theatres, hotels, hospitals and so on responded in a similar way, and sought to ensure that their customers were not inconvenienced by the strikes. The choice taken by the railway companies to restore the convenience that the horse cabs offered was probably the most straightforward and also advantageous strategy for organizations too. It thus makes sense that during the cab strike in 1894, the Avenue Theatre decided to promote their matinee by announcing, 'There are Six Cab Ranks Opposite'. The assurance of accessibility seemed promising as well because the next sentence of the advertisement stated, 'District and S.E. Railways within a few yards'.²⁷⁷ Another instance was the promotion launched two years later by the Haxell's Family Hotel on the Strand. In its

²⁷⁵ *The Morning Post*, 30 July 1853.

²⁷⁶ Barker and Robbins, *A History of London Transport*, vol. 1, p. 261. May, *Gondolas and Growlers*, pp. 115-28.

²⁷⁷ *The Morning Post*, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12 June 1894; and *The Strand*, 30, 31 May & 1, 2, 6, 7 June 1894.

advertisement, it said that, ‘During the present Cab Strike. This comfortable and moderate Priced Hotel may be easily reached by buses, Which pass the Hotel Doors From every London Railway Terminus.’²⁷⁸ In short, for a business which relied heavily on the service of horse-drawn cabs, the only way to safeguard its profits was to ensure that the convenient connection between itself and its customers was retained, or in other words, to reduce the amount of inconvenience caused by cab strikes to a minimum, whether this meant making the location of the business more accessible or supplying other transport options. These cases also emphasize the difference between the strike of 1853 and those that took place in the later part of the century. In the examples given above we can see that by the 1890s people were already able to use the underground and omnibuses as a substitute for the cabs. The amount of inconvenience could therefore be minimized.

Nevertheless, to the individual cab hirer, it is likely that none of above-mentioned compensatory measures was able to replace the convenience provided by the horse cabs. Railway passengers, for example, in spite of the omnibuses and private flies on standby, and even when ‘carts, and carriages of yet humbler description’ were also recruited, ‘in many cases had the mortification of finding themselves too late for the train.’²⁷⁹ In other words, these substitutes were generally less efficient and less reliable than the cabs, and sometimes cost more. For example, a regular cab hirer recalled an unpleasant experience during the 1867 strike, saying that on a cold night, ‘[s]everal neat broughams were in attendance at the station, and it cost me fifteen shillings to get home.’ This fare was 15 times higher than the legal tariff (1s for the first mile). It is no surprise that the customer ‘disapproved very much of the conduct of the men on that occasion.’²⁸⁰ This again confirms that none of the substitute options were able to provide Victorian cab hirers with the dependable, comfortable and reasonable service offered by the cabs. It was not until they were faced with such inconveniences though, that Victorian Londoners realized how convenient the horse cab in fact was. As one thwarted cab rider confessed, ‘We know the value of no blessings until we lose them [cabs], and until one or two good strikes – hard blows they have been – awaken us to a sense of their indispensability’²⁸¹.

Other ways in which people mobilized themselves during the cab strikes were reported

²⁷⁸ *The Standard*, 30 September 1896.

²⁷⁹ *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, 31 July 1853.

²⁸⁰ *The Sporting Times: A Review of Racing, Literature, Art and the Drama*, 1 August 1868.

²⁸¹ *The Sporting Times: A Review of Racing, Literature, Art and the Drama*, 1 August 1868.

in the Victorian press. However, again, they all confirm the fact that nothing could perfectly replace the horse-drawn cabs in Victorian London. For example, walking – the oldest and humblest mode of transport – was widely adopted during the cab strikes. As an article revealed in 1853: ‘both of ladies and gentlemen, were to be seen walking by the side of their porters’²⁸². Figure 3.9 shows a picture posted in *The Illustrated London News*, which also depicts a troop of people marching away from the railway terminal ‘in a storm.’²⁸³ Forty years later, a pair of cartoons from two satirical periodicals (see Figures 3.7 and 3.10) pictured a similar image – people forced to walk owing to the cab strike.²⁸⁴ If we focus on the image *only*, these pictures vividly present the huge contrast in people’s lifestyle and state of mind before and after the cab strike. It seems to me that the left-hand side of the picture shown in Figure 3.7, illustrating life in the days of horse cabs, portrays an easy, relaxed and laid-back mood. By contrast, the glare and motion of the same character shown on the other side of the figure express a sense of irritation, unwillingness and anger. He looks business-like, purposeful, industrious, and fit by comparison. The facial expression here is very similar to those of the family of three shown in Figure 3.9, on the right-hand side of the second part, and in image 6 of Figure 3.10. To these characters (and to real Londoners), being compelled to walk appears to have been an undesirable experience, as shown in the caption in Figure 3.10: ‘When you don’t feel inclined to walk, but have to, it does make you wild.’²⁸⁵

Interestingly, the captions to the illustrations shown in Figures 3.7 and 3.9 tell a completely different story. The caption in Figure 3.9 reads as follows, introducing a novel perspective from which to understand the cab strike and its side effect – walking:

On the other hand, what health it may have led to let the doctors reveal. Let them tell us how many who, compelled to try walking, have got attached to the novelty, and made it a habit. How many a poor dyspeptic, a bankrupt in body, by this little compulsion, has been set on his legs again!²⁸⁶

In this quotation, the editor of *The Illustrated London News* praises walking for the

²⁸² *Bell’s Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, 31 July 1853.

²⁸³ *The Illustrated London News*, 6 August 1853.

²⁸⁴ *Punch*, 24 June 1894. *Fun*, 29 May 1894.

²⁸⁵ *Fun*, 29 May 1894.

²⁸⁶ *The Illustrated London News*, 6 August 1853.

benefits it brings to people's health. The caption in Figure 3.7 – which is supposed to speak the gentleman's mind – likewise states that the 'strike done me a world of good' because he was forced to 'walk everywhere' and lost 4 stone as a result. In this sense, the gentleman wished they had 'gone on with' the strike.²⁸⁷ The text here seems to propose a new estimation of both walking and cab strikes. It suggests that after a period of time, people would not only adapt themselves to life without the cabs but would even come to enjoy travelling around the city on foot. A similar point was made in a letter to the editor of *The Daily News* in 1853. It argued that the horse-drawn cab would eventually lose its regular customers because they 'find, on being obliged to walk or patronise the "bus", that in neither case is their strength or comfort materially affected while the saving is considerable.' And in his own case, 'even under [the] new act,' which meant a fare of 6d per mile, he could save at least 10s a week.²⁸⁸ According to these extracts, therefore, walking seems to have been considered a healthier and cheaper way to move about the city than taking cabs. It is unlikely that the majority of people forced to walk during the strike actually enjoyed it or continued doing it because it was healthier to them. However, the materials do imply that regular cab hirers affected by the strike were not used to walking and relied upon the horse cabs to conduct their everyday lives.

At the same time, Victorian satirical magazines also introduced their readership to the kinds of alternative conveyances used during the cab strikes. Figure 3.8, for instance, shows the 'effect of the cab strike', portraying gentlemen employing extraordinary methods to get themselves to the opera such as taking a wheelbarrow, or being carried in a basket on the top of a servant's head.²⁸⁹ The same issue carried an advertisement announcing that, 'A roomy wheelbarrow, capable of accommodating a Member of Parliament on the rising of the House' was wanted. The contact address was listed simply as 'Colonel Sibthorp.'²⁹⁰ The intention of this pseudo advertisement was probably to ridicule the Tory MP, Charles de Laet Wald Sibthorp (1783-1855) who was the most frequently caricatured figure of his time²⁹¹ and the person who had earlier complained that the strike had caused his delay.²⁹² A similar image was

²⁸⁷ *Punch*, 24 June 1894.

²⁸⁸ *The Daily News*, 28 July 1853.

²⁸⁹ *Punch*, 6 August 1853.

²⁹⁰ *Punch*, 6 August 1853.

²⁹¹ Dickens once described the MP as 'the most amusing person in the House.' See *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*: <http://www.oxforddnb.com.libproxy.york.ac.uk/view/article/25507> (accessed 24 April 2011). Charles Dickens, *Sketches by Boz*, p. 233.

²⁹² *The Daily News*, 28 July 1853.

published in 1894 and is shown in Figure 3.10. Indeed, the images presented here are much more ironic than serious, more exaggerated than realistic. But ridiculous or not they highlight how indispensable London's horse-drawn cab was and how chaotic and inconvenient life could be if there was no cab to be had, as no other kind of conveyance could perfectly replace it.

As we have seen, many people preferred to stay at home when they thought that it would be difficult to secure a cab and it is possible that the cab strikes reinforced this inclination. An article commenting on the 1853 strike, 'never since the time of Charles II., when hackney-coaches were first invented, have the sight-seeing and out-going public been reduced to such an extremity of helplessness as by the cabmen's "strike."' ²⁹³ Another 1853 news report supports this interpretation of events, noting that, 'London enjoys unwonted stillness'. ²⁹⁴ Marx also made the following observation about the same strike:

London looked as if London had gone out-of-town. There were and there continued to be empty places where we were wont to see something. And as the eye was amazed at the emptiness of the places, so the ear was amazed at their tomb-like tranquillity. ²⁹⁵

Phrases such as 'unwonted stillness', 'emptiness' and 'tranquillity' convey how effectively the cab strike and the 'helplessness', inconvenience and annoyance it produced discouraged Victorian Londoners, particularly cab customers, from going out. Half a century later, in 1895, a news article in the *Times* about The Derby noted that 'the general attendance should have been larger than last year' because 'there is now no cab strike to interfere with the road traffic.' ²⁹⁶ This again suggests that Londoners lost interest in attending social events when cab strikes occurred and it thus seems reasonable to conclude that when facing the uncertainty and inconvenience triggered by the cab strikes, choosing not to go out was one of the more common responses and perhaps also a sign of disapproval. The strikes in this sense immobilized both the individual city dweller and the city as a whole.

On the basis of the discussion above, it appears that there was no single or perfect

²⁹³ *The Lady's Newspaper*, 6 August 1853.

²⁹⁴ *The Daily News*, 28 July 1853.

²⁹⁵ Marx, 'Financial Failure of Government.– Cabs – Ireland. – The Russian Question', p. 224.

²⁹⁶ *The Times*, 30 May 1895.

substitute for the horse-drawn cabs in Victorian London. The reason for this is clear: other forms of public conveyance were simply unable to fulfil the key function of the cabs; providing convenience. On the one hand, if people walked, took omnibuses or even took wheelbarrows instead of hiring a cab, they might save money or improve their health. But at the same time, some essential aspect of convenience as it was understood by Victorian Londoners would be lost. On the other, if people chose to take private flies they would have to pay extra for the kind of speed and comfort offered by a horse-drawn cab. Either way, they were faced with a dilemma. With regard to those who chose not to go out at all when cabs were not available, these people even sacrificed their social lives, or at least part of their social lives, and their mobility in response to the situation. In this respect, the difficulty of finding a proper substitute for the horse-drawn cab highlights its value and indispensability in Victorian London.

Conclusion

By adopting four criteria – accessibility, flexibility, speed and versatility – to assess the value and meaning of horse-drawn cabs to Victorian Londoners, and by describing some of the annoying experiences people encountered when there were no cabs available, we have been able to explore one of the essential features of London's horse-drawn cab: its convenience. It is this feature that distinguished the cabs from other modes of urban transport in Victorian London and which also prolonged their existence in the face of fierce competition.

Indeed, the official statistics reveal a steady increase in the number of licensed horse cabs until the turn of the twentieth century. Compared to other contemporary public vehicles, the cabs were free from the limitations of fixed timetables, routes, fare systems and designated stopping points. On the contrary, they offered their customers a hop-on-hop-off, door-to-door, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year transport service. The cab was in this sense highly accessible and flexible for Victorian Londoners.

Secondly, owing to their smaller size and lighter weight, combined with their freedom from the above limitations, the cabs could be faster and more efficient than other urban vehicles, helping to save passengers time and effort. The smart and quick hansom later even became one of the emblems of the city.

Thirdly, Victorian Londoners took advantage of all the above-mentioned qualities of the cabs, appropriating the vehicle to fulfil a wide range of purposes, particularly those

which had to be done urgently or by a certain time. The cabs in this sense played an indispensable role as ‘feeders’ and as substitutes for several developing special van services, such as the ambulance service and the police vehicle system, connecting not only different parts but also increasing institutions of the city.

Finally, the numerous complaints about the annoyance and inconvenience caused when there was ‘no cab to be had’ also suggest that being convenient was the distinguishing characteristic and principal advantage of London’s horse cab. Therefore, according to the primary sources, Victorian Londoners generally approved of the convenient service the cabs provided because it helped them deal with the accelerating pace of life in the modernising metropolis.

This chapter has also highlighted the important changes that took place involving the horse cabs in Victorian London. As the Victorian period witnessed great development in both transport and communications technology, the part the cabs played inevitably changed. They gradually became an urban conveyance offering mainly a feeder service, or other short-distance transportation, helping people to fit the new technologies into their daily lives. They also played a transitional and substitute role in Victorian London, where dramatic social, technological, and cultural changes and modernisations were taking place. In other words, they filled the gap when the transition was not yet complete, and by doing this, they found themselves in an indispensable position in the changing metropolis.

Last but not least, although the horse-drawn cabs gradually lost their dominance of London’s surface transport, they were still of great importance until the first decade of the Twentieth century. They not only conveyed people but also circulated ideas, goods and information. Without their services the city became immobilized. Therefore, had it not been for the horse cabs, the mobility and modernity of Victorian London would have been inconceivable. This is why Victorian people came to regard the horse-drawn cab as a symbol of modernity and also as an icon of the city, adding some legendary colour to this specific urban vehicle and creating a sense of collective ‘civic pride’.

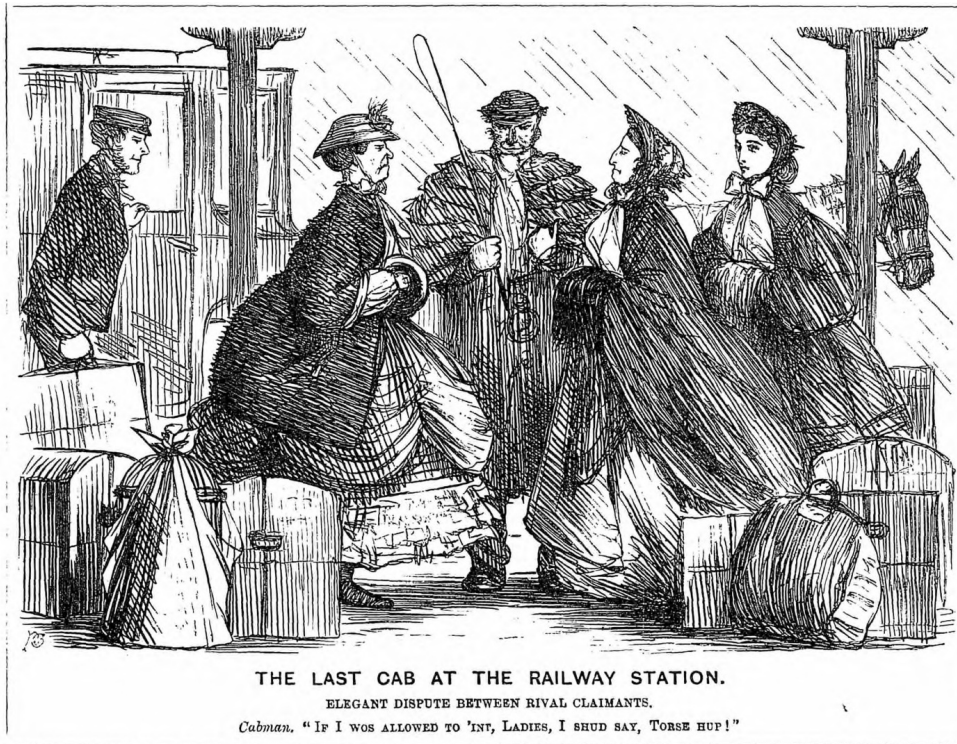


Figure 3.6 The Last Cab at the Railway Station.

Source *Punch*, 21 January 1865

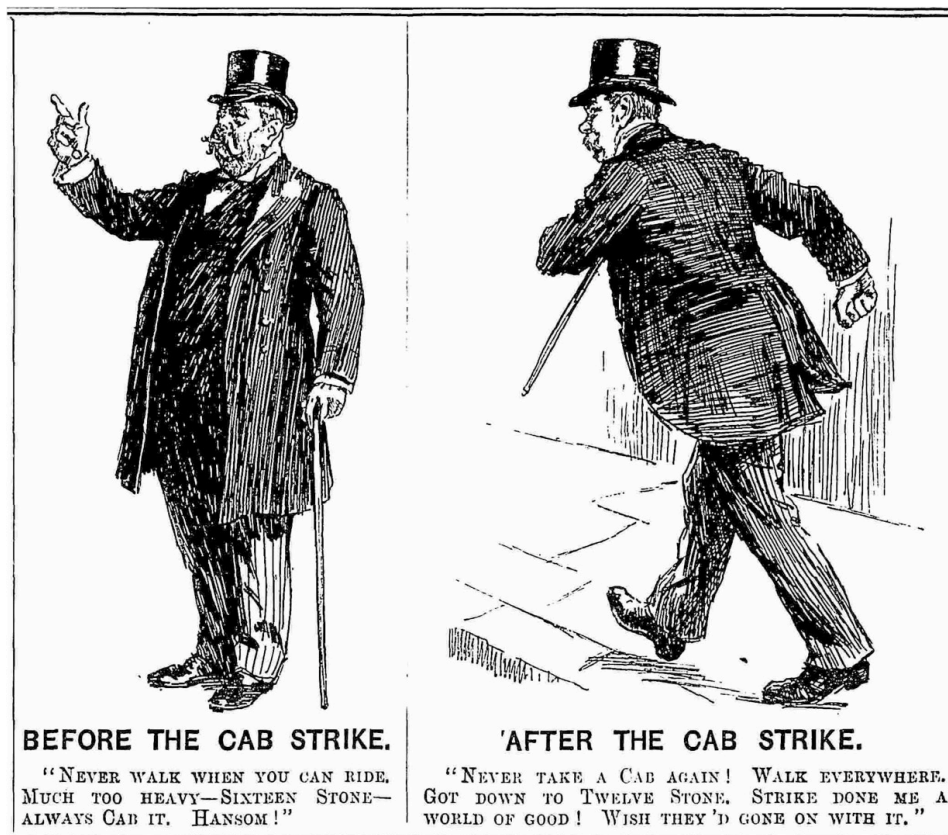


Figure 3.7

Source *Punch*, 24 June 1894



EFFECT OF THE CAB STRIKE.—GOING TO THE OPERA IN
A WHEELBARROW.

Figure 3.8 Effect of the Cab Strike—Going to the opera in a Wheelbarrow.

Source *Punch*, 6 August 1853

THE GREAT CAB STRIKE.—SKETCHED BY GEORGE THOMAS.



ARRIVAL OF A TRAIN.—NOT A CAB TO BE HAD.

AND so we have had a rebellion! London—that for so many years has been one of the firm things of Europe—our sole, Conservative, law-loving London has had a rebellion. The notion seems monstrous, and yet it's a fact. For three mortal days has it been in the grip of an out-

break, and suffering not a little from repressed circulation. A wild cat has been trying to stifle our elephants; and who are the culprits? Ah, there we have to blush! Who but our own London cabmen; who, naturally belonging to the party of progress, chose to be-

come retrograde, and tack all their vehicles into their stables. But what has been the general effect of this crisis? Why, evil and good. How many appointments it has broken—how many payments cut off, only the Post-office knows. But then, on the

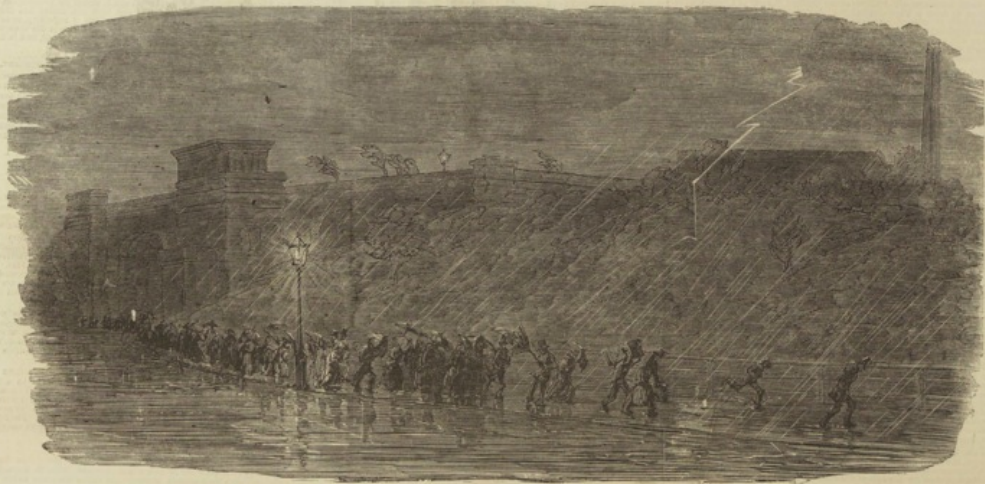


EVERY ONE HIS OWN PORTER.

other hand, what health it may have led to let the doctors reveal. Let them tell us how many who, compelled to try walking, have got attached to the novelty, and made it a habit. How many a poor dy-

pepic, a bankrupt in body, by this little compulsion, has been set on his legs again! Now, of a crisis so memorable we would preserve a few records; we would endeavour to perpetuate its opening day—not so much

in detail as by a rapid synopsis. With our Artist we would glance at its most prominent features, and endeavour to fix and send them down to posterity.

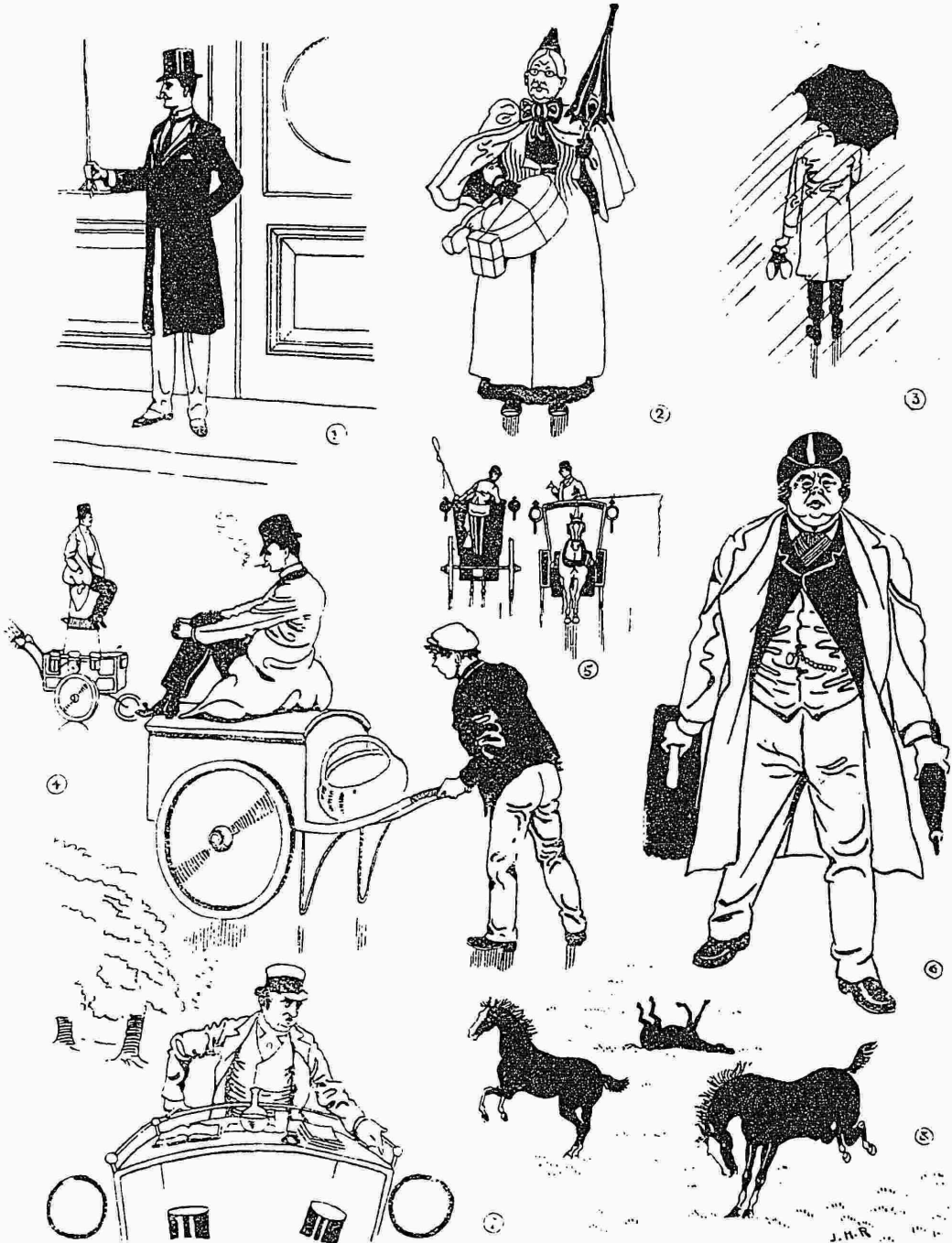


SCENE AT THE GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY STATION DURING THE CAB STRIKE.—PASSENGERS IN A STORM.

Figure 3.9 The Great Cab Strike.

Source *Illustrated London News*, 6 August 1853

THE CAB STRIKE.



(1) The man about town—a fare cabby loves.—(2) A fare cabby detests; she has all the fares and distances at the ends of her fingers, and has never yet been known to give an extra farthing.—(3) Going to a dance. What we may come to if the strike goes on!—(4) Or this!—(5) Discussing *the* question.—(6) When you don't feel inclined to walk, but have to, it does make you wild.—(7) The hansom cab has been used as a rostrum at some of the meetings in the park. What a capital idea! The top forms a splendid table; the reporters you can put inside, who are thus able to make their notes in comfort; whilst the speaker, should he forget the thread of his discourse, can canter round the park, collect his thoughts, and resume his speech; or, if he find the audience is not in sympathy with his remarks, he can drive away altogether.—(8) Though many may be put to inconvenience by the strike, it is a comfort to think the horses are, at any rate, having a high old time.

Figure 3.10 The Cab Strike.

Source *Fun*, 29 May 1894

Chapter 4 The Public Conveyance of Privacy

In the previous chapter, we saw how Victorian Londoners appropriated horse-drawn cabs to accomplish a broad range of activities. The majority of these tasks involved a certain degree of emergency, therefore necessitating the speed, flexibility, and efficiency of the cab. However, Victorian people did not take cabs only when they were under time pressures. There were several occasions – such as a lady’s shopping spree, a short journey to church on Sundays, and an idly casual ride – on which people still chose cabs instead of other modes of urban transport when they were in no rush. Therefore, there must be something else other than the quality of being fast and convenient that attracts Victorian cab hirer. And in the above-mentioned cases, the higher degree of passenger comfort provided by the horse-drawn cabs seems to have been a key factor. As early as the mid-century, Mayhew was describing his journey out with a smart Hansom as ‘pleasant’.²⁹⁷ A guide to London published in the late 1870s puts it more straightforwardly: the ‘Hansoms are very comfortable vehicles.’²⁹⁸ And according to Sala – ‘the most active and successful journalist of the Victorian era’, who ‘acquired a reputation as a special authority’ on London’s streets²⁹⁹ – even the ‘humble’, ‘old-fashioned’ growler was ‘very comfortable.’ Indeed Sala was so accustomed to riding in the cabs that in his twenty visits to The Derby he ‘never once travelled by rail.’³⁰⁰ These accounts suggest that Victorian Londoners in general saw the horse cabs as comfortable in comparison with other public vehicles in the city.

Some obvious features differentiated travelling experiences in horse-drawn cabs from other commercial passenger conveyances in Victorian London. The underground, for

²⁹⁷ Henry Mayhew, ‘Opposite A Cabstand’, *London Characters* (London, Chatto and Windus, 1874), p. 252.

²⁹⁸ *The Golden Guide to London: Illustrated with plans and engravings on wood* (London: Lambert, c. 1879), pp. 7-8.

²⁹⁹ Victorian weekly newspaper *Saturday Review* once hailed Sara as ‘the most active and successful journalist of the Victorian era.’ *Saturday Review*, 16 February 1895. For more details about Sala and his work, see Chapter 3 and Schlicke (ed.), *Oxford Reader’s Companion to Dickens*, p. 515. Rick Allen, ‘Observing London Street-Life: G. A. Sala and A. J. Munby,’ in Tim Hitchcock and Heather Shore (eds.), *The Streets of London: From the Great Fire to the Great Stink* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 2003), pp. 198-199.

³⁰⁰ George Augustus Sala, *London up to Date* (London: A. and C. Black, 1894), p. 41.

instance, initially powered by the steam engine and literally moving underground, gave the city dwellers a completely novel experience of movement. However, before its electrification at the turn of the century, travelling by the underground was not pleasant due to smoke emission and poor ventilation. A magazine of satire in 1867 joked that ‘the public idea of full dress in the underground’ is ‘a black choker.’³⁰¹ In 1884, when the Circle line was opened, *The Times* editorial complained that ‘a journey from King’s Cross to Baker Street is a form of mild torture which no person would undergo...’³⁰² A similar criticism was made by R. D. Blumenfeld who noted in his diary (June, 1887) that ‘the Underground railways must soon be discontinued, for they are a menace to health.’ In his opinion, ‘hansom cabs and omnibuses, carried by the swiftest horses I have seen anywhere, do the work most satisfactory.’³⁰³

London’s omnibuses and trams – ‘by many...a variant of the horse bus’³⁰⁴ – were also differentiated from the horse-drawn cab in several ways, like the outside upper deck seats on the bus and some early tramcars. The roof seating, initially the ‘knifeboard’ seating introduced in the mid-century and then the ‘Garden seat’ since the 1880s³⁰⁵, was enjoyable on a pleasant day. People sometimes even tipped the driver for reserving them these seats.³⁰⁶ However, without a roof sheltering the passengers from the elements, it could become unpleasant or simply unacceptable in certain circumstances. In an 1837 letter to the editor of *The Times*, an omnibus passenger complained that the conductor ‘coolly’ offered him a seat outside. As he was suffering from a bad cold, he declined and ‘took a cab at the nearest stand’.³⁰⁷ Otherwise, an extra and unlikely to-be-pleasurable effort was required. The outside passengers, according to an 1853 guide, were often seen ‘produce their umbrellas’ to provide

³⁰¹ *The Tomahawk: A Saturday Journal of Satire*, 21 November 1867.

³⁰² *The Times*, 7 October 1884.

³⁰³ Blumenfeld, ‘June 1887’ in *R.D.B.’s Diary*, p. 7. More complaints about the air quality of the Victorian underground, see David Bownes, Oliver Green, Sam Mullins, *Under Ground: How the Tube Shaped London* (London: Penguin Group, 2012), pp. 38-39.

³⁰⁴ T.C. Barker, ‘Urban Transport’, in Michael J. Freeman and Derek H. Aldcroft (eds.), *Transport in Victorian Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p. 159.

³⁰⁵ At the beginning passengers were seated back-to-back while facing outwards. This seating plan was called ‘knifeboard’ due to its resemblance to a knife-cleaning board. The ‘knifeboard’ was later replaced by the ‘Garden seat’ – forward-facing seats paired each side of the gangway. See Taylor, *The Moving Metropolis*, p. 39, 73, 77, 83. Theo Barker, *Moving Millions* (London: London Transport Museum, 1990), p. 18.

³⁰⁶ Blumenfeld, ‘13 October 1900’ in *R.D.B.’s Diary*, p. 89. Moore, *Omnibuses and Cabs*, p. 65.

³⁰⁷ *The Times*, 5 September 1837.

‘necessary protection against the variability of the climate.’³⁰⁸ A photograph taken at Piccadilly about half a century later (Figure 4.1) attests to the longevity of this common practice.³⁰⁹ In addition, the staircases, spiral or straight, which led to the upper deck were deemed too physically demanding to be safe, let alone comfortable. In fact, the staircase was not only a safety issue but also turned the upper deck mainly into a men’s place, excluding the elderly, children, and females.³¹⁰ In this sense, it is quite clear that the not-so-easy-access and not-element-proof upper-deck seating did not help omnibuses and trams to be as comfortable as the horse-drawn cabs.



Figure 4.1 Piccadilly, London

Source Private collection, via Bridgeman Education (Image Number: XJF 391546)

³⁰⁸ Schlesinger, *Saunterings in and about London*, p. 168.

³⁰⁹ The situation also attracted the police’s attention. The 1889 annual report of the Commissioner of the Metropolis Police noted that ‘The Commissioner has had brought under his notice a contrivance for sheltering the outside passengers of stage carriages from the inclemency of the weather.’ See Parliament Paper 1890-01 [C. 6237] *Report of the commissioner of police of the metropolis for the year 1889*, p. 12.

³¹⁰ For example, a man named Henry Macklin died of the injuries ‘he received by falling off an omnibus.’ *The Times*, 7 September 1837. About the safety and gender issues relating to upper deck seating, See Moore, *Omnibuses and Cabs*, p. 65, Taylor, *The Moving Metropolis*, p. 39 (‘the more athletic male passengers’). And Barbara Schmucki, ‘The Machine in the City. Public Appropriation of the Tramway in Britain and Germany, 1870-1915’, accepted for publishing in *Journal of Urban History* (2012/13), p. 16 [trams]. According to Schmucki, the upper deck of the trams was more open to the female than that of the buses.

At the same time, overcrowding was another common complaint levelled against the underground, omnibus and tram travel on popular lines in Victorian London at rush hour. In the same diary criticising the underground, Blumenfeld described the compartment in which he sat as ‘filled with passengers who were smoking pipes.’³¹¹ Apparently the cramped environment was already uncomfortable. The smokers and the poor ventilation only exacerbated the situation. In the case of omnibuses and trams, not only did drivers and conductors tend to keep their vehicles as full as possible, potential passengers would also try their best to ensure a seat in the conveyance.³¹² *New Monthly Magazine* in 1837 complained that in a London omnibus, ‘all six and twenty sweating citizens, jammed, crammed and squeezed into each other like so many peas in a pod.’³¹³ *The Times* in 1842 described how ‘the public were packed like coal sacks’ in an omnibus.³¹⁴ As far as trams are concerned, ‘the complaints of overcrowding’ were recorded in the police reports for the year 1884 and 1887.³¹⁵ Likewise, as Figure 4.2 through Figure 4.6 show, the packed interior of a tramcar or a bus became a popular theme for contemporary artists during the second half of the nineteenth century. Their works not only attest to the mass pursuit of individual mobility but also served to reconfirm Victorian Londoners’ ingrained preconceptions about cramped public vehicles. In these pictures, the carriage is always full and the passengers look reserved, indifferent, sometimes even ‘unconscious,’³¹⁶ but seldom happy, excited, or relaxed.

Although the last quarter of the century did witness some substantial improvement in the quality of omnibus service, and passengers seemed to feel cosier than before, as seen in Figure 4.5 (1885) and 4.6 (c. 1895), while sitting amongst half a dozen strangers, they did not look as comfortable, calm, and relaxed as horse-drawn cab customers. Compare the posture of Mr. Gladstone, then Prime Minister, who was

³¹¹ Blumenfeld, ‘June, 1887’ in *R.D.B.’s Diary*, p. 7. Complaints about the overcrowding on the Tube were also not rare to find in the Press. See ‘The Overcrowding of Carriages on the Metropolitan Railway’, *Pall Mall Gazette*, 21 February 1877. ‘Overcrowding on the Underground Railway’, *Morning Post*, 20 October 1884.

³¹² About omnibuses, see Barker, *Moving Millions*, pp. 18-19, 30. About trams, see Barker, *Moving Millions*, p. 40; Schmucki, ‘The Machine in the City. Public Appropriation of the Tramway in Britain and Germany, 1870-1915’, p. 18, 30; Taylor, *The Moving Metropolis*, p. 77.

³¹³ *New Monthly Magazine*, 1833, pp. 194-195.

³¹⁴ *The Times*, 16 April 1842.

³¹⁵ Parliament Paper 1884-85 [C. 4513] *Report of the Commissioner of Police of Metropolis for the year 1884*, p. 7. And 1888 [C. 5539] *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the year 1887*, p. 8.

³¹⁶ See the caption of Figure 4.4: ‘unconsciousness.’ *Punch*, 28 October 1871.

portrayed taking the omnibus ‘with ordinary passengers’, with that of the two gentleman riding the Hansoms – one in the background of the same painting (Figure 4.5), and the other in Figure 4.7 (c. 1879) – Mr. Gladstone, sitting in a slightly constrained manner, looks a lot less relaxed than his cab-riding counterparts. A similar contrast can be discerned from the three newspaper readers in Figure 4.5, 4.6 and 4.7. The pictures illustrate gentlemen handling newspapers; each appears cool and calm. However, the one sitting right next to Mr. Gladstone has given up trying to read and left the paper folded on his knees (Figure 4.5). The other bus rider (Figure 4.6) is sitting bolt upright with his elbows fixed at the side, to prevent his newspaper from spreading outwards. Both are clearly trying not to irritate their fellow passengers. In contrast, the ‘steady-looking old City man’³¹⁷ alone in the Hansom (Figure 4.7) not only has his newspaper spread wide open but has also arranged himself in a comfortably oblique position that suggests ease, confidence and relaxation.

One explanation for the contrasting portrayals above is that the horse-drawn cab offered its passengers a larger personal space on the seat, but this is no more than partly right. In the first place, overall, there were only subtle differences in the official rules governing the interior design and seating arrangements – a decisive factor in determining whether a vehicle was safe or comfortable – of public conveyances in London. For instance, passengers in both the cab (the four-wheeler) and the omnibus were entitled to sixteen inches of seating and no less than 40 inches ‘from the top of the cushion to the roof.’ Only a Hansom built after 1 August 1870 had to be at least 40 inches in width inside, granting its two passengers a little more space when it was fully loaded (in this case, 20 inches for each person).³¹⁸ As the figures (4.5, and 4.7 to 4.9) illustrate, the interior of the horse-drawn cab was roomy for a single passenger, but could become as packed as any bus or other public vehicle when two or more customers were riding. It is thus not surprising that an 1882 *Punch* article complained that the Hansom ‘can hardly in strictness be said to *have* an interior. The two

³¹⁷ Quoted from a review of the painting. See *The Times*, 2 May 1879.

³¹⁸ See Parliament Paper (1871 [C.358]) ‘No Hackney Carriage can be certified it for Public Use unless the following Conditions are strictly complied with’, in *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis*, p. 33, and *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis* (1872 [C.652]), p. 29. Also See Moore, *Omnibuses and Cabs*, p. 73. An earlier version could be found in: William Thomas Charley, *A Handy Book of the Law of London Cabs and Omnibuses* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1867), pp. 16-17.

“fares”...are crammed together in narrow compass...’³¹⁹ or that one of the etymologies of the word ‘shoful’ – the Hansom’s nickname – was that ‘two persons in a cab made it a “Show full.”’³²⁰

Secondly, during the Victorian era, London’s omnibuses and tramcars were not allowed to sell standing-room only tickets. In the figures no one other than the conductor and a new passenger looking for a seat, are standing. In other words, a seat was guaranteed to every single passenger, exactly matching what the cabs could offer, at least in theory.³²¹ Thus, legally, the physical space that a passenger was entitled to take up in both omnibus and horse-drawn cab was generally the same. Meanwhile, as contemporary photographs and other visual materials have shown, there was no obvious difference in the sense of space provided by tramcar, train car or underground (except in the third-class compartment) and the cab. This is however not surprising given that the design concept and technology applied to carriage design and building was similar. Hence, there must be a better explanation for the intimacy between the two female passengers in Figure 4.8, the domesticity in Figure 4.9, and the public perception that the horse-drawn cab was more comfortable than other means of public transport in Victorian London. What this chapter will argue is that it was the nature of the interior space of the cab, the *privacy* not the size of the space it offered that mattered. In turn these shade into issues such as ‘whom did you share the space with?’ or ‘what was the atmosphere of the space?’

According to Richard Sennett, the modern ideology of public and private – two increasingly distinctive but also interwoven ideas – was more or less in place by the end of the seventeenth century. ““Public” meant open to the scrutiny of anyone, whereas “private” meant a sheltered region of life defined by one’s family and friends.’ As Sennett points out, because public life takes places outside the circle of family and close friends, it involves dealing with diverse groups of people, both

³¹⁹ *Punch*, 20 May 1882.

³²⁰ Moore, *Omnibuses and Cabs*, p. 224.

³²¹ In practice it is for sure that conductors of London omnibuses and tramways frequently admitted ‘more persons into the inside of’ their vehicles ‘than they are constructed to carry’, causing great inconvenience to passengers. According to the police report, the numbers of charges filed against omnibus conductors with ‘overloading’ from 1887 to 1889 were: 83 (1887), 198 (1888) and 204 (1889), not negligible numbers. Quotation: Charley, *A Handy Book of the Law of London Cabs and Omnibuses*, pp. 115-116. Also see Parliament Paper 1890-91 [C. 6237] *Report of the commissioner of police of the police of the metropolis for year 1889*, p. 11, p. 14.

strangers and acquaintances.³²² Although this distinction between public and private has remained relatively stable since the 1600s, as Sennett, Norbert Elias, and Peter Gay, to name but a few, have argued, the Victorian era did witness a significant change in how people behaved in both the public and the private realm – particularly in the newly developed metropolises such as Paris and London, where there was sharp increase in the density and intensity of public life. As more and more ineluctable social contact was imposed on Victorian urban inhabitants, they began to withdraw. On the one hand, they started to move many parts of their lives into the private realm – ‘behind the scene of social life’ as Elias puts it, or, closing doors to the public, as Gay remarks.³²³ On the other, they learnt to withdraw themselves whilst they were in the public domain, exercising their ‘right to be let alone’, to remain silent behind an ‘invisible wall’ and avoid unwanted social interaction. It is in this sense that Sennett argues that ‘the private was superimposed on the public.’³²⁴ And it is in this regard that the definition of privacy proposed by Felix Stalder perfectly matches the space London’s horse-drawn cab afforded to its passenger – it not only discriminated itself from other modes of public transport but also provided its customers with a distinctive travelling experience. According to Stalder, privacy is:

...a kind of bubble that surrounds each person, and the dimensions of this bubble are determined by one's ability to control who enters it and who doesn't. Privacy is a personal space; space under the exclusive control of the individual. Privacy, in a way, is the informational equivalent to the (bourgeois, if you will) notion of “my home is my castle.”³²⁵

London’s hackney carriage was the only mode of public transport offering its customers a quasi-private space and enclosed carriage. The question therefore is: how did Victorian Londoners make use of and take advantage of this in such a privacy-driven society? How did they talk about their experiences of taking cabs with

³²² Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (First published in 1977, London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2002), pp. 16-17.

³²³ See Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*. Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, trans., Edmund Jephcott, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994). Peter Gay, ‘A Room of One’s Own’, in *Schinitzier’s Century: The Making of Middle-Class Culture 1815-1914* (London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 2001), pp. 253-279.

³²⁴ About ‘the right to be let alone,’ See Gay, *Schinitzier’s Century*, p. 256. Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, p. 17. ‘Invisible wall’ and the last quotation, See Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, p. 17.

³²⁵ Felix Stalder, ‘Privacy is not the Antidote to Surveillance’, *Surveillance & Society*, 1:1 (September, 2002), p. 121..

regard to the perception of distinction or privacy? And how did this experience or discourse differ from those in relation to other modes of public transport in Victorian London?

In order to examine how Victorian Londoners made use of and took advantage of the cab's privacy in a privacy-driven society, and how this quasi-private space differentiated the travelling experience between the horse-drawn cab and other forms of public transport, this chapter is divided into three. The first section focuses on three characteristics of the enclosed and exclusive carriage of the horse-drawn cab: the wall it created between the passengers inside and the streets outside; the absence of strangers in the form of fellow passengers; and the domesticity and further domestication of the cab in the later part of the nineteenth century. In the second section the emphasis is on the theme of emancipation. It first discusses how the quasi-private/quasi-public space of the cab emancipated its occupant from codes of conduct, social conventions and self-restraint. It then examines to what extent the hackney carriage allowed its passengers to do things of private nature. The third and last section deals with the sense of distinction obtained from travelling in such a distinctive – physical, economic and symbolic – yet public vehicle. The ambiguity of this in-between mode of urban transport is also considered here. On top of this, there is a thread running through the whole chapter outlining the dialectics of the idea of public and privacy, and the role London's horse-drawn cab played in promulgating, negotiating, and sometimes challenging this.

The Conveyance of Comfort and Safety

A Castle on the Move

London expanded dramatically during the nineteenth century and one of the consequences of this was that urban street life – its speed, intensity, heterogeneity, disorder and anonymity – intensified. In order to deal with this uncertainty and enhance their perceptions of safety in the city, people attempted to keep a comfortable distance from anonymous strangers. They built walls, both physical and symbolic, to distinguish themselves from the masses and practised inclusion and exclusion, even when they were on the move. As Jenner notes in his essay on London's hackney coaches – the predecessor of the Victorian horse-drawn cab – as early as the

seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, middle-and-upper-class people, women in particular, ‘preferred to travel by coach rather than walk...amidst the unruly and demotic culture of the street.’³²⁶ The enclosed carriage of the coach in this sense served (as a wall) to protect the passengers from potential risks, unwanted social encounters, unnecessary bodily contact, and sensible or unreasonable fear. Later, their Victorian descendants continued this habitus, transforming the interior of London’s hackney carriage into a ‘defensible private space in the midst of crowded streets.’³²⁷

Perhaps nothing illustrates this better than the pictures of the time. Figure 4.10, a *Punch* cartoon published in 1864, depicts an R. V. (rifle volunteers, or volunteer rifle corps) captain attempting to avoid encountering the Queen’s Guard in the streets by hailing a hansom. The phrase ‘take refuge in’ in the caption highlights how the Victorians viewed the cab as a wall, a refuge or a fort in motion, which could provide both physical and mental shelter for its passengers.

It is not surprising that Victorian females, often deemed vulnerable and described as ‘unprotected’,³²⁸ would travel in horse-drawn cabs like their forefathers. Some were forced to take a cab arranged by the (apparently male) authorities. For example, in 1862, a Mrs. Sophia Bennett, the wife of a labourer, was charged with throwing ‘boiling water’ over six people. According to *The Times*, this case was so sensational that it attracted more than a thousand persons to the court. Apparently, ‘...had it not been for Police-sergeant Reeves, 14 S, placing her in a cab, she would have been severely maltreated.’³²⁹ Nearly two decades later, *The Times* (1879) reported a similar story. The Alderman, after hearing the case in which a lady attempted to commit suicide because ‘she had no home and was tired of wandering about the streets’, said he should have her ‘conveyed in a cab, together with the police officer, to the address

³²⁶ Mark Jenner, ‘London Streets and hackney Coaches, c. 1640-c. 1740’, in Tim Hitchcock and Heather Shore (eds.), *The Streets of London: From the Great Fire to the Great Stink* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 2003), p. 41.

³²⁷ Eugene McLaughlin and John Muncie, ‘Walled Cities: Surveillance, Regulation and Segregation’, in Steve Pile, Christopher Brook, Gerry Mooney (eds.), *Unruly Cities*, (London: Routledge: 1999) p. 107.

³²⁸ The Victorian discourse about ‘unprotected’ females and London’s horse-drawn cab will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

³²⁹ *The Times*, 22 February 1862. A male version could be found in *The Times* two year later. After a trial, Captain Richmond was followed and threatened by a group of angry sailors. ‘A cab was called and the police put him into it and told the driver to proceed towards town as fast as possible.’ See *The Times*, 16 February 1864.

of the friends' who would take care of her.³³⁰ In both cases, the male authorities deliberately employed the horse-drawn cabs to convey the 'unprotected' women and keep them at a safe distance from the streets.

On the other hand, some females – especially the more educated, more well-to-do, or more famous ones – would consciously choose to take a cab in order to protect themselves from the dangers of modern London. For instance, in 1846, just a week before their secret marriage, a private letter was sent by the prominent poet Elizabeth Barrett (1806-61, later Elizabeth Barrett Browning) to her fiancé Robert Browning (1812-89), describing her adventure to retrieve her pet spaniel Flush, a gift from another female writer Mary Russell Mitford (1787-1855). Browning was informed that Flush was being kept by a Mr. Taylor, who she then visited with her trusted maid Miss Wilson. As they travelled through the 'obscure streets' of an unfamiliar district, even the cab driver had to stop and ask his way. All of a sudden, 'a gang of benevolent men & boys' gathered around the cab and obliged her to alight from the vehicle as Mr. Taylor was not at home. 'Wilson, in an aside of terror' pulled at Barrett Browning's gown and entreated her 'not to think of such a thing.' They stayed in the cab and met Mrs. Taylor, 'an immense feminine bandit' instead. Eventually, she paid six guineas as Flush's ransom.³³¹ More than half a century later, in 1908, when modernist writer Katherine Mansfield (1888-1923) returned to London from New Zealand, she wrote a letter to her then lover, depicting her scary experience the night before. It was almost midnight when she rode in a hansom after visiting the theatre. During the journey, she saw 'Dim men and women' clustering around the doors of pubic houses. She heard 'horrible laughter' coming out of the bars. And on top of this she was confronted by 'a great procession of the unemployed' in the Edgware Road. 'You cannot think how horrible and sinister they looked,' she wrote, 'tramping along...monotonously, insistently – like a grey procession of dead hours.'³³² It is interesting to note that in spite of the sixty-year gap between these accounts, and even though London itself

³³⁰ *The Times*, 4 November 1879.

³³¹ Elizabeth Barrett Browning, 'To Robert Browning, 6 September 1846, in *Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett: The Courtship Correspondence, 1845-1846*, ed. Daniel Karlin, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp. 310-312. About the courtship between the Brownings, and the friendship between Elizabeth and Mary Russell Mitford (and Flush), See *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*: <http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy.york.ac.uk/view/article/3711> (accessed 20 September 2012).

³³² Katherine Mansfield, 'To Garnet Trowell, 13 October 1908,' in *The Collected Letters of Katherine Mansfield*, eds. Vincent O'Sullivan and Margaret Scott, (4 vols, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984-1996), vol. 1, p. 70.

underwent some enormous changes during this period, the horse-drawn cab remained the preferred conveyance for Victorian females, particularly when they travelled at late night, visited an unfamiliar area, or perhaps most importantly, were faced with people of a different kind.

The Absence of Fellow Passengers

Unless they were car pooling/cab sharing – sharing a cab with strangers travelling to the same destination or in the same direction in order to save money – Victorian cab hirers generally rode alone or with trustworthy acquaintances. This reduced the probability of them annoying their fellow passengers, or being offended by strangers sharing the vehicle. An incredible number of offences and annoyances could potentially take place in the interior of a public conveyance with great frequency.³³³ Tiny little things would cause irritation, even if they did no lasting damage. A pair of spread knees or arms, feet on the seats, newspapers (the ‘newspaper offender’), wet umbrellas (the ‘wet umbrella nuisance’), lady’s ‘fluffy blouses’, invasion of personal space by ‘stout people’, dogs, spit on the straw, excess baggage, noise, disputes, gaze, and unfriendly atmosphere, all belonged to this category.³³⁴ More worrying was the smell of cigarettes, opening the windows thus letting in the chilly wind, or an elbow from the neighbours by accident. Incidents such as these could bring on a nasty cough, bad cold, or a purple bruise, along with the unpleasant feelings they generated.³³⁵

There were some more significant threats to contend with, such as verbal abuse, sexual harassment, pickpocketing, and even robbery, which could cause property loss, physical injury, or mental trauma. In 1853, a man was charged with ‘indecently exposing his person’ on a bus.³³⁶ In 1861, a ‘respectably-dressed’ young lady was

³³³ According to Moore, ‘Quarrels among the passengers were of everyday occurrence.’ See Moore, *Omnibuses and Cabs*, p. 72.

³³⁴ About ‘newspaper offender’ and ‘wet umbrella nuisance’, see Mrs. Humphry, *Manners for Men* (London: James Bowden, 1897), pp. 36-38. About ‘feet on the seats’, dogs, spit, dispute, and dispute between stout and thin people, see Moore, *Omnibuses and Cabs*, pp. 53-54, 72. About ‘lady’s “fluffy blouses”’, see Thomas Hardy, ‘To Elspeth Grahame, 31 August 1907,’ in *The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy*, ed. Richard Little Purdy and Michael Millgate, (7 vols, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978-1988), vol. 3, p. 270. About unfriendly atmosphere, see Figure 3.4.

³³⁵ About cigarettes, see Blumenfeld, ‘June, 1887’ in *R.D.B.’s Diary*, p. 7; *Judy*, 25 April 1883. About windows and the wind, see Moore, *Omnibuses and Cabs*, p. 53. About elbows, see *Illustrated London News*, 11 June 1859.

³³⁶ *The Times*, 29 March 1853.

accused of robbery on an omnibus. According to the Alderman, similar cases were ‘of such frequent occurrence by persons dressed like the prisoner.’³³⁷ Later, a case of assault was brought to the court in 1864 in which a dispute over an annoying body contact on a bus was followed by a physical attack. During the quarrel the defendant (a female) abused the complainant (a male) that ‘You old fool, then you had better take a cab’, highlighting the difference between two public vehicles.³³⁸ Furthermore, in the second half of 1871 alone, *Punch* ran two articles regarding pickpocketing on the public conveyances. One warned the public not to sleep on an omnibus, ‘as you may have your pocket picked.’³³⁹ The other, in typical *Punch* style, fantasised about a ‘Pickpocket’s Congress in London’ in which ‘papers read by experienced practitioners, showing...what is the safest and most dexterous way of practicing the light fingered art in a crowd, or in a railway carriage, or an omnibus...’³⁴⁰ And as Figure 4.11 (1881) and its caption illustrates, the male passenger only became furious and abusive because his fellow passenger ‘wanted all the windows shut’, and perhaps made some noise while chatting with the other woman. These examples all point to the conclusion that taking public vehicles means facing with potential dangers. And the even terrifying fact is: these accidents were generally unpredictable and thus inevitable and unresolvable. They were the cost of entering the public life, and an unavoidable evil that came with the increasingly mobile lifestyle.

Both the passengers and operators of Victorian public transport were fully aware of this issue. And thanks to the prosperity of print media in the nineteenth century; so was the general public, the potential market for individual mobility. A great deal of effort went into trying to remove the threat of danger and ease public anxiety: well-disciplined and attentive staff was deployed; codes of conduct were preached; and the interior of conveyance was domesticated, in order to make it more homely, in other words, making the inside of the car safe and comfortable. However, as transport historians Richter, Divall, and Schmucki have demonstrated, in spite of the emergence of this ‘public domesticity,’ the interior of the car remained no more than an in-between space because strangers were randomly and inescapably confined together during their journeys. Therefore, it was still difficult to enforce a code of conduct and

³³⁷ *The Times*, 1 July 1861.

³³⁸ *The Times*, 4 October 1864.

³³⁹ *Punch*, 17 June 1871.

³⁴⁰ *Punch*, 25 November 1871.

the relationship between passengers was subject to constant negotiation and reconstitution.³⁴¹ To put it another way, adding the domestic elements itself did not fundamentally change the nature of the car – its publicity, its openness to the public (the anonymous), and its heterogeneity – so the vagaries of travelling remained.

In contrast, the horse-drawn cab was the only public vehicle in Victorian London that assured its hirer the absence of other anonymous fellow passengers. The Act of 1831 already introduced a 20s. penalty for ‘permitting persons to ride without consent of the hire.’³⁴² And drivers were in fact fined when they allowed ‘persons to ride upon the hind springs’ (outside the carriage) without the passengers’ permission.³⁴³ In other words, the law promised the hire total ownership of the carriage for the duration of the journey. Cab passengers were therefore empowered to temporarily control this site/space. They could determine whom they would share this space with and whom they would not. This is exactly how Stalder defines privacy: a personal space ‘under the exclusive control of the individual.’³⁴⁴ And it is this sense of power and assurance that differentiated the horse-drawn cab from other forms of public transport in the minds of Victorian Londoners.

The most domestic public vehicle in Victorian London

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, railway and tram companies on both sides of the Atlantic put a considerable amount of effort into providing a more civilized, comfortable, and homelike service, attempting to both assuage their middle-and-upper-class passengers and attract new customers. Surprisingly (or not), London’s horse-drawn cab industry also adopted this strategy, though it is hard to tell which mode of transport actually led this wave towards domestication. It is however possible to argue that the cab had always been more domesticated – or had an innate quality of domesticity – than any other public vehicle since its early days. As far as space is concerned, the enclosed, exclusive interior of the cab closely resembled that

³⁴¹ See Colin Divall, ‘Civilising Velocity: Masculinity and the Marketing of Britain’s Passenger Trains, 1921-39’, *Journal of Transport History*, 32:2 (December, 2011), 164-191. Amy G. Richter, *Women, the Railroad, and the Rise of Public Domesticity* (The University of North California Press, 2005). Schmucki, ‘The Machine in the City. Public Appropriation of the Tramway in Britain and Germany, 1870-1915.’

³⁴² 1 & 2 Will. IV., cap.22, sec. 50.

³⁴³ Three hansom cab drivers were summoned and fined on the same day. See *The Times*, 23 October 1872.

³⁴⁴ Stalder, ‘Privacy is not the Antidote to Surveillance’, p. 121. .

of the private carriage which would awake the sense of comfort or home. Thus, it is not surprising that an 1845 article praised a ride of cab was more enjoyable than that of a bus because in comparison to the annoying experiences on the omnibus – including the neighbour’s elbows and that someone trod on your toes – ‘you arrive so comfortably, shoes clean, dress all tidy, and all that sort of thing.’³⁴⁵

In addition, as discussed in Chapter 3, the great convenience London’s horse-drawn cab provided to its passengers – 24/7/365 on duty, point-to-point transport, meeting individual requirements – enabled it to be used on almost any occasion at will, whether it was calling upon friends (like Dickens), attending social events (like Sala going to The Derby), going to church on Sundays (like Mrs Briggs in Anna Sewell’s best-seller *Black Beauty*)³⁴⁶, idling on a casual ride (like Mayhew), or simply a family day out (like Figure 4.9). And again, this quality made London’s hackney carriage similar to a coach belonging to a family or the individual – in other words, a very ‘domestic’ and private environment.

On top of this innate domesticity, according to Charles Booth (1840-1916) and the press, by no later than the last decade of the nineteenth century, London’s horse-drawn cab were ‘fitted and furnished equal to ordinary broughams.’³⁴⁷ Domestic items including carriage clock, looking glass, cigar-lighter, ash-trays and foot warmers were being provided and soon taken for granted. So were technological improvements such as India-rubber tyres and self-acting doors which would make a journey easier, quieter, smoother and therefore more comfortable.³⁴⁸ Even though it seemed more ironic than real, other domestic articles (comb and brush) and even personal services (boot-cleaning and handkerchief-scenting) were promoted by two competing cabdrivers in a cartoon (Figure 3.3) published in 1886.³⁴⁹ This all suggests that under the pressure of severe competition, the late-Victorian cab businesses were trying to upgrade their services by enhancing/emphasising the domesticity of their vehicles. The

³⁴⁵ *The Penny Satirist*, 11 October 1845.

³⁴⁶ Anna Sewell (1820-78), *Black Beauty* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 141.

³⁴⁷ See Parliament Paper 1884 [C. 4179] *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the year 1883*, p. 7.

³⁴⁸ See Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London* (2nd series, 9 vols, London, New York: The Macmillan Co., 1903), vol. 3, p. 304. *Funny Folks*, 3 April 1886. *Punch*, 20 May 1882; 13 March 1897. And Parliament Paper 1889 [C. 5761] *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the year 1888*, p. 10.

³⁴⁹ *Funny Folks*, 3 April 1886.

provision of the comb, the brush and the mirror implies that grooming – an action deemed to be private and needed to be hidden from the public within the civilized circle in the nineteenth century – was not only possible but even encouraged in a cab, a public vehicle. The boundary between the two spheres of public and private was thus proved permeable. Besides, the supply of the aforementioned beauty products that *Punch* described as ‘for lovely woman, winsome lass’ also strongly suggests that female passengers played a crucial part in this trade, just as they had for the private coach in previous centuries.³⁵⁰ This again confirms women’s deep involvement in public life in Victorian London. In this regard, the prevailing yet sweeping assumptions about the contrasting gender roles and spaces females and males occupied in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – men in public and the workplace; women in private and the household – also needs to be carefully reconsidered.

To conclude, in this section it was argued that the enclosed, exclusive and increasingly domesticated interior of the horse-drawn cab not only built a physical and symbolic wall between passengers inside and the outside world, but also evoked a sense of privacy, safety and territorial identity by affording the passenger total control over the space for the duration of the journey. The passenger therefore was able to withdraw from public engagement and enjoy freedom, privacy and intimacy. As noted in Chapter 2, investigative journalists Mayhew and Greenwood have already confirmed that some males would even spend the night in a horse-drawn cab. Likewise, an 1891 issue of *Punch* carried an article describing the narrator falling into a ‘slumber’ whilst taking a hansom to the British Museum.³⁵¹ Passengers of other forms of public transport were advised to remain on their guard but the fact that cab users could fall asleep and enter into what Divall calls – the most vulnerable state of everyday life³⁵² – is an indication of just how comfortable, safe and free Victorian Londoners felt in the horse-drawn cab.

³⁵⁰ As Whyman suggests, gentlemen in Late-Stuart England often sought advice about their vehicles from their female kin. And it is wives that inherited coaches and tended to use them whenever possible. See Whyman, *Sociability and Power in Late-Stuart England*, p. 105.

³⁵¹ ‘How to spend a holiday on scientific principles’, *Punch*, 15 August 1891, p. 77.

³⁵² Divall, ‘Civilising Velocity: Masculinity and the Marketing of Britain’s Passenger Trains, 1921-39’, p. 164.



Figure 4.2 *Mayhew's Great Exhibition of 1851: Odds and Ends, in, out, and about, 1851* by George Cruikshank, 1851.

Source Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Fund USA, via Bridgeman Education (Image Number: XYCI51675)



Figure 4.3 *Omnibus Life in London*

Source *Illustrated London News*, 11 June 1859

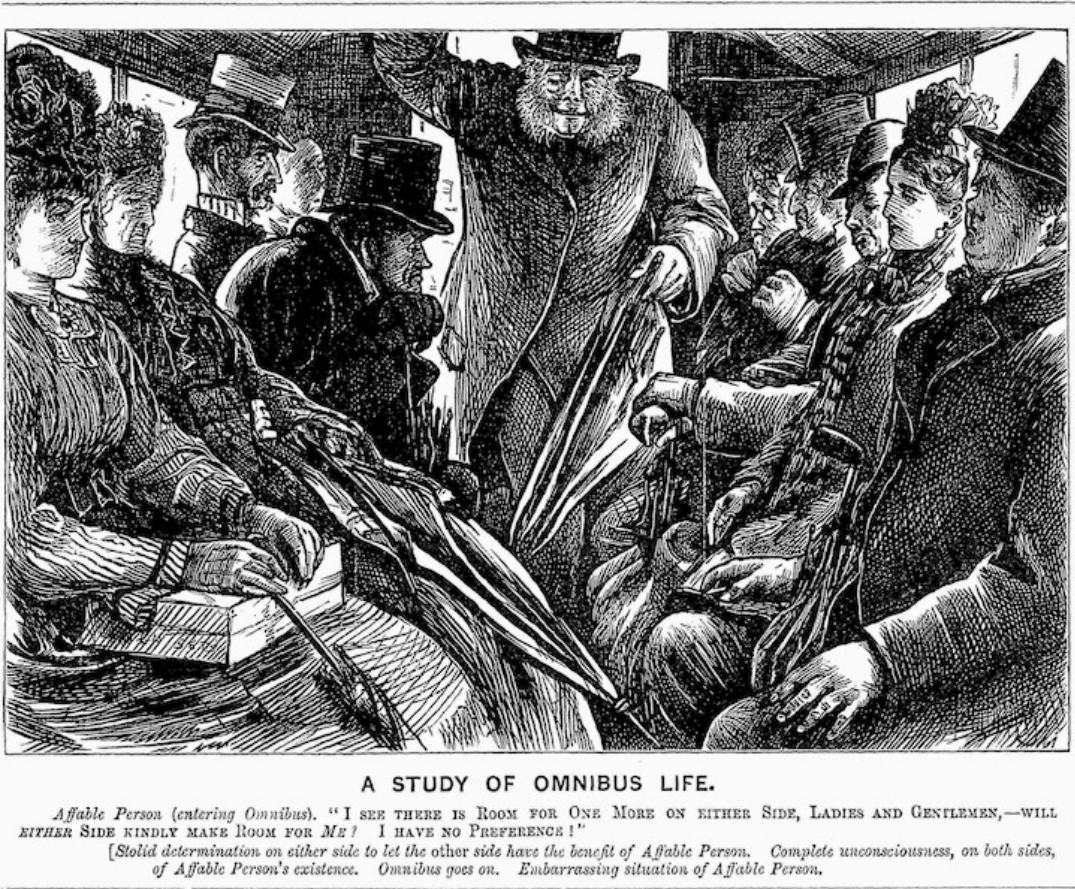


Figure 4.4 A Study of Omnibus Life

Affable Person (entering Omnibus). "I see there is room for one more on either side, ladies and gentlemen,—will either side kindly make room for me? I have no preference!"

[Stolid determination on either side to let the other side have the benefit of Affable Person. Complete unconsciousness, on both sides, of Affable Person's existence. Omnibus goes on. Embarrassing situation of Affable Person.]

Source *Punch*, 28 October 1871



Figure 4.5 *An Omnibus Ride to Piccadilly Circus, Mr Gladstone Travelling with Ordinary Passengers* by Alfred Morgan, 1885 (William Ewart Gladstone, 1809-98, four-time Prime Minister)
Source Private collection, via Bridgeman Education (Image Number: CH 44612)



Figure 4.6 *The Bayswater Omnibus* by George William Joy, c. 1895
Source Museum of London, via Bridgeman Education (Image Number: MOL 1821)



Figure 4.7 *Going to Business (Going to the City)* by James Jacques Joseph Tissot, c. 1879
Source Private collection, via Bridgeman Education (Image Number: BAL 8503)



Figure 4.8 Caution to Ladies Riding in Hansoms

Source *Punch*, 6 September 1862



A PLEASANT KIND OF UNCLE.

SCENE—*Inside a Cab. UNCLE on back seat. Two nice boys on front seat.*

Uncle. "NOW, REGINALD, LOOK OVER MY HEAD, AND TELL ME THE NUMBER OF THIS CAB."

Reginald (slowly). "ONE, SIX, SIX, EIGHT."

Uncle (sternly). "HOW DARE YOU, SIR? SAY SIXTEEN HUNDRED AND SIXTY-EIGHT. NOW, JAMES. WHAT IMPORTANT EVENTS IN ENGLISH HISTORY HAPPENED IN 1688?"

[The Boys think they might as well not be out for a Cheerful Holiday.]

Figure 4.9 A Pleasant Kind of Uncle

Source *Punch*, 23 July 1864

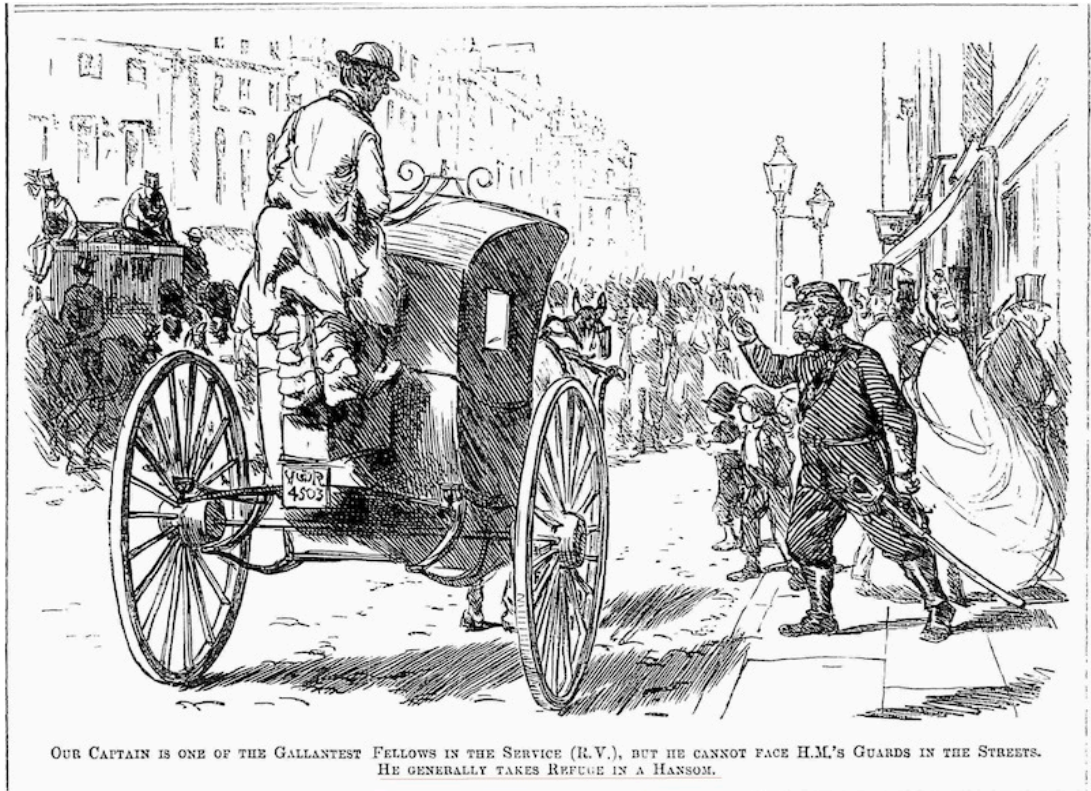


Figure 4.10 Our Captain is one of the gallantest fellows in the Service (R.V.), but he cannot face H. M.'s guards in the streets. He generally takes refuge in a Hansom.

Source *Punch*, 4 June 1864



Figure 4.11 Another Outrage on the "Underground"

Old Grumble (giving her a parting shot)—Well, you may have bronchitis, and you may have asthma, and you may have sore throat; but, dang it, woman, there's nothing the matter with your tongue!

And would you believe it? this was because she only wanted all the windows shut, and had been chatting to the lady opposite about that dreadful attack of rheumatism, and the other things she had gone through during the last year or two. Poor thing!

Source *Judy*, 29 June 1881

Table 4.1 Omnibus Law

-
1. Keep your feet off the seats.
 2. Do not get into a snug corner yourself, and then open the windows to admit a north-wester upon the neck of your neighbour.
 3. Have your money ready when you desire to alight. If your time is not valuable, that of others may be.
 4. Do not impose on the conductor the necessity of finding you change; he is not a banker.
 5. Sit with your limbs straight, and do not let your legs describe an angle of forty-five, thereby occupying the room of two persons.
 6. Do not spit upon the straw. You are not in a hog-sty, but in an omnibus, travelling in a country which boasts of its refinement.
 7. Behave respectfully to females, and put not an unprotected lass to the blush because she cannot escape from your brutality.
 8. If you bring a dog, let him be small and confined by a string.
 9. Do not introduce large parcels; an omnibus is not a van.
 10. Reserve bickerings and disputes for the open field. The sound of your own voice may be music to your own ears—not so, perhaps, to those of your companions.
 11. If you will broach politics or religion, speak with moderation; all have an equal right to their opinions, and all have an equal right not to have them wantonly shocked.
 12. Refrain from affectation and conceited airs. Remember you are riding a distance for sixpence which, if made in a hackney-coach, would cost you as many shillings; and that should your pride elevate you above plebeian accommodations, your purse should enable you to command aristocratic indulgences.

Note

* Moore claimed this article was published in *The Times*, January 1863 but it cannot be found in the database.

Source Henry Charles Moore, *Omnibuses and Cabs* (London: Chapman & Hall. LD., 1902), pp. 53-54.

The Conveyance of Freedom

Unfettered Mobility

As noted above, the crucial factor differentiating the horse-drawn cab from other public conveyances was its promise of an exclusive space that passengers could

exercise control over for the entire duration of the journey. The absence of anonymous fellow passengers not only prevented unwanted social encounters and bodily contact but also granted the cab hirer an exemption from the codes of conduct that applied on other forms of public transport. For example, in a book of manners titled *Manners for Men* (1897), the author devoted just one page to the dos and don'ts of travelling in a hansom but six pages to the etiquette of the omnibus.³⁵³ To justify her inclusion of the omnibus in a book for 'gentlemen', she argued that the 'humbler vehicle' was in fact 'a fine field for true courtesy' because it would be more difficult to stay gentle and polite when one was crowded up 'in the plebeian "bus".' Likewise, in his book *Omnibuses and Cabs* (1902) Moore cites the 'Omnibus Law', a list of 12 instructions for bus passengers covering everything from position and voice volume to payment and belongings (Table 4.1). In contrast, there is no counterpart in the section regarding the cabs.³⁵⁴ This difference in expectations again highlights the distinctive characteristics of the space provided by the cab. Whereas the interior of the omnibus and other forms of public transport was public, diverse and complicated, and therefore required more negotiation, regulation and cooperation, the inside of the horse-drawn cab was private, intimate and homogeneous, so conventions and codes of conduct became relatively unnecessary.

Moreover, in the absence of codes, conventions and the watchful eyes of strangers, the enclosed, isolated and increasingly domesticated interior of the horse-drawn cab also helped to emancipate its passengers, enabling them to do several things considered to be of a private nature and inappropriate for public consumption. Sleeping and grooming, for example, fall into this category. So does open expression of one's emotions. Elias and Sennett have explored how self-restraint became *de rigueur* among the middle and upper classes during the period leading up to the mid-nineteenth century. The upper echelons of the time constantly and consciously policed themselves not to reveal their feelings publicly, even when they were sitting in the darkness of the theatre. Self-restraint ultimately turned into a self-imposed and class-conscious 'discipline', (deliberately) discriminating 'respectable' people from the 'forthright

³⁵³ Mrs. Humphry, *Manners for Men*, p. 31 (In Hansom); pp. 36-41 (In or on an omnibus). Citations: p. 36.

³⁵⁴ The 'Omnibus Law' was allegedly carried in an issue of *The Times* in January 1836 but cannot be found in the database. However, it is reasonable to assume that there must be something like this somewhere, just like Mrs. Humphry's book of manners. See Moore, *Omnibuses and Cabs*, pp. 53-54.

workers' and the 'honest petite-bourgeois.'³⁵⁵ Likewise, it was also inappropriate to lose control in public vehicles. The 'Omnibus Law' (Table 4.1) advised the passengers to 'speak with moderation' and 'refrain from affectation and conceited airs.'³⁵⁶ The cartoons (Figure 4.3-4.6) portraying the scene in the omnibus also vividly represented the typical state of reserve, indifference and 'unconsciousness' of the bus passenger. Meanwhile, as Figure 4.12 illustrates, neither the outrage (of the gentleman) nor the talkativeness (of the lady on the right) was proper on the Underground, since the latter generated the former. The inside of the Victorian public conveyance was in this sense a more *public* space where self-restraint was required, except in the horse-drawn cabs.

The passengers of London's hackney carriages purchased an enclosed and exclusive space of privacy and intimacy. And it is this atmosphere of privacy and intimacy that allowed them to release their inner emotions. For instance, William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-63), the author of *Vanity Fair* (1847-48), once broke out into 'exclamation in the cab and letting off madly parts of the speech wh. wouldn't explode at the proper time' after a frustrating meeting in the mid-century.³⁵⁷ Victorian literature or visual material also provides some good examples showing that this was a common practice at that time. In *The Sign of the Four* (1890), the second novel featuring Sherlock Holmes, while Dr Watson accompanied his future wife Miss Morstan back to her home in a cab, 'she first turned faint, and then burst into a passion of weeping' after they got into the vehicle.³⁵⁸ Apart from anger, frustration and sorrow, people also displayed their joy, love and happiness in the cab. Figure 4.8 (1862) pictures two women in a Hansom talking intimately with their hands (nearly) held together. And a poem of the Scottish poet Robert Williams Buchanan (1841-1901) was read, 'They hey for the hansom home, two lovers nestling within it, The joy of Night, and to-morrow, the rush of the waking World!'³⁵⁹ Again, these examples highlight how the quality of intimacy and privacy of London's horse-drawn cab to a certain degree freed its passengers from self-restraint, offering them a

³⁵⁵ See Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, pp. 45-142. Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, pp. 206-207 (quotation).

³⁵⁶ Moore, *Omnibuses and Cabs*, pp. 53-54.

³⁵⁷ William Makepeace Thackeray, 'Letter to Mrs. Brookfield, 17-19 May 1849,' in *William Makepeace Thackeray: Letters and Private Papers*, ed. Gordon N. Ray (4 vols, Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1945), vol. 2, p. 540.

³⁵⁸ Doyle, *The Sign of the Four*, p. 48.

³⁵⁹ Robert Williams Buchanan, 'The Sphinx (On the Thames Embankment, London.)', *The Complete Poetical Works of Robert Buchanan* (2 vols, London: Chatto & Windus, 1901), vol. 2, p. 341.

temporary escape from their self-imposed discipline.

Away from the watchful eyes and the risk of being overheard (even the driver of both Hansoms and Growlers was seated outside the carriage) London's horse-drawn cab was often appropriated as a meeting point, in which the passengers could discuss whatever they wanted.³⁶⁰ Dickens was used to meeting friends in a cab and similar scenarios were illustrated in Victorian literature. For example, when faced with an awkward question in a club (a public space), the dissolute Sir Felix – one of the main characters in Trollope's satirical novel: *The Way We Live Now* (1875) – first paused for a moment, then responded, 'No;--that is not the reason. I'll tell you all about it in the cab to-morrow.'³⁶¹ Likewise, in *The Sign of the Four* even the neurotic Mr Sholto was able to share the secret of the 'Agra treasure', 'in a voice which rose high above the rattle of the wheels.'³⁶² In contrast, as Wolfgang Schivelbusch and Sennett point out, passengers taking other public vehicles were generally forced (and then imposed it upon themselves) to face 'the embarrassment of people facing each other in silence.'³⁶³ The absence of social interactions between the passengers in the visual materials (Figure 4.3-4.6) also highlights this phenomenon. It is thus clear that the passengers of London's horse-drawn cabs enjoyed comparative freedom to talk compared with those who took other modes of public transport. The public cab, in this sense, was very similar to a private living room or parlour in motion.

The cab not only helped the passengers to express themselves. It was also a great place to clear the mind because there would be no unwanted disturbances. Apparently some foremost Victorian intellectuals were accustomed to thinking in this way. Thackeray was one of them. In 1849, after a quarrel with Adelaide Anne Procter (1825-64) – daughter of poet Bryan Waller Procter (1787-1874), later also a prominent poet herself – Thackeray wrote a letter to Mrs. Procter confessing that 'Ten minutes reflection in the cab as it brought me home has convinced me that I was very wrong in showing any anger I might feel much more in saying that I would never shake hands with Adelaide

³⁶⁰ In the eighteenth century, London's hackney coaches were even used by the Bow Street runners as a torture chamber for 'searches and interrogations.' See J.M. Beattie, *The First English Detectives: The Bow Street Runners and the Policing of London, 1750-1840* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 106.

³⁶¹ Trollope, *The Way We Live Now*, vol. 1, p. 265.

³⁶² Doyle, *The Sign of the Four*, pp. 30-31

³⁶³ Sennett, *Flesh and Stone*, pp. 343-344. Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Railway Journey* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), p. 74 (Quotation).

as long as I lived. That is very absurd.’³⁶⁴ Thackeray’s words here not only prove that a short ride in a cab helped him clear his head but also demonstrate his regret about giving vent to his temper in such a direct and open way (‘discourteous’ in his own words), which violated the code of self-restraint in his social circle.³⁶⁵ Dickens, a mutual friend of Thackeray and the Procter family, was also in the habit of thinking in a cab.³⁶⁶ In a letter dated 1854, Dickens noted that ‘As I rode home in the Hansom...one or two doubt arose in my mind...’³⁶⁷ On the other hand, a remark made by Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) is noteworthy. In a letter sent to Elspeth Grahame (1862-1946, author and feminist, married to Scottish novelist and banker Kenneth Grahame, 1859-1932) in 1907, he mentioned that the omnibus was ‘where my attention is always too distracted by the young women around me in fluffy blouses to be able to concentrate on inner things.’³⁶⁸ In short, the inside of London’s horse-drawn cab was a better place for thinking, reflecting or concentrating on inner things than the interiors of other forms of public transport. This echoes Thorstein Veblen’s (1857-1929) opinion about housing: ‘Vulgar surroundings, mean (that is to say, inexpensive) habitations...are incompatible with life on a satisfactory spiritual plane – with “high thinking.”’³⁶⁹ The same logic seems to have fuelled the discrimination between public vehicles.

As a fort on the move, London’s horse-drawn cab protected its passengers from unwanted social interactions, including physical contact and the public gaze (only partially in the case of two-wheelers because the carriages were not completely enclosed). This defensible privatized space thus also afforded an opportunity to practise the voyeuristic gaze, particularly as there were thousands of cabs on the streets after the mid-century. The large number of cabs not only improved their accessibility but also made the cab-going public less conspicuous. The carriage concealed the

³⁶⁴ Thackeray, ‘Letter to Mrs. Procter, 8-9 June 1849’, in *William Makepeace Thackeray: Letters and Private Papers*, vol. 2, p. 549.

³⁶⁵ Thackeray, ‘Letter to Mrs. Procter, 8-9 June 1849’, p. 549.

³⁶⁶ Dickens was a not-so-intimate friend of Thackeray. He started publishing Adelaide Anne Procter’s poems in his periodical *Household Worlds* in 1853. Both Dickens and Thackeray were also familiar with Procter’s father. About the friendship between the three, see Schlicke (ed.), *Oxford Reader’s Companion to Dickens*, p. 475 (Ms. Procter); p. 570 (Thackeray).

³⁶⁷ Dickens, ‘To Wilkie Collins, 17 December 1854,’ in *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, vol. 7, p. 485.

³⁶⁸ Thomas Hardy, ‘To Elspeth Grahame, 31 August 1907,’ in *The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy*, eds. Richard Little and Michael Millgate, (7 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978-1988), vol. 3, p. 270.

³⁶⁹ Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007 [1899]), p. 29.

passenger-voyeur. And the flexibility and mobility of the vehicles allowed customers to trace, observe and spy, thus providing a service that no other forms of public transport could offer. As noted in Chapter 3, London's horse-drawn cabs were heavily engaged in the work of the Metropolitan police. In one commissioner's words, 'the best Detective Sergeants, for they are most energetic in the pursuit of offenders, will stand or lie in mews, in a ditch...*in a cab*...and will watch for hours without stirring, on purpose to catch or to keep observation' on the suspects.³⁷⁰ By contrast, according to Mayhew, a cabman once confessed to him that he sometimes got 'queer jobs, following people' because 'When a man's following some one', perhaps a pretty girl, he did not like 'to be seen.'³⁷¹ It is therefore no coincidence that the cab would take the centre stage in Doyle's Holmes stories, for both bad and good purposes. For instance, in the very first novel of the series, *A Study in Scarlet* (1887), the murderer took his job as a driver of four-wheeler to hunt down his targets. 'Sometimes I followed them on my cab, and sometimes on foot,' confessed him, 'but the former was the best, for then they could not get away from me...'³⁷² And the same reason also explains why the legendary detective relied London's hackney carriage so heavily. So did those investigative journalists, such as Sala, Dickens, and Mayhew.

However, it is noteworthy that this voyeuristic gaze was not exclusively practised by males, as some scholars has suggested.³⁷³ Female cab riders such as the aforementioned Barrett Browning and Mansfield made their own observations from the vehicles as well. The 'obscure streets', the 'feminine bandit,' the 'dim men and women' around bars and public houses, and the gathering 'unemployed,' were the objects they watched and detailed later in their letters.³⁷⁴ Here the objects of the observations made by both female and male Victorian writers bore an apparent similarity, that is, they were low life in London. It is this fundamental distinction between the observer and the object – in terms of socio-cultural status, mobility and

³⁷⁰ Parliament Paper 1874 [C.1059] *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, for the year 1873*, p. 107. Italics added for emphasis.

³⁷¹ Mayhew, 'Opposite a Cabstand', p. 249-250.

³⁷² Doyle, *A Study in Scarlet*, p. 114.

³⁷³ Laura Mulvey, for instance. See Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen*, 16: 3 (Autumn, 1975), pp. 6–18.

³⁷⁴ See Barrett Browning, 'To Robert Browning, 6, September 1846', in *Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett: The Courtship Correspondence, 1845-1846*, ed. Daniel Karlin, pp. 310-312. Mansfield, 'To Garnet Trowell, 13 October 1908', in *The Collected Letters of Katherine Mansfield*, eds. Vincent O'Sullivan and Margaret Scott, vol. 1, p. 70.

knowledge, but not necessarily in the sense of gender – that defines the voyeuristic gaze and reveals the unbalanced power relationship in such circumstances. The Victorian horse-drawn cab, in this sense, was the only public conveyance which could make its passenger a voyeur, opening up the possibility to observe, follow, spy or track at will.

Suicide in a cab: a public statement of individual free will

Last but certainly not least, by looking at suicide – arguably the ultimate expression of free will as someone deliberately ends one’s life by his/her own hands³⁷⁵ – we can obtain an alternative and fresh perspective on the central issue of this section: the privacy and sense of freedom offered by London’s hackney carriages. As Table 4.2 shows, according to the contemporary press, a dozen people attempted to self-destruct in London’s horse-drawn cabs between 1850 and 1910. Some of these suicides-in-cab were of great titles and high social status, such as the 8th Earl of Shaftesbury, who put a bullet in his head ‘while riding in a cab in Regent-street’ in 1886, only a year after he had succeeded to the peerage.³⁷⁶ Some of them were of extraordinary background, such as the daughter of the infamous beauty specialist and fraudster ‘Madame Rachel.’ The 35-year-old operatic singer was found after shooting herself in a four-wheeler in Piccadilly in 1888.³⁷⁷ However, perhaps the most striking phenomenon is that almost all of these Victorian suicides (11 out of 12) chose to ride alone on their last journey, apart from the 1901 case of a billiards maker who cut himself right after killing his wife accompanying him in the cab.³⁷⁸

³⁷⁵ Except the traditional and religious interpretation that suicide is ‘a personal challenge to the will of God,’ some Victorians already realised that although suicide meant ‘the negation of self,’ it also could ‘represent the ultimate in self-possession.’ See Barbara T. Gates, *Victorian Suicide* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. xiii, 38.

³⁷⁶ Anthony Ashley-Cooper (1831-86), the 8th Earl of Shaftesbury, was once the MP of Hull (1857-69) and Cricklade (1859-65). About the case of the Earl, See *The Times*, 14 and 16 April 1886.

³⁷⁷ Sarah Rachel Leeverson (c. 1806-80), best known as Madame Rachel, was a famed beautifier, trickster and finally con artist who asserted that her beauty products could help her consumers ‘beautiful for ever’. She was later charged with unlawfully obtaining £600 and conspiring to defraud one of her customers of £3000. Her successful career proves there was a market for beauty products/cosmetics in the Victorian era. For the advertisement, See *The Times*, 7 May 1863. For her trial, See *Old Bailey* (17 August 1868, Reference Number: t18680817-721.) <http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/browse.jsp?ref=t18680817-721> (accessed 29 March 2013). About her daughter’s suicide, See *The Times*, 1 May 1888.

³⁷⁸ *The Times*, 9 August 1901.

The connection between riding alone and committing suicide in one of London's horse-drawn cabs is even more instructive and of greater significance in the absence of any evidence suggesting that Londoners would perform the same action on an omnibus, a tramcar and the Underground. Suicidal people did throw themselves in front of the trains, omnibuses and trams, but they scarcely, if ever, committed suicide *in* the interiors of these public vehicles whilst travelling through Victorian London.³⁷⁹ This difference in the numbers of suicides committed in cabs and other modes of urban transport was more than likely because 'being alone' was the primary consideration to the suicidal people, and obviously only the horse-drawn cab could afford them this privacy, in both a temporal and a spatial sense, at both the physical and the psychological level. This perhaps also explains why some of the in-cab-suicides even wrote their testaments during the journey – an act generally regarded as personal and private, not something to be done in public. The above-mentioned Earl, for example, left several pieces of paper behind, begging for forgiveness. His brother said afterwards that 'the writing was like that of the deceased, but it was probably written while the cab was moving, and it was not easy to identify.'³⁸⁰ Likewise, a medical student who shot himself two decades later (in 1908) also left a slip of paper, 'written on in a scrappy manner, and most probably written in the cab,' giving his name and contact details.³⁸¹ The suicides-in-cab took the privatization of the interior of the horse-drawn cab to its logical and chilling conclusion, transforming a theoretically public space into something profoundly personal.

Nevertheless, no matter how private or personal it could be, London's horse-drawn cab was still a mode of public transport. Its interior was officially deemed a public space and if there was a suicide committed in the cab, it had to be reported to the police then the coroner, in effect making the self-murderer known to the public, even though suicide was a taboo subject in Victorian society. As Gates notes, throughout most of the nineteenth century, the family left behind by a suicide generally 'took pains to

³⁷⁹ Not a single piece of news about a suicide taking place on London's underground, omnibuses or tramcars was found between 1830 and 1910. Although there were several suicides committed related to the Underground, however, none of them actually took place *in* the carriage. See David Bownes, Oliver Green, Sam Mullins, *Under Ground: How the Tube Shaped London* (London: Penguin Group, 2012), p.45. Thus, this zero outcome makes the 12 cases of 'suicide in horse-drawn cabs,' though a relatively small sample size, much more meaningful and explanatory.

³⁸⁰ *The Times*, 16 April 1886.

³⁸¹ *The Observer*, 2 February 1908.

conceal the self-destruction' because suicide was not only illegal, immoral but also an immediate threat of financial loss to the family.³⁸² Even at the turn of the century, when denial or covering up slowly gave way to openness and sympathy, when punitive laws were loosened and revised, suicide generally remained a source of anxiety and disgrace to those left behind. In this regard, instead of self-murdering in a genuinely private place, doing it in the horse-drawn cab was equivalent to renouncing the opportunity to cover it up. On the contrary, it was no less than sending a clear and radical message, making a *public* announcement about the suicide's very last decision. The personal/*private* choice, due to the *public* characteristic of the (crime) scene, therefore, inevitably drew public interest and became a public affair.³⁸³ Committing suicide in a horse-drawn cab – a public statement of personal despair and the ultimate expression of individual willpower (free will) in a public vehicle – not only seriously challenged the distinction between private and public in Victorian society, but also provides us with a novel perspective on the ambiguous and paradoxical nature of London's cabs,³⁸⁴ and the complexity of public and private in the Victorian context.

In conclusion, this section has shown how the enclosed and exclusive interiors of London's horse-drawn cab not only freed its passengers from the codes of conduct applied to other modes of public transport but also allowed its customers comparative freedom to do what they wanted – be it grooming, expressing their feelings, chatting, thinking, spying, or even committing suicide. Here there are links with Gay's analysis of the universal pursuit of individual privacy in the nineteenth century – 'Private space meant space for genuine choices, which is another word for freedom.'³⁸⁵ The privacy, intimacy and freedom afforded by the cabs not only confirmed the distinction between the cab hirer and other street users in Victorian London but also the distinction between the cab and other forms of urban transport. On the other hand, they also remind us that the cab, although much more private than other public vehicles, was still a public conveyance. Its interior, in this sense, was a space in-between. The cab

³⁸² Suicide remained a crime in England until 1961 and it was not until the 1870s and 1880s that people who were sane but deliberately committed suicide were exempted from punitive forfeiture (the handing over of the suicide's property to the Crown) and entitled to a funeral in daylight hours. Gates, *Victorian Suicide*, p. xiv, 38-39, 152.

³⁸³ Similar places and scenes include a hotel room and a railway compartment.

³⁸⁴ There were three suicides in London's taxi-cabs, the motorised successor of the horse-drawn cab, in the time span of this study (1830-1910). Of these, two suicides were riding alone, implying that there might be historical continuity in the relationship between suicide and cabs.

³⁸⁵ Gay, *Schnitzler's Century*, p. 276.

passenger could only own and control the space for the duration of the journey. And what happened in the cab – as the in-cab-suicides illustrate – was therefore by nature both public and private. Perhaps most interestingly, it appears that Victorians Londoners who – allegedly – differentiated their life into two distinctive spheres, public and private, were not only fully aware of the paradoxes, ambiguities and complexities created by the hackney carriages but also manipulated/appropriated it in accordance with the situation and their own needs. The boundary was permeable. And the in-between horse-drawn cab was a great vehicle to carry them practising the transgression.

Table 4.2 Suicides in London’s Horse-drawn Cabs, 1850-1910

Press	Date	Suicide	Detail
<i>The Times</i>	23 11 1850	Surgeon	Alone. Took prussic acid
<i>The Times</i>	02 08 1864	Man	Alone. Cut with a razor. Saved
<i>The Times</i>	12 03 1874	Lad	Alone. Shot in a four-wheeler
<i>The Times</i>	09 01 1884	Lad	Alone. Shot in a four-wheeler
<i>The Times</i>	29 05 1885	Solicitor	Alone. Shot himself
<i>The Times</i>	14 04 1886	The Earl of Shaftesbury	Alone. Shot in a four-wheeler
<i>The Times</i>	01 05 1888	Female operatic singer	Alone. Shot in a four-wheeler
<i>The Pall Mall Gazette</i>	09 02 1894	coffee-housekeeper	Alone. Shot in a Hansom
<i>The Times</i>	09 11 1889	Lieutenant*	Alone. Shot in a Hansom
<i>The Times</i>	30 03 1901	Man	Alone. Shot in a Hansom
<i>The Observer</i>	02 02 1908	Medical student	Alone. Shot in a Hansom
<i>The Times</i>	05 01 1909	Marine Engineer	Alone. Shot himself

Note

* A later source said that the suicide was another ‘Morton Eden,’ not this Lieutenant Morton Eden of Yorkshire Regiment. See *The Times*, 22 April 1890.

Source *The Times* (1850-1910), *The Observer* (1850-1910), *The Pall Mall Gazette* (1850-1910).

A Conveyance of Distinction and Ambiguity

A conveyance of distinction

The enclosed interior of London’s horse-drawn cab enabled its passenger to enjoy the privacy, comfort, and freedom that no other public vehicle could match. However, the

cost of the ride was also unparalleled. Given that London's omnibus only charged from 1*d.* to 3*d.*; the fare of the parliamentary trains was 1*d.* a mile; the Metropolitan Railway (the underground) offered a 3*d.* return workmen's ticket; and the workmen's fare on London's tram never exceeded halfpenny a mile with a 1*d.* minimum fare; the cost of travelling by hackney carriage in the capital (1*s.* for minimum fare and then 6*d.* a mile) was exorbitant.³⁸⁶ Perhaps a real example would give more a vivid impression. In an editorial of *The Times* in 1851, the cost of travelling from London-bridge to Crystal Palace in a cab (approximately 5 miles) was lambasted as the equivalent of travelling from London Bridge to Brighton (about 50 miles) by rail. In addition, let us not forget another identifiable feature of the cab repeatedly noted earlier, that is customarily, hirers were entitled to make personal/additional requirements – a customised service in modern consumerism terms – if he or she paid more than the regular fare. In this regard, the price differences between cab riding and taking other different forms of urban transport seem to echo Gay's comment on Victorian housing, '...the principle of privacy had its snobbish side,' that is, 'Money could buy distance.'³⁸⁷

Victorian Londoners were fully aware of this difference between the mobilities. They practised and discoursed about the distinction in their everyday lives. In 1850, a letter to the *Punch* editor put it quite straightforwardly: 'I am a great Omnibus-Traveller because I am poor, and the Omnibus is the poor man's carriage.'³⁸⁸ In another *Punch* article (1857) it was explained how an archetype of the lower-middle-class – a clerk working in the post office who 'only' earned £150 a year – 'certainly cannot afford to take a Hansom 'there and back every day.' Therefore, 'Let him breakfast early and walk slowly to his duty.'³⁸⁹ Here we should bear in mind that *Punch* was a satirical magazine, the contents of which were often ironic, sarcastic, or humorous. In reality, throughout the nineteenth century, the omnibus was never the poor man's carriage, 'unless it was a special treat.'³⁹⁰ Neither were the underground or tram introduced in

³⁸⁶ T. C. Barker, 'Urban Transport', in Michael J. Freeman and Derek H. Aldcroft (eds.), *Transport in Victorian Britain* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1988), p. 141, 148. Barker, *Moving Millions*, p. 18, 43.

³⁸⁷ Gay, *Schnitzler's Century*, p. 268. Jane Baillie Welsh Carlyle, Letter from Jane Baillie Welsh Carlyle to Thomas Carlyle, 2 July 1849, in James Anthony Froude ed., *Letters and memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle*, vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1883), p. 324.

³⁸⁸ *Punch*, 27 April 1850.

³⁸⁹ *Punch*, 1 August 1857.

³⁹⁰ Barker, 'Urban Transport', p. 140.

the second half of the century. Besides, an £150 annual wage was by no means low because it was almost three times higher than the average earnings of most Victorian workers – people who could just about afford to walk to where they made their living.³⁹¹ The point is that a regular bus passenger and a clerk – both typical bourgeois – were unable to afford, or consciously chose not to travel by horse-drawn cab, not to mention people who earned much less or belonged to the lower class.

The contemporary vernacular with regard to Victorian public transport also mirrored, and in a way, reproduced this distinction. When introducing the omnibus from Paris in 1829, George Shillibeer (1797-1866) initially proposed to name this novelty ‘Economist’, yet for some reason the term ‘omnibus’ stuck.³⁹² The etymology of the omnibus, which means ‘for all’ or ‘a carry-all’³⁹³ in Latin, betrays its origin because its timetable and fare inevitably set a threshold limiting its accessibility³⁹⁴ – therefore ‘not for all’ in reality. However, some Victorians still deemed omnibus ‘too democratic’ and ‘plebeian’.³⁹⁵ Meanwhile, terms such as ‘workmen’s tickets,’ ‘workmen’s fare’ and ‘workmen’s trains’ were widely applied to a special train, tram and the underground service targeting working-class commuters from the mid-century, which ran at a lower price in the early morning only for labourers going to work. Such straightforward wording however reveals the contemporary mindset that Victorian labourers should only be afforded access to public transport at certain times and for a specific purpose: travelling to work. The adjective ‘workmen’s’ was connected to those who did menial jobs and potentially further awakened the sense of rudeness and vulgarity that Veblen contrasted with the word ‘leisure’, meaning ‘Abstention from labour’ or ‘conventional evidence of wealth’ and ‘the conventional mark of social standing.’³⁹⁶

³⁹¹ Barker, ‘Urban Transport’, p. 140.

³⁹² Barker, *Moving Millions*, p. 12.

³⁹³ *A Popular, Pictorial and Practical Guide to London* (London: Ward, Lock & co., Ltd, 1898), pp. 58-59. Taylor, *The Moving Metropolis*, p. 11.

³⁹⁴ London’s omnibuses generally started no earlier than 7.00 in the morning, too late for working-class people to travelling to their workplaces. See T.C. Barker and Michael Robbins, *A History of London Transport*, vol. 1, p. 188. Michael J. Freeman and Derek H. Aldcroft (eds.), *Transport in Victorian Britain*, p. 148.

³⁹⁵ In her book of manners, Mrs. Humphry justified why she included the ‘humble’, ‘democratic’ omnibus as one of the occasions where and when gentlemen could/should display their good manners. Her argument was that it was in such circumstance that manners matters. Quoted: Mrs. Humphry, *Manners for Men* (London: James Bowden, 1897), p. 36.

³⁹⁶ Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007 [1899]), pp. 31-32.

By contrast, London's horse-drawn cab never offered a workmen's service or suchlike. And according to the police report, the year 1877 witnessed the establishment of a cab company named 'The Private' (in comparison with the 'for all' omnibus) which possessed 24 cabs.³⁹⁷ And it is in this context the words and their connotations referring to other forms of urban transport – 'Economist' which means economical and inexpensive, 'for all' which means 'in public' and crowded, and 'workmen's' which means proletarian, mass, and cheap – made better sense. They verbally shaped and differentiated the impressions, expectations, sensations and experiences of different Victorian mobilities. And *the private* cabs, 'both of the Hansom and Clarence build,' as Edmund Yates remarked in 1879, remained 'the staple conveyance of middle-class Riding London'³⁹⁸, particularly the more affluent ones.

Therefore, travelling by London's hackney carriage was equivalent to making a public distinction or building a wall between the passengers and other street users, in all spatial/temporal, physical/mental, plus financial/social senses. This distinction, shown in Figure 4.7 to 4.11, bolstered the cab passengers' pride and dignity, and probably explains why they look so calm, at ease and confident. The wall in this sense was visible, tangible and even perceptible. In a letter (1849) to Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), his wife Jane Baillie Welsh Carlyle (1801-66) noted that she had changed from an omnibus to a cab only 'for dignity's sake.'³⁹⁹ Even more interesting is that this sense of superiority or dignity awoken by cabbing attracted mimics. In 1865, according to *The Times*, a clerk who had embezzled about £1,000 from his employer spent the stolen money with his then partner on a trip to Cremorne gardens, and as much as 15s. per night on cabs – an amount equal to travelling over 15 miles a night.⁴⁰⁰ A quarter of a century later, a 14-year-old East Ender stole £85 from her father. She then absconded with three neighbours of the same age and wandered about the city, shopping for 'velvet mantles, hats, feathers, and silk dresses', visiting

³⁹⁷ Parliament Paper 1878 [C. 2129] *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the year 1877*, p. 6. The company however did not last for a year.

³⁹⁸ Edmund Yates, *The Business of Pleasure* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1879), p. 42.

³⁹⁹ Jane Baillie Welsh Carlyle, 'Letter from Jane Baillie Welsh Carlyle to Thomas Carlyle, 2 July 1849', in James Anthony Froude ed., *Letters and memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle*, vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1883), p. 324.

⁴⁰⁰ *The Times*, 22 September 1865.

‘music-halls and theatres.’ Not surprisingly, ‘they always had hansom cabs.’⁴⁰¹ Such mimicry attests to that fact that Victorian Londoners – even a working-class teenager – were well aware of the distinction between the lifestyles and mobilities of different social classes. But it also suggests that the boundary was not impermeable. By emulating the profligate lifestyle of the middle and upper-classes, in particular what Veblen called conspicuous leisure and conspicuous consumption – consuming time and money for non-productive purposes⁴⁰² – people could at least temporarily escape from their humble origins. And London’s horse-drawn cab, in this sense, was appropriated not only as a mode of transport but also as a social marker, and every so often as Cinderella’s pumpkin coach.

A conveyance of ambiguity

The mode of transport people chose to take – the way people practised their mobilities – became a public and visible statement about the traveller’s social and financial status. From private carriage down to travelling on foot, a hierarchy of transport, mobility and privacy-on-the-move was established in Victorian London. However, whilst the private carriage remained the preserve of the well-to-do, as the nineteenth century progressed there was a blurring and complication of this hierarchy. The horse-drawn cab, an in-between vehicle in every sense, played a crucial part in this. On the one hand, although people like Hardy who was highly mobile and at one time a regular cab customer, could still be seen hailing the cab, they would constantly alternate between various forms of public transport, depending on the weather, destination, purpose, time, or even their mood. On the other, as we saw in Chapter 2, both the total number and the vehicle-to-citizen ratio of cabs increased steadily from the 1830s; the official fare also dropped in 1853, meaning that people belonging to the lower classes – such as a hotel servant (1858) and a prostitute plus her unemployed cohabitant (1868) but who were not traditional cab hirers⁴⁰³ – could sometimes be seen engaging cabs. This suggests that travelling by cab was not as conspicuous as it was in the earlier period, say, the eighteenth and early nineteenth century.⁴⁰⁴ The horse-drawn

⁴⁰¹ *The Times*, 9 January 1890.

⁴⁰² About the idea of conspicuous leisure and conspicuous consumption, See Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, pp. 28-69.

⁴⁰³ See *The Morning Chronicle*, 31 July 1858. *The Times*, 5 October 1868.

⁴⁰⁴ Jenner, ‘London Streets and hackney Coaches, c. 1640-c. 1740’, p. 42.

cabs gradually lost their association with ‘attention-seeking’ when there were thousands of them on the streets. In this regard, the hierarchy or the conventional order of who should practise which sort of mobility in Victorian London faced minor but constant challenges. Compared to the situation at the dawn of the century, when the Hackney coach dominated road transport, the distinctions were more often blurred and transgressed; the system became much more dynamic and complicated.

The ambiguity and ambivalence of the horse-drawn cab would eventually complicate the everyday practice of mobilities in Victorian London to an even greater extent. This chapter has already shown how, as privacy became an essential part of modernity, people would engage a horse-drawn cab when they wanted to withdraw from public. Under such circumstances, the cab became their castle, unless there was an emergency or they wanted to save money, in which case people who did not know each other would sacrifice their personal comfort and privacy to share the cab. In these cases, the horse-drawn cab was used purely as a mode of (public) transport, conveying the object – a person, a message, or an article – from point A to point B. This was the ‘useful’ (productive) function of the horse-drawn cab, as Veblen would put it.⁴⁰⁵ But there were multiple ways to appropriate London’s horse-drawn cab, each of them highlighting a different function or quality of the vehicle, and it was in this sense that it became a conveyance of ambiguity. Furthermore, by scrutinising how consumers exploited the horse-drawn cab, not only is the nature of its ambiguity or complexity revealed, so too is the competition, conflict and the negotiation between the competing modernities. For instance, the requirement of punctuality would conflict with the pursuit of privacy in the case of urgency. Or the increasingly distinctive spheres of private and public would clash when a suicide was committed in a cab. The horse-drawn cab, a relatively pre-modern mode of public transport in Victorian London, therefore bore multiple layers of meanings, and embodied the complexity of the modernities.

To conclude, in this section the distinctions and ambiguities surrounding the use of the horse-drawn cab in relation to the dynamics and complexity of Victorian society were

⁴⁰⁵ Veblen cleverly argued that ‘an object could be useful and wasteful both, and its utility to the consumer may be made up of use and waste in the most varying proportions.’ And this is the case how did the horse-drawn cab mean to different passengers, on different occasions. See Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, p. 69.

explored, as well as the multiple, critical part(s) played by the horse-drawn cab in the process of modernisation. The material presented suggests that, while the cab remained a conspicuous mode of urban transport it also had the potential to transgress or blur existing boundaries.

Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted another distinguishing characteristic and principal advantage of London's horse-drawn cab: the quasi-private space created by its partly enclosed carriage, which granted the passenger the privilege of being left alone. It has also been argued that in the Victorian age, a much more privacy-aware and privacy-pursuing period compared to the previous eras, this exclusive space-on-the-move was of great importance and widely favoured by cab hirers, helping to establish the cab in a unique position in the city's contemporary transport system.

The cab-carriage built a literal and metaphorical wall separating the passenger from the driver and the unknown masses on the streets. Unlike other modes of public transport, it could also be used to by a single passenger, thereby helping clients to avoid unwanted interactions with anonymous others, keep a distance from potential trouble, loosen their self-imposed psychological controls and escape from the social conventions dominated the shared spaces of other public conveyances. Moreover, by offering some domestic objects and providing attentive service, and with the help of the passenger's imagination, the interior of the horse-drawn cab further became a domesticated space where individuals could relax, meditate, release inner emotions and enjoy intimacy with family members, lovers and friends. It is in this sense that Victorian Londoners generally recognized the cab as an easier, cosier, and more enjoyable way of travelling around the city.

However, not everyone had equal access to this privilege due to the expensive fare. Cabbing became a respectable and privileged way of practising mobility in the metropolis since it excluded those who could not afford the fare. This in turn boosted both the cab passenger's sense of dignity and perception of distinction. In this regard, the distinction and differentiation between the cab passenger and other street users was not only spatial but also economic and social. Perhaps most importantly, this discrimination was physically perceptible and visually recognisable, meaning that

people were valued and classified according to how they moved through the city. And because of this paradoxical duality and the unique service they offered – a mode of *public* transport providing a *private* space that only a relatively limited group of people could afford – London's horse-drawn cab secured an indispensable place in the contemporary transport system.

It is also worth emphasising the tensions examined in the chapter between the different elements of modernity associated with the theme of mobility in the Victorian period. As discussed earlier, the pursuit of personal privacy had been an essential part of the process of modernization since the early nineteenth century, and London's horse-drawn cab fitted neatly into this change by offering its passengers a temporary intimate space. However, other modes of cab hiring and the crossover between different modes of public transport indicate that privacy, comfort or dignity were not always the top priorities in terms of mobility. Being punctual or simply saving money and trouble sometimes meant sacrificing privacy and comfort during a journey. Thus, the tension, or sometimes the conflict between the different aspects of modernity – such as convenience, mobility, and privacy – can be unveiled by scrutinizing how Victorian Londoners practised their mobilities. Overall though, London's horse cab was still the means of urban transport best fitted for the pace of life in the modernizing city.

Chapter 5 The Conveyance of Adventure

The comparison of travelling with an ‘adventure’ has a long tradition in the history of literature, particularly in those works which cover the theme of mobility. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the definition of the word ‘adventure’ is twofold. On the one hand, adventure could be ‘[a]ny novel or unexpected event in which one shares; an exciting or remarkable incident befalling any one,’ which could generate the sense of happiness or excitement. On the other, it could be ‘[t]he encountering of risks or participation in novel and exciting events; adventurous activity, enterprise,’ which contains potential danger and risk.⁴⁰⁶ Adventure therefore is something unpredictable or new in the first place. Its essence of uncertainty could then lead to either pleasure or anxiety, or even juxtapose both.

Coincidentally, in an article about the crucial part that transport plays in a city, Hamilton and Hoyle spend a whole section discussing ‘the horror and romance of transport.’⁴⁰⁷ They not only list several classic works of literature in connection with these two seemingly contradictory feelings and travelling, but also argue for the importance of studying the set of feelings, the reasons and meanings behind them, and the practice or reaction in response to them when urban transport is taken into account. In their analysis, the feeling of horror or fear is mainly due to facing uncertain situations or losing one’s independence during the journey, for example, being surrounded by strangers or getting lost in an unfamiliar place. Likewise, the sense of excitement or romance awakened by travelling is also connected with the idea of uncertainty and independence, but this time in a positive way. In this context, although travellers might be unsure about what is going to happen on the trip, they still maintain control. They

⁴⁰⁶ *Oxford English Dictionary*:

http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50003256?query_type=word&queryword=adventure&first=1&max_to_show=10&sort_type=alpha&result_place=1&search_id=Lhyw-oDwOMB-719&hilite=50003256 (accessed 27 May 2010).

⁴⁰⁷ Kelly Hamilton and Susan Hoyle, ‘Moving Cities: Transport Connections,’ in John Allen, Doreen Massey, Michael Pryke (eds.), *Unsettling Cities: Movement/Settlement* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 87.

not merely have the freedom to travel, but also have the ability, knowledge or confidence to access a suitable mode of transport both in the correct way and at the right time. In short, they possess the power and know-how to make appropriate decisions when travelling is necessary. Here the uncertainty of transport generates novelty, surprise, or even good fortune and promise. This also explains why the ideas of individual freedom, sureness and the accessibility are so crucial to the concept of a popular word today: mobility.⁴⁰⁸ Based on what has been discussed so far, as transport and adventure both involve a certain degree of two seemingly contrary senses of feelings, the connection and comparison between them is thus secured.

In 1853, Charlotte Brontë wrote in *Villette* that ‘Elation and pleasure were in my heart: to walk alone in London seemed of itself as an adventure.’⁴⁰⁹ This sentence has become one of the illustrative examples helping to define the word ‘adventure’ in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. In fact, Brontë was certainly not the only Victorian who possessed this viewpoint. Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, several Victorian authors, such as Arthur Conan Doyle, ‘General’ William Booth (1829-1912), Charles Booth, Henry James (1843-1916), Margaret Harkness, and the writers of sensation novels, a popular genre of fiction since 1860s, all shared an appetite for this metaphorical expression – regarding London as an ‘urban jungle’, a ‘mysterious metropolis’, and moving about the city as an adventure, as a journey full of both risk and excitement, and as an experience which would juxtapose two senses of feeling: fear and pleasure.⁴¹⁰

Nevertheless, in addition to these general characteristics, the Victorian discourse of ‘urban adventure’ did reflect the particular milieu of nineteenth-century London. The metaphor, as Keating and McLaughlin suggest, would be better understood under the context of global commodity capitalism and colonialism, in which the fluidity of people, capital and goods accelerated enormously. As the capital of the British Empire,

⁴⁰⁸ Hamilton and Hoyle, ‘Moving Cities: Transport Connections,’ pp. 87-91; Michael Flamm and Vincent Kaufmann, ‘Operationalising the Concept of Motility: A Qualitative Study’ *Mobilities* 1:2 (July 2006), pp. 167-189.

⁴⁰⁹ Charlotte Brontë, ‘London,’ in *Villette* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 48-49.

⁴¹⁰ Joseph McLaughlin, ‘An Irritation to Metaphor: Late-Victorian London as Urban Jungle’ in Joseph McLaughlin, *Writing the Urban Jungle: Reading Empire in London from Doyle to Eliot* (Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 2000), 1-26; Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 15-18.

Victorian London attracted massive commodities and labour-power both on a global scale and at an unprecedented level, making itself a cosmopolitan city, an imperial centre that embodied the complexity and hybridity of the whole empire. The space of London was spatially or geographically divided into several parts. In some of them, the cityscape was exoticized. The city thus, in McLaughlin's words, became 'British and foreign territory' simultaneously⁴¹¹ and the social boundaries within the city were both visible and sensible, even transgressive. As 'Outcast London was another country'⁴¹² to Victorian Londoners, visiting an 'other' quarter of the city was similar to going somewhere mysterious and unexplored, like Barrett Browning's case in Chapter 4. In this regard, it is understandable why General Booth, the founder and the first General of the Salvation Army, compared his visit to the East End with contemporary expeditions to Africa; he compared his missionary and charity effort with the works of his contemporaries among the African aborigines. His *In Darkest England* was published in 1890, almost at the same time when British explorer Henry Stanley's (1841-1904) *In Darkest Africa* was widely circulated among London readers. It is under such political/economic conditions and social/cultural atmosphere that late-Victorian writers tended to appropriate the rhetoric of 'urban jungle' and 'adventure' to signify the city and the experience of travelling in it.⁴¹³

Furthermore, apart from its rich colour of imperialism, this Victorian discourse of adventure was equally noteworthy for its masculinity. In their studies in narratives about late-Victorian London, Keating, McLaughlin and Walkowitz all suggest that there was always a dominant perspective which represented the values and ideology of the privileged, educated and bourgeois male. This manly narrative not merely presumed that 'the fact and fantasy of urban exploration' was a prerogative exclusive to men, but also attempted to disguise its patriarchal visuality and prejudice as purely reasonable and objective, by taking the forms of statistics, journalism or scientific reports.⁴¹⁴ The urban explorer, spectator, or in Charles Pierre Baudelaire's (1821-67) phrase, the *flaneur* in these Victorian discourses was generally and automatically

⁴¹¹ McLaughlin, 'An Irritation to Metaphor: Late-Victorian London as Urban Jungle,' p. 10.

⁴¹² Roy Porter, *London: A Social History* (London: Penguin Book Ltd, 1994), p. 334.

⁴¹³ See Peter John Keating, 'Introduction' in Peter John Keating (ed.), *Into Unknown England 1866-1913: Selections from the Social Explorers* (London: Fontana, 1976), pp. 11-32; McLaughlin, 'An Irritation to Metaphor: Late-Victorian London as Urban Jungle,' pp. 1-26.

⁴¹⁴ Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, p. 16.

presumed to be a male.⁴¹⁵ In addition, both Mayhew and Charles Booth were good at presenting their works about the urban poor in the form of carrying out a survey. Also, in the field of literature, Conan Doyle not surprisingly created his legendary duo – Holmes and Watson – as urban heroes with a scientific background and strong belief in science and reason. In this sense, it is fair to conclude that the popular viewpoint seeing nineteenth-century London as a ‘urban jungle’ or a giant, dark ‘labyrinth’, and the social imagination of moving about the city as an adventure, were basically male constructions.

The horse-drawn cab was one of the major modes of urban transport for middle and upper- class people in Victorian London. This group of people not only included the above-mentioned writers, but also more or less overlapped with those who formed the readership of their works. Victorian cab hirers were thus probably more likely to have been familiar with, to agree with, or even to accordingly adopt the perspective of viewing the city as a jungle where surprise and risk lurked.⁴¹⁶ It seems that the horse cab bore multiple layers of meaning to Victorian Londoners and was more than just as a mode of neutral public transport. First of all, it was the vehicle which moved its passenger thorough the urban jungle. Second, the horse-drawn cab provided a unique opportunity – a close yet separate place – to observe/approach the spectacles of London streets with ‘vicarious participation’⁴¹⁷ or, as presented in last chapter, a voyeuristic gaze, a much preferred spectatorship/experience to sense the city. It was quite similar to the way in which people read those narratives of ‘adventure’, which called forth only visual excitement and intellectual stimulation, when personal or physical involvement was not required. However, travelling (in the city) inevitably involved a certain degree of risk and uncertainty. Hence, although horse-drawn cabs could provide some physical protection and distance, there was still the probability of passing somewhere unfamiliar and encountering someone or something beyond imagination or expectation during the trip. In this sense, cabbing in Victorian London

⁴¹⁵ Sala and Munby were two other prominent street-observers in Victorian London. The latter was famous for his close connection with working class women. See Rick Allen, ‘Observing London Street-Life: G. A. Sala and A. J. Munby’, in Tim Hitchcock and Heather Shore (eds.) *The Streets of London: From the Great Fire to the Great Stink* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 2003), 198-214.

⁴¹⁶ While analyzing the narratives about the nineteenth-century railway, Richter argues that ‘‘Passengers, in turn, carried these stories with them onto the trains and saw their experiences through these narratives. See Richter, *Women, the Railroad, and the Rise of Public Domesticity*, p. 69.

⁴¹⁷ McLaughlin, ‘An Irritation to Metaphor: Late-Victorian London as Urban Jungle,’ p. 7; Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, p. 16.

could itself be seen as an adventure. To these cab hirers, the jungle or the creatures in it were no longer a literary or visual metaphor for city life, but real circumstances and actual people.

Based on what we have just discussed, this chapter uses this then-significant discourse of ‘adventure’ to argue that Victorian Londoners saw the horse-drawn cab as a ‘conveyance of adventure’, which not merely moved them around the spectacular city, but also called forth a complex of feelings of excitement, delight, anxiety and fear. In order to achieve this, the chapter will be divided into four sections. The first one will consider London’s horse-drawn cab as a vehicle of leisure and excitement, focusing on its central role in Victorian’s social and leisure lives. The other element of ‘adventure’, the opposite to a sense of contentment – the feelings of fear and horror, and the reasons that caused them – will be covered in the second part. Section three will emphasize the different experiences between cab passengers belonging to diverse social groups. Factors such as gender, age and appearance will be discussed here. The final part of the chapter will argue that there was a dominant masculine heroic discourse in terms of Victorian cabbage and mobility, which reinforced and re-confirmed the assertion that taking the horse-drawn cab in the city was akin to an adventure in the jungle and perhaps was not suitable for everyone.

The Conveyance of Pleasure

A vehicle of leisure

When discussing ‘what does transport do in the city’, Hamilton and Hoyle include ‘facilitates social interaction by allowing people to get together’ in their list of features.⁴¹⁸ London’s horse-drawn cab, in this regard – like its predecessor hackney coaches in the earlier centuries⁴¹⁹ – fulfilled this function better than any other modes of transport in nineteenth-century London, where and when the sociable London Season reached its peak. There were a massive number of contemporary texts describing the horse-drawn cab in connection with all kinds of social venues such as

⁴¹⁸ Hamilton and Hoyle, ‘Moving Cities: Transport Connections’, p. 93.

⁴¹⁹ About the coach and the sociability of the higher ranking in the eighteenth century, See Jenner, ‘Circulation and Disorder: London Streets and Hackney Coaches, c. 1640 – c. 1740’, 40-53. Whyman, *Sociability and Power in Late-Stuart England*.

clubs, restaurants, theatres, music-halls, balls, parties and sport events, where happiness, delight and pleasure could be expected. In fact, throughout the period from the 1840s to the end of the nineteenth century, a range of and also a huge amount of evidence was recorded showing how Victorian celebrities went to these places by horse cabs. For example, between 1830 and 1910, opera glasses were at the top of the list of ‘left in a cab,’ which appeared regularly in the classified advertisement column in *The Times*.⁴²⁰ As some of the owners recorded their journeys, venues such as the Olympic Theatre, Covent-garden Theatre and Adelphi Theatre were each mentioned more than once.⁴²¹ Figure 5.1, a cartoon from *Punch* in the early 1860s illustrates how keen cab drivers were to suggest popular events – a cattle show or dog show – to attend at that time, although the ladies seemed to be showing little interest. In the late 1870s, a song titled *Hansom Joe, the fastest on the road*, described how the cabman Joe picked a swell and rushed to Hurlingham, where ‘Polo’s play’d and Pigeons too [a]re shot at ev’ry year.’⁴²² In 1886, the caption of a *Punch* cartoon read that ‘The cab-drivers mournfully mutter’ when the Season was over.⁴²³ The fashion showed no sign of changing at the end of the nineteenth century. According to Wilkins, ‘every club-house in Pall Mall and St. Jame’s Square has a fringe of hansoms hanging about its skirts.’⁴²⁴ And a news article in *The Times* in 1895 concerning The Derby noted that ‘the general attendance should have been larger than last year’ because ‘there is now no cab strike to interfere with the road traffic.’⁴²⁵

Other special occasions including exhibition, coronation and Jubilee were also times when the demand for London’s horse-drawn cabs increased dramatically. The exhibition of 1851 undoubtedly boosted the cab market. And the police report of 1897 concluded that the year ‘has been a good year for cab drivers ... a large number of visitors having been attracted to the Metropolis on account of Her Majesty’s jubilee.’⁴²⁶

⁴²⁰ Opera glasses were reported 14 times out of 126 advertisements in the ‘left in a cab’ column in *The Times* dated between 21 February 1834 and 6 March 1902.

⁴²¹ Olympic Theatre (2 times), Covent-garden Theatre (3 times), and Adelphi Theatre (2 times), were mentioned in the advertisements in the ‘left in a cab’ column in the *Times* dated between 21 February 1834 and 6 March 1902.

⁴²² Arthur Guyatt, *Hansom Joe, the fastest on the road* (London: Alphonse Bertini & co, 1878).

⁴²³ *Punch*, 3 July 1886.

⁴²⁴ W. H. Wilkins, ‘Hansoms and their Drivers’, in *The Nineteen Century*, 33: 193 (March, 1893), p. 472.

⁴²⁵ *The Times*, 30 May 1895.

⁴²⁶ Parliament Paper 1898 [C. 8995] *Report of the commissioner of police of the metropolis for the year 1897*,

These examples demonstrate the extraordinary degree to which the social lives of middle and upper-class Victorian Londoners depended on the horse-drawn cab. In the meantime, Victorian cab drivers also relied on transporting people to and from these social activities to make their living. In fact, the seasonal fluctuations in the rent of cabs, here the rate paid by cab drivers to the proprietors, corresponded to the social rhythms of the city. According to a report published in 1877, the cab rent regularly rose on several occasions, including ‘Cattle Show week’, ‘Derby-day’ and ‘Christmas-day’.⁴²⁷ Hence, based on what has been presented, the contemporary discourses show a strong connection between the social lives of Victorian Londoners and the horse-drawn cab. The vehicle can therefore be seen as a social conveyance, which could call forth feelings of excitement and happiness, an essential element of the ‘adventure’, to its hirers.

Horse cab as a conveyance with great and enjoyable speed

In the chapter on convenience, we saw how the characteristic of flexibility and speed was crucial to London horse cab. This feature enabled the conveyance to offer a unique service, which distinguished the horse cab from other modes of urban transport in the city. Therefore, ‘speed was the essence of the cab’. However, the fact that ‘speed was the essence of the cab’ promised more than just time saved. That is, the velocity of the horse cab could not only help its passengers make up time, but also awakened in them a perception of excitement, which no doubt made riding the horse cabs an enjoyable experience to some of them.⁴²⁸

Among several types of Victorian horse cab, those able to run at fairly high speed normally were the two-wheelers, that is, the cabriolet imported from France in the 1820s and 1830s, and later the renowned Hansom cab, whose velocity and agility was a result of their lighter weight. Cabriolets, from the Victorians’ perspective, was a fairly fashionable and agile vehicle which Sala depicted as ‘the bouncing, rattling, garishly-painted cabs,’ and the ‘gorgeously painted’ able to do some acrobatics in the

p. 10

⁴²⁷ Thomson and Smith, ‘London Cabmen’, p. 6.

⁴²⁸ The sentence ‘speed was the essence of the cab’ is quoted from May. See Trevor May, *The Administration and Organisation of the London Cab Trade from the Late Eighteenth Century to the First World War* (PhD Dissertation of University of London, 1991), p. 60.

streets which ‘no other vehicle could ever by any possibility have contrived to’ do in Charles Dickens’s words.⁴²⁹ The velocity of the cabriolet was splendid, and their drivers certainly did not hesitate to show it off. As Moore noted in his history of the Victorian horse-drawn cab in 1902, ‘Drivers were fond of showing their superior speed, and while doing so frequently ran against street posts or collided with other vehicles; and when either of these things happened, or the horse fell, the “fare” was usually pitched forward into the road.’ Despite the threat of being hurt, this conveyance was still welcomed by ‘young and middle-aged men’, as well as “dandies” and shopmen’ or those who dared to pursue the experience of excitement. The pursuit finally even became a competition between these playboys – ‘Many of them boasted of the number of times they had been thrown out of them [the cabs].’⁴³⁰ But why were they doing that? The remark below made by Dickens probably gives the best answer:

It is all excitement. And in these days of derangement of the nervous system and universal lassitude, people are content to pay handsomely for excitement; where can it be procured at a cheaper rate?⁴³¹

To the ‘dandies’ galloping in the streets of London then became an adventure, which boosted their feelings of excitement and enabled them to show off their manliness.

The successor of the cabriolet was the Hansom cab, the most genteel and elegant vehicle dominating the surface transport in Victorian London. However, the popularity of Hansom cab was not only due to its stylish appearance, but also to its agility. In 1879, Edmund Yates asserted that the Hansom cab was essential to those who were chased by the deadline of doing certain things, including lawyers’ clerks, journalists, stockbrokers, editors and artists. ‘To such people a Hansom cab is a primary matter of faith.’⁴³² The image of a galloping Hansom therefore was rooted in Victorian society and recorded in a variety of media during the second part of the nineteenth century.

⁴²⁹ George Augustus Henry Sala, ‘Things Departed’, in George Augustus Henry Sala, *Gaslight and Daylight* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1860), p. 60; Charles Dickens, ‘The Last Cab-driver, and the First Omnibus Cad’, in Charles Dickens, *Sketches by Boz* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1895), pp. 104-05.

⁴³⁰ Moore, *Omnibuses and Cabs*, pp. 208-09.

⁴³¹ Dickens, ‘The Last Cab-driver, and the First Omnibus Cad’, pp. 105-06.

⁴³² Edmund Yates, ‘Riding London: Of Cabs, Jobs and Black Jobs’, *The Business of Pleasure* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1879), pp. 41-42.

There was a popular song entitled *The Hansom Galop* as well as *Hansom Joe, The Fastest on the Road*.⁴³³ Cartoons often sketched the sprinting Hansom cab (see Figure 5.4 and 5.7). In a contemporary best seller, people saw Sherlock Holmes jump neatly into a Hansom cab many times in order to trace criminals in the city. In other words, since the Hansom made its debut on the stage of Victorian London, there seemed to be a general consensus that it was “fast” to ride in a hansom.⁴³⁴

At the turn of the century, W. H. Wilkins and Moore both confirmed that the Hansom cab – just like the cabriolet earlier – was much more welcomed among the youngsters, who were much more eager to pursue the feeling of excitement. According to Wilkins, ‘Hansoms are most patronised by young men, who like them as a vehicle in which they can see and be seen, and because they are fast and will push on despite of stoppages and policemen...’⁴³⁵ Moore likewise echoed that ‘Hansom soon became the vehicles of the fast and disreputable’ due to this kind of reckless driving, and it perhaps was also the reason why they ‘figured in police court cases much more frequently than the four-wheelers did.’⁴³⁶ In this respect, to these swells, leaping in a handsome Hansom and roaring past the city was way to show off their boldness, wealth and appetite. Nevertheless, apart from the sense of excitement, there was another way to enjoy the delight of speed, a much easier and gentler way. As quoted earlier, Mayhew highly praised the experience of riding a Hansom when everything went just right. He vividly described how delightful it would be while the refreshing breeze gently brushed through passenger’s hair and the hoofs and wheels together played a lively tune.

To make a quick summary, London’s horse-drawn cab was a vehicle which conveyed people to most social venues. It therefore not only simply moved people to where they planned to go as an urban transport, but also brought the experience of pleasure and excitement to its passengers. In addition, the outstanding speed performed by the cab in comparison with other public vehicles was capable of getting its passenger’s pulse racing. And this sense of pleasure is definitely one of the key elements forming the experience of adventure.

⁴³³ Adrien Talaxy, *The Hansom Galop* (London: S. Clark Music Publisher, 1865); Guyatt, *Hansom Joe, the fastest on the road*.

⁴³⁴ Edmund Yates, *Recollections and Experiences* (London: Richard Bentley and Sons, 1884), p. 33.

⁴³⁵ W. H. Wilkins, ‘Hansoms and Their Drivers’, *The Nineteenth Century* 33:193 (1893: March), p. 472.

⁴³⁶ Moore, *Omnibuses and Cabs*, pp. 225-26.

The Conveyance of Risk

As noted in previous sections, ‘adventure’ indicates delight as well as sadness, romance as well as horror, amusement as well as risk, and often exceeds people’s expectations. This section will shift the focus onto the dark side of horse cab riding, discussing its dangers and the discourses Victorian Londoners adopted to deal with the associated risks, including the unpredictability of traffic powered by horses, the furious speed and the poorly designed construction of the vehicles that often caused accidents, the threat of the contagious diseases possibly spread by the hackney carriages travelling around the city, and the (assumed) connection between the horse-drawn cab and the crime.

The conveyance of crime

London’s horse-drawn cabs were sometimes involved in crimes or immorality. For example, in 1851, a fake cabman – a man driving a cab without a valid licence – picked up a female servant and then robbed her.⁴³⁷ A few years later, in 1858, another young hotel servant fell unconscious after the cab driver offered her ‘a glass of ale’. When she woke up, she was in a brothel and her personal belongings were gone.⁴³⁸ And according to Mayhew – perhaps one of Victorian cabmen’s severest critics – some cab drivers were connected with criminals. They drove swell-mobsmen, ‘women of the town’, and took advantage of ‘drunken fellows’.⁴³⁹ And it is this group of driver and the bucks – most of them were ex-cab drivers whose licences were invalidated – who were the black sheep of the trade.⁴⁴⁰ And in 1900, a gang of robbers ingeniously robbed a bank with the help of a cab. The robbers went to a small branch where only a clerk was in charge. They then asked the clerk to go and see a ‘crippled’ client who was sitting outside in the cab. While the clerk and the fake client were engaged in conversation, other members of the robbers’ gang easily removed the money from the bank.⁴⁴¹ Although such cases were not common, it is in this sense that taking a cab could be dangerous.

⁴³⁷ *The Lady’s Newspaper*, 2 August 1851.

⁴³⁸ *The Times*, 31 July 1858.

⁴³⁹ Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and London Poor* (3 vols., London: 1861) vol. 3, p. 351. The books was composed in the 1840s and first published in 3 volumes in 1851.

⁴⁴⁰ Mayhew, *London Labour and London Poor*, p. 352.

⁴⁴¹ *Leicester Chronicle and the Leicestershire Mercury*, 25 August 1900, p. 2.

Horse cab as a hazardous conveyance

The threat of traffic accidents must have been on the top of the list of risks of horse cab riding in Victorian London. During the nineteenth century, the city became more and more crowded as a direct result of rapid urbanization and immigrants pouring in from both the domestic countryside and overseas territories. The streets were overloaded with pedestrians and a variety of vehicles. In addition, since the horses could be sick, tired, frightened and sometimes out of control, urban traffic powered by horses was inevitably unpredictable and unreliable, just like an adventure. Figure 5.5 displays a perfect example of how uncertain the horse traffic could be when a cab passenger was hurrying toward a station. F. M. L. Thompson also remarks that the horse traffic was highly uncertain:

The behaviour of horse traffic is unpredictable, its control of direction erratic, and its road discipline poor, in comparison with motors; hence any given number of horse-drawn vehicles occupied a good deal more road space than the same number of motor vehicles simply because of the extra elbow room required.⁴⁴²

In addition to the instabilities of horse traffic, speed was definitely another issue. As discussed in the previous section, speed was the strength/essence of the horse cab and both cabmen and passengers generally did not hesitate to take advantage of it, whether they were really in a hurry or just wanted to have fun. However, velocity was the major cause of traffic accidents. Horse cabs, especially two-wheelers, which could easily pick up the speed, were therefore deemed hazardous. In the 1880s Yates condemned the cabriolet as ‘a dangerous vehicle.’⁴⁴³ Similarly Moore remarked that the Hansom cab was not as popular as its counterpart four-wheelers among the ‘elderly and sober-minded people’, who did not enjoy the speed.⁴⁴⁴

Although expressed in a humorous and ironic way, Figures 5.6 and 5.7 cited from *Punch* in 1868 are perfect illustrations of the risks of riding a horse cab: either the

⁴⁴² F. M. L. Thompson, *Victorian England: The Horse-Drawn Society, An Inaugural Lecture* (London: Bedford College, 1970), p. 12.

⁴⁴³ Yates, *Recollections and Experiences*, p. 33.

⁴⁴⁴ Moore, *Omnibuses and Cabs*, p. 225.

danger of speed, or the risk of an unreliable horse. Of course, in reality, it could be even worse, when speed and unreliability were combined in a single horse. This series of cartoons depicts poor Mr. Jenkins, a 'sober-minded' gentleman who had never given the Hansom a shot, choosing a cab pulled by a weak horse that looked unlikely to speed up. Nevertheless, he was still thrown out of the cab in the end because the horse was unable to complete the trip. The accident then became a trauma to Mr. Jenkins, which made him dream a series of nightmares. The cartoons might be exaggerated, but the statistics and news reports show a similar picture. Accidents caused by horse cab were quite common in Victorian London. For example, according to a column entitled 'court circular' in *The Times*, which reported information about the Royal family, aristocracy, officials and MPs, between 1902 and 1905, there were 6 MPs, a member of Royal Academy of Arts, an Admiral, the marquis of Bristol, and the Chamberlain involved in cab accidents. Most of them were injured, severely or slightly, in the accidents. Among them, five were knocked down by cabs; three were thrown out of their own cabs like poor Mr. Jenkins; one was hurt in the cab when the accident happened.⁴⁴⁵ General Booth was also scarred in a cab crash in 1908.⁴⁴⁶ These Victorian celebrities were lucky, because none of them lost their lives. Others involved in horse cab accidents were less fortunate. Between 1830 and 1913, the Old Bailey recorded 54 cases of manslaughter in which someone died as a direct result of cab accident. Among them, half of the cases ended in a verdict of guilty, the other half did not. Most of the accidents happened at night; more than half of them involved the Hansom; and testimonies such as 'furious speed,' 'reckless driving,' 'galloping' were fairly common, indicating that speed was the key cause of such tragedies on the streets.

The poor design/construction of the carriage was another factor that could cause damage. As previously mentioned, it was not unusual to see people being thrown out of a cab. The cabriolet was notorious for hurling its passengers out. In fact, with the exception of the four-wheelers, which possessed an enclosed carriage, none of the cabs, not even the 'safety patent' Hansom, could efficiently protect passengers or drivers from falling out. For example, on Sunday night, 21 Dec 1856, a Hansom hit two four-wheelers and then smashed into an omnibus. The driver of the Hansom fell

⁴⁴⁵ See *The Times*, 13 May 1902; 17 June 1902; 27 June 1902; 21 July 1902; 6 February 1903; 17 March 1905; 17 May 1905; 24 July 1905; 24 July 1907.

⁴⁴⁶ *The Times*, 29 June 1908.

out of the carriage and his passenger, a young lady, died.⁴⁴⁷ Half a century later, the situation had hardly changed. On 13 July 1906, there was an accident involving two cabs and a motor car. In order to pass the four-wheeler cab, the motor car hit the Hansom cab coming in the opposite direction and ‘the occupants of the cab were thrown out’, including the cab driver.⁴⁴⁸ The threat of being flung from a cab was understandably a huge concern among Victorian Londoners; therefore a number of discourses and even tactics were produced in connection with the topic. For instance, an essay in *Punch* joked that ‘We wonder no genius of the JEHU stamp ever thought of putting the door right underneath the vehicle, so as to prevent the person being thrown out.’⁴⁴⁹ In another article posted in 1902, a girl from outside London was advised not to sit in the middle of the seat but either side of the corner when riding a Hansom, in order to ‘take advantage of the pillar’ hung on the door in case the horse stumbled.⁴⁵⁰ All of these different discourses point to the fact that despite some improvements in the construction of the Victorian horse cab, throughout the Era there was no way to prevent cab occupants from occasionally falling out of the cab.

Last but certainly not least, is the quality of the cab driver. Nowadays, it seems quite sensible for a cab hire to expect that a qualified cab driver should possess the road sense, driving skills and a reliable personality. A standard procedure to evaluate these characteristics is also in place to ensure these qualities are present. However, what we now take for granted did not exist in the nineteenth century. It was not until 1838 that the cab driver needed a licence to make his living on the streets and not until the end of the century that the test of driving skill was actually executed. Before then, the authorities basically granted a licence to any person who ‘shall produce such a Certificate of his Ability to drive and of his good Character as shall be satisfactory.’ Here, the ‘Certificate of Ability to drive’ was rather ambiguous. Hence, it is no wonder that when an official was being interrogated on the subject of ‘Might not people be able to say that they would be able to drive simply because they could sit upright on a

⁴⁴⁷ Old Bailey: Reference Number: t18570105-230.

<http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/browse.jsp?id=t18570105-230-offence-1&div=t18570105-230&terms=cab#highlight> (accessed 3 September 2010).

⁴⁴⁸ Old Bailey: Reference Number: t19060723-52.

<http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/browse.jsp?id=t19060723-52-offence-1&div=t19060723-52&terms=cab#highlight> (accessed 3 September 2010).

⁴⁴⁹ ‘The Monster Cab Age,’ in *Punch*, unknown date, p. 189.

⁴⁵⁰ Anonymous, ‘Where to Sit in a Hansom’, *Woman’s Life*, 335:26 (September, 1902), p. 122.

box and hold the reins in their hand; is not that latitude of construction possible?' his answer was: 'It is possible, but I think in a very great majority of instances the words mean that the man has driven before.'⁴⁵¹ The lack of a trustworthy system for licensing qualified cab drivers therefore made horse cab riding in Victorian London much more risky, for one never knew whether the driver's skill or ability would be good enough to safely negotiate the hazards of the road.

In this light, there many variables were engaged when the risk/safety of horse cab was under consideration. The traffic, the speed, the horse, the condition of the cab, and the quality of drivers, all were crucial to a safe voyage. On the contrary, if there was a problem with one of these variables, disasters might be expected. In this sense, although taking horse cab in Victorian London was indeed quite exciting, it was also dangerous.

Horse cab as a conveyance of disease

As Kerr has shown, another worry in relation to the Victorian horse cab was the concern for public health.⁴⁵² That is, the cabs were considered a conveyance of contagious diseases. As nineteenth-century London underwent a rapid growth in its population, living conditions in the extremely crowded city inevitably became a serious problem as far as infectious diseases were concerned. It is no coincidence that the second half of the Victorian reign witnessed a stream of medical and social reform, coming from both official authorities as well as private individuals, from both religious organizations and civil groups. A weekly report was conducted in detail to monitor the birth rate and mortality, social investigation on a statistical basis and literature on the urban exploration of working class became two popular subgenres among the middle-class readership, and both professional and popular journals containing scientific and medical knowledge were circulated to educate people how best to tackle the infectious diseases.⁴⁵³ It is in this political and social context that the

⁴⁵¹ May, *The Administration and Organisation of the London Cab Trade from the Late Eighteenth Century to the First World War*, pp. 126-27.

⁴⁵² Matthew Kerr, "'Perambulating Fever Nests of our London Streets': Cabs, Omnibuses, Ambulances, and Other 'Pest-Vehicles' in the Victorian Metropolis", *Journal of British Studies* 49 (April 2010), pp. 283-310.

⁴⁵³ See: James Walvin, 'Sickness and Health', in James Walvin, *Victorian Values* (Worcester: Ebenezer Baylis and Son Ltd. 1988), pp. 25-37; Tina Young, 'Writing the Victorian City: Discourses of Risk, Connection,

Victorian horse cab was regarded as a threat to public health—as Ritchie declared in the mid-nineteenth century, ‘A terrible danger threatens all who live in London, or who visit it...’⁴⁵⁴

The reason behind this association of the horse cab with public health problems is that it played a significant role with regard to diseases in Victorian London. As noted in the previous chapter, before a proper ambulance system was devised, the Victorian horse cab, particularly the spacious Clarence, was frequently used to convey patients. The drivers did not normally clean or disinfect their cabs after completing their missions. In general, they would just carry on looking for the next passenger. Thus, if the disease was contagious, the virus or germs would be circulated among Londoners by cab. Furthermore, the enclosed carriage of Clarence, which obstructed the circulation of fresh air, reinforced the anxiety of Victorian people who believed that contagious diseases were airborne.⁴⁵⁵ With respect to this, Yates once asserted that ‘the free open airy Hansoms’ seemed affected less in comparison with the Clarence.⁴⁵⁶ In his ‘Concerning Cabs,’ Ritchie not only mentioned his worry that ‘it is impossible to say where the infection ceases,’ but also proposed his suggestion: penalty should be imposed on any attempt to ‘hire a public vehicle for the conveyance of any person affected with contagious disease.’⁴⁵⁷ In addition, in Figures 5.8 and 5.9, two cartoons cited from *Punch*, the cab passengers are clearly quite reluctant to take the four-wheelers due to the possibility that they had been used to transport patients during an epidemic of certain infectious diseases in the city.

The connection between diseases and transport here is worth noting. The main theory underpinning this anxiety/doubt about whether the horse cab could spread contagious diseases was the ‘miasma’ theory – a widely accepted belief asserting that ‘infection passed thorough the air,’ or ‘gases given off by putrefying organic matter.’⁴⁵⁸ According to this hypothesis, it was not only physical touch that could cause the damage, so too could invisible but inevitable contact via the atmosphere. This blurring of the distinction ‘between individuals and between houses’, as Tina Young points out,

and Inevitability’, *Victorian Studies*, 43:4 (Jun 22, 2001), pp. 561-90.

⁴⁵⁴ Ritchie, ‘Concerning Cabs’, p. 189.

⁴⁵⁵ Walvin, ‘Sickness and Health’, pp. 28-29.

⁴⁵⁶ Yates, ‘Riding London: Of Cabs, Jobs and Black Jobs’, pp. 44-45.

⁴⁵⁷ Ritchie, ‘Concerning Cabs’, pp. 189-90.

⁴⁵⁸ Porter, *London: A Social History*, p. 315.

frightened Victorian people: since every one needs to breathe, every one has the same chance of becoming infected. In this ‘Miasma’s Commonwealth,’ men are born equal, which is why Victorian Londoners were so eager to reform the life conditions of *all* city dwellers.⁴⁵⁹ Contemporary popular literature also echoed this trend of common concern about public health and the danger of fluidity or hybridity. In this sense, it might not be surprising that Doyle condemned London as a ‘cesspool into which all the loungers and idlers of the Empire are irresistibly drained,’ and those words were came out of the mouth of Dr. Watson – the narrator with medical background.⁴⁶⁰ It also explains why cabs were regarded as a serious threat during the period when certain contagious diseases were endemic in London. As a moving source of infection, the horse cab in this sense embodied the double danger of diseases and transport at the same time. London, in this way, was much more like a jungle where contagious diseases lurked.

Different adventure to different group of passengers

People nowadays will smile to hear that for years after their introduction it was considered "fast" to ride in a hansom, and its use was tabooed to ladies – Edmund Yates, 1895.⁴⁶¹

The dangers of these hansom cabs in getting in and out, with no helping hand, are prohibitive to all but active people – *The Times*, 19 July 1902.⁴⁶²

As has been discussed before, the door of the Victorian horse cab was clearly not open to every Victorian. It generally was an exclusive conveyance of people belonging to the upper or middle classes. However, even for those who could afford to take a horse cab, their experiences of riding might be different. That is, the financial threshold was neither the only obstacle nor the only variable with regard to this specific mode of transport. Therefore, this section will put emphasis on these differences and attempt to analyse the reasons behind them.

⁴⁵⁹ Young, ‘Writing the Victorian City: Discourses of Risk, Connection, and Inevitability’, pp. 561-90.

⁴⁶⁰ Arthur Conan Doyle, *A Study in Scarlet*, in *Sherlock Holmes: The Complete Stories* (London: Wordsworth Editions, 1889, 2006), p. 14.

⁴⁶¹ Yates, *Recollections and Experiences*, p. 33.

⁴⁶² *The Times*, 19 July 1902.

As noted several times, speed was the essence of Victorian horse cab, playing a crucial part in almost every aspect concerning this conveyance. Indeed, the speed of the cab did matter to different groups of passengers. As Moore and Wilkins' remarks, to most youngsters – the dandies, the swells, and even young ladies – speed equalled to excitement. On the contrary, to senior cab hirers, speed was a risk rather than an enjoyable experience. In addition, the structure of the cab could be another obstacle to the elderly. The fancy two-wheelers, both the cabriolet and Hansom, were notoriously difficult to get in and out of, especially for aged people. Dickens once said that there was nothing hard about getting into a cabriolet, 'The getting into a cab is a very pretty and graceful process, which, when well performed, is essentially melodramatic...One bound, and you are on the first step; turn your body lightly round to the right, and you are on the second; bend gracefully beneath the reins, working round to the left at the same time, and you are in the cab.'⁴⁶³ These detailed instructions although intended ironically show that it was indeed complicated to access the cab and not easy at all. And as cited in the beginning of this section, there was a comment saying that the Hansom was nearly 'prohibitive to all but active people.' Therefore, for weak, disabled and aged cab passengers, accessibility to the two-wheelers was quite restricted.

Figures 5.10 and 5.11, two cartoons cited from *Punch*, demonstrate another intolerable aspect of the horse cab for a certain group of people. But this time, it is not about age; it is about the appearance, or the weight of passengers. Although no one knows whether this kind of case happened or not, these pictures indicate that heavy people might not even be given the chance to access, get into, a horse cab if the cab driver thought his horse was too tired or too weak to offer the service. Even when the passenger finally got into the cab, there was still no guarantee that the journey would be completed. Furthermore, other physical conditions as well could influence the experience of riding a horse cab. For example, the size of the Hansom was a drawback regularly complained about by its passengers. As displayed in Figure 5.3 and reported in a *Punch* essay, the height of the carriage was not ideal; taller passengers thus always 'knocked his hat against the window.' Therefore, 'ride regularly in Hansoms, and your gossamer won't last a week.' Besides, the essay's author kept questioning the 'Hansom-cab manufacturers', 'Can two gentlemen sit comfortably in a Hansom? If so,

⁴⁶³ Dickens, 'The Last Cab-driver, and the First Omnibus Cad', p. 105.

how?’⁴⁶⁴ Passengers with diverse physical shapes would have different experiences when riding a Victorian horse cab, which means their accessibility and ability to enjoy the conveyance were also dissimilar.

This section has so far dealt with the disparate experiences of cab passengers with different ages and physical appearances. Nevertheless, in comparison with these two human factors, gender definitely will bring about many more discussions and controversies because there was an apparent split within the discourses as to the female experiences of riding Victorian horse cab. On the one side was a stream of an opinion, which highlighted the risk for females taking a horse cab. Phrases such as ‘unprotected female’ or ‘helpless women’ repeatedly depicted female cab passengers as vulnerable. A letter to the editors of *The Times* in 1853 which applauded the invention of an early type of taximeter, for example, said that it ‘will effectually prevent “cabby” attempting “to do a stranger or unprotected female” by driving them a long way round instead of the shortest cut....’⁴⁶⁵ In the same year, another wrote ‘...yet I cannot but feel that, had I been a bashful character or an “unprotected female,” the bully would have been but too successful.’⁴⁶⁶ Also in 1870, a letter complaining about the new cab regulation was signed by ‘an unprotected woman’.⁴⁶⁷

Several celebrated people also took this standpoint. Geraldine Endors Jewsbury (1812-80) once noted that ‘I had no idea how utterly helpless a woman feels on such occasions.’⁴⁶⁸ So did Mayhew when he commented that ‘Cabmen bully ladies dreadfully. A large part of their undue gain is made out of timid women, especially women who have children with them.’⁴⁶⁹ As quoted at the beginning of this section, Yates also commented that the Hansom’s use ‘was tabooed to ladies’. Even at the dawn of twentieth century when Moore published his *Omnibuses and Cabs*, he remarked that ‘Women can travel in London by train, tram, omnibus and boat without fear of extortion and incivility, but they know from bitter experience, that every time

⁴⁶⁴ ‘The Umbrella; Its Use and Abuse’, *Punch*, 5 November 1864.

⁴⁶⁵ *The Times*, 16 February 1853.

⁴⁶⁶ *The Times*, 20 July 1853.

⁴⁶⁷ *The Times*, 26 January 1870.

⁴⁶⁸ Geraldine Endors Jewsbury (1812-80), Letter from Geraldine Endors Jewsbury to Jane Baillie Welsh Carlyle, 28 December 1849, in Annie E. ed, *Selections from the Letters of Geraldine Endors Jewsbury to Jane Welsh Carlyle* (London: Longmans, Green, 1982), p. 328.

⁴⁶⁹ Mayhew, ‘Opposite A Cabstand,’ pp. 246-47.

they hire a cab they are running a risk of being cheated and afterwards abused for daring to utter a protest.⁴⁷⁰ This viewpoint was expressed in other forms as well. For instance, Figure 5.12 is a cartoon published in *Punch* in 1862, which illustrates a cab driver behaving suspiciously with his female passengers. Besides, there was a play entitled ‘Scenes from the Life of an Unprotected Female’ also in *Punch*, and in its Scene 11, outside the Bank, the plot description is as follows, ‘The unprotected female escapes from the hands of the cab-driver, after an hour of stoppages, prayers, fears, remonstrances, higgings, and general uncomfortableness of all kinds’⁴⁷¹ All of these materials indicate quite clearly how the experience of riding the horse cabs was perceived with respect to Victorian females; they also suggest that it was not proper for them to take the horse cab alone.

However, although they may be not shout as loudly as the other side, other materials did express an opposite opinion as to the female experience of riding a horse cab in Victorian London. According to the diaries and letters written by renowned Victorian females, and the weekly advertisement column ‘left in a cab’ in *The Times*, taking a cab was a common experience to women from the middle and upper class. For instance, both George Eliot and Jane Welsh Carlyle frequently recorded that they took horse cabs in their daily lives, but nothing horrible and no bad experience was written down.⁴⁷² In addition, female accessories, reticules, purses, or clothes were regularly reported as ‘left in a cab’. In this regard, the materials seem to suggest that taking a horse cab was perhaps not as frightful as their contemporaries asserted. On the contrary, as has been discussed in Chapter 4, in some cases, Victorian female even felt safer in a cab, particularly when they were situated somewhere they were not familiar with, or were surrounded by people they did not like.⁴⁷³ Neither were they really afraid of the cab driver because they did meet some good drivers who knew how to treat female passengers with politeness, generosity and respect. In an article in *The Woman’s Signal* in 1898, Lady Durham was reported to have met a considerate cabman, who drove her home for free on a rainy night. This experience was apparently good enough to improve her opinion of the cabmen. She even said that, ‘Oh, there is so

⁴⁷⁰ Moore, *Omnibuses and Cabs*, p. 275.

⁴⁷¹ ‘Scenes from the Life of an Unprotected Female’, *Punch*, 19 January 1850, p. 22.

⁴⁷² In her diary and private letters, Jane Welsh Carlyle mentions cabs 26 times, including when she lost her dog when taking a cab. At the same time, there are 12 such entries recorded in George Eliot’s diary and letters.

⁴⁷³ See the case of Elizabeth Barrett Browning and the story of ‘Man with the Twisted Lip’.

much good in the workingmen; they are so much better than we are.’⁴⁷⁴ Figure 5.13 is another example showing how hard the cab driver tried to remain polite when a female passenger was in his cab. On the one side, the editor of *Punch* might just attempt to joke about the cabman, but on the other, it also demonstrates, no matter consciously or not, the best endeavour of the cabby. In this light, it is not surprising that some female passengers were alleged to ask the cabman’s badge number for next hire.

And don't the ladies like to hire me, for we go splashing along in fine style, and then spoonily they say, ‘We shall look out for you Cabby another day, What’s your Number?’⁴⁷⁵

This section has presented the split of opinions as to the experience of hiring horse cabs, especially with regard to female passengers. However, the point of this is not to make claims about which one is true and which one is not. In fact, this polarization of opinions echoes the metaphorical rhetoric of ‘adventure,’ always linking to a set of senses. In addition, it also confirms that different people would have disparate feelings and different experiences of taking cabs. Nevertheless, at least one thing is sure, that is, taking a horse cab was already normal practice in the daily lives of Victorian people who could afford to do it, whether they were males or females.

A masculine heroic discourse of mobility

This chapter hitherto has presented the experience of both pleasure and risk in connection with taking a horse cab in Victorian London. However, if one stops here and reviews all the discourses about the Victorian horse cab, it is clear that there is always a young, masculine, educated and heroic discourse at the centre, dominating the discussion. What I am arguing here is that this not simply due to the fact that Dickens, Mayhew, Yates, Moore and the *Punch* editors, whose words have been quoted at length, were elite males in the Victorian society, but also because these male writers, journalists and social commentators were trying to monopolize the dominant discourse by suppressing other existing discourses, such as the discourses from female or aged passengers, as well as the cab drivers. It is very interesting and noteworthy that

⁴⁷⁴ *The Woman’s Signal*, 7 April 1898.

⁴⁷⁵ Guyatt, *Hansom Joe, the fastest on the road*.

the discourses about ‘unprotected women’ and the dangers of riding horse cabs were mainly promulgated by male writers. Of course this is not to claim that what they said was untrue, but to argue that even though Victorian women were well aware of what could happen when taking a cab, they did not seem to be as panicked as their male counterparts. They left almost nothing in terms of hard evidence complaining about the cabs or their drivers. Therefore, it can be argued that there was a masculine discourse trying to define the experience/knowledge of Victorian horse cab, deciding what was dangerous and what was delightful, making the judgement that most cab drivers, if not all of them, were greedy and unreliable, and most females, if not all of them, were helpless and vulnerable.

To take a step further in this direction, here I would like to propose another argument not only in connection with the horse cabs, but also with the idea of mobility in nineteenth-century London. That is, the reason why Victorian males tried so hard to promote the ‘advantage’ discourse of the horse cabs, and to degrade the mobility of cab drivers by demonizing this kind of mobility, and that of Victorian females by preventing them from accessing the cabs, was to justify their own mobility. This section therefore will stay focused on this dominant discourse as to Victorian horse cab and mobility, attempting to trace its origin, figuring out how it developed and worked, and discussing the co-evolution of the discourse, Victorian social atmosphere, and the industry of the horse cab. Nevertheless, competing discourses, like the voices of Victorian females, will also be included here.

Freedom, mobility, and city

Mobility – the ability to move or to be moved – has long been regarded as having an intimate relationship with individual freedom.⁴⁷⁶ In fact, the relationship between the two is so close that to Hamilton and Hoyle, it is not surprising that some roads in the modern cities are named ‘freeways’. It also explains why transport has always been linked to the ‘rhetoric of freedom’.⁴⁷⁷ In addition, the city – urban space – has long been regarded as a place of freedom as well. It is a place which attracts the flow of people and commodities. As the fluidity of people in the city reaches a massive scale,

⁴⁷⁶ Famm and Kaufmann, ‘Operationalising the Concept of Motility: A Qualitative Study’, p. 167.

⁴⁷⁷ Hamilton and Hoyle, ‘Moving Cities’, pp. 76-79, 81.

it produces anonymity and alienation, which promise the individual freedom.⁴⁷⁸

As noted in the previous section, transport, travel or movement could call forth the senses of both ‘romance and horror’ due to the fact that to move sometimes means to break the boundaries, to transgress the borderline, which might be equal to encountering a series of uncertainties, such as good or bad people, good or bad fortune, or even a dangerous accident. In the meanwhile, there has been a long tradition of literature depicting cities as places producing ubiquitous excitement and fear. In McLaughlin’s words, the city has always been portrayed as a place juxtaposing a set of dual values such as ‘darkness and light, sin and salvation, barbarism and culture.’⁴⁷⁹ The alienation, anonymity and fluidity of cities not only awaken anxieties about identity, but also create a twilight zone where ‘dreadful delight’ might happen.⁴⁸⁰ Therefore, it is the experience of travelling in the city – here, travelling in Victorian London – which interested those late-Victorian authors, who compared urban travel to an adventure, an exploration, and a trip of discovery.

When walking in the imperial capital in 1876, Henry James (1843-1916), an American writer who stayed in London for a very long time,⁴⁸¹ once wrote that ‘I had complete liberty...I felt it to be the right place.’ As Walkowitz argues, ‘Despite its brutalities, London offered James an oasis of personal freedom, a place of floating possibilities as well as dangers.’ By moving freely across the urban space, and out of these perceptions of freedom, uncertainty and possibility, a sense of pleasure emerged.⁴⁸² This pleasure of transgression and exploration, coincidentally (or not), was the specialty and passion of Doyle’s renowned hero—Sherlock Holmes. As Holmes claimed more than once, he did not work for money, but for the job itself, and for the delightful experience that only this job could offer. Baudelaire even created a role model – the *flâneur* – a male with Bohemian lifestyle, on behalf of a certain group of people who knew how to enjoy the pleasure of travelling and exploration in the nineteenth century, a sensibility which in Richard Sennett’s words was ‘a bourgeois male pleasure.’⁴⁸³ In

⁴⁷⁸ Hamilton and Hoyle, ‘Moving Cities’, p. 76.

⁴⁷⁹ McLaughlin, ‘An Irritation to Metaphor’, p. 1.

⁴⁸⁰ Cited from Walkowitz’s book title: *City of Dreadful Delight*.

⁴⁸¹ Henry James moved to Mayfair in London in 1876 and spent most of his time there until 1886. See *DNB*: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34150?docPos=3> (accessed 10 September 2014).

⁴⁸² Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, p. 15.

⁴⁸³ Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, p. 15.

other words, the freedom to travel through urban space and enjoy discovering/exploring the city was exclusive in Victorian society, to the so-called bourgeois males.

The traditional prerogative of the Victorian male

As Flamm and Kaufmann argue in their article with regard to mobility, ‘Mobility requires capability and knowledge and “tariff schemes.”’ It is a type of know-how, even ‘capital’, which needs to be accumulated and can be bought or acquired with other forms of capital.⁴⁸⁴ Accessibility is restricted. A threshold of spatial mobility – no matter whether it is social, financial, or intellectual – thus clearly exists. The above-mentioned ‘freeways,’ for instance, are not literally free or open to everyone, only to those who own automobiles.⁴⁸⁵ Moreover, mobility – in this case, possessing a car – then becomes a scale by which to distinguish people and a measure of one’s subjectivity, a way to check whether one’s self fulfils certain requirements, or to compare one’s self to other people. According to McLaughlin, Walkowitz and Richard Sennett, to Victorian male elites, travelling around and exploring Victorian London—the urban jungle – and observing, discovering and gazing at others—the poor, the immigrants – ‘had long been the informing feature of nineteenth-century bourgeois male subjectivity.’⁴⁸⁶ To put it in another way, they distinguished themselves from their fellows by their mobility/adventure and the way they read and discoursed about the city and its multi-cultural dwellers:

These practices [gaze] presupposed a privileged male subject whose identity was stable, coherent, autonomous; who was, moreover, capable through reason and its ‘science’ of establishing a reliable and universal knowledge of ‘man’ and his world.⁴⁸⁷

This explains why Mayhew and Booth were keen to apply seemingly scientific and statistical measures when publicising their ‘discovery.’ Similarly, it is also the reason why Doyle created Dr. Watson – with a medical degree – as his narrator, and a

⁴⁸⁴ Flamm and Kaufmann, ‘Operationalising the Concept of Motility: A Qualitative Study’, p. 168.

⁴⁸⁵ Hamilton and Hoyle, ‘Moving Cities’, p. 76.

⁴⁸⁶ Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, p. 15.

⁴⁸⁷ Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, p. 16.

detective with a chemistry background who used scientific methods to investigate crimes. Manliness was another important element in these discourses. Exploration, adventure, conquer, discovery all are words associated with strong, heroic masculinity. All in all, Victorian male elites were trying to dominate the discourse and build their subjectivity in a period when boundaries were being collapsed and identity had become fluid and unclear.

It was under these social and cultural conditions that Victorian male opinion leaders developed a masculine heroic discourse in connection with mobility. The Victorian horse-drawn cab, as a major mode of urban transport, played a central role in this discourse. As has been discussed previously, the Victorian hackney carriage was an exclusive way to move about London. Its fare was not affordable to general public. It provided a space distinguished from the masses in the streets, which in the meantime offered an ideal base to observe or investigate other people at a close yet not dangerous distance. The feature of hop-on-hop-off and the flexible fare system were very convenient to its hirer, especially those who valued this kind of sense of freedom. Last but not least, it required some basic physical strength, skills, geographical knowledge, and guts. No wonder Doyle chose the horse-drawn cab as Holmes's favourite conveyance, and Holmes became its best known user, an archetypal Victorian male characterised by 'self-control, self discipline, and the absence of emotional expression.'⁴⁸⁸

It was indeed like old times when, at that hour, I found myself seated beside him in a hansom, my revolver in my pocket and the thrill of adventure in my heart. Holmes was cold and stern and silent. As the gleam of the street-lamps flashed upon his austere features I saw that his brows were drawn down in thought and his thin lips compressed. I knew not what wild beast we were about to hunt down in the dark jungle of criminal London, but I was well assured from the bearing of this master huntsman that the adventure was a most grave one, while the sardonic smile which occasionally broke through his ascetic gloom boded little good for the object of our quest.⁴⁸⁹

⁴⁸⁸ Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, p. 17.

⁴⁸⁹ Arthur Conan Doyle, 'The [Adventure of the] Empty House', *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*, in *Sherlock Holmes: The Complete Stories* (London: Wordsworth Edition, 1989, 2006), p. 856.

The masculine heroic discourse of mobility

Victorian male opinion leaders not only promoted their discourse on mobility in connection with the horse cab, but also attempted to suppress other counter-discourses by degrading other people's mobility. For instance, to cab drivers, who possessed an equivalent mobility in Victorian London, they degraded cab drivers' mobility as a transgression of social norms.

Recent studies in different fields have already noted the interconnection between 'mobility' and 'being a threat/potential threat'.⁴⁹⁰ As Lissa Malkki cleverly concludes, as hegemonic 'sedentarism' – being rooted or placed bodily as well as culturally or 'politically' *in* certain place – becomes pervasive throughout the developed and developing world, those who lose their bodily attachment to a fixed/recognisable place, like the homeless, refugees, or streetwalkers, are pathologised and demonised as aberrant, immoral and dangerous.⁴⁹¹ These studies afford an alternative explanation of why cabdrivers were condemned as one of the origins of disorder in Victorian London. They might have caused damage to the city; nevertheless, the reason that they were notorious in popular culture, or why the authorities tried so hard to 'manage' them was not because they were 'bad' but because of their mobility, which not only contradicted the rooted values of 'sedentarism' but also contradicted the mobility of Victorian male elites, making cab drivers a signifier of strangeness, unfamiliarity and threat. Mayhew is probably the most typical instance of this positioning. In his *London Labour and the London Poor*, he divided people into two 'distinct and broadly marked races, viz., the wanderers and the settlers – the vagabond and the citizen – the nomadic and the civilized tribes.' And in the Victorian Period, the boundaries between two races had become much more ambiguous due to fluidity on a global scale.⁴⁹²

As for the mobility of Victorian females, the idea of women being free to take a cab, or to travel/transgress/discover the urban space – which was supposed to belong to men – at will seriously vexed their male fellows, not to mention the possibility of

⁴⁹⁰ This connection can be seen in the works of Hannah Arendt (1906-75), Zygmunt Bauman (on the homeless), Liisa Malkki (refugees), Richard Sennett, David Harvey, and Tim Cresswell (on homosexuals).

⁴⁹¹ Lissa Malkki, 'National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialization of National Identity Among Scholars and Refugees', *Cultural Anthropology*, 7:1 (February, 1992), 24-44.

⁴⁹² Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor*, p. 43.

contamination caused by contact between ‘pure’ women and ‘evil’ cabmen. As a means to prevent the potential combination of these two undesirable/hazardous kinds of mobility, namely both the movement of women and cabdrivers – the two subject species at that time – Victorian male opinion leaders promoted the image of ‘unprotected women’ and the theory that taking a cab was dangerous for single women.

Apart from the discourse of ‘unprotected female’ or ‘vulnerable women,’ there was another way to denigrate the mobility of Victorian women: the discourse in connection with female cab drivers. There had been some female proprietors of hackney coaches since the beginnings of the business. Most were the widows or daughters of former plate owners.⁴⁹³ Records of female drivers however, are relatively scarce, which is perhaps why female drivers were deemed as a ‘spectacle’ or ‘exciting scene’ on the Victorian London streets, even by women’s newspaper and periodicals.⁴⁹⁴ It is equally noteworthy how Victorian visual materials presented the female cab drivers, particularly those published in the sensationalist periodicals. Figures 5.14 and 5.15, for example, employ the same plot device in which one or several *policemen* are trying to stop female cab drivers, who ironically seemed to be controlling their Hansoms with great aplomb.⁴⁹⁵ No similar scenes were found in the cartoons picturing a male cabby. That is, there seems to have been widespread agreement in Victorian society that female cab drivers were indeed an interesting scene, but only a few people would have taken them seriously. It was not until the 1890s that the social climate began to change. The end of the century is also when, according to Walkowitz, ‘male’ spectatorship changed.⁴⁹⁶ Although still focusing on the outfit of those 25 *handsome*

⁴⁹³ May, *Gondolas and Growlers*, p. 164.

⁴⁹⁴ See the title of Figure 5.14 and the article in which it was wrote: ‘It is stated that shortly Londoners will witness the spectacle of twenty-five hansom cabs driven about their city by as many handsome girls.’ *The Woman’s Signal*, 2 September 1897, p. 159. *The Woman’s Signal* was a cheap, weekly feminist magazine edited by the well-known Lady Henry (Lady Henry Somerset, 1851-1921), a temperance leader and campaigner for women’s right. About *The Woman’s Signal*, see *The Waterloo Dictionary of English Newspaper and Periodicals: 1800-1900*: <http://www.victorianperiodicals.com.ezproxy.york.ac.uk/series2/showarticle.asp?id=81836&HighlightedField=title&HighlightedWords=woman%27s~signal> (accessed 10 September 2014).

⁴⁹⁵ Figure 5.14 and 5.15 were cartoons in the cheap, sensationalist, but popular weekly periodical *The Illustrated Police News*. See *The Illustrated Police News* 29 June 1878 and 22 August 1885. About *The Illustrated Police News*, see *The Waterloo Dictionary of English Newspaper and Periodicals: 1800-1900*: <http://www.victorianperiodicals.com.ezproxy.york.ac.uk/series2/showarticle.asp?id=90071&HighlightedField=title&HighlightedWords=illustrated~police~news> (accessed 10 September 2014).

⁴⁹⁶ Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, p. 22.

girls, the article published in *The Woman's Signal* in 1897 at least shows neither distrust nor contempt. Likewise, Figure 5.16 is a cartoon depicting a Hansom girl in *Punch* published in 1896, which adopts a rather neutral perspective.

In addition to degrading the mobility of cab drivers and Victorian women, this masculine heroic discourse showed disrespect for other less manly attributes. Figures 5.6 and 5.7 are typical instances. Jenkins, the short gentleman who did not enjoy the horse cabs' velocity is described as 'timid'. His stature also hints at his lack of strength or masculinity. He chooses an impotent horse, as he thinks it will be safer because the cab will not be as fast. However, he eventually falls out of the Hansom just like his fellow who is eager to go faster. When Jenkins falls, the people in the cartoon who witness the tragedy display no sympathy. The editor even ironically commented that 'Don't look too much before you leap.' This unsympathetic/ironic attitude to a certain degree reveals the contempt – disguised as a form of humour – that existed for people, particularly men, like Jenkins. This discourse therefore reinforced the idea that only masculine, daring, and knowledgeable and skilled (those who knew how to choose the horse and cab) urban men understood and also were well qualified to enjoy riding horse-drawn cabs in Victorian London.

By denigrating the mobility of cab drivers, their male and female counterparts, well-to-do Victorian men could therefore monopolise not only the discourse about the horse cab, but more importantly, the discourse and practice of mobility itself.

However, along with the dominant discourse there were other discourses regarding mobility in the Victorian Period. For instance, as early as 1875, there was an article titled 'Cab-driving is certainly an original employment for women' in the weekly feminist newspaper *Women and Work*, which was found and published by the women's right activist Emily Faithful (1835-95).⁴⁹⁷ Other more powerful words emphasize the fact that the Victorian female often dared to enjoy the pleasure and 'adventure' of bourgeois male – taking a horse cab to somewhere depicted as the 'darkest heart of England.'

⁴⁹⁷ *Women and Work*, 9 October 1875. About *Women and Work*, see *The Waterloo Dictionary of English Newspaper and Periodicals: 1800-1900*:

<http://www.victorianperiodicals.com.ezproxy.york.ac.uk/series2/showarticle.asp?id=81846&HighlightedField=title&HighlightedWords=women~work> (accessed 10 September 2014).

...I know that in your heart you agree with everything I say, and only add those grumbling growls to keep up the precious dignity of your sex...I like to be amused, but there's nothing to amuse one now, unless one takes a Hansom, and goes away into the wilds at the east-end, places you never heard of, there's fun there, but it's a bore to go so far.⁴⁹⁸

Therefore, the conversation, negotiation, and competition between competing discourses continued throughout the second half of the nineteenth century.

Conclusion

This chapter echoes the popular rhetoric of 'adventure' in Victorian Period, regarding riding the horse cab in nineteenth-century London as an adventure, focusing on both its positive and negative experiences. In addition, it also scrutinizes how Victorian people expressed their experiences of hiring a cab, figuring out the differences, and examining the controversy. At the end of this chapter, I suggest that there was a masculine heroic discourse with regard to Victorian horse cabs and mobility, trying to justify Victorian bourgeois male mobility, and degrade other discourses about mobility, including those more favourable to females, cab drivers, and those who did not enjoy the adventure of cab riding. In this regard, the Victorian horse cab was not merely a major mode of urban transport, but also played a central role as a cultural signifier when Victorian people were considering urban fluidity, subjectivity, and identity.

⁴⁹⁸ 'Mary Ann's Notions', *Punch*, 17 January 1857, p. 26.



" HANSOM, MISS ! , YES, MISS ! CATTLE OR DOG SHOW ? "

Figure 5.1 "Hansom, Miss! Yes, Miss! Cattle or Dog Show?"

Source *Punch*, 12 July 1862

FAREWELL TO THE SEASON.
A Midsummer Monody, 1886.



FAREWELL to the Season! Not often
 We take it so early as June;
 But CHAMBERLAIN nothing could soften,
 The Parties were all out of tune.
 And so dissolution confronts us,
 Ere roses are fairly in bloom,
 And GLADSTONE from Westminster hunts us
 To challenge our fate, and his doom.

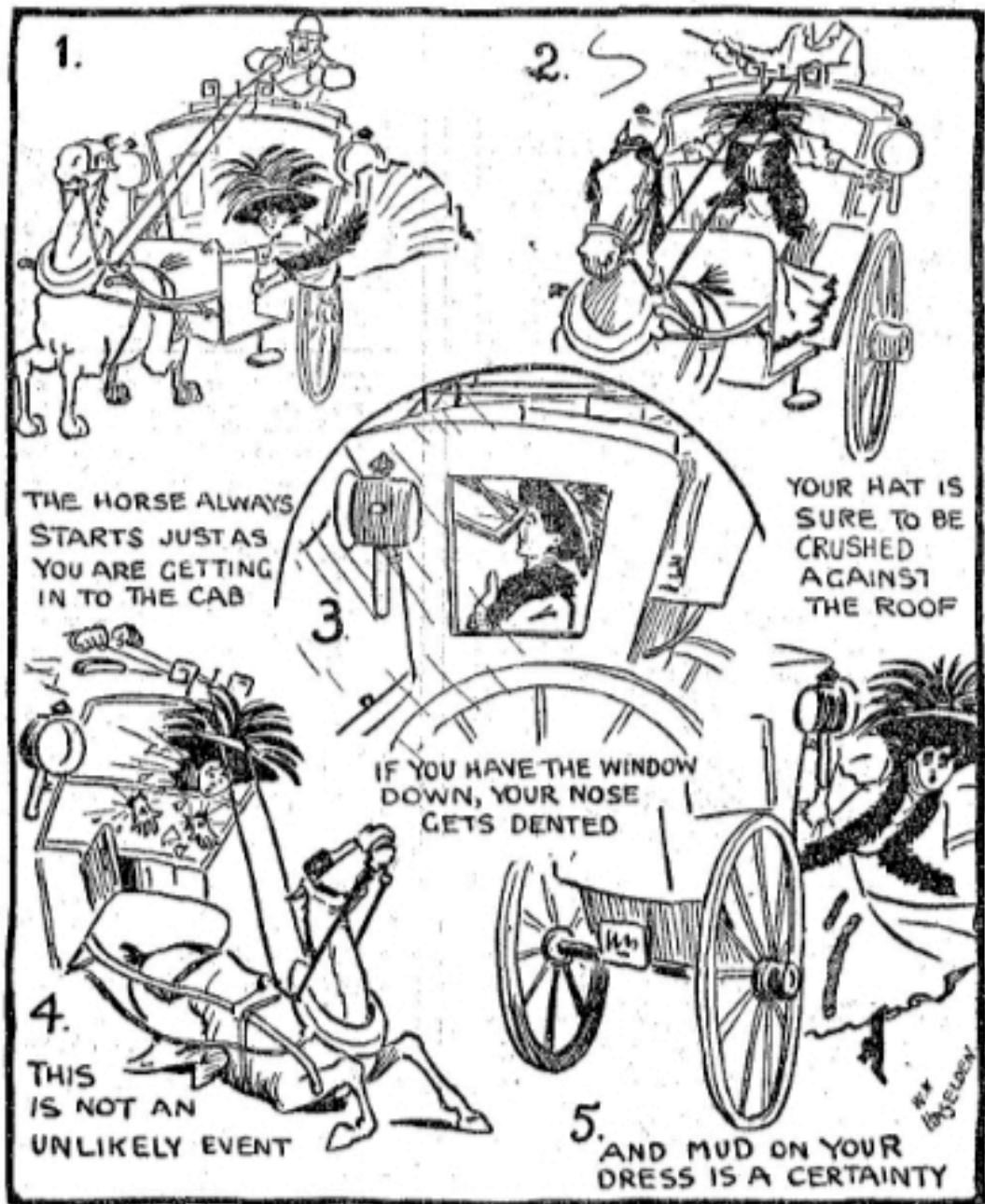
Farewell to the Season! 'Twas scurvy
 Of WILLIAM to play us this trick,
 Sets everything all topsy-turvy,
 And banishes trade to Old Nick.
 The Shopkeeper sighs with vexation,
 The Milliner moans in despair;
 In the West there is wild tribulation;
 Teeth-grinding and tearing of hair.

Farewell to the Season! The hunter
 Of husbands is baulked of her game.
 There is grief in the bosom of GUNTER,
 All Regent-Street's soul is a-flame.
 The Row is a wilderness utter,
 The Livery Stables look sad,
 The Cab-drivers mournfully mutter,
 And Materfamilias goes mad.

Figure 5.2 Farewell to the Season

Source *Punch*, 3 July 1886

ALTHOUGH A HANSOM HAS ITS DISADVANTAGES—



—It remains a most popular vehicle, dear to the hearts of Englishmen and Englishwomen.

Figure 5.3 Although a hansom has its advantages

Source *Punch*, 28 November 1907

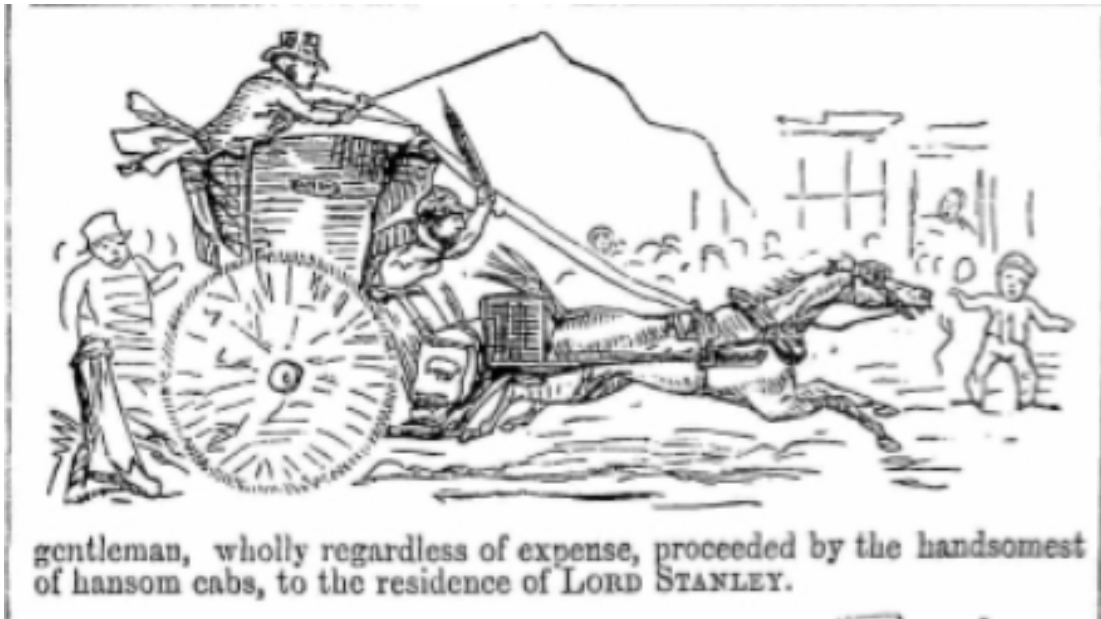


Figure 5.4

Source *Punch*, unknown date

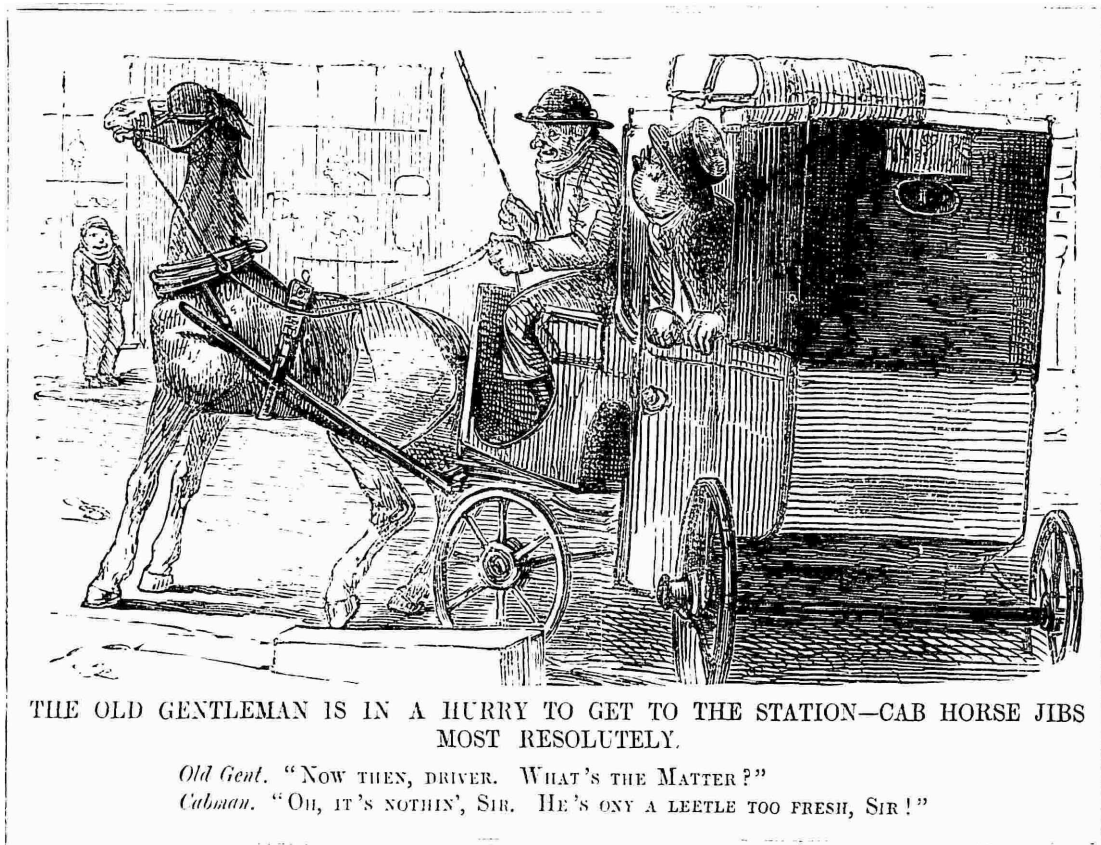
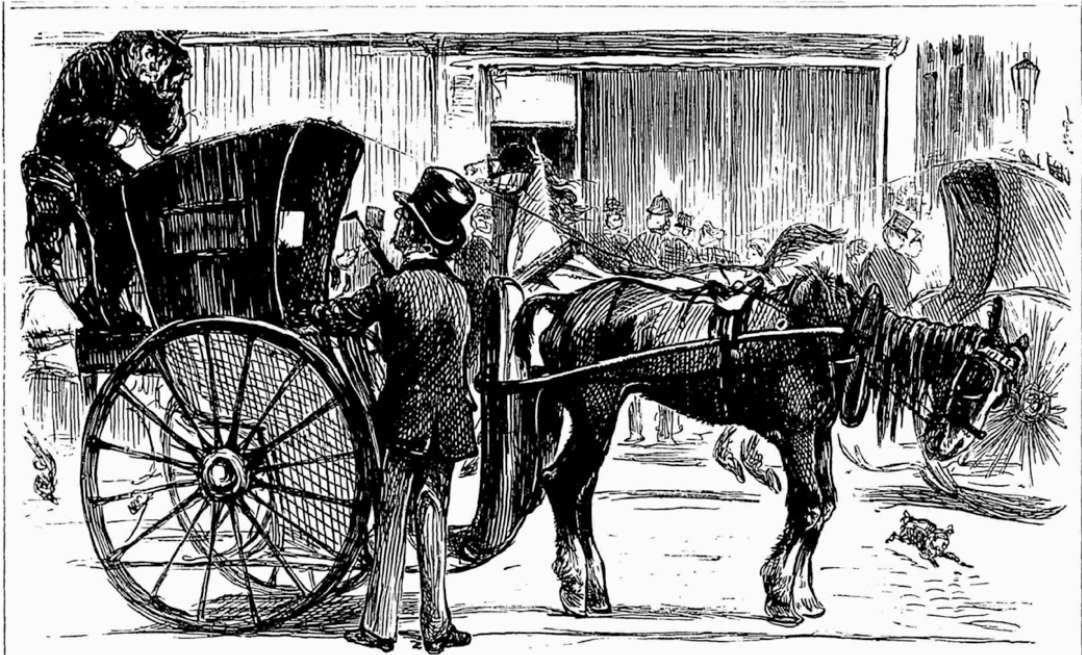


Figure 5.5 The Old Gentleman is in a hurry to get to the station cab horse – jibs most resolutely

Source *Punch*, 1 January 1853



DON'T LOOK TOO MUCH BEFORE YOU LEAP.

JENKINS IS TIMID, AND NEVER RIDES IN HANSOM CABS, ON ACCOUNT OF THE WELL-KNOWN TENDENCY THE HORSES THEREOF HAVE TO BOLT, KICK, AND OTHERWISE MISCONDUCT THEMSELVES. BUT ONE DAY HE SEES A HORSE WITH A CERTAIN "JE NE SAIS QUI" ABOUT IT THAT INSPIRES HIM WITH CONFIDENCE; AND HAVING ASCERTAINED FROM THE DRIVER THAT SAID HORSE IS NOT TOO FRESH, AND MADE HIM PROMISE NOT TO LET IT GALLOP, HE ENTERS THE VEHICLE—



THE RESULT!

Figure 5.6 Don't look too much before you leap

Source *Punch*, 1 February 1868



EVER SINCE POOR JENKINS MET WITH THAT ACCIDENT IN THE HANSON CAB LAST FORTNIGHT, HIS NOCTURNAL SLUMBERS HAVE BEEN AGITATED BY A CONSTANTLY RECURRING NIGHTMARE. HE DREAMS THAT A MORE THAN USUALLY APPALLING CAB-HORSE BOLTS WITH HIM IN HANWAY PASSAGE (OXFORD STREET); AND CANNOT QUITE MAKE OUT WHETHER HE IS RIDING IN THE CAB, OR WHETHER IT IS HE WHO STANDS, POWERLESS TO MOVE, RIGHT IN FRONT OF THE INFURIATED ANIMAL.

Figure 5.7

Source *Punch*, 14 February 1868



PREVENTION BETTER THAN CURE.

Old Lady. "BUT, GOING IN FOUR WHEEL CABS! I'M SO AFRAID OF SMALL POX!"

Cabby. "YOU'VE NO CALL TO BE AFEARD O' MY CAB, MUM, FOR I'VE 'AD THE HIND WHEEL WACCINATED, AND IT TOOK BEAUTIFUL!"

Figure 5.8 Prevention better than cure

Source *Punch*, 30 May 1863



Figure 5.9 Four-wheeler versus hansom

Source *Punch*, 20 August 1870



Figure 5.10 What a dreadful story

Source *Punch*, 22 July 1854

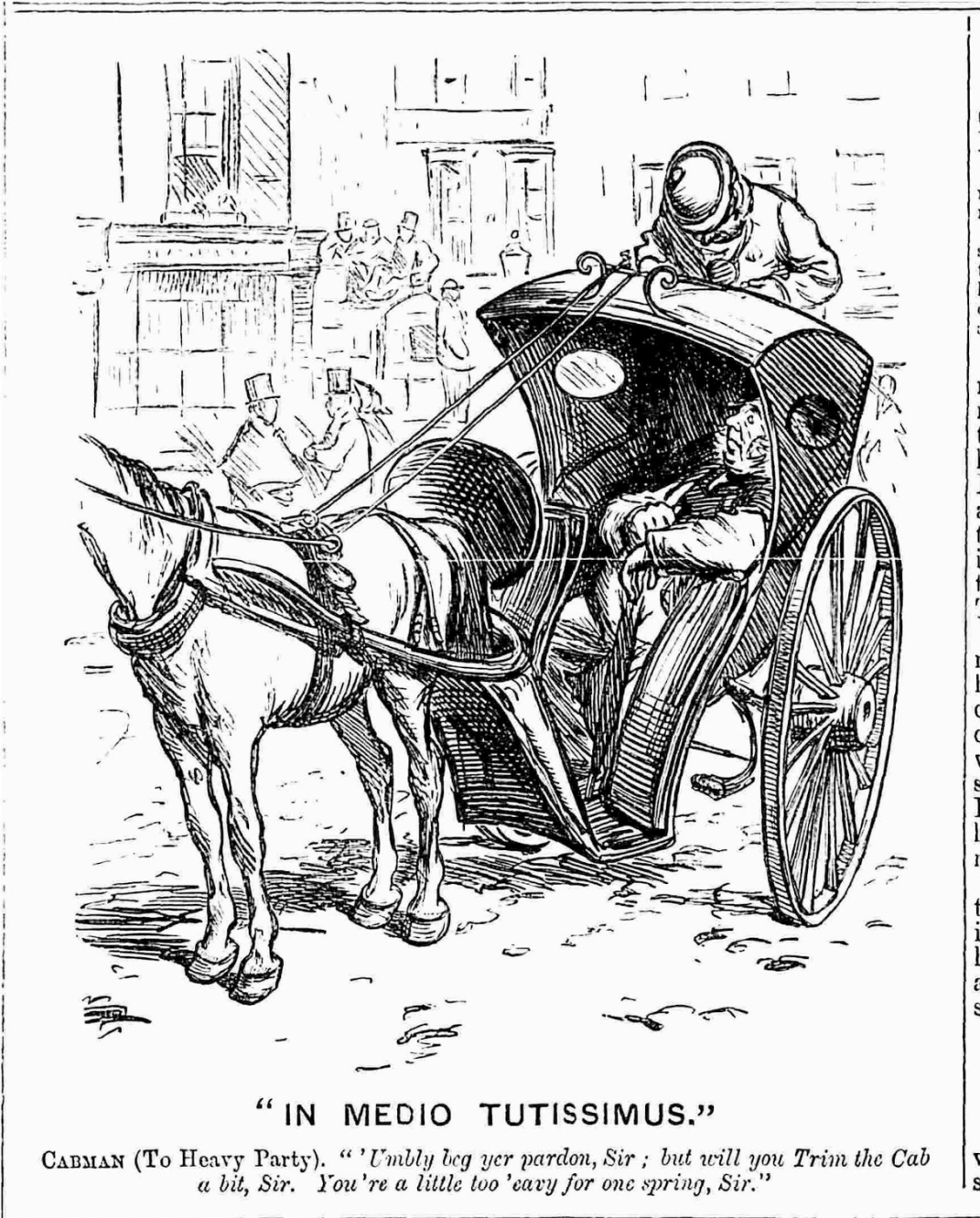


Figure 5.11 “In Medio Tutissimus”

Source *Punch*, 6 September 1863



Figure 5.12 Caution to ladies riding in hansoms

Source *Punch*, 6 September 1862



“POLITESSE OBLIGE.”

Hansom Cabby (suppressing a volley of imprecations at the tip of his tongue—the four-wheeler had narrowly grazed his horse’s nose—as he’d a Lady inside). “’PRAY ’OW D’YER LIKE LONDON, SIR?”

Figure 5.13 “Politesse Oblige.”

Source *Punch*, 11 October 1879

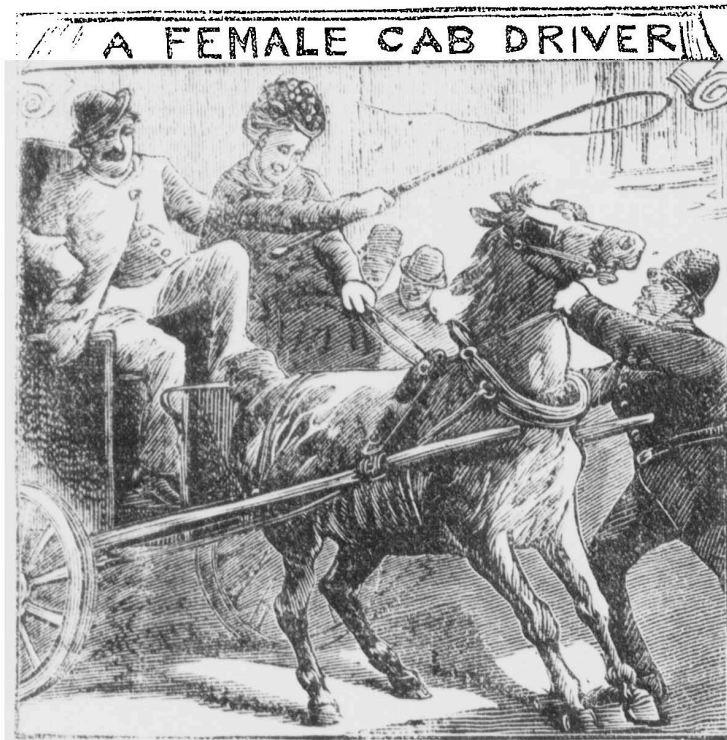


Figure 5.14 A female cab driver

Source *The Illustrated Police News*, 29 June 1878



Figure 5.15 A female cabdriver exciting scene in Piccadilly

Source *The Illustrated Police News*, 22 August 1885



THE NEW HANSOM CAB-GIRL.

(A Suggestion for the Railway Companies.)

Figure 5.16 The new hansom cab-girl

Source *Punch*, 19 December 1896

Chapter 6 The Conveyance of Dynamic Trust

In Victorian London, numerous disputes over the cab fares were brought in front of the magistrates. Such seemingly endless disagreements also featured in contemporary printing media as well as everyday conversations, putting a strain on the relationship between the drivers and passengers of the city's hackney carriages. It is therefore almost impossible to study the horse-drawn cabs without examining this core issue. Unlike the workers in other contemporary modes of public transport, who were waged employees, the drivers of horse-drawn cabs – whether owner-drivers who owned their own cabs and horses or drivers who rented vehicle and horses from cab proprietors – rarely received regular salaries. Their daily earnings depended on how many ‘hirings’ they could complete, and how profitable each hiring was. However, as Wilkins indicated, the number of hirers and their generosity was a matter of luck.⁴⁹⁹ Each time the cab driver ventured out onto the streets was, in Booth's words, the equivalent of launching out ‘upon a sea of adventure.’⁵⁰⁰ It is in this sense that the drivers of London's hackney carriages were in a distinctive state of mind from other public vehicles' employees when they were at work. And consequently, they were put, from the very first, in an opposite position to their passengers which inevitably caused tension between the two parties.

In addition, the fare structure of London's horse-drawn cab bore no resemblance to those of its competitors. The standard rate of the coaches plying for hire in the capital had been regulated by statute since the early days of city cabbing. This meant that officially the driver had no say over how much he charged the passenger, let alone the price he had to pay for renting the cabs and horses, his fixed costs.⁵⁰¹ Also, while Victorian train, tram and omnibus companies sold tickets at fixed prices, cab customers could choose from two tariff systems – hiring by distance or hiring by time – offering them greater flexibility and variety. This relatively complicated fare

⁴⁹⁹ W. H. Wilkins, ‘Hansoms and their Drivers’, in *The Nineteen Century*, 33: 193 (March, 1893), pp. 475-476.

⁵⁰⁰ Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London* (17 vols, London: Macmillan, 1903), vol. 3, p. 289.

⁵⁰¹ As for how did this trade run, please see Chapter 1.

structure created plenty of grey areas open to interpretation and liable to cause disputes between drivers and passengers. The lack of reliable equipment for measuring distance (and/or time) further complicated the situation and, although now and then similar devices were brought to the authority, it was not until 1907 that taximeters were made compulsory on taxi-cabs, just as they began to replace the horse-drawn cab.⁵⁰² Hence, one of the questions that concerns Mark Jenner about the hackney coaches in the long eighteenth century – ‘What exactly was the distance between two points’⁵⁰³ – remained unanswered throughout the lifespan of London’s horse-drawn cab. In this regard, the question that ‘what exactly did the distance between two points cost’ was inevitably a deal for the passenger and the driver to make together. The practice of Victorian cabbage, in this sense, bore a resemblance to the business conducted in the traditional open market where bargaining was publicly performed and both buyer and seller were prepared for it. By contrast, travelling with other modes of public transport was more similar to shopping in the department store – another novelty in the nineteenth century – where prices were fixed therefore not negotiable, and where self-constraint and social withdrawal was encouraged.⁵⁰⁴

The drivers and the passengers were not the only participants involved in this bargaining process. Bureaucracy and the ‘publishers, mapmakers and printers’, as Jenner and Paul Dobraszcyk put it, also played their part.⁵⁰⁵ The state regulated the rate in the first place, and intervened as a moderator and final judge when a dispute occurred. As well as publishing information, they also provided an impressive array of printing materials including official books of fares, handbooks, posters, lists, guides and maps. These had been arming cab hirers since the 1680s, creating a special market of ‘functional reading.’⁵⁰⁶ There were maps displaying main streets, railway

⁵⁰² ‘Order made in pursuance of “The Metropolitan Police Carriage Act, 1869” 32 and 33 Vict. cap. 115, by the Right Honourable Herbert John Gladstone, one of Her Majesty’s Principal Secretaries of State’, *London Gazette*, 15 March 1907, Part V, sec. 38, p. 1859. However, this requirement was never imposed on the horse-drawn cabs. About the meters, see May, *Gondolas and Growlers*, p. 132, p. 193.

⁵⁰³ Jenner, ‘Circulation and Disorder: London Streets and Hackney Coaches, c. 1640–c. 1740’, p. 48.

⁵⁰⁴ About the department store, fixed price and modernity see Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, (First published in 1977, London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2002), pp. 141-142.

⁵⁰⁵ See Jenner, ‘Circulation and Disorder: London Streets and Hackney Coaches, c. 1640–c. 1740’, p. 47. Paul Dobraszcyk, ‘Useful Reading? Designing Information for London’s Victorian Cab Passengers’, *Journal Of Design History* 21:2 (2008), 121-140. Quotation: Dobraszcyk, ‘Useful Reading? Designing Information for London’s Victorian Cab Passengers’, p. 121.

⁵⁰⁶ Jenner, ‘Circulation and Disorder: London Streets and Hackney Coaches, c. 1640–c. 1740’, p. 47. Dobraszcyk, ‘Useful Reading? Designing Information for London’s Victorian Cab Passengers’, pp.

terminuses, popular venues and cabstands but the majority were tables of the thousands of routes and fares. In this sense, one of the first impressions visitors would have had of the metropolis was that of ‘a city of fares’.⁵⁰⁷ The simplified map with the cabstands and the four-mile circle may also have formed a unique mental map for individual readers, just like the Underground map does for tourists these days.⁵⁰⁸ As Dobraszcyk has demonstrated, these instructions could not necessarily be put into practice as even the official books of fares contained errors and outdated information, while others had no authority to mediate the disagreement.⁵⁰⁹ But they did at least provide would-be-hirers with a general understanding or knowledge of London’s horse-drawn cabs, which was helpful when bargaining with a cab driver. In the first decade of the twentieth century, when motor cabs fitted with taximeters overtook their horse-powered predecessors, the practice of providing printed information for cab passengers started to die out,⁵¹⁰ as did the bargain between the drivers and passengers. These changes can be seen as part of a broader transition towards the modernisation of every aspect of the trade, in terms of power, fares and the driver-passenger relationship.

Following the thread of this disagreement and bargaining over cab fares, the chapter will scrutinise the interactions and relationships among the cab drivers, the authorities and the passengers (the general public). The first section focuses on two offences, which for a long time destroyed the reputation of London’s cabmen, and also caused mutual distrust between the hirer and the hired, that is, overcharging and bilking. The former occurred when the driver demanded more than the lawful fare and the latter when the passenger cheated the driver. Using the laws, official statistics and works of social documentary, this section examines how the driver and the passenger took advantage of each other, and how the bureaucracy attempted to intervene and restore order. The section after this analyses the grey areas of the official fare system, which were open to interpretation and unavoidable dispute, including the charge for an extra passenger, luggage, and the hiring itself. It shows how both drivers and hirers

121-140.

⁵⁰⁷ Jenner, ‘Circulation and Disorder: London Streets and Hackney Coaches, c. 1640–c. 1740’, p. 49.

⁵⁰⁸ About the Tube map, see David Bownes, Oliver Green, Sam Mullins, *Under Ground: How the Tube Shaped London* (London: Penguin Group, 2012), p. 8.

⁵⁰⁹ Dobraszcyk, ‘Useful Reading? Designing Information for London’s Victorian Cab Passengers’, pp. 123-128.

⁵¹⁰ Dobraszcyk, ‘Useful Reading? Designing Information for London’s Victorian Cab Passengers’, p. 129.

attempted to manipulate each other, while the authority attempted to strike a balance between their competing interests, suggesting that there were complex dynamics among the three parties. The third section discusses why knowledge and practice were so important for those attempting to master the art of cabbage in Victorian London – both for drivers hoping to get a generous customer and avoid troublesome fares, and for passengers looking to take advantage of the trade, its flexible fare system and service. The last section shifts the focus onto the various relationships between individual cab driver and passenger, including the real possibility of forging long-term relationships, relationships of a friendly nature, or a master-servant relationship never fully realised, thus remaining problematic and discordant.

The Conveyance of Distrust

As noted before, the drivers and passengers of London's hackney carriages were automatically placed in an oppositional relationship by virtue of the fact that the former were obliged to maximise their profits, while the latter attempted to minimise their expenses. This section therefore puts emphasis on two offences that could cause damage to the driver-passenger relationship and deepen the sense of distrust between the two parties: overcharging and bilking.

However, before tackling these subjects, it is worth discussing the official statistics with regard to said offences. First of all, without reliable equipment for measuring distance, it was sometimes impossible to differentiate between overcharging and bilking, as an 1851 editorial of *The Times* points out, 'After all, the driver's estimate must often be as conjectural as the traveller's, especially where both parties are Londoners; and who is to define the exact distance between a point in Baker-street and a point in the Commercial-road?'⁵¹¹ If a case was eventually raised in the court, there is no doubt that the magistrate would have made the final call, but the definition of the offences might still fluctuate case-by-case, magistrate-by-magistrate. The difficulty in defining the offences is also highlighted by the associated legal terminology. For instance, in two 'Returns' presented to the House of Commons in the 1830s, the convictions of the drivers of London's horse-drawn cabs included 'extortion,' 'over-charge,' 'taking more than fare,' 'exaction,' and 'exactng,' changing from one

⁵¹¹ *The Times*, 13 May 1851.

court to another.⁵¹² Likewise, ‘bilking’ was not the only term used to describe the cheating committed by cab hirers, probably not even the correct one. Labels such as ‘fraud’ and ‘non-payment’ were widely applied as well.⁵¹³ It therefore made statistical work extremely difficult, if it is not impossible.

Secondly, even though the precise distance could be measured by the authority, it cost each litigant 5s. – or more than five short jobs to the cab driver – and in most cases the driver would simply acquiesce and plead guilty to avoid ‘a heavier fine for wasting the time of the court.’⁵¹⁴ This in turn affected the total number of the cases recorded, which means that the official statistics on overcharging should be read with caution. In addition, there must have been many victims of both offences who never brought their cases to the police, or simply settled outside of court.⁵¹⁵ Hence, it is also difficult to estimate how often these offences were committed. But by examining the materials at hand, we can sketch the distrust between drivers and passengers of London’s horse-drawn cabs.

Overcharge

As explained earlier, overcharge meant that the cab driver demanded more than his legal fare. It did not require any higher intelligence to conduct it. The driver either deliberately took a long way, or, as depicted in the left side of Figure 6.1 (1853), threatened the passenger with abusive language and violent gestures. Overcharge was considered a test of ‘the timidity of the traveller or the conscience of the driver,’ as an editorial of *The Times* observed in the mid-century.⁵¹⁶ The excuses given by cabmen to Victorian cab hirers for their overcharge varied widely. For example, in 1862, a cab driver explained that he had charged an extra shilling because ‘the road is very bad,

⁵¹² Parliament Paper 1835 (139) *Public Carriages, Metropolis. Return of informations and convictions, and penalties levied on drivers and proprietors of hackney coaches*. And 1837 (218) *Public Carriages, Metropolis. Return of informations and convictions, and penalties levied on drivers and proprietors of hackney coaches*.

⁵¹³ Parliament Paper 1895 [C. 7607] [C.7607-1] *The cab service of the metropolis. Report of the committee of enquiry appointed by the home secretary*, p. 6.

⁵¹⁴ See Wilkins, ‘Hansoms and their Drivers’, p. 478. 1895 *The cab service of the metropolis*, p. 4, 324.

⁵¹⁵ Parliament Paper 1852 (279) *Hackney carriages (metropolis). Returns to an Order of the Honourable The House of Commons, dated 23 March 1852...*, pp. 9-11.

⁵¹⁶ *The Times*, 13 May 1851.

and on a dark night exceedingly dangerous...⁵¹⁷ while in 1874, another driver told the sitting magistrate that ‘as it was Christmas time he expected a trifle more than his fare.’⁵¹⁸ Still in 1881, a magistrate ‘strongly condemned the system of extortion practised by cabmen in the present inclement weather,’ for he had learned that ‘a gentleman going from Euston station to the Reform Club could not get a cab under two guineas [42s.]’⁵¹⁹ It appears that the drivers of London’s horse-drawn cab were always ready to provide any possible excuses on any occasion for raising the price.⁵²⁰ Therefore, it is not surprising that a Victorian child was taught to regard them as ‘birds of prey.’⁵²¹

Victorian Londoners believed that foreigners/strangers and females – the most ignorant, timid, and unprotected groups of people in the city – were cabmen’s favourite targets. For example, in 1850, an article in *Punch* vividly depicted an ‘unprotected female’ escaping ‘from the hands of the cab-driver, after an hour of stoppages, prayers, fears, remonstrances, higgings, and general uncomfortableness of all kinds.’⁵²² Later, a letter sent to the editor of *The Times* in 1853 argued that the introduction of a device (a kind of meter) was necessary to prevent “‘cabby” attempting “to do a stranger or unprotected female” by driving them a long way round instead of the shortest cut...’⁵²³ The same year saw Marx, whom had been moving to London since 1849, commenting on the new Hackney Carriage Act and the cab strike, noting (with sarcasm) that the cabmen’s ‘extortion from unprotected females...were to be put down.’⁵²⁴ In 1862, an article titled ‘London, as it strikes a Stranger’ complained that a newcomer to the city was ‘open to a thousand impositions’ until he had learned the lessons about cabbing there.⁵²⁵ And in the 1870s, Mayhew also remarked that ‘Cabmen bully ladies dreadfully. A large part of their undue gain is made out of timid women, especially women who have children with them.’⁵²⁶ It is in this sense that ‘the

⁵¹⁷ *The Times*, 31 December 1862.

⁵¹⁸ *The Times*, 5 January 1874.

⁵¹⁹ The distance between Euston station and the Reform Club (on the Pall Mall) was not exceeding 4 miles. *The Times*, 25 January 1881.

⁵²⁰ It is however understandable that the cabmen in Victorian London charged more according to different times and periods because the rent for the horses and cabs – their cost – did fluctuate. See Chapter 1.

⁵²¹ ‘Cab!’ in *All The Year Around*, 25 February 1860, p. 414.

⁵²² *Punch*, 19 January 1850.

⁵²³ *The Times*, 16 February 1853.

⁵²⁴ Marx, ‘Financial Failure of Government. – Cabs – Ireland. – The Russian Question, 29 July 1853’, p. 224.

⁵²⁵ ‘London, as it strikes a Stranger’, *Temple Bar*, 5 (July, 1862), p.387,

⁵²⁶ Mayhew ‘Opposite A Cabstand’, pp. 246-247.

city of fare'⁵²⁷ would change into the city of fear.

In addition to their timidity and unfamiliarity, another reason why strangers, foreigners and females were most likely to be overcharged is that it was both unlikely and improper for them to bring such cases before a magistrate. The scarcity, if not absence, of complaints raised by foreigners confirms that it was almost practically impossible for them to engage with a strange legal system. Therefore, it is also impossible to know how often the offence was committed. On the contrary, numerous charges filed by Victorian females challenged the prevalent viewpoint that the court – where vicious criminals and many irrelevant males presented – was not a place suitable for pure, unprotected, and decent females.⁵²⁸ Female cab hirers, at least some of them, seemed unafraid of publicly presenting themselves in court against the extortionate cabmen. Moreover, according to Wilkins, the 'worst fare of all' for a London cab driver was a 'lady', for unlike 'the city man' the female passengers often ignored (or were ignorant of) the unwritten rules of tipping and paid only the exact fare.⁵²⁹ A verse in an 1895 *Punch* even described these 'middle-class mammas' as 'sly as foxes.'⁵³⁰ They knew 'the distance to a hinch [inch?], and were always well prepared to 'aggle [haggle], bate, and pinch...'⁵³¹ costing the cabmen time and money. In this regard, Victorian females in fact were both prey and predator to the cabmen, just like (if not even more parsimonious than) their fellow males. They were not as defenceless or vulnerable as their contemporaries believed. Here, the relationship(s) between Victorian females and London's horse-drawn cab are once more revealed as complicated and various.

Again, although it is difficult to portray the details of the overcharge with regard to London's hackney carriages, the official documents are still able to show us the trends, or big picture of this specific offence. In 1835 and 1837, the House of Commons

⁵²⁷ Jenner, 'Circulation and Disorder', p. 49.

⁵²⁸ For example, 'She must take off her glove in the presence of an indefinite number of stern policemen and perspiring spectators, and recount the history of her disasters to a matter-of-fact magistrate. Who would expose a lady to such an ordeal for the sake of five shillings - it may be of sixpence?' See *The Times*, 19 May 1851.

⁵²⁹ Wilkins, 'Hansoms and their Drivers', p. 476.

⁵³⁰ *Punch*, 19 October 1895. Figure 6.12 (1894) offers similar description, which contrasts a middle-aged woman with a young gentleman ('the man about town') While the former is 'A fare cabby detests; she has all the fares and distance at the ends of her fingers, and has never yet been know to give an extra farthing,' the latter is 'a fare cabby loves.' The contrast will also be discussed further in section 4. See *Fun*, 29 May 1894.

⁵³¹ *Punch*, 19 October 1895.

received two reports considering the information of convictions and penalties in relation to London's public vehicles. According to the reports, the number of charges for overcharging was significant, both near to a hundred.⁵³² Given that some branches of the police courts only provided the total number of the convictions and omitted the details of each case, such as Marlborough Street court and Worship Street court, the true number would undoubtedly have been higher. In comparison with Table 6.1 which contains the convictions for overcharge and exaction between 1883 and 1907 (the year when taximeter was compulsory in motor cabs), it is clear that the cases of overcharge dropped considerably. This attests to several remarks made about the trade in the last quarter of the century. For example, in the 1870s, Booth commented that 'The relations between the cabmen and the public they drive are, on the whole, very pleasant.'⁵³³ An editorial of *The Times* in 1887 noted that 'No body of public servants has improved in a more remarkable manner than the London cab-drivers...For the most part the cab-drivers in London are intelligent, honest, polite, and to those who treat them fairly, reasonable in their demands.'⁵³⁴ And the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police suggested in 1894 that 'I venture to think that these facts speak well for the general honesty of drivers and conductors of public carriages...'⁵³⁵ All of these examples suggest that the serious extortion of Victorian London's cabmen was gradually rectified as the century progressed.⁵³⁶

⁵³² See Parliament Papers 1835 (139) *Public Carriages, Metropolis. Return of informations and convictions, and penalties levied on drivers and proprietors of hackney coaches*. And 1837 (218) *Public Carriages, Metropolis. Return of informations and convictions, and penalties levied on drivers and proprietors of hackney coaches*.

⁵³³ Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London* (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd, 1903) vol. 3, p. 290.

⁵³⁴ *The Times*, 30 July 1887.

⁵³⁵ Parliament Paper 1894 [C. 7556] *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the year 1893*, p. 7.

⁵³⁶ Similar comments could be found in following texts, to name but a few. Smith regarded the drivers as 'reliable and honest men...' Wilkins described the cabmen 'in the present day' as 'smart, intelligent, sober, honest, and hard-working...' And a guide to London noted that 'The cabmen are—general opinion to the contrary, notwithstanding—civil and obliging.' See John Thomson and Adolphe Smith, 'London Cabmen', in *Victorian London Street Life in Historic Photographs* [originally *Street Life in London* published in 1877], (New York: Dover Publications, INC, 1994), p. 4. Wilkins, 'Hansoms and their Drivers', p. 473. *A Popular, Pictorial and Practical Guide to London* (1898), p. 58.

Table 6.1 Convictions for Overcharge and Exaction recorded in the Metropolitan Police Records, 1883-1907

Year	Overcharge and Exaction (Hackney coaches/Horse-drawn cabs)	Overcharge and Exaction (Stage carriages/Omnibuses)	Total
1883			11
1884			10
1885			9
1886			5*
1887	11	1	12
1888	5	2	7
1889	0	0	0
1890	4	0	4
1891	8	0	8
1892	5	0	5
1893	6	1	7
1894	2	0	2
1895	6	0	6
1896	3	0	3
1897	5	0	5
1898	3	0	3
1899	0	0	0
1900	2	0	2
1901	5	0	5
1902	4	1	5
1903	1	1	2
1904	1	0	1
1905	3	0	3
1906	0	0	0
1907	0	0	0

Note

* Between 1883 and 1886, there was no statistics on different modes of public vehicles, only a total number of the convictions for overcharge and exaction.

Source *Reports of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis (1888-1907)*.

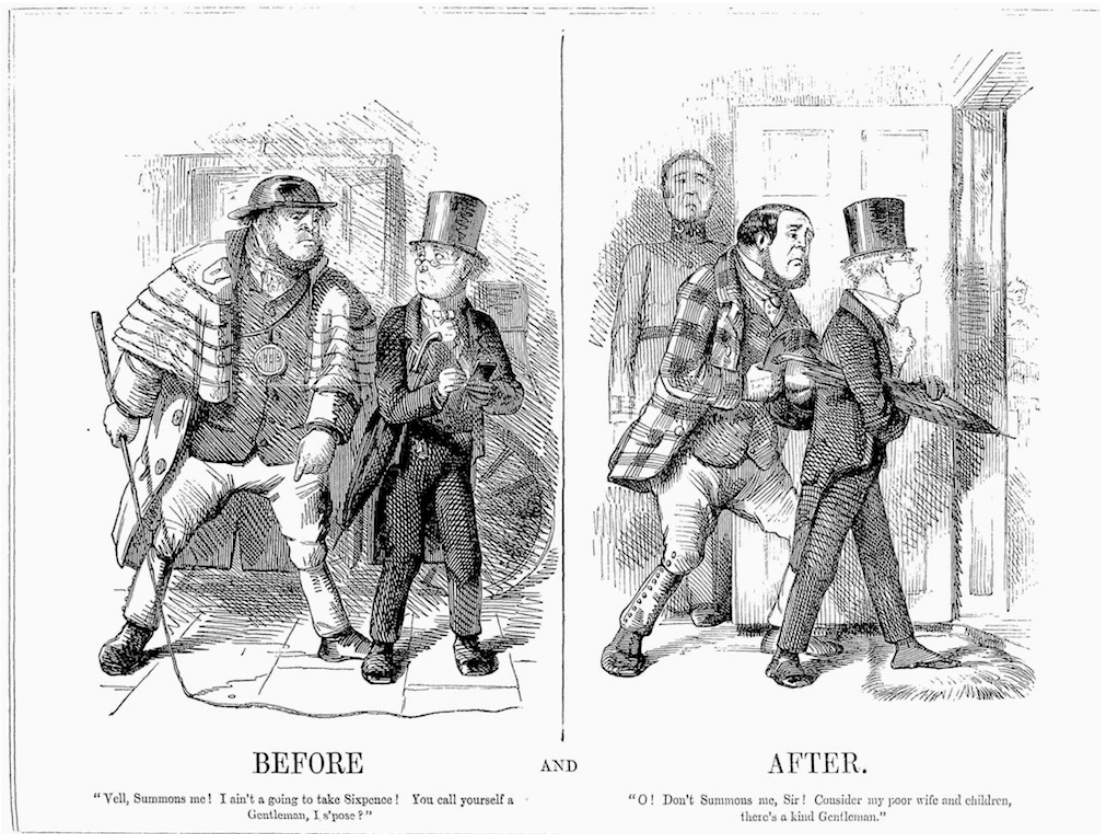


Figure 6.1 Before and After

Before: “Vell, Summons me! I ain’t a going to take Sixpence! You call yourself a Gentleman, I s’pose?”

After: “O! Don’t Summons me, Sir! Consider my poor wife and children, there’s a kind Gentleman.”

Source *Punch*, 30 July 1853

Bilking

As Mayhew puts it, ‘the biter sometimes bit’⁵³⁷, but because of the various methods Victorian cab passengers employed to dodge their fares, it is also true to say that the biter was *often* bit. Bilking was more likely to take place when it was ‘a large fare,’ sometimes even ‘half-a-day’s work or a day’s work,’⁵³⁸ causing serious losses to the cabman. According to Wilkins, there were two popular ways of bilking. The first was simply giving the driver fictitious names and addresses and asking the driver to collect

⁵³⁷ Mayhew, ‘Opposite A Cabstand’, p. 246.

⁵³⁸ 1895 *The cab service of the metropolis*, p. 97.

the money later on. The other was setting down the cab somewhere in the vicinity of a crowded place with several exits and passages. The hirer would require the driver to wait, but he himself never show up afterwards.⁵³⁹ Under either circumstance, there was little opportunity for the cabman to trace the bilker and recover his loss. The offence of bilking was hence never rare. For instance, in an 1852 Return to the parliament regarding the metropolitan hackney carriages, 423 cases were raised by cab drivers or proprietors against hirers between September 1850 and September 1851. Among these, there were 185 convictions, by no means a negligible number.⁵⁴⁰ Likewise, the Committee appointed by the Home Secretary to review the cab service in London interviewed 13 drivers in 1894, and all of the interviewees had been fooled.⁵⁴¹

The attitude of the authorities, in terms of the legislation introduced and people involved, such as politicians, the Metropolitan Police and the magistrates, also contributed to the popularity of bilking. As Wilkins observed, Victorian cab drivers did not ‘get too much protection from the law.’⁵⁴² While bilking was recognised as a criminal offence by the Act of 1831,⁵⁴³ cases were often settled out of the court. The Summary Jurisdiction Act 1879 took a step further, repealing the section and making the cab fare ‘a civil debt.’⁵⁴⁴ It was not until 1896 that ‘bilking’ was again categorised as a punishable offence liable to certain fines and penalty.⁵⁴⁵ In addition, the legislation did not confer equal rights on drivers and passengers. The first Act of 1853 empowered cab hirers to require drivers ‘to drive to a police court or police station’ in case of disputes, but drivers were not given the same right.⁵⁴⁶ They did not even enjoy the same rights as the employees of the railway and tram companies. While the latter

⁵³⁹ Wilkins, ‘Hansoms and Their Drivers’, p. 477.

⁵⁴⁰ There are no details about the charges, but it is reasonable to assume that most of the charges filed by cab drivers would be related to bilking. Besides, it is worth noting that the low proportion of convictions was due to the fact that ‘these cases are very frequently settled out of court, by the payment of the fare and costs, without being brought to a hearing.’ See Parliament Paper 1852 (279) *Hackney carriages (metropolis). Returns to an Order of the Honourable The House of Commons, dated 23 March 1852...*, pp. 9-11.

⁵⁴¹ 1895 *The cab service of the metropolis*, pp. 95-126.

⁵⁴² The Committee of 1894 also reported that ‘An impression that cab cases do not receive fair and patient treatment in the courts is undoubtedly general among drivers...’ See Wilkins, ‘Hansoms and Their Drivers’, p. 478. 1895 *The cab service of the metropolis*, p. 4.

⁵⁴³ 1 & 2 Will. IV., cap.22, sec. 41.

⁵⁴⁴ 1895 *The cab service of the metropolis*, p. 6. Also see May, *Gondolas and Growlers*, p. 102.

⁵⁴⁵ London Cab Act 1896, 59 & 60 Vict., cap.27. The Act therefore was nicknamed ‘The Bulking Act.’ See Moore, *Omnibuses and Cabs*, p. 257.

⁵⁴⁶ 16 & 17 Vict., cap. 33, sec. 18.

were allowed to ‘arrest any one who refuses to pay his fare,’ the drivers and conductors of horse-drawn cabs and omnibuses could only request the name and address of the bilker.⁵⁴⁷ Even though the members of the 1894 Committee agreed that it was ‘worse for a man to bilk a cabman of his fare than it is for a starving man to steal a loaf’, they refused to grant equivalent power to London’s cab drivers.⁵⁴⁸ This shows that Victorians treated the pre-modern horse-drawn cab and omnibus, and the modern railways and trams differently. In short, the cab drivers were under stricter regulation but enjoyed less protection.

Because it was so easy to cheat London’s horse-drawn cab drivers, some people became habitual offenders. In 1861, a honey merchant was charged with ‘riding in cabs day after day and cheating the drivers of their fares.’⁵⁴⁹ In 1892, another man was levelled with the accusation that ‘For years past he had neglected to pay cabmen until they had summoned him and compelled him to do so.’⁵⁵⁰ Even notable figures could not resist the temptation to bilk. For instance, William Edwardes (1801-72), the 3rd Baron of Kensington was accused of ‘being drunk, refusing to pay a cabman, and assaulting Police-constable...’ in 1860.⁵⁵¹ Two years later, Isaac Butt MP was fined 18s. 6d. for bilking, and ordered to pay 10s. for court cost. And neither was it his first offence.⁵⁵² A decade later, in a dispute over the fare, Lord Henry Graham, a member of the House of Lords, chose not to pay the driver his lawful fare in the first place, even though he knew exactly how much he should have paid.⁵⁵³ These cases echo May’s remark that ‘Meanness towards cab drivers was common sport...’⁵⁵⁴

It is also noteworthy that in comparison to the topic of overcharge, the Victorian general public seemed to treat bilking relatively light-heartedly, as amusing and irrelevant. Their unsympathetic attitude somehow resonated with the defensive and

⁵⁴⁷ 1895 *The cab service of the metropolis*, p. 14.

⁵⁴⁸ 1895 *The cab service of the metropolis*, p. 14.

⁵⁴⁹ *The Times*, 20 September 1861.

⁵⁵⁰ *The Morning Post*, 8 January 1892.

⁵⁵¹ *The Times*, 10 September 1860.

⁵⁵² *The Times*, 19 February 1862. Also see Chapter 2.

⁵⁵³ *The Times*, 4 February 1878. It is also a case in which the magistrate made the wrong call, probably because the complainant is a Lord. It was a one-shilling ride, with two passengers, two parcels ‘on the box and footboard,’ so the fare should have been 1s. 4d. The Lord only gave 1s. in the very beginning. But the driver asked for 1s. 6d. so in practice they were both guilty for cheating. But the magistrate only fined the driver.

⁵⁵⁴ May, *Gondolas and Growlers*, p. 97.

conservative stance taken by the authority. The press sometimes even implied that cheating cab drivers was to be applauded, given ‘their hands [the cab drivers’] were against every man, and everyman’s hand ought to be against them in self defence.’⁵⁵⁵ For example, when describing a Jones who showed him several tricks to bilk cabmen, Mayhew wrote phrases such as ‘...Jones did a neat thing the other day,’ and ‘not always is the traveler killed by the robber, but sometimes the robber is killed by the traveler.’⁵⁵⁶ Likewise, Figure 6.2, an 1893 cartoon picturing two young gentlemen playing a trick on some cabmen, shares the same comical tone. Perhaps Victorian Londoners did not realise that the fares were cab drivers’ earnings, that receiving nothing for a hiring not only cost money but also wasted their time, energy, and energy of their horses. It even reduced their ability to lease a vehicle from a proprietor, especially if they were defrauded so many times that they were unable to pay the rent.⁵⁵⁷ Bilking, in this sense, was disastrous for London’s cabmen and deserved more serious consideration from both the authorities and the general public.

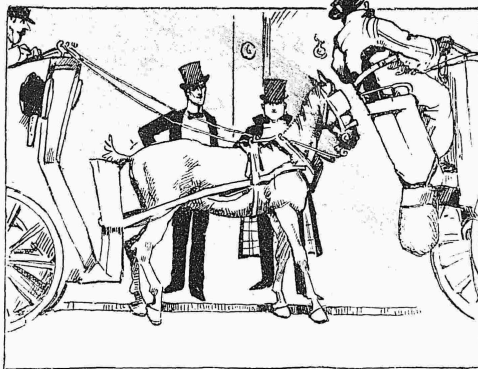
In sum, this section has examined two common offences associated with cabbings in Victorian London. It has demonstrated that the interaction and relationship between driver and passenger was not a one-way street, with the cabman as predator ever ready to extort and abuse the cab consumer. On the contrary, it was not unusual to see the far richer party dishonestly taking advantage of the poorer one. There were black sheep on either side. And there is no doubt that both overcharge and bilking would undermine the base of mutual trust and create tension between the two parties.

⁵⁵⁵ *All The Year Around*, 25 February 1860.

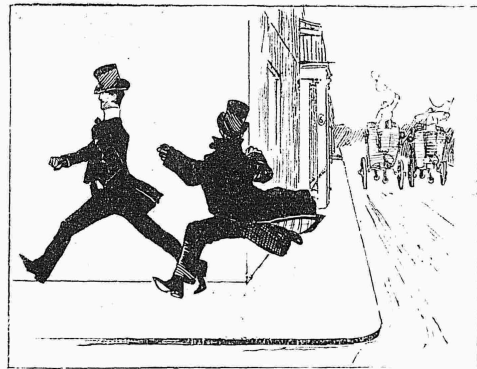
⁵⁵⁶ Mayhew, ‘Opposite a Cabstand’, p. 247.

⁵⁵⁷ 1895 *The cab service of the metropolis*, p. 97.

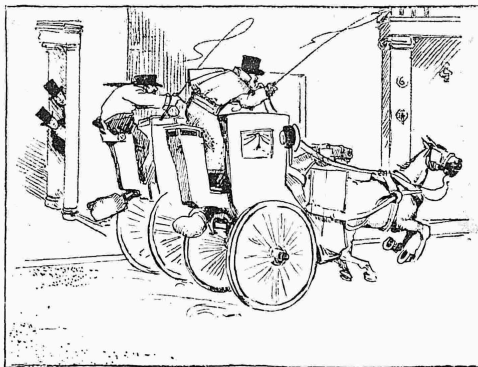
Handsome is that Hansom does. (*Unimproved Version.*)



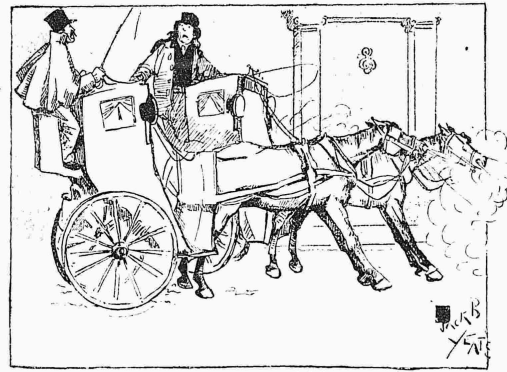
Algy and Cholly find themselves without a penny to pay the cab fares. So Algy says, "We'll give a sovereign to the one that drives round the square first."



The cabbies are off like a shot; so likewise wicked Algy and Cholly.



The Finish.



Cabbies: "Blowed if we ain't been 'ad!'"

Figure 6.2 Handsome is that Hansom does.

Algy and Cholly find themselves without a penny to pay the cab fares. So Algy says. "We'll give a sovereign to the one that drives round the square first."

The cabbies are off like a shot: so likewise wicked Algy and Cholly.

The Finish.

Cabbies: "Blowed if we ain't been 'ad!'"

Source *Chums*, 29 March 1893

The Conveyance of Confusion

The Problematic Extra Passenger

Two London Hackney Carriage Acts were passed in June and August 1853.⁵⁵⁸ Each contained a clause regarding the fare when more than two people were accommodated. The first Act regulated that 'When more than Two Persons shall be carried *inside* any

⁵⁵⁸ 16 & 17 Vict., cap. 33 (28 June 1853), and 16 & 17 Vict., cap. 127 (20 August 1853).

Hackney Carriage, one Sum of 6*d.* is to be paid...'⁵⁵⁹ But in the second Act the clause was amended to: 'Whenever more than Two Persons shall be *conveyed by* any Hackney Carriage,' 6*d.* shall be paid for each above.'⁵⁶⁰ This amendment immediately led to some confusion and debate, not only between drivers and hirers but also among Aldermen and magistrates: should the extra person – often a male servant – who was seated *outside* the carriage (on the box or next to the driver), be liable for the extra 6*d*? For the drivers, the answer was 'yes', and they were right according to the amendment. But for the master who paid the fare, the answer was 'no'. And while Mr. Jardine in Bow Street police court argued that 'a servant on the box with the driver was not legally chargeable'⁵⁶¹, Mr. Long at Marylebone and Mr. Broderip at Westminster expressed the opposite opinion.⁵⁶²

This phenomenon in some ways echoes what was revealed in Chapter 3, that a spatial/physical distinction was maintained between different social statuses and sexes when mobilities were practised in Victorian London. An outside seat, in this respect, was suitable for the male servant as a man, just like male passengers sitting on the upper deck of the trams and omnibuses. Meanwhile, being a servant, it was also reasonable for him to sit beside the cab driver – a man of his kind – and separate from his master. Only this disagreement over the cab fare went a step further because to certain degree, at both a legal and everyday-life level, it questioned and even negated the servant's existence as one of the passengers on board. This which would no doubt have raised some interesting but also serious questions: if he was not a passenger, in this case an extra person driven by the cab driver, then what was he? Was he a person (as well as his master)? And was it possible for a man to be a person (on the cab) but not a chargeable passenger at the same time?⁵⁶³

⁵⁵⁹ 16 & 17 Vict., cap. 33, Schedule A. Italics added for emphasis.

⁵⁶⁰ 16 & 17 Vict., cap. 127, sec. 14. Italics added for emphasis.

⁵⁶¹ *The Times*, 12 December 1853.

⁵⁶² *The Times*, 29 November 1853; 12 December 1853. Three cases were recorded and re-narrated in *A Handy Book of the Law of London Cabs and Omnibuses* published in 1867. The author has pointed out the passenger's neglect of the difference between the Acts. I have checked *The Times* database, confirmed the news, and built my own argument on the base of these cases. See William Thomas Charley, *A Handy Book of the Law of London Cabs and Omnibuses* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1867), p. 77.

⁵⁶³ 'Who is the passenger?' would be a question to be answered at different levels. In general, a person conveyed by any mode of transport could be considered a passenger. But for example, in business, are people who do not pay their legal fares – therefore do not appear in any statistics and lose the company money if they are not caught – also passengers?

Similar issues arose when a child was on board with two adults, the child being the extra passenger in this case. The 1853 Acts introduced a clause – only this time the two were on the same page – in favour of passengers who travelled with children. The original sentence simply went ‘Two Children under Ten Years old shall be considered as One Adult Person...’⁵⁶⁴ But, as an 1867 guidebook to London’s cab and omnibus asked, what about the ‘extra fare to be charged for *one* child under ten years of age? Is such a child a PERSON or not?’⁵⁶⁵ Not surprisingly, the ambiguity of the ruling soon led to several disputes, amongst as well as in front of the magistrates. The main argument the dissenters made was that a child, particularly an infant in arms, did not physically occupy as much space as an adult. Nor did he or she add too much burden to the horse.⁵⁶⁶ This disagreement was finally settled – at least from a legal standpoint – in the 1860s. First, in 1862, the Lord Chief Justice (Sir Alexander Cockburn, 1802-80) gave his judgement in favour of the drivers at the Court of Queen’s Bench. He argued that the cab driver was not ‘to be entitled to carry one child for nothing,’⁵⁶⁷ and in this sense confirming that a child, even an infant, was a person and a chargeable passenger. Later, an order made in 1869 by the Home Secretary – Henry Austin Bruce (1815-95, Home Secretary: 1868-73) – further put this argument in much more straightforward language, clarifying that ‘Every child shall be reckoned as a person...’ and ‘All children to count as Passengers.’⁵⁶⁸

However, the confirmation that a child was a person (and a passenger) only solved half of the problem. In everyday life, it was the sum charged for the child passenger that concerned the drivers and hirers. According to the 1853 Acts and the 1869 order, the driver was entitled to *6d.* for conveying an extra child as well as an adult. The only difference was that the 1853 Acts favoured the passengers by counting two children as one adult. That is, two children would be allowed to board at the same cost of *6d.* On

⁵⁶⁴ 16 & 17 Vict., cap. 33, Schedule A, and 16 & 17 Vict., cap. 127, s. 14.

⁵⁶⁵ The italics and the capital letters in the quotation were original. Charley, *A Handy Book of the Law of London Cabs and Omnibuses*, p. 78.

⁵⁶⁶ *The Times*, 1 November 1853. *The Times*, 4 January 1862. Charley, *A Handy Book of the Law of London Cabs and Omnibuses*, pp. 78-79.

⁵⁶⁷ Charley, *A Handy Book of the Law of London Cabs and Omnibuses*, p. 79.

⁵⁶⁸ ‘Order as to Licensing Hackney and Stage Carriages, as to Licensing Drivers of Hackney and Stage Carriages, and as to certain Regulations relating to Hackney and Stage Carriages, made in pursuance of “The Metropolitan Police Carriage Act, 1869” 32 and 33 Vict. cap. 115, secs. 6, 8, 9, 10, and 11, by the Right Honourable Henry Austin Bruce, one of Her Majesty’s Principal Secretaries of State’, *London Gazette*, 31 December 1869, p. 7463, 7465.

the contrary, as the 1869 order counted every child as an individual passenger, this reduction in fare was removed. The offer was immediately restored however by a clearer and more balanced order issued two months later, charging 3*d.* for ‘each child under 10.’⁵⁶⁹ But the more ambiguous phrase ‘two shall count as one’, which was slightly favourable to the driver, was reintroduced at the turn of the century,⁵⁷⁰ and the saying that ‘twins go as cheaply as single babies’ revived again.⁵⁷¹ The series of changes to the regulations concerning children’s fares highlight the complicated yet dynamic relationship between cab drivers (and proprietors), hirers (the general public) and the authorities. It also suggests that none of these three parties could gain upper hand in this trade, even over such a relatively minor issue. And under such circumstances, when the rule was so changeable and ambiguous, it is not surprising that disagreements about the fare at the level of real life were common.⁵⁷²

Disputable luggage

Charging for the luggage and other articles conveyed by London’s hackney carriage, proved equally problematic. Generally speaking, luggage put inside the cab was carried free of charge, but the driver was entitled to an extra 2*d.* for each piece carried outside (on the top of the cab or on the footboard outside, Figure 6.3) providing ‘more than Two Persons shall be carried inside’.⁵⁷³ Until the ruling changed in 1870 this

⁵⁶⁹ ‘Order made in pursuance of “The Metropolitan Police Carriage Act, 1869” 32 and 33 Vict. cap. 115, by the Right Honourable Henry Austin Bruce, one of Her Majesty’s Principal Secretaries of State’, *London Gazette*, 1 February 1870, p. 603.

⁵⁷⁰ Until at least 1895, the official fare for each extra child remained 3*d.* The phrase ‘two children...shall count as one person’ was reintroduced in the 1907 order, a full seven years after the magistrate who said ‘twins go as cheaply as single babies’ ordered the defendant to pay 6*d.* for his nine-month-old baby in 1900. See 1895 *The cab service of the metropolis*, p. 324. ‘Order made in pursuance of “The Metropolitan Police Carriage Act, 1869” 32 and 33 Vict. cap. 115, by the Right Honourable Herbert John Gladstone, one of Her Majesty’s Principal Secretaries of State’, *London Gazette*, 15 March 1907, Part IV, sec. 33, p. 1858. And *Reynold’s Newspaper*, 15 April 1900.

⁵⁷¹ *Reynold’s Newspaper*, 15 April 1900.

⁵⁷² About the subject of children-as-passengers, the Victorian period witnessed some outstanding cases. For example, in 1863, a cab driver was summoned for refusing to convey a group of three: two ladies and a baby. The driver argued that his vehicle was a hansom which was not allowed to take more than two (which is true), but the magistrate fined him 5*s.* Another not chargeable ‘infant’ (as shown in the article’s title) was a young man one month short of 21 years old. He asserted that he was supported by his father and had ‘not a farthing’ to pay the fare. The magistrate dismissed the defendant and told the driver, ‘I can do nothing more for you.’ The definition of child and passenger in Victorian society therefore appeared to be rather loose and on a case-by-case basis. See *The Times*, 16 January 1863. *The Illustrated Police News*, 30 March 1889.

⁵⁷³ It was not until the orders of 1869 and 1870 that the rule concerning the number of passengers was

extra charge that often became a quarrel between the hire and the hired. A common practice to spare the expense was to pile the interior of the cab with luggage and the passenger himself sat outside instead, just as shown in Figure 6.3, a cartoon published in an 1887 *Funny Folks*. This time the cartoon is neither fictitious nor exaggerated, for more extraordinary and dramatic cases had already happened in real life. For example, in 1853, 120 pineapples were conveyed to Covent Garden Market by a horse-drawn cab. The case later came before the magistrate because there was a dispute over the fare. The driver demanded 1*l.* 1*s.* 8*d.*, regarding each pineapple as a piece of luggage. On the contrary, the hirer argued that all pineapples were put inside the cab and only he himself sat outside. The driver was then fined 40*s.* because in the magistrate's opinion, he 'was in error on every point.'⁵⁷⁴ He should not have taken the pineapples in the first place (the cab was not a market-cart). He should not have charged them as luggage (there was only *one* person on board, plus all the pineapples were placed *inside*). Lastly, he should never have brought his hirer to the police court since the 1853 Act did not empower him to do so. This was the right of the passenger, not the driver.⁵⁷⁵

A decade later, in 1865, another case was raised in the Westminster police court in which an Admiral, his wife, his footman, plus four parcels were taken by a four-wheeler. The driver accordingly claimed a fare of 2*s.* 8*d.*, including the charge for the ride by distance, the third passenger, and the luggage carried outside. However, as the footman rode on the box, there were only two persons *inside* the carriage. As the condition that 'more than Two Persons shall be carried inside' was not met, there could be no extra tariff, even though the cab did in fact take more than two persons with four packages carried outside. The poor driver was fined 3*s.* for overcharging.⁵⁷⁶ It is also noteworthy that while reviewing this case, the author of *A Handy Book of the Law of London Cabs and Omnibuses* (1867) justified the conduct of this group of passengers, arguing that 'A lady of rank could hardly be expected to sit opposite her

removed. The order of 1869 contained a clause 'twopence for each package carried outside' but did not mention the number of passengers. By contrast, the order of 1870 stated quite clearly that '...what ever may be the number of persons carried.' See 16 & 17 Vict., cap. 33, Schedule A. 'Order of 1869', *London Gazette*, 31 December 1869, p. 7465. And 'Order of 1870', *London Gazette*, 1 February 1870, p. 602.

⁵⁷⁴ *The Times*, 20 July 1853.

⁵⁷⁵ The actual number of pineapples is uncertain because the earlier report noted 120 and the latter recorded 130. The driver finally went to the goal for a month since he failed to pay the penalty. *The Times*, 13, 20 July 1853. Charley, *A Handy Book of the Law of London Cabs and Omnibuses*, pp. 94-95.

⁵⁷⁶ *The Times*, 23 February 1865. Charley, *A Handy Book of the Law of London Cabs and Omnibuses*, p. 94.

footman to enable the cabman to charge for luggage.⁵⁷⁷ The practice of distinguishing the space between the master and servant in this case was, deliberately or not, used as a convenient excuse to evade the extra but reasonable charge from the cab driver.

Occasionally a manipulator was hoist by his own petard. For example, in 1876, a man was summoned for refusing to pay his legal fare. In answer to the charge, he admitted that he had hired the complainant to convey him and several articles, including six deal boxes on the roof, from the railway station to his residence. Nevertheless, he argued that ‘he did not employ the complainant as a cabdriver to carry him as a passenger, but as a common carrier, to convey the property to his residence,’ a job ‘which could have been done in ten minutes by an outdoor porter.’⁵⁷⁸ He appears to misunderstand the definition of common carrier as the driver or the proprietor of London’s horse-drawn cab was not one because ‘he does not ply regularly between different specified places.’⁵⁷⁹ Nor was he a porter. And the condition of two persons on board was already removed at that time. The defendant consequently was ordered to pay the 6d. remaining fare, and 2s. 6d. for the complainant’s loss of time. The aforementioned cases again attest to the fact that the daily practice of cabbing in Victorian London was equally complicated for both drivers and hirers. Although the law left some leeway for negotiation and manipulation, a little neglect or misunderstanding of the rule might cause not only annoying quarrels but also loss of money and time.

⁵⁷⁷ Charley, *A Handy Book of the Law of London Cabs and Omnibuses*, p. 94.

⁵⁷⁸ *The Illustrated Police News*, 29 July 1876.

⁵⁷⁹ About the definition and discussion of ‘common carrier’ see Charley, *A Handy Book of the Law of London Cabs and Omnibuses*, pp. 10-11.



Figure 6.3 Handsome is as Hansom DOES

"Passengers in hansoms with a bag or portmanteau place on the footboard in such a position that the doors cannot be closed, must be prepared to pay for it as 'outside luggage.'" — *Pall Mall Gazette*.

Cabby – All Right, guv'nor, you can't shut the doors – tuppence extra each parcel.

Mr. Jacobs – Oh, no, ma tear! The parcels is all right; it's me in the vay of the doors – tuppence hextry for me.

Source *Funny Folks*, 8 October 1887

Other arguable issues

In addition to cases that involved an extra passenger, a child, or luggage, there were a variety of other disagreements over the fare which needed the Aldermen and the magistrates to make the official determination. Among these quarrels, some simply mixed nearly every arguable element in the period when those issues were still open to dispute, showing that cabbing and fare counting were a complicated and confusing aspect of everyday life, and that even the authorities did not always make the right call. For example, the year 1862 witnessed a case of non-payment involving three adult passengers, one child, and five packages carried outside the carriage. The dispute was finally mediated as the defendant paid the fare 2s. 4d. and court costs. However, in this case the correct fare should have been 2s. 10d. since the child was also a chargeable passenger pursuant to the second London Hackney Carriage Act 1853. But even the driver did not object to the decision.⁵⁸⁰

Some other cases brought up the question of the definition of a chargeable journey. In other words, they concerned whether the passenger was liable for an incomplete or unnecessary ride. For instance, there was the cab driver who failed to find his way in 1862.⁵⁸¹ Or the German in 1865 who alighted from a cab in the middle of his ride, walked instead due to the block on the London Bridge.⁵⁸² And in 1900, a passenger took an additional ride from the police station house to his home after bringing a dispute over the fare of a baby between himself and the driver to the police.⁵⁸³ All the verdicts given in these three cases were in the drivers' favour, that is, the passengers had to pay the legal fares. It is also noteworthy that these judgments were made in a slightly humorous way. The magistrate thought that the lost, unprofessional driver 'deserved what he got' (a blow on his head by the passenger).⁵⁸⁴ The Lord Mayor reminded the German that 'This (giving up the cab and walking instead) is what we all have to do occasionally on London Bridge; but with this difference, we always pay the

⁵⁸⁰ The driver himself also claimed that 2s. 4d. was his proper fare: 1s for distance, 10d. for luggage and 6d. for an extra passenger. So in fact it was 6d. short of the proper fare. See *The Times*, 9 August 1861.

⁵⁸¹ *The Times*, 18 January 1862.

⁵⁸² *The Times*, 14 November 1865. Also: Charley, *A Handy Book of the Law of London Cabs and Omnibuses*, p. 71.

⁵⁸³ *Reynold's Newspaper*, 15 April 1900.

⁵⁸⁴ *The Times*, 18 January 1862.

cabman.’⁵⁸⁵ And the passenger/defendant in the last case was told, ‘...but you were not obliged to use his cab to drive you back to your home. You must pay the cabman...You have made a great fight for the nursery.’⁵⁸⁶ These cases suggest that although the disputes about the cab fares were important and personal to the litigants, they often appeared amusing and somehow ridiculous in the eyes of a third party, making such cases of London’s hackney carriage one of the popular topics in the Victorian press and everyday conversations.⁵⁸⁷

Still others debated the start, the end, and the duration of a hiring or contract, particularly when the ride involved both of the two basic elements of the fare structure: time and distance. As noted before, the cab laws allowed the hirer to hire either by distance or by time, only ‘to be expressed at the Commencement of the Hiring.’⁵⁸⁸ But the year 1853 saw an extraordinary case in which the hirer changed his mind from hiring by distance to hiring by time, ‘after the cab had been driven from 200 to 400 yards.’⁵⁸⁹ In answer to the charge with exaction, the driver argued that the journey had contained two distinct hirings: the first 200 to 400 yards was charged by distance, and the remaining was charged by time. In this case the magistrate agreed with the defendant. This proves that it was practically possible for one journey to occur two or more different fares, as long as the hirer demanded.⁵⁹⁰ Another 1862 case raised the issue of the duration of the contract. After a ride from his residence to St. George’s square, the hirer alighted and asked the driver to pick him up a few hours later. Here the fundamental question was: ‘whether the hiring was continuous’? In the magistrate’s opinion, since the driver had not been paid at St. George’s square, the hiring was continuous, and he was still in his service. ‘The only mode of discharging him would have been to pay him,’ otherwise the ‘first contract did not terminate.’ The

⁵⁸⁵ *The Times*, 14 November 1865. Also: Charley, *A Handy Book of the Law of London Cabs and Omnibuses*, p. 71.

⁵⁸⁶ This is the same magistrate who remarked that ‘In other words twins go as cheaply as single babies.’ See *Reynold’s Newspaper*, 15 April 1900.

⁵⁸⁷ The editors of the Victorian newspapers often gave titles similar to ‘amusing cab fare disputes’ and the news was frequently written in a hilarious and comical style. So were the cartoons covering the same topic. See ‘An “infant” and the cab fare’, *The Illustrated Police News*, 30 March 1889. ‘Amusing cab fare disputes’, *Reynold’s Newspaper*, 7 October 1894. ‘A lady and her cab fare’, *The Newcastle Weekly Courant*, 9 June 1900.

⁵⁸⁸ London Hackney Carriage Act 1853. 16 & 17 Vict., cap. 33, Schedule A.

⁵⁸⁹ *The Times*, 13 September 1853.

⁵⁹⁰ *The Times*, 13 September 1853.

hirer as a result was liable for the fare for the whole time.⁵⁹¹ These conflicts highlight the complexity and varieties of cabbage in practice, revealing Victorians' everyday appropriation of London's hackney carriages, and their expectations of the service. They also show that the definition and management of this specific mode of urban transport was under constant negotiation and in steady progress.

In sum, this section has examined some grey areas left by the cab laws about the fare of London's horse-drawn cab, which were open to interpretation and potential contest, like the definition of a chargeable extra passenger, luggage, and hiring. The multiple and often conflicting interpretations of drivers, passengers and the authorities represent their different standpoints and underline the tension between them: the drivers sought to maximise their earnings; the passenger wanted to minimise the expense, and the authorities attempted to strike a balance and make the final but not necessarily correct decision. In this regard, the magistrate's court – sometimes even the Court of Queen's Bench and Parliament – appeared to be another arena other than the streets where cab drivers and the general public contested, and where the definition of the cab service and its price were constantly negotiated and to be determined. Meanwhile, these grey areas also complicated the daily practice of cabbage in Victorian London, for both hirers and the hired tried to manipulate each other while not breaking the rules. It is in this sense that, in addition to daring, knowledge, strategy and experience were so important when driving or hiring a hackney carriage.

The Conveyance of Bargaining, Knowledge, Experience and Practice

Bargaining

As the preceding discussion has demonstrated, the fare system of London's horse-drawn cab left room for drivers and passengers to contest, negotiate and broker a deal. Thus, cabbage in Victorian London bore a close resemblance to shopping in a traditional open fair where bargaining was allowed, encouraged and even required. People who chose 'not to participate actively... [risked]... losing money.'⁵⁹² As early as 1851, an editorial of *The Times* suggested that readers 'make a bargain with a

⁵⁹¹ *The Times*, 6 November 1862.

⁵⁹² Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, p. 142.

cabman beforehand.⁵⁹³ In 1858, two females were reported to bargain with a cabman to take one of them ‘to Coven-garden for 1s.’⁵⁹⁴ And according to the 1895 Committee report, it was not uncommon to see cab drivers offered a 6d-fare at the end of the century in the face of the cut-throat competition.⁵⁹⁵

The Victorian press also presented visual materials picturing this mundane activity, which was so commonplace that people scarcely wrote about it. For example, Figures 6.4 (1854), 6.5 (1864), 6.6 (1875), 6.7 (1881) and 2.3 (1886) are cartoons describing the different levels of bargain practised between the driver and the hirer of the horse-drawn cab, and various outcomes produced. Sometimes it was the driver that acted as a ‘master of the situation,’⁵⁹⁶ holding a stronger bargaining position (Figures 6.4 and 6.7). But on occasion the hirer was at an advantage (Figures 6.5, 6.6 and 2.3). That is, neither side could really dominate the ‘game’.⁵⁹⁷ And it is in this sense that the cartoons reproduce and highlight the everyday scenes on the streets of Victorian London.

Sometimes the game was not played on a one-on-one basis but involved more participants. Figure 2.3 illustrates two competing cabmen making offers to their potential clients. And perhaps there is no better description of the bargains made between drivers and hirers than *Saunterings in and about London* – an 1853 guide to London (originally written in German):

Supposing the stranger speaks the English language fluently enough to make himself understood, of course he will name the place to which he wishes to go, and ask what they will take him for. He may rely on it, that of any conclave of cabmen, each one will demand, at least, double the amount of his legal fare. He demurs to the proposal, whereupon, the six cabmen mount their boxes forthwith, return to their stand in the middle of the road, and indulge in jocular remarks on “foreigners,” and “Frenchmen” in general...The retreat, however, was merely a feint; a few skirmisher advance again, and waylay the stranger.

⁵⁹³ *The Times*, 13 May 1851.

⁵⁹⁴ *The Times*, 31 July 1858.

⁵⁹⁵ The minimum official fare was 1s. after 1869. But some drivers offered a 6d. bargain for hirers who only rode for a short distance (under a mile) in the last quarter of the century. 1895 *The cab service of the metropolis*, p. 73.

⁵⁹⁶ Quotation: Figure 6.7, *Punch*, 5 February 1881.

⁵⁹⁷ Schlesinger, *Saunterings in and about London*. (1853), p. 158.

Again, and again, do they inquire, “what he will give?” They turn up the whites of their eyes, shrug their shoulders, make offers confidently, and decline propositions scornfully, and go on haggling and demonstrating until one of them comes to terms, and drives off with the victim.’⁵⁹⁸

It is this interactive practise and performance of bargaining – haggling, offer and demur, advance and retreat – that Sennett regards as ‘the most ordinary instances of everyday theater in a city’⁵⁹⁹ and a crucial part of a participative, active, and vibrant public life. It is also the existence (or not) of these theatrics that differentiates the shopping experiences in an open market and a department store, and that signals the change from the public life of the Ancien Régime to that of the nineteenth century.⁶⁰⁰ The way in which people accessed London’s horse-drawn cab and other contemporary modes of public transport thus echoes this transformation in public life, practicing mobility, and urban modernity. It offers a new perspective on the aforementioned topic of private/public because, in this sense, the pre-modern horse-drawn cab was actually more *public* than other modern public vehicles. Cabbing, compared to taking other forms of public transport, was a way of practising individual mobility that the passenger could exert greater control over. Hence, the power relationship between the driver/operator and the passenger of the cab was indeed more balanced than that of other public transit. However, when the motor cab started to replace the horse-drawn cab and the taximeter was made compulsory at the dawn of the twentieth century, this specific sense of *public* and the practice of bargaining also began to fade away.

⁵⁹⁸ Schlesinger, *Saunterings in and about London*, p. 159.

⁵⁹⁹ Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, p. 142.

⁶⁰⁰ Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, pp. 141-142.



WHAT A DREADFUL STORY!

Stout Party. "STOP! HERE! CABMAN! WE WANT TO GO AS FAR TER-WARDS WHITECHAPEL AS WE CAN FOR SIXPENCE?"
Cabman. "VERY SORRY, MUM! BUT THE OSS HAS BIN OUT ALL DAY—DEAD BEAT, MUM—GOING HOME, MUM!"

Figure 6.4 What A Dreadful Story!

Stout Party. "Stop! Here! Cabman! We want to go as far ter-wards Whitechapel as we can for sixpence?"

Cabman. "Very sorry, mum! But the oss has bin out all day – dead beat, mum – going home, mom!"

Source *Punch*, 22 July 1854



Figure 6.5

Fare (who has driven rather a hard bargain and is settling) "But why, my good man, do you put that cloth over the horse's head?"

Cab driver: "Sure, yer honour, thin – I shouldn't like him to see how little ye pay for such a hard day's work!"

Source *Punch*, 25 June 1864

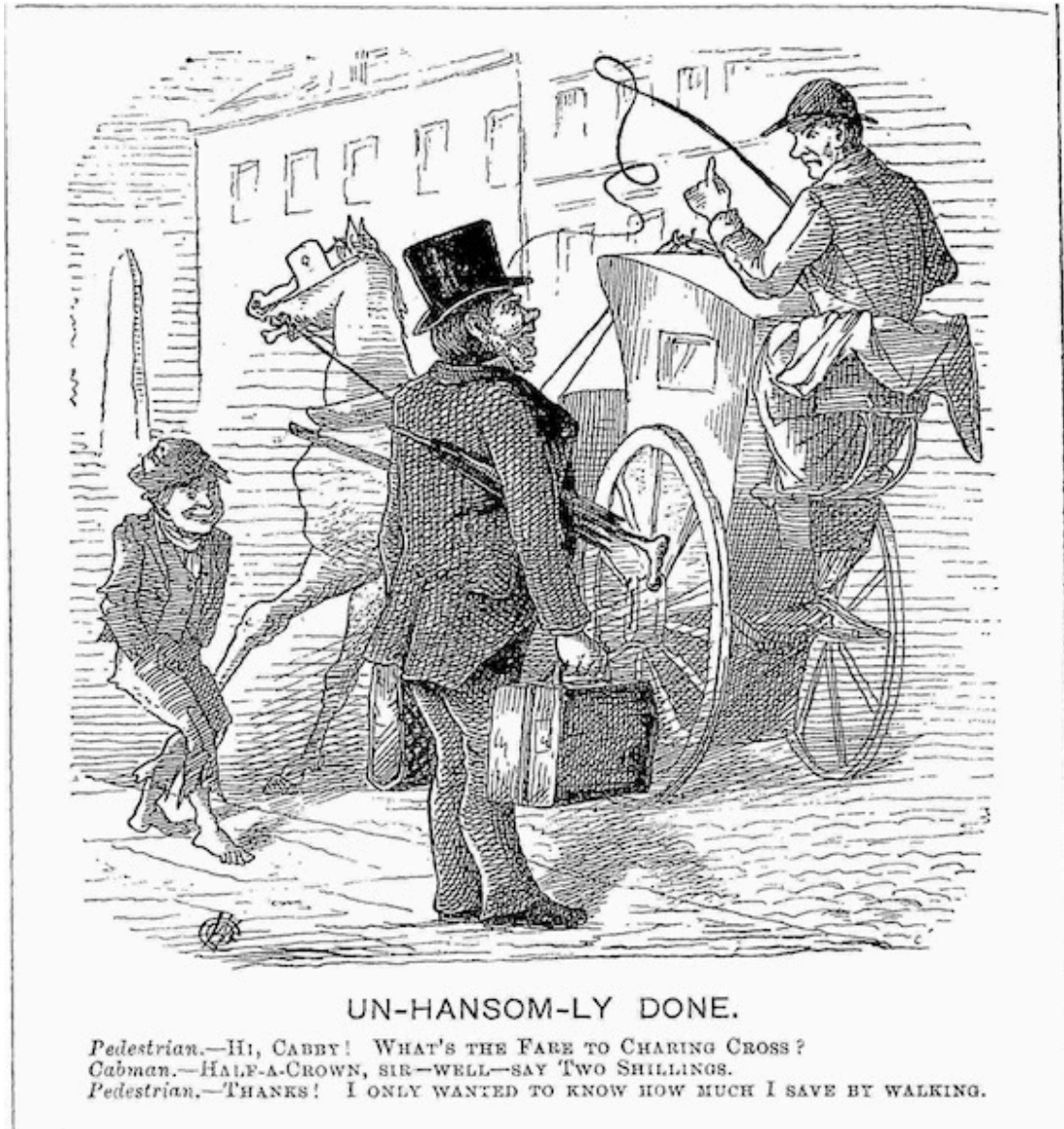


Figure 6.6 Un-Hansom-Ly Done

Source *Funny Folks*, 30 January 1875



AN ULTIMATUM.

Cabby (Master of the Situation). "TAKE UP YOUR MASTER AT CAVEL'SH SQUARE? NOW, LOOK 'ERE, YOUR GOV'NER 'LL HEV TO COME HISSELF,—AND TELL ME WHERE HE WANT TO GO, AN' HE CAN MAKE ME A HOFFER!"

Figure 6.7 An Ultimatum

Cabby (Master of the Situation). "Take up your master at Cavel'sh Square? Now, look 'ere, Your Gov'ner'll hev to come hisself, – And tell me where he want to go, An' he can make me a hoffer!"

Source *Punch*, 5 February 1881

Knowledge, practice and experience

As the aforementioned German guide wryly observed, ““Live and learn” ought to be the motto of the student of London cab-ology.’⁶⁰¹ And it was a sensible motto for both cab drivers and passengers, for as far as cabbings in Victorian London was concerned, the more knowledgeable and experienced one could be, the less chance one had of being overcharged or defrauded; and furthermore, the easier it was to attain a stronger bargaining position.

Being a cab driver in London was – and still *is* – a job requiring substantial knowledge, practice and experience. In 1874 Mayhew once stated that ‘A wholly inexperienced man cannot jump on the box of a Hansom and drive an irritable fare at a reasonable pace down Cheapside at three o’clock in the afternoon’ because – as the novel *Black Beauty* (1877) which featured a cab horse noted – ‘If you want to get through London fast in the middle of the day, it wants a deal of practice.’⁶⁰² In addition, Mayhew went on, the cabman needed to have ‘some scientific acquaintance with the inner structure of the horse’ in order to know ‘the precise number of miles that his horse can travel before it sinks exhausted’ with the ‘smallest amount of sustenance.’ As far as the passenger was concerned, Mayhew believed that the cabman must be an ‘expert physiognomist, and must be able to tell at a glance whether a fare is to be bullied or wheedled into an over-payment.’ Meanwhile, the cabman had to furnish himself with ‘original readings of the more obscure sections of the Cab Act’ since he could not afford to hire a counsel. And perhaps most importantly, Mayhew argued, the cabman ‘must be intimately acquainted with the nearest cut to the obscurest streets; and he must be prepared to look with an eye of suspicion on all fares who require to be set down at the Burlington Arcade, the Albany, Swan and Edgar’s, Waterloo House, and all the other edifices which a person may enter from one street and leave by another.’⁶⁰³

The contemporary descriptions of the ‘observant’⁶⁰⁴ cab drivers in Victorian London

⁶⁰¹ Schlesinger, *Saunterings in and about London*, p. 158.

⁶⁰² Sewell, *Black Beauty*, p. 133.

⁶⁰³ Henry Mayhew, ‘The Thumbnail Sketcher in a Cab’, in *London Characters* (London, Chatto and Windus, 1874), pp. 68-69.

⁶⁰⁴ Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London*, vol. 3, p. 301.

bear a close resemblance to that of the legendary Holmes. They both were expert physiognomists; they had mastered the topography of the city, and as Figure 6.8 (1864) pictures, they both specialised in tobacco.⁶⁰⁵ A *Punch* article suggested that the cabmen would demand the fare according to the passenger's outfit. For instance, 'To a young gentleman with half a cigar and a pea coat, taken up at the eyder cellars, and "driven like bricks," 2s. 6d. per mile,' and 'To a gentleman in black with a blue or crimson moreen bag, containing papers tied with red tape, 8d. per mile according to Act of Parliament.'⁶⁰⁶ Various other factors would influence the cabmen's decision to take the hire or not. As depicted in Figures 6.4 (1854) and 6.9 (1899), the human figure is the superficial excuse for the cab drivers' refusal to take heavy hirers ('stout party' [6.4] and 'Farmer Twentystone' [6.9]), out of consideration for the horse. But in reality, there is a more social and financial consideration or implication hidden in the captions and cartoons. For example, the hirers' outfits in both cartoons were out-of-date, if not humble. In addition, the destination Whitechapel in Figure 6.4 was located at the East-End, the deprived area of the city where a return fare was unlikely to be found. The sixpence proposal was also below the regular rate. And in Figure 6.9, the first name of the hirer – Farmer – makes it quite clear that he did not belong to the regular clientele of London's horse-drawn cabs. By contrast, the gentleman smoking in the background of 6.4 is more likely to have been the kind of passenger a Victorian cabman would look for. His presence in the cartoon cannot therefore be regarded as a coincidence. All in all, while these social and financial clues would have been recognised by the experienced cabman, this knowledge of faces, outfits, tobacco and everything related to the business required time to accumulate and lessons to be learned.

Likewise, knowledge, practice and experience of cabbage were equally important to the cab hirer. As Dobraszcyk points out, students of 'cab-ology' in Victorian London were well catered for by the vast array of printing materials providing relevant information. The Metropolitan Police published its official Book of fares, containing thousands of routes and fares. Numerous publishers designed similar products in a

⁶⁰⁵ Holmes claimed that he had 'written a little monograph on the ashes of 140 different varieties of pipe, cigar, and cigarette tobacco.' See Conan Doyle, 'The Boscombe Valley Mystery', in *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, p. 96.

⁶⁰⁶ We can be sure that the article was published before 1853 as the official fare was reduced from 8d. to 6d. by the Act of 1853.

variety of forms, including pocket books and maps.⁶⁰⁷ Besides, any new order given by the Home Secretary, or the establishment/cancellation of a cabstand by the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, had to be carried in the *London Gazette*. Even people who desired to acquire profound knowledge of the trade would not be left disappointed. Social documentaries about the business and people written by Mayhew, Booth, Wilkins and Moore among many others were published in the second half of the century. Otherwise, newspapers and periodicals would be enough for everyday use. *The Times*, for example, seldom, if ever, missed an update or change in the cab laws. It also carried cases that came to the police court, partly to remind its readership not to make the same mistakes themselves. Even women could access information via channels such as the column titled ‘notices to correspondents’ in *The Lady’s Newspaper* which answered questions from its readership. An 1863 issue contained the general knowledge of the fare system of London’s horse-drawn cab.⁶⁰⁸

In addition to the general knowledge of the fare structure and the business, Mayhew again provided a detailed observation of London’s cab drivers that would deepen the general public’s understanding of this special group of people. In *London Characters*, Mayhew produced six specimens of the cabmen (with sketches). The ‘quiet, civil old gentleman’ who drove carefully and slowly looked out for females and children in particular. The ‘light-comedy cabman’ always made fun of other people and persuaded people ‘to look misfortune from a humorous point of view.’ The ‘conventional foul-mouthed blackguard’ seemed ‘almost to have died out.’ The ‘Hansom cabman’ who drove a pristine vehicle with a good horse was ‘the smartest class of cabman.’ The ‘civil-spoken man’ who always said ‘leaves it to you, sir’ attempted to imply that he did not drive for money but for ‘establishing friendly social relations’ with his passenger. And the man ‘in the cape’ was the person who was often in trouble.⁶⁰⁹ By giving pictures and information on the appearances, personalities, habits and outfits of different kinds of London’s cab driver, Mayhew’s work – although rather arbitrary – was an initial answer to the general request for more detailed information about the cabmen.

⁶⁰⁷ Dobraszczyk, ‘Useful Reading? Designing Information for London’s Victorian Cab Passengers’, pp. 121-140.

⁶⁰⁸ *The Lady’s Newspaper*, 3 January 1863.

⁶⁰⁹ Mayhew, ‘The Thumbnail Sketcher in a Cab’, pp. 71-78.

But in the history of London's horse-drawn cab, perhaps no one was as knowledgeable as a female named Caroline Giacometti (1830-90)⁶¹⁰, better known as Mrs. Prodgers or 'Mother Prodgers' to her contemporaries. In the 1870s and 80s, particularly in the first decade, London's hackney carriage trade was shocked by the lady who possessed 'an extensive and unique knowledge of cab law and London mileage.'⁶¹¹ She frequented the police courts and brought numerous cases against the cab drivers. At the beginning the complaints were mainly about overcharges. Later, other charges such as insult (publicly calling her 'Old Mother Prodgers')⁶¹² and refusal to take her (which was not uncommon) were gradually included.⁶¹³ Because she was 'an authority on cab law,' at an 1875 trial, a magistrate suggested that perhaps 'she could enlighten him on the subject.'⁶¹⁴ The same year saw a cartoon (Figure 6.10) depicting her entering a cabman's shelter, and all of a sudden every cabman turned his back on her, trying his best to avoid the engagement.⁶¹⁵ Likewise, as Moore notes, a shout of 'Mother Prodgers' would 'send every cab within hail dashing away up side streets to escape her.'⁶¹⁶ London's cabmen detested her so much that they even burnt effigies of her on bonfire night.⁶¹⁷ And the success (or the notoriety) of this extraordinary female again proved how important knowledge, practice and experience were as far as cabbings was concerned.

⁶¹⁰ Although May thought that 'Dickens might have invented this lady,' Mrs. Prodgers was real. The 1881 Census has recorded a Caroline G. Prodgers inhabiting at Marylebone, London, which corresponds to the address Mrs. Prodgers gave in the several magistrate's court, and the same address was put in her obituary in the Press. See 1881 Census: Class: *RG11*; Piece: *163*; Folio: *63*; Page: *11*; GSU roll: *1341035*. *The Times*, 1 January 1887 (At Marylebone magistrate's court). *The Graphic*, 10 May 1890 (obituary). May, *Gondola and Growlers*, p. 102. More interesting details regarding Mrs. Prodgers are covered in a Web article by U.K. based artist Heather Tweed. The story is generally correct. Only does it lack clear citations. See <http://publicdomainreview.org/2012/09/19/mrs-giacometti-prodgers-the-cabmans-nemesis/> (accessed 29 March 2013).

⁶¹¹ Moore, *Omnibuses and Cabs*, p. 238.

⁶¹² *The Times*, 1 January 1887.

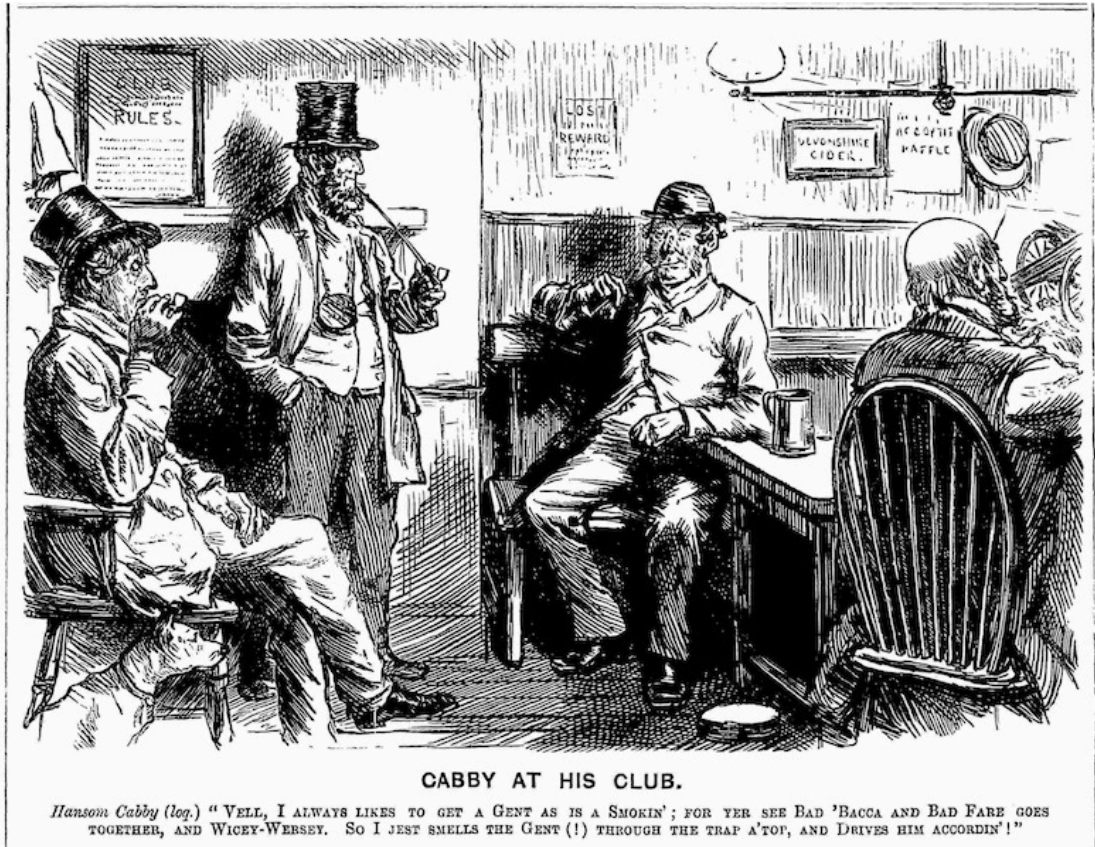
⁶¹³ *The Times*, 24 June 1872; 20 December 1872.

⁶¹⁴ *The Times*, 6 February 1875.

⁶¹⁵ *Punch*, 6 March 1875.

⁶¹⁶ Moore, *Omnibuses and Cabs*, p. 238.

⁶¹⁷ The effigy of Mrs. Prodgers and the summons for the cabman were reported in an earlier news article. See *The Ipswich Journal*, 9 November 1875. John Thomson and Adolphe Smith, 'November Effigies', in *Victorian London Street Life in Historic Photographs* [originally *Street Life in London* published in 1877], (New York: Dover Publications, INC, 1994), p. 102.



CABBY AT HIS CLUB.

Hansom Cabby (log.) "VELL, I ALWAYS LIKES TO GET A GENT AS IS A SMOKIN'; FOR YER SEE BAD 'BACCA AND BAD FARE GOES TOGETHER, AND WICEY-WERSEY. SO I JEST SMELLS THE GENT (!) THROUGH THE TRAP A'TOP, AND DRIVES HIM ACCORDIN'!"

Figure 6.8 Cabby at his club

Hansom Cabby (log.) "Vell, I always like to get a gent as is a Smokin'; for yer see bad 'bacca and bad fare goes together, and wicey-wersev." So I jest smells the gen through the trap a'tot, and drives him accordin!"

Source *Punch*, 17 September 1864

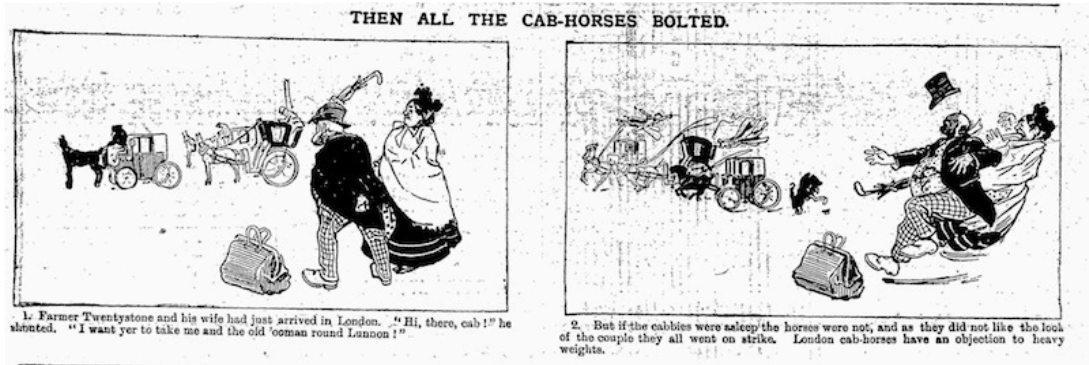


Figure 6.9 Then All the Cab-Horses Bolted

1. (Left) Farmer Twentystone and his wife had just arrived in London. "Hi, there, cab!" he shouted. "I want yer to take me and the old 'ooman round Lunnon!"
2. (Right) But if the cabbies were asleep the horses were not, and as they did not like the look of the couple they all went on strike. London cab-horses have an objection to heavy weights.

Source *Illustrated Chips*, 11 March 1899



Figure 6.10 The Cabman's Shelter. (Enter Mrs. Giacometti Prodgers. Tableau!)

Source *Punch*, 6 March 1875

Civilisation and cabbie

Knowledge and experiences of cabbie could serve more than a protective or defensive purpose. In fact, since the horse-drawn cab was so indispensable to the middle-and-upper class of the city, mastering the art of cabbie appeared to become a basic requirement for sociability, civility and urbanity, particularly to urban males. As it has already been noted ‘the City man’⁶¹⁸ and ‘the young men about town’ were ‘infinitely preferred’⁶¹⁹ by London’s horse-drawn cab drivers. These urban men were regular and veteran cab hirers. On the one hand, they were generous and sympathetic to the drivers so they always paid more than their legal fares, and never neglected the extra charges, whether they were legally binding or unwritten. On the other, they knew the city and the cab trade well enough so they were unlikely to be extorted. Lord John Russell (1792-1878), the two-time prime minister, for instance, was allegedly in the habit of cabbie the short distance back home from the House of Commons every night. And every cabman knew that this easy job was worth a shilling.⁶²⁰ Or, like Wilkins was told (1893), gentlemen of this kind simply placed their money ‘on the roof without a word,’ and ‘almost invariably’ offered 6d. above the standard fare. By showing their generosity, confidence, sophistication and control in the process of cabbie, they even earned the respect of London’s cabmen.⁶²¹

On the contrary, men who did not cab in similar manner were possibly deemed to be being slightly improper, or at least not as gentlemanly as genuine gentlemen, from the cabmen and the gentlemen’s perspective. For example, the left side of Figure 6.1 (1853) pictures an impertinent cabman threatening his passenger who was only willing to pay him 6d. – the legal fare for a riding within one mile pursuant to the new Act. He sarcastically challenged the hirer that ‘You call yourself a Gentleman, I s’pose,’ implying that the way the hirer cabbie/paid was not very gentleman-like.⁶²² Likewise, in 1868, *The Sporting Times* carried an article written by ‘the man about town,’ who claimed that he spent ‘£10,000 a year in cab fare for many years’ but never had a dispute with the driver. In his viewpoint, the drivers of London’s horse-drawn cabs

⁶¹⁸ Wilkins, ‘Hansoms and Their Drivers’, p. 476.

⁶¹⁹ Thomson and Smith, ‘London Cabmen’, p. 6.

⁶²⁰ Moore, *Omnibuses and Cabs*, p. 239.

⁶²¹ Wilkins, ‘Hansoms and Their Drivers’, p. 476.

⁶²² *Punch*, 30 July 1853. Similar case: *The Lady’s Newspaper*, 13 September 1856.

were ‘underrated and underpaid’ because when ‘a testy old gentlemen, or penurious cad, who ought to have taken an Atlas, is aggrieved, he proclaims his wrong from Charing Cross...’⁶²³ This again suggests that neither an ungenerous nor ungracious attitude/gesture would make a man a skilful yet respectful gentleman-cab hirer. In addition, the characters’ appearance and outfits in Figure 6.5 (1864) and 6.11 (1893) – a man ‘who has driven rather a hard bargain’ and a novice named *Farmer* who was so ignorant of the hansom that he did not even know where to sit – bore no resemblance to the image of a typical metropolitan gentleman (the left side of Figure 6.12). Nor did the ways they cabbed, for the former pushed too hard and the latter was too naive. In this regard, the Victorian proper cabbings clearly involved both dos and don’ts, such as *do* pay higher than the lawful fare and *do not* waste time on complaining or haggling. And by exercising all this dos and don’ts would eventually become nature, reshaping one’s habitus, and making a ‘men about town.’⁶²⁴

All this points to the conclusion that in the Victorian era, specialising in cabbings seemed to be a requirement yet also a privilege for the urban gentlemen, which would distinguish them from ‘unprotected females’, unsophisticated countrymen, helpless strangers and people who never could afford the opportunities to cab. It is in this sense that the accumulation of knowledge and experience – the know-how – of proper cabbings (not just cabbings) could be regarded as a part of the process of masculine civilisation, the cultivation of urban gentleman in the increasingly mobilised metropolis.⁶²⁵ It thus echoes Flamm and Kaufmann’s argument that motility is ‘indeed a form of capital,’ which partly depends on ‘economic capital’, and involves accumulation of ‘experience’, ‘knowledge’ and ‘skills’, and a sense of ‘control’.⁶²⁶

Based on what has been discussed, it is proposed that the knowledge and practice of proper cabbings could not only prepare a sophisticated cab customer but also help improve the relationship between the hirer and the hired. The focus solely on urban

⁶²³ *The Sporting Times: A Review of Racing, Literature, Art and the Drama* (London), 1 August 1868, p. 244.

⁶²⁴ In the field of material studies, scholars have already suggested a dynamic subject (user) – object relationship in which objects, or the way people appropriate the object will reshape or cultivate a new habitus, even create a new standard of everyday life, such as the household appliances. See Shove, *Comfort, Cleanliness and Convenience: The Social Organisation of Normality*.

⁶²⁵ It also explains why Victorian book of manners (for gentleman) would introduce the courtesy of cabbings. See Mrs. Humphry, *Manners for Men* (1897), p. 36.

⁶²⁶ Michael Flamm and Vincent Kaufmann, ‘Operationalising the Concept of Motility: A Qualitative Study’, *Mobilities*, 1:2 (July, 2006), pp. 167-189.

males – particularly in comparison to the general hostility to Mrs. Prodders – reflects and embodies the contemporary prejudice against females, the countrymen, and other groups of people in terms of individual mobilities and cabbings in Victorian London. This in many ways resonates with the previous chapter, suggesting that there was a complicity among the press, the trade and the clientele – which were all dominated by city men – in an attempt to monopolise (or at least to represent themselves as the specialists of) this specific mobility (and its sense of convenience, freedom, superiority, and adventure) in the metropolis. Proper cabbings and the metropolitan gentlemen hence defined each other. In this regard, Mrs. Prodders (and any other like-minded females, like the middle-aged women in Figure 6.12) failed to meet Victorian public's approval simply because she publicly displayed her refusal to play the role of 'unprotected female,' and her incredible knowledge and skills of cabbings. But neither was proper in Victorian society.

HIS FIRST HANSOM.



CABBY : "Hansom, sir?"
Farmer Gubbins : "Well, I should like to, if you'll let me git in front an' drive. I don't like the look of that little seat behind there."

Figure 6.11 His first hansom

Source *Illustrated Chips*, 2 December 1893

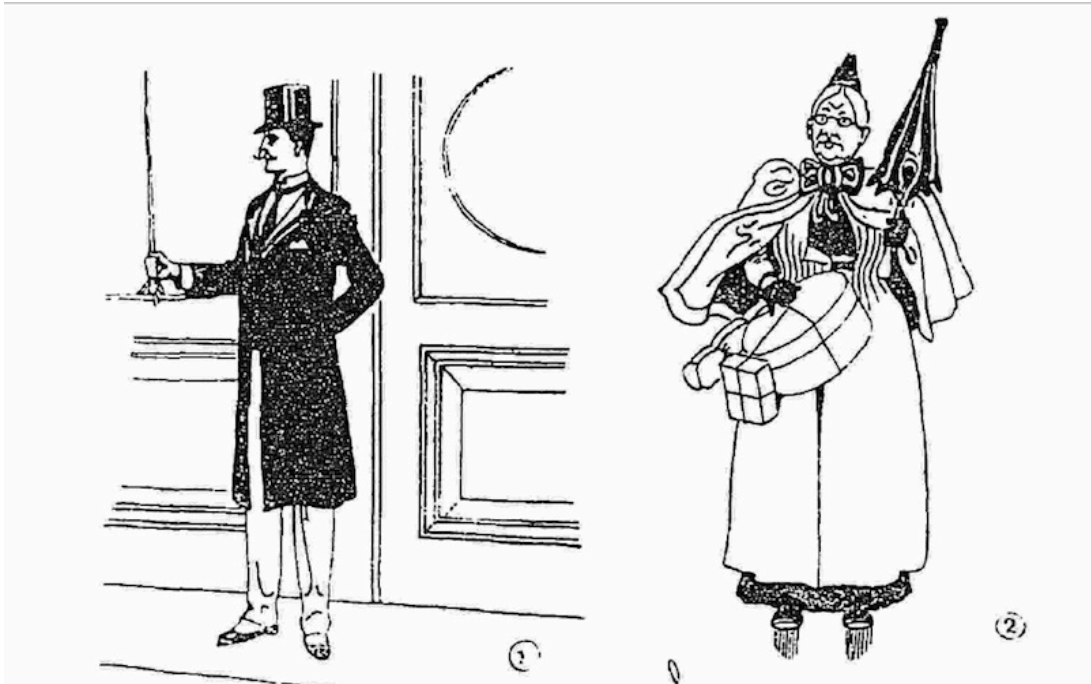


Figure 6.12 Strike

Caption:

- (1) The man about town – a fare cabby loves.
- (2) A fare cabby detests; she has all the fares and distance at the ends of her fingers, and has never yet been know to give an extra farthing.

Source *Fun*, 29 May 1894

The Conveyance of Relationships

The possibility of long-standing relationships

Although the connection between the cab driver and the passenger was ephemeral,⁶²⁷ in fact, as several texts attest, there was a reasonable possibility of a long-term relationship being established between the two parties, whether it was a friendly or a strained one. For instance, in 1853, when the new Act reduced the cab fare from 8*d.* a mile to 6*d.*, a Miss Marshall, a popular actress of the Strand Theatre, found herself in a awkward situation to get a cab because the distance between the cabstand adjoining

⁶²⁷ Fred Davis, 'The Cabdriver and His Fare: Facets of a Fleeting Relationship', *The American Journal of Sociology*, 65: 2 (September, 1959), pp. 158-165. May, *Gondolas and Growlers*, p. 65, p. 97.

her residence and the theatre was just few yards short of one mile. The journey in this sense was so unprofitable that ‘the whole of the cabmen’ on the stand ‘apparently conspired to avoid her.’⁶²⁸ Whenever she made her appearance, they suddenly became busy, fell asleep, pretended to be deaf and blind, or simply disappeared, causing her serious inconvenience as she had to go to the theatre two or three times a day.⁶²⁹ This case bore a resemblance to that of the (in)famous Mrs. Prodgers in the 1870s. It indicates the existence of a mutual understanding between the cab drivers and their regular clients. In this case, at least all drivers realised who Miss Marshall was and where (and how far) she normally would go. The case not merely highlights the changeability of the relationship but also reconfirms the business nature of the interactions between the hire and the hired. An amendment to the rules, or more precisely, a drop in profits, would easily convert a regular into an unwelcome customer.

However, sometimes it was the hirer, like Mayhew that blacklisted the driver. According to Mayhew’s work published in 1874, he was once accommodated in a building opposite a cabstand. He soon became acquainted with the drivers on this stand. Among them, there was one whom he would never employ again. He accused the driver of overcharging him and deliberately making him late. The experience was so unpleasant that Mayhew blocked ‘this particular evilly disposed cabman’ immediately and permanently.⁶³⁰ A long-lasting, yet broken relationship was therefore established based on poor service.

The driver-hire relationship in Victorian London was not always rocky. In contrast to the aforementioned examples and what May has suggested in his study – the men on the streets had ‘little opportunity of nurturing a regular clientèle’ and had ‘no chance building up a marketable goodwill’⁶³¹ – there were still positive cases. In 1849, *The Times* carried a letter criticising the privilege cab system at Waterloo terminus, in which the sender noted that a cab he was ‘in the habit of using’ had ceased to serve at the station. The driver, in answer to his inquiry, explained that the exorbitant rent

⁶²⁸ *The Times*, 19, 22 October 1853.

⁶²⁹ *The Times*, 19, 22 October 1853.

⁶³⁰ Mayhew, ‘Opposite A Cabstand’, p. 246.

⁶³¹ May, *Gondolas and Growlers*, p. 65.

demanding by the railway company was unaffordable.⁶³² The interactions between the two suggested that they were no less than long-term business acquaintances. In addition, according to Mayhew, in exactly the same book he condemned the evil cab driver, depicting a vivid image of an old gentleman-driver who carried old ladies and children, generally had ‘two or three regular customers, who knows where to find him.’⁶³³ And a few years later, in 1877, Adolphe Smith – a journalist who worked along with prominent photographer John Thomson (1837-1921) to document the street life in Victorian London – reported a similar story. One of his informants, a cab driver, admitted that he had made a fortune because a profligate couple had engaged his cab ‘day after day.’ When the couple got drunk in the public house, they knew that ‘they might trust the cabman to see them safely home.’⁶³⁴ And it is in this sense that something beyond the pure business ties between the driver and the hirer became sensible. A mutual trust, care, or even a rapport was gradually developed.

Likewise, Victorian literary work and popular culture provide similar examples. The year 1877 also witnessed the publication of *Black Beauty* – a world-famous novel about the life story of a working horse that spent some time hauling a cab in London. Chapters 36 and 37 described a cab driver Mr Barker temporarily losing an already regular client Mrs Briggs simply because he declined her husband’s new proposal to convey them to the church on Sundays, insisting that Sundays were the time for rest, family and worship. And more importantly, they should be a day saved for everyone – including the poor and the rich, the passenger and the driver. Nevertheless, this broken relationship was repaired soon after Mrs Briggs realised that ‘Nothing will suit her but Mr Barker’s cab again.’⁶³⁵ The cabman and the customer were back in each other’s daily lives once more. Yet to some degree, the story also reveals how fragile and changeable these long-lasting ties could be. In addition, in the lyrics of a popular song in 1878, the passengers were so impressed by the speed of the horse and the skill of the hansom driver that they wanted to enjoy the service in the future. A swell ordered the driver to pick him up ‘at St. James’s tomorrow about this time.’ And a lady asked the driver his ‘number’ because ‘We shall look out of you Cabby another day’.⁶³⁶ These

⁶³² *The Times*, 3 February 1849.

⁶³³ Mayhew, ‘Thumbnail Studies in A Cab’, pp. 71-72.

⁶³⁴ Thompson and Smith, ‘London Cabmen’, p. 4.

⁶³⁵ Anna Sewell, *Black Beauty*, (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 136-141.

⁶³⁶ Arthur Guyatt, *Hansom Joe, the fastest on the road* (London: Alphonse Bertini & co, 1878).

steps towards initiating a potential long-term relationship with the driver suggest that enduring relationships between individual passengers and drivers actually existed. While a civil, trustworthy and skilful cab driver was granted opportunities to transform a random passenger into a regular, a rude, abusive and greedy coachman would go on the blacklist.

Relationships outside the carriage

Sometimes the Victorian cab driver and his client would build up a relationship outside the carriage, which to a certain degree would go beyond the simple driver-hirer relationship as well as our modern sense of professionalism, whereby one simply pays the other to drive from place to place. As we have already seen, a serious dispute between the two parties would end either in the police station house or the magistrate's court, where their roles were transformed from driver and passenger into complainant and defendant. Hence, a legal relationship replaced their original business connection. Interestingly, even when a driver and a passenger were put in these officially rival positions, the tension, or the hostility between the two was not necessarily heightened, especially when it was just a disagreement over the fare. The Victorian magistrate's courts on occasion witnessed the passenger-plaintiff express sympathy and regret for the driver-defendant. In a case heard in 1853, the complainant once asked the magistrate to reconsider the penalty because he was shocked by how harsh the punishment was and how hastily the decision was made. The infamous case also upset the general public and the trade of London's hackney carriage. The latter soon launched the city's very first major cab strike.⁶³⁷ A similar event took place in Southwark police court in 1876. After 'learning the defendant had a wife and young family,' the passenger-complainant expressed that 'he had no wish' that the driver-defendant 'be severely punished.'⁶³⁸ This again attests to the severity of the

⁶³⁷ There was a disagreement in which the driver thought that the journey was more than 4 miles while the passenger insisted that it was shorter than 3. The case was therefore brought to the Bow Street Magistrate's Court at the suggestion of the driver. The magistrate proposed that the distance be measured, provided each party was willing to pay 5s in advance. As it was the first business the driver had on that day, he did not have enough money to hand. The magistrate then said he could only take the passenger's word in this regard and fined the driver 40s – more than a 40-mile journey – or one month in prison. The journey was eventually measured. It was over 7 miles. See *The Times*, 20, 21, 23 July 1853. About the cab strike, please see Chapter 3.

⁶³⁸ *The Times*, 10 May 1876. More or less the same thing happened in the aforementioned 'pineapple case': The complainant 'tried hard to get the penalty mitigated.' See *The Times*, 13 20 July 1853.

sentences given to the drivers, which sometimes even surprised the passenger-plaintiffs. This derivatively legal relationship therefore opened up – although in an unexpected way – an opportunity for the passenger-complainants to broaden their understanding about the laws, the trade and the drivers of London’s horse-drawn cabs, particularly the risks and difficulties that the latter faced on a daily basis, including the suits brought against them.

In addition to the station house and the magistrate’s court, Victorian cab passengers and drivers also frequented places such as coffee shops and public houses where refreshments were being served in each other’s company, showing a friendly aspect of their relationship. The practice became a commonplace so in 1863, an editorial of *The Times* commented that ‘What is more common than the drawing up of a cab at the door of a public house for the fare to refresh and treat the driver? There are classes of people who seem to think a drive incomplete without both process.’⁶³⁹ Likewise, in some extraordinary cases, although the drivers and the passengers did not visit such places, they went through a similar process and enjoyed each other’s company, even just for a short time. For example, in 1853, a passenger testified that ‘...in the progress of the journey, the defendant [driver] had been liberally supplied with cigars and other creature comforts.’⁶⁴⁰ Two decades later, in 1874, another passenger ‘passed the whisky bottle through the trap several times’ to his cabman, and the latter ‘made pretty good pulls at it.’⁶⁴¹ By spending extra time and money on taking refreshments together, the driver-passenger relationships forged by London’s horse-drawn cabs were in this sense much closer than that of other contemporary (modern) forms of public transport. No matter how domestic the Victorian omnibuses, trains and trams claimed or attempted to be, their staffs and customers seldom, if ever, had opportunities to have drinks with each other at the same table, as if they were old friends or a family. Neither do the cab drivers and their passengers nowadays. This gentle and friendly custom died out with the modernisation, professionalization and commercialization of the trade and society as a whole.

Nevertheless, even the seeming ties of friendship could easily become discordant

⁶³⁹ Quotation: *The Times*, 11 November 1863. Other examples: *The Lady’s Newspaper*, 2 August 1851. *The Observer*, 22 October 1882.

⁶⁴⁰ *The Times*, 7 December 1853.

⁶⁴¹ *The Observer*, 22 November 1874.

because the cab passenger did not always ‘treat the driver.’⁶⁴² In other words, sometimes they did not pay for the refreshments on such occasions. The year 1831 witnessed two textbook cases. In January, during an overnight journey, the driver not only bought ‘two glasses of hot wine’ for the passenger – ‘a fashionably attired female’⁶⁴³ – but also paid for the breakfast for two in a coffee shop as soon as it opened at 4.00 in the morning. This more-than-20-hour journey finally ended in Marylebone magistrate’s court when the lady failed to pay the legal fare, and for the drinks and meals.⁶⁴⁴ Half a year later, in August 1831, after stopping at ‘almost every public-house on the road,’ another cab journey ended before the magistrate.⁶⁴⁵ In this case, the driver accused the passenger of owing him not merely his legal fare but also another 9s. because at one stop (Old Bailey) of this pub crawl, the latter had treated every person in the house but it had been the driver who had settled the bill. The magistrate ordered the passenger to pay the fare but claimed ‘he had nothing to do with the 9s.’ and suggested the driver take the case to the Court of Requests.⁶⁴⁶ The hirer and the driver under this circumstance arguably became the creditor and the debtor, again highlighting the variety of their original relationship. These cases also suggest that offering refreshments to the driver could only be regarded as the hirer’s gesture of goodwill. It was perhaps a tacit agreement and a habitual ritual between the driver and the passenger. It was however not the latter’s obligation that .

A relationship never realised: the hirer a master and the driver a public servant

When the hirer-driver relationship was taken into consideration, there existed – perhaps still does – an ingrained belief that the driver of London’s hackney carriage should be regarded as a public servant. According to Jenner, this attitude could be traced back to the eighteenth century when Daniel Defoe (1660?-1731) argued that a hackney coachman should be as obedient as a domestic servant on the basis that all relevant regulations required them to take their passengers’ orders and drive them to anywhere within the Bills of Mortality.⁶⁴⁷ In spite of several changes in the laws related to London’s hackney carriages, this primary component remained throughout

⁶⁴² Quotation: *The Times*, 11 November 1863.

⁶⁴³ *The Observer*, 9 January 1831.

⁶⁴⁴ *The Observer*, 9 January 1831.

⁶⁴⁵ *The Observer*, 14 August 1831.

⁶⁴⁶ *The Observer*, 14 August 1831.

⁶⁴⁷ But Jenner disagreed. See Jenner, ‘Circulation and Disorder’, pp. 51-52.

the nineteenth century. So did Defoe's followers. In June 1853, a complaint in the *Illustrated London News* read 'A cabman was supposed to be the servant of the public, and yet he was everyone's master.'⁶⁴⁸ The same year witnessed an editorial of *The Times* asserting that 'The cabman, once a cabman, is no more a freetrader, but a public servant.'⁶⁴⁹ A decade later, in 1862, a Mr. Paynter sitting the Westminster police court assured those present that 'a cabman was a public servant, who was bound to go wherever he was directed.'⁶⁵⁰ *The Times* editorial then endorsed the same idea in 1887.⁶⁵¹ One of the reasons why this opinion was repeatedly voiced is that it was obviously never realised in practice. Victorian social investigators and documentary writers who paid attention to the cab industry seemed to disagree with this contention,⁶⁵² not to mention the vast majority of contemporary cab drivers who did not see themselves as public servants.⁶⁵³ As the cartoons show, they certainly did not fulfil this role expectation by treating their passengers like masters.⁶⁵⁴

The 1853 editorial of *The Times* presented another argument supporting this public-servant theory. It claimed that the cabmen's stand in the street is given 'by the public, and is a privilege.' Thus, the regulations and conditions imposed on them were 'restrictive' yet also 'protective.'⁶⁵⁵ However, it is interesting that this so-called privilege is exactly the reason that Jenner considers the hackney coachmen businesspeople rather than servants. They owned their own coaches and horses. They paid the state for the privilege – purchasing the licences to ply for hire in the city – not vice versa, receiving salaries from the government. Most importantly, it was not

⁶⁴⁸ *Illustrated London News*, 18 June 1853

⁶⁴⁹ *The Times*, 28 July 1853.

⁶⁵⁰ *The Times*, 6 November 1862.

⁶⁵¹ *The Times*, 30 July 1887.

⁶⁵² The term 'public servant' was not applied to the cab drivers in Mayhew, Booth and Smith's works. Wilkins used it in a slightly ironic way describing the bitter relationship between the cabman and the policeman, another 'public servant'. 'Those other sorely-tried public servants, policemen, are not disposed to be over lenient with licensed drivers.' See Wilkins, 'Hansoms and Their Drivers', p. 478.

⁶⁵³ In the 1895 Committee report, two cab drivers – Mr. J. Beasley and Mr. E. Dyke, who served as witnesses (two of thirteen) – considered themselves public servants. The former mentioned it in the context of endorsing an official reduction in the number of annual licenses issued, saying that it would favour the public. The latter asked for the pension (see next paragraph). See 1895 *The cab service of the metropolis*, p. 96 (Mr. Beasley), 115-116 (Mr. Dyke).

⁶⁵⁴ For instance, as Moore noted, some cab hirers 'expected cabmen to get down and ring the bell or knock at the door of the house where they wished to alight.' But the majority of cabmen objected to fulfilling this duty because they were drivers, not personal/private servants. See Moore, *Omnibuses and Cabs*, p. 234.

⁶⁵⁵ *The Times*, 28 July 1853.

unusual to see a servant – particularly those working with horses, such as the coachman and the groom – become a hackney coach driver, pursuing more freedom and independence.⁶⁵⁶ This did not change much in the nineteenth century. The proprietors still paid for the licences for their vehicles. The drivers were now required to pay for their driving licences in the first place; then paid the proprietors for horses and cabs. Only the market was opened; the monopoly of the hackney carriages ended, and the privilege was not as privileged as in earlier centuries. Moreover, the state, on behalf of the public, even reduced the official cab fare and created more strict laws regulating the trade. Not surprisingly, Victorian cab drivers felt more restricted than protected by the state and the public. In addition, compared to another contemporary public servant – the Metropolitan Policeman – who from 1829 was waged and would receive a pension, it is understandable that the horse-drawn cab drivers doubted that they and the constables belonged to the same category. In fact, in answer to the Committee considering the cab service of the metropolis (1894), a driver Mr. Dyke argued that ‘I certainly think that if it is right to provide old age pensions for the police, cab drivers following their calling are just as useful as the police, and they should be provided for if possible.’⁶⁵⁷ In other words, if they were not entitled to what other public servants enjoyed, why were they categorised into this section?⁶⁵⁸

Even in the legal field, whether the cab driver was a public servant was still a question open to dispute, in a way that perhaps would surprise the cab hirer (the so-called ‘public’). The most complicated situation was that the cab driver was not the driver-owner who kept his own vehicle and horse(s). Under these circumstances, the driver first needed to rent a cab and horse(s) from the proprietor. In this regard, he, as some legal professionals suggested, was arguably the proprietor’s servant.⁶⁵⁹ In fact, as Victorian proprietors regularly grumbled, the cab laws did ‘press heavily’ on them

⁶⁵⁶ Jenner, ‘Circulation and Disorder’, p. 52.

⁶⁵⁷ 1895 *The cab service of the metropolis*, pp. 115-116.

⁶⁵⁸ It is however interesting that whether the policeman was a public servant or master was also a popular topic in nineteenth-century London. See ‘Servant or Master? Police and Public in London’, in Wilbur R. Miller, *Cops and Bobbies: Police Authority in New York and London, 1830-1870* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press: 1999), pp. 104-139.

⁶⁵⁹ The issue was eventually settled (at a legal level) at the end of the century as *Justice of the Peace* noted that the proprietor was liable to the negligence of the cab driver, which means, his servant. However, the report of the Committee showed that the Committee and the proprietors apparently had different opinion. Charley, *A Handy Book of the Law of London Cabs and Omnibuses*, p. 11, 141. ‘Negligence of London Cabowner’, in *Justice of the Peace*, 28 April 1894, reprinted in 1895 *The cab service of the metropolis*, pp. 317-318.

based on this contention. They were obliged to produce *the* driver before the magistrate, liable to pay the fine and responsible for the luggage that may be lost from the cab⁶⁶⁰ because it was they – as masters – that ‘trusted the servant (driver) with the control of the carriage.’⁶⁶¹ However, at the same time, some did agree that the driver of public vehicles was the servant of the passenger. In this respect, the negligence of the driver was the passenger’s negligence because ‘He chose his own conveyance, and must take the consequence of any default of the driver, whom he thought fit to trust.’⁶⁶² Here the question is would it be possible for a driver to be a servant of one particular proprietor, and also a public servant (a servant of the passenger)? In addition, the master in this sense was liable for what the servant did, as the servant was under the master’s control. That is, being treated like a master was also a responsibility which I doubt the Victorian public had full awareness of when they required the cab driver to be absolutely obedient. All in all, the major disagreement over the master-servant/hirer-driver and proprietor-driver relationships at both the theoretical and the practical level confirms the complex dynamics in this trade, and the tension and dilemmas about trust or distrust of each other among the three parties. The fact the issue remained unsettled also reminds us that this master-servant relationship was a relationship never achieved in the age of the horse-drawn cab.

To conclude this section, the various aspects and complexity of the driver-passenger relationship forged around London’s horse-drawn cab challenge the widely held assumption that the connection between the two parties was short, unstable, confined to the carriage and severed as soon as the journey was completed. It has been argued that long-lasting relationships between Victorian cab drivers and passengers were not unusual. People frequented the same cabstands. They were fully aware that a trustworthy driver could offer them a much safer and more enjoyable service, and would do their best to engage a reliable driver and avoid an infamous one. The licence numbers of both the carriage and the driver would be helpful in this respect. In addition, the section also examined the different possibilities and dynamics of the driver-passenger relationship. It has suggested that the initial ties of business between the two parties could later transform into relationships of various natures, sometimes even continued away from the carriage, such as the complainant and the defendant in

⁶⁶⁰ 1895 *The cab service of the metropolis*, p. 9.

⁶⁶¹ Charley, *A Handy Book of the Law of London Cabs and Omnibuses*, p. 141.

⁶⁶² Charley, *A Handy Book of the Law of London Cabs and Omnibuses*, p. 142.

the magistrate's court, and the friendly companions in the public house. And it is this pre-modernity, complexity and changeability of the driver-hirer relationship that differentiates London's horse-drawn cab from other modes of public transport in the Victorian era, and its successors today. Finally, the section also examined the popular idea that the cab driver should be a public servant. However, the fact that this putative master-servant relationship remained questionable and problematic, and was only partially realised in Victorian London, again underlines the dynamics and ambiguity of the trade, at both the theoretical and practical level.

Conclusion

This chapter dealt with a central issue with regard to London's horse-drawn cab i.e. the long-standing dispute between passengers and drivers over the fare. It not only tackled the nature of this conflict but also used it as a thread to reveal the tension and dynamics between the three parties directly involved: the drivers, the authorities and the passengers (the general public).

The main reason for the constant quarrels about the cab fare is obvious: the absence of a reliable measure able to provide precise information about the distance and the fare-to-be-paid. However, as we have seen, the problem was not technological, but the reluctance of the trade, its drivers and proprietors as well as the administration, to seek out or design such an instrument. There were no concerted attempts to figure out a new tariff scheme in answer to this everlasting nuisance and, in this respect, although London's horse-drawn cab played a critical role in the process of the city's modernisation, the trade itself remained conservative and primitive. It rejected the assistance/interference of modern technology, preserving its relatively pre-modern way of running the business and encouraging traditional social interactions between drivers and hirers brokering a deal. It is in this sense that the Victorian cab business bore no resemblance to other contemporary (modern) modes of public transport or the nineteenth-century novelty department store, in which the prices were fixed and non-negotiable. And it is this margin or space allowing further bargaining and negotiation, which caused the continuing disputes.

The strained relationship between Victorian cab drivers and their clients also underlined another duality of the horse-drawn carriage system. The vehicle was not

only a mode of public transport but also the livelihood of individual cabmen. Drivers, although they were arguably and mistakenly deemed public servants by the general populace, were in fact businessmen or skilled labourers after all. Unfortunately, sometimes these roles conflicted with each other. The general public expected a convenient, safe and cheap public vehicle operated by an obedient, civilized and trustworthy figure, yet the driver-breadwinner not only wanted to make the largest amount of money out of every journey but also had to complete as many journeys as possible. To the cab driver, whoever was willing to pay more than the legal fare was therefore much welcome and appreciated. In this respect, the ambivalent and even conflicting roles of London's hackney carriage, plus its profit-making nature, unavoidably put its drivers and hirers in potentially rival positions, which led to the enduring conflict between them.

Knowledge, experience and practice did help to prevent this friction from becoming unbearable. The more knowledgeable, experienced and sophisticated cab drivers or hirers were, the less chance there was that they would end up feeling cheated, or getting into irresolvable disputes. Furthermore, the more confident and proficient hirers became, the more control they could enjoy during the ride. Mastering the art of proper cabbage, in this sense, became a basic requirement for sociability, civility and urbanity, particularly for urban males. And compared to other modern forms of public transport, over which the passenger had no control at all, the hirer of London's hackney carriage at least had some power and knowledge to negotiate, or even contest with the driver.

Last but not least, it is widely believed that the Victorian driver-passenger relationship was fragile partly because the duration of each ride was too brief to remedy the anonymity and develop a mutual trust between the two parties. Whilst this may have been true in many or even most cases, the chapter has highlighted the various relationships that could be formed between individual cab hirers and their fares, including long-term associations. Regular cab users would engage a cab at particular cabstands. A good service might afford the driver a second opportunity. In addition, as we have seen, the relationship between driver and passenger would sometimes extend to situations away from the vehicle. A serious dispute would probably end in the magistrate's court. The business relationship in this regard changed into a legal one. It was also not rare to see the two parties visiting a public house or sharing creature

comforts together during the journey. This seemingly simple and singular relationship between the passengers and drivers of London's hackney carriage was, in fact, ripe with possibilities and potential.

By examining the rich variety of relationships between the drivers and passengers, this chapter again suggests that it would be a shame if we treated London's horse-drawn cab simply as a mode of public transport conveying people from one place to another, and its drivers as public servants providing skills and services in a dispassionate fashion. The unique fare system, the bargaining process, the common but tacit understanding of the rules of tipping and the numerous disputes over the grey areas created by the pre-modernity, complexity, ambivalence and sometimes even conflicting characteristics that the horse-drawn cab and its driver possessed, together distinguished this specific vehicle from other contemporary, modernist public conveyances, making it a perfect signifier of the period and the city in transition. However, when taximeter was made compulsory on the increasing motor cab in 1907, it not only signalled an important accomplishment of the modernisation, mechanisation and professionalisation of the trade but also ended the traditional interaction between the driver and the passenger. The machine – taximeter – became the only authority over the fare. Furthermore, the word 'taxi' has been used to mean the motor cab and the trade.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

For the closing ceremony of London 2012 Summer Olympics, the layout of the Olympic Stadium was converted into a giant Union Flag; prominent landmarks of the city such as Big Ben, the London Eye, Battersea Power Station and Tower Bridge were reproduced and represented in front of a domestic television audience of more than 20 million and 750 million worldwide, demonstrating the pride of the nation and the city. And sure enough the famous London cabs – a moving landmark of the city – were there at this special event. Actually they appeared on several occasions throughout the programme, and definitely made their presence known at the two-hour mark when the reunited girl band Spice Girls were conveyed centre stage by five London cabs.⁶⁶³ The attendance of the cab at the closing ceremony reaffirmed its presence as one of the visual/design elements that composed the mascot of the games. That is, from the very beginning to the very end of London 2012, the London cab literally took centre stage in every way – metaphorically and physically, artistically and practically – assuring the audience that the cab was by no means just a mode of urban transport but also a well-acknowledged cultural metaphor of the city, or even the state.

The popularity and centrality of the black cabs in twentieth and twenty-first-century London is a déjà vu of the hansoms and growlers in Victorian London, where the number of the licensed horse-drawn cabs once exceeded ten thousands, two times more than the number of the omnibuses plus horse-drawn trams in the city. It was an era when Disraeli drew the famous analogy that the hansom cab was ‘the gondola of London’⁶⁶⁴; when Arthur Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes became the now legendary ambassador/spokesperson of London’s hackney carriage; when the commissioner of the Metropolis Police hailed the vehicle as ‘the one most in request for London use, being the more convenient for rapid transit from one place to another’⁶⁶⁵; and when Charles Booth complimented that ‘The constant presence of cabs on the look-out for a

⁶⁶³ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ij3sgRG5sPY>. (29 March 2013)

⁶⁶⁴ Benjamin Disraeli, *Lothair* (3 vols, London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1870), vol. 1, p. 226.

⁶⁶⁵ Parliament Paper 1884 [C. 4179] *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the year 1883*, p. 7.

fare is one of the greatest conveniences of the London streets.⁶⁶⁶

By examining the contemporary practice and discourse of the nineteenth-century cabbing, this research has also sought to enhance our understanding of London's hackney carriages from one place to another by reconsidering some relatively overlooked primary sources and adopting a different methodology from previous researchers. The object-in-use, object-in-discourse approach adopted in the study has enabled a shift in focus away from the conventional historiography associated with the field – a rather object-centred approach which pays more attention to politics, system, administrative organizations, technology, and to a certain degree drivers (and their jargon) – to the practical experiences of users (both drivers and hirers), the dynamic relationships between people who were involved, how the cabs connected and interacted with other modes of public transport, and how the vehicles responded to the changes and rhythm(s) of the city, namely, the role the horse-drawn cabs played in the modernising Victorian London. By relocating the users and the vehicle in the Victorian context, this approach has attempted to broaden the scope of transport studies, regarding the cab as a vehicle conveying and at times negotiating with the social milieu of the nineteenth-century London. It can be seen as an answer to recent calls from the field of transport history for transport historians to add a cultural and experience aspect to their studies, by focusing on topics such as consumption, practice and representation.

As for the sources, the increasing amount of searchable online databases of newspaper collections, periodicals, diaries, letters, and literature works has opened new possibilities for this study to explore the topic. Contemporary diaries, letters and news articles have provided valuable first-hand information of how Victorians appropriated the horse-drawn cabs in their everyday lives (their travel practices and travel habits), what they did (or did not do) in the cabs, and their interactions with the drivers. The editorials and letters to the editors have revealed their opinions on the vehicles, cab drivers, or the trade. The reports following the process and results of the disputes brought to court have shown how the service was debated, negotiated and finally determined. And the literary sources and visual materials have demonstrated how Victorians represented the vehicle. Being able to track specific terminology (public servant), people (Mrs. Prodgers) or even events (cab strike) has been extremely

⁶⁶⁶ Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London* (2nd series, 9 vols, London, New York: The Macmillan Co., 1903), vol. 3, p. 295.

helpful. While, on the one hand, the resources now available can provide the big picture, for example, through a survey, at the same time, it is also very useful to be able to focus on a specific topic.

This study has highlighted several significant changes and transitions the carriages plying for hire in the metropolis underwent during the Victorian period. Throughout the era, London's hackney carriages had to compete with several rival forms of transport. The omnibus was introduced in 1829, the underground started operating in 1863, and the horse trams in 1870. In answer to these challenges, London's horse-drawn cab changed its role in the city, focusing on short inner-city journeys, and taking the passengers and visitors to and fro between the centre business area and railway terminus. Every time a novel communication technology was introduced, it co-operated and adapted itself to the city in transition. By doing this, it became a coordinator or connection between different modes of communication. For example, it was not unusual for some Victorian Londoners to take a cab to make a phone call, or send a telegraph. The cab therefore not only connected the city, but also forged links with the world beyond the city. On the other hand, the way the cab was used suggests that mobility was a mode of capital. The more mobile the lives that people lived were, the quicker they enjoyed and adapted themselves to the novelty.

The cab in this sense found itself a role in the more mobilized/modernized society (in the increasingly urban lives and lifestyles of London's residents). They occupied a significant place in urban everyday life until that they were replaced by the motor cabs. They were also used as a substitute for the immature or inadequate system of delivery, ambulances and police cars, fulfilling a useful purpose, in Veblen's words, and they were not as conspicuous as they were in the earlier centuries. This highlights the cab's characteristic of being in-between i.e. between different modes of transport and between pre-modern society and modern society, where people inevitably had to be mobile when in the metropolis and travelling under time pressure.

When the monopoly of the hackney carriages ended, the Hackney Coach Office abolished, and the Metropolitan Police gradually took over the control of London's horse-drawn cabs, the authorities (via the police) started imposing more severe restrictions on the successors of the 'unruly' hackney coachmen.⁶⁶⁷ Compared to his relatively unregulated predecessor, by the end of the nineteenth century, Victorian

⁶⁶⁷ Jenner, 'Circulation and Disorder', p. 50.

cabman had to wear a badge (1843), produce a book of fares when required (1853), hand in a ticket with his personal details (1853), and pass an examination demonstrating his knowledge of London's topography as well as a driving test (1896). They operated under the watchful eyes of not only the inspectors of the Public Carriage Office and the ordinary constables, but also the general public. A Foucauldian panopticon of surveillance that may not have been there in the earlier centuries became real enough in the Victorian era, when hundreds and sometimes thousands of reports were made annually against drivers, unfit horses and carriages. The relationships between drivers, the authorities, the hirers, and the public therefore were quite different from those in the previous societies, signalling the process of modernisation and professionalisation that was transforming policing, the cab trade, and the city as a whole.

In addition, as the social milieu changed, the way people engaged the hackney carriages also changed accordingly. During the eighteenth century, travelling out in a coach was generally equivalent to making a public statement. The passengers were expecting to see and be seen, (in a way) inviting interaction between the inside and outside of the coach. However, as the nineteenth century became a privacy-pursuing society, more and more Victorians chose to travel in a cab for the right to be 'let alone', to avoid unwanted social interactions or body contact – especially when compared to taking other modes of public transport, such as omnibuses or trams in which all passengers were confined to an enclosed space. Cabbing therefore was a gesture of escape, avoidance, and exclusiveness. The vehicle supposed to connect people then transformed to a site of disconnection. However, even though the cab could entitle its hirer a quasi-private space during the journey, it was still a public vehicle. The cases of suicides-in-cab highlight this *in-between* characteristic of the horse-drawn cab: the action of killing oneself when riding alone in a cab – arguably the ultimate statement of personal/individual freedom but remaining a violation of both secular and religious law – was bound to be made public because the cab that provided a sense of privacy was actually a mode of public transport.

Last but not least, this study has examined the relationship(s) between the drivers and passengers of London's horse-drawn cabs and suggested that it was in fact varied and dynamic (a two-way traffic, to use a transport metaphor). Numerous materials have been produced to prove that not all the driver-passenger relationships were ephemeral – as most of previous researchers have suggested – a long-term relationship between an individual driver and passenger was practically possible and, within the confines of

the cabbing world, socially acceptable. Besides, the relationship at times lasted beyond the carriage, extending to a police court or a public house. Similarly, it has been shown that Victorian women, particularly the female cab hirers, were not as vulnerable as they have been made out to be or were believed to be at the time. Instead of being prey to cab drivers, women actually were not the most welcomed clients to the cabmen. In fact, to many of them, women were the last-favourable because according to the drivers, women seldom left tips for the drivers. Besides, Victorian females were not afraid to file a complaint about a driver, and were even daring enough to make a bilk. The dominant discourse of ‘unprotected female’ with regard Victorian cabbing was therefore challenged.

A number of topics or directions however have been left outside the scope of this study, or have only been touched upon due to the constraints of space and time. The thesis therefore proposes several avenues for further research.

For instance, as this study has demonstrated, the court records, or the news reports about the cases could provide substantial and significant information with regard to Victorian cabbing. So many major issues – fare, service, hiring and passenger – were debated, negotiated and finally (sometimes even temporarily) determined in the court. Further details about the experiences of cabbing and the different interpretations of the laws were given in the process of cross-examination and plea. The background of individual litigants – both driver and passenger – was also included. A researcher could even compile statistics according to time, charges, occupation, age and sex, to see if there is any significant result. This would also help to shed light on topics like how Victorian Londoners perceived and practiced law in their everyday lives. A more comprehensive and in-depth survey would therefore be a fruitful (but time-consuming) direction for further research on this topic.

While it is generally impossible to conduct a study on London’s hackney carriages without referring to the Metropolitan Police – the administrative institution of the trade at most of the nineteenth century – it is however interesting that the research on the Metropolitan Police in the Victorian era scarcely alludes to the cabs, other than as a police duty with no special significance.⁶⁶⁸ However, as J. M. Beattie (focusing on the

⁶⁶⁸ Perhaps the only exception is J.M. Beattie’s recently-published book *The First English Detectives* (2012), in which the author spends two pages discussing the important place the hackney coaches occupied in those runners’ highly mobile lives. See: Clive Emsley, ‘The Birth and Development of the Police’, in Tim

Bow Street Runners and the Metropolitan Police in its early stage) and the Chapter 4 and 6 of this study have suggested, the connection between the police and cabs, policeman and cabman was very strong. On the one hand, drivers of London's horse-drawn cabs bore a resemblance to constables of metropolitan police in several ways. They mainly consisted of males from the lower classes. They spent a very long time on the streets, making themselves prominent landmarks or visual foci of the city. They frequently worked together as cabman played the role of driver, messenger, informant, or witness accordingly. On the other hand, they were put in the opposite position when the police supervised cab drivers. The relationships between these two 'public servants', a status they are often mistakenly reduced to, were therefore a topic worth further research. A closer review of the police reports might provide us with a clear picture of how much the police spent on engaging cabs, for what purposes, in what ways, and whether there were chronological fluctuations.⁶⁶⁹ A thorough examination of the court records might give information on the interaction between the two parties in different circumstances. Sometimes both were on the same side, sometimes in opposition; sometimes the cabman was the litigant, sometimes a witness. Furthermore, from 1870, hackney carriage attendants – the successors of watermen – at cabstands were replaced by police constables, a policy that was welcomed by Londoners. The policemen and drivers therefore even shared a workplace. In this regard, any materials regarding this might deepen our knowledge of the daily lives of cab drivers and constables, and how they got along with each other.

In addition, body shape/size and body (dys)function – particularly disability and corpulence, which would cause activity limitation to certain degree – are always a real issue in terms of *individual* mobility and *public* transport, both in the Victorian era and the present day.⁶⁷⁰ As this study – in Chapters 3, 4, and 5 – has shown, people who suffered from different scales of invalidism, such as poet Elizabeth Barrett

Newburn (ed.) *Handbook of Policing* (Devon: Willan Publishing, 2003), pp. 66-83. Michael Rowe, *Introduction to Policing* (London: SAGE, 2008). Wilbur R. Miller, *Cops and Bobbies* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999). Tem Newburn (ed.), *Policing Key Reading* (Devon: Willan Publishing, 2005). And J.M. Beattie, *The First English Detectives: The Bow Street Runners and the Policing of London, 1750-1840* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 82-83.

⁶⁶⁹ The revenue the police received from licensing London's cab vehicles and drivers has been carefully surveyed by May. See May, *The Administration and Organisation of the London Cab Trade from the Late Eighteenth Century to the First World War* (PhD Dissertation of University of London, 1991).

⁶⁷⁰ For instance, nowadays London's cab has provided a disabled friendly service. The candidate is required to do a 'wheelchair exercise' – loading a wheelchair 'in and out' the vehicle – in the process of driving test. See the clip on the website of Transport for London:
<http://www.tfl.gov.uk/businessandpartners/taxisandprivatehire/27021.aspx> (accessed 24 March 2013).

Browning⁶⁷¹, patients, or victims of street accidents, formed an important part of the clientele of London's horse-drawn cabs. Chapter 5 has also suggested that obese people did occupy a special place in the Victorian popular culture considering the hackney carriage (and other modes of public transport) in the metropolis, featuring as one of the typical yet sometimes embarrassing and unwelcome customers. However, still little is known about the practical cabbing experiences of the oversized and people who suffered from different levels of activity limitations – those who were commonly supposed to require more vehicular assistance in terms of individual mobility. As Victorian society saw a huge development of mass production and standardisation – including the standardisation of public transport and the travelling space – several questions merit further examination. For instance, who, and in what ways, decided the ideal dimension (the so-called 'conditions of fitness') of London's hackney carriages – and further defined their ideal passengers (with ideal body size and adequate physical strength to get in and out of the carriages)? How did the obese and disabled adapt to cabs built for *ordinary* or *average* people? What was the general relationship between drivers and passengers of this kind? And what was the interaction – or lack of it – between the design/building, authoritative and use sectors of the horse-drawn cab? The functionalist, user-centred theory that Mom introduces to the field might be helpful here.⁶⁷² And certainly the study could easily expand to other forms of public transport, deepening our understandings of the history of standardisation of travelling space, social/technological construction of ideal/improper passengers, and the reaction and resolution to such limitations and discrimination.

Last but not least, the 1895 committee report contributed a short section comparing the system of London's hackney carriages with that of domestic and European counterparts, such as Paris, Berlin, Vienna, Dublin, Liverpool, and Leeds.⁶⁷³ The comparison inevitably focused on licensing, fare scheme, regulations, and the relationship between the cab and the railways. How people appropriated and discoursed cabbing in their daily lives has not been touched on. Hence, a comparison

⁶⁷¹ Elizabeth Barrett Browning generally had been confined to her house since her adolescent sickness. See: *DNB*: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/3711> (accessed 24 March 2013). Anna Sewell, the author of *Black Beauty*, suffered a permanent lameness due to an accident when she was about fourteen. Although she was not necessarily a regular cab user, she was familiar with horses and definitely had a close understanding of London's hackney carriage. See: *DNB*: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25140> (accessed 24 March 2013).

⁶⁷² Gijs Mom, 'Translating Properties into Functions (and Vice Versa): Design, User Culture and the Creation of an American and a European Car (1930-70)', *Journal of Design History* 21:2 (2007), pp. 171-181.

⁶⁷³ Parliament Paper 1895 [C. 7607] [C.7607-1] *The cab service of the metropolis. Report of the committee of enquiry appointed by the home secretary*, Appendix III, pp. 205-313.

between the users' cabbings experiences under different systems in different cities – whether domestically or internationally – might be another direction for further research.

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Fun

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Leicester Chronicle and the Leicestershire Mercury

Morning Post

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Pall Mall Gazette

Paul Pry

Punch

Reynold's Newspaper

Temple Bar

The Bristol Mercury and Daily Post

The Daily Gazette

The Daily Mirror

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The Lancet
The Morning Post
The Municipal Journal, established as London
The Observer
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