

A Tale of Two Countries: Voicing the Poor in 19th-Century Britain and Italy

Week 1 – Handout 1

Text 1

Pulp, 'Common People', from the album 'Different Class', 1995

Common People

She came from Greece she had a thirst for knowledge
She studied sculpture at Saint Martin's College, that's where I caught her eye.
She told me that her Dad was loaded
I said in that case I'll have a rum and coke-cola.
She said fine and in thirty seconds time she said, I want to live like common people
I want to do whatever common people do, I want to sleep with common people
I want to sleep with common people like you.
Well what else could I do - I said I'll see what I can do.
I took her to a supermarket
I don't know why but I had to start it somewhere, so it started there.
I said pretend you've got no money, she just laughed and said oh you're so funny.
I said yeah? Well I can't see anyone else smiling in here.
Are you sure you want to live like common people
You want to see whatever common people see
You want to sleep with common people,
you want to sleep with common people like me.
But she didn't understand, she just smiled and held my hand.
Rent a flat above a shop, cut your hair and get a job.
Smoke some fags and play some pool, pretend you never went to school.
But still you'll never get it right
'cos when you're laid in bed at night watching roaches climb the wall
If you call your Dad he could stop it all.
You'll never live like common people
You'll never do what common people do
You'll never fail like common people
You'll never watch your life slide out of view, and dance and drink and screw
Because there's nothing else to do.
Sing along with the common people, sing along and it might just get you thru'
Laugh along with the common people
Laugh along even though they're laughing at you and the stupid things that you do.
Because you think that poor is cool.
I want to live with common people, I want to live with common people *[etc..]*

Exercise

Treat the text as a poem.

Who is the narrating persona?

What is his relation to the poem's other speaker?

How do the speakers relate to the poem's celebrated protagonists, the 'common people'?

How are 'common people' defined?

How are 'common people' voiced in literary and linguistic terms?

Is the voice realistic?

Text 2

Welsh, Irvine, *Trainspotting* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1993) [Nominated for the 1993 Booker Prize]

The Skag Boys, Jean-Claude Van Damme and Mother Superior

The sweat wis lashing oafay Sick Boy; he wis trembling. Ah wis jist sitting thair, focusing oan the telly, tryin no tae notice the cunt. He wis bringing me doon. Ah tried tae keep ma attention oan the Jean-Claude Van Damme video.

As happens in such movies, they started oaf wi an obligatory dramatic opening. Then the next phase ay the picture involved building up the tension through introducing the dastardly villain and sticking the weak plot thegither. Any minute now though, auld Jean-Claude's ready tae git doon tae some serious swedgin.

– Rents. Ah've goat tae see Mother Superior, Sick Boy gasped, shaking his heid.

– Aw, ah sais. Ah wanted the radge tae jist fuck off ootay ma visage, tae go oan his ain, n jist leave us wi Jean-Claude. Oan the other hand, ah'd be gitting sick tae before long, and if that cunt went n scored, he'd haud oot oan us. They call um Sick Boy, no because he's eywis sick wi junk withdrawal, but because he's just one sick cunt.

– Let's fuckin go, he snapped desperately.

– Haud oan a second. Ah wanted tae see Jean-Claude smash up this arrogant fucker. If we went now, ah wouldnae git tae watch it. Ahd be too fucked by the time we goat back, and in any case it wid probably be a few days later. That meant ah'd git hit fir fuckin back charges fi the shoap oan a video ah hudnae even goat a deek at.

– Ah've goat tae fuckin move man! he shouts, standing up. He moves ower tae the windae and rests against it, breathing heavily, looking like a hunted animal. There's nothing in his eyes but need.

Ah switched the box oaf at the handset. - Fuckin waste. That's aw it is, a fuckin waste, ah snarled at the cunt, the fuckin irritating bastard.

He flings back his heid n raises his eyes tae the ceiling.

– Ah'll gie ye the money tae git it back oot. Is that aw yir sae fuckin moosey-faced aboot? Fifty measley fuckin pence ootay Ritz!

This cunt has a wey ay makin ye feel a real petty, trivial bastard.

Text 3

Welsh, Irvine, *Trainspotting*, trans. Giuliana Zeuli (Parma: Guanda, 1996)

I ragazzi del buco, Jean-Claude Van Damme e la Madre Superiora

Sick Boy era coperto di sudore; tremava tutto. Io me ne stavo lì schiaffato davanti alla tele, cercando di non dargli retta, a quel coglione. Mi buttava giù. Provai a concentrarmi sulla cassetta di Jean-Claude Van Damme.

Come in tutti i film del genere, l'inizio era drammatico: era quasi obbligatorio. Poi, nel pezzo che veniva dopo c'era un grande sforzo per creare atmosfera, facendo tra l'altro entrare in scena il cattivo, e per far stare in piedi una trama proprio scacata. Comunque, Jean-Claude sembrava pronto a menare le mani da un momento all'altro.

«Rents, devo vedere la Madre Superiora», fa Sick Boy col fiato corto, scuotendo la testa.

«Ah», faccio io. Volevo mandarlo affanculo. Perché non si levava dai coglioni? Io volevo restarmene lì con Jean-Claude. Però già sapevo che stavo per sfasciarmi anch'io, non ci mancava molto, e se quello andava a farsi adesso poi mi lasciava a secco. Lo chiamano Sick Boy non perché sta sempre male per crisi di astinenza, ma perché è un coglione che ha la testa fuori posto.

«Andiamo, cazzo.»

«Aspetta un momento.» Volevo vedere Jean-Claude farlo a pezzi, quello stronzo, che se la tirava tanto. Se ce ne andavamo adesso, rischiavo di non vederlo più. Al ritorno sarei stato troppo fottuto, e poi magari non tornavamo prima di due o tre giorni. Così gli dovevo pagare anche la multa a quel negozio del cazzo, per una cassetta a cui non avevo dato neanche un'occhiata.

«Devo andare, cazzo, e subito!» ulula lui, alzandosi in piedi. Se ne va alla finestra e ci si appoggia contro: respira pesante, da animale braccato. Negli occhi ha un bisogno disperato e nient'altro.

Io allora spengo il video col telecomando. «Cazzo, che spreco», ringhio in faccia a quel coglione, a quel colossale rompipalle.

Lui getta la testa all'indietro, con uno scatto, e tira su gli occhi verso il soffitto. «Te lo do io i soldi per riaffittarla. È solo per questo che sei tanto incazzato? Per cinquanta miseri pence?»

Il coglione ha quel modo tutto suo di farti sentire un vero bastardo.

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Week 1 – Handout 2

Text 4

Wordsworth, William, *Lyrical Ballads* (Harlow: Pearson, 2007) [With Samuel Taylor Coleridge. First published 1798, but revised 1800, 1802, 1805; Preface first published 1800, definitive version 1802]

Extracts from Preface

The first volume of these Poems has already been submitted to general perusal. It was published, as an experiment, which, I hoped, might be of some use to ascertain, how far, by fitting to metrical arrangement a selection of the **real language of men** in a state of vivid sensation, that sort of pleasure and that quantity of pleasure may be imparted, which a Poet may rationally endeavour to impart.

[...]

Several of my friends [...] advised me to prefix a systematic defence of the theory upon which the Poems were written. But [...] to treat the subject with the clearness and coherence of which I believe it susceptible, it would be necessary to give a full account of the present state of the public taste in this country, and to determine how far this taste is healthy or depraved; which, again, could not be determined, without pointing out in what manner language and the human mind act and re-act on each other, and without **retracing the revolutions, not of literature alone, but likewise of society itself**.

[...]

They who have been accustomed to the **gaudiness and inane phraseology of many modern writers**, if they persist in reading this book to its conclusion, will, no doubt, frequently have to struggle with feelings of **strangeness and awkwardness**: they will look round for poetry, and will be induced to inquire by what species of courtesy these attempts can be permitted to assume that title.

[...]

The principal object, then, proposed in these Poems was to choose incidents and situations from **common life**, and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as was possible in a selection of **language really used by men**, and, at the same time, to throw over them a certain **colouring of imagination**, whereby **ordinary** things should be presented to the mind in an **unusual** aspect [...]

[...]

Humble and rustic life was generally chosen, because, in that condition, the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a **plainer and more emphatic language**; because in that condition of life our elementary feelings coexist in a state of greater **simplicity**, and, consequently, may be more accurately contemplated, and more forcibly communicated; because the manners of rural life germinate from those elementary feelings, and, from the necessary character of **rural occupations**, are more easily comprehended, and are more durable; and, lastly, because in that condition the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of **nature**. The language, too, of these men has been adopted (**purified indeed from what appear to be its real defects**, from all lasting and rational causes of dislike or disgust) because such men hourly communicate with the best objects from which the best part of language is originally derived; and because, **from their rank in society** and the sameness and narrow circle of their intercourse, being less under the influence of social vanity, they convey their feelings and notions in **simple and unelaborated expressions**. Accordingly,

such a language, arising out of repeated experience and regular feelings, is a more permanent, and a far more philosophical language, than that which is frequently substituted for it by Poets [...]

[...]

Wordsworth's subjects in *LB* will include:

'maternal passion'; 'the last struggles of a human being, at the approach of death'; 'objects of nature'; 'goings-on of the universe'; 'daily life'; 'appearances of the visible universe [...] storm and sunshine, [...] revolutions of the seasons, [...] cold and heat, [...] loss of friends and kindred, [...] injuries and resentments, [...] gratitude and hope, [...] fear and sorrow'.

[...]

Wordsworth on current state of literature as affected by social change. He's proposing to focus on the ordinary, the natural:

For a multitude of causes, unknown to former times, are now acting with a combined force to blunt the discriminating powers of the mind, and, unfitting it for all voluntary exertion, to reduce it to a state of almost savage torpor. The most effective of these causes are the **great national events** which are daily taking place, and the **increasing accumulation of men in cities**, where the uniformity of their occupations produces a craving for extraordinary incident, which the rapid communication of intelligence hourly gratifies. To this tendency of life and manners the literature and theatrical exhibitions of the country have conformed themselves. The invaluable works of our elder writers, I had almost said the works of Shakespeare and Milton, are driven into neglect by frantic novels, sickly and stupid German Tragedies, and deluges of idle and extravagant stories in verse.

[...]

Wordsworth comments on his style:

[...] personifications of abstract ideas rarely occur in these volumes; and are utterly rejected, as an ordinary device to elevate the style, and raise it above prose. My purpose was to **imitate**, and, as far as possible, to adopt **the very language of men**; and assuredly such personifications do not make any **natural** or **regular** part of that language. [...] I have wished to keep my Reader in the company of **flesh and blood** [...]

'little of what is usually called **poetic diction**'; 'little falsehood of description';

Poet's relations with society:

'while he **describes** and **imitates passions**, his situation is altogether slavish and mechanical, compared with the freedom and power of **real and substantial action and suffering**. So that it will be the wish of the Poet to **bring his feelings near to those of the persons whose feelings he describes**, nay, for short spaces of time, perhaps, to let himself slip into an **entire delusion, and even confound and identify his own feelings with theirs**; modifying only the language which is thus suggested to him by a consideration that he describes for a particular purpose, that of giving **pleasure**. Here, then, he will apply the principle of selection which has been already insisted upon.

[...]

'poetry is the image of man and nature'

[...]

'Poets do not write for Poets alone, but for men'

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Collegio S. Caterina, April-May 2016
Dr Paul Howard, Trinity College, Cambridge
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Week 1 – Handout 2

Text 4

Wordsworth, William, *Lyrical Ballads*
(Harlow: Pearson, 2007) [With Samuel Taylor Coleridge. First published 1798, but revised 1800, 1802, 1805]

Goody Blake and Harry Gill
A True Story

Oh! what's the matter? what's the matter?
What is't that ails young Harry Gill?
That evermore his teeth they chatter,
Chatter, chatter, chatter still!
Of waistcoats Harry has no lack,
Good duffle grey, and flannel fine;
He has a blanket on his back,
And coats enough to smother nine.

In March, December, and in July,
'Tis all the same with Harry Gill;
The neighbours tell, and tell you truly,
His teeth they chatter, chatter still.
At night, at morning, and at noon,
'Tis all the same with Harry Gill;
Beneath the sun, beneath the moon,
His teeth they chatter, chatter still!

Young Harry was a lusty drover,
And who so stout of limb as he?
His cheeks were red as ruddy clover;
His voice was like the voice of three.
Old Goody Blake was old and poor;
Ill fed she was, and thinly clad;
And any man who passed her door
Might see how poor a hut she had.

All day she spun in her poor dwelling:
And then her three hours' work at night,
Alas! 'twas hardly worth the telling,
It would not pay for candle-light.
This woman dwelt in Dorsetshire,
Her hut was on a cold hill side;
And in that country coals are dear,
For they come far by wind and tide.

By the same fire to boil their pottage,
Two poor old Dames, as I have known,
Will often live in one small cottage;
But she, poor Woman! dwelt alone.
'Twas well enough when summer came,
The long, warm, lightsome summer-day;
Then at her door the *canty* Dame
Would sit, as any linnet, gay.

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But when the ice our streams did fetter,
Oh! then how her old bones would shake!
You would have said, if you had met her,
'Twas a hard time for Goody Blake.
Her evenings then were dull and dead:
Sad case it was, as you may think,
For very cold to go to bed;
And then for cold not sleep a wink.

O joy for her! whene'er in winter
The winds at night had made a rout;
And scattered many a lusty splinter
And many a rotten bough about.
Yet never had she, well or sick,
As every man who knew her says,
A pile before hand, wood or stick,
Enough to warm her for three days.

Now, when the frost was past enduring,
And made her poor old bones to ache,
Could any thing be more alluring
Than an old hedge to Goody Blake?
And, now and then, it must be said,
When her old bones were cold and chill,
She left her fire, or left her bed,
To seek the hedge of Harry Gill.

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Now Harry he had long suspected
This trespass of old Goody Blake;
And vowed that she should be detected,
And he on her would vengeance take.
And oft from his warm fire he'd go,
And to the fields his road would take; 70
And there, at night, in frost and snow,
He watched to seize old Goody Blake.

And once, behind a rick of barley,
Thus looking out did Harry stand:
The moon was full and shining clearly,
And crisp with frost the stubble land.
--He hears a noise--he's all awake--
Again?--on tip-toe down the hill
He softly creeps--'tis Goody Blake;
She's at the hedge of Harry Gill! 80

Right glad was he when he beheld her:
Stick after stick did Goody pull:
He stood behind a bush of elder,
Till she had filled her apron full.
When with her load she turned about,
The bye-road back again to take;
He started forward with a shout,
And sprang upon poor Goody Blake.

And fiercely by the arm he took her,
And by the arm he held her fast, 90
And fiercely by the arm he shook her,
And cried, "I've caught you then at last!"--
Then Goody, who had nothing said,
Her bundle from her lap let fall;
And, kneeling on the sticks, she prayed
To God that is the judge of all.

She prayed, her withered hand uprearing,
While Harry held her by the arm--
"God! who art never out of hearing,
O may he never more be warm!" 100
The cold, cold moon above her head,
Thus on her knees did Goody pray;
Young Harry heard what she had said,
And icy cold he turned away.

He went complaining all the morrow
That he was cold and very chill:
His face was gloom, his heart was sorrow,
Alas! that day for Harry Gill!
That day he wore a riding-coat,
But not a whit the warmer he: 110
Another was on Thursday brought,
And ere the Sabbath he had three.

'Twas all in vain, a useless matter,
And blankets were about him pinned;
Yet still his jaws and teeth they clatter;
Like a loose casement in the wind.
And Harry's flesh it fell away;
And all who see him say, 'tis plain,
That, live as long as live he may,
He never will be warm again. 120

No word to any man he utters,
A-bed or up, to young or old;
But ever to himself he mutters,
"Poor Harry Gill is very cold."
A-bed or up, by night or day;
His teeth they chatter, chatter still.
Now think, ye farmers all, I pray,
Of Goody Blake and Harry Gill!

(1798)

Week 1 – Handout 3

Text 7

Wordsworth, William, *Lyrical Ballads* (Harlow: Pearson, 2007) [With Samuel Taylor Coleridge. First published 1798, but revised 1800, 1802, 1805]

The Old Cumberland Beggar

I saw an aged beggar in my walk,
And he was seated, by the highway side,
On a low structure of rude masonry
Built at the foot of a huge hill, that they
Who lead their horses down the steep rough road
May thence remount at ease. The aged Man
Had placed his staff across the broad smooth stone
That overlays the pile, and, from a bag
All white with flour, the dole of village dames,
He drew his scraps and fragments, one by one, 10
And scanned them with a fixed and serious look
Of idle computation. In the sun,
Upon the second step of that small pile,
Surrounded by those wild unpeopled hills,
He sat, and ate his food in solitude:
And ever, scattered from his palsied hand,
That, still attempting to prevent the waste,
Was baffled still, the crumbs in little showers

Fell on the ground; and the small mountain birds,
Not venturing yet to peck their destined meal, 20
Approached within the length of half his staff.

Him from my childhood have I known; and then
He was so old, he seems not older now;
He travels on, a solitary Man,
So helpless in appearance, that for him
The sauntering horseman-traveller does not throw
With careless hand his alms upon the ground,
But stops, that he may safely lodge the coin
Within the old Man's hat; nor quits him so,
But still, when he has given his horse the rein, 30
Towards the aged beggar with a look
Sidelong, and half-reverted. She who tends
The toll-gate, when in summer at her door
She turns her wheel, if on the road she sees
The aged beggar coming, quits her work,
And lifts the latch for him that he may pass.
The post-boy, when his rattling wheels o'ertake
The aged beggar in the woody lane,
Shouts to him from behind, and if, perchance
The old man does not change his course, the boy 40
Turns with less noisy wheels to the roadside,
And passes gently by, without a curse
Upon his lips, or anger at his heart.
He travels on, a solitary Man;

His age has no companion. On the ground
His eyes are turned, and, as he moves along
They move along the ground; and, evermore,
Instead of common and habitual sight
Of fields with rural works, of hill and dale,
And the blue sky, one little span of earth 50
Is all his prospect. Thus, from day to day,
Bow-bent, his eyes for ever on the ground,
He plies his weary journey; seeing still,
And never knowing that he sees, some straw,
Some scattered leaf, or marks which, in one track,
The nails of cart or chariot-wheel have left
Impressed on the white road, in the same line,
At distance still the same. Poor Traveller!
His staff trails with him; scarcely do his feet
Disturb the summer dust; he is so still 60
In look and motion, that the cottage curs,
Ere he has passed the door, will turn away,
Weary of barking at him. Boys and girls,
The vacant and the busy, maids and youths,
And urchins newly breeched all pass him by:
Him even the slow-paced waggon leaves behind.

But deem not this Man useless. – Statesmen! ye
Who are so restless in your wisdom, ye
Who have a broom still ready in your hands
To rid the world of nuisances; ye proud, 70

Heart-swoln, while in your pride ye contemplate
Your talents, power, or wisdom, deem him not
A burthen of the earth! 'Tis Nature's law
That none, the meanest of created things,
Of forms created the most vile and brute,
The dullest or most noxious, should exist
Divorced from good – a spirit and pulse of good,
A life and soul, to every mode of being
Inseparably linked. While thus he creeps
From door to door, the villagers in him 80
Behold a record which together binds
Past deeds and offices of charity
Else unremembered, and so keeps alive
The kindly mood in hearts which lapse of years,
And that half-wisdom half-experience gives,
Make slow to feel, and by sure steps resign
To selfishness and cold oblivious cares.
Among the farms and solitary huts,
Hamlets and thinly-scattered villages,
Where'er the aged beggar takes his rounds 90
The mild necessity of use compels
To acts of love; and habit does the work
Of reason; yet prepares that after joy
Which reason cherishes. And thus the soul,
By that sweet taste of pleasure unpursued,
Doth find herself insensibly disposed
To virtue and true goodness. Some there are,

By their good works exalted, lofty minds
And meditative, authors of delight
And happiness, which to the end of time 100
Will live, and spread, and kindle; minds like these
In childhood, from this solitary being,
This helpless wanderer, have perchance received
(A thing more precious far than all that books
Or the solitudes of love can do!)

That first mild touch of sympathy and thought,
In which they found their kindred with a world
Where want and sorrow were. The easy man
Who sits at his own door, and, like the pear
That overhangs his head from the green wall, 110
Feeds in the sunshine; the robust and young,
The prosperous and unthinking, they who live
Sheltered, and flourish in a little grove
Of their own kindred, all behold in him
A silent monitor, which on their minds
Must needs impress a transitory thought
Of self-congratulation, to the heart
Of each recalling his peculiar boons,
His charters and exemptions; and, perchance,
Though he to no one give the fortitude 120
And circumspection needful to preserve
His present blessings, and to husband up
The respite of the season, he, at least,
And 'tis no vulgar service, makes them felt.

Yet further. – Many, I believe, there are
Who live a life of virtuous decency,
Men who can hear the Decalogue and feel
No self-reproach; who of the moral law
Established in the land where they abide
Are strict observers; and not negligent, 130
Meanwhile, in any tenderness of heart
Or act of love to those with whom they dwell,
Their kindred, and the children of their blood.
Praise be to such, and to their slumbers peace! –
But of the poor man ask, the abject poor,
Go, and demand of him, if there be here
In this cold abstinence from evil deeds,
And these inevitable charities,
Wherewith to satisfy the human soul?
No – Man is dear to Man; the poorest poor 140
Long for some moments in a weary life
When they can know and feel that they have been
Themselves the fathers and the dealers out
Of some small blessings, have been kind to such
As needed kindness, for this single cause,
That we have all of us one human heart. – --
Such pleasure is to one kind Being known,
My neighbour, when with punctual care, each week
Duly as Friday comes, though pressed herself
By her own wants, she from her chest of meal 150

Takes one unsparing handful for the scrip
Of this old Mendicant, and, from her door
Returning with exhilarated heart,
Sits by her fire, and builds her hope in heaven.

Then let him pass, a blessing on his head!
And while in that vast solitude to which
The tide of things has borne him, he appears
To breathe and live but for himself alone,
Unblamed, uninjured, let him bear about
The good which the benignant law of Heaven
Has hung around him: and, while life is his,
Still let him prompt the unlettered villagers
To tender offices and pensive thoughts.
Then let him pass, a blessing on his head!
And, long as he can wander, let him breathe
The freshness of the valleys; let his blood
Struggle with frosty air and winter snows;
And let the chartered wind that sweeps the heath
Beat his grey locks against his withered face.
Reverence the hope whose vital anxiousness 170
Gives the last human interest to his heart.
May never HOUSE, misnamed of INDUSTRY!
Make him a captive! for that pent-up din,
Those life-consuming sounds that clog the air,
Be his the natural silence of old age!
Let him be free of mountain solitudes;

And have around him, whether heard or not,
The pleasant melody of woodland birds.
Few are his pleasures: if his eyes have now
Have been so long familiar with the earth 180
No more behold the horizontal sun
Rising or setting, let the light at least
Find a free entrance to their languid orbs.
And let him, *where* and *when* he will, sit down
Beneath the trees, or by the grassy bank
Of highway side, and with the little birds
Share his chance-gathered meal; and, finally,
As in the eye of Nature he has lived,
So in the eye of Nature let him die!
(1798)

Exercise

Who is the narrating persona?
What is his relation to the poem's protagonist?
Who helps the beggar?
Who is the poem aimed at?
How does it engage politically?

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Week 1 – Handout 4

Text 6

Barnes, William, *Poems of Rural Life in the Dorset Dialect*, 1844

For recording, see:

<http://media.adelaide.edu.au/press/barnesy/008-the-milkmaid.mp3>

The milk-mâid o' the farm

I be the milk-mâid o' the farm:

I be so happy out in groun',	<i>field</i>
Wi' my white milk-pâil in my yarm,	<i>arm</i>
As ef I wore a goolden crown.	<i>if</i>

An' I don't zit up hafe the night,	<i>half</i>
Nar lie var hafe the day a-bed:	<i>nor, for</i>
An' that's how 'tis my eyes be bright,	
An' why my cheäks be älwiz red.	<i>always</i>

In zummer marnens, when the lark	<i>mornings</i>
Da rouse the yerly lad an' lass	<i>do, early</i>
To work, I be the vust to mark	<i>first</i>
My steps upon the dewy grass.	

An' in the evemen, when the zun	<i>evening</i>
Da sheen upon the western brows	<i>shine,</i>
O' hills, wher bubblèn brooks da run	
Ther I da zing an' milk my cows.	

An' ev'ry cow da stan' wi' I,	
An' never mōve, nar kick my pail,	
Nar bliare at t'other cows, nar try	<i>bellow</i>
To hook, ar swīтч me wi' her tail.	<i>or</i>

Noo liady, wi' her muff an' vâil,	<i>veil</i>
Da wā'ke wi' sich a stiately tread	<i>walk</i>
As I do wi' my milkèn pail,	
A-balanc'd up upon my head.	

An I at marnen an' at night	
Da skim the yaller cream, an' mould	<i>yellow</i>
An' press my cheeses red an' white,	
An' zee the butter vetch'd an' roll'd.	<i>fetch'd (turned solid)</i>

An' Tommas shon't be cäll'd the wust	<i>worst</i>
Young man alive, var he da try	<i>for</i>
To milk roun' al his own cows vust,	<i>first</i>
An' then to come an' milk var I.	

I be the milk-mâid o' the farm:
I be so happy out in groun',
Wi' my white milk-pâil in my yarm,
As ef I wore a goolden crown.

Week 1 – Handout 3

Text 7

Wordsworth, William, *Lyrical Ballads* (Harlow: Pearson, 2007) [With Samuel Taylor Coleridge. First published 1798, but revised 1800, 1802, 1805]

The Old Cumberland Beggar

I saw an aged beggar in my walk,
And he was seated, by the highway side,
On a low structure of rude masonry
Built at the foot of a huge hill, that they
Who lead their horses down the steep rough road
May thence remount at ease. The aged Man
Had placed his staff across the broad smooth stone
That overlays the pile, and, from a bag
All white with flour, the dole of village dames,
He drew his scraps and fragments, one by one, 10
And scanned them with a fixed and serious look
Of idle computation. In the sun,
Upon the second step of that small pile,
Surrounded by those wild unpeopled hills,
He sat, and ate his food in solitude:
And ever, scattered from his palsied hand,
That, still attempting to prevent the waste,
Was baffled still, the crumbs in little showers

Fell on the ground; and the small mountain birds,
Not venturing yet to peck their destined meal, 20
Approached within the length of half his staff.

Him from my childhood have I known; and then
He was so old, he seems not older now;
He travels on, a solitary Man,
So helpless in appearance, that for him
The sauntering horseman-traveller does not throw
With careless hand his alms upon the ground,
But stops, that he may safely lodge the coin
Within the old Man's hat; nor quits him so,
But still, when he has given his horse the rein, 30
Towards the aged beggar with a look
Sidelong, and half-reverted. She who tends
The toll-gate, when in summer at her door
She turns her wheel, if on the road she sees
The aged beggar coming, quits her work,
And lifts the latch for him that he may pass.
The post-boy, when his rattling wheels o'ertake
The aged beggar in the woody lane,
Shouts to him from behind, and if, perchance
The old man does not change his course, the boy 40
Turns with less noisy wheels to the roadside,
And passes gently by, without a curse
Upon his lips, or anger at his heart.
He travels on, a solitary Man;

A Tale of Two Countries: Voicing the Poor in 19th-Century Britain and Italy

Collegio S. Caterina, April-May 2016

Dr Paul Howard, Trinity College, Cambridge
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His age has no companion. On the ground
His eyes are turned, and, as he moves along
They move along the ground; and, evermore,
Instead of common and habitual sight
Of fields with rural works, of hill and dale,
And the blue sky, one little span of earth 50
Is all his prospect. Thus, from day to day,
Bow-bent, his eyes for ever on the ground,
He plies his weary journey; seeing still,
And never knowing that he sees, some straw,
Some scattered leaf, or marks which, in one track,
The nails of cart or chariot-wheel have left
Impressed on the white road, in the same line,
At distance still the same. Poor Traveller!
His staff trails with him; scarcely do his feet
Disturb the summer dust; he is so still 60
In look and motion, that the cottage curs,
Ere he has passed the door, will turn away,
Weary of barking at him. Boys and girls,
The vacant and the busy, maids and youths,
And urchins newly breeched all pass him by:
Him even the slow-paced waggon leaves behind.

But deem not this Man useless. – Statesmen! ye
Who are so restless in your wisdom, ye
Who have a broom still ready in your hands
To rid the world of nuisances; ye proud, 70

Heart-swoln, while in your pride ye contemplate
Your talents, power, or wisdom, deem him not
A burthen of the earth! 'Tis Nature's law
That none, the meanest of created things,
Of forms created the most vile and brute,
The dullest or most noxious, should exist
Divorced from good – a spirit and pulse of good,
A life and soul, to every mode of being
Inseparably linked. While thus he creeps
From door to door, the villagers in him 80
Behold a record which together binds
Past deeds and offices of charity
Else unremembered, and so keeps alive
The kindly mood in hearts which lapse of years,
And that half-wisdom half-experience gives,
Make slow to feel, and by sure steps resign
To selfishness and cold oblivious cares.
Among the farms and solitary huts,
Hamlets and thinly-scattered villages,
Where'er the aged beggar takes his rounds 90
The mild necessity of use compels
To acts of love; and habit does the work
Of reason; yet prepares that after joy
Which reason cherishes. And thus the soul,
By that sweet taste of pleasure unpursued,
Doth find herself insensibly disposed
To virtue and true goodness. Some there are,

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By their good works exalted, lofty minds
And meditative, authors of delight
And happiness, which to the end of time 100
Will live, and spread, and kindle; minds like these
In childhood, from this solitary being,
This helpless wanderer, have perchance received
(A thing more precious far than all that books
Or the solitudes of love can do!)

That first mild touch of sympathy and thought,
In which they found their kindred with a world
Where want and sorrow were. The easy man
Who sits at his own door, and, like the pear
That overhangs his head from the green wall, 110
Feeds in the sunshine; the robust and young,
The prosperous and unthinking, they who live
Sheltered, and flourish in a little grove
Of their own kindred, all behold in him
A silent monitor, which on their minds
Must needs impress a transitory thought
Of self-congratulation, to the heart
Of each recalling his peculiar boons,
His charters and exemptions; and, perchance,
Though he to no one give the fortitude 120
And circumspection needful to preserve
His present blessings, and to husband up
The respite of the season, he, at least,
And 'tis no vulgar service, makes them felt.

Yet further. – Many, I believe, there are
Who live a life of virtuous decency,
Men who can hear the Decalogue and feel
No self-reproach; who of the moral law
Established in the land where they abide
Are strict observers; and not negligent, 130
Meanwhile, in any tenderness of heart
Or act of love to those with whom they dwell,
Their kindred, and the children of their blood.
Praise be to such, and to their slumbers peace! –
But of the poor man ask, the abject poor,
Go, and demand of him, if there be here
In this cold abstinence from evil deeds,
And these inevitable charities,
Wherewith to satisfy the human soul?
No – Man is dear to Man; the poorest poor 140
Long for some moments in a weary life
When they can know and feel that they have been
Themselves the fathers and the dealers out
Of some small blessings, have been kind to such
As needed kindness, for this single cause,
That we have all of us one human heart. – --
Such pleasure is to one kind Being known,
My neighbour, when with punctual care, each week
Duly as Friday comes, though pressed herself
By her own wants, she from her chest of meal 150

Takes one unsparing handful for the scrip
Of this old Mendicant, and, from her door
Returning with exhilarated heart,
Sits by her fire, and builds her hope in heaven.

Then let him pass, a blessing on his head!
And while in that vast solitude to which
The tide of things has borne him, he appears
To breathe and live but for himself alone,
Unblamed, uninjured, let him bear about
The good which the benignant law of Heaven
Has hung around him: and, while life is his,
Still let him prompt the unlettered villagers
To tender offices and pensive thoughts.
Then let him pass, a blessing on his head!
And, long as he can wander, let him breathe
The freshness of the valleys; let his blood
Struggle with frosty air and winter snows;
And let the chartered wind that sweeps the heath
Beat his grey locks against his withered face.
Reverence the hope whose vital anxiousness 170
Gives the last human interest to his heart.
May never HOUSE, misnamed of INDUSTRY!
Make him a captive! for that pent-up din,
Those life-consuming sounds that clog the air,
Be his the natural silence of old age!
Let him be free of mountain solitudes;

And have around him, whether heard or not,
The pleasant melody of woodland birds.
Few are his pleasures: if his eyes have now
Have been so long familiar with the earth 180
No more behold the horizontal sun
Rising or setting, let the light at least
Find a free entrance to their languid orbs.
And let him, *where* and *when* he will, sit down
Beneath the trees, or by the grassy bank
Of highway side, and with the little birds
Share his chance-gathered meal; and, finally,
As in the eye of Nature he has lived,
So in the eye of Nature let him die!
(1798)

Exercise

Who is the narrating persona?
What is his relation to the poem's protagonist?
Who helps the beggar?
Who is the poem aimed at?
How does it engage politically?

A Tale of Two Countries: Voicing the Poor in 19th-Century Britain and Italy

Week 2 – Handout 1

Text 8

Manzoni, Alessandro, *I promessi sposi* [*Fermo e Lucia* 1823, not published; 1827; definitive version 1840]

Introduzione

L'Historia si può veramente deffinire una guerra illustre contro il Tempo, perché togliendoli di mano gl'anni suoi prigionieri, anzi già fatti cadaueri, li richiama in vita, li passa in rassegna, e li schiera di nuovo in battaglia. Ma gl'illustri Campioni che in tal Arringo fanno messe di Palme e d'Allori, rapiscono solo che le sole spoglie più sfarzose e brillanti, **imbalsamando co' loro inchiostri le Imprese de Prencipi e Potentati, e qualificati Personaggj**, e trapontando coll'ago finissimo dell'ingegno i fili d'oro e di seta, che formano un perpetuo ricamo di **Attioni gloriose**. Però alla mia debolezza non è lecito solleuarsi a tal'argomenti, e sublimità pericolose, con aggirarsi tra Labirinti de' Politici maneggj, et il rimbombo de' bellici Oricolchi: solo che hauendo hauuto notitia di fatti memorabili, se ben capitorno a **gente meccaniche, e di piccol affare**, mi accingo di **lasciarne memoria** a Posterì, con far di **tutto schietta e genuinamente** il Racconto, ouuero sia Relatione. Nella quale si vedrà in angusto Teatro luttuose Traggedie d'horrori, e Scene di malvagità grandiosa, con intermezzi **d'Imprese virtuose e buontà angeliche, opposte alle operationi diaboliche**.

[...]

«Ma, quando io avrò durata l'eroica fatica di **trascriver** questa **storia** da questo **dilavato e graffiato autografo**, e l'avrò data, come si suol dire, alla luce, **si troverà poi chi duri la fatica di leggerla?**»

[...]

ma com'è dozzinale! com'è **sguaiato**! com'è scorretto! **Idiotismi lombardi a iosa, frasi della lingua adoperate a sproposito, grammatica arbitraria, periodi sgangherati**. E poi, qualche eleganza spagnola seminata qua e là;

[...]

Ecco qui: declamazioni ampollose, composte a forza di solecismi pedestri, e da per tutto quella goffaggine ambiziosa, ch'è il proprio carattere degli scritti **di quel secolo, in questo paese**. In vero, **non è cosa da presentare a lettori d'oggiorno**: son troppo ammaliziati, troppo disgustati di questo genere di stravaganze.

[...]

Nell'atto però di chiudere lo **scartafaccio**, per riporlo, mi sapeva male che una **storia** così bella dovesse rimanersi tuttavia sconosciuta; perché, in quanto **storia**, può essere che al lettore ne paia altrimenti, ma a me era parsa bella, come dico; molto bella. «Perché non si potrebbe, pensai, prender la serie de' fatti da questo manoscritto, e **rifarne la dicitura?**»

Text 9

Belli, Giuseppe Gioachino, *Tutti i sonetti romaneschi* (Rome: Newton, 1998, 2 vols) [Sonnets not published by author, first published in full 1886-89; Introduction (not published) first drafted 1831, revised 1832, 1839, 1843, this version 1847]

Introduzione [not Belli's title; applied retrospectively by editors]

Io ho deliberato di lasciare un **monumento** di quello che oggi è **la plebe di Roma**. In lei sta certo un tipo di **originalità**: e la sua **lingua**, i suoi concetti, l'indole, il costume, gli usi, le

pratiche, i lumi, la credenza, i pregiudizi, le superstizioni, tuttociò insomma che la riguarda, ritiene un'impronta che assai per avventura **si distingue da qualunque altro carattere di popolo**. Né Roma è tale, che la plebe di lei non faccia parte di un gran tutto, di una città cioè di sempre solenne ricordanza. Oltre a ciò, mi sembra la mia idea non iscompagnarsi da **novità**. Questo disegno così colorito, checché ne sia del soggetto, **non trova lavoro da confronto che lo abbiano preceduto**.

I nostri popolani non hanno arte alcuna, non di oratoria, non di poetica: come niuna plebe n'ebbe mai. Tutto esce spontaneo dalla **natura** loro, viva sempre ed energica perché lasciata libera nello sviluppo di qualità non fattizie. Direi delle loro idee ed abitudini, direi del parlare loro ciò che non può vedersi nelle fisionomie. **Perché tanto queste diverse nel volgo di una città da quelle degl'individui di ordini superiori?** Perché non frenati i muscoli del volto alla immobilità comandata dalla civile educazione, si lasciano alle contrazioni della passione che domina e dall'affetto che stimola; e prendono quindi un diverso sviluppo, corrispondente per solito alla natura dello spirito che que' corpi informa e determina. Così i volti diventano specchio dell'anima. Che se fra i cittadini, subordinati a positive discipline, non risulta una completa uniformità di fisionomia, ciò dipende da **differenze essenzialmente organiche** e fondamentali, e dal non aver mai la natura formato due oggetti di matematica identità.

Vero però sempre mi par rimanere che la educazione che accompagna la parte dell'incivilimento, fa ogni sforzo per ridurre gli uomini alla uniformità: e se non vi riesce quanto vorrebbe, è forse questo uno de' beneficii della creazione. **Il popolo quindi mancante di arte, manca di poesia**. Se mai cedendo all'impeto della rozza e potente sua fantasia, una pure ne cerca, lo fa sforzandosi di **imitare la illustre**. Allora il plebeo non è più lui, ma **un fantoccio male e goffamente ricoperto di vesti non attagliate al suo dosso**. Poesia propria non ha: e in ciò errarono quanti il dir romanesco vollero sin qui presentare in versi che tutta palesarono la lotta dell'arte colla natura e la vittoria della natura sull'arte.

Esporre le frasi del romano quali dalla bocca del romano escono tuttora, senza ornamento, senza alterazione veruna, senza pure inversioni di sintassi o troncamenti di licenza, eccetto quelli che il parlator romanesco usi egli stesso: insomma cavare una regola dal caso e una grammatica dall'uso, ecco il mio scopo. Io non vo' già presentare nelle mie carte la poesia popolare, ma i popolari discorsi svolti nella mia poesia. Il numero poetico e la rima debbono uscire come accidente dall'accozzamento, in apparenza casuale, di libere frasi e correnti parole non scomposte giammai, non corrette, né modellate, né acconciate con modo differente da quello che ci manda **il testimonio delle orecchie**: attalché i versi gettati con simigliante artificio non paiano quasi suscitare impressioni ma risvegliare reminiscenze. E dove con tal corredo di **colori nativi** io giunga a dipingere la morale, la civile e la religiosa vita del nostro popolo di Roma, avrò, credo, offerto un quadro di genere non al tutto spregevole da chi non guardi le cose attraverso **la lente del pregiudizio**. Non casta, non pia talvolta, sebbene devota e superstiziosa, apparirà la materia e la forma: ma il popolo è questo; e questo io **ricopio**, non per proporre un modello, ma sì per dare **una immagine fedele di cosa già esistente e, più abbandonata senza miglioramento**.

Nulladimeno io non m'illudo circa alle disposizioni d'animo colle quali sarebbe accolto questo mio lavoro, quando dal suo nascondiglio uscisse mai al cospetto degli uomini. Bene io preveggo quante timorate e pudiche anime, quanti zelosi e pazienti sudditi griderebber la croce contro **lo spirito insubordinato e licenzioso** che qua e là ne traspare, quasiché nascondendomi perfidamente dietro la maschera del popolano abbia io voluto prestare a lui le mie massime e i principii miei, onde esaltare il mio proprio veleno sotto l'egida della calunnia.

[...]

Facile però è la censura, siccome è comune la probità di parole. Quindi, perdonate io di buon grado le smaniose vociferazioni a quanti *Curios simulant et bacchanalia vivunt*, mi rivolgerò invece ai pochi sinceri virtuosi fra le cui mani potessero un giorno capitare i miei scritti, e dirò loro: **Io ritrassi la verità. Omne aevum Clodios fert, sed non omne tempus Catones producit.** Del resto, alle gratuite incolpazioni delle quali io divenissi oggetto replicherò il tenor della mia vita e il testimonio di chi la vide scorrere e terminare tanto ignuda di gloria quanto monda d'ogni nota di vituperio.

Molti altri scrittori ne' dialetti o ne' patrii vernacoli abbian noi veduti sorgere in Italia, e vari di questi meritar laude anche fra i posteri. Però un più assai vasto campo che a me non si presenta era loro aperto da parlare non esclusivamente appartenenti a tale o tal plebe o frazione di popolo, ma usate da tutte insieme le classi di una peculiare popolazione: donde nascono **le lingue municipali**. Quindi la facoltà delle figure, le inversioni della sintassi, le risorse della cultura e dell'arte. Non così a me si concede dalla mia circostanza. Io qui ritraggo le idee di **una plebe ignorante**, comunque in gran parte concettosa ed arguta, e le ritraggo, dirò, col soccorso di **un idiotismo continuo, di una favella tutta guasta e corrotta, di una lingua infine non italiana e neppur romana, ma romanesca**. Questi idioti o nulla sanno o quasi nulla: e quel pochissimo che imparano per tradizione serve appunto a rilevare la ignoranza loro: in tanto buio di fallacie si ravvolge. Sterili pertanto d'idee, limitate ne sono le forme del dire e scarsi i vocaboli.

[...]

Ogni quartiere di Roma, ogni individuo fra' suoi cittadini dal **ceto medio in giù**, mi ha somministrato episodii pel mio dramma: dove comparirà sì il bottegaio che il servo, e il nudo pitocco farà di sé mostra fra la credula femminetta e il fiero guidatore di carra. Così, accozzando insieme le vari classi dell'intero popolo, e facendo dire a ciascun popolano quanto sa, quanto pensa e quanto opera, ho io compendiato il cumulo del costume e delle opinioni di questo volgo, presso il quale spiccano le più strane contraddizioni. Dati i popolani nostri per indole al sarcasmo, all'epigramma, al dir proverbiale e conciso, ai risolti modi di un genio manesco, non parlano a lungo in discorso regolare ed espositivo. Un dialogo inciso, pronto ed energico: un metodo di esporre vibrato ed efficace: una frequenza di equivoci ed anfibologie, risponde ai loro bisogni e alle loro abitudini, siccome conviene alla loro inclinazione e capacità.

Di qui la inopportunità nel mio libro di filastrocche poetiche. **Distinti quadretti**, e non fra loro congiunti fuorché dal filo occulto della macchina, aggiungeranno assai meglio al fine principale, salvando insieme i lettori dal tedio di una lettura troppo unita e monotona. Il mio è un volume da prendersi e lasciarsi, come si fa de' sollazzi, senza bisogno di progressivo riordinamento d'idee. Ogni pagina è il principio del libro, ogni pagina la fine.

L'ortoepia ne' Romaneschi non cede in vizio alla grammatica: il suono della voce cupo e gutturale: la cantilena molto sensibile e varia. Tradotta la prima nella ortografia de' miei versi, mostrerà **sommo abuso di lettere**.

Nel mio lavoro io non presento la scrittura de' popolani. Questa lor manca; né in essi io la cerco, benché pur la desidero come essenziale principio d'incivilimento. **La scrittura è mia, e con essa tento d'imitare la loro parola.** Perciò del valore de' **segni cogniti io mi valgo ad esprimere incogniti suoni.**

[...]

Week 2 – Handout 2

Text 10

Belli, Giuseppe, *Tutti i sonetti romaneschi*. Full text available at
http://www.intratext.com/ixt/ita1554/_INDEX.HTM

288. La bbona famijja

Mi' nonna a un'or de notte che vviè Ttata
se¹ leva da filà, ppovera vecchia,
attizza un carboncello, sciapparecchia,²
e mmaggnamo du' fronne d'inzalata.

Quarce vvorta se fâmo³ una frittata,
che ssi⁴ la metti ar lume sce se specchia^{4a}
come fussi^{4b} a ttraverto d'un'orecchia:
quattro nosce,⁵ e la scena⁶ è tterminata.

Poi ner mentre ch'io, Tata^{6a} e Ccrementina
seguitamo un par d'ora de sgocchetto,⁷
lei sparecchia e arissetta^{7a} la cuscina.

E appena visto er fonno ar bucaletto,
'na pissciatina, 'na sarvereggina,
e, in zanta pasce, sce n'annamo a letto.

¹ Se. ² Ci apparecchia. ³ Ci facciamo. ⁴ Se. ^{4a} È
trasparente. ^{4b} Fosse. ⁵ Noci. ⁶ Cena. ^{6a} Mio padre. ⁷ Lo
sgocchetto, lo *sgocettare* è quel «seguire a sbevazzare
alcun tempo». ^{7a} Rassetta.

914. La madre poverella

Fijja, nun ce¹ sperà: ffatte² capasce
che cqua li ricchi sò ttutti un riduno,³
e un goccio d'acqua nun lo dà ggnisuno,
si tte vedessi⁴ immezzo a una fornasce.

Tu bbussa a li palazzi a uno a uno;
ma ppòì bbussà cquanto te pare e ppiasce:
tutti: «Iddio ve provedi: annate in pasce».
Eh! ppanza piena nun crede ar diggiuno.

Fidete,⁵ fijja: io parlo pe sperienza.
Ricchezza e ccarità ssò ddu' perzone
che nnun potranno mai fà cconoscenza.

Se⁶ chiede er pane, e sse trova er bastone!
Offerímolo⁷ a Ddio: ché la pascenza
è un conforto che ddà la riliggione.

¹ Ci. ² Fatti. ³ Tutti una massa: tutti uguali.
⁴ Se ti vedesse. ⁵ Fidati. ⁶ Sì. ⁷ Offeriamolo.

781. La vita dell'Omo

Nove mesi a la puzza: poi in fassciola¹
tra sbasciucchi,² lattime e llagrimoni:
poi p'er laccio,³ in ner crino,⁴ e in vesticciola,
cor torcolo⁵ e l'imbraghe pe ccarzoni.

Poi comincia er tormento de la scola,
l'abbeccè, le frustate, li ggeloni,
la rosalia, la cacca a la ssediola,
e un po' de scarlattina e vvormijjoni.⁶

Poi viè ll'arte, er diggiuno,⁷ la fatica,
la piggione, le carcere, er governo,
lo spedale, li debbiti, la fica,

er zol d'istate, la neve d'inverno...
E pper urtimo, Iddio sce⁸ bbenedica,
viè la Morte, e ffinisce co l'inferno.

¹ Il bambino in fasce dicesi sempre *cratura in fassciola*.
² Baci dati con insistenza. ³ Cinghia attaccata dietro le spalle de'
bambini per sorreggerli ne' loro primi mesi di cammino. Può presso a
poco paragonarsi al tormento della corda. ⁴ Canestro in forma di
campana, aperto in alto e nella base, entro cui si pongono i bambini, che
lo spingono col petto e tengonsi ritti in esso nel camminare. ⁵ Salva-capo
contro le cadute. ⁶ *Vormiglioni*: vaiuolo. ⁷ Digiuno ecclesiastico che
principia all'anno ventunesimo. ⁸ Ci.

1170. Li du' ggener'umani

Noi, se sa,¹ ar Monno² semo ussciti fori
impastati de mmerda e dde monnezza.³
Er merito, er decoro e la grannezza
sò ttutta marcanzia⁴ de li Siggiori.

A su' Eccellenza, a ssu' Maestà, a ssu' Artezza
fumi, patacche, titoli e sprennori;
e a nnoantri⁵ artigiani e sservitori
er bastone, l'imbasto e la capezza.

Cristo creò le case e li palazzi
p'er prencipe, er marchese e 'r cavajjere,
e la terra pe nnoi facce de cazzi.

E cquanno morze⁶ in crosce, ebbe er penziere
de sparge,⁷ bbontà ssua, fra ttanti strazzi,⁸
pe cquelli er zangue e ppe nnoantri(5) er ziere.⁹

¹ Si sa. ² Mondo. ³ Immondezza. ⁴ Mercanzia.
⁵ Noi altri. ⁶ Morì. ⁷ Spargere. ⁸ Strazi. ⁹ Siero.

Week 2 – Handout 3

Text 11 Belli as socio-politically engaged?

Le classi sociali

È un albergo la umana società
In tre piani distinto e forse più,
Dove gli uomini stan chi su e chi giù,
E chi, fra questi e quelli, a la metà.

Ma nessuno è contento dove sta,
E tutti anelan di salir più su;
E ciascun dice all'altro: scendi tu;
E quel vorria salire anche di là.

Meno i più alti che poi restan lì
Gridando che salir più non si può,
Tutti gli altri rispondono di sì.

Intanto, fra quei sì e fra quei no,
Quando il su non discese e il giù salì,
Chi al pianterren più rimarrà non so.

Belli italiano, ed. by Roberto Vighi, 3 vols (Rome: Carlo Colombo, 1975), III, p. 622.

[Compare to Li du' ggener'umani]

362. Li soprani der Monno vecchio

C'era una vorta un Re¹ cche ddar palazzo
mannò ffora a li popoli st'editto:
«lo sò io, e vvoi nun zete² un cazzo,
sori vassalli bbuggiaroni, e zritto.

lo fo dritto lo storto e storto er dritto:
pòzzo vénneve³ a tutti a un tant'er mazzo:
lo, si vve fo impiccà nun ve strapazzo,
ché la vita e la robba lo ve l'affitto.

Chi abbita a sto monno senza er titolo
o dde Papa, o dde Re, o dd'Imperatore,
quello nun pò avé mmai vosce in capitolo».

Co st'editto annò er Boja pe ccuriero,
interroganno tutti in zur tenore;
e arisposeno tutti: «È vvero, è vvero».

¹ C'era una volta un Re, c'era una volta una Regina, è il princip
generale di ogni favola che dal popolo si racconta.

² Non siete. ³ Posso vendervi.

2121. La vita da cane

Ah sse chiam'ozzio er zuo, bbrutte marmotte?
Nun fa mmai ggnente er Papa, eh?, nun fa ggnente?
Accusí vve pijjassi un accidente
come lui se strapazza e ggiorn'e nnotte.

Chi pparla co Ddio padr'onnipotente?
Chi assorve tanti fijji de mignotte?
Chi mmanna in giro l'innurgenze a bbotte?¹
Chi vva in carrozza a bbinidì la ggente?

Chi jje li conta li quadrini sui?
Chi l'ajjuta a ccreà li cardinali?
Le gabbelle, pe ddio, nnu le fa llui?

Sortanto la fatica da facchino
de strappà ttutto l'anno momoriali
e bbuttalli a ppezze in ner cestino!

¹ A botti: i plebei di Roma dicono *le botte* invece di *le botti*.

541. Er custituto

«Chi ssiete?» «Un omo». «Come vi chiamate?»
«Biascio Chiafò». «Di qual paese siete?»
«Romano com'e llei». «Quanti anni avete?»
«Sò entrato in ventidua». «Dove abitate?»

«Dietr'a Ccampo-Carleo».¹ «Che arte fate?»
«Gnisuna, che ssapp'io». «Come vivete?»
«De cuer che Ddio me manna». «Lo sapete
perché siete voi qui?» «Pe ttre pposate».

«Rubate?» «Ggià». «Vi accusa?» «Er Presidente».²
«Ma le rubaste voi?» «Nun zò stat'io».
«Dunque chi le rubò?» «Nu ne so ggnente».

«E voi da chi le aveste?» «Da un giudio».
«Tutto vi mostra reo». «Ma ssò innoce».
«E se andaste in galera?» «È er gusto mio».

¹ Chiesetta e contrada al Foro Traiano.

² Presidente regionario di polizia.

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Week 2 – Handout 3

Text 12

'Them & [uz]' by Harrison, Tony, *Selected Poems* (London: Penguin, 1984), pp. 122-123.

I

αἰἄι, ay, ay! ... stutterer Demosthenes
gob full of pebbles outshouting seas –

4 words only of *mi 'art aches* and ... 'Mine's broken,
you barbarian, T.W.!' *He* was nicely spoken.
'Can't have our glorious heritage done to death!'

I played the Drunken Porter in *Macbeth*.

'Poetry's the speech of kings. You're one of those
Shakespeare gives the comic bits to: prose!
All poetry (even Cockney Keats?) you see
's been dubbed by [ʌs] into RP,
Received Pronunciation, please believe [ʌs]
your speech is in the hands of the Receivers.'

'We say [ʌs] not [uz], T.W.!' That shut my trap.
I doffed my flat a's (as in 'flat cap')
my mouth all stuffed with glottals, great
lumps to hawk up and spit out ... *E-nun-ci-ate!*

Exercise

How does Harrison use language to create a sense of identity? Compare with Belli.

II

So right, yer buggers, then! We'll occupy
your lousy leasehold Poetry.

I chewed up Littererchewer and spat the bones
into the lap of dozing Daniel Jones,
dropped the initials I'd been harried as
and used my *name* and own voice: [uz] [uz] [uz],
ended sentences with by, with, from,
and spoke the language that I spoke at home.
RIP RP, RIP T.W.
I'm *Tony* Harrison no longer you!

You can tell the Receivers where to go
(and not aspirate it) once you know
Wordsworth's *matter/water* are full rhymes,
[uz] can be loving as well as funny.

My first mention in the *Times*
automatically made Tony Anthony!

Week 2 – Handout 4

Text 13

Strong female voices, or patriarchal portrayals?

418. Er Logotenente

Come intese¹ a cciarlà der cavalletto,²
presto io curze(1) dar zor Logotenente.³
«Mi' marito..., Eccellenza, è un poveretto...
pe ccarità... cche nun ha ffatto ggnente».

Disce: «Mèttet'a ssede». Io me sce metto.
Lui cor un zenno⁴ manna via la ggente:
po' me s'accosta: «Dimme un po' ggrugnetto,⁵
tu' marito lo vòì reo o innoscente?»

«Innoscente», dich'io; e llui: «Sciò⁶ ggusto»;
e detto-fatto cuer faccia d'abbreo
me schiaffa⁷ la man-dritta drent'ar busto.

Io sbarzo in piede, e strillo: «Eh, sor cазео. ..».
E llui: «Fijjola, cuer ch'è ggiusto è ggiusto:
annate via: vostro marito è rreo».

¹ Intesi, corsi. ² Supplizio di colpi sull'ano.
³ Luogotenente criminale del Governatore.
⁴ Cenno. ⁵ Visetto. ⁶ Ci ho.
⁷ *Schiaffare*: introdurre con vivacità.

595. Er confessore

«Padre...». «Dite il confiteor». «L'ho ddetto».
«L'atto di contrizione?» «Ggià l'ho ffatto».
«Avanti dunque». «Ho ddetto cazzo-matto
a mmi' marito, e jj'ho arzato¹ un grossetto».²

«Poi?» «Pe una pila che mme róppe³ er gatto
je disse for de mé: “Ssi' mmaledetto”;
e è ccratura de Ddio!». «C'è altro?» «Tratto
un giuvenotto e cce sò ita a lletto.

«E llí ccosa è ssuccesso?» «Un po' de tutto.
«Cioè? Sempre, m'immagino, pel dritto».
«Puro a rriverzo...». «Oh che peccato brutto!

Dunque, in causa di questo giovanotto,
tornate, figlia, cor cuore trafitto,
domani, a casa mia, verso le otto».

¹ *Alzare*, per «rubare». ² Mezzo *paolo* d'argento.
³ *Ruppe*.

1260. L'omo e la donna

«Sí», strillava, «è ggiustizzia da galerra¹
che nnoi povere donne disgraziate
sempre avemo da èsse soverchiate
come fússimo statüe de terra.

Voiantri purcinelli de la Scerra
date fora l'editti, predicate,
dite messa, assorvete, ggiustizzate,
e, ppe gionta de ppiú, ffate la guerra.

Cos'ha, ppiú de la donna, un galeotto
d'omaccio, pe pprotenne² in ogni caso
de stà llui sopra e dde tiené³ llei sotto?

Cos'ha dde ppiú? una mano, un piede, un stinco,
una bbocca, un'orecchia, un occhio, un naso?».
Allora io: «Nu lo sapete? un pinco». ⁴

¹ Dalla massima parte del popolo *galera* è pronunciata *galerra*.

² Pretendere. ³ Di tenere.

⁴ Vedi il Sonetto..., al quale questo vocabolo può servire di appendice.

Exercise

Who has the most power, the man or the woman?
How is power assigned linguistically?

Exercise for next week

Compare Belli's female voices to Porta's Ninetta.

Full text available at:

https://it.wikisource.org/wiki/Poesie_%28Porta%29/34_-_LA_NINETTA_DEL_VERZEE

Full dramatization of La Ninetta del Verzee available at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mKp2-j-p4FM>

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Week 3 – Handout 1

Text 14

Porta, Carlo, *Poesie*, ed. Dante Isella (Milan: Mondadori, 1975).

LA NINETTA DEL VERZEE [1814]

Bravo el mè Baldissar! bravo el mè nan!
l'eva poeu vora de vegnì a trovamm...
T'el seet mattascion porch che maneman
l'è on mes che no te vegnet a ciollamm?
Ah Cristo! Cristo! com'hin frecc sti man!
Bell bell... speccia on freguj... te voeu geramm,
bolgirossa! che giaz! aja i mee tett!
che bell cojon, sont minga on scoldalett.

Pover tett nève?... te sentet com'hin froll?
Ma, gh'hoo avuu ona passion, varda, in sti dì
che l'è stada, per brio! el mè tracoll.
L'è quaj cossa ancamò se sont insci.
Ven scià... settet giò on poo... già l'è anmò moll,
e poeu coss'èet de fà? l'è venerdì,
gh'è minga d'opra: descorremm on poo,
ché subet che l'è all'orden te la doo.

Varda el mè Baldissar se se pò dà
on mond pussee carogna, on mond pù infamm!
Te se regordet d'avemm vist per cà
quell gioven magher, longh come on salamm,
ch'el me vegneva a toeu de andà a ballà?
Che di voeult te l'ee vist a peccenamm?

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Ben: sent adess, sto roffianon strozzaa
che tir fioeul d'ona negra el m'ha giugaa.

Prima de tutt tee de savè che fina
de vint agn fa, quand sont restada indree
della povera mamm, la mia medina,
che adess, jesuss! l'è al Gentilin anca lee,
per no invodamm a santa Catarina,
o lassamm andà in cà don quaj mestee,
la m'ha tiraa in cà sova e tegnuu inguala
d'ona soa tosa vera e naturala.

Sta mia medina l'eva ona tetton,
matta, allegra quell mai che se pò dà:
ghe piaseva a paccià del bell e bon
e andà dent per i boeucc e boccalà:
ma sora tutt poeu la soa gran passion
l'eva quella de fassela fregà:
oh intutù de quest gh'è nient de noeu,
desdott in fira e fresca come on oeuv.

In quell temp la gh'aveva per gimacch
on gioven d'offellee, fort, traccagnott,
ch'el stava lì in la porta e in l'uss attacch.
Costuu, me cunten ch'el gh'avess de sott
on peston de pirotta masiacch,
ma basta, fussel mò per sto bescott,
o per quij del mestee ch'el ghe portava,
l'offellee l'eva lu ch'el le ciavava.

S'ha mò de dà l'inconter che costuu
el gh'ha giusta d'avegh anch lu on bagaj,
che l'è nient alter che quell porch fottuu

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che m'è costaa in sti dì tanto travaj.
Insci, cont el stà insemma tutt e duu,
col giugà insemma e fà quij cattanaj
che fan tucc i fioeu, semm rivaa a quell
de trovass cott tutt duu senza savell.

Intrattanta, per via della via
dell'intrigh insci faa della medina,
ne faven dormì nun bardassaria
foeura di pee de lor in la cusina;
là ne saraven sù all'ave maria
de sira fina a quella de mattina,
e là nun de per nun tutta la nocc
sevem patron de fà onia sort de locc.

Fin però che semm staa duu cisquittitt,
ciovè a dì de des, vundes, dodes agn,
se semm faa quaj carezz e quaj basitt,
e poeu voltavem là come lasagn;
ma quand emm comenzaa a sentì i gallit
vers la part che comenzen i cavagn,
se semm accort d'avegh di olter besogn
on poo pussee gajard de quij del sogn.

Ma sì! per dilla giusta, in quant a mì,
sto besogn savarev minga spiegall...
soo che sentiva el sangu come a bui,
che gh'aveva ona voeuja de tentall
e in l'istess temp vergogna a comparì.
Soo anch che andava in broeuda in del basall
e soo che quand el me toccava i tett
trepillava del gust come on gallett.

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Soo de giunta che, quand alla mattina me toccava de andà a tend in Verzee alla banca del pess della medina, ogni bott che passass on perrucchee o quajghedun con bianca la marsina, me sentiva a rugà fina in di pee: me andava insemma i onz della stadera e el coeur l'andava a vella e el coo a stondera.		da bravo perucchee el s'è miss a rid e a saramel pù strenc in mezz ai did.		mi, bona a dagh a trà, fermegh el brasc, e prepotenta e franca come on sbir, Cossa farisset mai, dighi, pajasc?... Cossa vuj fà, el respond... mazzamm... morì... fornì sta vitta... contentatt anch ti...	140
Mì el mè Pepp el vedeva de per tutt, e semper ghe l'aveva de denanz: mì el vedeva in di tèmol, in di trutt, in di micch, in la suppa, in di pittanz, no gh'eva giovenott, né bell né brutt, che se podess ris'cià de famme di avanz: rispondeva pesciad, desgarb e slepp, e tutt sti coss in grazia del mè Pepp.	85	Cristo! che sgarbiada de cervell l'è staa per mì quell cioll in ardion. Poss dì ch'el m'ha daa in man minga on usell, ma el manegh de tucc quanc i cognizion: allora subet hoo capii tutt quell che se daven d'intend paricc smorbion quand li alla banca me diseven milla cinad sulla panscietta e sulla inguilla.	115	Sanguanon! che dianzer de paroll! m'è calaa i forz de sbalz, m'è vegnuu frecc. Me sont pondada a lu coj brasc al coll, e lu borlonem là a travers al lecc, e li in terra el cortell, in aria el cioll, lecchem, basem, stroffignem, brascem strecc, Ninin... tas... lassem fà... pensa nagotta...	145
Né l'è minga de dì che fin d'allora el m'avess missa alla comunion. On cazz! Me poden dà on cortell in gora se mì pensava mai che in di colzon ghe fudess dent de quella sort de bora! A vedè come el mond l'è mai cojon! Tucc me credeven ona gran canonega, e seva fatta pesc che né ona monega.	90	Lì emm comenzaa tutt duu de sto moment a lavorass intorna de fadiga, lu a fà onia possa per sonamel dent e mi olter tant per stoppagh sù la figa. Fors anca el sarà staa on presentiment, ma l'ha avuu pari a sbatt, l'hoo faa stà in riga, ghe l'hoo basaa, menaa, gh'hoo daa de tetta, ma de pondamel?... voj! ciappa sta fetta.	120	Ona voeulta poeù rotta che l'è stada no gh'è staa pù resguard né pù rispett. Via ona ciavada on'altra gran ciavada, no se fava olter facc che quel giughett, e se con tant piccià nol m'ha impregnada l'è proppi robba de fà fà on quadrett, tanto pù che sti usij già hin certi ordegn che fornissen el gioeugh con lassà pregn.	150
Anzi gh'hoo anmò in la ment la gran paura che hoo avuu, quand de lì a on pezz me l'ha daa in man, l'hoo creduu on boll, ona besiadura, on bugnon (soeuja mì), on quaj maa de can, e soo che m'è soltaa ai oeucc addrittura come on s'cioppon de piang, ma lu, el giavan,	95	Sent mò che macciavella de birbon l'è rivaa a tira a man per mettem sott. L'ha comenzaa a fà el trist, el lumagon, a fass vedè a mangià pocch o nagott. Lu el me schivava, el fava repetton, el sospirava come on mantes rott, e con pù mì ghe andava per el vers con pussee el fava el pregn, el gnucch, l'invers.	125	L'eva trii agn pocch manca che st'istoria l'andava quietament semper insci, quand la medina, che Dio l'abbia in gloria, l'ha tolt sù ona fevrascia de morì. I dottor l'han creduda infiammatoria e gh'han faa vint solass in tredes dì, ma el dì adree, giust in quella che han dezis de faghen pù, l'è andada in paradìs.	155
	100	Infin quand l'ha creduu de vess a tir vedi ch'el mett a volta on cortellasc e ch'el sbassa i cannij incontra al fir:	130		160
	105		135		165

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Morta lee, bona nocc ai sonador,
s'è barattaa la scenna in d'on moment;
mì sont andada in cà del cogitor
e el Pepp l'è andaa in cà anch lu d'un sò parent
e lì, via de vedess e de descor
quaj voeulta per el di denter per dent,
resguardo sia alla prozion de mezz,
sant March! gh'è sta sù el gatt per on bell pezz.

Ma mi, tra che a trovamm inscì ligada
in cà del pret moriva de passion,
e tra che el Pepp el m'eva sueffada
de bon'ora a saggià certi boccon,
assa brutta on bell di ciappi la strada
e pienti el cogitor come on fuston
ressolutta de tend al fatto mè
senza tance seccad de barolè.

Deffatt per quant sto pover religios
l'abba faa, l'abba ditt per famm capì
ch'el pass che fava l'eva on pass ris'cios
e che la purgarev forsi on quaj di,
l'ha traa via el sò fiaa e la soa vos,
anzi el gh'ha avuu de grazia a mondamm lì
de circa milla lir, che la medina
la m'ha lassaa tra pillà e robba fina.

Con cà pientada, e con quij pocch danee,
fresca, giovena e grassa come sera,
gh'aveva semper gent innanz indree
alla mia banca mej che né a ona fera;
de coeugh poeù gh'en vegneva di vivee,
e a quist basta domà che ghe fass ciera,

170 se gh'avess anch venduu merda per pess
sti facc de porca even content l'istess.

175 E che fior de partii ch'hoo possuu fà!
(Inscì magari avess vorsuu dattamm)
fioretton de marcant, de famm marcià
inguala di primm sciori, di primm damm;
e se fuss stada tosa de trattà
soo che on fraa Geromin l'ha vorsuu damm
del pelter assossenn, famm desmett banca,
mandamm in fiacca, e lu comparì nanca.

180 Ma mi ciocca, imbriga, incarognada
de sto razza de can d'on tajapieucc,
tant e quant ghe n'è staa che m'han cercada
olter tant n'hoo cascias foeura di oeucc;
e sì che giamò on pezz m'en seva dada
ch'el me fava scusà de stoppaboeucc,
185 ma già nun vacch de donn semm tucc inscì,
se al mond gh'è on crist el vemm proppi a sciarni!

190 E dininguarda e non poeù a fass toeù via,
en fan toninna, en fan de sott e doss.
Pur tropp l'è inscì: mi ch'hoo provaa la mia,
soo cossa gh'è de noeuv con sti balloss.
Pur tropp sont dada denter in la stria,
e el cogitor l'ha induvinaa tutt coss.
Ah roffianon d'on Pepp!... Varda el mè nan
se gh'è on cristo compagn in tutt Milan!

195 Minga content sto faccia de figon
de vess staa lu el strozzaa che el me l'ha rotta,
d'avemm traa i mej partii tucc a monton,

200 d'avemm drovada pesc d'ona pirotta,
d'avemm semper goduu i pù bon boccon
che gh'aveva alla banca, e per nagotta,
230 sagg de mè, del mè ton, della mia inguilla
l'ha comenzaa a miramm anca alla pillà.

205 In prenzipi col sloffi de dovè
comprà ona cossa o l'oltra a ona quaj posta
el me cercava in prestet per piasè;
235 ma in seguet poeù, quand el m'ha vist desposta
a lassagh god in pas el fatto mè,
l'andava al cantarà lu de soa posta,
e lì servo umelisse sur baslott,
210 ogni freguj, allon, giò on scopellott. 240

215 Ma se! impiastaa de vizzi come l'era,
lallela! gh'en voreva olter che inscì:
l'avarav traa in setton la cà Mellerà,
l'Archint, el Greppi, el Melz, staghela lì.
245 Dì cojon! Lu ostarij, trissett, primera,
la scènn, lu palch, lu donn de mantegni;
e mè ciollatononna de massee
compramm i corna cont i mee danee!

220 Olter che corna! l'ha tentaa per fina
de taccamm ona pesta bolgironna;
250 e se no sont allesta ona mattina
a tira i ciapp, indree t'el me le sonna.
Per fortuna del ciel che intanta fina
che hoo faa per compagnamel in la monna
225 hoo miss i did in mezz a on masarott 255
de filapper consciaa cont el scirott.

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Eppur: coss'eel?... l'eva inscì tant vergnon,
tant marcadett e tanto fin d'ingegn,
che hoo avuu de grazia a fagh la remission;
anzi l'ha tiraa i coss finna a quel segn,
de pacciamm (direv squas) anca i mincion,
perché a furia de vend e de fà pegn
el m'ha sbiottada e el m'ha redutt in pocch
come on oss spuvaa foeura d'on pitocch.

No gh'aveva olter pù che el lecc, i scagn,
la cros de perla e quatter strasciarj,
inscì tra robba dora e quij pocch pagn,
quand besognos de vendem anca quij
on dì el m'è vegnuu in cà, torber compagn
de quand el s'è vorsuu tajà i cannij,
e piovend giò daj oeucc acqua a monton
press a pocch el me parla de sto ton.

Sent Ninetta, el me dis, i creditor
m'hin taccaa al cuu come tanc can mastin;
se no i paghi in sti pocch vintiquatt'or
gh'è già in pront la fameja e i manezzin:
donca on fioeu par mè! on fioeu d'onor
l'avarà de reduss a fà sta fin?...
Ah nò Ninetta!... innanz de famm grani
già l'è on moment... faroo quell che soo mì.

Mì dolza come l'uga, appena senti
dove van a fornì sti ulterm paroll,
deventi smorta, tremi, me spaventi,
e poeù al solet ghe metti i brasc al coll;
infin voo al cantarà: lì me resenti
della cros, di peritt, del tornacoll,

e ghe dighi, piangend, Ciappa antecrist,
degià ch'èet mangiaa el rest, mangia anca quist.

260 Redutta che son stada ona pitocca
senza credet, né robba, né danee,
s'hoo avuu de pagà el ficc, de mett in bocca,
hoo proppi dovuti mettem al mestee.
Ma fina che gh'hoo avuu taccaa alla socca
sto sanguetta fottuu d'on perucchee,
265 on quattrin che on quattrin, nanca a pagamel
sont mai stada patronna de vanzamel.

Infin per compì l'opra adess mò sent
cossa ghe solta in coo a sto porch infamm!
270 Giust on mes fa el ven chì, el me sara dent,
e el me dis ch'el gh'ha voeuja de ciavamm;
voo sul lecc: me le mett lì inscì on poo arent,
e poeù, paffeta, el fa per inculamm;
mì allora streng el ghicc, dagh on button,
e dighi... Ovej!... coss'hin sti pretension!

275 Nanca el cuu poss salvamm sangua de di!
Malarbetto ludron, brutto pendizzi!
el cuu l'è mè, vuj fann quell che vuj mì
né hoo besogn de cavatt de sti caprizzi.
280 S'avess vorsuu dall via, a st'ora chì
sarev fors maridada a vun d'offizzi.
Figuret mò se sont inscì cojonna
de mettem sott a ti a fà seggionna!

Infin vedend che dura come on sass
285 no dava a scolt pù al piang né al sospirà,
né al solet sloffi de vorè mazzass,

el s'è ressolt de fammela pagà;
né savend toeù oltra straa de vendicass
l'è andaa a cercà on poetta e el m'ha faa fa
ona dianzer d'ona bosinada
290 de famm fà la minee perfinna in strada. 320

Ecco el mè Baldissar, ecco on trattin
la reson bolgironna di passion
che me deslenguen come on candirin.
295 Ma el pussee pesc anmò di mee magon
l'è a vedè che sta birba d'on bosin 325
tra i lapp ch'el dis per mettem in canzon
el ghe ne infira voeuna, el mè car nan,
che tend nient manca che a famm perd el pan.

300 L'è rivaa fina a dì che gh'hoo in di oss
on morbo vecc de brusà via l'ussell! 330
Ma se pò dà on trattà pussee balloss,
on'azion pussee infamma e de cortell?
Pacciamm tutt, godemm tutt, e de maross
taccamm anca in l'onor, toeuemm, anca quell?
305 Questa per cristo no la poss capì: 335
mì impestada?... Buffon!... dighel mò ti.

Dighel mò ti, per brio! se gh'è ona donna
pussee sana de mì in tutt quant Milan!
310 Te le taccherà ben lì alla Coronna
la Mora del sciall giald, ma mì, doman! 340
Ma ovej!... varda che aria bolgironna
l'ha ciappaa sto tò cioll!... scià... scià el mè nan...
dammel car... toeù... l'è tova... ah dio!... ciccin...!
Vegni... ve... gni... ghe sont... Cecca?... el cadin.
315

A Tale of Two Countries: Voicing the Poor in 19th-Century Britain and Italy

Week 3 – Handout 2

Text 15

Dickens, Charles, *The Pickwick Papers* [first published in serial form, in monthly parts, 1836-7]

Extract from Chapter 12 – Sam Weller hired by Mr Pickwick

Mr. Snodgrass did as he was desired; and Mr. Samuel Weller forthwith presented himself.

'Oh — you remember me, I suppose?' said Mr. Pickwick.

'I should think so,' replied Sam, with a patronising wink. 'Queer start that 'ere, but he was one too many for you, warn't he? Up to snuff and a pinch or two over — eh?'

'Never mind that matter now,' said Mr. Pickwick hastily; 'I want to speak to you about something else. Sit down.'

'Thank'ee, sir,' said Sam. And down he sat without further bidding, having previously deposited his old white hat on the landing outside the door. 'Tain't a very good 'un to look at,' said Sam, 'but it's an astonishin' 'un to wear; and afore the brim went, it was a very handsome tile. Hows'ever it's lighter without it, that's one thing, and every hole lets in some air, that's another — ventilation gossamer I calls it.' On the delivery of this sentiment, Mr. Weller smiled agreeably upon the assembled Pickwickians.

'Now with regard to the matter on which I, with the concurrence of these gentlemen, sent for you,' said Mr. Pickwick.

'That's the pint, sir,' interposed Sam; 'out with it, as the father said to his child, when he swallowed a farden.'

'We want to know, in the first place,' said Mr. Pickwick, 'whether you have any reason to be discontented with your present situation.'

'Afore I answers that 'ere question, gen'l'm'n,' replied Mr. Weller, 'I should like to know, in the first place, whether you're a-goin' to purvide me with a better?'

A sunbeam of placid benevolence played on Mr. Pickwick's features as he said, 'I have half made up my mind to engage you myself.'

'Have you, though?' said Sam.

Mr. Pickwick nodded in the affirmative.

'Wages?' inquired Sam.

'Twelve pounds a year,' replied Mr. Pickwick.

'Clothes?'

'Two suits.'

'Work?'

'To attend upon me; and travel about with me and these gentlemen here.' 'Take the bill down,' said Sam emphatically. 'I'm let to a single gentleman, and the terms is agreed upon.'

'You accept the situation?' inquired Mr. Pickwick. 'Cert'nly,' replied Sam. 'If the clothes fits me half as well as the place, they'll do.'

'You can get a character of course?' said Mr. Pickwick.

'Ask the landlady o' the White Hart about that, Sir,' replied Sam.

'Can you come this evening?'

'I'll get into the clothes this minute, if they're here,' said Sam, with great alacrity.

'Call at eight this evening,' said Mr. Pickwick; 'and if the inquiries are satisfactory, they shall be provided.'

Text 16

Dickens, Charles, *The Pickwick Papers*

Extract from Chapter 13 – Sam Weller's first extended speech

'Why, he drove a coach down here once,' said Sam; 'Lecture time came on, and he was engaged by a party to bring down woters from London. Night afore he was going to drive up, committee on t' other side sends for him quietly, and away he goes with the messenger, who shows him in; —large room—lots of gen'l'm'n—heaps of papers, pens and ink, and all that 'ere. "Ah, Mr. Weller," says the gen'l'm'n in the chair, "glad to see you, sir; how are you?"—"Very well, thank 'ee, Sir," says my father; "I hope *you're* pretty middlin," says he.—"Pretty well, thank'ee, Sir," says the gen'l'm'n; "sit down, Mr. Weller—pray sit down, sir." So my father sits down, and he and the gen'l'm'n looks wery hard at each other. "You don't remember me?" said the gen'l'm'n. —"Can't say I do," says my father. —"Oh, I know you," says the gen'l'm'n: "know'd you when you was a boy," says he. —"Well, I don't remember you," says my father. —"That's wery odd," says the gen'l'm'n." —"Wery," says my father. —"You must have a bad mem'ry, Mr. Weller," says the gen'l'm'n. —"Well, it is a wery bad 'un," says my father. —"I thought so," says the gen'l'm'n. So then they pours him out a glass o' wine, and gammons him about his driving, and gets him into a reg'lar good humour, and at last shoves a twenty-pound note into his hand. "It's a wery bad road between this and London," says the gen'l'm'n.—"Here and there it *is* a heavy road," says my father.—"Specially near the canal, I think," says the gen'l'm'n.—"Nasty bit that 'ere," says my father.—"Well, Mr. Weller," says the gen'l'm'n, "you're a wery good whip, and can do what you like with your horses, we know. We're all wery fond o' you, Mr. Weller, so in case you *should* have an accident when you're bringing these here woters down, and *should* tip 'em over into the canal without hurtin' of 'em, this is for yourself," says he.—"Gen'l'm'n, you're wery kind," says my father, "and I'll drink your health in another glass of wine," says he; vich he did, and then buttons up the money, and bows himself out. You wouldn't believe, Sir,' continued Sam, with a look of inexpressible impudence at his master, 'that on the wery day as he came down with them woters, his coach was upset on that 'ere wery spot, and ev'ry man on 'em was turned into the canal.'

A Tale of Two Countries: Voicing the Poor in 19th-Century Britain and Italy

Week 3 – Handout 3

Text 17

Wellerisms

1. 'There's nothin' so refreshen' as sleep, sir, as the servant girl said afore she drank the egg-cupful of laudanum'
2. 'Now, gen'l'm'n, "fall on," as the English said to the French when they fixed bagginets'
3. 'How are you, ma'am?' said Mr. Weller. 'Wery glad to see you, indeed, and hope our acquaintance may be a long 'un, as the gen'l'm'n said to the fi' pun' note'
4. 'There; now we look compact and comfortable, as the father said ven he cut his little boy's head off, to cure him o' squintin''
5. 'Hooroar for the principle, as the money-lender said ven he wouldn't renew the bill'
6. 'Vich I call addin' insult to injury, as the parrot said ven they not only took him from his native land, but made him talk the English langwidge arterwards'
7. 'Avay vith melincholly, as the little boy said ven his schoolmissus died'
8. 'If you know'd who was near, sir, I rather think you'd change your note; as the hawk remarked to himself vith a cheerful laugh, ven he heerd the robin-redbreast a-singin' round the corner'
9. 'I only assisted natur, ma'am; as the doctor said to the boy's mother, after he'd bled him to death'
10. 'Sorry to do anythin' as may cause an interruption to such wery pleasant proceedin's, as the king said wen he dissolved the parliament'

Text 18

Cockney renderings

George Bernard Shaw, *Captain Brassbound's Conversion*, 1900

Ahrs is a Free Trade nition. It gows agin us as Hinglishmen to see these bloomin furriners settin up their Castoms Ashes and spheres o hinfluence and sich lawk hall owver Arfricar. Daownt Harfricar belong as much to huz as to them? thets wot we say.

Andrew Tuer, *Thanks Awf'ly*, 1890

It wuz afore mah tahm, bet I dess-sy you reckerlec' we'en the 'Owben Viadeck wuz owpin'd? In the middle uv the Viadeck, yer'now, there's a steps a-leadin' daown inter Ferrind'n Rowd enderneath. W'en you've bin a-walkin' in Ferrind'n Rowd, 'ev y'ivver trahd a-kemmin' ep them there steps? The mowst pezzlin' steps in Lendin' I calls 'em...

Exercise

Translate into standard English, and compare to Sam Weller's speech

Text 19

Dickens, Charles, *The Pickwick Papers* [first published in serial form, in monthly parts, 1836-7]

Extract from Chapter 32 – Sam Weller's valentine to Mary the housemaid

'But wot's that, you're a-doin' of? Pursuit of knowledge under difficulties, Sammy?'

'I've done now,' said Sam, with slight embarrassment; 'I've been a-writin'.'

'So I see,' replied Mr. Weller. 'Not to any young 'ooman, I hope, Sammy?'

'Why, it's no use a-sayin' it ain't,' replied Sam; 'it's a valentine.'

'A what!' exclaimed Mr. Weller, apparently horror-stricken by the word.

'A valentine,' replied Sam. 'Samivel, Samivel,' said Mr. Weller, in reproachful accents, 'I didn't think you'd ha' done it. Arter the warnin' you've had o' your father's wicious propensities; arter all I've said to you upon this here wery subject; arter actiually seein' and bein' in the company o' your own mother-in-law, vich I should ha' thought wos a moral lesson as no man could never ha' forgotten to his dyin' day! I didn't think you'd ha' done it, Sammy, I didn't think you'd ha' done it!' These reflections were too much for the good old man. He raised Sam's tumbler to his lips and drank off its contents.

[...]

Sam dipped his pen into the ink to be ready for any corrections, and began with a very theatrical air—

""Lovely—""

'Stop,' said Mr. Weller, ringing the bell. 'A double glass o' the invariable, my dear.'

'Very well, Sir,' replied the girl; who with great quickness appeared, vanished, returned, and disappeared.

'They seem to know your ways here,' observed Sam.

'Yes,' replied his father, 'I've been here before, in my time. Go on, Sammy.'

"'Lovely creetur,'" repeated Sam.

"'Tain't in poetry, is it?" interposed his father.

'No, no,' replied Sam.

'Wery glad to hear it,' said Mr. Weller. 'Poetry's unnat'ral; no man ever talked poetry 'cept a beadle on boxin'-day, or Warren's blackin', or Rowland's oil, or some of them low fellows; never you let yourself down to talk poetry, my boy. Begin agin, Sammy.'

Mr. Weller resumed his pipe with critical solemnity, and Sam once more commenced, and read as follows:

"'Lovely creetur I feel myself a damned——'" 'That ain't proper,' said Mr. Weller, taking his pipe from his mouth.

'No; it ain't "damned,"' observed Sam, holding the letter up to the light, 'it's "shamed," there's a blot there—"I feel myself ashamed."'

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

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

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

'So I am a-lookin' at it,' replied Sam, 'but there's another blot. Here's a "c," and a "i," and a "d."'

'Circumwented, p'raps,' suggested Mr. Weller.

'No, it ain't that,' said Sam, "'circumscribed"; that's it.'

'That ain't as good a word as "circumwented," Sammy,' said Mr. Weller gravely.

'Think not?' said Sam.

'Nothin' like it,' replied his father.

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

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

"'Feel myself ashamed and completely circumscribed in a-dressin' of you, for you are a nice gal and nothin' but it.'"

'That's a wery pretty sentiment,' said the elder Mr. Weller, removing his pipe to make way for the remark.

'Yes, I think it is rayther good,' observed Sam, highly flattered.

'Wot I like in that 'ere style of writin',' said the elder Mr. Weller, 'is, that there ain't no callin' names in it—no Wenuses, nor nothin' o' that kind. Wot's the good o' callin' a young 'ooman a Wenus or a angel, Sammy?'

Exercise

What is the Wellers' attitude to the written word?