

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

Towards a definition of 'the poor'...

- Class (in Britain)
- *The Class Sketch*, 1966

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..]

How does this relate to representing 'the poor'?

She told me that her Dad was **loaded** - Economic difference

I want to live like **common people** - See definitions of 'common'

I said **pretend** you've **got no money** - Fiction, unreal; poor only those with no money?

But she didn't understand - Ultimate futility of those from different class fully comprehending the condition of being poor

pretend you never went to school - Think of educational status of 19th-century authors/artists

But still **you'll never get it right** - Ultimate futility of those from different class representing the poor. Can poor represent themselves in art?

You'll never live like common people

You'll never do what common people do - You'll never **speak** like common people?

You'll never fail like common people

Because **you think that poor is cool** - Danger of romanticising/idealising the poor

Definitions of 'common', *Oxford English Dictionary* [oed.com]

5.

- a. Of or belonging to the community at large, or to a community or corporation; public.
- b. In various phrases which translate or represent Latin *res publica*, as †**common good**, **common profit**, **common thing**, **common utility**
- c. **common right** n. the right of every citizen. [Compare French *le droit commun*, la loi établie dans un état, l'usage général.]

6.

- a. Free to be used by every one, public.
- b. **common woman**: a harlot; so **common prostitute**

11.

- a. Having ordinary qualities; undistinguished by special or superior characteristics; pertaining to or characteristic of ordinary persons, life, language, etc.; ordinary.

12.

- a. Of persons: Undistinguished by rank or position; belonging to the commonalty; of low degree; *esp.* in phr. **the common people**, the masses, populace. (Sometimes *contemptuous*.)

14. In depreciatory use:

- a. Of merely ordinary or inferior quality, of little value, mean; not rare or costly.
- b. Of persons and their qualities: Low-class, vulgar, unrefined.

UNCOMMON PEOPLE

RESISTANCE, REBELLION AND JAZZ



ERIC HOBBSBAWM

- 'common people'
- 'the little people'
- = anonymous
- = don't feature prominently in mainstream representations

- '*uncommon* people'

This book is almost entirely about the sort of people whose names are usually unknown to anyone except their family and neighbours, and, in modern states, to the offices registering births, marriages and deaths.

[...] They constitute most of the human race.

[...] *collectively*, if not as individuals, such men and women are major historical actors.

[...] They are not 'featureless and commonplace'.

Towards a definition of 'the poor'...in the C19th

Poverty as normal condition of up to 90% of the population

ENGLAND

- Poor Laws (C16th>, but inconsistent)
- Church - alms, almshouses
- Poor Law circa 1800 - local parishes responsible for poor, through taxes (£7 million 1830)
- Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 (help only through workhouses)

ITALY

- 'l'Italia fin ora non riconosce la necessità che o Stato o Provincia o Comune abbia il dovere di tutelare i poveri'
Jesse White Mario, *La miseria in Napoli*, 1877
- Church

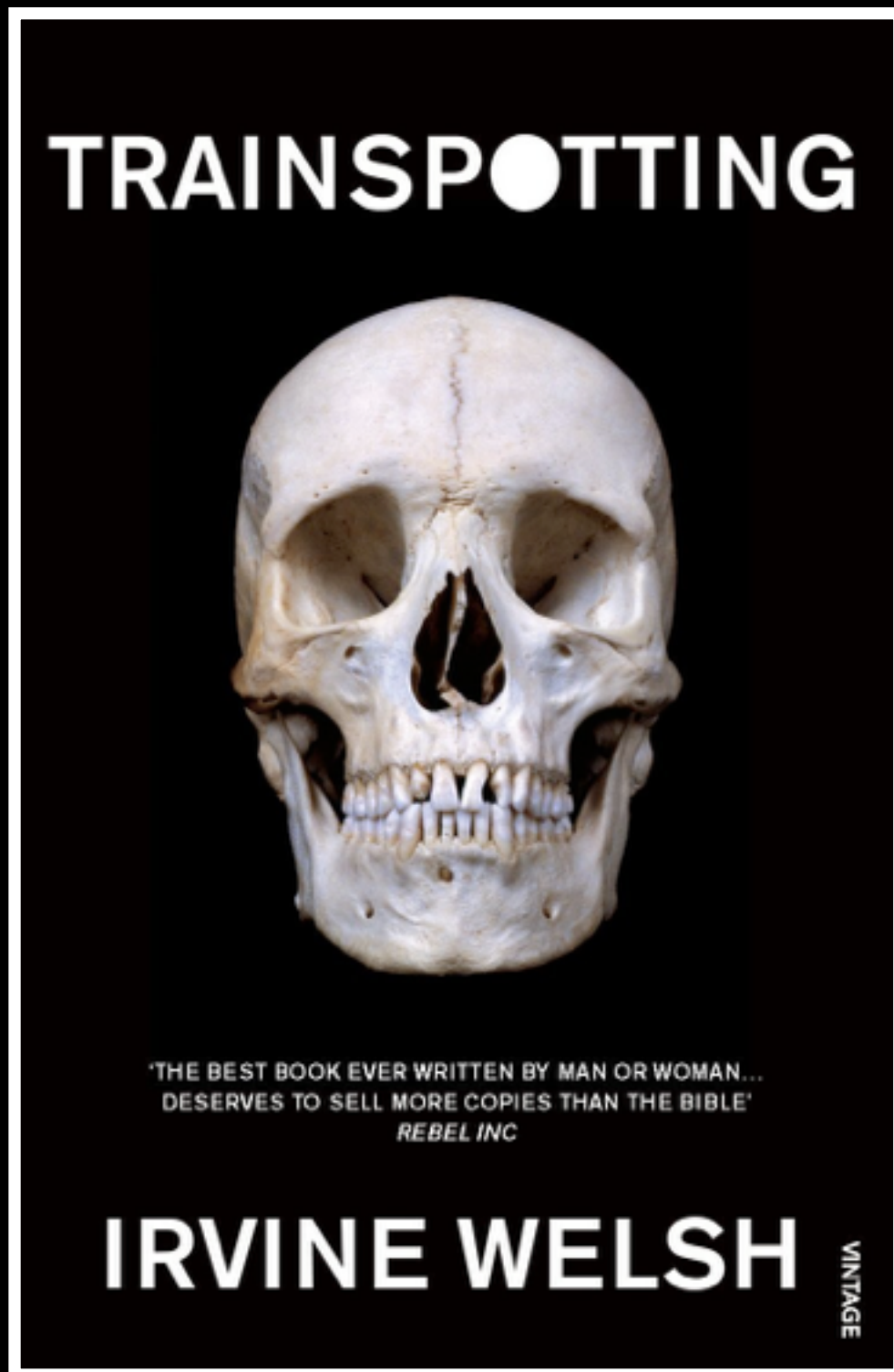
'poor' as 'labouring poor' = those who can work

‘The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles’

Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*, 1848

- landowners
- bourgeois capitalists
- proletarian workers

Incipit from *Trainspotting* - characterisation through voice



- What language?
- What *type* of language?
- What register?
- Is it realistic? How does it relate to the recording?
- What audience?
- Whose voices? Author/narrator/character/reader

***Trainspotting* - a mini-glossary**

- oafay = off of
- thegither = together (Scots)
- swedgin = fighting (Scots/dialect)
- radge = crazy person (Scots/dialect), also meaning 'high on drugs'; also term of endearment
- ootay = out of
- visage = face (Scots)
- eywis = always
- deek = look, also vb (Scots)

***Trainspotting* - linguistic identity**

- Place - Lowland Scots (Edinburgh)
- Class - dialect/slang of underworld (crime, drugs, unemployment, poverty)
- Audience? Who is it written for?

Incipit from *Trainspotting* - literature?

- What is literary/conventional about it?
Paragraphing, punctuation (semi-colon in first line!)
- Conventions of orality - c.f. e.g. Shakespeare's Stephano in *Tempest* 'Flout 'em and scout 'em, / And scout 'em and flout 'em'.
- What is unconventional? Language. No speech marks = stream-of-consciousness
- Effect on reader? Unsettling

**A Tale of Two Countries:
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William Wordsworth

- Born 1770; dies 1850.
- Cockermouth, Cumbria = Lake District, north west England, area of outstanding natural beauty
- Upper class
- Rural upbringing, but educated in a grammar school in Cumbria and then at St John's College, Cambridge



Wordsworth's minor revolution in the *Lyrical Ballads*

- 1798 Advert:
'The majority of the following poems are to be considered as experiments. They were written chiefly with a view to ascertain how far the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society is adapted to the purpose of poetic pleasure.'
- 1802 Preface:
Major theoretical statement of his poetics

Wordsworth's minor revolution in the *Lyrical Ballads*

Preface in summary:

- Acute awareness of social changes/anxiety
- Deliberate reduction of class difference/hierarchy - 'Poet binds together [...] the vast empire of human society'
- Democratisation of poetry - ballad form
- Naturalism of content and language
- How is naturalism reconciled with poetry?
 1. Metre and form arouses pleasure in reader
 2. Poetry better than prose for conveying the suffering of human beings
- Metre necessary, but not poetic diction and 'artificial distinctions of style'
- Poetry most suited to discussing human suffering

Goody Blake and Harry Gill

- In 1837, Wordsworth removes local references to Dorset in stanza 4, replacing it with:

Remote from sheltered village-green,
On a hill's northern side she dwelt,
Where from sea-blasts the hawthorns lean,
And hoary dews are slow to melt.

- Part of his aspiration to be a *national* poet, widely read (see Preface to *LB*: Poetry's truth 'not individual and local, but general, and operative')

Wordsworth's minor revolution in the *Lyrical Ballads*

W's prose (Preface) v verse (poems in *LB*) in terms of style etc?

- Preface 'obscure beyond any necessity - and the extreme elaboration and almost constrainedness of the diction contrasted (to my feelings) somewhat harshly with the general style of the poems'

Coleridge

William Barnes

- Opposite approach to Wordsworth (localistic)
- But pastoral if not totally lyrical in Wordsworthian sense
- Idealising - happy poor, no apparent suffering
- No direct engagement with what theorist Theodor Adorno calls the 'social bustle' characteristic of early C19th - poverty question in society

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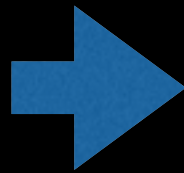
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Coleridge

Goody Blake and Harry Gill

- In 1837, Wordsworth removes local references to Dorset in stanza 4

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.



Remote from sheltered village-green,
On a hill's northern side she dwelt,
Where from sea-blasts the hawthorns lean,
And hoary dews are slow to melt.

- cf also '*canty* Dame' italicised because dialectal - Scots/Northern = 'cheerful, healthy'

William Barnes's poetry in Dorset dialect

- The milk-mâid o' the farm

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The Old Cumberland Beggar

Wordsworth's note to text

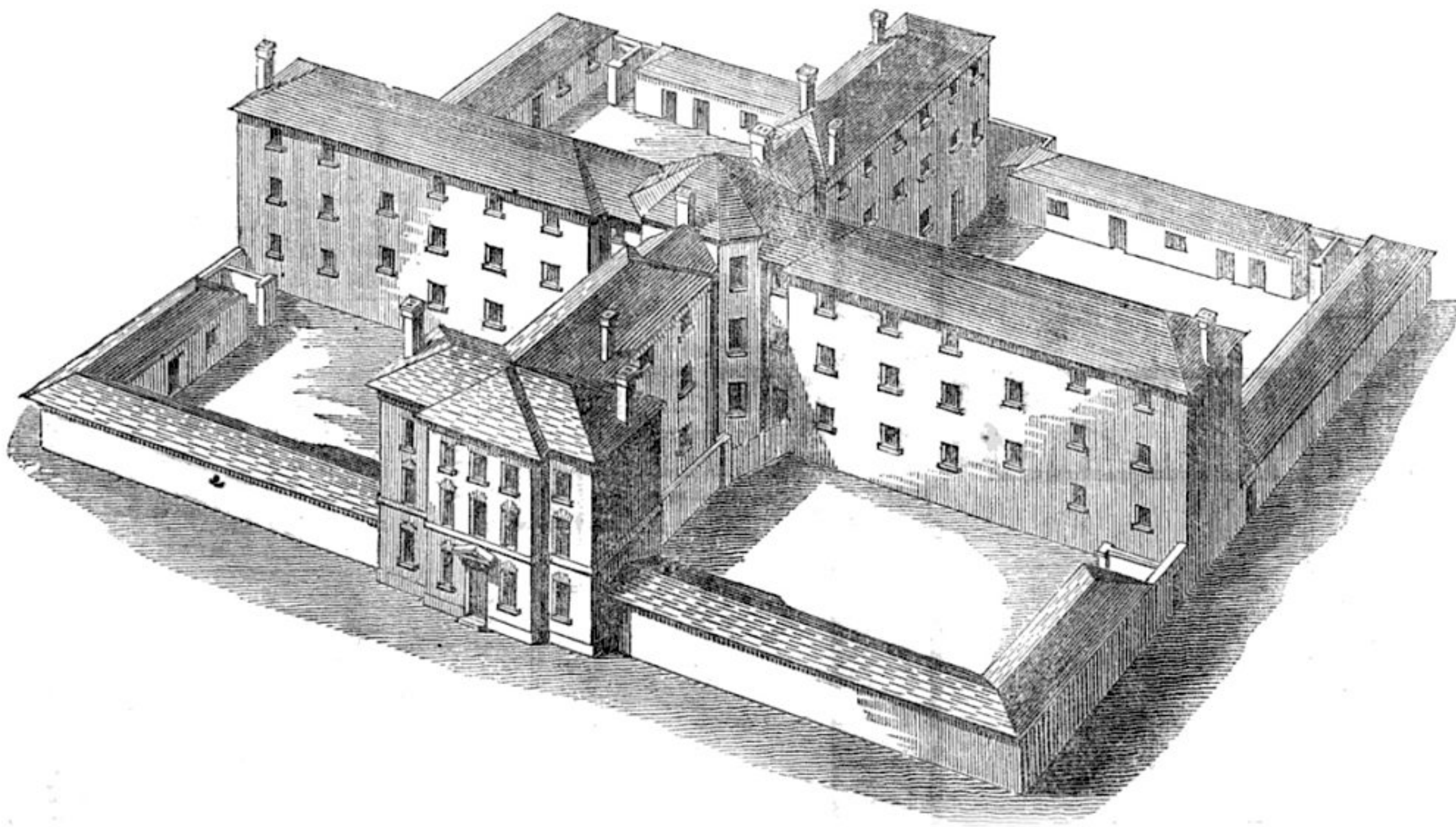
- The class of Beggars to which the Old Man here described belongs, will probably soon be extinct. It consisted of poor, and, mostly, old and infirm persons, who confined themselves to a stated round in their neighbourhood, and had certain fixed days, on which, at different houses, they regularly received alms, sometimes in money, but mostly in provisions.

Letter to William Wilberforce MP, 1801

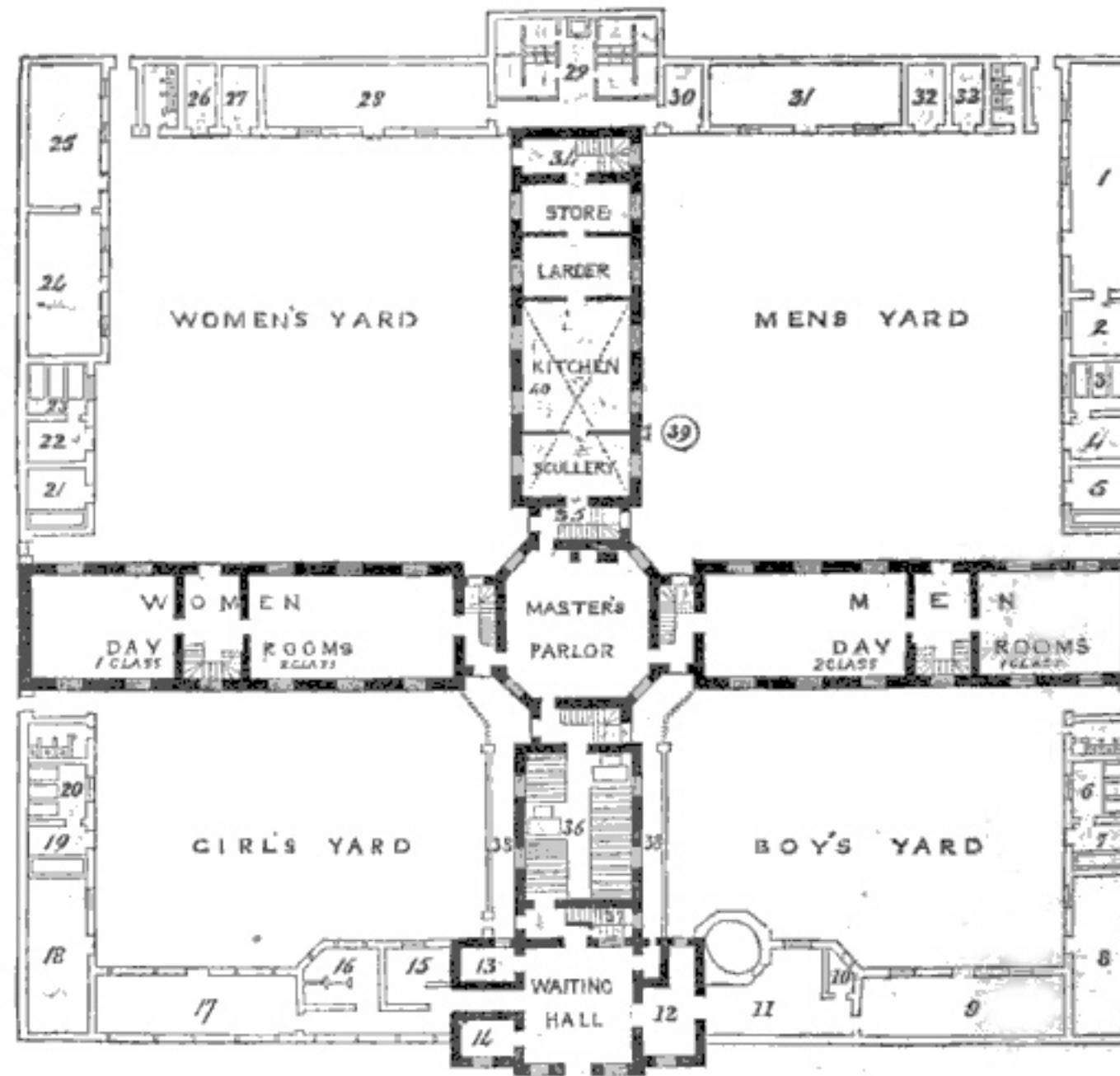
- Wilberforce - Member of Parliament, abolitionist (anti-slavery campaigner)
- Letter accompanying copy of *LB*, written by Coleridge, but bearing Wordsworth's signature
- Another defence of the poetic language of *Lyrical Ballads*
 - Current taste: 'an aversion to the common conversational language of our countrymen'
 - Part of that taste is 'understanding what they [Poets, but also readers] are conscious the lower classes of their countrymen would not be able to understand'
 - Subjects of *LB* 'walk in silence and in a veil' - principally in literature, but equally in society too

Poor Law Amendment Act, 1834 (New Poor Law)

- ‘prisons of the poor’ (Richard Oastler, abolitionist) - confinement, uniform, segregation
- ‘no outdoor relief’ - rural poor moved to urban centres to reduce cost to rural areas
- resentment in North - London-centric
- all of above implicit in Old Cumberland Beggar



Design for workhouse 1835



Design for workhouse 1835

Other key poems in *LB* for W's portrayal of poor

Many silent vagrants - literally voiceless, Wordsworth as spokesman but not direct voice

- Simon Lee
- Poor Susan
- Ruth
- Poems on the Naming of Places
- Michael

Other poems beyond *LB* for W's portrayal of poor

See also, in *Complete Poetical Works*;

- Beggars
- Sequel to the Beggars
- Resolution and Independence - encounter with a leech-gatherer

He told, that to these waters he had come
To gather leeches, being old and poor:
Employment hazardous and wearisome!
And he had many hardships to endure:
From pond to pond he roamed, from moor to moor;
Housing, with God's good help, by choice or chance,
And in this way he gained an honest maintenance.

- Wordsworth compares the plight of the poet to that of the poor [difficult to take seriously, but he makes the comparison]

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The Old Cumberland Beggar

- Domestic metaphor used by Wordsworth in direct address to politicians

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,
Heart-swoln, while in your pride ye contemplate
Your talents, power, or wisdom, deem him not
A burthen of the earth!

“To sweep something under the carpet”



Italy, at beginning of C19th

- Manzoni

“Per nostra sventura, lo stato dell’Italia divisa in frammenti, la pigrizia e l’ignoranza quasi generale hanno posto tanta distanza tra la lingua parlata e la scritta, che questa può dirsi quasi lingua morta.”

(Letter to Fauriel, 9th February 1806.)

Manzoni's *Introduzione*

- That 'distanza' exaggerated with historical setting
- History = glorious deeds of high-born, important individuals - Manzoni about to change that
- Monument, historical accuracy (c.f. Belli)
- New type of reader? National scope
- Recast the language - Manzoni's project

Manzoni's 'povera gente' - are they really poor?

- Renzo is a skilled worker, a silk weaver (Lorenzo Tramaglino), but he's also a landowner (however modest – 'un poderetto', small farm, and he even employs people to work his land), so that 'per la sua condizione, poteva dirsi agiato' – for his class/status, he could be said to be prosperous/well-off
- Glimpses of poorer people - e.g. Ch.4 "Lo spettacolo de' lavoratori sparsi ne' campi, aveva qualcosa d'ancor più doloroso." ; "La fanciulla scarna, tenendo per la corda al pascolo la vaccherella magra stecchita"
- Renzo and Lucia's troubles never really economic, even though the dowry payment from the converted Innominato eases things (particularly in Lucia and Agnese's eyes)
- Renzo and Lucia much more prosperous at the close of the novel as owners of silk mill – suggestion Renzo has become a capitalist even benefitting from *gride* (upward social movement?)
- Manzoni defines them as poor (or his narrator does): Renzo described as 'un contadino', and Lucia 'una contadina'. They repeatedly define themselves as poor: 'povera gente' etc - think of the conclusion: 'Questa conclusione, benché trovata da povera gente, c'è parsa così giusta, che abbiám pensato di metterla qui, come il sugo di tutta la storia.'

Belli's *Introduzione* v Wordsworth's *Preface* - similarities

	Belli	Wordsworth
Appeal to classics for authority	Horace, Ausonius/Martial, Juvenal, Seneca	Quintilian (motto preceding poems)
Novelty/innovation	"[...] novità. Questo disegno [...] non trova lavoro da confronto che lo	"strangeness and awkwardness"
Mimesis	"io ricopio"; "tento d'imitare la loro parola"	"I have proposed to myself to imitate"
Truth	"dirò loro [critics]: lo ritrassi la verità"; "lo testimonio delle orecchie"	"Real language of men"
Popular form?	Sonnet (?)	Ballad
Style	"senza ornamento, senza alterazione veruna, senza pure inversioni di sintassi o troncamenti di licenza"	no "personifications of abstract ideas"; "no poetic diction"

Belli's *Introduzione* v Wordsworth's *Preface* - differences

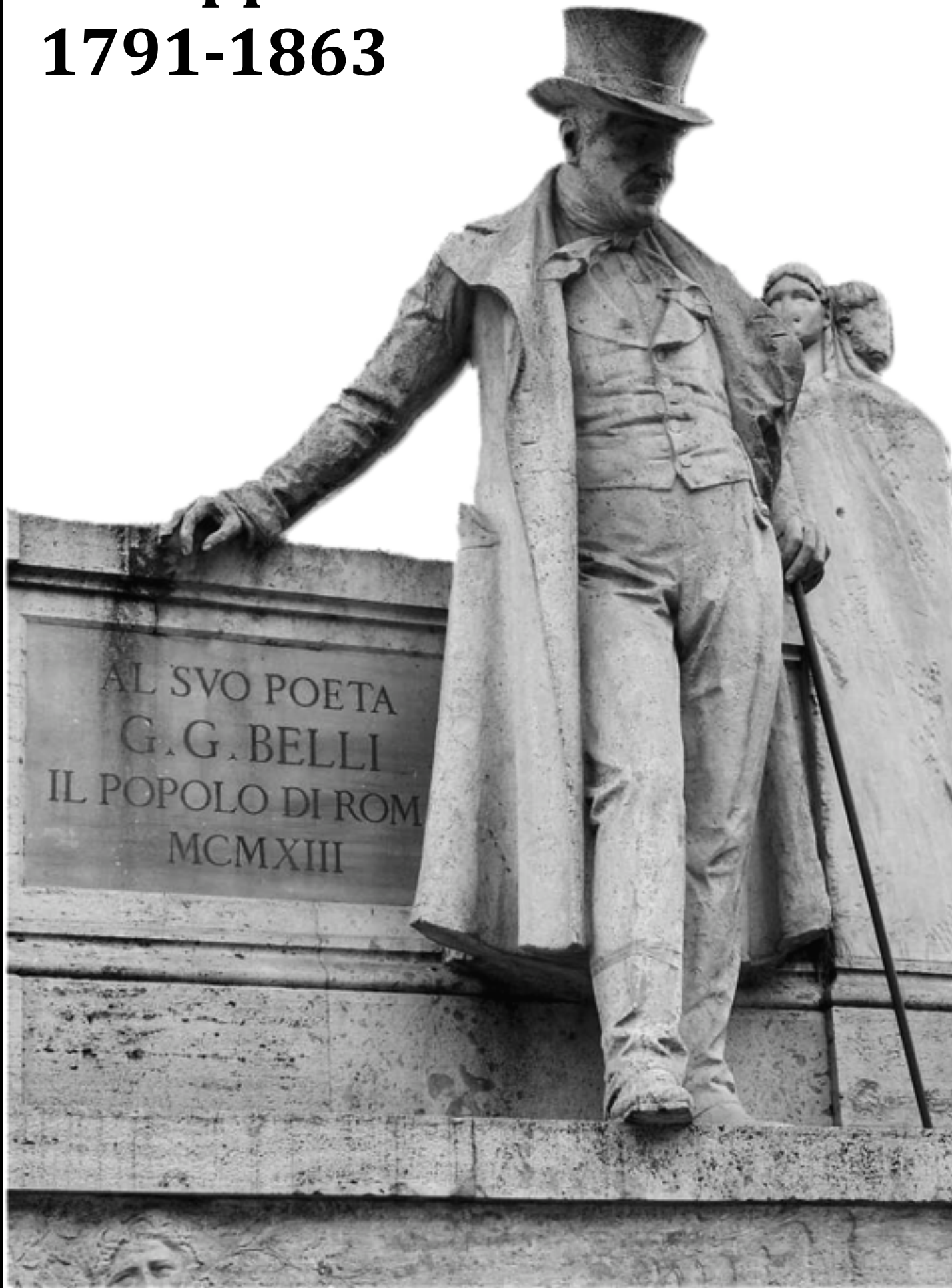
	Belli	Wordsworth
Attitude to class differences	Uses nature to stress a biological otherness of the lower classes	Uses nature to reduce differences to category "man"
Attitude to subjects	Largely negative; no attempt at social change	Positive/sympathetic; active attempt to widen readership
Poetic persona	Of the people; "i popolari discorsi svolti nella mia poesia"; author's voice to be silent in poems	For the people, but not of them. Poet not to speak through mouths of his characters
Form	Little discussion - only hints ("distinti quadretti" etc) at sonnet	Thorough justification for ballad form
Language	More scientific approach (c.f. French naturalism)	Somewhat vague real language of men
Aims	Stresses the local	National scope

“Introduzione”

- Never published by Belli - letter form, but shows he envisaged publication
- Various revisions of the text.
- Attempts to define his subjects:
 - “plebe” [“popolaccio” in 1st draft]
 - “popolani”
 - “volgo”
 - “cittadini”
 - “uomini”
 - “popolo”
 - “plebeo”
 - “romano”
 - “plebe ignorante”
 - “idioti”

Giuseppe Gioachino Belli

1791-1863

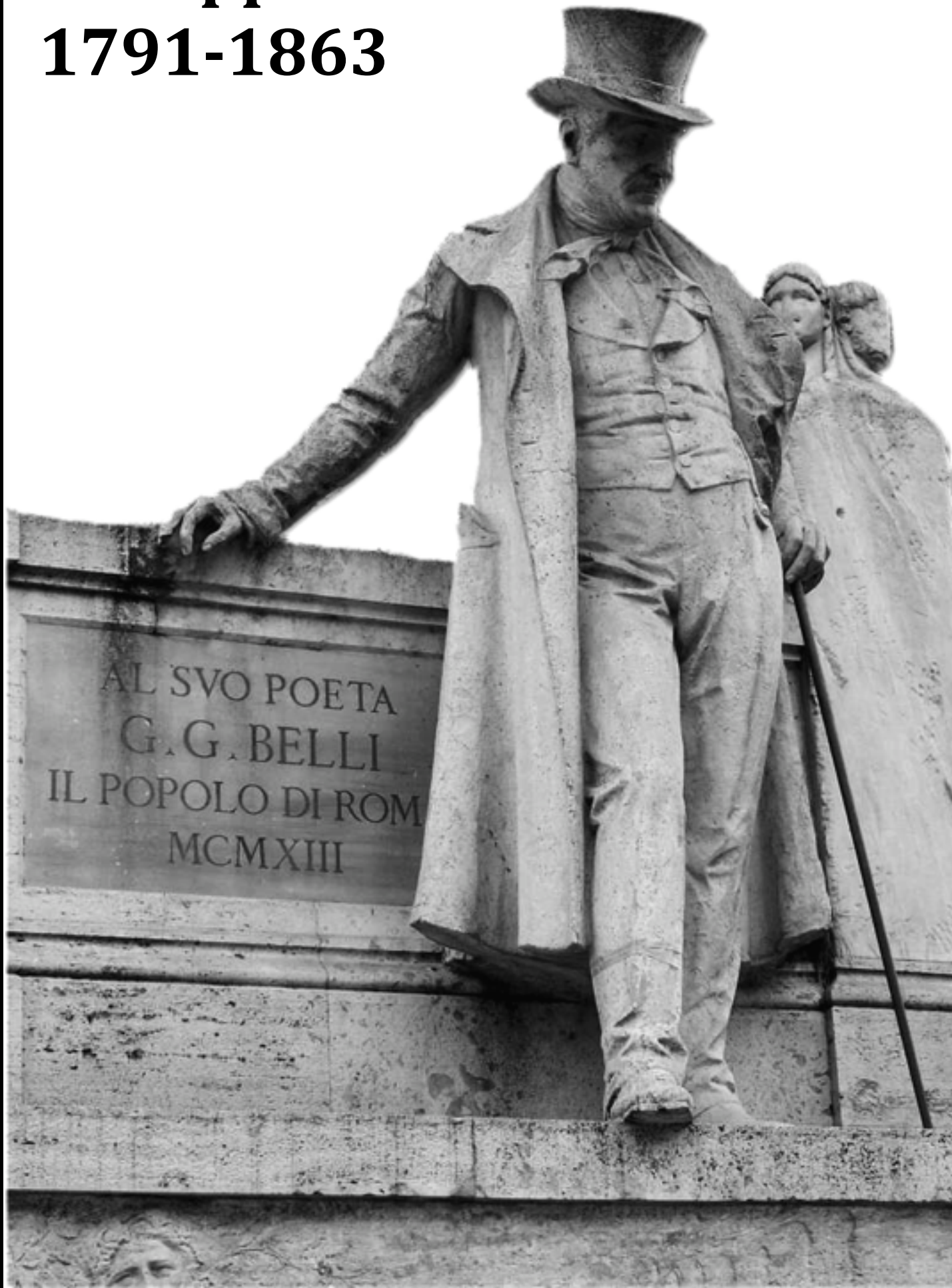


- 2279 sonnets
[Petrarch 317!]
- Mostly written in
1830s
- Published only
posthumously
- Frank, unadorned
language

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Giuseppe Gioachino Belli

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- 2279 sonnets
[Petrarch 317!]
- Mostly written in
1830s
- Dates punctuated
by political unrest
- Published only
posthumously
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unadorned
language

Evidence of Belli reciting his sonnets

‘Gioacchino Belli non apparteneva a nessun gruppo; la sua personalità era troppo spiccata. [...] Con questo singolare ingegno che credo potrebbe dirsi il massimo poeta dialettale, io mi trovai più volte a desinare da mio cognato Mons. Luciano Bonaparte, ed erano quelle serate, per cagion sua, piacevolissime. Sorbendo il caffè, dopo essersi un pò fatto pregare, ci recitava quei suoi sonetti, che noi dicevamo proibiti. Pareva egli non potesse declamare a modo, se non sedeva comodamente, e non metteva in capo un berrettino di seta nera, che durante la recitazione veniva rigirando sul cranio. Non era possibile non smascellarsi dalle risa, soprattutto per la serietà a cui atteggiava il suo volto sbarbato, e per se stesso severo, sul quale invano avresti aspettato un sorriso. Quei versi che declamava quasi a ritegno, come ad esempio “*Il Papa non fa niente!*” non c’era caso di farglieli ripetere. A prima vista parrebbe veramente singolare la scambievole simpatia fra il Bonaparte e lui. Ma erano allora all’unisono nella devozione grande e sincera verso la religione cattolica.’

Campello Della Spina, Paolo, *Ricordi di più che cinquant’anni dal 1840 al 1890* (Spoleto: Prem. Tip. dell'Umbria, 1910),

Evidence of Belli reciting his sonnets

‘But surely you have not had the chance to read the sonnets by the Roman poet Belli, which, in any case, you’ll need to hear when he reads them himself. In these sonnets, there is much salt and sharpness, they are completely surprising, and so genuine in their reflection of today’s life in Trastevere that you’ll be reduced to laughter, and this heavy cloud that too often burdens your head will fly away together with the tiring and unbearable headache.’

Gogol, letter to Maria Balabina, April 1838

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Belli's poor - skepticism of written word

- Written word = form of imperialism, designed to enforce social division in eyes of poor/uneducated
- Reading and writing for 'them', not 'us'
- See e.g. 'Er legge e scrive'

E a cche tte serve poi sto scrive e llege?

Làsselo fà a li preti, a li dottori,
a li frati, a li Re, all'Imperatori,
e a cquelli che jje l'obbriga la Lègge.
[1598. *Er legge e scrive*]

Belli's poor - skepticism of written word/voice effects

- “Idiotismo” occasionally taken to an extreme, see the poem entitled ‘Avviso’

Bra-man-do — il — Rev-do — Ven-le— Mo-na-ste-ro
de — San-ti — Cos-ma *virgola* e — Da-mi-a-no
ven-de-re *virgola* o — af-fit-ta-re — un — pi-a-no
d'u-na — su-a — ca-sa *virgola* e — l'in-ti-e-ro

or-to *virgola* il — qua-le — gi-a-ce — a — ma-no
man-ca *virgola* e — al — nu-me-ro — tre-zero
del — Vi-co-lo — Ster-ra-to — al — ci-mi-te-ro
di — San — Spi-ri-to *virgola* con — va-no

per — stal-la punt'e *vvirgola* si — av-vi-sa
tut-ti *virgola* e — sin-go-li — as-pi-ran-ti
virgola che — do-ma-ni — al-la — pre-ci-sa

o-ra — d'o-re — uno — sette— re-sta — in-gi-un-to
al — No-ta-ro — del — Lo-co — Sig. — Bri-gan-ti...6
Che sse vadi a ffà fotte, e mmetto er punto.

[1209. *Avviso*]

Literacy rates

- Italy 22% in 1820; 32% in 1870 (lowest of European countries included)

c.f.

UK 53% in 1820; 76% in 1870

[UNESCO figures, <http://ourworldindata.org/literacy/>]

‘One may assume that at the **time of Unification** [...] only people who were literate were able to use Italian. **The illiterates were all confined to their dialects.** The census figures give about 75 per cent in 1861, but it would be rash to assume that the 25 per cent who were nominally literate could speak Italian proficiently. [...] According to De Mauro’s estimate it is more realistic to assume that in 1861 the number of those able to use Italian could not have amounted to many more than 600 000 (400 000 Tuscans, 70 000 Romans, and about **160 000** from the rest of Italy) i.e., 2.5 per cent of the total population.’

(Lepschy and Lepschy, *The Italian Language Today*)

Literacy rates

- Widespread education for all only comes on a national scale with Unification
- Legge Casati - Unification; Legge Coppino 1877 (5 years' compulsory education for dialectal speaking children)
- Some regional differences - e.g. Regno di Sardegna (Legge Bon Compagni 1848)

Belli voicing the poor - voice effects/form

- Flexibility of sonnet form = technical possibilities
- Apparent monologues
- Reported speech
- Direct speech
- Extended sequences (e.g. 586-593. *Le confidenze de le ragazze* - 8 poems)

1389. Er bordello scuperto

Entrato er brigattiere in ner bordello
je se fa avanti serio serio un prete.

Disce: «Chi ssete voi? cosa volete?»

Disce: «La forza, e pportà llei 'n Castello».

Belli voicing the poor

- Dialogue sonnet/contrasto/dramatic sonnet (English tradition)- entirely made up direct speech without need for narrating persona
- Tradition of this - e.g. Cecco Angiolieri's Becchina sonnets
- Language mixing
- Face to face opposition e.g. 541. *Er custituto*

Voice dynamics - c.f. Porta's *Giovannin Bongee*

«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 innocente».

«E se andaste in galera?» «È er gusto mio».

[541. *Er custituto*]

1 Chiesetta e contrada al Foro Traiano.

2 Presidente regionario di polizia.

276. Er giorno der giudizio

Cuattro angioloni co le tromme in bocca
se metteranno uno pe cantone
a ssonà: poi co ttanto de voscione
cominceranno a ddì: ffora a cchi ttocca.

Allora vierà ssù una filastrocca
de schertri da la terra a ppecorone,¹
pe rripijjà ffigura de perzone,
come purcini attorno de la bbiocca.²

E sta bbiocca sarà ddio bbenedetto,
che ne farà du' parte, bbianca, e nnera:
na pe annà in cantina, una sur tetto.

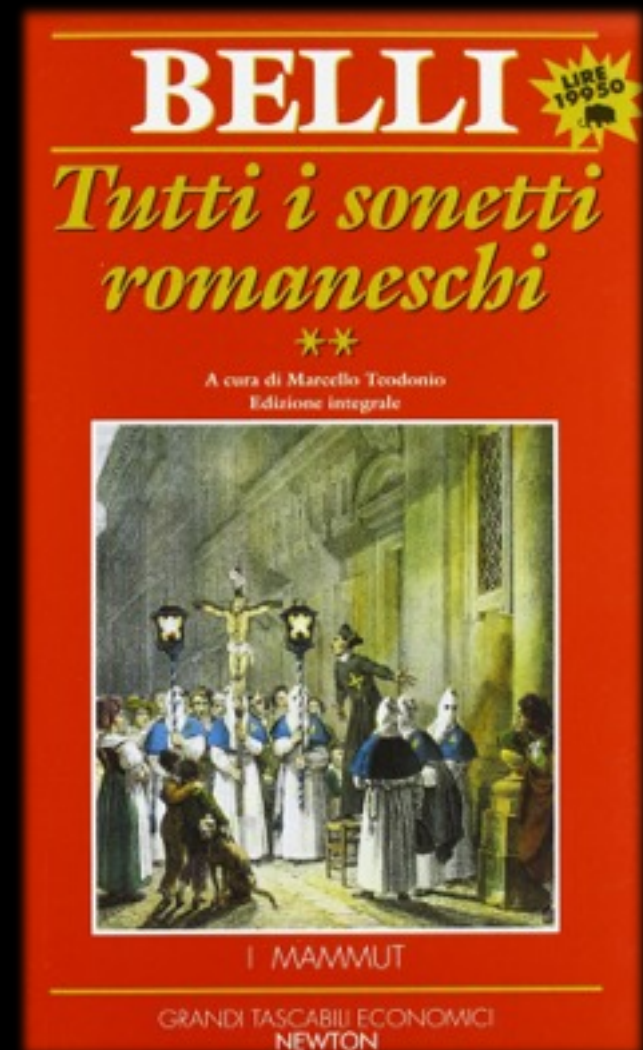
All'urtimo usscirà 'na sonajjera³
d'Angioli, e, ccome si ss'annassi a letto,
smorzeranno li lumi, e bbona sera.

25 novembre 1831

1 Camminando cioè con mani e piedi.

2 Chioccia.

3 Un formicaio, ecc.



And after these things I saw **four angels standing on the four corners of the earth**, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.

And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he **cried with a loud voice** to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea...

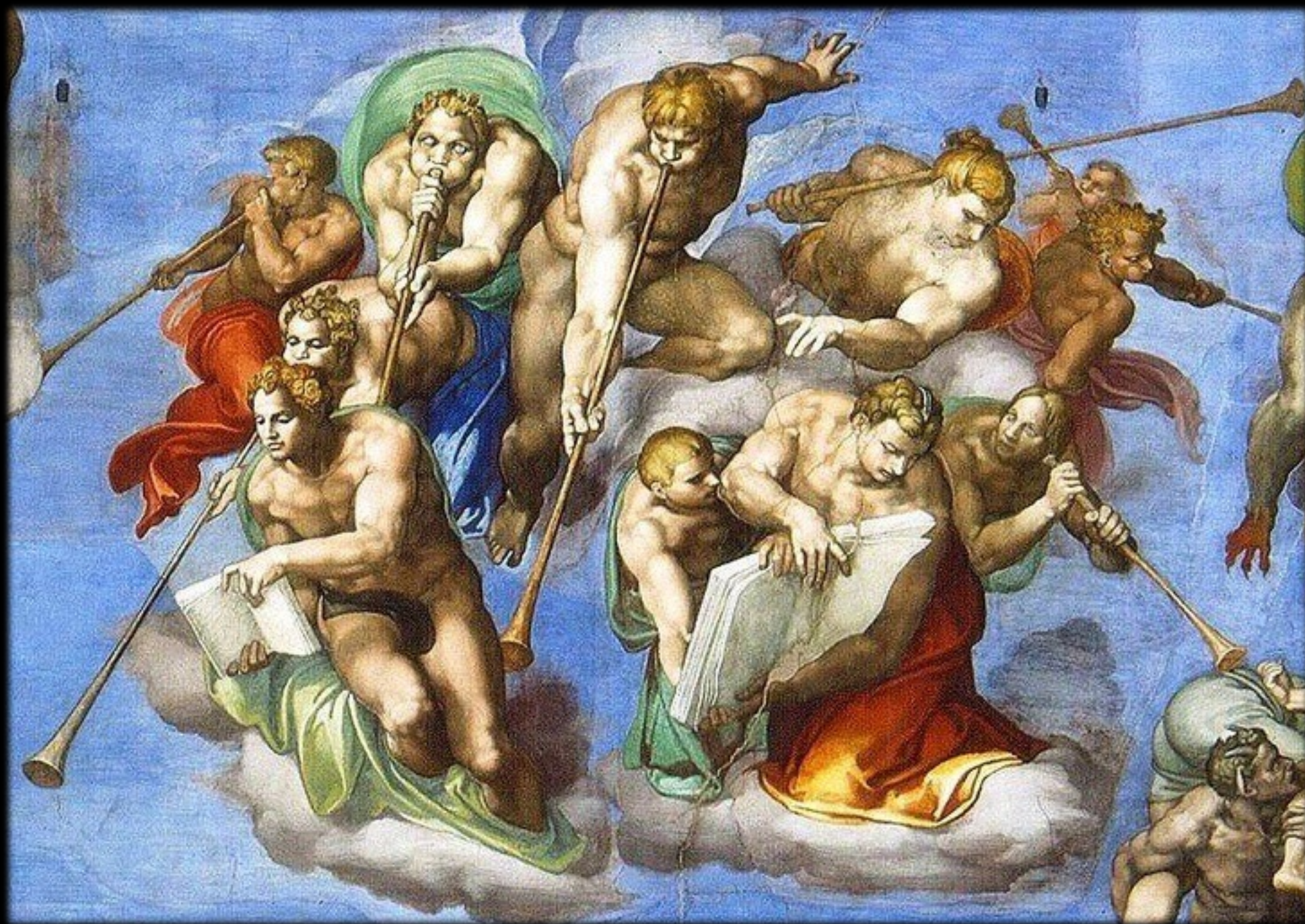
Revelation 7:1-2

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, **even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings**, and ye would not!

Matthew 23:37

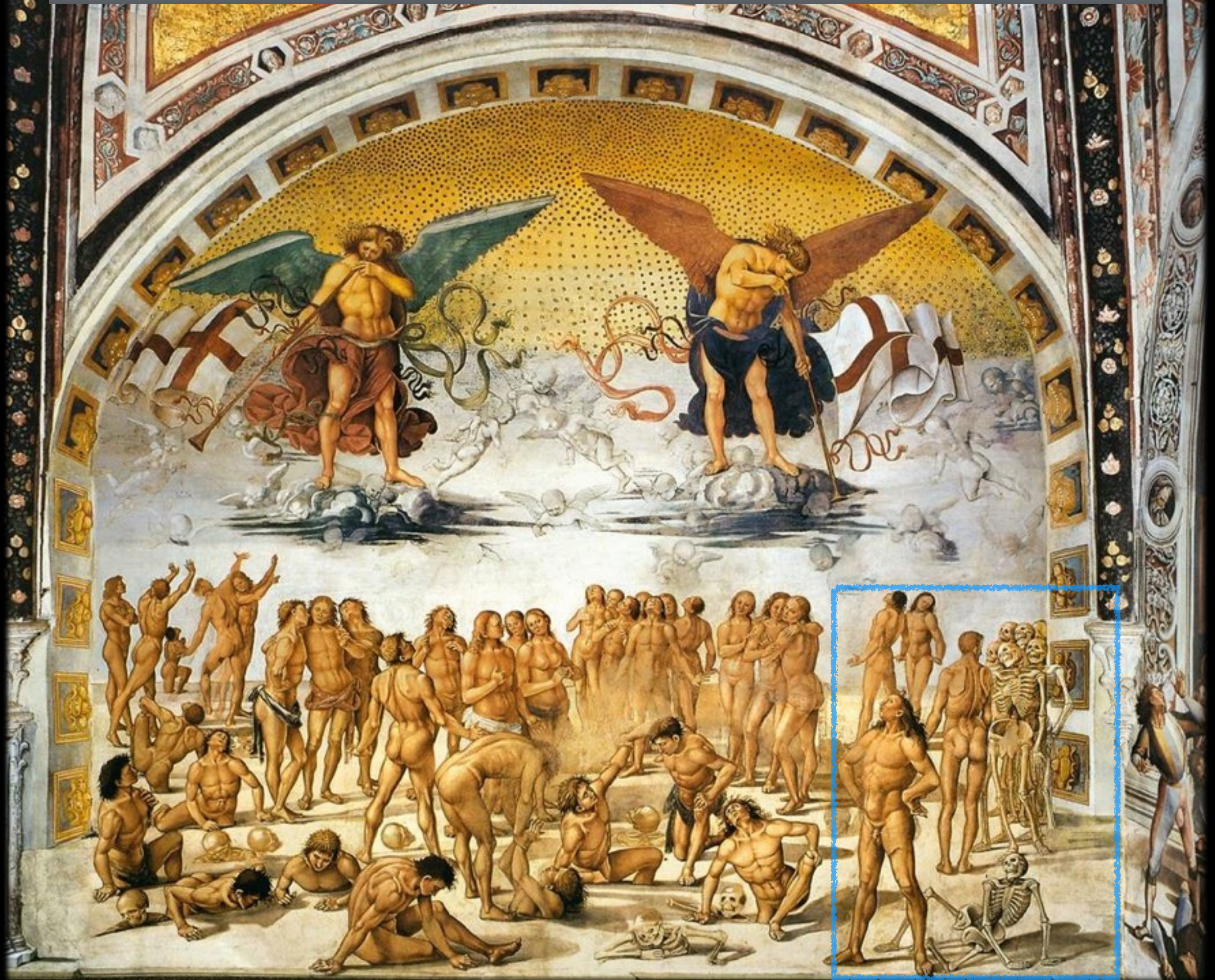
Michelangelo's *Last Judgment*, Sistine Chapel, Rome







Signorelli's *Resurrection of the Flesh* in the San Brizio Chapel, Orvieto



?



Belli in England - Hans Sotheby, 1874

BELLI'S SONNETS IN THE ROMAN DIALECT.

THE book of which the following pages will attempt to give some account belongs to a very small class in literature, if, indeed, it is not *sui generis*. Written in the singular form of sonnets, it is partly a series of satirical attacks on the Papal Court and Government half a century ago—partly a gallery of cabinet sketches, humorous or pathetic, of the Roman populace in their daily life, taken from their own lips and conversation. It would be difficult to name any book in which the author's personality is more effaced in outward form, or more distinctly present in inward spirit. The former must of course be the case in all dialect poetry written by an educated man, but we know of no other instance of this medium having been chosen for the vent of strong political feeling, or by a man of so much genius. The result is a true work of art, in which all the details have the freshness of a photograph along with that indescribable stamp which no mere transcript from unselected nature ever succeeds in imparting.

Identity of Belli's poor

- Collective identity based on exclusion - **nnoantri** (define themselves as the Others = process of Othering)
- Otherness constructed principally through language, but also animality etc
- 'Us' and 'them' - theme running throughout C19th English Lit. C.f. Dickens
- C.f. social identity theories, e.g. Henri Tajfel's 'in-groups' and 'out-groups', group categorisation, groupings=identity. Almost reversal of reality - the excluded become the 'in-group' in Belli through constant assertion of Otherness
- Literally "voiceless"
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**
[362. *Li soprani der Monno vecchio*]

Compare Tony Harrison poem 'Them and [uz]'

- How does Harrison use language to create identity?
- How does it compare with Belli?

Is Belli socially/politically engaged?

- Introduzione - no
- Poetry - yes
- How?
- How does Belli's satire work?

Is Belli socially/politically engaged?

A GIUSEPPE GIGLIOLI, a Londra

[Londra], martedì notte [3 novembre 1846].

Caro Giglioli,

Verrò, se mi riesce, a invitar te e la gentilissima moglie tua, in persona; ma intanto sappi, tu immemore d'ogni cosa nostra, che martedì sera, 10 novembre, alle otto, celebreremo il quarto Anniversario della nostra **Scuola** – che dimando a te, e prego umilmente, ma caldamente quanto più so, la tua Signora, di volerci compiacere e onorare della vostra presenza – che saremo *moderati* e ci uniformeremo, quanto potremo, alla Circolare del Card. Gizzi, evitando, anche tra i maccheroni, le dimostrazioni clamorose – che avremo molte Signore Inglesi e che vorrei vedessero gli Italiani riuniti in un pensiero almeno d'insegnamento. Vieni, dunque, perdio; o son io messo con tutte le cose mie al *ban de l'Empire* perché non parteggio per la Lega Pontificio-regio-ducale, prossima come ognun sa? Radice //p254// è a Dublino; l'ho saputo per caso. Addio, ancor sempre, *quand-même* il

tuo

GIUSEPPE

Se trovi qualcuno tanto ardito da dire che il Papa non fa poi gran cosa, dagli il Sonetto che unisco.

19. Croy Street, New North Road.

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

Divisions within 'the poor'?

GENDER

- France - Olympe de Gouges *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen* 1791
- England - Mary Wollstonecraft *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* 1792
- Italy?
- Anna Maria Mozzoni *La donna e i suoi rapporti sociali in occasione della revisione del codice italiano* 1864

WOMAN'S RIGHTS.

THE right to be a comforter,
When other comforts fail ;
The right to cheer the drooping heart
When troubles most assail.

The right to train the infant mind,
To think of Heaven and God ;
The right to guide the tiny feet
The path our Saviour trod.

The right to solace the distressed,
To wipe the mourner's tear ;
The right to shelter the oppressed,
And gently chide each fear.

The right to be a bright sunbeam,
In high or lowly home ;
The right to smile with loving gleam,
And point to joys to come.

The right to fan the fevered brow,
To ease the troubled mind,
And gently tell in accents low,
"All those who seek shall find."

Such are the noblest woman's rights,
The rights which God hath given,
The right to comfort man on earth
And smooth his path to heaven.

M.C.M.R.

Gender questioning in C19th literature

- Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* 1847

women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. (ch. 12)

Men/women dialectics in Belli and Porta

- What difference? What Otherness?
- How are poor women defined?
- Who defines them?
- Are they voiceless?
- Are they powerless?
- Are they worse off than their poor male counterparts?



Useful gender theory

- Lacan *phallocentrism*
- Derrida *phallogocentrism* - emphasis on the linguistic
- Slavoj Žižek:

[...] sexual differentiation is grounded in the very ontological opposition of subject and object, of active spirit and passive matter. Woman is a passive, impressionable object, which means that she is entirely dominated by sexuality.

(‘Otto Weininger, or “Woman doesn’t Exist”’, in *The Žižek Reader*, ed. by Elizabeth and Edmond Wright (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), p. 129.)

**A Tale of Two Countries:
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Ninetta's language

- Porta identifies Milanese as something lowly: **‘tutt i lenguagg del mond hin come quell / che parla on sò umilissim servitor’**
- Brandana linguistic dispute of the 1750s Milanese branded as language of **‘cucina, dispensa, pentola’**
- Porta himself comes back from the **‘scoeura de lengua del Verzee’** at the start of *On funeral* with a basket of linguistic delicacies and local identity, his ‘scorbetta / Caregada de tucc i erudizion / Che i serv e i recatton / Dan de solet a gratis ai poetta’. The Verzee as an organic centre of language production
- Food dominates Ninetta's discourse - similes, metaphors abound with food
Pepp ‘longh come on salamm’
medina ‘desdott in fira e fresca come on oeuv’
Ninetta ‘dolza come l’uga’
Ninetta and lover ‘e poeù voltavem là come lasagn’
- Overtly sexualised language - part of her trade, her ‘mestee’

Charles Dickens

1812-1870



- 1824 - Father imprisoned for three months for debt
- 1824 - Dickens forced to work in a blacking warehouse, labelling bottles
- 1830 Solicitor's clerk
- 1832 Parliamentary reporter in House of Commons
- 1834 Reporter on *Morning Chronicle*
- 1836-7 *The Pickwick Papers* published in monthly instalments

‘The author’s object in this work, was to place before the reader a constant succession of characters and incidents; **to paint them in as vivid colours as he could command**; and to render them, at the same time, **life-like** and amusing.

Dickens, Preface to *The Pickwick Papers*

- *The Pickwick Papers* first publishing sensation
- First instalment sells 500 copies
- Final instalment sells 40000 copies
- All thanks to Sam Weller



Mr Pickwick, innocent, master
to Sam Weller, later father-
figure

Sam Weller, servant to Mr
Pickwick, very sharp, most
intelligent character in book,
practical, witty, but formally
uneducated

Tony Weller, coachman, Sam
Weller's real father, absent
when Sam was young

**Sam Weller 'the greatest symbol in English literature of
the populace peculiar to England'**

G. K. Chesterton

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

Beginning of *The Pickwick Papers*

The first ray of light which illumines the gloom, and converts into a dazzling brilliancy that obscurity in which the earlier history of the public career of the immortal Pickwick would appear to be involved, is derived from the perusal of the following entry in the Transactions of the Pickwick Club, which the editor of these papers feels the highest pleasure in laying before his readers, as a proof of the careful attention, indefatigable assiduity, and nice discrimination, with which his search among the multifarious documents confided to him has been conducted.

'May 12, 1827. Joseph Smiggers, Esq., P.V.P.M.P.C. [Perpetual Vice-President—Member Pickwick Club], presiding. The following resolutions unanimously agreed to:—

'That this Association has heard read, with feelings of unmingled satisfaction, and unqualified approval, the paper communicated by Samuel Pickwick, Esq., G.C.M.P.C. [General Chairman—Member Pickwick Club], entitled "Speculations on the Source of the Hampstead Ponds, with some Observations on the Theory of Tittlebats;" and that this Association does hereby return its warmest thanks to the said Samuel Pickwick, Esq., G.C.M.P.C., for the same.

Wellerisms

An expression or form of speech used by or characteristic of the Dickens character Sam Weller or his father, Tony; (usually) spec. a kind of a proverbial expression in which a statement, such as a familiar saying or proverb, is given a humorous or ironic twist by being incongruously or punningly attributed to a particular speaker, typically in a specific situation

[Oxford English Dictionary]

Literary precedents

- **Dogberryism**, after Dogberry, Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing*

“Our watch, sir, have indeed **comprehended** two **auspicious** persons”

=

apprehended, suspicious

- **Malapropism**, after Mrs Malaprop, Sheridan, *The Rivals*

The ludicrous misuse of words, esp. in mistaking a word for another resembling it; an instance of this. [OED]

“Sure, if I **reprehend** any thing in this world it is the use of my **oracular** tongue, and a nice **derangement** of **epitaphs**!”

=

comprehend/apprehend, vernacular, arrangement, epithets

Inconsistencies in Sam's speech

- Inconsistencies abound in Sam's speech
 - *wery, werry*
 - *wos, vas*
 - *vy, white*

[all from Chapter 10]

Sam self-aware of his own speech otherness

- Despite his illiterate/uneducated status, Sam is fully aware of his own language

‘What’s your name, sir?’ enquired the judge.

‘Sam Weller, my Lord,’ replied that gentleman.

‘Do you spell it with a “V” or a “W”?’ enquired the judge.

‘That depends upon the taste and fancy of the speller, my Lord,’ replied Sam, **‘I never had occasion to spell it more than once or twice in my life,** but I spells it with a “V”.’

Here a voice in the gallery exclaimed aloud, ‘Quite right too, Samivel; quite right, - Put it down a we, my Lord, put it down a we.’
[Chapter 34]

‘Though you search London you shall not find a Cockney who is half such a Cockney as Sam Weller...who never existed, but who yet remains and will forever remain the typical Cockney.’

Edwin Pugh, *The Charles Dickens Originals* (1912)

‘The average cockney is not articulate. He is often witty; he is sometimes eloquent; he has a notable gift of phrase-making and nicknaming. Every day he is enriching the English tongue with new forms of speech, new clichés, new slang, new catchwords...But the spirit, the soul of the Londoner is usually dumb.’

Edwin Pugh, *Harry the Cockney* (1913)



**A Tale of Two Countries:
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Main features of Sam Weller's speech

- /v/ > /w/ - **wery, wentilation**
- h-dropping - **'ere**
- hypercorrect aspiration/addition of /h/ - **hinivation**
- yod-dropping/loss of palatalisation - **furniter**
- emphatic deictic demonstratives - **that 'ere question**
- non-standard relative pronoun *as* - **the wery day as he came down with them woters**
- archaic progressive - **I've been a-writin'** (<on/at writing)
- present tense instead of past tense - **'That's werry odd,' says the gen'l'm'n**
- loss of velarity [ing] - **sayin'**
- neologisms - **tile** (hat)
- Wellerisms - sort of popular folk wisdom, with an absurd twist
Business first, pleasure afterwards, as King Richard the Third said when he stabbed t'other king in the Tower, afore he smothered the babbies

Ending of *The Pickwick Papers*

- **Sociological harmony/balance - no real sense of class struggle/opposition**
- ‘[...] the very first people that knocked at the door of Mr Pickwick’s house on the bridal morning, were **the two poor relations**, all smiles and shirt-collar.
They were welcomed heartily though, **for riches or poverty had no influence on Mr Pickwick.**’
- Mr Pickwick ‘is somewhat infirm now; but he retains all his former juvenility of spirit, and may still be frequently seen contemplating the pictures in the Dulwich Gallery, or enjoying a walk about the pleasant neighbourhood on a fine day. **He is known by all the poor people about, who never fail to take their hats off as he passes with great respect**; the children idolize him, and so indeed does the whole neighbourhood. Every year he repairs to a large family merry-making at Mr. Wardle's; on this, as on all other occasions, he is invariably attended by the faithful Sam, between whom and his master there exists a steady and reciprocal attachment, which nothing but death will sever.’

Is Sam Weller's speech realistic?

Is Sam Weller's speech realistic?

- **Tony Weller on Sam's education:**

'I took a great deal o'pains with his eddication, Sir; let him run in the streets when he was wery young, and shift for his-self. It's the only way to make a boy sharp, Sir.' [Ch. 20]

- **Mayhew on London street urchins:**

'The education of these children is such as only the streets afford; and the streets teach them for the most part - and in greater or lesser degrees - acuteness - a precocious acuteness.'

Henry Mayhew (1812-1887), 'traveller in the undiscovered country of the poor'

- Journalist
- Founding editor of satirical magazine *Punch* [1841 > 1992]
- Self-styled anthropologist/ethnologist - more scientific approach
- '**Mayhew was a sociological Dickens**' [James Bennett, *Oral History and Delinquency: The Rhetoric of Criminology*, p.35]
- ***London Labour and the London Poor*** [1850-1852]
- 'the greatest Victorian novel **never** written' [Robert Douglas-Fairhurst]
- Italian translation:
Il lavoro e i poveri nella Londra vittoriana, ed. M. Cotone, 2012

Henry Mayhew voicing the **costermongers**

- Costermonger < COSTARD, *apple* + MONGER, *seller, trader*
- Back-slang
- Cant / cryptolect / patter

‘cant’

4. The peculiar language or jargon of a class:

4a. The secret language or jargon used by gipsies, thieves, professional beggars, etc.; *transf.* any jargon used for the purpose of secrecy.

[*OED*]



THE LONDON COSTERMONGER.

"Here Pertaters! Kearots and Turnups! fine Brockello-o-o!"

Oliver Twist

Preface

The greater part of this Tale was originally published in a magazine. When I completed it, and put it forth in its present form, **it was objected to on some high moral grounds in some high moral quarters.**

It was, it seemed, a coarse and shocking circumstance, that some of the characters in these pages are chosen from **the most criminal and degraded of London's population**; that Sikes is a **thief**, and Fagin a **receiver of stolen goods**; that the boys are **pickpockets**, and the girl is a **prostitute**.

I have yet to learn that a **lesson of the purest good may not be drawn from the vilest evil**. I have always believed this to be a recognized and established truth, laid down by the greatest men the world has ever seen, constantly acted upon by the best and wisest natures, and confirmed by the reason and experience of every thinking mind. I saw no reason, when I wrote this book, why **the dregs of life, so long as their speech did not offend the ear**, should not serve the purpose of a moral, at least as well as its froth and cream.

Oliver Twist

Preface

‘dregs’

1a. (Usually *pl.*) The sediment of liquors; the more solid particles which settle at the bottom of a solution or other liquid. Also *fig.*

2. *transf.* Faeces, excrement, refuse, rubbish; corrupt or defiling matters. *Obs.*

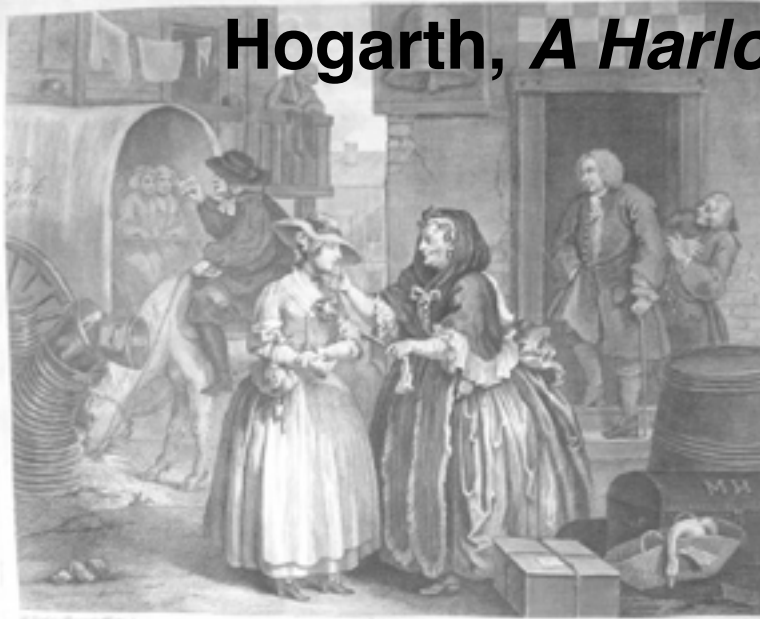
3. *fig.* The most worthless part or parts; the base or useless residue; the refuse or offscourings.

[*OED*]

Oliver Twist, or *The Parish Boy's Progress*

- 'I wish to show, in little Oliver, the principle of Good surviving through every adverse circumstance, and triumphing at last' [Dickens]
- 'Twist' - symbolic
- Reference to *Pilgrim's Progress*, 1678 Christian allegory by John Bunyan
- Reference to Hogarth's *A Rake's Progress* and *A Harlot's Progress*
- Dickens confirms Hogarth precedent in preface

Hogarth, *A Harlot's Progress*, 1732

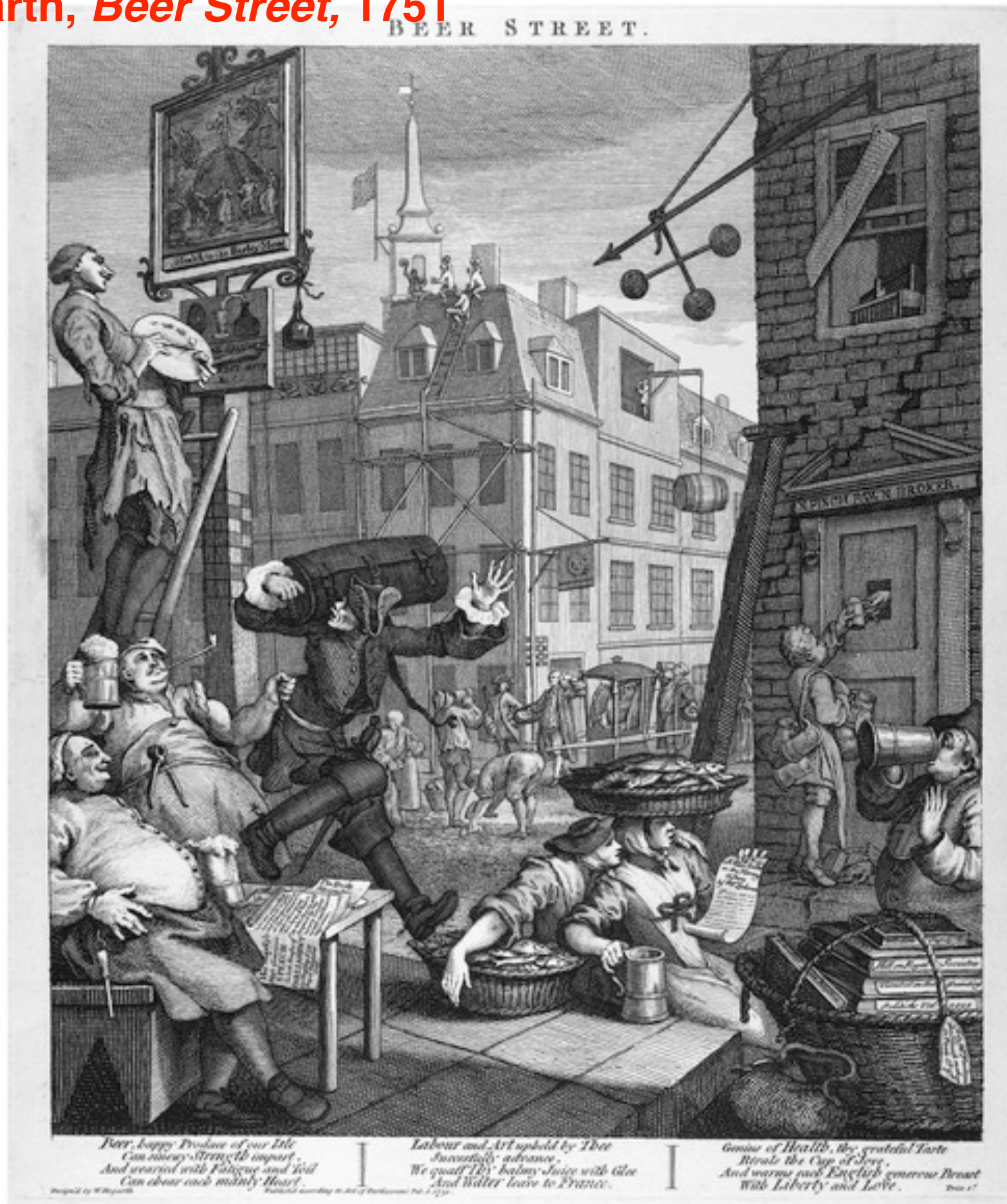


Dickens and Hogarth

- Dickens 'the literary Hogarth of the day' [Reviewer of *Pickwick* in *Bell's Life in London*, 12 June 1836]
- Dickens confirms Hogarth precedent in preface

I had read of thieves by scores — seductive fellows (amiable for the most part), faultless in dress, plump in pocket, choice in horseflesh, bold in bearing, fortunate in gallantry, great at a song, a bottle, pack of cards or dice-box, and fit companions for the bravest. But I had never met (**except in Hogarth**) with **the miserable reality**. It appeared to me that to draw a knot of such associates in crime as really do exist ; to paint them in all their deformity, in all their wretchedness, in all the squalid poverty of their lives; **to show them as they really are**, forever skulking uneasily through the dirtiest paths of life, with the great, black, ghastly gallows closing up their prospect, turn them where they may; — it appeared to me that to do this would be to attempt at something which was greatly needed, and which would be **a service to society**.

Hogarth, *Beer Street*, 1751



Hogarth, *Gin Lane*, 1751



Dickens in response to *Hogarth*

“The gin-shops in and near Drury-Lane, Holborn, St. Giles's, Covent-garden, and Clare-market, are the handsomest in London. There is more of filth and squalid misery near those great thorough-fares than in any part of this mighty city.

Gin-drinking is a great vice in England, but wretchedness and dirt are a greater; and until you improve the homes of the poor, or persuade a half-famished wretch not to seek relief in the temporary oblivion of his own misery ... gin-shops will increase in number and splendour.”

Dickens, ‘Gin Shops’ in *The Evening Chronicle*, 19 February 1835

Cant

- Dickens draws attention to Sikes's use of cant

In pursuance of this request, Nancy quickly laid the cloth; disappearing for a few minutes, she presently returned with a pot of porter and a dish of sheep's heads: which gave occasion to several pleasant witticisms on the part of Mr. Sikes, **founded upon the singular coincidence of 'jemmies' being a cant name, common to them,** and also to an ingenious implement much used in his profession.

What's in a name? *Oliver Twist*

VEL

Tipp—to give.
Tease—a slave at work.
Tatty togg—a gaming cloth.
Tallyman—a person who lets out clothes to disorderly women.
Tabby—an old maid.
Tackle—good clothes; also a mistress.
Thums—threepence.
To derrick—to set out on some enterprize.
Tumbler—a cart.
Trandlers—pease.
Twelver—shilling.
Tower—clipt money.
Touch—to arrest.
Touted—to be followed or pursued.
Trapp—a constable or thief-taker.
Translators—sellers of old mended shoes and boots.
Trib—a prison.
Trooper—half-crown.
Tageman—a gown or cloak.

VIN

Tears of the tankard—drops of liquor.
Teaze—to be whipt at the cart's tail.
Truck—stealing money under pretence of changing it.
Trine—to hang.
Topping—hanging.
Twigg—to observe.
Twisted—hanged.
Twittoe—two.
To feck—to look out, to discover the best means of obtaining stolen goods.
Twirlers—a sort of vagrants who hawk about men and women's clothes.
Tout—to guard.
Trine—the new drop.
Town todlers—silly fellows taken in by sharpers at different games.
Tolo bon rig—persons who go about the country telling fortunes by signs, pretending to be deaf and dumb.

U.

Upright (going on the)—stealing ale-house pots.
Upper-ben—an upper coat.
Upp—acquainted with the conversation of the company; apprised of any transaction.
Upright—ale-house measures.
Uphills—false dice.

V.

Vamp—to pledge any article.
Velvet—the tongue.
Tip the velvet—to talk to a woman; to impose by flowery language.

Vamper—stockings.
Vinegar—a cloak or gown.
To Vinegar—to screen any person by telling a false story.

ZNE

Wattles—ears.
Whids—words.
Wo-ball—a milk-woman.
Whisker—a lie; a bouncing wonderful story.
White wool—silver.
Whitcher—silver bowl.
Wooden ruff—in the pillory; he wore the wooden ruff, he stood in the pillory.
Word-pecker—a punster, joker; a player on words.
Wall-flowers—clothes exposed to sale in Moanmouth-street.
Warm—rich.
Water-headed—sniveling, ousing fellow.
pirates—robbers on the water.
Wedge—silver plate.

ZAN

W.

Wall—to have a name scored up at a public-house.
Water pads—fellows who rob ships on the rivers.
Whattles—ears.
Whids—words.
Whiffler—a relaxation.
Whimpshire—Yorkshire.
Whinn—penny.
Wobble—to reel.
Whirligigg—the pillory.
Whiddler—talkative fellow.
Whack—share of the booty.
Wheadle—a sharper.
Whip-jack—tenth order of the canting crew.
Whites—counterfeit silver.
Wipe—a handkerchief.
Wobble—drunk.
Whiddler—an informer.

Twisted = hanged

Yam—to eat hearty.
Yarmouth capon—a red her- ring.
Yarum—food made of milk.
Yack and onions—watch and seals.

Yeiper—a poor fellow subject to make pitiful lamentations of trifling incidents.
Yankee—a tawney man.
Znees—frost or snow.

Z.

Zneezy weather—frosty weather.

Zany—a poor stupid fellow.

p 2

George Andrewes, *A Dictionary of the Slang and Cant Languages: Ancient and Modern* (1809)

**A Tale of Two Countries:
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Eye dialect

- Literary convention for alerting the reader to a character's likelihood of using non-standard speech
- Avoids extensive orthographical variants
- Suggests otherness (dialectal, foreign, uneducated speech)
- 'wos' for 'was' - no difference in pronunciation or vowel quality - for the eye rather than the ear
- 'wimmin' for 'women'

More linguistic inconsistencies in Dickens

- Oliver's speech = Standard English
- Compare Oliver's speech to other children, e.g. Noah Claypole
- Exception is Dick whom Oliver meets in the infant farm
- Dick pure like Oliver = Standard English
- *Oliver Twist* as 'moralistic realism'
- Compare speech of other characters - Sikes, Fagin etc

The reception of *Oliver Twist*

- ‘It’s all among Workhouses, and Coffin Makers, and Pickpockets... I don’t *like* those things; I wish to avoid them; I don’t like them in *reality*, and therefore I don’t wish them represented.’
[Prime Minister, Lord Melbourne]
- ‘Boz is regius professor of slang’ [contemporary review]

Dickens and reform

- “fiction with a purpose”:
- "I can honestly declare tonight, that all the use I have ... made of my eyes - or nose [laughter] that all the information I have since been able to acquire through any of my senses, has strengthened me in the conviction that searching sanitary reform must precede all other social remedies [cheers] and that even Education and Religion can do nothing where they are most needed, until the way is paved for their ministrations by Cleanliness and Decency [hear, hear]. What avails it to send a Missionary to me, a miserable man or woman living in a foetid Court, where every sense upon me for delight becomes a torment, and every minute of my life is new mire added to the heap under which I lie degraded? To what natural feeling within is he to address himself? ... But give me my first glimpse of Heaven through a little of its light and air - give me water - help me to be clean."

[Dickens to Metropolitan Sanitary Association 1851, quoted in John Sutherland, *Inside Bleak House*]

Dickens and sanitation

- *Oliver Twist* set in 'Mudfog', fictional area of London
- '[...] in *Bleak House*, filth emerges as the true villain [...]
Specifically, airborne filth, rising mephitically from the open sewers, from the "nightsoil" (human excrement dumped in the gutters), and the animal droppings that caked the open streets. "Mudfog" Dickens liked to call that poisonous atmosphere - for which read (and, with the mind's nose, smell) "shitair".
[John Sutherland, *Inside Bleak House*]
- Dirt synonymous with literary portrayals of the poor - c.f. Belli, Verga, Serao etc
- For Jo in *Bleak House*, dirt is literally his main occupation, his way of life

Beginning of *Bleak House* - emphasis on dirt

- Fog as a metaphor for oppression and suffering

London. Michaelmas term lately over, and the Lord Chancellor sitting in Lincoln's Inn Hall. Implacable November weather. As much **mud** in the streets as if the waters had but newly retired from the face of the earth, and it would not be wonderful to meet a Megalosaurus, forty feet long or so, waddling like an elephantine lizard up Holborn Hill. **Smoke** lowering down from chimney-pots, making a soft **black** drizzle, with flakes of soot in it as big as full-grown snowflakes—gone into mourning, one might imagine, for the **death of the sun**. Dogs, undistinguishable in **mire**. Horses, scarcely better; splashed to their very blinkers. Foot passengers, jostling one another's umbrellas in a general **infection** of ill temper, and losing their foot-hold at street-corners, where tens of thousands of other foot passengers have been slipping and sliding since the day broke (if this day ever broke), adding new deposits to the **crust upon crust of mud**, sticking at those points tenaciously to the pavement, and accumulating at compound interest.

Fog everywhere. Fog up the river, where it flows among green aits and meadows; fog down the river, where it rolls defiled among the tiers of shipping and the waterside **pollutions** of a great (and dirty) city.

Other poor voices - Jo in *Bleak House*

- Jo's first appearance

Here he is, very muddy, very hoarse, very ragged. Now, boy! But stop a minute. Caution. This boy must be put through a few preliminary paces.

Name, Jo. Nothing else that he knows on. Don't know that everybody has two names. Never heerd of sich a think. Don't know that Jo is short for a longer name. Thinks it long enough for HIM. HE don't find no fault with it. Spell it? No. HE can't spell it. No father, no mother, no friends. Never been to school. What's home? Knows a broom's a broom, and knows it's wicked to tell a lie. Don't recollect who told him about the broom or about the lie, but knows both. Can't exactly say what'll be done to him arter he's dead if he tells a lie to the gentlemen here, but believes it'll be something wery bad to punish him, and serve him right—and so he'll tell the truth.

"This won't do, gentlemen!" says the coroner with a melancholy shake of the head.

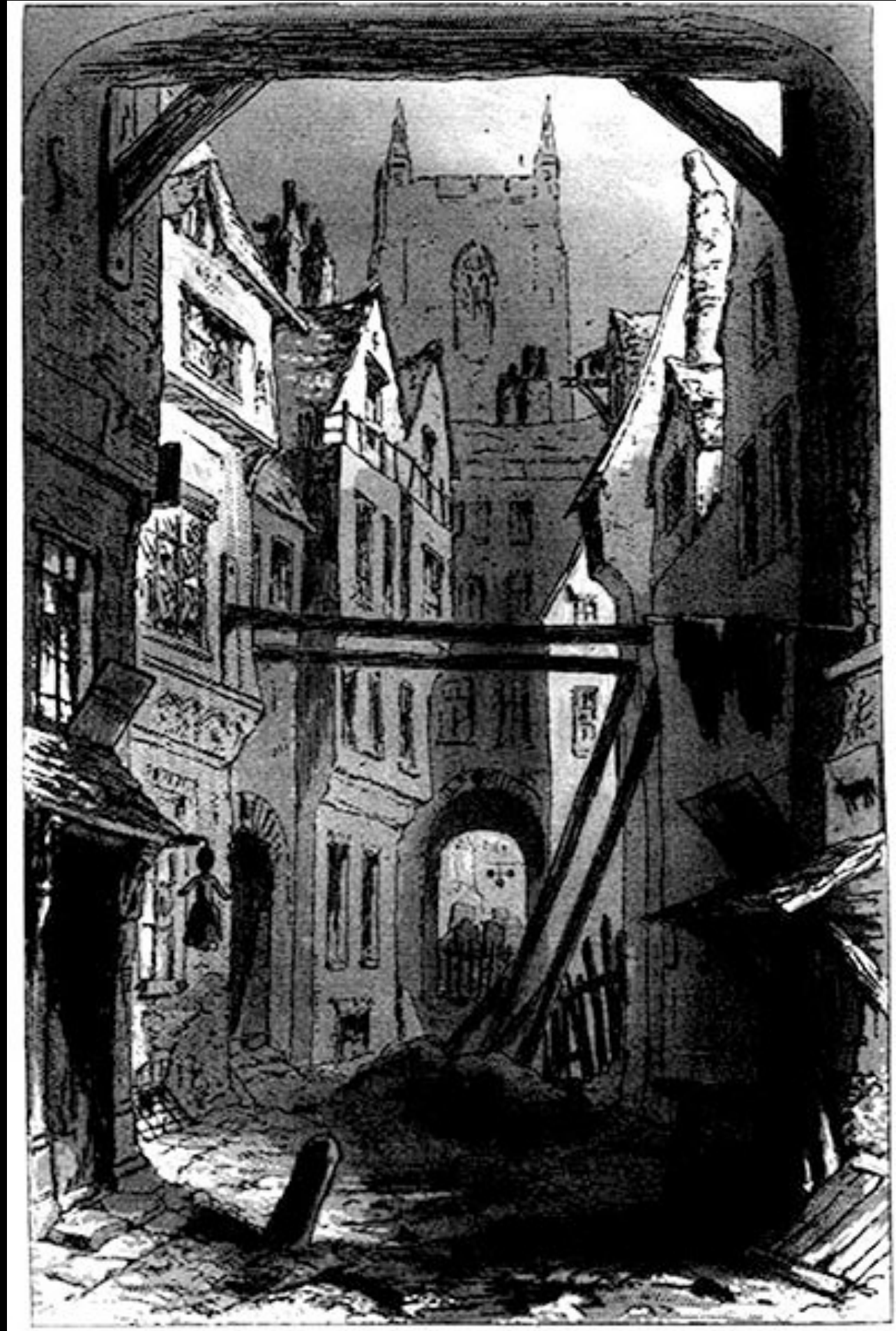
"Don't you think you can receive his evidence, sir?" asks an attentive juryman.

"Out of the question," says the coroner. "You have heard the boy. 'Can't exactly say' won't do, you know. We can't take THAT in a court of justice, gentlemen. It's terrible depravity. Put the boy aside." [Chapter 11]

Other poor voices -

Jo in *Bleak House*

Jo lives - that is to say, Jo has not yet died - in a **ruinous** place, known to the like of him by the name of Tom-all-Alone's. It is a **black, dilapidated** street, avoided by all decent people; where the crazy houses were seized upon, when their **decay** was far advanced, by some bold vagrants, who, after establishing their own possession, took to letting them out in lodgings. Now, these tumbling tenements contain, by night, **a swarm of misery**. As on the **ruined human wretch vermin parasites** appear, so these ruined shelters have bred a crowd of **foul** existence that **crawls** in and out of gaps in walls and boards; and coils itself to sleep, in **maggot** numbers, where the rain drips in; and comes and goes, fetching and carrying **fever** and sowing more evil in its every footprint than Lord Coodle, and Sir Thomas Doodle, and the Duke of Foodle, and all the fine gentlemen in office, down to Zoodle, shall set right in five hundred years — though born expressly to do it. [Chapter 16]



Jo and sanitation

[Jo is] ... not a genuine **foreign-grown savage**; he is the ordinary **home-made article**. Dirty, ugly, disagreeable to all the senses, in body a **common creature** of the **common streets**, only in soul a heathen. **Homely filth begrimes** him, **homely parasites** devour him, **homely sores** are in him, homely rags are on him; native ignorance, the growth of English soil and climate, sinks his immortal nature **lower than the beasts** that perish

[Chapter 47]

Crossing-sweepers - rich meet poor

- Jo plot device for Dickens - face to face interaction/ juxtaposition of high and low, wealth and poverty
- Rich forced to confront poverty on a daily basis
- Compare Mayhew's oral history account of crossing-sweepers [illustration from Mayhew]





THE CROSSING-SWEEPER NUISANCE.

Punch, 1856

Caption reads: 'Now, Sir! Give us Ha'penny, & I'll stand on my Nose'

The illiterate voice of Jo

- Jo - not Joe, can't spell his own name
- Mr **Sangsby** [Snagsby] - metathesis - modern interpretation might be dyslexia c.f. Belli, e.g. 815. *Er caffettiere **fisolof***
- Syntax - compare Lady Dedlock's
- Compare Mayhew's oral history account of crossing-sweepers [illustration from Mayhew]



Compare Lady Dedlock's syntax to Jo's

“Are you the boy I have read of in the papers?” she asks behind her **veil**. [...]

“Listen and be silent. Don't talk to me, and stand farther from me! Can you shew me all those places that were spoken of in the account I read? The place he wrote for, the place he died at, the place where you were taken to, and the place where he was buried?”
[Chapter 16]

“[...] a lady in a wale as sed she was a servant and as come to my crossin one night and asked to be showd this 'ere ouse and the ouse wot him as you giv the writin to died at, and the berrin ground wot he's berrid in. ”

[Jo]

- Jo telling the truth but in garbled language

- *The Crossing Sweeper*, William Powell Frith, 1858
- Idealised?
- Her dress lifted
- Is she ignoring him?
- “Nuisance” = inconvenience
- Little more than beggars

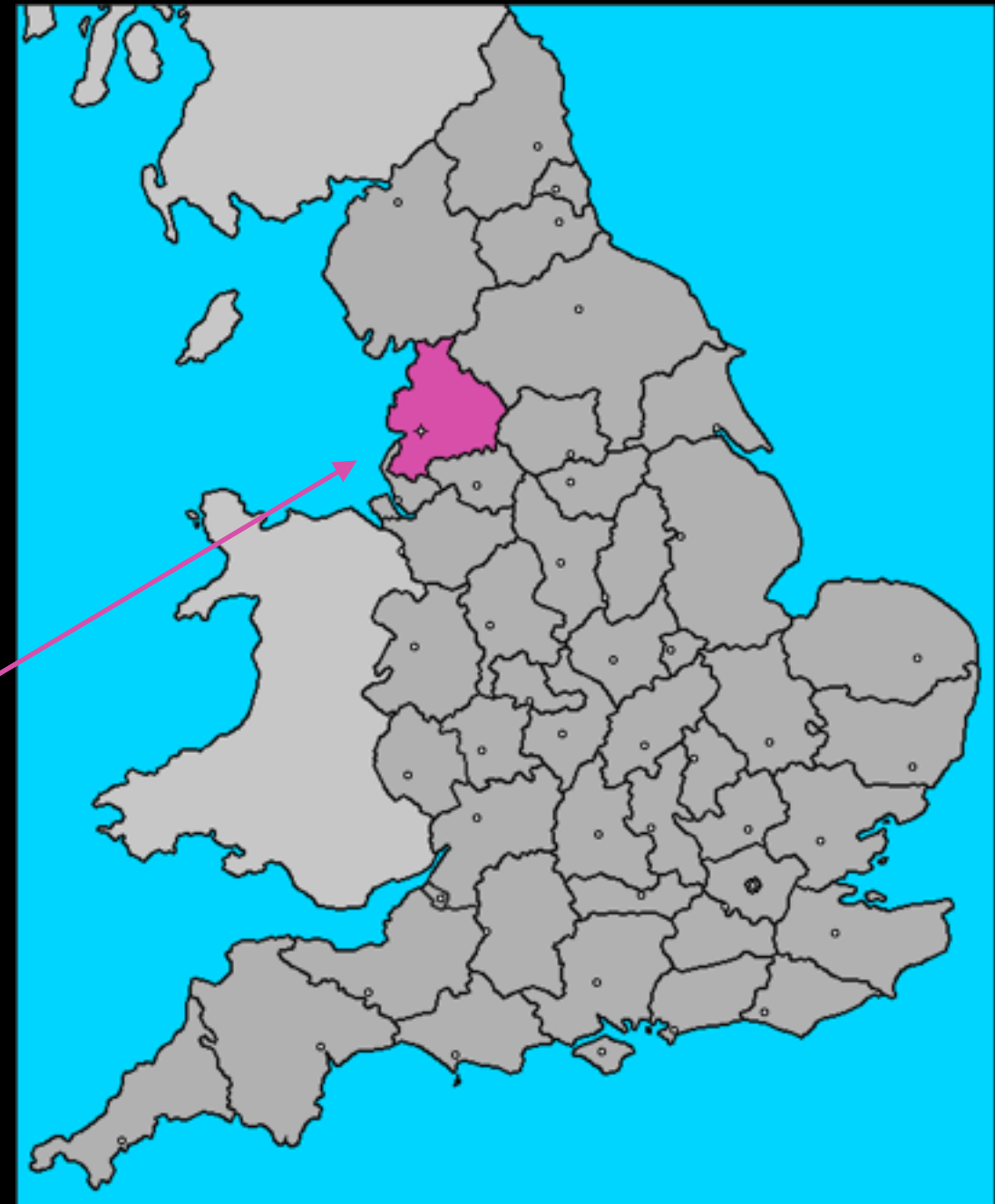


Dickens goes North

- *Hard Times*
- Dickens's attempt at 'industrial novel'
- Stephen Blackpool - factory worker, honest suffering
- Coketown - fictional setting, probably modelled on Preston
- Thomas Macauley dismisses *Hard Times* 'sullen socialism'

Hard Times

- Coketown = Preston?
- Stephen **Blackpool**
- Industrial Revolution
- Cotton mills
- Steam-powered



Yorkshire/Lancashire divide - North of England

The Pennines - natural isogloss



Description of Coketown

It was a town of red brick, or of brick that would have been red if the smoke and ashes had allowed it; but as matters stood, it was a town of **unnatural** red and black like the painted face of a savage.

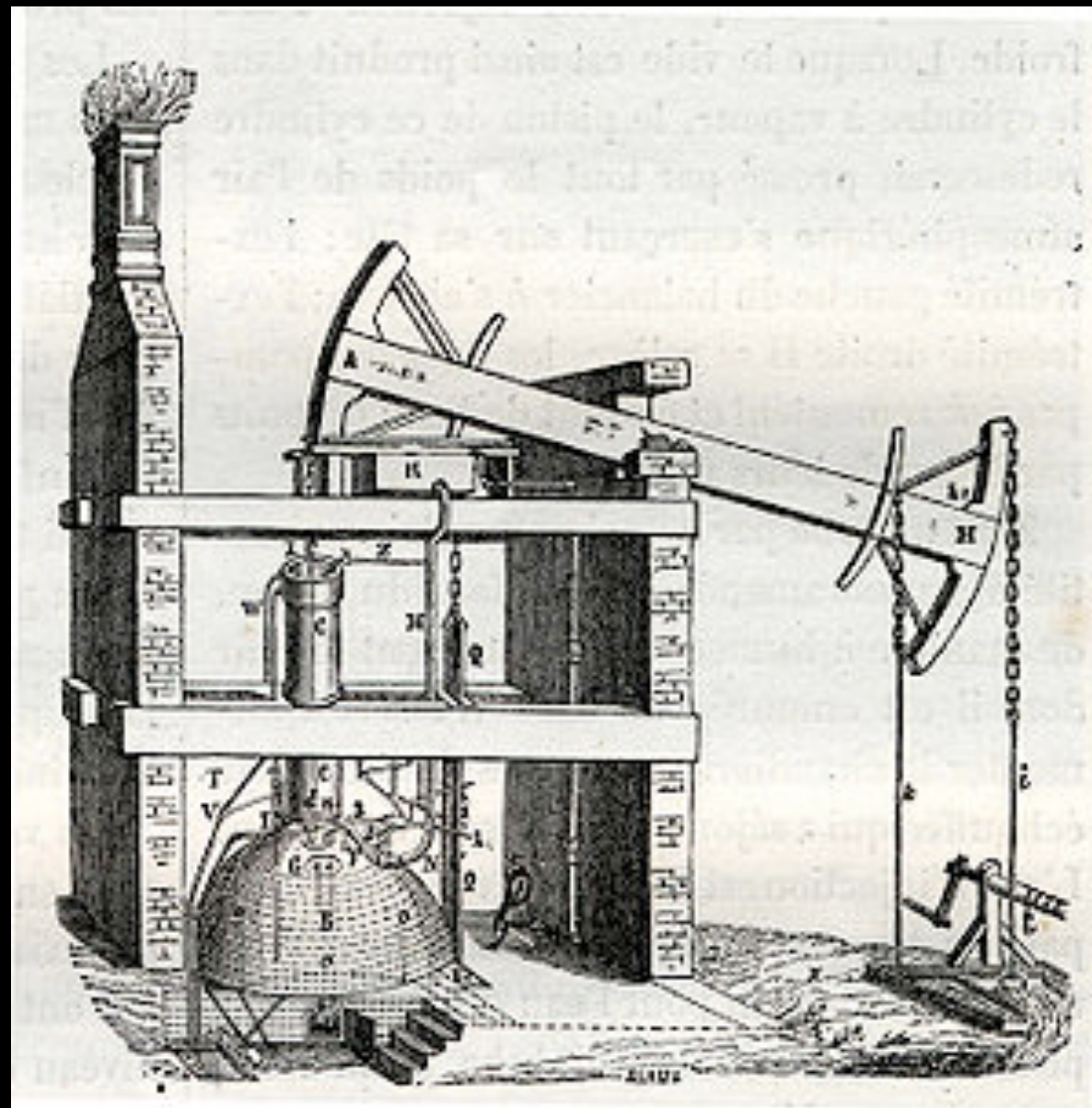
It was a town of machinery and tall chimneys, out of which interminable serpents of **smoke** trailed themselves for ever and ever, and never got uncoiled.

It had a **black** canal in it, and a river that ran purple with **ill-smelling** dye, and vast piles of building full of windows where there was a **rattling** and a **trembling** all day long, and where the piston of the **steam-engine** worked monotonously up and down, like the head of an elephant in a state of melancholy madness. It contained several large streets all very like one another, and many small streets still more like one another, inhabited by people **equally like one another, who all went in and out at the same hours, with the same sound upon the same pavements, to do the same work, and to whom every day was the same as yesterday and tomorrow, and every year the counterpart of the last and the next.**

These attributes of Coketown were in the main inseparable from the work by which it was sustained; against them were to be set off, **comforts of life which found their way all over the world**, and elegancies of life which made, we will not ask how much of the fine lady, who could scarcely bear to hear the place mentioned. The rest of its features were voluntary, and they were these.

You saw nothing in Coketown but what was **severely workful.**

where the piston of the steam-engine worked monotonously up and down, like the head of an elephant in a state of melancholy madness



What happens when Dickens goes North?

- Different sounds from previous Dickens characters
- *Hard Times* only Dickens novel not set in London at all

Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, 1847

- Joseph's speech

Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, 1847

- Charlotte Brontë's revisions following Emily's death:

‘It seems to me advisable to modify the orthography of the old servant Joseph's speeches; for though as it stands it **exactly** renders the Yorkshire dialect to a **Yorkshire ear**, yet I am sure **Southerns** must find it **unintelligible**; and thus one of the most graphic characters in the book is **lost on them**.’

[Charlotte Brontë to Smith Elder (publisher) 1850]

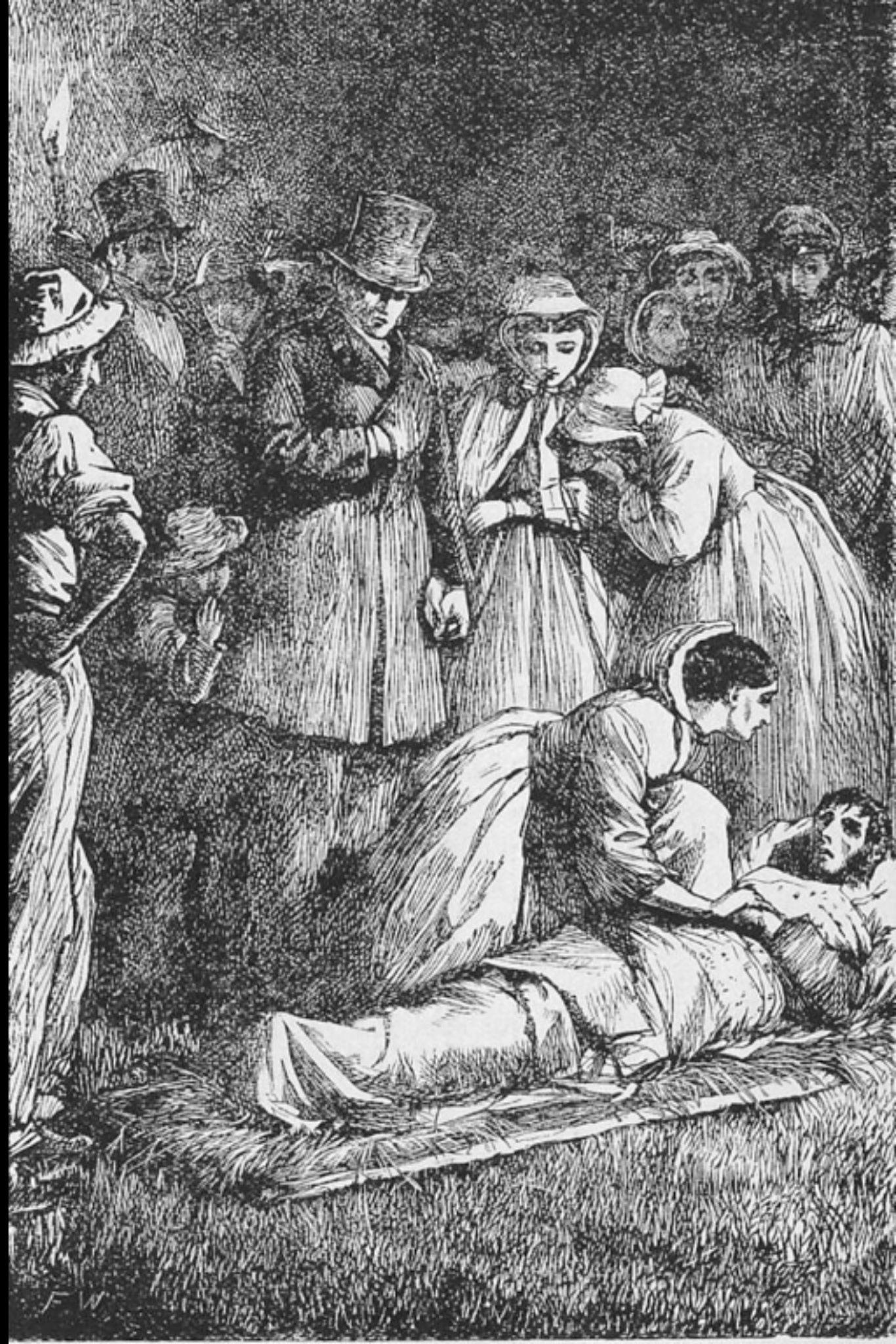
Stephen Blackpool



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

Stephen Blackpool's voice in translation

- *Tempi difficili*, trans. by Gianna Lonza (Milan: Garzanti, 1988, 1993)
- Northern England identity disappears
- Markers of orality all but disappear
- Some errors - e.g. 'calma, calma' for 'pooh, pooh!'
 - C.f. verb 'to pooh-pooh something' = to express contempt or disdain for; to ridicule. Also: to make light of; to dismiss as silly or unimportant.



Dickens and the law

- ‘The one great principle of the English law is to make business for itself’ [*Bleak House*, Chapter 39]
- Divorce = “a luxury fairly belonging...to the superior and wealthy classes”
[Caroline Norton, *The Making of Modern Law*, 1858]
- Divorce impossible for people like Stephen Blackpool
- Compare Azzecagarbugli on muddles and confusions and plots

Dickens influenced by Manzoni?

- Dickens's narrator at end of novel:
[...] balderdash and bluster? Had he any prescience of the day, five years to come, when Josiah Bounderby of Coketown was to die of a fit in the Coketown street, and this same precious will was to begin its long career of **quibble**, plunder, false pretences, vile example, **little service and much law**? Probably not. [*Hard Times*, ch.37/ Book III. ch.9]
- Azzecagarbugli usually translated into English as **Dr Quibble-Weaver**
- **Quibble**
 1. A play on words, a pun.
 2. An equivocation, evasion, or frivolous objection based on an ambiguity or uncertainty of wording, a trivial circumstance, etc. In later use freq.: **an objection to a point of detail**, a minor complaint or criticism. [*OED*]



Dickens influenced by Manzoni?

- We know Dickens read Manzoni's *Promessi sposi* during the year he spent in Genoa:

A little, patient, revolutionary officer, exiled in England during many years, comes to and fro three times a week, to read and speak Italian with me. A poor little lame butterfly of a man [...]. If I question him closely on some idiom which he is not in a condition to explain, he usually shakes his head dolefully and begins to cry.

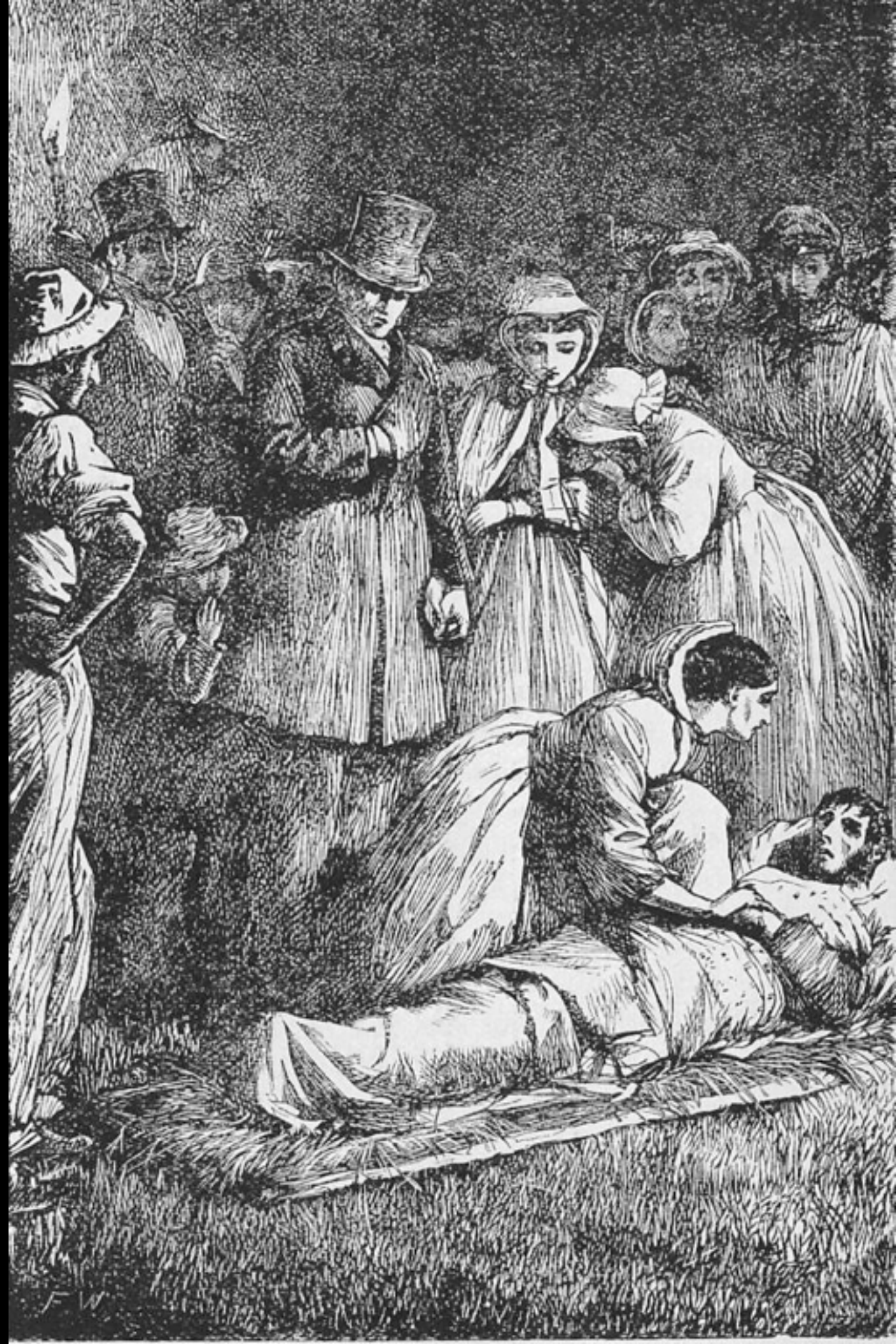
[...]

He has initiated me in the “***Promessi Sposi***” [...]. And what a clever book it is! I have not proceeded far into the story, but am quite charmed with it. The interviews between the bridegroom and the priest, on the morning of the disappointment—and between the bridegroom and the bride and her mother, and **the description of poor 'renzo's walk to the house of the learned doctor, with the fowls and the scene between them**, and the whole idea of the character and story of Padre Cristoforo, are touched, I think, by a most delicate and charming hand. I have just left the good father in Don Rodrigo's boisterous eating hall, and am in no little anxiety, I assure you.

[Letter, 1 September 1844]

Stephen Blackpool's final words

- See handout
- Stephen as spokesman for his class
- Politician Thomas Macaulay dismisses *Hard Times* as 'sullen socialism'
- See also Dickens 'On Strike'



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

“A working-class hero is something to be...”: Orwell on Dickens

- Stephen Blackpool as possible exception?

Shabby-genteel People

- Dickens:

‘Now, shabby people, God knows, may be found anywhere, and genteel people are not articles of greater scarcity out of London than in it; but this compound of the two—this shabby-gentility—is as purely local as the statue at Charing-cross, or the pump at Aldgate. It is worthy of remark, too, that only men are shabby-genteel; a woman is always either dirty and slovenly in the extreme, or neat and respectable, however poverty-stricken in appearance. **A very poor man, ‘who has seen better days,’ as the phrase goes, is a strange compound of dirty-slovenliness and wretched attempts at faded smartness.**

[...]

A shabby-genteel man may have no occupation, or he may be a corn agent, or a coal agent, or a wine merchant, or a collector of debts, or a broker’s assistant, or a broken-down attorney. He may be a clerk of the lowest description, or a contributor to the press of the same grade. Whether our readers have noticed these men, in their walks, as often as we have, we know not; this we know—that the miserably poor man (no matter whether he owes his distresses to his own conduct, or that of others) **who feels his poverty and vainly strives to conceal it**, is one of the most pitiable objects in human nature. Such objects, with few exceptions, are shabby-genteel people.’

[‘Shabby-genteel People’, *Morning Chronicle*, 5 November 1834]

Shabby-genteel People

- Orwell:

‘In the kind of shabby-genteel family that I am talking about there is far **more consciousness of poverty** than in any working-class family above the level of the dole.

[...]

A shabby-genteel family is in much the same position as a family of ‘poor whites’ living in a street where everyone else is a Negro. In such circumstances you have got to **cling to your gentility because it is the only thing you have**; and meanwhile you are hated for your stuck-up-ness and for the accent and manners which **stamp you as one of the boss class.**’

[*The Road to Wigan Pier*, **1937**, chapter 8]

Orwell's criticism of Dickens and dirt

- C.f. Alexis de Tocqueville

‘Peculiar character of Manchester. The great manufacturing city for cloth, thread, cotton... as is Birmingham for iron, copper, steel. Favourable circumstances: ten leagues from the largest port in England, which is the best-placed port in Europe for receiving raw materials from America safely and quickly. Close by the largest coal-mines to keep the machines going cheaply. Twenty-five leagues away, the place where the **best machines in the world are made**. Three canals and a railway quickly carry the products all over England, and over the whole world. The employers are helped by science, industry, the love of gain and English capital. Among the workers are men coming from a country where **the needs of men are reduced almost to those of savages**, and who can work for a very low wage, and so keep down the level of wages for the English workmen who wish to compete, to almost the same level. So there is the combination of the **advantages of a rich and of a poor country; of an ignorant and an enlightened people; of civilisation and barbarism**. So it is not surprising that Manchester already has 300,000 inhabitants and is growing at a prodigious rate....

[Journeys to England and Ireland, 1835]

Orwell's criticism of Dickens and dirt

- C.f. Alexis de Tocqueville

Thirty or forty factories rise on the tops of the hills I have just described. Their six stories tower up; their huge enclosures give notice from afar of the centralization of industry. **The wretched dwellings of the poor are scattered haphazards around them.** [...] Heaps of dung, rubble from buildings, putrid, stagnant pools are found here and there among the houses and over the bumpy, pitted surfaces of the public places. [...] They [roads] are lined with one-story houses whose ill-fitting planks and broken windows show them up, even from a distance, as the last **refuge a man might find between poverty and death.** None-the-less the wretched people reduced to living in them can still inspire jealousy of their fellow beings. Below some of their miserable dwellings is a row of cellars to which a sunken corridor leads. Twelve to fifteen human beings are crowded pell-mell into each of these **damp, repulsive holes. The fetid, muddy waters, stained with a thousand colours by the factories they pass, of one of the streams I mentioned before, wander slowly round this refuge of poverty.**

[Journeys to England and Ireland, 1835]

Elizabeth Gaskell

- Publishes *Mary Barton* in 1848 (widespread unrest in Europe)
[Dickens publishes *Hard Times* in 1854]
- ‘**Condition of England Question**’ - middle-class anxieties about social tensions caused by industrialisation, urbanism, class antagonism (1840s term)
- Appends to novel two lectures by her husband, William Gaskell, on Lancashire dialect (at request of her publishers - Chapman & Hall, same publishers of Dickens)
- Extensive notes by William Gaskell to text also included

Elizabeth Gaskell

- Gaskell's revolutionary twist: working-class characters as central protagonists of the novel
- Original title: *John Barton*
- Original title suggests hero status - dangerous
- 'Round the character of John Barton all the others formed themselves; he was my hero, the person with whom all my sympathies went, with whom I tried to identify myself at the time' [*The Letters of Mrs Gaskell*, ed. Chapel and Pollard]

Elizabeth Gaskell

- Preface to *Mary Barton*:

I bethought me how deep might be the romance in the lives of some of **those who elbowed me daily in the busy streets** of the town in which I resided. I had always felt a deep sympathy with the care-worn men, who looked as if doomed to struggle through their lives in strange alternations between work and want; tossed to and from by circumstances, apparently in even a greater degree than other men. [...] I saw that they were sore and irritable against the rich, the even tenor of whose seemingly happy lives appeared to increase the anguish of the lottery-like nature of their own. Whether the bitter complaints made by them, of the neglect which they experienced from the prosperous — especially from the masters whose fortunes they had helped to build up — were well-founded or no, it is not for me to judge. It is enough to say, that this belief in the injustice and unkindness which they endure from their fellow-creatures, taints what might be resignation to God's will, and turns it to **revenge** in too many of the poor uneducated factory-workers of Manchester.

Elizabeth Gaskell

- Preface to *Mary Barton*:

To myself the idea which I have formed of the state of feeling among too many of the factory-people in Manchester, and which I endeavoured to represent in this tale (completed above a year ago), has received some confirmation from the events which have so recently occurred among a similar class on the Continent.

- Revolution in Europe = danger of revolution at home

Reaction to *Mary Barton*

Do they want to know why [working men protest, become Chartists and Communists]? Then let them read Mary Barton. **Do they want to know why poor men, kind and sympathising as women to each other, learn to hate law and order, Queen, Lords and Commons, country-party, and corn-law-leaguer, all alike—to hate the rich, in short?** Then let them read Mary Barton. Do they want to get a detailed insight into the whole “science of starving,”—“clemming,” as the poor Manchester men call it? Why people “clem,” ... what people look like while they are “clemming” to death ... and who looks after them, and who—oh, shame unspeakable!—do not look after them while they are “clemming,” and what they feel like when they see their wives and their little ones “clemming” to death round them; and what they feel, and must feel, unless they are more or less than men, after all are “clemmed” and gone, and **buried safe out of sight, never to hunger, and wail, and pine, and pray for death any more for ever?** Let them read Mary Barton. Lastly, if they want to know why men learn to hate the Church and the Gospel, why they turn sceptics, Atheists, blasphemers, and **cry out in the blackness of despair and doubt**, “Let us curse God and die,” let them read Mary Barton.

[Charles Kingsley for Fraser’s Magazine (Vol. 39, April 1849)]

Dickens goes North

- Dickens to Gaskell, 16 June 1854:

‘I have never thanked you for Mr. Gaskell's lectures, which I have read with uncommon pleasure. They are so sagacious and unaffected, and tell so much that is interesting.’

- “Dree” used by Dickens and discussed by William Gaskell:

‘A very expressive adjective derived from the same source is ‘dree’, as in, ‘This is a dree bit o’ road.’ In Anglo-Saxon ‘dreogan’ meant to suffer or endure, having for its preterite ‘dreah’. The Scotch still use it in its original sense [...] and Lancashire people talk of ‘dree rain’, which often puzzles those who fancy it is a corruption of ‘dry’. And they say it rains ‘dreely’ meaning that it is continuous and enduring.

[Lecture 2, Appendix to *Mary Barton*]

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

Dickens and Italy: 'So many jewels set in dirt'

- Dickens in Italy 1844-45, year in Genoa for *Pictures from Italy*
- Travel literature to an extent (Grand Tour)
- Attempt to avoid the 'picturesque', instead reinventing a 'new picturesque'
- Talks of a 'duty' to encourage improvement in conditions
- Dickens's "attraction of repulsion" [Forster] - perhaps nowhere more evident than in *Pictures from Italy*

Dickens and Italy

- Preface to *Pictures from Italy*

Many books have been written upon Italy, affording many means of studying the history of that interesting country, and the innumerable associations entwined about it. **I make but little reference to that stock of information;** not at all regarding it as a necessary consequence of my having had recourse to the storehouse for my own benefit, that I should reproduce its easily accessible contents before the eyes of my readers.

Neither will there be found, in these pages, any grave examination into the government or misgovernment of any portion of the country. No visitor of that beautiful land can fail to have a strong conviction on the subject; but as I chose when residing there, a Foreigner, to abstain from the discussion of any such questions with any order of Italians, so I would rather not enter on the inquiry now. During my twelve months' occupation of a house at Genoa, I never found that authorities constitutionally jealous were distrustful of me; and I should be sorry to give them occasion to regret their free courtesy, either to myself or any of my countrymen.

Dickens and **Italy**: “attraction of repulsion”

- Genoa: ‘the rapid passage from a street of stately edifices, into a maze of the vilest squalor’
- Piacenza: ‘A brown, decayed, old town, Piacenza is’
- Rome: River Tiber with ‘its promising aspect of desolation and ruin’
- Naples: ‘Polcinelli and pickpockets, buffo singers and beggars, rags, puppets, flowers, brightness, dirt, and universal degradation’

Dickens and Italy



- Rome - ghetto

The little town of miserable houses, walled, and shut in by barred gates, is the quarter where the Jews are locked up nightly, when the clock strikes eight—a miserable place, densely populated, and **reeking with bad odours**, but where the people are industrious and money-getting. In the day-time, as you make your way along the narrow streets, you see them all at work: upon the pavement, oftener than in their **dark and frowzy shops**: furbishing old clothes, and driving bargains.

frowzy = smelly; unkempt in appearance

Dickens and Italy

- ‘picturesque’
- From landscape painting
- Rural Britain compared to views from the Grand Tour
- Romanticism, sublime, beauty
- Idealisation of poverty
- Dickens’s ‘new picturesque’ in name of progress/social improvement:

“I am afraid that the conventional idea of the picturesque is associated with such misery and degradation that a new picturesque will have to be established as the world goes on”
[Letter to Forster from Naples, 1835]

Dickens as *flaneur*

- Dickens's narrating voice that of an early flaneur
- Detachment but social engagement. Affinities with street photography
- According to Walter Benjamin a flaneur is an “observer formed through the habit of walking through city streets and endlessly using the eyes to record and categorize the visual information on offer; standing back from actual contact with individuals; intrigued and intoxicated by the phenomenon of the crowd, whilst not letting this reaction blind him to **social reality**.”
[Kate Flint, introduction to *Pictures from Italy* (Penguin)]

Dickens as would-be social reformer

- Dickens's 'pictures' as something progressive
- 'Diorama' in Naples title - visual/educational
- Diorama = A small-scale representation of a scene, etc., in which three-dimensional figures or objects are displayed in front of a painted background, the whole often being contained in a cabinet and viewed through a window or aperture in the front; hence, any small-scale model of a scene, building-project, or the like; also, a miniature set (set n.1) used in Cinematography and Television where a full-sized set or location would be impracticable.
[OED]

Dickens as would-be social reformer

- Dickens reveals his true sympathies with Italy later:
- In 1861 letter he cites “one’s natural sympathies with a people so oppressed as the Italians, and one’s natural antagonism to a Pope and a Bourbon”
- “The rising of the Italian people from under their unutterable wrongs, and the tardy burst of day upon them after the long long night of oppression that has darkened their beautiful country, have naturally caused my mind to dwell often of late on my own small wanderings in Italy
[*Uncommercial Traveller*, 1860]
- In 1866 letter “I feel for Italy almost as if I were Italian born”

Dickens as would-be **social reformer**

- End of *Pictures from Italy*:

[...] let us part from Italy, with all its **miseries** and **wrongs**, affectionately, in our admiration of the beauties, natural and artificial, of which it is full to overflowing, and in our tenderness towards a people, naturally well-disposed, and patient, and sweet-tempered. Years of **neglect**, **oppression**, and **misrule**, have been at work, to change their nature and reduce their spirit; miserable jealousies, fomented by petty Princes to whom union was destruction, and division strength, have been a **canker** at their root of nationality, and have barbarized their language; but the good that was in them ever, is in them yet, and a noble people may be, one day, raised up from these **ashes**. Let us entertain that hope!

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

Lottery in Naples

“In Naples the passion for the lottery reaches a frenzy. It has become an **epidemic disease**. Everyone plays in the hope of winning either the necessities or the luxuries of life. The most **impoverished workers**, scullery-boys, cabmen, cooks, matchstick vendors, and beggars all **go without food** in order to make their weekly bets... But it is **among the poor that the disease is most widespread and most devastating**. Everyone, without exception, plays in some quarters of the Old City... The lottery, therefore, is the **scourge**, the **tapeworm**, of the Neapolitan people.”

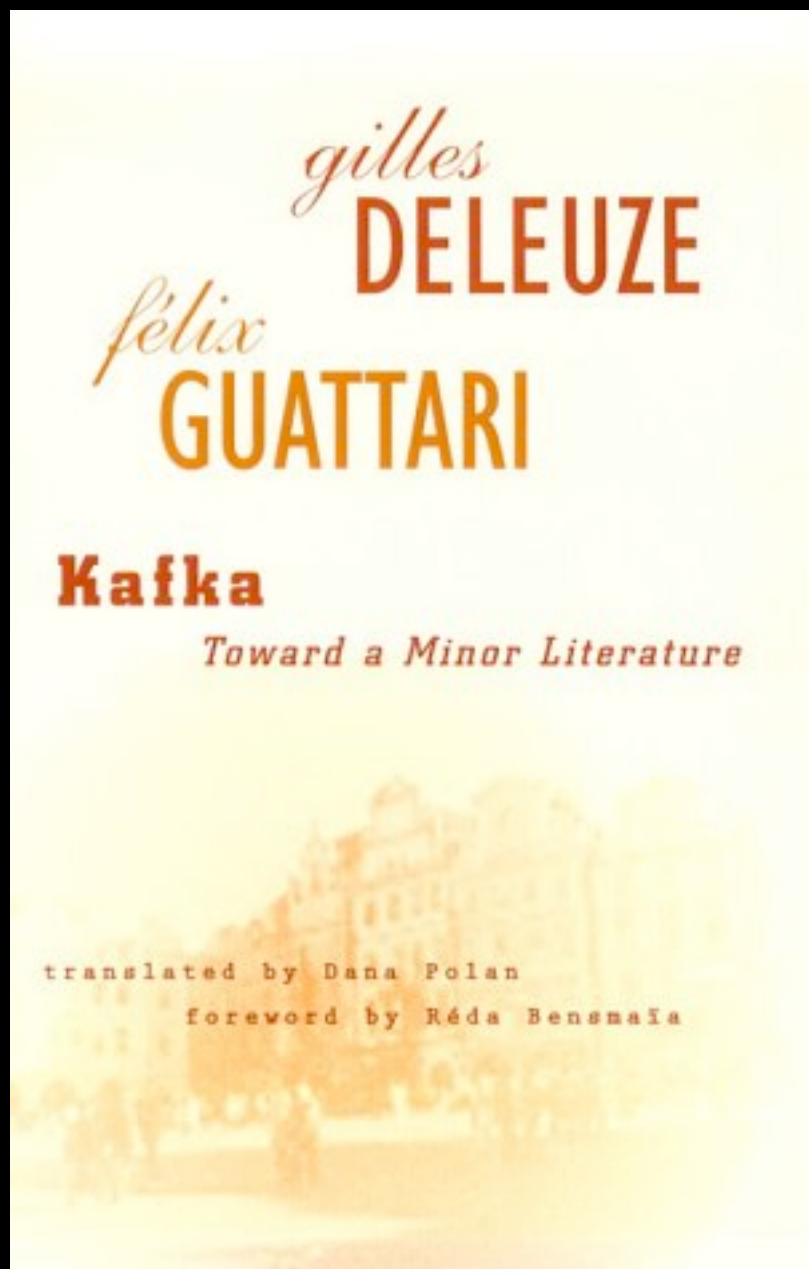
[Marcellin Pellet, French Consul to Naples, *Napoli contemporanea 1888-1892* (Quoted in Frank Snowden, *Naples in the Time of Cholera 1884-1911*)]

Lottery in Naples

- By the 1880s the lottery in Italy was generating 80 million lire annually
- Naples provided 21 million lire
- Effectively taxation by another name

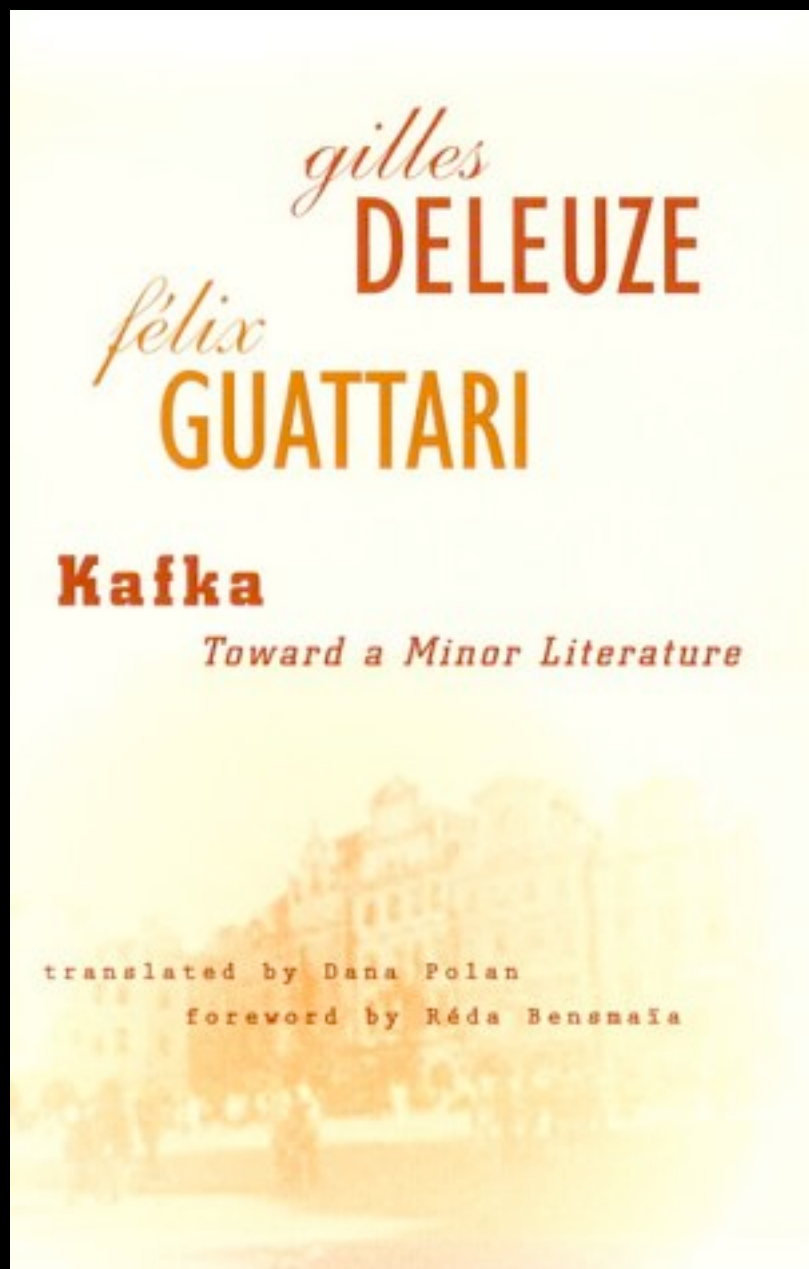
**A Tale of Two Countries:
Voicing the Poor in 19th-Century Britain and Italy**

Useful literary theory - Deleuze and Guattari's 'Minor Literature'



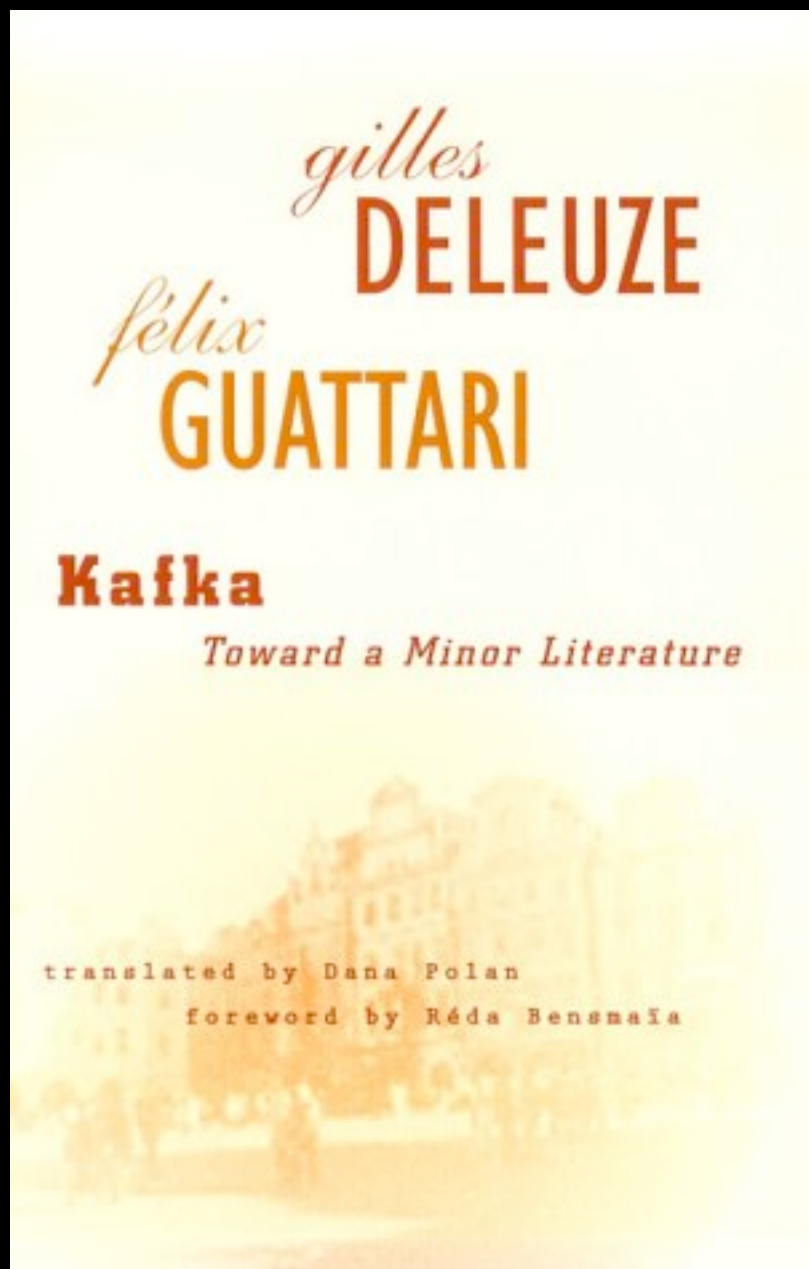
- Psychoanalytical tradition - from and against
- *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*
- Based on Kafka's 'Prague German'/Jewish German - impossibility of writing in standard German to reflect Jewish minority identity.
- 'A minor literature doesn't come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language'
- 'everything in them is political [...] each individual intrigue [is forced to] connect immediately to politics'
- 'literature is the people's concern'

'Minor Literature' - what sort of language?



- Language of the marginalised
- Against *regionalisms* - archaic and non-revolutionary
- 'use syntax in order to cry'
- 'hate all languages of masters'
- minor language 'a sort of *stranger* within his own language'
- 'Polylingualism of one's own language, to make a minor or intensive use of it'

'Minor Literature' - what sort of language?



Kafka's language 'withered vocabulary' and 'incorrect syntax', characterised by:

- *intensives* or *tensors*
- 'terms that connote pain'
- incorrect use of prepositions
- stereotypical adverbs
- exclamations
- predominance of conjunctions
- a language of opposition

C.f.

- Hugo on slang as 'une langue de combat'
- Belli on romanesco as 'una storpiatura'
- Our authors' languages as sociolects
- Linguistic corruption/non-standardness, but creative invention

Exam - 15th June, 10.00-13.00

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

Answer in English or Italian.

Exam time: 3 hours (10.00-13.00)

Monolingual paper dictionaries are allowed.

No other devices are allowed.

Please answer **2** questions (c.1000-1250 words each). Each answer must reference the work of **at least one author in Italian and one author in English**, supported by clear textual examples.

Example questions

- **How realistic are the voices of the poor in the 19th-century works you have studied across the two literatures?**
- **Compare and contrast the voicing of the urban and rural poor across the two countries in the 19th-century works you have studied.**
- **Discuss the claim that authors concerned with the poor across the two literatures ‘mostrano un notevole interesse per il dialetto, visto come mezzo più adatto all’espressione dei sentimenti rispetto alla lingua letteraria, troppo aulica, innaturale e lontana dalle esigenze della società’ [Diadora].**
- **Discuss the portrayal of children in relation to poverty in the works you have studied across the two literatures, with particular attention to voice.**

Possible structure (1000-1250 words)

- **Introduction: c.100-150 words**
 - **Outline your approach to question - several possible answers**
 - **Engage with the question**
 - **Explain choice of authors/texts and reasons**
 - **Say how you intend to make comparisons/highlight differences**
 - **Possibly hint at your conclusion**
- **3 paragraphs (ideally, linked) of c.350 words each**
 - **Perhaps choose 3 key areas/themes/differences to develop in each paragraph**
 - **Be analytical; not narrative**
 - **Use carefully chosen examples**
 - **Use relevant (short) quotations**
- **Conclusion: c.100-150 words**
 - **Answer the question!**
 - **Come to a firm position - don't 'sit on the fence'**